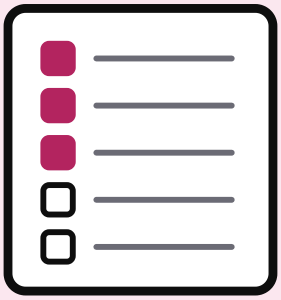
Model

# Nielsen’s usability heuristics

Ten general rules that evaluators use to review an interface and spot usability problems before testing it with users.



In Spanish

*Heurísticas de Nielsen*

Origin

Nielsen and Molich (1990); revised by Nielsen (1994)

## What problem it addresses

Lets you detect many problems early and at low cost, before testing with users.

## Components

### Visible status
The interface always says what is going on.

### People’s language
Familiar words and concepts, not technical ones.

### Control and freedom
A clear way out to undo or leave.

### Consistency
The same thing has the same name and look everywhere.

### Prevent errors
Better to avoid the error than to warn about it.

### Recognize, don’t recall
Options in view, without forcing people to memorize.

### Flexibility
Shortcuts for experienced users.

### Just enough
Every extra element competes with what matters.

### Recover from errors
Clear messages that say what happened and how to fix it.

### Help
Easy to find and focused on the task.

## An example

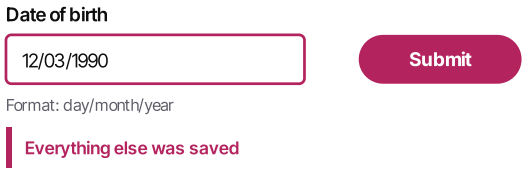
A sign-up form with a date field.

### Not reviewed




The date is typed in a format that isn't stated. On submit, a generic error appears and everything is cleared. **Two rules broken.**

### Reviewed with the heuristics




The format is shown, the error appears next to the field and explains what is missing, and what was typed is kept. **Prevent errors and recover from them.**

With the list of heuristics, a single review finds problems the team no longer saw.

## How it works

1

**Several people review** the interface separately.

2

**Each problem is noted** next to the heuristic it breaks.

3

**The lists are combined** and the problems are ranked by severity.

## Applications in design

### Use it like this

Run a heuristic review with three to five people before testing with users.

### Avoid

Letting a single person review the interface and call it done.

### Don't fall for it

Heuristics find problems, but don't tell you which ones matter most to the people who use the product.

## 20 to 51%

### What the research says

That is the share of problems each evaluator found alone on average, depending on the experiment (there were four). With five evaluators, about two thirds were found (Nielsen and Molich, 1990).

## Connections

Used in

- UI design
- UX design
- Cognitive walkthrough
- Usability testing
- UX writing

Related to

- Slips and mistakes
- Guidelines for Human-AI Interaction
- Jakob's law
- WCAG guidelines
- Doherty threshold
- Usability

## Authors and works

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1990 | **Jakob Nielsen and Rolf Molich** | Proposed heuristic evaluation and measured how many problems each evaluator finds. |
| 1994 | **Jakob Nielsen** | Revised the list based on hundreds of real problems and brought it down to ten. |

### Sources

**Original sources**


- Nielsen, J., & Molich, R. (1990). Heuristic evaluation of user interfaces. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '90) (pp. 249–256). ACM. View source (https://doi.org/10.1145/97243.97281)
- Nielsen, J. (1994). Enhancing the explanatory power of usability heuristics. In Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '94) (pp. 152–158). ACM. View source (https://doi.org/10.1145/191666.191729)


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