# Usability and You

**Website Usability Testing @ Your Institution**

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## What, Why, & When

### What is a website usability test?
- Quality assurance
- How is your site actually used?
- Efficient & inexpensive way to make changes/improvements to your virtual presence
- A series of individuals using a site under the guidance of a facilitator

### Why should you conduct a usability test?
- Are you 100% sure your site is 100% accessible to 100% of your students, faculty, and staff?
- Are you 100% sure your patron population does not want to see any changes or additions?
- How is your community interacting with your site?
- Is it how you expect them to, or is it completely different?

### When should I conduct a usability test?
- Before planning a redevelopment
- Repeatedly during development / during major redevelopments
- When you start to notice a change in tracking statistics, a rise in patron troubleshooting questions
- When your site goes mobile
- When you begin to suspect that your site may actually be a dinosaur dressed in an iPad’s fancy casing

## Cost Effective

This test can be done for free, or you can choose to buy participation incentives. Even with incentives, the cost is relatively low.

## What did we learn?
- The mobile site had issues with the ILL & EZ Borrow pages
- The site and mobile versions were well organized and user-friendly
- We fixed an ongoing problem—too many clicks to complete simple tasks—in the latest overhaul
- Graduate / distance students liked the new mobile version

## Next step?

Conduct the test again with new distance graduate and freshmen students

## Steps to create, disseminate, and analyze a usability test

1. Define and identify what you want to test.
   - The whole site?
   - Newest or oldest portions?
   - Mobile site?

2. Plan out your test step by step
   - Participant eligibility questionnaire
   - Test ASAP
   - Compile your results

3. Advertise, organize, and analyze.
   - Create a follow-up questionnaire

### Tips:
- Always remind participants that the test is not studying their abilities
- It is studying the usability of the site. If a participant cannot complete a task or has a hard time doing so, the it is (most likely) the site’s failure.
- Do not help! We know our sites, so to generate accurate results, do not speak to the participants during testing.
- This is constructive criticism. We think differently that our patrons.

### Conduct testing as a one-shot or in batches

Create a study description and include background information

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2. Plan out your test step by step.
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