

Introduction To Usability¹

What is usability?

What are some ways in which usable systems can be designed and developed?

These notes are based upon the book "*Developing User Interfaces*" by Hix, D. and Hartson, H. (1993) and the paper "*How to design usable systems*" by Gould, J.

James Tam

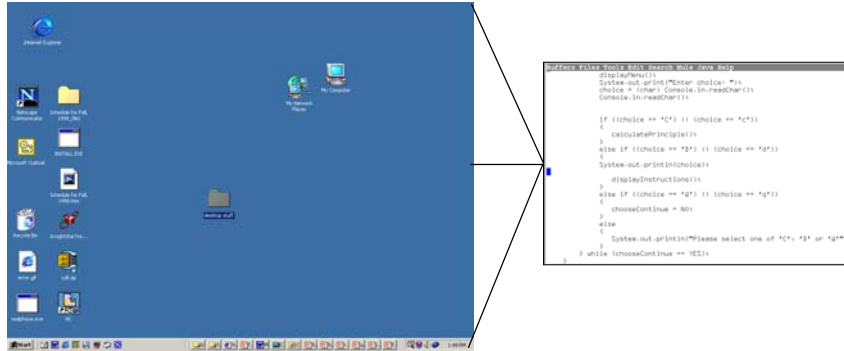
What Is Usability?

User satisfaction

Efficiency and effectiveness (user tasks)

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Importance Of Usability: The Interface IS The System To Most People



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Importance Of Usability: Cost Of Using A Computer

Costs from the technical point of view

- Hardware costs
- Software costs

Costs from the user point of view / personware

- Training costs
- Daily usage

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Designing Unusable Systems: Blame It On The User!

“What is wrong with me? Why can’t I figure this out?”

“They’re all just idiots!”

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How To Design Usable Systems (Gould)

- 1) Early - and continual - focus on users
- 2) Early – and continual - user testing
- 3) Engage in iterative design
- 4) Engage in integrated design

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Early – And Continual – Focus On Users

Decide who will be using the system and what they will be doing with it

This forms the basis of your design

Many techniques may be employed

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Early – And Continual – User Testing

Not something to do just at the end!

...instead: from the start of the development process and throughout have users do real work using different versions of your system.

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Engage In Iterative Design

Identifying required changes.

Being able to make the required changes.

Being willing to make the required changes.

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Integrated Design

All aspects of usability under one person

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Historical Context Of Usability

It's peanut butter!

The priest with a parachute paradigm.

The UI police - 'programmers hide your code!'

Important...but how do we do it?

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Main Points

- What is usability
- Why is usability an important issue in terms of systems design
- How to design usable systems
- The historical context of usability

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