

World usability day

On 3 November, 'World usability day' was organised to promote 'ease of use' in technology and other products.







1 "*E-commerce – buying goods and services on the Internet – is easy nowadays.*" Put a cross on the line at the point which shows your opinion. Compare and discuss your answer with a partner.

Agree strongly ←————→ Disagree strongly

2 Guess the missing figures (a–c) in this report extract. Check your answers by scanning the discussion forum posts.

Corporate web sites: usability In one study of 15 large commercial sites, users could only find information (a) ____ % of the time. Another report stated that (b) ____ % of web shoppers have given up looking for the item they wanted to buy online. Only (c) ____ % of corporate sites complied with simple web usability principles. (Adapted from: Jakob Nielsen: 1998)

Discussion forum: World usability day

POST 1: Are there any good corporate websites out there? What about the worst?		Posted
	I think Amazon and Google are pretty successful. As a customer, I find it easy to follow Amazon's signposts – the yellow buttons. I also like Google's homepage – it's free of clutter. Martina, New Jersey	1 / 11 / 05
	When I try to book a holiday online, if I get something wrong on the form, it deletes everything I have typed in and I have to go back to the beginning. Really frustrating. In my opinion, corporates spend a fortune on their websites – what for? That money should go to improving customer service. Paul S. York	1 / 11 / 05
	Companies have learnt a lot since Nielsen's criticisms, some seven years ago. Back then, in a study of 15 large commercial sites, users could only find information 42% of the time; 62% of web shoppers gave up looking for the item they wanted to buy online. It's much better now. Then, only about 51% of companies complied with simple web usability principles, such as: 'is the site organized by user goals?' Ed, NYC	2 / 11 / 05
POST 2: Are there any 'usability' success stories? What annoys you?		
	One reason I think that the iPod is successful is because of its usability. I like the click wheel and how easy it is to use iTunes. I'm not technical, and I like the whole concept of 'plug and go!' Sue C. London	1 / 11 / 05
	Usability isn't only applicable to websites or new media. I believe usability techniques can be applied across businesses. In my view, companies should be much more 'customer-centric'. One thing I hate is calling a company and getting a recorded message: 'we really value your call'. John Kay, Boston	3 / 11 / 05
	I dread buying a new PC or anything technical. I cannot follow the set-up instructions – and I'm not alone. Yesterday, I actually stabbed myself trying to get the wrapper of a CD with a pair of scissors. Ridiculous. How do some companies expect people to even get past the packaging? Mary, Edinburgh	3 / 11 / 05

3 Read the posts above. Which posts do you agree with?

4 One word in each line does **not** collocate with the word in the grey box. Delete this 'odd word out'.

(1) web	(a) page	(b) designer	(c) statistics	(d) corporate	(e) search
(2) (a) web	(b) simple	(c) original	(d) criticism	(e) innovative	design
(3) usability	(a) study	(b) expert	(c) market	(d) survey	(e) research

5 Discuss the following questions in small groups. Be ready to report your ideas to the class.

- (1) List your three favourite commercial websites. Why do you like these sites? Which sites do you dislike? Why?
- (2) Evaluate your own company's website. Can you suggest any improvements?
- (3) Do you have any examples of 'poor usability'? How can companies improve these products / services?