

Mobile Interactive Design Heuristics

System Status Feedback

The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within a reasonable time.

Speak the User's Language

The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order. Use names and jargon specific to the brand/sport/interest that the application is serving.

Easy to Escape

Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo. Incorporate a way to go "Home" easily.

Consistency and Standards

Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform and brand/sport/interest conventions/jargon.

Error Prevention

Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place.

Recognition not Recall

Make objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the system to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable whenever appropriate.

Flexibility and Efficiency of Use

Advanced features should be optional and useful for speeding up usage and/or creating a greater experience. Applications should support learning by the advanced user and immediate use by the novice.

Aesthetic and Minimalist Design

Do not include irrelevant or edge-case information. Every extra unit of information on a screen competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

Help users Recognize, Diagnose, and Recover from Errors

Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution. It is useful to identify which errors are due to a network problem (correctable by perhaps moving to a new location or trying again later) from those that are software related or server related.

Support

Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large. At a minimum, there needs to be a phone number and a time when the user can call and speak directly with a human about their problem (call or e-mail support).

Breadth not Depth

Users understand broader, shallow information sets better than narrow deep ones. Users also find resources faster in broader, shallow information sets than in narrow, deep ones. This is even more apparent with small screens.

(Kiger, 1984; Jacko & Slavendy, 1996; Zaphiris & Mtei, 1997)

Streamlined Feature Set

Mobile applications work best when addressing a focused need/desire. Browsing is difficult on the small screen, so all features not essential to the experience and key purpose of the application should be stripped out. The tendency to add more and more features/content should be avoided. A sharpshooter approach with a rifle than one of a shotgun should be the approach. Identify the specific, core requirement the application must address and design to that.

Interactive & Real-Time

To the degree that all other heuristics can be followed, every application has to allow the user to interact with real-time information and other users.