

Usability @ MIT

<http://web.mit.edu/ist/usability>

The Usability Team is part of MIT's central computing department, Information Services and Technology.

The Usability Team has one full-time employee and the affinity support of about 10 other people with varying degrees of expertise. Almost all have received or are working on either the Bentley College Master's degree or Certificate in Human Factors in Information Design.

We offer the following services to the MIT community:



- *Group reviews of web sites and web applications (heuristic reviews)*
Products can be partial- or full-paper prototypes, online prototypes (wireframes), or fully developed products.
- *Usability testing (talking protocol tests)*
Product owners and our usability group observe users trying to accomplish tasks on a site, either in our Usability Test Lab or at a representative user workplace.
- *Card sorting—a tool for developing the information architecture of your site*
We design and conduct card sorting sessions, where users sort cards containing major topics for a site into groupings that make sense to them.

- *Accessibility testing*

Our representative from the Adaptive Technology (ATIC) Lab conducts tests of web sites and software for accessibility.

- *Pluralistic walkthroughs*

Team-based inspection uncovers problems and fosters quick, detailed solutions. Teams consist of three types of participants: representative users, developers, and usability professionals.

- *Consultation for usability tests of a product*

We apply our expertise and training to help:

- develop user profiles and test strategies
- recruit test volunteers
- develop a test
- coordinate your usability effort



In addition, the team works with undergraduate classes in which students are assigned to develop web sites or applications. We teach a unit on usability and then bring the students into the lab to test their projects.

During MIT's winter Independent Activities Period, we sponsor some kind of ongoing usability event—sometimes a series of Usability 101 classes or, as we did this year a lecture series called Why Usability?.

We are unique among campus usability groups in that our primary mission is to support the community developers of web sites and web applications. We are not part of any academic program or research group and we only on very rare occasions take outside work.

To learn more about us, see <http://web.mit.edu/ist/usability>. For contact us, send email to usability@mit.edu.