

# Usability Test Plan for Amazon.com Help

Online help documentation for help and support to customers of  
Amazon.com

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**Date** : September 28, 2016

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## Executive summary

Amazon is an American electronic commerce company. It is the largest Internet-based retailer in the world by total sales and market capitalization. The company has an online customer help system which is a part of their ecommerce website, Amazon.com. The purpose of this test is to evaluate the usability of online help from the perspective of a customer. Through systematic usability testing, recommendations will be made for the website to improve user experience.

The easiest way to contact Amazon's customer service department is by using their toll-free phone number. However, this is not the most efficient way to address issues, since customers have to answer a number of questions related to their account in order to verify their identity before Amazon customer service can begin to help them with their problem. Amazon's online help provides a guided customer service in which customer's can get necessary help by providing answers to questions that appear in a sequence.

Although Amazon has such extensive help available, sometimes it fails to reach the customers. This site <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/online/amazon.html> gives a listing of customer complaints. Some of the issues mentioned here are mainly because they could not find the required help through the website. This, and my personal experience with Amazon help made me choose this project for usability testing.

This test plan describes:

- The problem statement and test objectives
- The types of users to recruit for testing
- The testing methodology and proposed tasks/scenarios
- Plan for test setting up the evaluation room
- Plans for data collection and reporting
- Project deliverables

## Test Plan Rationale

Amazon customers, sometimes get stuck in situations where the order is late or doesn't arrive at all, or it arrives broken, defective, or with parts missing. To address these issues, customers try to get in touch with Amazon's customer service department. Without calling customer care, if users attempt to locate help, they expect it to be articulate with the exact words that they would use to describe their problem. The usability test will determine if users can easily and effectively find desired help and are able to complete the core tasks in order to navigate through the help system on the website.

## Objectives

Customers look for help only when they are facing an issue with a product or service. This means that they look for help when they are dissatisfied. So, the prime objective of this usability study is to make it easier for users to get to the desired help topic in the least amount of time. Other goals are as follows:

- To check whether customers can locate the help menu.
- Once they locate help, whether they are able to enter required information without misunderstanding.
- Whether the customers understand all wording on the website and can use it to navigate to the topic that deals with the issue that they are facing.
- To find out whether customers trust the help.
- Whether users find the most efficient navigation when they look for help.
- Are they satisfied with the help topics.

## Research Questions

This usability test will provide quantitative and qualitative data addressing customer requirements of an online help system for an ecommerce website. The users' experience will be assessed by requesting them to conduct specific tasks and also asking them about their overall satisfaction with the site. Questions to be addressed in this usability evaluation include:

- Can the user find the help link through the homepage of Amazon.com?
- Can the user find help specific to their problem using the search button?
- Can the users find the specific help topic for the issue that they are facing?
- Can users navigate through the help?
- Do users understand all the wording on the website? Are there any translation mistakes or misunderstandings?
- Do users trust the website? Do they fill out the personal information readily?
- How quickly can they navigate through the on-screen menus?
- What problems or difficulties did they encounter in trying to find help?
- Which aspects do users like and which aspects do they dislike?

These questions were devised using information supplied by current customers, personal experience and my assessment of potential usability problems resulting from an earlier heuristic evaluation of the site.

This usability study will be designed to allow us to extract mostly qualitative data. The focus of the study will be task-oriented and directed toward how the user subjectively responds to the issues listed above.

## Methodology

Usability testing on the Amazon.com help website will focus on concerns identified from the consumeraffairs website and other online forums as well as customer feedback. This usability study will gather basic quantitative data regarding participants' ability to complete basic tasks and their qualitative impressions regarding ease of use, organization, and suitability of content will also be collected. This section describes the methodology for conducting usability testing on the help website, including:

- Test configuration
- Participant information
- Equipment used for data collection

### Location and setup

This test will be conducted at the D.H Hill Library located on the campus at the North Carolina State University. Owing to the small size and random nature of the group of participants, a time will be set up with each participant as per their convenience. Based on the available time, a study room with a white board will be booked at the library well in advance. This will be called as the Evaluation room. The equipment required in the evaluation room is as follows:

#### Hardware

- Either a PC or Mac based on user's preference (Device 1)
- Microphone to record think aloud comments on Device 1
- Internet connectivity on Device 1
- A point to go camera (Nikon model) to record video which will be used to analyze non-verbal cues (Device 2)

#### Software

- Internet browser like Chrome or Firefox
- Camatasia installed on Device 1 for screen recording

### Pre-test arrangements

I will be the only person to manage the test from beginning to the end. Therefore, I will be responsible for analyzing the users' background atleast a week before the test, setting up the evaluation room atleast 15 minutes before the test and introducing and training the users about the tasks that they will be asked to be performed.

#### Screening questionnaire

A participant screener to select users matching the user profile will be used. Qualified participants will complete a pre-test questionnaire to answer questions about prior experience, behaviors, and other criteria, as a part of the screening questionnaire. This test is about checking how the users find the quality of documentation and not the website itself, therefore,

users must know how to use the basic services of Amazon.com like ordering a product and tracking its delivery.

