

BRENNAN  
CENTER  
FOR JUSTICE



## Making Every Vote Count: A Design for Better Ballots

### Usability Testing for Local Election Officials

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The Brennan Center for Justice  
Ballot Design Task Force

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### Objectives for this session

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- Learn about usability and usability testing
  - What, why and when
  
- Learn how to conduct a usability test
  - Planning a usability test
  - Practice
  
- Improve your ballots
  - Using the results of the test
  - Guidelines from the Ballot Design Task Force report

## Introduction to usability and usability testing

### Good usability is critical to good elections

- Usability testing by local elections officials helps meet goals for good elections:
  - Make it more likely the voter's intention is carried out
  - Make it easier for voters to use ballots
  - Identify design problems in ballots that could lead to voters making mistakes
  - Make it more likely that media coverage of an election is positive

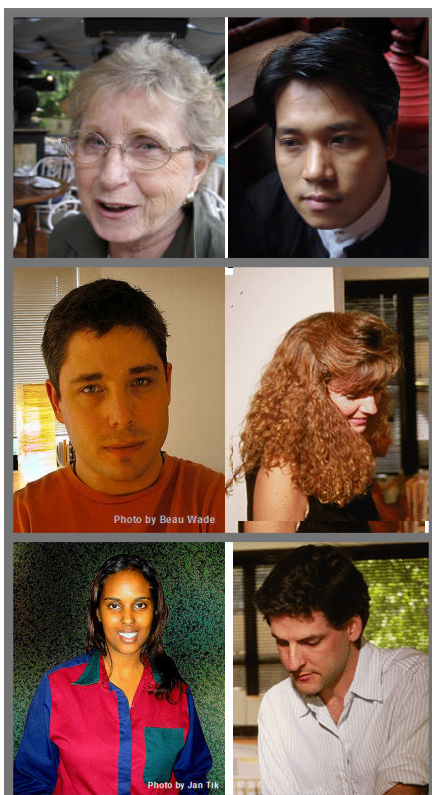
## What do we mean by “usability”?

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- Usability means that voters can cast valid votes **as they intended**, quickly, **without errors**, and **with confidence** that their ballot choices were recorded correctly.
  - For you, it’s whether the ballot can be counted
  - For voters, it’s whether they are able to vote as they intend to
- Usability is important in voter education and other election materials as well as in ballots.

## Usability is about people

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### **A voter and mom:**

“I can’t take the time to wait in two-hour lines. I need to be in and out before the baby wakes up from her nap.”

### **A concerned voter:**

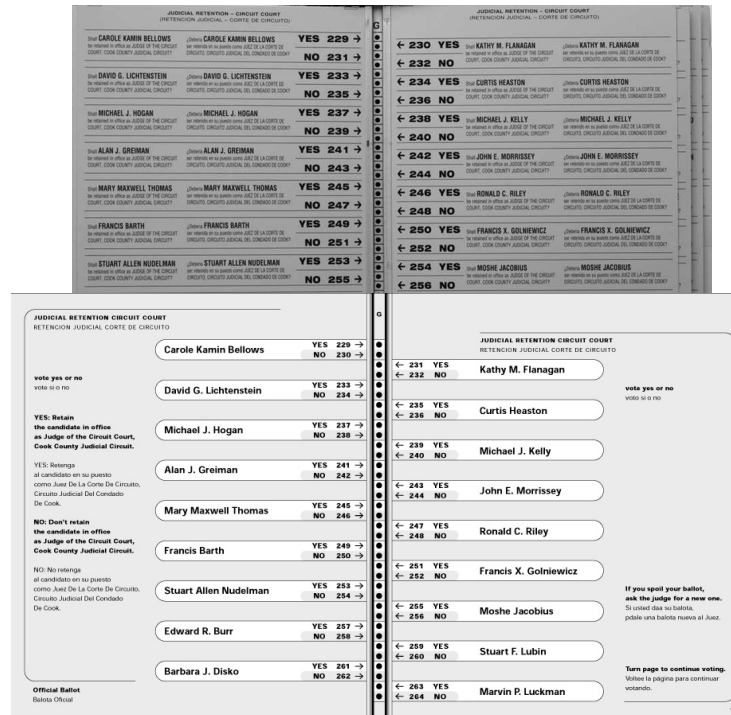
“Okay, I haven’t voted on a touch screen. How do I know I’m doing this right?”

