Usability Testing Tips

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Remember:

You are testing the design, **not the user**!

- Make sure to empathize with the user – keep them relaxed by using friendly language. Follow up with "What," "Where" and "Why" questions if it's not clear what s/he is doing (ex: "What are you trying to find?").

- Even if you are timing things, don't make this obvious to your users. Otherwise they will feel pressured, as if they are being tested (rather than the design).

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Planning the Test:

Ensure that your tasks are not phrased in a way that unintentionally provides "clues" to the user. Tasks should be written in an open-ended way using common (rather than technical) language.

Example of a task that should be rephrased:
"Can you find the 'About Us' section?"

Example of how this can be rephrased:
"If you wanted to learn more about this company, where would you look?"

If user still can't find it, or if they are navigating around but not saying anything, you could then follow up with:
"Where do you expect to find this? What are you looking for?"

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Right before the test:

- Remind your test subjects that s/he will not hurt your feelings by saying anything negative or making any suggestions; in fact, they are helping you.

- Remember to encourage them to think out loud, and behave as they would if they were really using the site/product, even if it means telling you that they would give up "in real life." Assure them that this kind of information is what will really help you improve the design.

- Do not include any help or information about where the test subject can complete their task and let them know that while they ask you questions about the task itself, you cannot help them with completing it. Let them know it's perfectly okay if they can't do it. If they can't figure out how to do it, you can just mark it down as "unable to complete."

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During the test:

DON'T:
- Don't verbalize what you think a user is thinking or fill in the sentences for your users.
- Don't explain or justify the design.

DO:
- Stay detached and neutral – don't say things like, "Good job!" It's okay to say "thank you, that was very helpful feedback."

- Try to observe and listen as much as possible. It's okay to ask follow up or clarifying questions.

- Confirm or summarize what a user has said if you want to be absolutely sure you've understood what they have already said.

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After the test:

- If you can, allow some "buffer" time between test subjects so that you can meet up with your team to talk about the previous test. This will give you some time to compare notes and make any necessary adjustments.

- You will also want to have a discussion after all of the tests are done to come to some conclusions together.