

Design Principles And Usability Heuristics

You can avoid common design pitfalls by following these rules-of-thumb for design

You can inspect an interface for usability problems by applying these same principles

James Tam

Design Principles And Usability Heuristics

Broad “rules of thumb” that describe features of “usable” systems

Design principles

- Broad usability statements that guide a developer’s design efforts
- Derived by evaluating common design problems across many systems

An evaluation tool

- Same principles used to “evaluate” a system for usability problems
- Becoming very popular
 - User involvement not required
 - Catches many design flaws

James Tam

Design Principles And Usability Heuristics (Advantages)

Discount usability engineering

- A few general guidelines can correct for the majority of usability problem
- Easily remembered, easily applied with modest effort
- Cheap and fast way to inspect a system
- Can be done by:



Double experts



Usability experts



End users

James Tam

Design Principles And Usability Heuristics (Weaknesses)

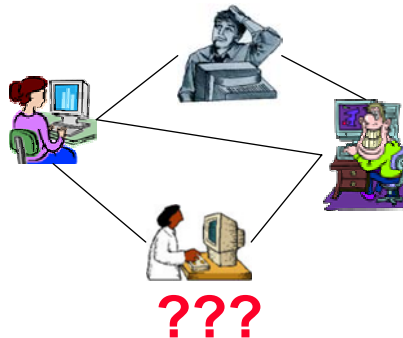
Principles are more or less at the motherhood level

- Can't be treated as a simple checklist
- Subtleties involved in their use
- Example:

Heuristics for a
single user



Heuristics for many
collaborating users



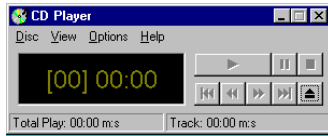
James Tam

1. Simple And Natural Dialogue

Use the user's conceptual model

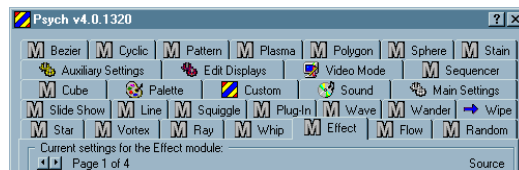
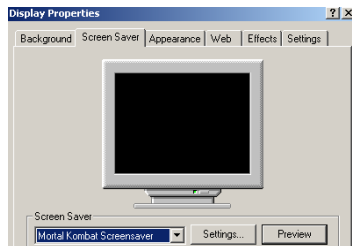
Match the users' task in as natural a way as possible

- Minimize mapping between interface and task semantics



James Tam

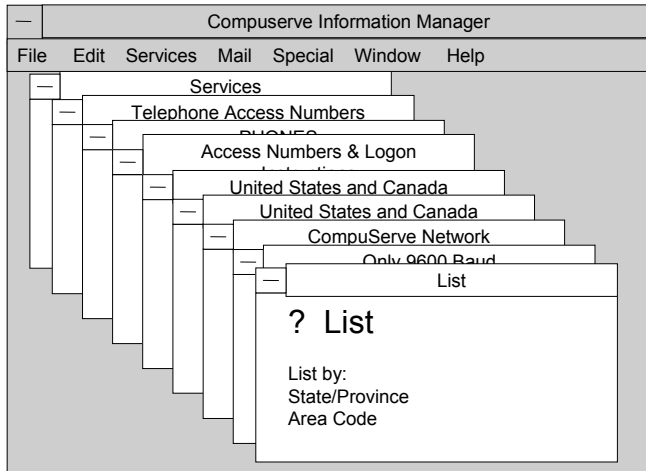
1. Simple And Natural Dialogue



James Tam

1. Simple And Natural Dialogue

Menu or window? Which window?



James Tam

1. Simple And Natural Dialogue

Present exactly the information the user needs when it is needed

- Less is more
 - Less to learn, to get wrong, to distract...
- Remove or hide irrelevant or rarely needed information
 - Competes with important information on screen
- Information should appear in natural order
 - Order of accessing information matches user's expectations
 - Related information is graphically clustered
- Minimize or mitigate modes
- Use windows frugally
 - Don't make navigation and window management excessively complex

James Tam

Dr. Drugs Pharmacy Master

Davison, Thomas

Edit Customer
New Customer

First Name: Thomas **Alberta Health Care #:** 45688-3357
Last Name: Davison **Doctor:** Jane Yang
Address: 4 BRADEN CRS NW **Insurer:** FARMERS INSURANCE AGE
City: Prudhoe **Policy #:** 4215487-56
Province: Alberta **Notes:**
Postal Code: F4T6H8
Phone Number: 403 282-9759

Prescriptions

Drug	Start Date	End Date
Alprazolam	Jan 2001	Feb 2001
Citalopram	Feb 2001	Mar 2001
Ranitidine	Mar 2001	Apr 2001
Folic Acid	Jun 2001	Jul 2001
Levothyroxine	Jul 2001	Aug 2001
Celecoxib	Sep 2001	Oct 2001
Omeprazole	Oct 2001	Nov 2001

1999 < Year > 2001 | Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Good: Info in the same place

By previous 481 students Brant LeClerc, Lloyd Yoon, Amy Yang (with permission) James Tam

Dr. Drugs Pharmacy Master

First Name: **Alberta Health Care #:**
Last Name: **Doctor:**
Address: **Insurer:**
City: **Policy #:**
Province: **Notes:**
Postal Code:
Phone Number:

Prescriptions

Drug	Start Date	End Date
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Omeprazole	Oct 2001	Nov 2001

1999 < Year > 2001 | Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Good: Info in the same place
Bad: Special edit mode

By previous 481 students Brant LeClerc, Lloyd Yoon, Amy Yang (with permission) James Tam

Dr. Drugs Pharmacy Master

Davison, Thomas

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1999 < Year > 2001 | Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

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Province: Alberta **Notes:**
Postal Code: F4T6H8
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Prescriptions

Drug Name
 Manufacturer Doctor
 Quantity Units
 Price/Unit Refill Quantity

Good: Stable parts of the window
Bad: Prescriptions separate from graphics

By previous 481 students Brant LeClercq, Lloyd Yoon, Amy Yang (with permission) James Tam

Dr. Drugs Pharmacy Master

Davison, Thomas Add Undo

First Name: Thomas
Last Name: Davison
Address: 4 BRADEN CRS NW
City: Prudhoe
Province: Alberta
Postal Code: F4T6H8
Phone Number: 403 282-9759

Health Care #: 45688-3357
Doctor: Jane Yang
Insurer: FARMERS INSURANCE AGE
Policy #: 4215487-56
Notes:

Prescriptions New Prescription

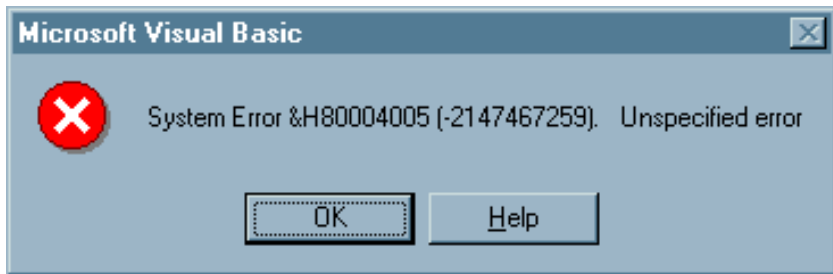
Alprazolam
 Citalopram
 Ranitidine
 Folic Acid
 Levofloxacin
 Celecoxib
 Omeprazole