### **Differently-abled voter**

“A simple ballot makes it easier for all of us to vote.”

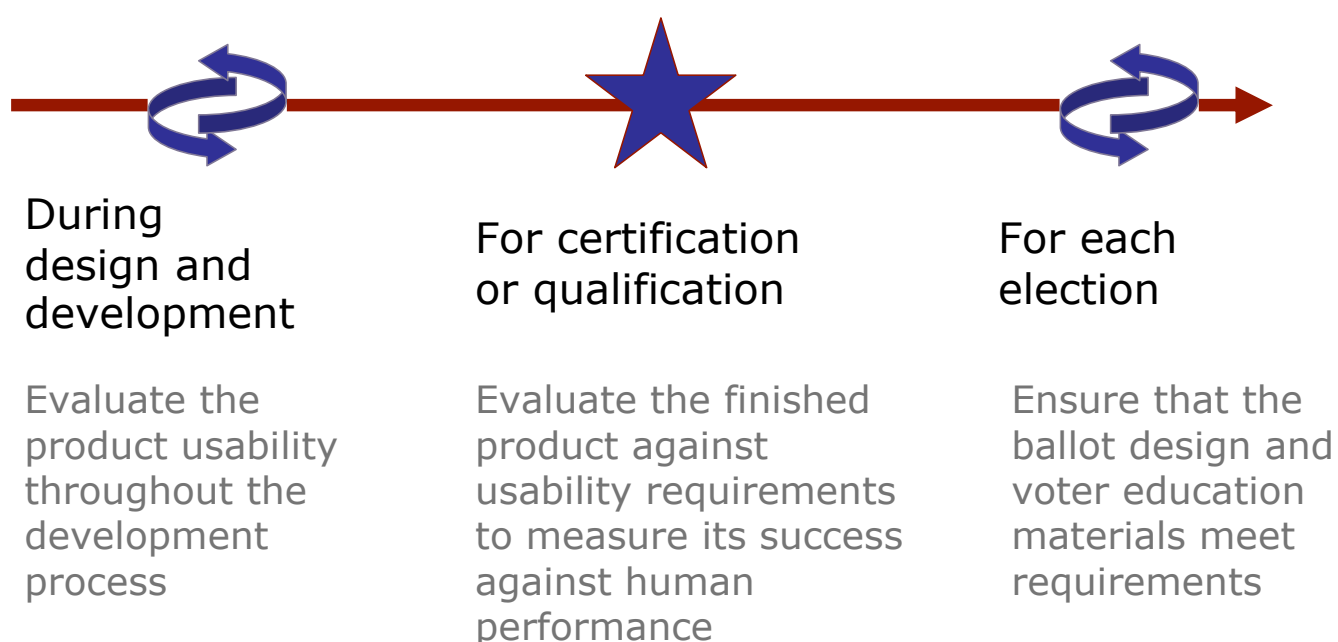
## Usability testing ensures that ballots designed to good standards meet their goals

- A standard ensures a base level of usability, accessibility, and privacy.
- Usability testing and good election procedures support and extend standard requirements



Redesigned ballot in Chicago, Illinois  
Courtesy of Design for Democracy

## Usability testing is needed throughout the election process



## Usability testing lets you observe voters using a ballot before the election

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- **Observe** real people using something rather than asking them about it
- **Measure** how easy is to use to accomplish a task: Can voters vote without becoming confused and making mistakes?
- **Inform design:** Where can we prevent mistakes? How can we help voters recover from mistakes?
  - Lets you confirm or challenge assumptions about ballot design
  - Gives you the opportunity to fix problems

## How easily can we learn from users?

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- Gathering user experience feedback can be as simple as watching someone use the site to find information.
  - Let them explore the site. Don't explain or demo
  - Watch what they do
  - Listen to their comments
  - Take their problems seriously

