

User interface design

"The interface is the product."

Jef Raskin

originator of the Apple Macintosh

"A user interface is well designed when the program behaves exactly how the user thought it would."

Joel Spolsky

User Interface Design for Programmers

Uniformity, consistency

- **uniform visual appearance throughout: sizes, colors, fonts, ...**
 - *CSS* is your friend for web pages
- **always put similar items in standard places**
 - File / Edit / View ... / Help
 - OK / Cancel at the bottom right
 - consistency with other systems if it makes sense
 - use the local look and feel
- **follow conventions**
 - ... means "more to come"
 - grayed out means inactive
 - checkmark means currently selected
 - ...

Legibility

- not everyone is 18 years old!
- use large enough text sizes
- use legible fonts
- use contrasting colors
 - don't use dark blue letters on black background!
- don't assume a screen size
 - text should adapt to screen size, not require scrolling
- mobile is different but the same principles apply

DocEng 2013

September 10-13, Florence, Italy



Home

▼ Call for Papers

- Relevant topics
- Submission procedures
- Workshop/tutorial proposals

▼ Committees

- Conference
- Programme
- Steering

Important dates

ProDoc@DocEng

Registration

Support for students

▼ Venue

- Travel and accommodation

Sitemap

Sitemap



Collapse all

- DocEng 2013
 - Call for Papers
 - Committees
 - Home
 - Important dates
 - ProDoc@DocEng
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Ease of use

- **pick good defaults**
- **don't get too deep**
 - multi-level menus
 - drop-downs that don't fit on the screen
- **remember useful information**
 - previous text entries
 - position in file system
 - settings
- **but do it consistently**
- **provide text-based alternatives**
 - let me type filenames instead of forcing a dialog
- **think about accessibility**
- **think about other languages and cultures**

Safety first

- **don't do irrevocable actions without confirmation**
 - don't quit without warning if changes are not saved
- **but do it right**
 - don't ask about saving if there were no changes
Excel and Word both do this wrong
 - show an indicator of whether changes have occurred
- **provide a way to interrupt long-running computations safely**
- **watch out for security warnings that are clicked automatically**

Usability testing *(Krug, Rocket Surgery Made Easy)*

- figure out a small set of important tasks
- tell the user what task to do
 - but not how to do it
- try it yourself
- write it down so the user can refer to it
- get the user to talk out loud about his/her thought processes while performing it

Useful reading

- **Windows user experience interaction guidelines:**
 - <http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/windows/desktop/aa511258.aspx>
- **Steve Krug, Rocket Surgery Made Easy**
- **Joel Spolsky, User Interface Design for Programmers**
- **World's worst web site (one of a million similar sites)**
- <http://www.angelfire.com/super/badwebs/>