1999 <Year> 2001 | Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

collapsed onto one screen (needs formatting)
 Double click to edit (mode buttons gone)
 Click to get info

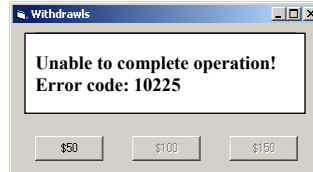
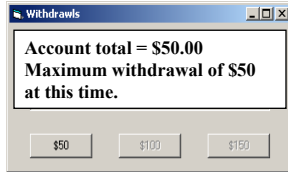
By previous 481 students Brant LeClerc, Lloyd Yoon, Amy Yang (with permission) James Tam

2. Speak The User's Language



2. Speak The User's Language

Terminology based on users' language for task



Use meaningful mnemonics, icons, and abbreviations

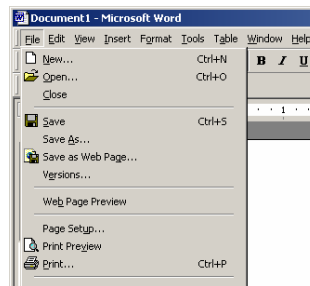
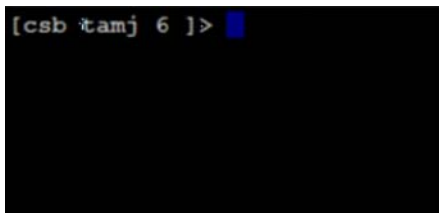
- eg File / Save
 - Ctrl + S (abbreviation)
 - Alt FS (mnemonic for menu action)
 - Open folder (tooltip icon)



James Tam

3. Minimize The User's Memory Load

- Describe required the input format, use examples, provide default inputs
- Promote recognition over recall



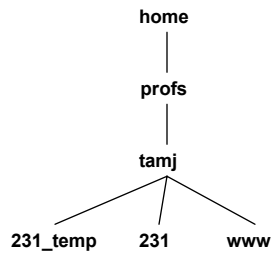
James Tam

3. Minimize The User's Memory Load

Small number of rules applied universally

File
11110000
01010101

Remove
what?



James Tam

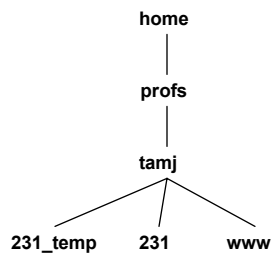
3. Minimize The User's Memory Load

Small number of rules applied universally

File
11110000
01010101

Remove
what?

rm file name



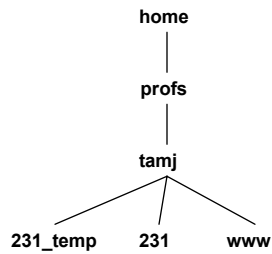
James Tam

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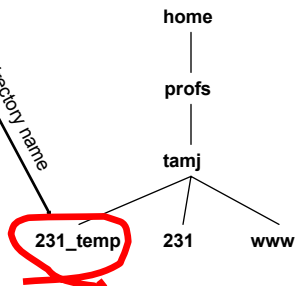
3. Minimize The User's Memory Load

Small number of rules applied universally

File
11110000
01010101

Remove
what?

mail directory name



James Tam

4. Be Consistent

Consistency of effects

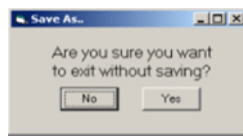
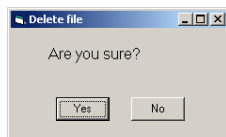
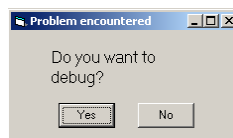
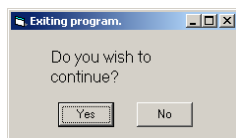
- Same words, commands, actions will always have the same effect in equivalent situations
- Makes the system more predictable
- Reduces memory load

James Tam

4. Be Consistent

Consistency of language and graphics

- Same information/controls in same location on all screens / dialog boxes forms follow boiler plate
- Same visual appearance across the system (e.g. widgets)



James Tam

4. Be Consistent

These are labels with a raised appearance.

Is it any surprise that people try and click on them?

The form contains the following elements:

- Subscriber** (button)
- Name:** **Tech. Re**
- Account #:** **Status:**
- Contact** (button)
- Telephone:** **E-Mail:**
- Address:** **St**
- Save** (button)
- Cancel** (button)

James Tam

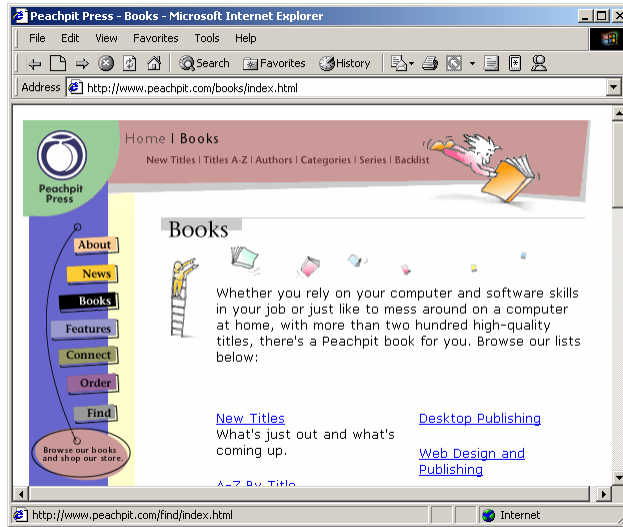
4. Be Consistent

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window with the following content:

- Browser Title:** Peachpit Press - Features: Tips on Designing Web Pages - Microsoft Internet Explorer
- Address Bar:** http://www.peachpit.com/features/hndmonth/webpages.html
- Page Header:** Home | Features | Articles | Book Excerpts | Tips | Author Interview | Readers Write
- Navigation Menu (Left):** About, News, Books, Features, Connect, Order, Find. Below the menu is a circular graphic with the text: "Read articles, interviews, excerpts, tips, and more!"
- Main Content:**
 - Section:** Tips on Designing Web Pages
 - Author:** by Robin Williams
 - Text:** Excerpted from Adobe's The Non-Designer's Guerrilla Marketing CD
 - Body Text:** Two of the most important factors in good web design are repetition (consistency) and clarity. A visitor should never have to figure out how to use your navigation system, where they are in the site, or whether they are still in your web site or have lumbled somewhere
- Right Column:**
 - Section:** Non-Designer's Month
 - Related Links:** Bad/Good Design, Checklists, from The Non-Designer's Web Book, Design Principles, from
- Browser Status Bar:** http://www.peachpit.com/features/excerpt/index.html | Internet

James Tam

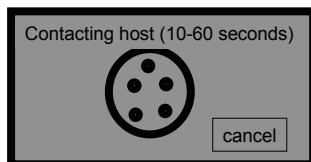
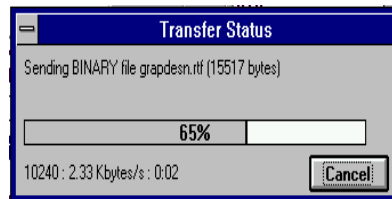
4. Be Consistent



James Tam

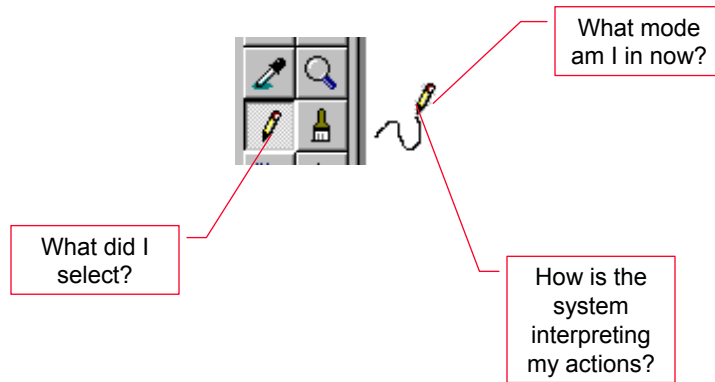
5. Provide Feedback

What is the program doing?



