

# Mis-Usability: On the Uses and Misuses of Usability Testing

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## ABSTRACT

Usability has become so popular that its value is being threatened by misuse of the term and by misunderstandings about important distinctions between usability studies and empirical usability testing, between usability and verification tests, between ease of use and usefulness, and concerning how we interpret statistics. This paper examines these problems and encourages academicians and practitioners to work toward mitigating them.

## Categories and Subject Descriptors

H.1.2 User/Machine Systems; Human Factors

## General Terms

Documentation, Performance, Design, Human Factors.

## Keywords

Usability, Documentation

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Usability testing may be on the verge of becoming a victim of its own success. Those of us who have expended on the virtues and necessities of usability testing are now watching as people apply the concept, the methods, and the results in ways we could not have imagined. Automated testing programs are “testing” websites and yielding rooms of tables, charts, and graphs of “usability” information. People are usability testing anything that moves, and, in some cases, things that neither move nor have any usable characteristics. The web is filled with sites offering lists of web design “rules,” sometimes based on testing performed with a handful of subjects. One of the seminal web testing books is based on testing using flawed methods on a non-representational set of users doing non-representational tasks. This is a problem for technical communicators, who are increasingly being expected to

perform usability testing on their documents, help systems, and web-sites. Indeed, as more and more of technical communicators’ products are delivered online, and hence are software, we will undoubtedly be asked to test those products. Many communicators are being asked to learn usability testing methods quickly, and, in some cases, inadequately.

It has been difficult enough to persuade most managers to fund usability testing of products under development. If we allow tests that do not take into account the inherent limitations of usability testing and if we allow poor test methodologies to yield questionable results (as indeed they will), we risk undermining and trivializing the whole concept of usability testing. That risk becomes more severe if we allow others to appropriate usability testing methods without really understanding what they are doing.

Four general categories of misconceptions contribute to mis-usability:

1. Misunderstanding of the concept of usability itself and of the distinctions between usability studies and empirical tests.
2. Two types of problems with statistics: assuming that a set of quantitative statistics equals a usability test, and misusing statistical results, especially from tests performed without large enough user samples.
3. Using usability tests for verification rather than usability.
4. Lack of knowledge of the limitations of and the proper methods of usability testing to ensure valid and reliable results.
5. Testing for ease of use but not usefulness.

This presentation examines each of these misconceptions. It will provide examples of the conceptual problems and will list the major limitations of usability testing that all practitioners should take into account.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF USABILITY

What is usability? Perhaps more importantly, what is not? Dumas and Redish [2] define usability testing as requiring five characteristics: that the goal is to improve a product’s usability, that the participants represent real users, that they do real tasks, that testers observe and record the participants, and that they then analyze the data and recommend changes to fix problems.

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# Testing In Counseling Uses And Misuses

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## **Testing In Counseling Uses And Misuses:**

Testing in Counseling Harley Duane Christiansen,1981      **Testing and Assessment in Counseling Practice C.** Edward Watkins, Jr., Vicki L. Campbell,2012-12-06 The primary purpose of this revision remains identical to that of the first edition to show how key personality cognitive behavioral and vocational tests assessment procedures can be used by counselors in their work with clients Too often assessment books only provide the reader with information about tests and assessment procedures They do not however take the next step showing readers how these tests assessment procedures can be used and integrated into the actual work of counseling This revision is designed to fill that void Chapter authors all of whom are experts in their respective topic areas share the theoretical and research backgrounds about a particular test assessment procedure and then provide a case example or examples to show how assessment data can be meaningfully incorporated into the counseling process      **The Uses and Misuses of Tests** Charles W. Daves,1984      **Substance Use & Misuse** ,1999      Testing in Counseling Practice C. Edward Watkins (Jr.), Vicki Lynn Campbell,1990 Because testing has long been regarded as an important role for counselors they traditionally have provided a variety of testing services including personality vocational intellectual and aptitude testing A major purpose of this book is to show how these kinds of tests can be used to augment and facilitate the counseling process Testing in Counseling Practice provides current information about various tests and assessment methods such as historical foundations and conceptual background measurement properties administration and interpretation implementation and future research directions The book is divided into three sections personality assessment vocational assessment and contemporary issues and innovations Each chapter is written either by the person who developed and originated the test assessment method or by the person who is regarded as the major interpreter of it Case examples showing how various test assessment methods can be used in counseling practice are also included