## Ballot usability testing does not have to be formal, lengthy or expensive

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- Testing aimed at finding problems do not need:
  - A formal laboratory
  - 100's of participants
  - Special equipment (except for your voting system)
  - Special recording systems

## Planning and Conducting Usability Test

## Demonstration

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- Volunteer for voter
- Everyone else observe the session
- I'll be moderator, doing what you should do if you were conducting usability testing

## Demonstration

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- Voter – assume
  - You haven't done much homework
  - You have a vague feeling about how you want to vote
  - You want to be sure to vote on the measure about education technology
- Observers, please note
  - What the voter does
  - What the voter says

<b>OFFICIAL BALLOT</b> <b>CLARK COUNTY, WASHINGTON</b> <b>SPECIAL ELECTION</b> <b>February 06, 2007</b>		<b>Precinct 0905-02</b>																						
<b>MAKE SURE YOUR VOTE COUNTS.</b> Please take the time to read through all of the voting instructions below and the instructions printed on the other materials included in your ballot packet before you begin voting. By understanding the voting instructions thoroughly, you will be able to successfully vote your ballot.		<b>CAMAS SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 117</b> <b>PROPOSITION NO. 1</b> <b>BONDS TO CONSTRUCT AND EXPAND SCHOOLS</b>																						
<b>VOTING INSTRUCTIONS:</b> 1) Your ballot must be voted in secret and shown to no one. 2) Use a black or blue ink pen to mark your ballot by completely filling in the box to the left of your choice(s). 3) Unless specifically allowed by law, more than one vote for a ballot measure will be an overvote and no votes for that ballot measure will be counted. 4) If you make a mistake when voting, you may request a replacement ballot by calling the Elections Department at (360) 397-2345. Or, you may correct it using the instructions printed on the fellow secret envelope. 5) After you have completed voting, review your choice(s) to be sure you marked the ballot the way you intended to vote. 6) Do not make any mark of identification on the ballot or the secret envelope. 7) Refold your ballot in the same manner as when you received it and place it in the fellow secret envelope. 8) Place the sealed fellow secret envelope containing your voted ballot into the affidavit envelope with the green stripes. 9) Read the Affidavit of Voter oath on the return envelope with the green stripes, then sign the affidavit oath and date it on the lines provided. <b>YOUR BALLOT WILL NOT BE COUNTED IF YOU DO NOT SIGN THE OATH ON THE AFFIDAVIT OF VOTER ENVELOPE.</b> 10) Attach sufficient first class postage (\$0.39) and mail your ballot so that it will be postmarked by election day or earlier. 11) If you choose not to mail your ballot, you may take it to one of the ballot drop locations listed on the sheet of instructions included in your ballot packet.		The Board of Directors of Camas School District No. 117 adopted Resolution No. 06-03, concerning a proposition to relieve overcrowding by constructing and expanding schools. This proposition would authorize the District to construct two new elementary schools, expand Camas High School and Lacamas Heights and Dorothy Fox Schools, reconstruct Helen Baller Elementary School and Doc Harris Stadium, make infrastructure, health and security improvements, acquire land for future school sites, and expand Transportation Center; issue no more than \$90,000,000 of general obligation bonds maturing within 21 years; and levy annual excess property taxes to repay the bonds, all as provided in Resolution No. 06-03. Should this proposition be: <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> REJECTED																						
<b>CITY OF WASHOUGAL</b> <b>PROPOSITION NO. 1</b> <b>NEW CIVIC CAMPUS</b> <b>GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS - \$7,500,000</b>		<b>CAMAS SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 117</b> <b>PROPOSITION NO. 2</b> <b>REPLACEMENT OF EXPIRING TECHNOLOGY LEVY</b>																						
The City Council of the City of Washougal adopted Ordinance No. 1668 concerning a proposition for bonds. This proposition authorizes the City to construct a new Civic Campus including Public Library, Senior Room, Community Room, and a City Hall, to issue \$7,500,000 of general obligation bonds maturing within a maximum term of 20 years to finance such improvements, and to levy property taxes annually in excess of regular property tax levies to repay such bonds, all as provided in Ordinance No. 1668. Should this proposition be: <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED? <input type="checkbox"/> REJECTED?		The Board of Directors of Camas School District No. 117 adopted Resolution No. 06-04, concerning a proposition to finance educational technology improvements. This proposition would authorize the District to acquire educational technology equipment (including classroom computers to support instruction) and make other technology improvements by levying the following excess property taxes, in place of an expiring levy, on all taxable property within the District: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Collection Year</th> <th>Approximate Levy Rate/\$1,000 Assessed Value</th> <th>Levy Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2008</td> <td>\$0.26</td> <td>\$1,072,671</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2009</td> <td>\$0.26</td> <td>\$1,137,032</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010</td> <td>\$0.26</td> <td>\$1,171,143</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>\$0.26</td> <td>\$1,206,277</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012</td> <td>\$0.26</td> <td>\$1,242,466</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013</td> <td>\$0.26</td> <td>\$1,279,739</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> all as provided in Resolution No. 06-04. Should this proposition be approved? <input type="checkbox"/> LEVY...YES <input type="checkbox"/> LEVY...NO		Collection Year	Approximate Levy Rate/\$1,000 Assessed Value	Levy Amount	2008	\$0.26	\$1,072,671	2009	\$0.26	\$1,137,032	2010	\$0.26	\$1,171,143	2011	\$0.26	\$1,206,277	2012	\$0.26	\$1,242,466	2013	\$0.26	\$1,279,739
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## Review