James Tam

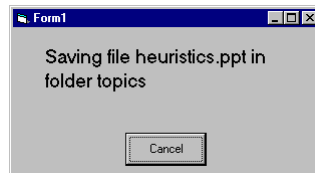
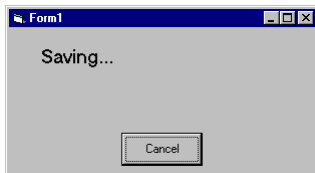
5. Provide Feedback



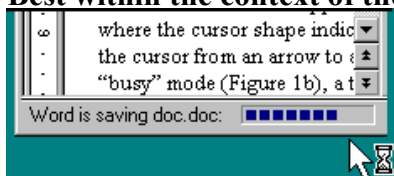
James Tam

5. Provide feedback

Should be as specific as possible, based on user's input



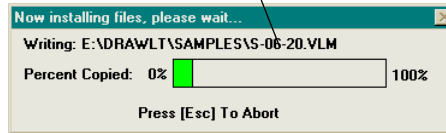
Best within the context of the action



James Tam

5. Provide feedback

Multiple files being copied,
but feedback is file by file.



Drawing Board LT

James Tam

5. Provide feedback

Feedback response time

- How users perceive delays
 - 0.1 Second max: perceived as “instantaneous”
 - 1 Seconds max: user’s flow of thought stays uninterrupted, but delay noticed
 - 10 Seconds: limit for keeping user’s attention focused on the dialog
 - > 10 Seconds: user will want to perform other tasks while waiting

James Tam

6. Provide Clearly Marked Exits



James Tam

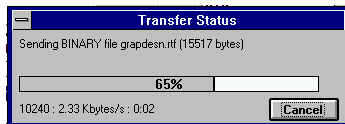
6. Provide Clearly Marked Exits

Universal Undo

- e.g., <Ctrl>-<Z> and <Ctrl> <Y>

Progress indicator & Interrupt

- Length operations

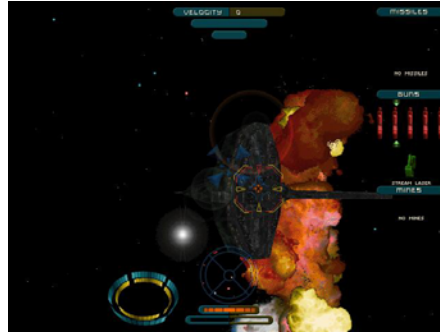


James Tam

6. Provide Clearly Marked Exits

Restoring defaults

- Getting back original settings

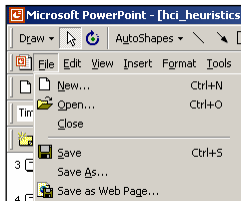


Wing Commander: Privateer © Origin-EA

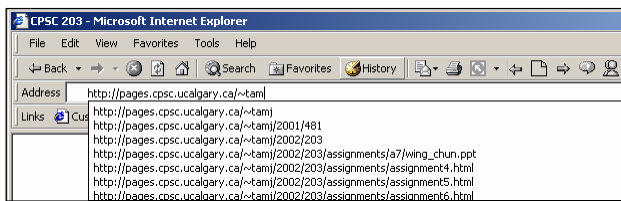
James Tam

7. Provide Shortcuts

Keyboard accelerators



Name completion



James Tam

7. Provide Shortcuts

Experienced users should be able to perform frequently used operations quickly

- Type-ahead (entering input before the system is ready for it)
- Navigation jumps
 - e.g., going to window/location directly, and avoiding intermediate nodes
- History systems
 - WWW: ~60% of pages are revisits



James Tam

The screenshot shows a Microsoft PowerPoint window titled "Microsoft PowerPoint - [M_heuristics]". The slide content is as follows:

7. Provide shortcuts
Experienced users should be able to perform frequently used operations quickly

Strategies:

- keyboard and mouse accelerators
 - abbreviations
 - command completion
 - menu shortcuts
 - function keys
 - double clicking vs menu selection
- type-ahead (entering input before the system is ready for it)
- navigation jumps
 - e.g., going to window/location directly, and avoiding intermediate nodes
- history systems
 - WWW: ~60% of pages are revisits

Annotations with red boxes and arrows point to various UI elements:

- Keyboard accelerators for menus:** Points to the File menu.
- Customizable toolbars and palettes for frequent actions:** Points to the top toolbar.
- Split menu, with recently used fonts on top:** Points to the Font menu.
- Double-click raises toolbar dialog box:** Points to the toolbar area.
- Double-click raises object-specific menu:** Points to the drawing toolbar.
- Scrolling controls for page-sized increments:** Points to the vertical scrollbar on the right side of the slide.

James Tam

8. Deal With Errors In A Helpful And Positive Manner

People will make errors!

Errors we make

- Mistakes
- Slips



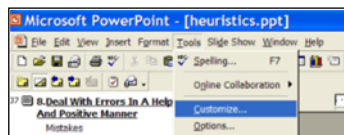
Image and sound file from "The Simpsons"

James Tam

8. Deal With Errors In A Helpful And Positive Manner

Mistakes

- Arise from *conscious deliberations* that lead to an error instead of the correct solution



Slips

- *Unconscious behavior* that gets misdirected en route to satisfying goal
 - e.g. drive home wanting to pick up something at a store, go all the way home instead.
- Shows up frequently in skilled behavior
 - Usually due to inattention
- Often arises from similarities of actions

```
{csb 481 16 }> rm *  
rm: remove file1 (yes/no)? y  
rm: remove file2 (yes/no)? y  
rm: remove file3 (yes/no)? y  
rm: remove file4 (yes/no)? y  
rm: remove file5 (yes/no)?
```

James Tam

Types Of Slips

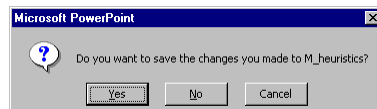
- 1) **Capture error**
- 2) **Description error**
- 3) **Loss of activation**
- 4) **Mode error**

James Tam

Types Of Slips: Capture Error

Frequently done activity “captures” the intended activity

- Occurs when common and rarer actions have same initial sequence
- “Force of habit results in the slip”



James Tam

Types Of Slips: Description Error

Intended action has much in common with others that are possible

- Usually occurs when right and wrong objects physically near each other
- “Perform the right action but on the wrong object”
 - e.g., Pour juice into bowl instead of glass



James Tam

Types Of Slips: Description Error (2)



Print
preview??