Introduction to Counseling and Guidance Robert Lewis Gibson, Marianne H. Mitchell,1995 The sixth edition of this well thought of book retains its logical progression of topics while introducing the latest technologies concepts and applications in the counselor s repertoire As they have in previous editions the authors present practical examples and discussions of all of the major facets of counseling in a wide variety of counselors work settings They include a thorough treatment of techniques of assessment including an overview of standardized testing and discussion of subjective approaches to appraisal observation self reporting and others This book introduces future counselors to the technology they will encounter on their first assignments and familiarizes them with the type of equipment and tools to expect It also includes coverage on the vital topics of program development management and legal ethical issues For professionals in the field of counseling      *Drug Use, Misuse and Abuse* Cecile A. Marczyński,2014-01-13 Bringing a new approach to covering the basic principles and major topics found in a typical psychopharmacology course Drug Use Misuse and Abuse also adds the newest exciting and controversial findings in the study of drug use and abuse At the core the text has a strong emphasis on developing scientific

literacy and critical thinking in the student Drug Use Misuse and Abuse includes the major drugs typically covered in an undergraduate psychopharmacology course caffeine nicotine cocaine amphetamines including methamphetamine alcohol opiates marijuana the hallucinogens antipsychotics antidepressants and antianxiety medications and moreover the content emphasizes the latest scientific findings in the field including advances in imaging the living brain Included is a chapter on careers related to psychopharmacology as well as a variety of pedagogical features that help students learn making it appropriate for an instructor of a lecture based online or hybrid course Developmental Counseling Donald H. Blocher,1966 *Use of Test Results* University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign campus). Bureau of Educational Research,1960 **Assessment in Counseling** Albert Bullard Hood,Richard W. Johnson,1991 The purpose of this book is to provide information about the various psychological assessment procedures that are specifically relevant for practicing counselors and human development professionals The book deals with the use of such tests in the counseling process and includes illustrative case studies It emphasizes the selection interpretation and communication of psychological test results It also emphasizes the importance of integrating test results with other information about the client The psychological tests selected are those that are most often used by counselors and human development professionals in their daily practice Section 1 presents basic concepts of psychological assessment Section 2 covers cognitive assessment and the various tests that assess intelligence academic aptitude and academic achievement The third section deals with procedures used by counselors to assist clients in making decisions regarding their careers and life plans In section 4 personality assessment is considered The final section deals with professional practices and considerations Excerpts from documents outlining ethical and test standards particularly appropriate to counselors and human development professionals in their use of assessment procedures are reproduced in the appendix ABL **Public Health Reports** ,2008 *Core List of Books and Journals in Education* Nancy P. O'Brien,Emily Fabiano,1991-01-09 This list assembles a selected group of approximately 1000 books and journals currently available in the field of education mostly published in the late 1980s All works are in English and almost all are American American government documents and monographs published by UNESCO have also been included

**Educational Measurement** Robert L. Linn,1993 A comprehensive standard reference on the theory and principles of testing this edition was originally published by ACE Macmillan in 1989 revising and updating the second edition of 1971 The volume is divided into three sections covering theory and general principles administration and scoring and applications Discussed in detail is how computer technology can be the primary tool for successfully integrating testing with instruction Each of the 18 in depth articles is followed by an extensive bibliography of references Annotation copyright by Book News Inc Portland OR **Current Career and Occupational Literature** Leonard H. Goodman,1984 **Docket No. 117638** ,2014 *Sears List of Subject Headings* Minnie Earl Sears,Joseph Miller,2000 Presents suggested headings appropriate for use in the catalogs of small and medium sized libraries and provides patterns and instructions for adding new headings as

they are required The seventeenth edition features a revision of headings for the native peoples of the Western Hemisphere as well as many new subdivisions *Guidance and Counseling in the Elementary School* Richard C. Nelson,1972 *New York State Journal of Medicine* ,1926 Ethical and Professional Issues in Counseling R. Rocco Cottone,Vilia M. Tarvydas,1998 For courses on ethical professional and legal issues in counseling and psychology departments This ethics text focuses on counseling and counseling psychology in a format that serves beginning students provides a useful format and structure for professors teaching ethics courses and inspires critical thought about ethical issues Through case scenarios reprints of many codes of ethics and narrative information this book not only functions as an introduction to professional counseling and counseling ethics but it also serves as a compendium of contemporary ethical codes and issues

**Professional Ethics and Insignia** John Stierman,2000-07-26 Professional Ethics and Insignia gathers together the codes of ethics and emblems of more than 200 major professional associations in the United States providing a window into how various professions define interpret and enforce ethical behavior A range of occupations are presented including engineers physicians financial executives university professors anthropologists authors and many others

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