- How well did that go?
- What did you observe the voter doing?
- What problems did the voter have?
- How did the moderator behave?
  - Participant: what was it like?
  - Moderator: what questions do you have about moderating?
  - Observer: what did you see?



## Planning a usability test

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- Know why you're testing
- Make sure the right people are on board
- Find the right participants
- Frame the voting task in a voter-centered way
- Facilitate curiously, objectively
- Know what you want to do with the results
- Be willing to iterate designs

## The goals of testing are to identify problems...so you can fix them

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- Identify problems in design that could lead to residual votes or fall-off
- Even the best ballot design can introduce unpredictable problems
- Make it easier to carry out the voter's intent
- Make it more likely that the voter's intent is carried out
- Only good news about the election

## Why not do this in a group?

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- In focus groups, you get
  - Preferences
  - Opinions
  - Group consensus
- In a usability test, you get
  - Individual behavior and performance
  - What happened, as well as why

## There are three times when it's especially important to test ballots

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- Something about the situation has changed since the last election  
(a new voting system, ballot style or change in laws)
- When you have a good idea of what's going to be on the ballot  
(You can test the layout, even if the details are not complete)
- Some event happens that would change the layout  
(a candidate dies or is disqualified at the last minute)

## What do you need for a usability test?

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### What

- A ballot or other election materials

### Where

- A polling place or other similar room

### Who

- Voters: 12-15 or 5-7, one at a time
- Moderator
- Observer/note-taker

## Prepare...run the test...compile the results

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### 1. Prepare for the test

- Prepare copies of what you want to test
- Set up a place for the test
- Recruit voters to try out the materials

### 2. Run the test

- One at a time, have a voter try to use the materials
- Observe what happens, note what voters say
- Ask the voter to step through what they did, where there were questions, what was confusing

### 3. Compile the results

- Over several voters, look for patterns in their problems and questions

## Running a usability test: tips, techniques and practice

### Moderating

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- Impartial, unbiased, observing
- No teaching!
- Listen and watch
- Open-ended questions: Why? How? What were you doing?

