

Testing and Templates: Building Effective Research Guides
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Usability Testing Scripts

Pre-test Questions:

- What is your name?
- What is your year?
- What is your major?
- Have you ever seen a research guide before?
- Have you, with a class, had a library introduction/orientation?
If yes, which class(es)?
- How often do you use the library?
- How often do you use the library website?

Potential Tasks/Questions

- What is the ultimate goal of our guides? How can testing improve this?
 - **Given specific tasks or questions, can users successfully find a resource to use on the guides?**
 - Can they tell the differences between resources?
 - How do they behave on the front page?
- What improvements are we looking for?
 - Layout
 - Inconsistencies between look & descriptions
 - Labeling
 - Contextual information on resources
- What are we measuring, and what kind of feedback will be useful?
 - Successfully completing the basics of the task (finding a resources to use vs. finding a “perfect” source, article, image – we are only testing to their ability to **locate** resources on the guide and understanding what they are for, not their ability to use the resource)
 - How long did it take them to complete the task?
 - Error rates – what tripped them up most?
 - Take verbal responses from the user – ask them to think aloud through their process. “I’m clicking here *because...*”, “I think this search will give me these results...”
 - Rating
 - Audio/video recorded responses of the user’s experience (facial expression, questions asked or verbalized confusion or frustration)

Testing Script:

Hi, [student name]. My name is [librarian(s)], and I'm going to be walking you through this session.

You probably already know, but let me explain why we've asked you to come here today: We're testing our library research guides website to see what it's like for actual people to use it.

I want to make it clear right away that we're testing the site, not you. You can't do anything wrong here. In fact, this is probably the one place today where you don't have to worry about making mistakes.

We want to hear exactly what you think, so please don't worry that you're going to hurt our feelings. We want to improve it, so we need to know honestly what you think.

As we go along, I'm going to ask you to think out loud, to tell me what's going through your mind. This will help us.

If you have questions, just ask. I may not be able to answer them right away, since we're interested in how people do when they don't have someone sitting next to them, but I will try to answer any questions you still have when we're done.

We have a lot to do, and I'm going to try to keep us moving, but we'll try to make sure that it's fun, too.

You may have noticed the camera. With your permission, we're going to videotape the computer screen and what you have to say. The video will be used only to help us figure out how to improve the site, and it won't be seen by anyone except the people working on the project. It also helps me, because I don't have to take as many notes.

If you would, I'm going to ask you to sign something for us. It simply says that we have your permission to tape you, but that it will only be seen by the people working on the project. It also says that you won't talk to anybody about what we're showing you today, since it hasn't been made public yet.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

- Give the student the recording permission forms and a pen. Once they've signed, open the Connect session and start recording.
- Ask demo/web behavior questions
- Open the LibGuides homepage.

First, I'm going to ask you to look at this page and tell me what you make of it: what strikes you about it, whose site you think it is, what you can do here, and what it's for. Just look around and do a little narrative. You can scroll if you want to, but don't click on anything yet.

- Allow this to continue for three or four minutes, at most.

Thanks. Now I'm going to ask you to try doing some specific tasks. I'm going to read each one out loud and give you a printed copy. *I'm also going to ask you to do these tasks without using the Search box.* We'll learn a lot more about how well the site works that way. And again, as much as possible, it will help us if you can try to think out loud as you go along.

- Hand the participant the first scenario, and read it aloud.
- Allow the user to proceed until you don't feel like it's producing any value or the user becomes very frustrated.
- Repeat for each task or until time runs out.

Thanks, that was very helpful.

- Probe anything you want to follow up on.

Course guide-specific

1. For your Art History (or "20th Century Art history") class, you are writing a paper about Gerhard Richter, a contemporary German painter. Your professor wants you to use scholarly, academic **articles**. Find one article about Richter for your paper that meets this criteria using the library guides.
 - a. Observe:
 - i. Does the student scan the list for an appropriate guide header?
 - ii. Do they show confusion at the structure or arrangement of the guides?
 - iii. How long did it take them to locate an appropriate guide?
 - b. Questions during exercise:
 - i. Do the tabs make sense to you?
 - ii. What made you choose one of the links/tabs/resources over another?
 - iii. What does (jargon word on page) mean to you?
 - iv. How many places would you generally look for a resource before moving on?

Subject based (open-ended)

2. For a design history class, you need to find an image of a chair designed by Charles Eames. You'll be printing it and using it in a Powerpoint presentation to your class, so it needs to be good quality. Locate one image or resource you can use to find an appropriate image.
3. You're taking a class on scriptwriting for an animation class. You've read parts of your textbook but want to learn more about storytelling for animation/animated films in general. Find a resource you can use in your paper using the research guides.
 - a. Questions to ask during exercise:
 - i. What made you choose (resource/link/tab) name?
 - ii. What do you think this search box will do? Why?
 1. alt: What do you think you'll find in this database or link? Why?
4. You're taking a course in (student's discipline – adjust as needed), and want to learn what current professionals in your field/industry are writing about or working on. Locate a resource on your topic, published within the last 3 years.
 - a. Questions for the student:
 - b. Questions for the observer:
 - i. Did the student find "their" subject guide from the list? How long did it take them to identify the appropriate guide?
 - ii. Did the student identify a book or journal explicitly named in the guide?

iii. Student should be able to identify a book or journal name from the guides.

5. You are taking an architectural history course and need to learn more about materials used in 17th century European church construction. Your professor wants you to use books or scholarly/academic articles for this. Find a resource that meets these criteria using the guides.

General questions to consider for the OBSERVER:

Was any prompting or assistance necessary other than clarifying the question/task?

Did the student complete the task?

Did they read the descriptions by the search boxes or database choices?

Did they go back and repeat a search or move forward?

Did they have problems with the navigation (not noticing tabs/dropdowns/multiple links under subject guide headings)

Were they confused by the descriptions or lack of descriptions?

General questions to ask the STUDENT:

What terms did you scan for when trying to find the appropriate subject guide, database, or resource on the guides?

What might someone find confusing about these guides?

How likely would you be to use these guides in the future?

What might someone find to be useful in the guide?

Rate your level of ease in using this guide (1 – not at all easy → 10: very easy, everything worked the way I expect it to)

Do the tabs make sense?

What does (potentially jargon-y term) mean to you?

How many places do you generally search for resources/information?

What have you done in the past when you can't find a useful resource?

What made you choose one resource over another?

Did you read the descriptions by search boxes or databases?

Did you get the results you expected after running a search?

What kinds of results did you expect from running this search?

What do you do if you're lost or confused/Where do you look for help? (On the website/guide)