

CUE-9: U-Haul Usability Test

Usability Findings

Team L

Study Method

- Test of the uhaul.com website conducted between March 25 – March 28, 2011
- Five participants, all recruited using UserTesting.com
 - These were “unmoderated” sessions where the participants were recorded reading the tasks and thinking out loud on their own.
- Sessions lasted about a half hour each
- Participants attempted seven tasks each using uhaul.com (Appendix A)
 - They were asked background and follow-up questions and typed their answers (Appendix B)

Participant Profiles

Participant	Sex	Occupation	Age	Web savvy
U1	M	Missionary	24	Average
U2	M	Small Business Manager	52	Average
U3	F	Retired. Formerly television news producer, then licensed paralegal.	62	Average
U4	F	Housewife	36	Average
U5	M	Sales and Marketing	31	Average

Findings – Severity Ratings

Each issue in this report includes one of the following severity ratings:

Rating	Rating Code	Description
Critical Problem	A	Causes frequent catastrophes. A catastrophe is a situation where the website “wins” over the test participant – that is, a situation where the test participant cannot solve a reasonable task or where the website annoys the test participant considerably.
Serious Problem	B	Delays test participants in their use of the website for some minutes, but eventually allows them to continue. Causes occasional “catastrophes”.
Minor Problem	C	Causes test participants to hesitate for some seconds.
Good Idea	I	A suggestion from a test participant that could lead to a significant improvement of the user experience.
Positive Finding	P	This approach is recommendable and should be preserved.

Executive Summary

- In general, participants were usually able to complete most or all of their tasks on uhaul.com, with some issues along the way.
- The biggest issues centered around:
 - Confusion navigating: Similar information in multiple places, and lack of consistency and sufficient detail
 - Understanding what the costs and totals are, both due in the store and online
 - Having to do unnecessary work:
 - manual assessment/calculation (e.g., mileage, storage space)
 - Clearing out fields prefilled for supplies
- The most positive aspects included:
 - Main navigation and links at the bottom of the screen worked well
 - The site saved reservation information even when navigating away from the reservation
 - Reviews/ratings associated with locations

Detailed Findings

Global Findings: Navigation & Content

- Participants often had issues with navigating content, especially in the task involving looking for additional supplies and equipment. Certain things were offered in various places, and not in a consistent way
 - e.g., in one place furniture pads were offered by the dozens, and in others you can choose an exact number
 - e.g., furniture pads and other supplies are offered on the shopping cart page, but then users didn't always remember where they saw them, and had to click a few levels deep to find them elsewhere on the site.
- A couple of participants also noted that they were unsure whether they could rent/borrow or buy items
 - e.g., dolly— Some wondered if the price listed was to buy or rent. Only a couple of participants found the page where one could reserve a dolly, so most assumed they'd have to buy one.
 - “It would be nice to tell me which items I'm buying, and which items I'm actually renting.”
- Severity Rating: B. *Although this didn't necessarily ultimately lead to failing tasks, this issue was apparent at various points during the session and led to significant delays in success and frustration.*

Global Findings: Links on bottom of the screen

- The navigational links listed at the bottom of the screen were appreciated by a number of participants and used effectively.
 - P3: “Everything is pretty concise at the bottom.”
 - Severity Rating: P. *This is a positive finding, indicating something that should be preserved.*
- The links were most often used to navigate to the FAQs.
 - Most wondered upon returning from the FAQs, whether it would lose their reservation. And were pleasantly surprised when it remembered all of their data. Rating: P: *Positive finding.*
 - However, this points to the larger issue that users didn’t always adjust well to being taken away from their reservation to look up FAQs, and sometimes couldn’t easily find their way back. As secondary/reference content, it is recommended that the FAQs in particular open in a new window so that users can reference it in relation to their reservation, and not navigate away from the reservation. Rating: C. *This was more of an annoyance to participants than anything, only causing slight hesitation in behavior.*

