

# Ten user research techniques for the web

Paul Gill, Torchbox  
@paulsimongill

**“I found what I was looking for quickly and without having to think”. - *Anonymous participant from user testing***

# 0. Why do research?

- \* user centred-design
- \* satisfy needs
- \* content strategy
- \* evidence-based decision making

## 0.2 What do we need to know?

- \* context
- \* language
- \* needs
- \* tasks

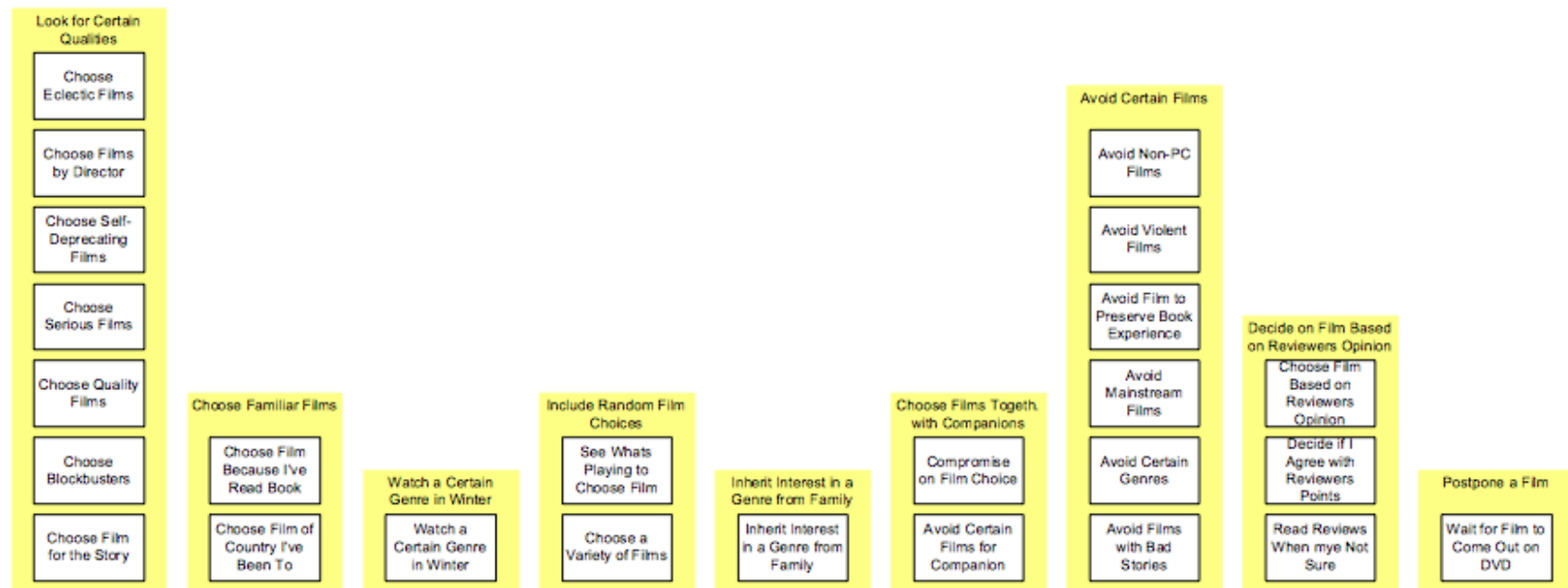
\* context



\* language

< OBVIOUS		REQUIRES THOUGHT >
<p>Jobs! <i>Click</i></p>  <p>Jobs</p>	<p>Hmm. <i>[Milliseconds of thought]</i> Jobs. <i>Click</i></p>  <p>Employment Opportunities</p>	<p>Hmm. Could be Jobs. But it sounds like more than that. Should I click or keep looking?</p>  <p>Job-o-Rama</p>