## Moderator roles

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- Flight attendant
  - Ensuring safety and comfort
- Sportscaster
  - Play-by-play
  - Maximizing information flow to observer/note taker
- Scientist
  - Planning
  - Maintaining objectivity
  - Managing data
  - Producing reports
  - Iterating design

## Briefing the voter

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- We're not testing you – your being here helps us create a better ballot
- You can stop if it's uncomfortable
- Your involvement will be confidential
- Problems you have with using the ballot are not your fault
- If you get stuck or confused, say so
- Treat me like a poll worker

## Maximizing information

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- If the voter says, “hmmm” or “oops” or “I wonder...”
  - Say, “What questions do you have right now?”
- If the voter is silent for 10 or 20 seconds (count!)
  - Say, “What are you thinking?”
- If the voter stops because she thinks she’s done or she’s stuck (and you think there’s a problem)
  - Summarize what you saw her do
  - Ask what she will do next

## Think aloud or review

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- Consider asking people to “think aloud” as they vote
  - What they’re doing
  - Why they’re doing it
- Review after voting
  - Ask the voter to walk you through, step-by-step what they did and why
  - Use the ballot as a guide for the discussion
  - Ask what was confusing or frustrating
  - You may want to ask voters to do specific things now and comment

## Forming task scenarios

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- Open-ended
- Separate the results from the process
  - You want them to under vote
  - They want to vote in as many contests as they're comfortable with

## Task examples

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- You usually vote for everyone in the Yellow party. Vote for all the people in that party at one time.
- For State Senator, instead of the Yellow party person, you want the Orange party person. Make sure your vote for State Senator is for the Orange party person.
- For now, you decide not to vote for Water Commissioners.
- When you are ready, finish voting as you really would in a real election.

## Taking notes

Didn't read the instructions. Did he see them?

3 BALLOT / BALOTA OFICIAL /

CONSOLIDATED GENERAL ELECTION / ELECCIONES GENERALES CONSOLIDADAS / 聯合普選  
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO / CIUDAD Y CONDADO DE SAN FRANCISCO / 三藩市市縣  
NOVEMBER 2, 2004 / 2 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2004 / 2004年11月2日

DISTRICT 11 / DISTRITO 11 / 第11選區

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS: Complete the arrow pointing to your choice, as shown in the picture. To vote for a qualified write-in candidate, write the person's name on the blank line provided and complete the arrow.

INSTRUCCIONES PARA LOS ELECTORES: Complete la flecha que apunta hacia su selección, tal como se indica en la imagen. Para votar por un candidato calificado no listado, escriba el nombre de la persona en el espacio en blanco provisto, y complete la flecha.

選民指南：將指向你的選擇的箭頭畫線連接起來，如圖所示。  
投票合格寫入候選人時，在提供的空白上填寫此人的姓名，並將箭頭畫線連接起來。

FEDERAL - 聯邦	FEDERAL - 聯邦	SCHOOL - ESCUELA - 學校
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENTE Y VICEPRESIDENTE Vote for One/Uno Vote por Un/Una	UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE REPRESENTANTE DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DISTRICT 8 - DISTRITO 8 - 第 8 選區 Vote for One/Uno/Una	MEMBER, COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD MIEMBRO, CONSEJO DEL COLEGIO COMUNITARIO Vote for no more than Four Vote por no más de Cuatro
MICHAEL BADARIK AND RICARD CARMAGNA Republican Democrat Independent	MALCOLM DELGADO Democrat Independent	RODNEY GIBSON SCHIFF Democrat Independent
MICHAEL ANTHONY PEROUTKA AND CHUCK BALDWIN Republican Democrat Independent	TELANI DOWELL Democrat Independent	RYAN BERG Democrat Independent
LEONARD PELTZER AND JANCE JORDAN Republican Democrat Independent	JENNIFER DELALMA Democrat Independent	MATT JIM DUNNINGTON Democrat Independent
JOHN F. KERRY AND JOHN EDWARDS Democrat Republican	WRITE IN / ESCRIBIR EN / 寫入	MELTON MARSH III Democrat Independent
DAVID COBB AND PATLA MARCHE Democrat Republican	STATE - ESTADO - 州 MEMBER, STATE ASSEMBLY MIEMBRO, ASAMBLEA ESTATAL DISTRICT 12 - DISTRITO 12 - 第12 選區 Vote for One/Uno/Una	RODOLFO POLES Democrat Independent
GEORGE W. BUSH AND RICHARD CHENEY Republican Democrat	CHRIS MADEN Democrat Independent	DALE JOHNSON TRAMON Democrat Independent
WRITE IN / ESCRIBIR EN / 寫入	TOWERS FORTEN Democrat Independent	WRITE IN / ESCRIBIR EN / 寫入
UNITED STATES SENATOR SENADOR DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS Vote for One/Uno/Una	TELENDY, YEE Democrat Independent	WRITE IN / ESCRIBIR EN / 寫入
DON J. CRONMANN Democrat	WRITE IN / ESCRIBIR EN / 寫入	WRITE IN / ESCRIBIR EN / 寫入

