

Usability Testing Your OWI Course

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Definitions

A working definition of Usability for today: the extent to which your students are able to complete the goals you have created for your online writing course

Goal: The outcome you want to achieve.

Tasks: The actions or steps you undertake to achieve the goal.

For Example:

Goal: Successfully completing an assignment

Task: finding where I turn in the assignment online.

Steps toward your usability test

- 1. Find a task to test.** For instance: “Make and appointment with the Writing Center.
- 2. Note your own assumptions.** This can provide a good way to compare what you expected to the outcomes.
- 3. Instruction in writing detailed prose.** A common writing course activity deployed to this specific activity.
- 4. Modelling.** Give students an idea of what a usability test might look like, and what sort of things you would look for in a similar (but not identical) task.
- 5. The Students Test.** Students are now performing the test themselves, taking notes and ultimately writing up their experiences.
- 6. Debrief.** Let students know what your initial expectations were, how they coalesced and diverged from you and each other, and most importantly, how you will incorporate changes into your OWI design.

Additional Helpful Resources

Barnum, C. M. (2011). *Usability testing essentials: Ready, set...test!* Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann.

Krug, S. (2014). *Don't make me think, revisited: A common sense approach to web usability.* Berkeley, CA: New Riders.

Rubin, J., & Chisnell, D. (2008). *Handbook of usability testing: How to plan, design, and conduct effective tests.* Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Publishing, Inc.