# Choose Film



What's Playing Today (by title)	What's Playing Today (by location)	Film List (by genre)	What's Playing Today (by location)		What's Playing Today (by location)	Film List (by genre)	Film List (compiled reviews)	Rent a DVD from Sponsor
What's Playing (by title)	What's Playing (by location)	Film List (by related films)	What's Playing (by location)	List of Movies Playing Now	What's Playing (by location)	Film List (by related films)	Film List (by favorite reviewer)	Reserve a DVD from Sponsor
What's Playing Today (by director/actor)	What's Playing Today (at favorite theaters)		What's Playing Today (by title)	Pick a Film (by favorite theater)	What's Playing Today (by title)		Film List (by peer rating)	DVD Release Dates
What's Playing (by director/actor)	What's Playing (at favorite theaters)		What's Playing (by title)	What's Playing in the Next Two Hrs (by location)	What's Playing (by title)		Film List (by related films)	
Film List (by genre)	Film List (based on books)		What's Playing Today (by director/actor)	What's Playing in the Next Two Hrs (by title)	What's Playing Today (by director/actor)	List of Movies Playing Now	My Favorite Reviewers List	
Film List (by director/actor)	Film List (by country of story)		What's Playing (by director/actor)	What's Playing in the Next Two Hrs (by actor/director)	What's Playing (by director/actor)	Is It Sold Out?	Pick Favorite Reviewer	
Film List (by mood)	Film List (by country of origin/director)		What's Playing Today (at favorite theaters)	What's Playing in the Next Two Hrs (at favorite theaters)	What's Playing Today (at favorite theaters)	Is There a Line?	Links to Other Review Websites	
Film List (by related films)	List of Movies Playing Now		What's Playing (at favorite theaters)	How Much Longer Will It Be Playing?	What's Playing (at favorite theaters)	How Much Longer Will It Be Playing?		

# The techniques





# 1. Existing research

- \* Market research
- \* Reports/studies from the sector

Good for:-

- \* Audience overview
- \* Domain knowledge

## **Q2 How happy were you with Paul's talk on user research?**

- ☐ Ecstatic
- ☐ Very ecstatic
- ☐ Deliriously happy
- ☐ I'd prefer not to say

NEXT

## 2. Surveys

- \* On and offline
- \* "Web intercepts"

### Good for:-

- \* Quant data on audience groups (age, location, etc.).
- \* Lists of needs.
- \* Recruiting users for later research.





# 3. Analytics

- \* Popular content and landing/exit pages
- \* Search terms (site and engines)
- \* GTM.

Good for:-

- \* Language
- \* Current user needs/tasks



## 4. Contextual inquiry

- \* Listening
- \* Watching

Good for:-

- \* Context
- \* Language
- \* Frustrations and opportunities





# 5. Interviews

- \* Phone
- \* Face-to-face

## Good for:-

- \* Best way of finding out detailed information about your users - context, language,
- \* BUT: sample size



*"You kids don't know what you want. That's why you're still kids, 'cause you're stupid. Just tell me what's wrong with the freakin' show!" - The Simpsons: Season 8, Episode 14*

## 6. Focus groups

Good for:-

- \* Gauging opinion.
- \* Internal audiences
- \* BUT: risk of the opinion of one.

