



Session Script: [Mitchell County] Ballot Usability Testing

Overview of the Session (1 minute)

Greet the participant at the “voter check-in” table.

Read this to each participant:

“Thank you for agreeing to participate. Today, we’d like to get your feedback about the [preliminary] ballot for the [November general] election. We are trying to understand how well the ballot design works for people like you.

For the next few minutes, I’d like you to pretend you are voting in a real election as you use this ballot. I’ll watch you doing that [add a note about observers, if you have them: as will these other lovely people]. We’ll all be taking notes and listening carefully while you vote.

When you have finished voting, I’ll ask you to fill out a brief questionnaire. Then I’ll ask you some questions about what you thought of the ballot and what the experience of using it was like. The whole interview should take about 15 minutes.

Please remember that you are not being tested in any way. Your taking part in the study helps us evaluate how well the ballot works. Do you have any questions at this point?

Voting Tasks (up to 10 minutes)

- Have the participant sit/stand at the voting station. Make adjustments as necessary for people with disabilities.
- Introduce the ballot and give the ballot to the participant.

“Although this situation will be similar to voting in a real election because you have a ballot that looks real, it isn’t a real election. By voting as you normally would on this preliminary ballot, you’re helping us learn where voters like you might have questions or problems with using it. These votes will not count in the upcoming election.

“This is the ballot I would like you to use. [Hand the person the ballot.]

“Okay, let’s get started. Are you ready to vote? Please try to do what you would normally do, not what you think I want you to do. If you’re undecided about a race or measure, do what you would do in a real election.

“From this point on, you should treat me like a poll worker. If you have questions or problems with the ballot, ask me, the poll worker. I’ll note your question and if it is appropriate, I will help you.”

While the participant is voting, observe them without disturbing them. Don’t teach them how to use the ballot!

What to look for

- How easily did the participant find the name of the person they wanted to vote for?
- How easily did the participant find the contest/proposition they wanted to vote on?
- What problems did they have marking the ballot?
- Did the participant under-vote or over-vote? Why? What comments did they have about that?
- Did the participant skip any contests or propositions? Why? What comments did they have about that?
- What questions did the participant ask about while using the ballot? After using the ballot?
- Did the participant find the instructions?
- Did the participant read the instructions?
- If the participant did read the instructions, how helpful were they? What questions and problems did the participant have understanding the instructions?

Later:

“Have you ever written in a candidate? How do you do that using this ballot?”

“What do you do if you make a mistake?”

Administer the **Post-study Questionnaire**.

Wrap-up and debriefing (3 minutes)

“Step me through what you did on the ballot, please. Let's just go through it from where you started and tell me about any questions, doubts, or confusion you remember having along the way.”

Ask participants follow-up questions if you need to. Try to keep questions open-ended. For example, if the participant missed a race or didn't vote according to your instructions, go to that place in the ballot and say, “Tell me more about what you did on the ballot here and why.” Or, “I see you said that you strongly disagree that you feel confident using this ballot. Tell me about that.”

When you're done with the review of their ballot and the questionnaire, if there is time, ask these questions:

How's the type size for you?

How did using this ballot compare with the last time you voted?

What help do you think that other people might need in using this ballot?

Then wrap up the session by thanking the participant. Hand them the **information sheet** about the study.