Global Findings: Fees/Cost

- Participants had significant trouble understanding the costs in the shopping cart, especially in reconciling the Amount Due with the costs of everything listed.
 - Many didn't realize or see the "due in store" indications, thus they were especially confused when the total amount due was either 0.00 or much lower than they anticipated.
 - Rating: A: *This was significantly confusing and often kept people from completing their tasks.*
- Participants were often confused as to whether a particular cost listed was a one-time cost, or per month (e.g. storage), or per day (Safemove: \$105). Rating: C. *Did not ultimately cause task failure, but was slightly confusing.*
- One participant noted that the environmental fee of \$5 was just another thing to "make people suspicious" and suggested that it be rolled into the truck rental cost. Rating: I: *Suggestion*

Global Findings: Consistency of location results

- Through the phone number inquiry task, one participant realized that the listing of locations when searching for a nearby pick-up place *did not* list a phone number, while the results from searching within the “Locations” part of the website *did*.
 - Rating: B: *This type of inconsistency often causes people to get lost backtracking to various pages to find what they’d seen earlier, or just get confused having seen different information on very similar-looking pages.*

Findings: Identifying distance of locations

- When searching for pick-up locations, or locations in general, participants found it frustrating and cumbersome that the locations listed did not show distance mileage.
 - *P4: “It’s weird how it’s not showing me the distance... If they’re sorting by distance, I’d like to see how far it is.”*
 - *Rating: A: This happened for multiple participants and they had to guess based on the map which were the closest locations and how far away they were.*

Findings: Identifying mileage between locations

- Once entering pick-up and drop-off locations for a truck, users progressed to a page listing the available trucks. On this page, it contained a note that stated how many miles were covered by the rates listed.
 - It wasn't clear to users if that was the exact mileage between Pittsburgh and Denver, or if that was just the mileage covered by the rate.
 - Those who assumed it was the mileage covered by the rate wanted to see what the mileage was for the trip they just entered (to make sure that it was covered by the rate-mileage listed). One participant said he would go to Google Maps to look it up to make sure.
 - *"Having extra mileage can really add up."*
 - Rating: B: *Although this information is easily found elsewhere and did not hinder the reservation, it caused hesitation and confused a number of users.*

Findings: Searching for pickup and storage locations

- In addition to not understanding distance of various locations, a few participants weren't clear what the red pin on the map represented.
 - *"Is that the zip code that I put in? I don't know what that is."*
 - Rating: B. *Although this only was commented on by a couple of participants, it has the potential to create false assumptions about whether the pin was in the center of the town, the zip code, or an exact address listed.*
- When entering a zip code on the homepage for a pickup location, and then on the subsequent page typing in "Darlington Road", it did not recognize the search criteria when one participant attempted it.
 - The user expected that since he had entered the zip code on the first page, it would recognize Darlington Road as a subset of that zip code, when in reality the new search was independent of the initial criteria.
 - Rating: B. *Although it only impacted one user, this could be a frustrating and confusing experience for those who attempt something similar.*

Findings: Searching for pickup and storage locations, cont'd

- One participant suggested adding an advanced search to the website's homepage to enable him to enter more detailed information up front (e.g. # of rooms and other options).
 - Rating: I: *Idea.*
- On the storage landing page, one user tried to click on part of the map image, assuming that it would bring them to the locations/a filter for a particular state.
 - Rating: C. *This is likely a minor annoyance for users, but something that others might assume as well. Consider making this into an interactive map to facilitate another way of pursuing locations.*
- Participants found the review ratings for locations useful
 - “That’s so fantastic. I love reviews.”
 - Rating: P: *Positive finding, preserve this functionality.*

Findings: Evaluating location, storage, and truck options

- On the results page for different storage types, one participant suggested listing the actual rates right on that page, rather than forcing him to choose “view rates” for each.
 - Rating: I: *Idea*
- After going to a particular page to see more about the storage facility, one participant suggested a link to “go back to storage results.”
 - Rating: I: *Idea*
- While searching for storage locations, the progress indicator for loading results stopped/froze for a long time, causing the user to think that there was a bug with the website. However, after an extended period of time where the progress indicator had frozen, the results were loaded.
 - Rating: B: *Giving the user the impression that the page stopped working may cause frustration and abandonment.*

