Moderating Usability Studies

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A timeline

- Preparation
- Welcoming the participant
- Getting ready
- During the study
- After the study
Preparation: before the study begins

- Be prepared
- Your assumptions
- Your biases
20 Cognitive Biases That Screw Up Your Decisions

1. Anchoring bias. People are more likely to stick to the first piece of information they hear, regardless of whether the piece of information is accurate or not. Someone’s opening bid in a negotiation or a starting price in a store can have a strong effect on what they eventually pay.

2. Availability heuristic. People overestimate the importance of an event or person that comes to mind more easily, regardless of its actual frequency or probability. For example, people are more likely to think about a car accident than a plane accident, even though a plane is much more likely to crash.

3. Bandwagon effect. The probability that a person will adopt a new idea or behavior increases as more people adopt it, regardless of whether the idea or behavior is actually good or bad. People are more likely to conform to the actions of others.

4. Illusory correlation. Illusory correlations are the tendency to see patterns in data that aren’t actually there. People are more likely to see patterns in data that are caused by chance, or by other factors that are not related to the pattern they are looking for.

5. Confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is the tendency to seek out information that confirms our preconceptions or hypotheses, while ignoring information that might contradict our beliefs.

6. Cognitive illusion. Cognitive illusions are beliefs that are based on incorrect or distorted perceptions of reality. People are more likely to see patterns in data that are not actually there, or to see things that are not there.

7. Overconfidence. Overconfidence is the tendency to overestimate one’s own ability to perform a difficult task or job.

8. Overconfidence bias. Overconfidence bias is the tendency to overestimate one’s own ability to perform a difficult task or job.

9. Information bias. Information bias is the tendency to seek information when one does not actually need it.

10. Distractibility. Distractibility is the tendency to be easily distracted by external stimuli.

11. Outcome bias. Outcome bias is the tendency to focus on the outcome of a decision rather than on the decision itself.

12. Overconfidence bias. Overconfidence bias is the tendency to overestimate one’s own ability to perform a difficult task or job.

13. Plausibility bias. Plausibility bias is the tendency to overestimate the plausibility of an event or idea simply because it seems more plausible than others.

14. Pro-innovation bias. Pro-innovation bias is the tendency to favor new and innovative ideas over old and established ones.

15. Reversal. Reversal is the tendency to change one’s mind about a decision after new information has been introduced.

16. Salience. Salience is the tendency to focus on information that is more noticeable or obvious.

17. Selective perception. Selective perception is the tendency to focus on information that confirms one’s preconceptions or hypotheses, while ignoring information that contradicts them.

18. Stereotyping. Stereotyping is the tendency to make assumptions about a person or group based on their perceived characteristics.

19. Survivorship bias. Survivorship bias is the tendency to focus on the success of a particular strategy or method, while ignoring the failures of others.

20. Zero-risk bias. Zero-risk bias is the tendency to focus on the risks of a particular strategy or method, while ignoring the benefits of others.
The beginning: the welcome

- Build rapport
- Describe the study
- Make them comfortable
The beginning, part two: getting the tools ready

- Forms
- Discuss recording & data privacy
- Explain ‘think aloud’
- Overview of the technology
The middle: during the session

- Your attention
- Your demeanor
- Ask questions (but be careful)
The end: after the session

- Ask if any questions
- Give the gift
- Say thank you!
Conclusion

- Success!
Learn more

- How To Moderate Effectively In Usability Research, By Colleen Roller
  https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2015/07/moderating-effectively-in-usability-research/
- 12 Expert Tips for Moderating Like a Pro, by Peter Hughes
  https://www.usertesting.com/blog/2014/09/22/12-expert-tips-for-moderating-like-a-pro/
- Effectively Moderating Usability Tests, by Beth Loring (UIE webinar)
  https://aycl.uie.com/virtual_seminars/effectively_moderating_usability_tests
- Identifying and Validating Assumptions and Mitigating Biases in User Research
- Interviewing Users- How to Uncover Compelling Insights, by Steve Portigal
  http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/interviewing-users/
- This presentation as a blog post http://tinyurl.com/harvarduxgroup