



There's a lot to consider when you're thinking about user testing for your mobile app. What? When? How? Here are our answers to the questions we hear the most about user testing mobile apps.

Q. We already have some beta testers who use our app. Do we also need to do user testing?

- A.** Any testing is good, but as beta testers get to know your app, it gets harder for them to spot usability problems because they no longer have fresh eyes. Also, friends and family (the usual source of beta testers) are not necessarily a good proxy for typical users because they are too emotionally invested in your product or aren't representative of your customer base.

UserTesting gives you feedback from typical users who don't already know your app and have no emotional investment in it. User tests help you understand the needs and reactions of normal users, the people who will be writing your reviews in the app store.

Q. Should we test before or after app release?

- A.** We strongly recommend testing apps prior to release, during development. It's much easier to fix a problem in the early stages of development than to do it after the product is finished (not to mention after you've received a slug of bad reviews in the app store).

Q. Testing an iOS app before release is very difficult because of Apple's security. How do you handle that?

- A.** We have special processes to simplify the testing of iOS apps. We take care of the UDID management, and we don't deplete your allocation of UDIDs. Just fill out the test form online, give us a link to your app, and we'll take care of the rest. (Note: due to the extra logistics involved, iOS unreleased tests take an average of three business days to complete after we receive your .ipa file.)

Q. When in the development process should we do user tests?

- A.** Whenever you have something you can show to users, it's a good idea to get feedback on it right away. You can even test prototypes and preliminary wireframes (anything you can display in a browser, you can show in a user test). Generally, the sooner you identify problems, the easier it is to fix them. We've seen tragic examples of companies that tested at the end of development, identified problems, but released anyway because it was too late in the process to make changes.

Q. What sorts of tests should we do on mobile apps?

- A.** When people hear "user testing," they tend to assume that means only usability testing. That is, of course, one of the things you should do with user testing: Have users go through the main functions of your app, make sure they're intuitive, and identify questions or hesitations users might have.

Many apps include icons and controls that the developer custom-created for the app. Although artistic creativity is great, one of the most common causes of confusion in user tests is buttons and controls that users can't easily understand. It's essential to test these features.

But there are also three other important tasks for user testing. The first is to look for emotional engagement. In other words, how do people feel about your app? Can they quickly accomplish what they want to do? Do they feel rewarded by using it? Mobile users are notoriously impatient and easily distracted. If your app doesn't make people feel engaged, they may move on to something else, and never come back.

The second task is to get a deeper understanding of how your customers think. The better you understand them, the better you can make decisions on their behalf. User tests are like mini-focus groups, but you can organize them on a day's notice and with far less expense and hassle.

The third use is settling internal arguments. Because mobile devices are highly personal, you may find that people on your team can be extremely passionate about a dispute over a feature or UI element. Rather than having a knock-down argument on the subject, it's often easier and faster to let the actual users give you a ruling. User tests make it easy to bring in that voice of the customer.

Q. Should we test on both tablets and smartphones?

- A.** If your app is designed to run on both tablets and smartphones, you should test on both of them. A screen layout that looks good on a smartphone can look uninviting on a tablet, and vice-versa. And user behaviors are subtly different on tablets and smartphones.

Q. We're testing an Android app. Which brands of smartphone should we test on?

- A.** Samsung devices account for about 50% of Android web traffic in the U.S., so that's the best place to start if you're short on time or money. LG, Motorola, and HTC are also major Android vendors in the U.S., and each has its own unique skin of Android that may behave differently than you expect. It's best to test on a mix of brands. (Source for brand share: Statcounter GS, 2013).

Q. Can you test Windows Phone and BlackBerry?

- A.** Yes! Since these are less common platforms you'll need to contact us to place the order.



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