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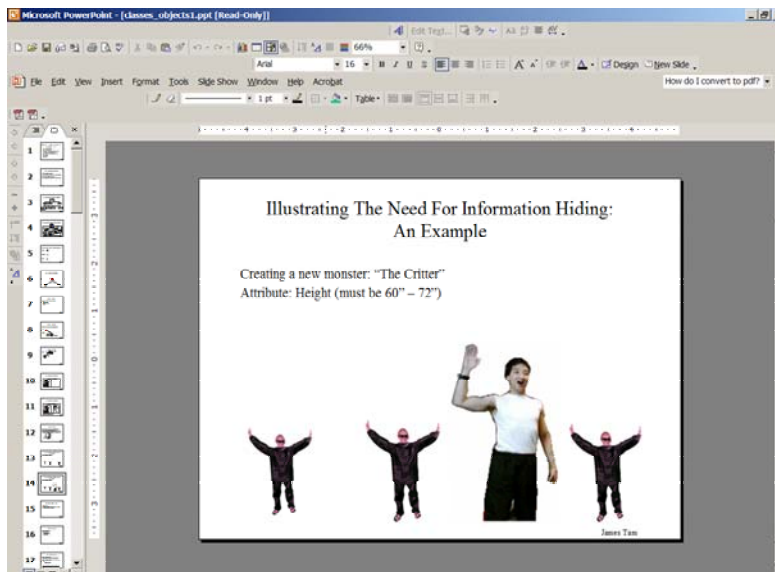
Types Of Slips: Loss Of Activation

Loss of activation

- Forgetting what the goal is while undergoing the sequence of actions
 - e.g., Start going to room and forget why you are going there
- “What the heck was I doing again?”
- Misordering a sequence

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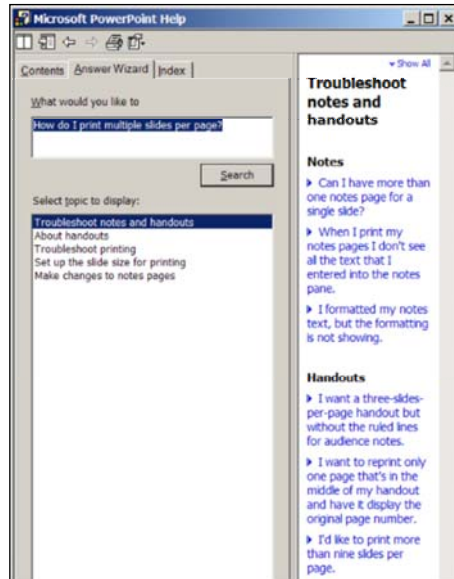
Loss Of Activation



The image shows a screenshot of a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. The slide is titled "Illustrating The Need For Information Hiding: An Example". Below the title, the text reads: "Creating a new monster: 'The Critter'" and "Attribute: Height (must be 60" – 72)". The slide features four figures: three small, dark, humanoid figures with their arms raised, and one larger, white, muscular figure with his arms raised. The name "James Tam" is visible in the bottom right corner of the slide content.

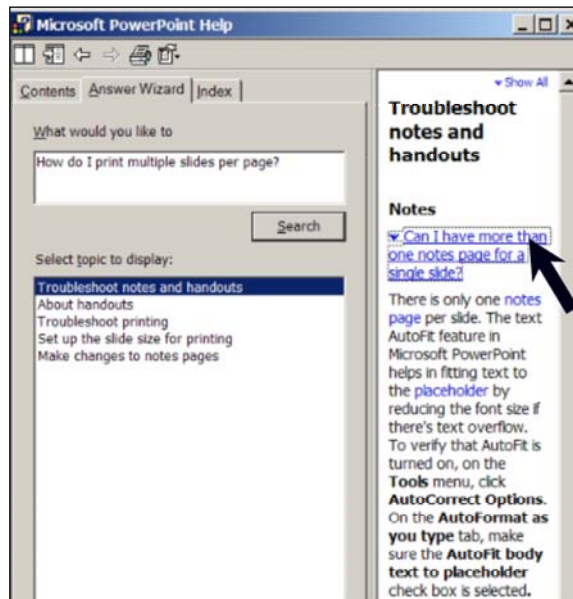
James Tam

Loss Of Activation (2)



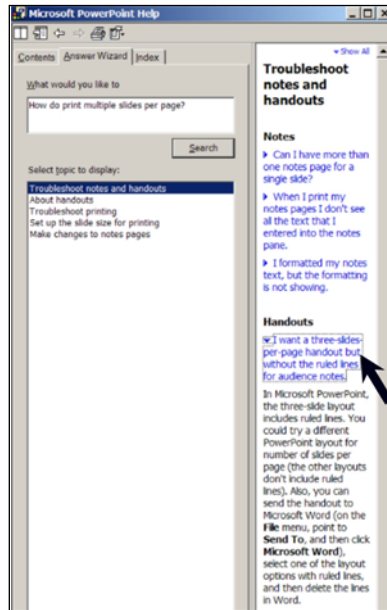
James Tam

Loss Of Activation (3)



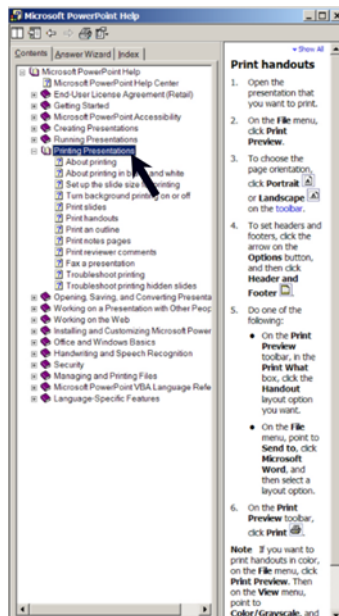
James Tam

Loss Of Activation (4)



James Tam

Loss Of Activation (5)

