

# Usability Testing

## What is it?

Usability testing is a research-based method of verifying that a design will meet the needs of a site or application's users. In a usability test, end-users attempt to complete tasks in a paper or click-through prototype. By testing with even a small sample of users, most major usability issues can be uncovered and corrected before the system is built.

## Who uses it?

**UI Designers** use usability tests to vet and refine their designs (since no design is perfect the first time).

**Business Decision Makers** use usability testing to fortify risky areas of a system. By structuring tasks specifically to test critical functionality before the system is released, usability tests demonstrate that the most important features will work (and if not, what can be done about it).

**Product Owners** can use the results of usability tests to identify areas that are likely to benefit from supporting material *around* and *outside* the system. This can become the basis for documentation, training, and marketing material.

## How It Works

- 1. Figure out the test focus.** Together, the project team identifies the most important or risky areas of the system. These become of the focus of the test activities, or tasks.
- 2. Prep the prototype, tasks, and users.** Draft tasks and ready the prototype. The data in the prototype should be realistic for the tasks. If not, users will be confused.
- 3. Run the tests.** A test session has a facilitator, one or two test users, and observers from the project team. Observers note whenever users get stuck or seem confused.
- 4. Review findings and adjust the design.** The project team reconvenes to review findings and decide how to address the issues that were raised.

## Getting Started

Check out samples from previous projects at [\[url\]](#) or contact [\[name and number\]](#) to get started.