Findings: Evaluating options, cont'd

- When browsing the different size options for truck size, many participants hesitated and weren't sure how to assess the number of bedrooms would be moved.
 - This is likely partly an artifact of the task, directing the user with a number of rooms rather than bedrooms. It's reasonable to think that participants in reality would be more prepared to answer regarding their own places.
 - However, a few participants legitimately wanted to either decide by number of total rooms, or by the truck size itself. One participant went to the FAQs to find the actual truck sizes.
 - Rating: B: *In this particular task, it affected a number of participants. However, it is suggested to retest this in a realistic environment and see if it is truly a significant issue.*
- One user suggested that on the page showing pictures of the truck sizes, including an actual drawing of a piece of furniture in it to demonstrate the relative size of the truck (similar to in the storage section). Rating: I: *Idea*

Findings: Evaluating options, cont'd

- Almost all users had to manually calculate the amount of storage space needed to accommodate ten boxes at a specific size, as the site only gave dimensions by total feet.
 - Again, this finding may partly be an artifact of the task, asking for a number of boxes of a particular size in inches. However, it is not unreasonable for someone to approach the task in that way.
 - Participants often looked for a calculator; "I'm looking for something that will help me calculate, because I'm not a mathematician...On this page I would love to see some sort of a calculator, where you could put in the size of the boxes you need it to store and it would tell you what size storage you needed."
 - Rating: B: *This issue affected almost all participants.*
- One participant suggested a way to type in the dimensions needed for storage (presumably in any units desired) and returning plausible choices for storage units
 - Rating: I: *Idea*
- One user noted that he expected to enter the number of months he wanted the storage unit for, in order to add it to the shopping cart.
 - Rating: C: *This was a minor concern that would not hinder task success, but perhaps points to the larger global issue of understanding the cost structure.*

Findings: Packing Materials/ Equipment/Services

- One participant noted that she liked having additional materials and services advertised on the shopping cart page (and in other places). Rating: P
 - *“I like all these little extras thrown in. It makes me feel like I’m gonna be taken care of.”*
- However, the pre-filled quantities became problematic or annoying for users
 - P1: *“What? who would use 10 dozen furniture pads? That’s ridiculous.”*
 - One participant assumed that those items were already added to his cart. Rating: C: *Only one person was affected by this.*
 - Others were annoyed that they had to “zero-out” or change the quantity in each field if they only wanted a couple of items (because it submitted in groups). Rating: A. This caused significant frustration and hesitation.
 - *“I’m not sure I like that...because if I was in a hurry I might not notice that those numbers were in there, and I might reserve things that I didn’t really want to get.”*

Findings: Packing Materials/Equipment/Services, cont'd

- One participant suggested calling the site section “packing supplies and equipment” because she doesn’t view a dolly as a supply. Rating: I: *Idea*
- Upon finding the place to rent a dolly (<http://www.uhaul.com/RentalItems/>), the user could not find a place to actually make the reservation (the text at the top of the page had a link to make reservations but it took a long time to find). Rating: B: *Only one user stumbled upon this area, but it has the potential of confusing participants significantly. Consider integrating an action link with each rental item within the body of the page itself.*
- When finally clicking on the link to reserve a dolly, it brought the user to a very generic-seeming page where he then had to search further to find the right place to reserve one. Rating: C.
- On the dolly rental page, the participant didn’t find the social media links useful in this context; “*Why would I share that on Facebook? ‘I got moving dollies. I’m soooo excited.’*” Rating: C

Findings: Damage Liability task

- Participants struggled significantly with the task on understanding coverage for vandalism, often getting lost and confused in the different types of coverage and seemingly elusive language.
 - P1 found the “Truck coverage PDF” helpful, but he could not click into items for more information. Rating: C
 - Most went to the FAQs for this task, and found that the information listed there was not very useful. There were multiple possible areas for the information, and the damage FAQ specifically listed things such as “damage waiver” and “liability coverage” without defining them there. One participant suggested moving the descriptions of SafeMove and the other choices into this FAQ. Rating: A: *This impacted almost all users and often led to task failure.*
 - A couple of participants found information about “accidental damage,” but were unclear as to whether that encompasses vandalism by a random person. Rating: B: *This particular piece of confusion sometimes led to an inability to complete the task.*