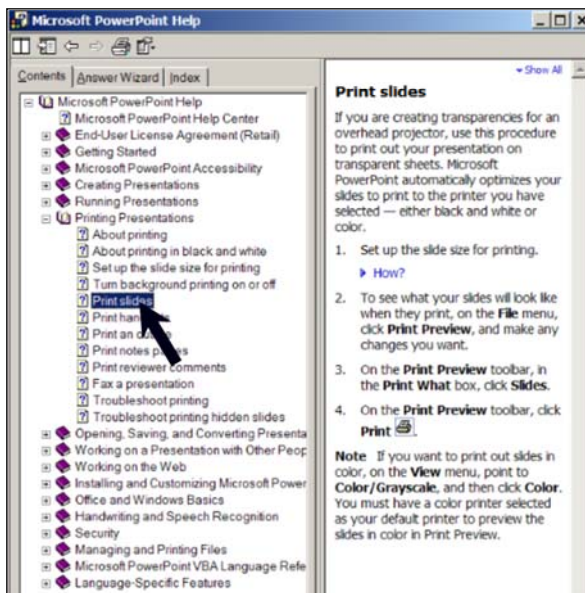


James Tam

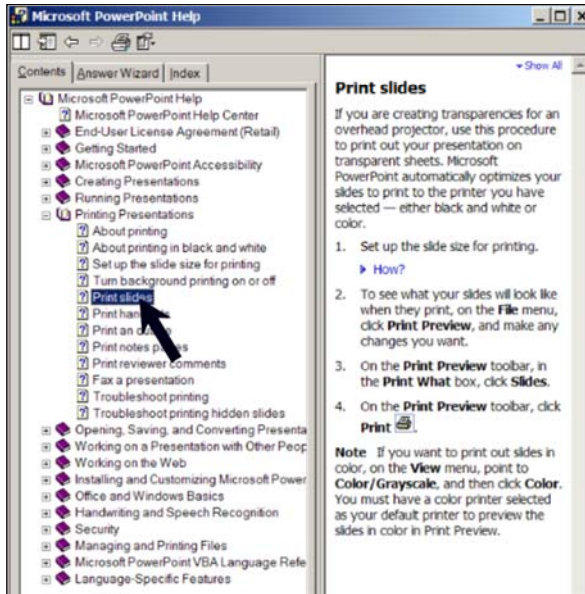
Loss Of Activation (6)



Loss Of Activation (7)



Loss Of Activation (7)



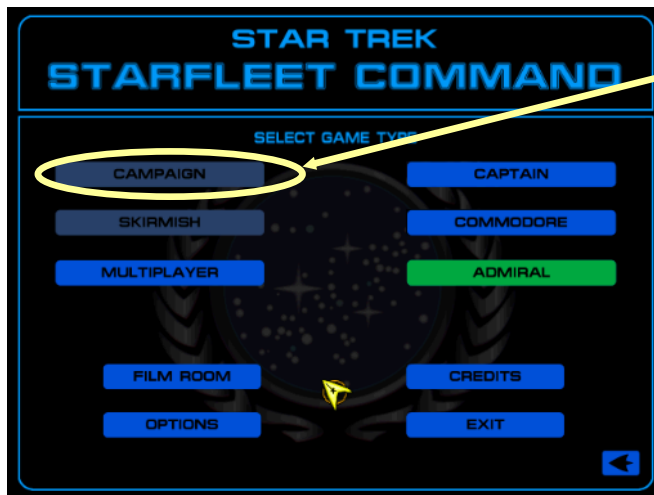
What was I doing again???

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Types Of Slips: Mode Error

Mode errors

- People do actions in one mode thinking they are in another mode



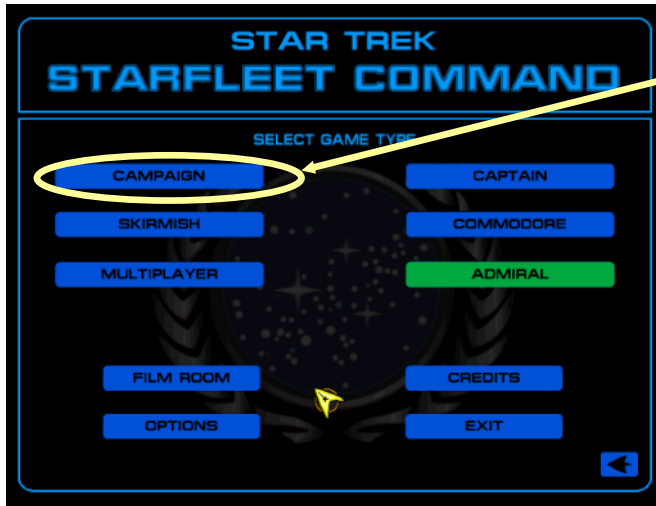
Game is in multiplayer mode only (cannot load saved games)

James Tam

Types Of Slips: Mode Error (2)

Mode errors

- People do actions in one mode thinking they are in another mode



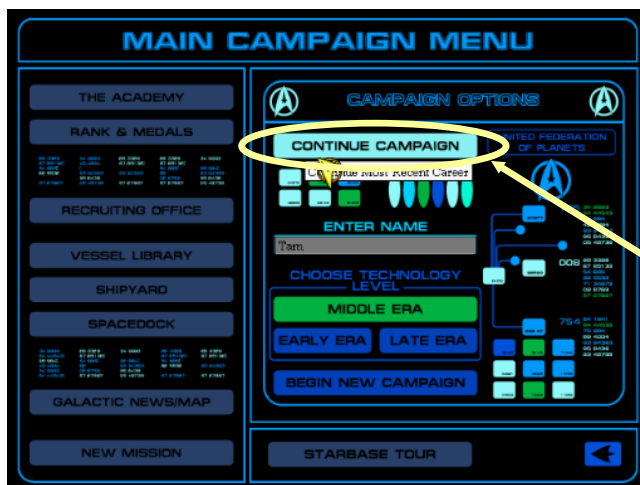
Game is single and multiplayer mode (can start new campaigns or load existing games)

James Tam

Types Of Slips: Mode Error (3)

Mode errors

- People do actions in one mode thinking they are in another mode



In this mode it is possible to load a game

James Tam

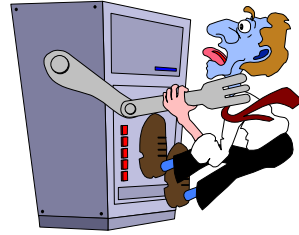
Designing For Slips

General rules

- Prevent slips before they occur
- Detect and correct slips when they do occur
- User correction through feedback and undo

Examples

- Capture errors
 - One action captures another
 - Allow actions to be undone rather than asking for confirmations
- Description errors
 - Correct action on the wrong object
 - Make objects look physically distinctive and/or far apart
- Loss of activation
 - Forgot goal
 - If system knows goal, make it explicit
 - If not, allow person to see path taken or shorten steps
- Mode errors
 - Mistake modes
 - Have as few modes as possible (preferably none)
 - Make modes highly visible



James Tam

Generic System Responses For Errors

General idea: Forcing functions

- Prevent / mitigate continuation of wrongful action
 - e.g., range selection for dynamic queries

Gag

- Deals with errors by preventing the user from continuing
 - e.g., cannot get past login screen until correct password entered

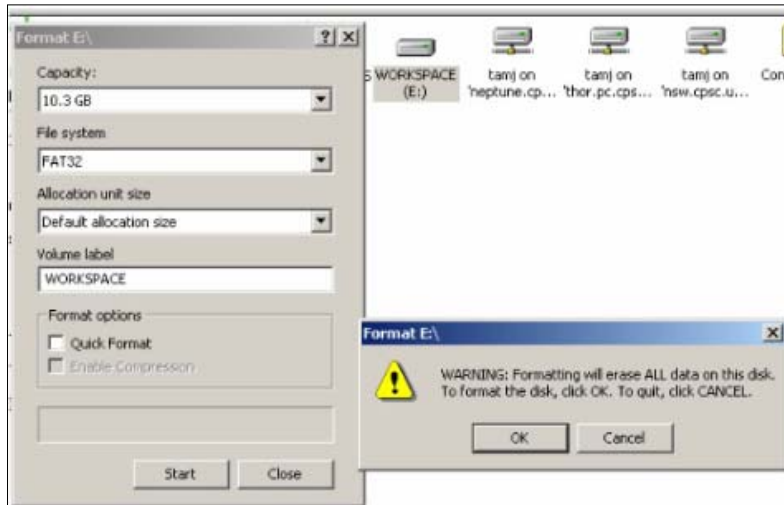
Warn

- Warn people that an unusual situation is occurring
- Better than nothing but when overused, becomes an irritant
 - e.g., audible bell, alert box

