

Lab #5

Program Design

Instructions:

The objective of this lab is to consider the design issues associated with the following two websites:

- <http://www.irishtimes.com>
- <http://www.independent.ie>

We are going to use a collection of ideas about good website design by Jakob Nielsen (a leading web usability consultant). His suggestions are called *heuristics* (or rules-of-thumb).

So for each of the two sites, comment on how well-designed they are under each of the ten heuristics, using at least 10 words or more per heuristic.

NOTE: If there are any words in this lab that you don't know what they mean, please look them up on the web before asking your lab supervisor.

Nielsen's Heuristics

Title	Heuristics	Your Comment (at least 10 words per heuristic)
1. Visibility of system status	The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.	
2. Match between system and the real world	The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.	
3. User control and freedom	Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.	
4. Consistency and standards	Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing.	
5. Error prevention	Very good error messages shows a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.	

6. Recognition rather than recall	Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.	
7. Flexibility and efficiency of use	Accelerators -- unseen by the novice user -- may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.	
8. Aesthetic and minimalist design	Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.	
9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors	Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.	
10. Help and documentation	Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.	

Submission: In the Word document you have all your labs and tutorials in:

PROGRAM-DESIGN-PORTFOLIO.DOC (or .ODT or .DOCX)

add in the answers. Now e-mail your document to Damian.Gordon@dit.ie with a subject heading of PROGRAM DESIGN LAB #5 and in the message of your e-mail please let me know your full name, your student number, the name of your programme, the programme code, the name of the module, the year you are in (first year), and your assignment.

PLEASE NOTE: If you do not have the correct subject heading on your e-mail, or the correct filename, your submission WILL be rejected.

Marking:

Please note, this lab is due for submission at the end of this week. Each of these labs contributes to your final result in this module, so it's best to get the earlier ones done as well as you can, because as the labs continue on they will get harder, so you might as well pick up the easy marks early on.