

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES TAKEN FROM THE AIDS.GOV BLOG



# USABILITY

## What is usability?

Usability measures the quality of a user's experience when interacting with a product or system – whether that is a website, software application, mobile technology, or any user-operated device. In general, usability refers to how well users can learn and use a product to achieve their goals and how satisfied they are with that process.<sup>1</sup>

## Why should I care about usability?

Web users scan webpages looking for trustworthy, updated, and easy-to-read information. If they cannot find it, they leave the page quickly. A key principle of usability is that it is user-centered, meaning that users are involved throughout the development process. When users' needs, interests, preferences, and limitations are considered first, they are more likely to access the resources you have available.

## Who or what does usability affect?

Usability allows your audiences:

- To find your website, blog, podcast, etc.,
- To find what they want or need on the site, and
- To understand what they find.

## What role does usability play in response to HIV?



Asking your users for feedback about your HIV/AIDS online materials (usability testing) ensures that the communities and individuals you serve can find and use your information. For example, if your clients cannot find your organization's hours and services easily on your website, they may not find their way to you.

## How can I improve usability?

- Involve your current or potential users in planning, developing prototypes, writing content, and conducting usability tests. You can get useful feedback from just five or six users.
- You can also conduct an expert review. This involves asking usability experts to evaluate your site and provide input about things that might be problematic.

## Where can I learn more about usability?

Examples of usability resources include:

- Information on usability and user-centered design: [www.usability.gov](http://www.usability.gov)
- The Usability Professionals Association: [www.usabilityprofessionals.org](http://www.usabilityprofessionals.org) 
- Jakob Nielsen's website on usable technology: [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com) 
- Ginny Redish's book: *Letting Go of the Words: Writing Web Content that Works*
- Joseph Dumas and Ginny Redish's guide: *A Practical Guide to Usability Testing*
- Steve Krug's book: *Don't Make Me Think*
- Donald Norman's book: *The Design of Everyday Things*

<sup>1</sup> Usability.gov, "What is Usability?" Available at: <http://www.usability.gov/basics/whatusa.html>. Accessed on 10/02/08.