James Tam

Generic System Responses For Errors (2)

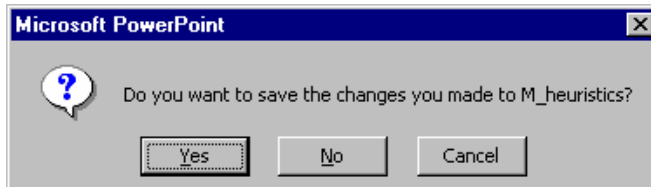
Warning (probably needed)



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Generic System Responses For Errors (3)

Warning (can get annoying)



James Tam

Generic System Responses For Errors (4)

Do nothing

- Illegal action just doesn't do anything
- User must infer what happened
 - e.g., enter letter into a numeric-only field (key clicks ignored)
 - e.g., put a file icon on top of another file icon (returns it to original position)

Self-correct

- System guesses legal action and does it instead - but leads to a problem of trust
 - e.g., spelling checkers

Lets talk about it

- System initiates dialog with user to come up with solution to the problem
 - e.g., compile error brings up offending line in source code

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Generic System Responses For Errors (5)

Teach me

- System asks user what the action was supposed to have meant
- Action then becomes a legal one

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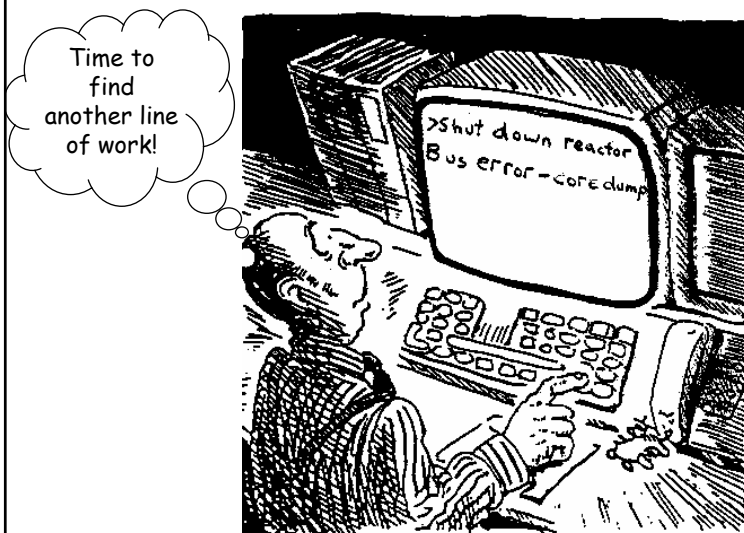
Error Handling In "The Good Ole Days"



What is "error 15762"?

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Don't Make Things Seem Worse Than They Really Are



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Rules Of Thumb For Error Messages

1. Understandable

2. Specific

3. Helpful

4. Polite and non-intimidating

- Don't make people feel stupid
 - Try again, bonehead!
 - Error 25
 - Cannot open this document
 - Cannot open "chapter 5" because the application "Microsoft Word" is not on your system
 - Cannot open "chapter 5" because the application "Microsoft Word" is not on your system. Open it with "Teachtext" instead?

James Tam

Examples Of Dealing With Errors In A Positive And Helpful Manner

Prevent errors

- Try to make errors impossible
- Modern widgets: only "legal commands" selected, or "legal data" entered

The screenshot shows a dialog box titled 'Form1'. It has a 'Date:' label followed by a text input field. Below this, there are three separate input fields for 'Month', 'Day', and 'Year'. The 'Month' field has a dropdown menu showing 'May', the 'Day' field has a text input with '22', and the 'Year' field has a dropdown menu showing '1997'. Below these, there are three more dropdown menus for 'Month', 'Day', and 'Year', with 'May', '22', and '1997' selected respectively.

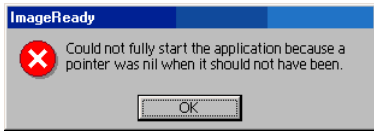
The screenshot shows a dialog box titled 'Appointment'. It has tabs for 'General', 'Attendees', 'Notes', and 'Planner'. The 'General' tab is selected. It has a 'When:' section with 'Start:' and 'End:' fields. The 'Start:' field has a dropdown menu showing '8:30AM' and a date dropdown showing 'Wed 5 /14 /97'. The 'End:' field has a dropdown menu showing '4:30PM' and a date dropdown showing 'Wed 5 /14 /97'. There is an 'All day' checkbox. Below this, there is a 'Description:' field with the text 'Smart Technology Sen'. To the right of the description is a calendar widget for 'May 1997'. The calendar shows the days of the week (S, M, T, W, T, F, S) and the dates from 27 to 31. The date '14' is highlighted. Below the calendar is a 'Where:' field with a dropdown menu showing '1', '2', '3', '4', '5', '6', '7'.

Provide reasonableness checks on input data

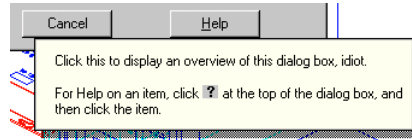
- On entering order for office supplies
 - 5000 pencils is an unusually large order. Do you really want to order that many?

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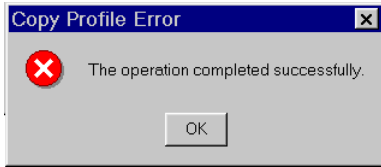
Examples Of Bad Error Messages



Adobe's *ImageReady*



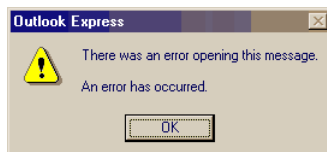
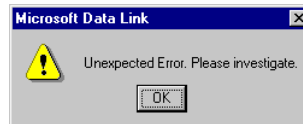
AutoCAD Mechanical



Microsoft's *NT Operating System*

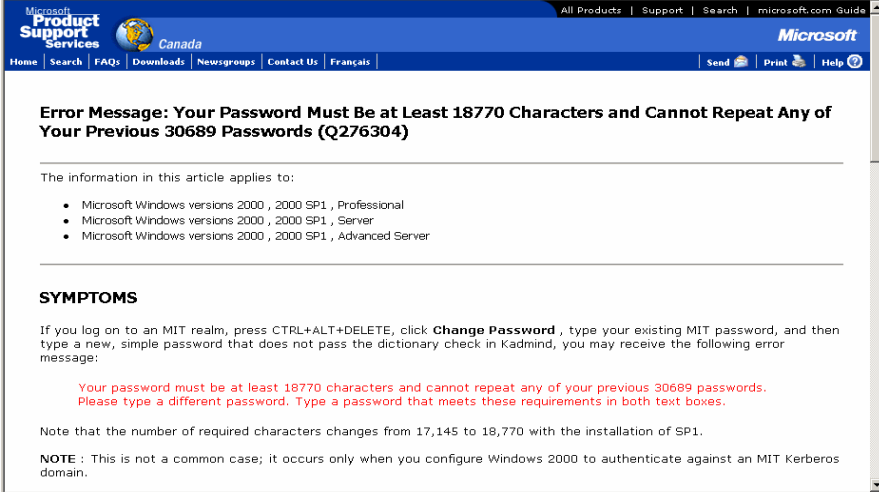
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Examples Of Bad Error Messages (2)