Only voted for 2. Why?

Wrote in a qualified candidate but didn't connect the arrow

## Practice: Test a ballot

- Break up into groups
- Each person takes a role: participant, moderator, observer



## Let's try it.

OFFICIAL GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT		
A	B	C
County	General Election	November 6, 2007
<p><b>Instructions to Voter</b></p> <p>1. To vote, you must completely darken the oval (●) to the left of the candidate or answer of your choice.</p> <p>2. To cast a write-in vote, blacken the oval (●) to the left of the line provided and write in the candidate's name. Only a candidate who has timely filed a valid notice of intent to become a write-in candidate may have a vote counted in his or her favor.</p> <p>3. If you make an error, please return your ballot to a precinct official and obtain a new one.</p> <p><b>OFFICIAL CITY OFFICE TYPE BALLOT</b></p> <p>CLINTON CITY</p> <p><b>For Mayor</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Joseph Barchi <input type="radio"/> Joseph Hallaren</p> <p><b>For President of Council</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Elizabeth Harp <input type="radio"/> Andrew Kowalski</p>	<p><b>For Auditor</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Adam Cramer <input type="radio"/> Greg Vuocolo</p> <p><b>For Treasurer</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Daniel Court <input type="radio"/> Amy Blumhardt</p> <p><b>For City Director of Law</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Alvin Boone <input type="radio"/> James Lian</p> <p><b>For Member of Council at Large</b> (Vote For Not More Than TWO)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Austin Hildebrand-Mac-Dougall <input type="radio"/> James Garrity</p> <p><b>For Member of Council, Seventeenth Ward</b> (Vote For Not More Than One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Lloyd Garriss</p> <p>Write-in _____</p>	<p><b>OFFICIAL VILLAGE OFFICE TYPE BALLOT</b></p> <p>_____ VILLAGE</p> <p><b>For Mayor</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> John Hewetson <input type="radio"/> Victor Martinez</p> <p><b>For Clerk-Treasurer</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Heather Portier <input type="radio"/> David Platt</p> <p><b>For Clerk</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Glen Lawney <input type="radio"/> Brad Schott</p> <p><b>For Treasurer</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Carroll Forrest <input type="radio"/> Bruce Reeder</p> <p><b>VOTE BOTH SIDES</b></p>
A 001 TWP A	B 0001:1	C 001

This SAMPLE ballot provides the CORRECT TITLES and ORDER OF OFFICES for ballot layout for candidates for the November 2007 General Election. The space for a write-in candidate should be provided only if applicable. See Ballot Printing Instructions.

OFFICIAL GENERAL ELECTION BALLOT		
D	E	F
County	General Election	November 6, 2007
<p><b>For Member of Council,</b> (Vote For Not More Than _____)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>For Member of Board of Trustees of Public Affairs</b> (Vote For Not More Than _____)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>OFFICIAL JUDICIAL NON-PARTISAN BALLOT</b></p> <p>_____ MUNICIPAL COURT</p> <p><b>For Judge of Municipal Court</b> (Full Term Commencing _____) (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>For Clerk of Municipal Court</b> (Vote For Not More Than _____)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p>← <i>Print Candidate Name?</i></p>	<p><b>OFFICIAL CITY NON-PARTISAN BALLOT</b></p> <p>_____ CITY</p> <p><b>For Mayor</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>For President of Council</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>For Auditor</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>For Treasurer</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p>	<p><b>For City Director of Law</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>For Member of Council at Large</b> (Vote For Not More Than _____)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>For Member of Council, Ward</b> (Vote For Not More Than One)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p> <p><b>OFFICIAL VILLAGE NON-PARTISAN BALLOT</b></p> <p>_____ VILLAGE</p> <p><b>For Mayor</b> (Vote For Not More Than ONE)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name] <input type="radio"/> [Print Candidate Name]</p>
D 001 TWP A	E 0001:1	F 001