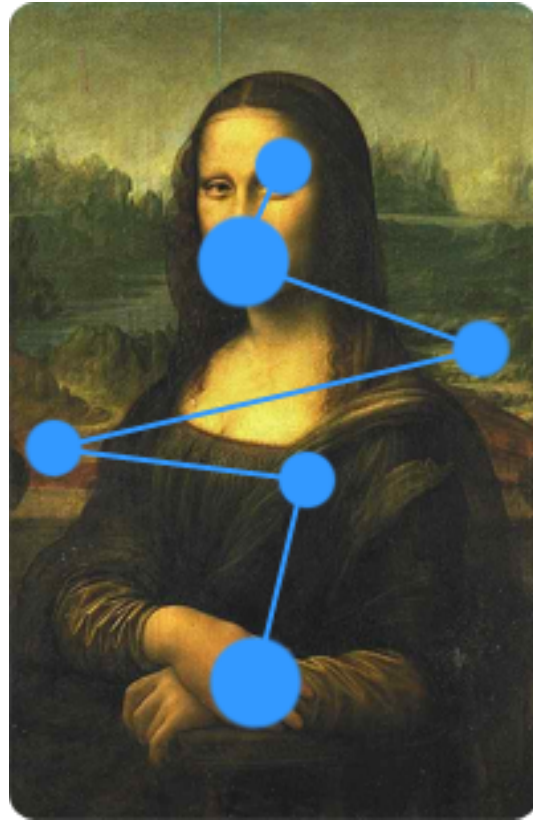


# 7. Card sorts

- \* Open
- \* Closed
- \* Online tools

**Good for:-**

- \* Language
- \* Information architecture



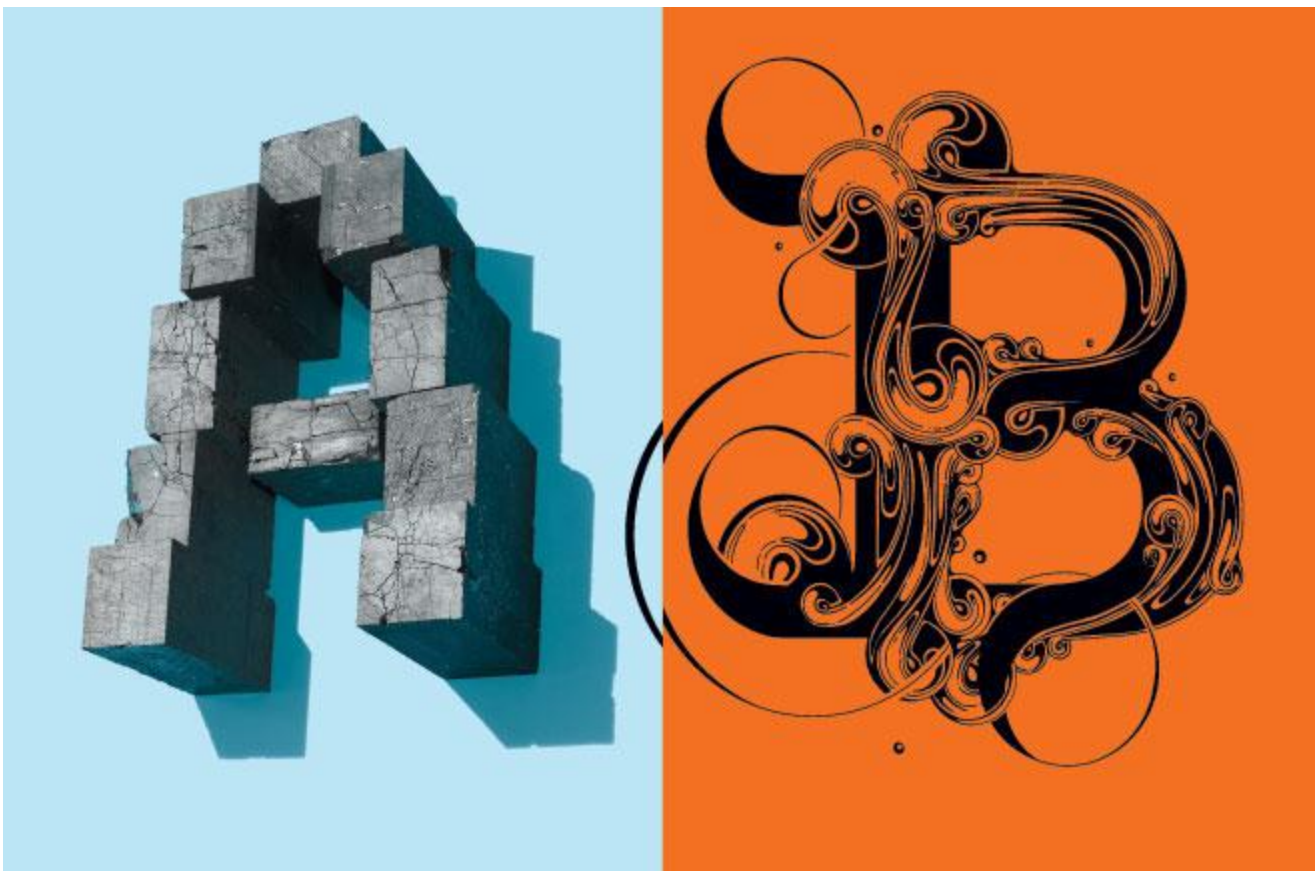
## 8. User testing

- \* Face-to-face
- \* Remote

Good for:-

- \* Tasks.
- \* Language.