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Examples Of Bad Error Messages (3)



The screenshot shows a Microsoft Support Services page for Canada. The main heading is "Error Message: Your Password Must Be at Least 18770 Characters and Cannot Repeat Any of Your Previous 30689 Passwords (Q276304)". Below this, it states "The information in this article applies to:" followed by a list of Windows versions: Microsoft Windows versions 2000, 2000 SP1, Professional; Microsoft Windows versions 2000, 2000 SP1, Server; and Microsoft Windows versions 2000, 2000 SP1, Advanced Server. Under the "SYMPTOMS" section, it describes a user logging on to an MIT realm and receiving an error message. The error message text is: "Your password must be at least 18770 characters and cannot repeat any of your previous 30689 passwords. Please type a different password. Type a password that meets these requirements in both text boxes." A note mentions that the number of required characters changes from 17,145 to 18,770 with the installation of SP1. A final note states: "NOTE: This is not a common case; it occurs only when you configure Windows 2000 to authenticate against an MIT Kerberos domain."

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9. Provide Help

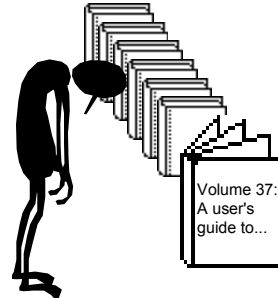
Help is not a replacement for bad design!

Simple systems:

- Walk up and use; minimal instructions

Most other systems:

- Feature rich
- Some users will want to become “experts” rather than “casual” users
- Intermediate users need reminding, plus a learning path (novice to advanced)



James Tam

Documentation And How It's Used

Many users do not read manuals

- Prefer to spend their time pursuing their task
- Paper manuals unavailable in many businesses!
 - e.g. single copy locked away in system administrator's office

Typical usage scenarios:

- Usually used when users are in some kind of panic, need immediate help
 - Indicates need for online documentation, good search/lookup tools
 - Online help can be specific to current context
- Sometimes used for quick reference
 - Syntax of actions, possibilities...
 - List of shortcuts ...

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Types Of Help

Reference Manuals

Reminders

Context-sensitive help

- Tool tips
- What's this (Balloon help)

Wizards

Tips

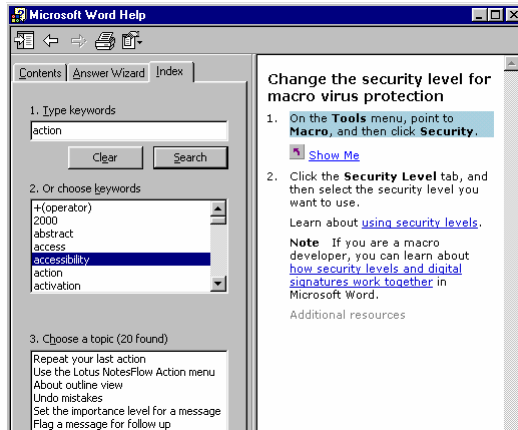
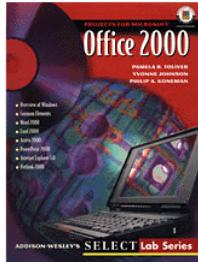
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Reference Manuals

Traditional form of help

Detailed

Paper or online



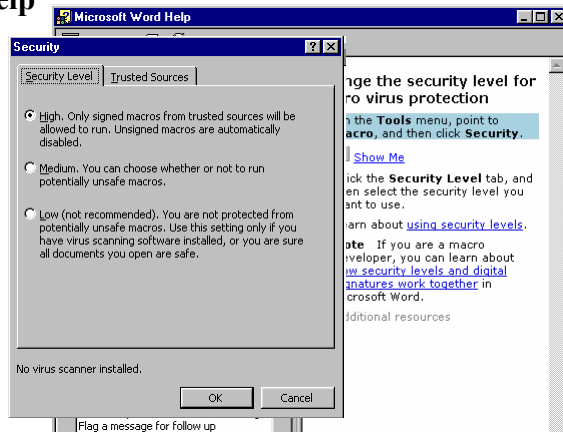
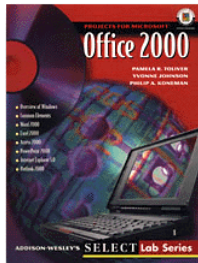
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Reference Manuals

Traditional form of help

Detailed

Paper or online



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Reminders

Short reference cards

- Expert user who just wants to check facts
- Novice who wants to get overview of system's capabilities

WEAPONS	
Fire	Spacebar
Select Weapon/Group	Enter
Chain-Fire/Group-Fire Toggle	\
Alpha Strike	P
Add Weapon to Group 1-5	Shift+1-5
Fire Group 1, 2, 3	Num Lock, /, * (Keypad)
Fire Current Group	:
Jettison Ammunition	K

TARGETING	
Cycle Through All Targets	T
Previous Target	R
Target Nearest Enemy	E
Target Friendly (Lancemate)	F
Target Object Underneath Reticle	Q
Inspect Targeted Object	I
Targeting OFF	Ctrl+T

HUD SYSTEMS	
Cycle through Multi-Function Display	F1

DISPLAYS	
Radar Display (Normal/Full Screen/OFF)	F2
Damage Display	F5
HTAL (Head/Torso/Arms/Legs)	
Armor Damage Report	F6
Enable/Disable/Save/HUD	F11
Remove Cockpit	U
Objectives/Briefing Summary	F12

CAMERAS	
Target View	F4
Rear View	F7
Down View	F8
Weapon View	F9
Weapon View (Full Screen, After Launch)	F10

From "Mechwarrior 2: Mercenaries" © Microprose

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Reminders (2)

Keyboard templates

- Shortcuts/syntactic meanings of keys; recognition vs. recall; capabilities

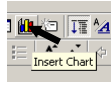


From "Gunship" © Microprose

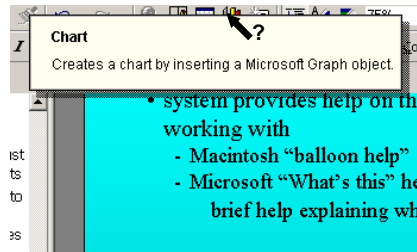
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Context-Sensitive Help

Tool tips

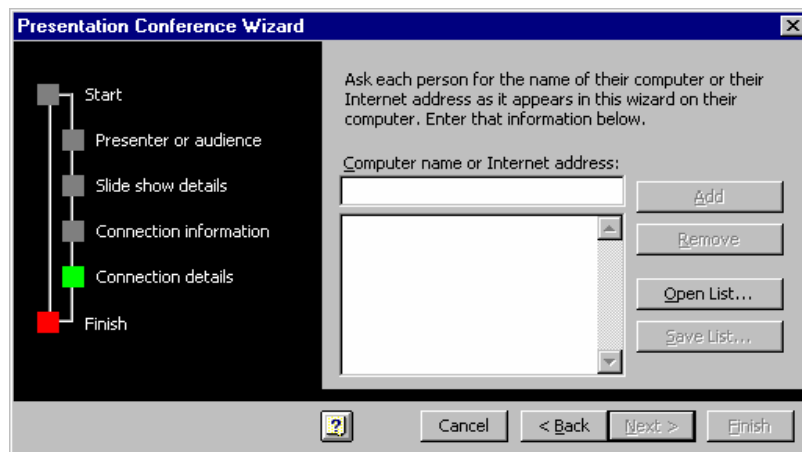


What's this (Windows) or Balloon help (Mac)



James Tam

Wizards



James Tam

Tips

Advanced features

Point out incorrect use



Change Awareness

- What is change awareness
- Why is it an important area of study
- Issues in change awareness
- Future work



James Tam

Tips

Advanced features

Point out incorrect use

The image shows a presentation slide titled 'Change Awareness' with a list of bullet points. A yellow tip box is overlaid on the slide, containing the following text:

Text is too small
Some of the text in this placeholder might be too small for your audience to read.