This SAMPLE ballot provides the CORRECT TITLES and ORDER OF OFFICES for ballot layout for candidates for the November 2007 General Election. The space for a write-in candidate should be provided only if applicable. See Ballot Printing Instructions.

## Discussion

- What kinds of things happened?
- What did your voter do?
- What did your voter say?

## Learning from a usability test: Analyze what happened

### Base your results on what the voters *did* and *said*

- Watch what voters *did*
  - Failures to cast ballot, or abandonment
  - Errors or hesitation in marking the ballot
  - Requests for assistance, re-reading instructions
  - Any voter adaptation or behavior that is adaptive (such as taking out reading glasses or moving in closer to the machine)
  - Incidents that would go in the poll book
  - Surprises
  - Indications of voter emotion (confusion, frustration, anger, disgust; delight, satisfaction)

## Base your results on what the voters *did* and *said*

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- Listen for things they *said* that might indicate problems
  - All voters said that the language of the measures was complex and difficult to understand
  - Some voters said that the type was too small
  - Several voters marked their selections with checkmarks or Xs rather than filling in the box
  - Only a few of the voters read the instructions on the ballot
  - Voters expected the numbers to designate steps they should take

## Analyzing data

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- Look for behavior that indicates potential problems
  - Hesitancy, corrections or asking for help all indicate that ballots may be difficult to use or that instructions are not clear
- Look for errors:
  - Count errors
  - Look at where in the ballot the errors occurred
  - Look at the types of errors
- Collect statements by voters
  - During the tasks
  - In the final debriefing
- Compile the results of the post-test questionnaire
  
- If you have a lot of notes put them on stickies and sort them

## Reports compile what you observed in the test

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- A good report includes:
  - Information about when and how the usability test was conducted
  - The details of what you observed (errors, statements by voters, other observations)
  - A list of recommendations for how to improve the ballot
  
- Encourage reporting for
  - Sunshine
  - Public relations
  - Demonstration of improvement and progress
  
- A sample usability report is included in the LEO Usability Testing Kit online resources

Improve your ballots:  
making recommendations

## The Ballot Design Checklist

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- Ballot instructions should be brief, simple, and clear.
  - In instructions for write-in votes, state plainly that voters should not vote for both a named candidate and a write-in a candidate *for the same office*.
  - Write instructions in an active voice and in positive terms. (“Fill in the oval for your write-in vote to count,” rather than, “If the oval is not marked, your vote cannot be counted for the write-in candidate.”)
  - Use common, easily understood words. (“Move to the next page of the ballot,” or “Move to the next screen,” rather than “Navigate forward through the ballot.”)
  - Provide the context of the action first, then the action. (“[Context] To vote for the candidate of your choice, [Action] fill the oval to the left of the candidate’s name.”)
  - Place each instruction on its own line.

## The Ballot Design Checklist (2)

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- Ballot instructions should be brief, simple, and clear.
- Paper ballots:
  - Display general instructions in the top left-hand corner of the ballot. Place specific instructions and related actions together. Do not put all instructions at the beginning of the ballot.
  - Let voters know that if they make a mistake, they can get a new ballot. Include this information in the initial instructions.
- Electronic ballots:
  - Display startup instructions in an easy-to-spot location in the voting booth.
  - Place specific instructions and related actions together. Do not put all instructions at the beginning of the ballot.
  - Instruct voters to review selections and provide clear instructions on how to change a selection and cast the ballot.

