

Silent Test

Idea/Introduction

User testing is a method to understand and record user needs in the research and design process.

Learning Outcome

Participants will be able to perform the Think-Aloud User Testing method.

Time

5-10 min

Definition

This activity is based on the Think-Aloud User Testing method where users are instructed to verbalize what they are doing while they are doing it.¹

Activity

When the app is built and live, this is the perfect time to test and revise it. This exercise is about listening. Have participants open up their app and find a partner. Their partner should be instructed to use the app and talk about everything they are doing, verbalizing why they are making some choices and not others. During this activity, the participants who are sharing their app cannot speak; they have to let their partner move through their app and click around without saying a word. They can write down what they hear, but they cannot speak. You may encourage participants to place their hand over their mouth.

After the activity, have participants journal about what they saw their partner do when they were silent. Come together as a group and talk about the shared experience.

Framing for slower-paced participants

Some participants may struggle with writing and watching at the same time. Slower-paced participants can be asked to draw or verbalize their partners' observations.

Framing for faster-paced participants

Faster-paced participants can be encouraged to do the silent test with more than one participant. They can then look at their notes and see if there are patterns in how others are using the app. Did participants see things their users collectively did not understand? Where their outliers? This can be a space to ask a faster-paced participant to do some more in-depth analysis of their results.

¹ Boren, T., and J. Ramey. "Thinking Aloud: Reconciling Theory and Practice." *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication* 43.3 (2000): 261-78. Print.