- Change text to be at least 36 point
- Ignore this style rule for this presentation only
- Change style checker options for all presentations

Don't show me this tip again

OK

The slide content is partially obscured by the tip box. The visible text on the slide includes the title 'Change Awareness' and the first two bullet points: '• What is change awareness' and '• Why is it an important area of study'. A cartoon paperclip character is visible at the bottom right of the slide area.

James Tam

Conducting A Heuristic Evaluation

It's a compromise between extensive style guides and intuition-based inspections



Style guides

Heuristic
evaluation

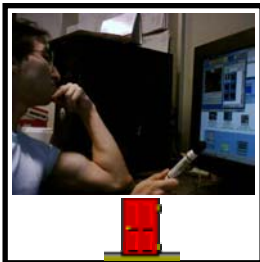
Inspections

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Conducting A Heuristic Evaluation (2)

Employ a small set of evaluators (3–5) examine interface using heuristics as a structure

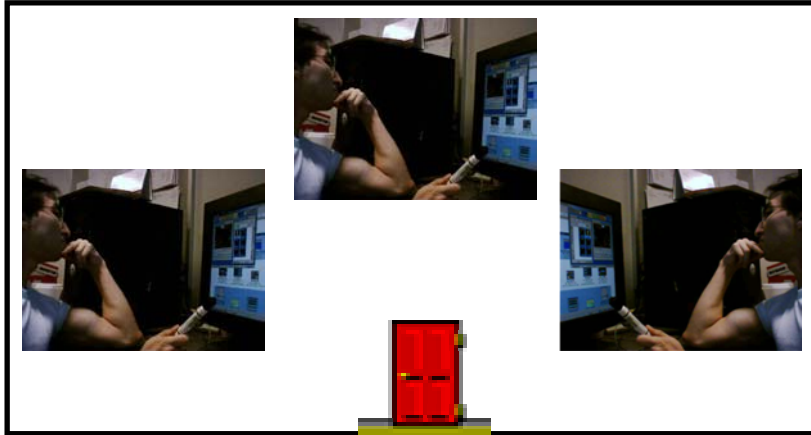
Each person evaluates the system according to the heuristics individually (~1 – 2 hours)



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Conducting A Heuristic Evaluation (3)

After this bring the evaluators together to pool their results

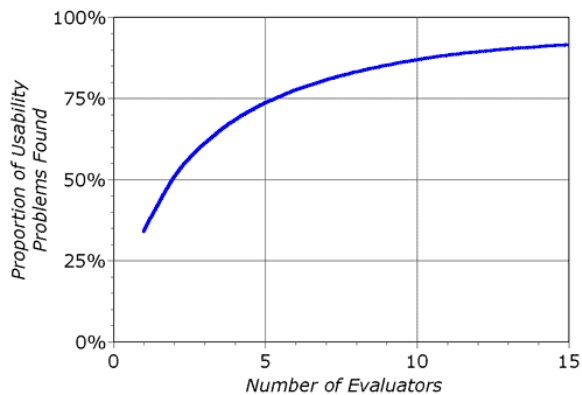


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Conducting A Heuristic Evaluation (4)

Benefits of group evaluations

- Single evaluator only catches ~35% of usability problems
- 5 evaluators catch ~75%



Statistics from "Usability Engineering" by Jakob Nielsen

James Tam

Heuristic Evaluations: Who Should/Could Conduct Them

- Interface experts
- Software development team
- End users
- Double experts

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Heuristic Evaluations: Types Of Systems To Evaluate

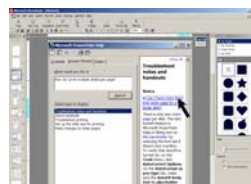
Low fidelity paper prototypes



Medium fidelity prototypes



Completed systems



James Tam

Other Guidelines: Style Guides

Guidelines published by producers of graphical user interfaces (GUIs)

- Examples:
 - Open Software Foundation MOTIF
 - Open Look
 - MS Windows
 - Apple

Describes the “look and feel” of the GUI

- e.g. Open Look
 - Grouping items in the same menu:
 - Use white space between long groups of controls on menus or in short groups when screen real estate is not an issue

Good, but hard too follow

- GUI and widget specific
- Vast number of guidelines
- May miss fundamental design principles

James Tam

Example Pages From Motif Style Guide, Release 1.1

Message Dialogs

Description

MessageDialogs should be used to convey a message to the user. They must not interrupt the user's interaction with the application. They should include a message, and one of the following button arrangements.

- OK
- OK Help
- OK Cancel
- OK Cancel Help
- Yes No
- Yes No Help
- Yes No Cancel
- Yes No Cancel Help
- Cancel
- Cancel Help
- Retry Cancel
- Retry Cancel Help

Related Information

For more information, see the reference pages for DialogBox, ErrorDialog, InformationDialog, QuestionDialog, WorkingDialog, and WarningDialog

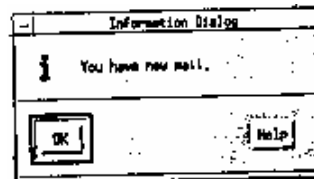
Information Dialog

Description

An InformationDialog should be used to convey information to the user. It must not interrupt the user's interaction with the application. It should include an information symbol, a message, and one of the following button arrangements.

- OK
- OK Help

Illustration



Related Information

For more information, see the reference page for DialogBox

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Other Guidelines: Widget-level “Guides”

Toolkit “hard-wires” guidelines

- Repertoire of widgets
- Look & feel of particular widgets
- Easier to use defaults than to re-invent the wheel!

Some toolkits

- Look & feel is programmer-settable or platform-dependent

Advantages:

- Easy to be consistent
- Widgets developed by experts (e.g., graphical designers)

Disadvantages

- Can be hacked around
- Interfaces “assembled” by non-interface designers can still be terrible

James Tam

You Now Know

Nine principles of design

- Simple and natural dialog
- Speak the user’s language
- Minimize user’s memory load
- Be consistent
- Provide feedback
- Provide clearly marked exits
- Provide shortcuts
- Deal with errors in a positive manner
- Provide help

James Tam

You Now Know (2)

Heuristic evaluation

- Principles can be used to systematically inspect the interface for usability problems

Style guides are mostly platform-dependant design principles

Widget-level guidelines are built into the widgets themselves