Other FAQ Findings

- The FAQs page has a table of contents on the left, listing multiple sub-sections. When a user clicks into the FAQs from the bottom of any page of the site, the appropriate FAQ sub-section loads in context. E.g., clicking the same FAQ link from the Truck section brings you to a different view than if clicking it from the Storage section.
 - This confused one participant, as he did not notice the left-hand side menu. He didn't know how to get back to the "other" FAQs he had seen before.
 - Rating: C.
- One participant felt that FAQs was important enough to put as a link/tab at the top of the page. She also suggested having a "home" tab.
 - Rating: I: *Idea*

Findings: Shopping Cart/Checkout

- There was a additional services section on the shopping cart listing some storage spaces with a “view all” link. One person clicked that link to find that “all” were associated with Denver (the drop-off location). He had to search to get to Pittsburgh.
 - Rating: C: This is a minor usability issue that may not impact many users and would cause a little additional work in certain cases.
- P1 was confused as to why the shopping cart confirmed the pick-up location, yet stated that a pick-up location would be scheduled. This was unclear. Rating: C.
- P3 could not find a way to edit the shopping cart. Rating: C: *This is rated a minor issue, as only one person was unable to do this. However, most of the participants didn't need to edit. This problem may be more impactful in reality.*

Findings: Shopping Cart/Checkout, cont'd

- When P4 clicked on the icon to remove an item from the shopping cart, she got a dialog box that offered the choice to “remove” or “cancel”. At quick glance she assumed that “cancel” meant to cancel the order, so clicked it and was confused when the item was not gone from the cart.
 - Rating: C: This would likely only happen occasionally which would lead to minor confusion/annoyance, but perhaps an enhancement could be made to this flow to prevent it.
- P5 suggested a progress indicator upon checking out, so that he could anticipate each necessary step, and easily move to previous steps.
 - Rating: I: *Idea*

Appendix A - Tasks

Scenario: Your friends Mike and Anna are about to move from Pittsburgh, PA to Denver, CO. They have an apartment in Pittsburgh consisting of a living room, a bedroom, a kitchen, and a bathroom. They want to find the cheapest service for the move to Colorado. They expect to make the move themselves with some help from a few friends.

They are planning to move out on April 14th and they expect the trip to take 3 days.

The couple plans to return to Pittsburgh after 2 years so they want to rent a self storage unit in Pittsburgh for the stuff they don't need in Denver.

Task 1: The couple needs a truck that is suitable for all the furniture and belongings in their 3 room apartment. Please find the total price the couple will have to pay for the truck. Note: They are moving on April 14th from Darlington Rd. in Pittsburgh, PA 15217 to Emerson St. in Denver, CO 80218

Task 2: Before you go any further, you want to check if Mike and Anna need a special driver's license to drive the truck across country. Where would you find that info?

Task 3: They also need an indoor storage unit in Pittsburgh that can hold 10 moving boxes (18" x 18" x 16") and a large fridge. Find the per month cost of the storage.

Task 4: You have a few questions that the U-Haul website hasn't answered. Please find the phone number for the U-Haul pickup location closest to the couple's home on Darlington Rd. in Pittsburgh, PA.

Task 5: The couple has decided to rent the truck. Please book the truck you found the pricing for earlier. In addition, please order 20 large moving boxes, 15 small moving boxes, a utility dolly, and a dozen moving blankets. Note: Please stop when you reach the "Billing Info" page. Do NOT submit the order.

Task 6: During the move, an unknown person scratched the truck in several places, probably with a knife. An auto body technician has estimated that the repair will cost \$2,000. Since you helped the couple book the truck, they called to find out if they are liable for repair costs. And if so, how much will it cost?

Task 7: You were impressed with U-Haul during your friends' move and you are considering U-Haul yourself. Find the nearest U-Haul pick-up/drop off to your home. Note: You live at 48105 Warm Springs Blvd., Fremont, CA 94539.

Appendix B – Answers to background and follow-up questions

- **Participant U1**

- **Knowledge of U-Haul**

- Is familiar with U-Haul. Has used the website to find the price of a tow dolly. It turned out to be too expensive.

- **What did you like most about U-Haul's website?**

- It was pretty easy to use

- **What is most in need of improvement?**

- Finding out if I'm liable if my truck gets vandalized.

