# Seller Central usability study guide

## The guide

The purpose of this document is to give UX designers the ability to conduct usability studies on their own without having to request help from a user researcher. Nearly every step along the way is subjective and should be based on the needs of the project and the designer’s ability to obtain relevant information from participants.

Do not think of this document in terms of what you must do for a usability study; think of it as a starting point. Each study you conduct will give you a better understanding about how to best use the time it takes to complete the process from beginning to end. Modify your process as you see fit, but remember that the goal of conducting usability studies is always the same: **To discover an interface’s areas of improvement in terms of efficiency, accuracy, recall, and emotional response.**

## The project

### Define the goals

Ask stakeholders what they would like to get out of the study and find out specific questions about the project that have not yet been answered. Even if these questions’ relationships to the interface usability are not directly apparent, they exist in some way or another. Discovery of those relationships will make themselves known when you begin building tasks.

### Gather the materials

You should now have the designs that will be used for this study in your possession. These designs may come in the form of paper prototypes, wireframes, high fidelity mockups, interactive prototypes, or any combination of the previously mentioned. Whatever you have, it should show something that represents real content. Lorem ipsum has the potential to throw off a seller’s concentration or make them feel like the mockup is nonsense.

### Build the tasks

With goals defined and the test materials in front of you, you can now design your tasks. Tasks can range from vague to specific, but each one should help answer questions about the usability of the designs being tested.

Tasks can also be used to start discussions with sellers. Once you build your tasks, don’t be afraid to try them out with a colleague and see if the purpose is clear.

## The participants

### Find

Ask the project’s PM or main stakeholder to get you a generous list of sellers that fit the target audience criteria. If you feel comfortable finding the correct population of sellers yourself, then there is less need for help. Just make sure you know your target audience.

If you intend to have 4 participants, start with a list of at least 10. Always start with a list of more sellers than you intend to include in the study. Not every one that you contact will get back to you, not every one that gets back to you will get scheduled, and not every one that gets scheduled will show up to the meeting. Account for this when building your initial list of sellers.

At this point, it will be a good idea to either use the existing participant tracking sheet or create your own so that you don’t have to scribble contact info and status of participants on a whiteboard.

### Contact

By far, the quickest method to gauge seller interest is to call them. Ring them up, taking time zone differences into account. If you get an answer, just introduce yourself and ask if they are interested in participating in a usability study with Amazon. Find out if they are the primary user of Seller Central and if they are restricted from viewing any parts of Seller Central. Mention that participants will receive a gift card (the amount depends on how long the sessions will take). A little incentive can go a long way. $50 may be good for a 60 minute session, whereas $100 may be reasonable for a 90 or 120 minute session.

If you don’t get an answer on the phone or you don’t want to call, then email will suffice. Personalize the email a little if you can. Tell the seller you’re conducting a study, ask if they’re interested, and mention the gift card.

**Don’t tell them exactly what you are testing. It introduces bias that can wreck any data you are looking to gather from that participant’s session.**

### Schedule

Scheduling comes in two parts:

1) Finding a day and time that works for the seller

2) Reserving a room in which to conduct the session.

[WebEx](http://www.webex.com/) and [GoToMeeting](http://www.gotomeeting.com/fec/) (both have free trials or versions) work well for scheduling and will send reminder emails to both the host (you) and any participants. In addition, schedule the time in your Outlook calendar and invite all of the project’s stakeholders. This would be a good time to see if anyone is willing to be a note taker.

If you get an A/V room, you’ll be all set. If you don’t get an A/V room, then you need a projector.

### Send and collect non-disclosure agreements

Edit the NDA template document if you deem it necessary and send it as the body of an email to each participant that has been scheduled. You must receive a participant’s required response to the NDA prior to their scheduled session. Once you do receive it, file it away (both in email and a local copy) for later.

## The study

### Finalize preparations

This is essentially just an opportunity to double check that you have everything ready. It’s also a good time to test the test. Go through your materials and make sure prototypes function properly, mockups don’t contain errors, and participants are scheduled for the correct times. Make sure you have a projector in your possession by this time. If anyone that you invited agreed to be a note taker, make sure they are ready.

If you planned on capturing screen interactions and recording audio, recording software like [Camtasia](http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html) will do you well. There is a free trial, so make sure to download/install/learn the software well before you conduct your first session.

### Conduct the study

Be ready. Get there 15 minutes early if possible. Setup your computer and make sure all of your required documents are open. Call the seller and sign onto your web-based conferencing tool. Be friendly and try to avoid talking to them like you’re reading from a script.

Once a session is complete, use your manners and thank the participant for their time. Remind them they will receive their gift card after all of the sessions are completed.

## After the study

### Reimburse participants

After all study sessions are complete, you can disburse gift cards that you previously told participants they would receive for giving us their time.

Use the document here for instructions on how to request and disburse gift cards.

### Write your report

An example report is provided in the “Resources” section at the end of the document. You may follow this strictly, or you may create your own template. Either way, there are a few things that should be in every usability study report:

1. Why the study was conducted
2. What was used to conduct the study
3. Who the study was conducted on
4. How the study was conducted
5. A summary of your sessions

More comprehensive studies will require sections for qualitative and quantitative data, possibly including visuals and resource citations. Depending on who is going to be digesting this report, don’t overdo it, but don’t just provide a drawn out summary either. It needs to represent the fundamentals of a usability study. The report should be something you’ll be proud to reference later on.

### Take feedback and questions

You are bound to receive questions from stakeholders and various readers of the report on several aspects of what you wrote. Be prepared to answer the questions that you can and to forward questions you cannot answer to the appropriate parties. As the owner of the study and report, though, you should feel comfortable fielding questions about your methodology and findings.

## Resources

Camtasia

<http://www.techsmith.com/camtasia.html>

WebEx

<http://www.webex.com/>

GoToMeeting

<http://www.gotomeeting.com/fec/>

Non-disclosure agreement

[Link removed]

Participant tracking sheet

[Link removed]

Example email

[Link removed]

Example report

[Link removed]

Gift Card Order Form

[Link removed]