
User Testing Plan for Conspicuous Families course

Version: September 27, 2001

Key steps and timeline

Step	Resource & comments	Timeline
1. Select users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacques – guidelines & invitation to participate• Cradle – identify/recruit	by Mon, October 15
2. Schedule users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cradle	by Fri, October 26
3. Clarify user testing goals/questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacques – propose• Cradle & LPI - validate	by Fri, October 26
4. Select and brief co-evaluator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vicki – select• Jacques - brief	by Fri, October 26
5. Develop test scenarios, and briefing/debriefing for users	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacques	by Wed, October 31
6. Conduct dry run	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-evaluator & Cradle staff person	by Fri, November 2
7. Prepare room, equipment, gifts, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cradle	by Fri, November 2
8. Conduct tests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacques & co-evaluator	Mon-Tue, Nov 5-6
9. Discuss results	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacques, Vicki, Frank, Mindy, Ann, Judy (to confirm)	Wed, November 7
10. Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacques• Co-evaluator - support	by Fri, November 9

- Total estimated effort for Jacques: 30 hours (less if someone else conducts tests)
- Additional effort for Cradle: 30 hours (split among several people)

Details on each step

1. Select users

- Need 6 to 8 users (no big deal if there are one or two no-shows—we'll use the time to write up observations, etc.).
- Should be representative of audience in terms of gender (mainly women?), with cross-section of computer experience and adoption knowledge. Other criteria to be defined.

- Plan for small gift to thank users.

2. Schedule users

- Required time commitment for users: about 2-3 hours total at test location (Cradle’s offices?).
- To avoid problems, it is best to schedule only two users per day per evaluator.
- Users who are pressed for time can be accommodated, but given the depth of the CF module’s content, this is to be avoided.

3. Clarify user testing goals and questions

Dimensions and questions are addressed in both the directed observation and semi-structured interview portions of the test (see below for details). The interview mainly addresses questions not covered during the observation.

Categories of questions

- Content
- Instructional design
- Usability and “look & feel”

Content—possible dimensions/questions (to complete)

- Usefulness and quality: How useful is this content to you and to most adoptive parents?
- Superiority to or complementarity with other available information (agencies, Web, discussion groups, etc.). (Key here is to see if users perceive the difference between online learning and other sources.)
- Clarity and detail: Are the objectives, instructions and content clear and well written? Is the level of detail appropriate?
- Structure and organization: Are the structure and organization clear?
- Are the supplementary resources useful? Would you come back to these after completing the module?

Instructional design—possible dimensions/questions (to complete)

- Relevance: Is this a good way to learn this type of content? Is this important material to learn?
- Learning effectiveness: What is the learning impact of this module? Will this change parents’ behavior?
- Efficiency: Is this worth your time? Could you get the “same thing” in less time elsewhere?

- Interactivity: Is there enough for learners to do? Is the balance of reading versus doing appropriate?
- Feedback: Is the level of feedback to user actions appropriate?
- Motivation: Are the activities engaging? Will learners come back for more?
- Self-paced approach: Is the self-paced approach appropriate? Should this approach be complemented by collaborative group activities?

Usability and “look & feel” —possible dimensions/questions (to complete)

- Navigation: Are the navigation buttons and functions easy to find, use and follow?
- Images: Are the images and illustrations of high quality and is their use appropriate?
- Audio: Are the audio portions of high quality and is the use of audio appropriate?
- Bookmarking and other functions: Are the bookmarking and other additional functions easy to find, use and follow?
- Visual design: What impressions does the user have about the visual design or style? Inviting?
- Transparency: Is the technology bothersome or transparent?

4. Select and brief co-evaluator

- For 6 to 8 users, would require two evaluators over two days.
- It is best to test users one at a time. User are most responsive and talkative in that context.
- The Cradle or LPI could propose a co-evaluator to work with Jacques. Ideally, it should not be the principal designer of the course, designers being too emotionally invested in the product!

5. Develop test scenarios, and briefing/debriefing for users

- In addition to allowing users to navigate the module as they wish, simple scenarios are also provided to check the ease with which certain tasks are done.
- Immediately prior to the test, users are briefed on key aspects of the test, how they should respond, etc. If necessary, computer neophytes are provided with introductory notions about using online learning materials.

- After the test, users are thanked and debriefed; additional comments and general questions can be addressed here.

6. Conduct dry run

- This is to fine-tune the duration of the test, revise any questions which are not clear, etc.

7. Prepare room, equipment

- Ideally two small, pleasant rooms or offices.
- A computer similar to the expected typical learner’s configuration, with Internet access.

8. Conduct tests

Once the user is welcomed and made comfortable, the usual agenda is as follows:

1. Briefing and pre-training if necessary (15 minutes)
2. Directed observation (about 60 minutes)
Evaluators use a simple two-column journal to record observations and their context. At various points during the observation, they ask users to carry out simple tasks/scenarios.
3. Semi-structured interview (about 30 minutes)
Questions not sufficiently covered during the observation (or needing clarification) are addressed here. Responses are recorded on simple form.
4. Debriefing, thanks and gift. (15 minutes)
A week-long cruise is going too far ;-) but users will appreciate a token of our appreciation for their time and attention.

9. Discuss results

- The day following the tests, we can have a meeting to go over main observations and results.

10. Report

- Results will be summarized in a concise report in the following format:

Question category

Question	Observations/responses	Recommendation