

Task 3 Taxpayer Usability Testing Protocol

Interview information:

Date:

Time: _____ am/pm to _____ am/pm

Interviewer:

Participant ID:

Vignettes completed (circle): V1 V2 V3 V4 V5

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for helping us out today. My name is [NAME] and I work as a researcher with the MITRE Corporation. MITRE is a not-for-profit company that runs federally funded research data centers, including for the IRS.

I'd like to start out by telling you a little bit about what we're doing today. As you may already know, the IRS has redesigned the 1040 form for the upcoming tax season beginning in 2019. Anytime the IRS redesigns a form or creates a new form, it is important to test how well the new form works for real taxpayers like you. Today, you'll be helping us out by filling out the new form using fictitious tax information while I observe you, and then I'll ask a few questions.

I want to stress that my purpose here today is not to collect your personal information, but rather to understand if there are any problems or difficulties you encounter while filling out the new form so we can make recommendations to the IRS on how to improve the form or better support taxpayers as they fill out the new form. As such, there are no right or wrong answers. Our team not design the new form, so please don't feel like you need to hold back or worry that we will take your criticisms personally. Also, MITRE has no commercial interest in this form; we won't make money off of approving or disapproving the form.

Before we get started, I'd like you to read and sign this consent form. This consent form explains your rights as a participant in this research study. It explains that your information will be kept confidential, and your name will not be associated with anything you tell me when I prepare my report for the IRS. It also explains that you have the right to end the interview at any time.

[GIVE CONSENT FORM AND HAVE PARTICIPANT SIGN]

Thank you. Again, I want to remind you that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. We will be here for about 60 to 90 minutes. At the completion of the interview, I will give you a prepaid VISA card for \$100.

Do you have any questions before we start?

USABILITY SECTION

As I mentioned before, our first activity is for you to fill out the new 1040 form. Again, we are not looking for information about you personally, but rather, your experience as you fill out the form – what you are thinking and how you decided on your answers. In order to protect your confidentiality, I am going to give you a fictitious test scenario.

[GIVE TEST SCENARIO DOCUMENTS]

Here you will find a write-up about the scenario and some fictitious documents like the ones you might receive in real life from an employer or other sources. I'd like you to pretend that you are filling out the 1040 at home as this person in the scenario. Please fill out the form as though we were not here. I understand that sometimes you might want to ask me a question about how to fill out the form, but again, my goal is to understand how you would fill out the form if I weren't here. If you have questions for me, we can discuss those when the interview is over.

[GIVE NEW 1040 FORM]

Here is the redesigned 1040 form. Please go ahead and fill it out using these documents. I will observe you and take some notes, and then I will have some questions about your experience when you finish the form.

[OBSERVE PARTICIPANT FILL OUT FORM.]

TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- HOW OFTEN PARTICIPANT LOOKED AT INSTRUCTIONS
- FOR WHAT ITEMS PARTICIPANT LOOKED AT INSTRUCTIONS
- ITEMS WHERE PARTICIPANT HESITATED OR EXPRESSED CONFUSION
- ITEMS WHERE PARTICIPANT MADE ERRORS]

Satisfaction Questionnaire

ADMINISTER SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Debriefing Questions - Usability

1. Overall, how easy or difficult would you say filling out the new 1040 form was? [if needed] Why do you say that?
2. [If participant looked at the instructions] I noticed that you looked at the instructions when you were filling out [INDICATE PART OF FORM]. What were you looking for?
 - a. Was there anything you were looking for that you didn't find in the instructions?
3. [If participant expressed confusion or hesitation] I noticed that you seemed unsure at [INDICATE PART OF FORM]. Can you tell me what you were thinking when you filled out this part?
[**repeat question for each section/line where participant expressed confusion or hesitation]

4. [If participant committed errors] Can you tell me how you decided on your answer for this section/line?
 - a. [If needed] How certain or uncertain are you of your response on this line? Why do you say that?
 - b. [**repeat questions for each section/line where participant committed errors]

Vignettes

[DEPENDENT ON HOW LONG THE INTERVIEW IS RUNNING, DECIDE WHETHER TO DO ONE OR MORE VIGNETTES]

Now I'd like you to take a look at another fictional scenario. Please fill out the section of the 1040 form that corresponds to [THE PART OF THE FORM FOR THE VIGNETTE].

Debriefing Questions - General Opinions/Feedback

1. Before doing this interview, what, if anything, had you heard about the new 1040 form?
2. In your opinion, what can the IRS do to help taxpayers like you with the transition from the old 1040 form to the new 1040 form?
 - a. What steps would you take to get help in areas that were confusing or challenging?
3. The IRS is not able to make changes for the 2019 filing season, but may make changes in the future. Are there any wording changes you would suggest for the form or the instructions to help improve them?
 - a. Any other suggestions you have to improve the form?
4. Overall, how do you think your experience filling out the new 1040 form compares with your experiences filling out the old 1040 form? [if needed] Can you tell me more about that?
 - a. Would you say that the new 1040 form is easier or more difficult to fill out compared to the old 1040 form? [if needed] Can you tell me more about that?
5. In general, is it challenging to understand the language and instructions on the tax forms? Why do you say that?