# 9. AB and multivariate testing

- \* Testing alternative layouts
- \* Done on existing sites
- \* Need traffic

Good for:-

- \* Language.
- \* Tasks.



# 10. Personas

- \* Archetypes
- \* Needs not stats
- \* For designers, marketers, managers...
- \* Settle arguments
- \* Dimensions



# Matthias Neumann

*"A diligent German Astrophysics student, dedicated to his research and looking for a world-class expert to work with."*

**About:** Studied entirely in top-level German institutions and is currently starting the second year of an intensive Master's programme. Expected to graduate top of his cohort.  
**Age:** 23  
**Audience:** Prospective graduate student (research; overseas)

Background & use of web	Motivation & relationship	Goals & needs	Frustrations	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hopes to secure departmental, governmental or Research Council award related specifically to his research.</li> <li>Interested in football, comedy and programming.</li> <li>Very technical though not design-oriented; Linux user.</li> <li>Maintains his own website and a modest presence on Facebook and Twitter; socialises mainly amongst those with the same academic interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research-focussed; wants to pursue his research with world-class facilities and a leading expert in his field.</li> <li>Wants a community of students in his discipline to collaborate, network and socialise with.</li> <li>Want to work at a top rated RAE department (in EU), with record of ground-breaking research and frequent publications in high-impact journals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Find out what the English language requirements are.</b></li> <li><b>Find out whether his German qualifications are likely to be competitive.</b></li> <li>Find out which supervisors/ research groups are at Oxford and who have vacancies.</li> <li>Would like to find out about the department, research facilities and accommodation options.</li> <li>Discover what funding is available, including scholarships specifically for German students and also Research Council funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He isn't sure whether he can apply directly to the supervisor/department he would like to study with or whether he is required to apply through the central admissions process.</li> <li>He isn't sure how to apply for funding/scholarships, or the likelihood of being successful.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate direct communication with the department and straightforward signposting to detailed academic information.</li> </ul>

All needs for Matthias at: <http://needotron.torchbox.com/search/tag/prospective%20graduates>

# Your exercise

- \* Groups of 5 please.
- \* Choose a site you're involved with
- \* Choose the most important audience group
- \* What is their context/motivation?
- \* What are their goals (and tasks)?
- \* What else would you like to know about them?

# References

Needotron (gov.uk's needs database), <http://digital.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/2011/09/19/introducing-the-needotron-working-out-the-shape-of-the-product/>

Steve Krug - Don't Make Me Think (2005) <http://www.sensible.com/dmmt.html>

Mental model for choosing a film - [http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/mental-models/blog/moviegoer\\_alignment\\_diagram/index.php](http://rosenfeldmedia.com/books/mental-models/blog/moviegoer_alignment_diagram/index.php)

Surveys - Surveymonkey.com, <http://www.workhappy.net/2009/05/using-google-docs-to-make-a-survey.html>

Web intercepts - <http://ethn.io>

Google Tag Manager - <http://www.google.com/tagmanager/>

Lester Freamon from The Wire - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lester\\_Freamon](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lester_Freamon)

Card sorts - <http://www.optimalworkshop.com/optimalsort.htm>, <http://www.simplecardsort.com/>

Remote usability testing - <http://loop11.com>, <http://www.userlytics.com/sitepublic/>, <http://usabilla.com> (lots more out there though)

AB testing using content experiments - <http://support.google.com/analytics/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=1745147>

# Thanks for listening

Paul Gill, Torchbox  
@paulsimongill