## The Ballot Design Checklist (3)

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- Don't split contests.
  - List all candidates for the same race on the same page and in the same column.
  - Remove the entire column or row for any candidate or party that has been withdrawn or disqualified (not just the candidate or party name).
- Make sure ballot design is consistent.
  - Use consistent format and style for every contest and voting action.
  - Use consistent font type, letter-size, and shading in all contests.
  - Place response options (such as fill-in ovals) in a consistent place on the ballot, such as on one side on candidate names or ballot question choices.

## The Ballot Design Checklist (4)

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- Make ballots easy to understand visually.
  - Use flush-left text, instead of centered text.
  - Display all text in mixed case, rather than all capital letters.
  - Use a simple, easy-to-read font, such as Arial or Univers.
  - Bold and/or shade certain text, such as office names.
  - Use a legible, minimum text size, meeting VVSG requirements, such as 12 points.
  - Eliminate extraneous information or design it to avoid visual clutter.

### **Paper ballots:**

- Use the fill-the-oval, rather than the connect-the-arrow, method of selecting a choice in a contest.

### **Electronic ballots:**

- Only place one contest on each screen.

## The Ballot Design Checklist (5)

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- Give voters maximum flexibility.
  - **Electronic ballots:**
    - Allow voters to select or change the language of the ballot at any time during the voting process.
    - Allow voters to change text size and contrast levels and to get audio support at any time during the voting process.

## Last words

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- Usability test your ballots
- Understand the what happened in the test
- Turn that into improved ballots

## Resource: The Ballot Usability Testing Kit

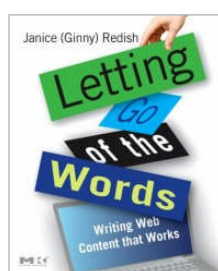
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- A kit of materials to help local election officials run usability tests with ballots for each election
- A project of the Usability Professionals' Association (Dana Chisnell, Laurie Kantner, Ginny Redish, Whitney Quesenbery, Josephine Scott, Sarah Swierenga)
- It includes:
  - Usability Testing Ballots: What you need to know
  - Session script
  - Report template

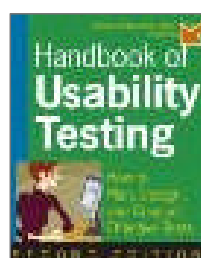
[www.usabilityprofessionals.org/civiclif/voting/leo\\_testing.html](http://www.usabilityprofessionals.org/civiclif/voting/leo_testing.html)

## Resources to learn more about usability

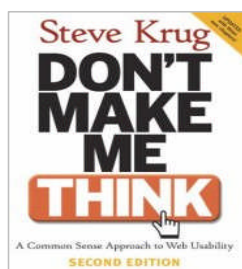
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**Letting Go of the Words** by Janice Redish



**Handbook of Usability Testing** by Jeff Rubin and Dana Chisnell



**Don't Make Me Think: A Common Sense Approach to Web Usability** by Steve Krug

**Ballot Usability and Accessibility**  
<http://ballotusability.blogspot.com/>

**Usability.gov**

A guide to developing usable and useful web sites (from US Dept of HHS)



BRENNAN  
CENTER  
FOR JUSTICE

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law is a non-partisan public policy and law institute that focuses on fundamental issues of democracy and justice.

The Brennan Center's Voting Rights and Elections Project promotes policies that protect rights, equal electoral access, and increased political participation on the national, state and local levels. The Voting Rights and Elections Project works to expand the franchise, to make it as simple as possible for every eligible American to vote, and to ensure that every vote cast accurately recorded and counted.

It has published two path-breaking reports: *The Machinery of Democracy: Protecting Elections in an Electronic World*, which focused on voting system security, and *The Machinery of Democracy: Voting System Security, Accessibility, Usability, and Cost*.



UPA is an association of professionals with a mission to advance the usability profession through education, information, skill-building and improved methods and practices.

The Usability in Civic Life project promotes usability in elections, plain language and accessibility. Projects include participation in the Brennan Center's Ballot Design Task Force, the EAC's Technical Guidelines Development Committee and the US Access Board's advisory committee to update "Section 508" accessibility regulations.

UPA maintains a list of professionals interested in working with local election officials:

<http://www.usabilityprofessionals.org/civiclif/voting/consultants.html>