- **Participant U2**

- **Knowledge of U-Haul**

- Is familiar with U-Haul. Rented a U-Haul truck and a trailer years ago. Has not used the U-Haul website.

- **What did you like most about U-Haul's website?**

- The top menu bar made it extremely easy to navigate to the type of rental that you want and the location search made it easy to find the nearest location. I also liked the speed of the website.

- **What is most in need of improvement?**

- The FAQs need to be on top of each page, not in very small print on the bottom of the page. When going through the checkout process and adding supplies/boxes I should not have to delete items that I did not select as was the case when I wanted boxes. It appears that your site automatically includes some supplies.

Appendix B, cont'd

- **Participant U3**

- **Knowledge of U-Haul**

Has rented U-Haul truck twice to help friends move and once for herself to move some furniture because it was a little cheaper than what the furniture store wanted to deliver it

- **What did you like most about U-Haul's website?**

When I clicked on a link, I had an expectation of what I would see on the next page.

U-Haul's website delivered what I expected to see, so it made navigation of the site extremely easy. Also, when asked to do another task, each link was where I expected to find it. I didn't have to search for anything. There was something fun about going through the different steps to complete each task. I found the site very enjoyable.

- **What is most in need of improvement?**

- I ran into a bit of a problem in the storage section (I believe it was Task #3). The page seems to freeze, and you can see in the video how I tried to work around the situation two or three times. It finally worked, but I'm not sure what caused the site to hang up at that point.

- I'd like to see an icon on each page that indicates the page is loading. It was on some, but not all pages. There were a few times that I wasn't sure if my click had "gone through" or if I needed to click a link or button again.

- I'd love to see a calculator in the storage section where I could enter the size and number of boxes I need to store and it would generate a suggested size of storage compartment. Even though the square footage of each unit is listed, I'm terrible with math and had to guess at the size I needed. It would be helpful to have this in the truck rental section, too. (If it is there, I didn't notice it....)

- Also, on the page where I was ordering boxes, there were pre-populated numbers for accessories that I didn't need. I'd like to see those boxes left blank so the user can fill in what they need.

- I had to go back and edit my cart to remove a furniture dolly that I didn't need. First, I looked for an edit button on the shopping cart, but didn't find one. I finally figured out that if I clicked on the link for the accessories, it would take me to the page and I could change the number there...but if someone didn't try clicking on that link, they might close out their order and leave the site. (You can see in the video where I attempted to find an "edit cart" button.)

Appendix B, cont'd

- **Participant U4**

- **Knowledge of U-Haul**

Participant is very familiar with U-Haul. They have moved many, many times using U-Haul trucks. They have also rented a climate-controlled storage facility from U-Haul.

- **What did you like most about U-Haul's website?**

I most liked that the site was easy to navigate and finding what I was looking for was almost always quick and straight forward. I liked that I was walked step by step through the process of renting a truck and choosing all of the extra options. I liked that there were maps of U-Haul locations as well as photos and driving directions. I liked all of the extras I was offered links to such as help moving and storage units.

- **What is most in need of improvement?**

I would have appreciated exact mileage from the zipcode or exact address I entered to each pick-up or drop-off location. Having a little more clarity on what will fit in each truck would be helpful. Instead of simply saying, fits 1-2 bedroom apartment, if it could show me a photo, drawing, or description of all of the items that would be expected from a 1-2 apartment that would fit in each size truck.

- **Participant U5**

- **Knowledge of U-Haul**

Knows U-Haul well. Sees their trucks in many places. Rented a truck from them about 7 years ago, cross-town rental. Does not recall if he used the website 7 years ago.

- **What did you like most about U-Haul's website?**

I liked the homepage set up and design. I felt like it was very easy to start looking for prices and information.

- **What is most in need of improvement?**

I think the one thing that would have helped me the most was a numbered/steps section that told me what was happening during the reservation process. e.g. 1. Look for trucks/rates. 2. Cover Your Rental 3. Order Supplies 4. Find Storage 5. Review 6. Confirm. This would have given me more confidence in understanding that I was moving through the process appropriately and that I would have opportunities to make important selections in the process.