Sample Web Site Evaluation Plan[1]

Roles

- **Facilitator.** The facilitator's responsibilities are to read instructions, handle transitions from one section of the test to another, field participants' questions, and if necessary help participants recover from software bugs or places where they are clearly stuck for far too long.
- **Observers.** Observers record times and on-screen events, and they tally tracked metrics.

Introduction

Thank you very much for helping us evaluate two Web sites. We are testing people's perceptions of Web sites that are in the early stages of design. Here's what we have planned for the next [insert time frame here]:

1. First we will start a Web browser, open up a start page, and ask you to read through the introductory text.
2. Next we will ask you to perform some tasks on the first Web site. Interspersed will be some survey questions asking you about your perceptions of the tasks and of the Web site.
3. Steps 1 and 2 will be repeated for the second Web site.
4. At the end, we will ask you for any comments you have overall.

We're asking you to help us improve the Web site by finding problems with it. We would like to stress that we are testing the Web site, not you. If you have

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1 Throughout Appendix B, italic typeface indicates text that is meant to be spoken to participants.

trouble with some of the tasks we ask you to perform, it is the Web site's fault, not yours. Don't feel bad; trouble spots are exactly what we're looking for. And please remember that this is totally voluntary. Although we don't know any reason why this should happen, if you become uncomfortable or find this evaluation objectionable in any way, feel free to quit at any time.

Hand them two consent forms—one for our files, one for them as a copy—as well as any forms for obtaining demographic information or contact information to receive any prizes or checks.

This consent form just says that you understand what this test is about, that you understand we will respect your privacy wishes, and that you will allow us to publish any results from this study.

Wait until the participant completes the forms.

Before we begin, I'd like to ask you to say what comes to your mind as you work. We have found that we get a great deal of information from these informal observations if we ask people to think aloud as they work through the exercises. It may be a bit awkward at first, but it's really very easy once you get used to it. All you have to do is speak your thoughts as you work. If you forget to think aloud, I'll remind you to keep talking.

Do you have any questions for us before you start?

Tasks

Be sure to do the following for each participant:

1. Give them scrap paper and a pen.
2. Give them a sample address and sample credit card number, if necessary for the tasks. *(The two Web sites we will be asking you to test are e-commerce Web sites. Here is an address and fake credit card number to use. No actual purchases will be made.)*[2]
3. Start the Web browser.
4. Clear out the browser cache and history.
5. Maximize the Web browser size.
6. Hand them the first task on a sheet of paper.

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2 Be sure also to do tests in which you do give your participants money to complete purchases all the way through. Otherwise you won't know if the entire checkout process works.

7. Ask them to read the first task aloud.

8. After they complete each task, ask them what they thought was hard and what was easy about the task. Ask them to rate the difficulty of the task on a scale of 1 to 10.

9. Repeat steps 6 through 8 for each task.

Debriefing

Do you have any final comments about the Web sites, this study, or anything else?