### **Hardware setup**

On the test day, I will arrange the laptop and video recorder on the same table. These devices will have to be set in the evaluation room. So, the study room at D.H. Hill Library has to be booked at least one day in advance to the test. An email will be sent to the participants mentioning the room details so that communication time can be saved. The Camatasia screen recording function will be turned and video recording will be turned on as soon as the participant enters the room.

### **Training**

I will be preparing a tutorial with slides that tell the user about each task. Only descriptions of the tasks will be provided. Detailed instructions on how to perform the task will not be given to the user.

*Note:* The challenge in preparing this tutorial will be to avoid using terms that the user can copy to analyze the task given to them or terms that are present on the website that users will come across while performing their tasks. The slides should explain tasks to the users in layman language.

### **User profiles**

The selection of participants whose background and abilities are representative of the Amazon's intended end user is a crucial element of the evaluation process. I have used different users based on differences in age, gender, background and familiarity with the website. I plan to test a total of six users, plus one additional user as a backup in case one of the six users has to back out. Using the screening questionnaire, I'll screen the candidates until I find 7 good candidates (five for the study, one for a pilot, and one as a backup). Once the users are identified, I'll set up a schedule for each usability evaluation.

### ***Test Participant Characteristics***

The test participants fall under the following characteristics:

#### **Demographics**

- Age – may range from 20-50
- Education – May or may not be educated

#### **Technology savvy**

- Internet use—uses the Internet at least for social media and entertainment (most interviewees also use the internet for work)
- Devices—must have familiarity with Windows or Apple computers

## Frequency of use

- Use Amazon. Com extensively
- Have used the website only a couple of times in the past

## Moderator

I will act as both the moderator and logger. The responsibilities will be as follows:

- Interact with the participants during the usability testing sessions. Use a script to explain the testing process to each participant and answer any initial questions.
- Give information about the tasks to be performed.
- Provide and collect the pre-test questionnaire, video consent form, and post-test questionnaire.
- Set up the evaluation room.
- Prompt users when necessary and respond as needed to comments or concerns.
- Log observations during the testing. These observations will include direct quotes from participants, descriptions of their actions, comments from the team, and nonverbal observations such as sighs and body language. The logging system will be supported by the video recording.

## Participants

Following are responsibilities of the users:

- Perform tasks mentioned in the task list.
- Think aloud throughout the testing process and report any challenges to the moderator.

## Ethics Guidelines and Incentives

Following details will be provided to the users before conducting the test:

- Purpose of the test
- Total number of participants for the test
- Video recording permission. Users will be asked to sign on a video release consent form to grant permission for being video taped.
- All users will be given 10\$ Amazon gift cards for taking the test, as an incentive.

## Data Collection

Data collection will be a combination of quantitative measurements and subjective observations. The quantitative and qualitative data measures are listed below:

### Quantitative Data

Through testing sessions:

- Time required to complete the task
- Number of users successful in completion
- Number of problems encountered
- Number of users failed in task completion

Through questionnaires:

- Level of difficulty to perform the task
- Level of confidence
- Level of reaction to the appeal of online help

### Qualitative Data

Non-verbal and verbal feedback and observations:

- Facial expressions
  - Confusion
  - Uncertainty
  - Pleasure
- Verbal complaints
  - Complaints
  - Praise
- Other comments
  - Questions
  - Amount of prompting required

## Tasks

The goals for the usability test are to evaluate whether participants can find information that allows them to:

- Change their account information
- Use promotional codes and redeem gift cards
- Track their missing package

All five participants will perform all the 10 tasks.

<b>Scenario 1:</b> You have realized that you have saved your account information on your work PC. The browser does not allow you to clear any history or saved passwords because the browser settings are password protected by the admin. Instead of spending time to contact IT or admin you decide to change your Amazon login information. You have to find information on how to change these settings on the official website.				
Task number	Description	Required to perform	Success Criteria	Maximum time
Task 1	Log on	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Go to <a href="http://www.amazon.com">http://www.amazon.com</a>.</li><li>2. Enter login credentials to log into your account.</li></ol>	Being able to log on to the system quickly.	1.5 minutes
Task 2	Locate help page	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Go to the main menu.</li><li>2. Click on <b>Help</b>.</li></ol>	Being able to find the help page.	1 minute



<b>Task 3</b>	Find the list of help topics	1. Scroll down to find a list of help topics.	User should be able to find help topics and the search field associated with it.	1 minute
<b>Task 4</b>	Find information to change password	1. Enter 'password' or change password' in the search box OR 2. Go to <b>Account Settings</b> 1. Click <b>More in Account Settings &amp; Payment Methods</b> . 2. <b>Account setting &gt; Reset your password</b> .	User should be able to reach the help topic titled 'Reset your password'	2.5 minutes

**Scenario 2:** You have received a gift card for \$100 from your friend. You have have a promotional code for \$10 from earlier which you not did not redeem due to lack of information on how to do it. But you will need to find that information in order to redeem your gift card. So you decide to look for it. You first want to try and redeem the gift card of \$100 followed by entering the promo code for \$10 and then check your Amazon account to find the total credit available in your account.

<b>Task number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Required to perform</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum time</b>
<b>Task 5</b>	Go to Help page and find information to redeem gift card	1. Go to help topics. 2. Browse help topics and click <b>Other Topics</b> . 3. Click <b>Gifts, Gift Cards &amp; Registries</b> . 4. Click <b>Redeeming Gift Cards</b> .	Being able to navigate to the required page.	2.5 minutes
<b>Task 6</b>	Find information on promo code	1. The help topics do not include information on promo codes. Users will have to search by typing 'promo code' or 'promotional' in the search box 2. Click on the link <b>Redeem Promotional Codes</b>	Being able to navigate to the required page	2.5 minutes

<b>Task 7</b>	Check available credit in account	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The help topics do not include information on promo codes. Users will have to search by typing 'credit balance' or 'balance' in the search box.</li> <li>2. Click on the link <b>View Gift Card Balance</b>.</li> </ol>	Being able to navigate to the required page	2.5 minutes
<p><b>Scenario 3:</b> You have received an email saying that your order was delivered. You go home to find out that there is no package. You wait for 24 hours and check the mailbox, still no package. The tracking shows package as delivered. You have to find out the next steps to perform, in such a situation.</p>				
<b>Task number</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Required to perform</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum time</b>
<b>Task 8</b>	Go to package tracking link and look for information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go to <a href="http://www.amazon.com/tracking">http://www.amazon.com/tracking</a></li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. No information is available in this section.</li> <li>2. The user must go to the help page to look for desired information.</li> </ol>	Navigate to the help page.	1.5 minutes
<b>Task 9</b>	Find help topic for this scenario	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Go to the help page and scroll for topics.</li> <li>2. Click <b>Where's my stuff</b>.</li> <li>3. Click <b>Find a Missing Package That Shows As Delivered</b>.</li> </ol>	Being able to find the help page.	2.5 minutes
<b>Task 10</b>	Read the information given and plan next steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The user must be able to perform all the tasks mentioned in this topic</li> <li>2. After that, the user must plan to call customer service by locating their number</li> </ol>	User should be able to understand the help topic and perform the required steps in order to address their issue.	4.5 minutes

## Test Session Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule for the usability testing sessions. These are subject to change based on participant availability and other external factors. The testing schedule is arranged so that:

- There is enough time to prepare the test area.
- Ability to accommodate enough participants.
- Ability to document findings after each day of testing.

Day 1: October 12, 2016. 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m

Time	Activities
1.00 – 2.00	Hardware and Software Setup
2.00 – 3.00	Pilot testing session
3.00 – 4.00	Documenting results and improvising test plan based on results and experiences during test.

Next 5 dates staggering over the following 2 weeks : Depending upon the participant's availability, 2 hours per session.

Time (sample)	Activities
1.00 – 2.00	Hardware and Software Setup
2.00 – 2.10	Introductions and pre-test questionnaire
2.10 – 2.20	Training and orientation
2.25 – 2.50	Testing session
2.50 – 3.00	Post-test questionnaire

## Usability Metrics

The following usability metrics will be used to report overall results of the test.

### Effectiveness

- Percent of tasks completed
- Ratio of successes to failures

### Efficiency

- Time to complete a task
- Time to learn
- Time spent on errors
- Number of errors
- Number of repetitions

### User Satisfaction

- Rating scale for usefulness of online help
- Rating scale for satisfaction with search functions
- Number of times user expresses frustration or anger

- Rating scale for user versus technological control of task
- Perception that the help supports tasks as needed by the user by means of navigation and search terms

## Evaluation criteria

During each test, both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected.

### Quantitative

The quantitative data provides measurable feedback based on users' responses to questions asked throughout the test. Questionnaires, requiring participants to rank ease or difficulty, will be administered after each scenario, and at the end of the test. The first part of the post-test protocol includes administering System Usability Scale (SUS) questions.

SUS questions are a set of standardized questions used widely in usability studies. They ask the user to respond to questions by rating them on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. One example of an SUS question is, "I thought the system was easy to use". The questions will be administered on the participants' computer screens by means of screen recording. The team can see the participant responses from the control room, as well as listen to any comments the participants makes.

The benefit of using SUS questions is that the average SUS scores for all participants in the study can provide a baseline for comparison to other website usability studies or for future studies of this same site.

### Quantitative

Qualitative feedback will be collected throughout the testing process by observing the video recording from the user's test, including users' remarks, non-verbal body language, and facial expressions. A pre-test questionnaire will help understand what issues users expect to face or have experienced with the site. The post-test questionnaire will help users to assess the help site with a predetermined metric system.

## Deliverables

Upon completion of usability testing, findings will be presented in the following ways:

- A detailed Usability Test Report which includes a concise summary, background of the project, objectives, research questions, methods, qualitative and quantitative measures and an interpretation of findings.
- A copy of positive and negative findings along with recommendations will be attached to the report.
- An oral presentation of the findings will be delivered in PowerPoint format.
- Electronic files of the session logs and video recording evidence to support the findings will be made available upon request.