



Testing a Taxonomy

When building or revising a taxonomy, one question always comes up, “How do we know our taxonomy works?” There are several ways you can test your taxonomy.

Test with Open or Closed Card Sorting

Open Card Sorting

Open card sorting lets you judge how users group cards. Adding the terms to a card sorting tool and allowing users to sort these terms into their own groups gives you an idea of what groupings make sense and gives you a lot more keywords!

Closed Card Sorting

With groupings already in place, closed card sorting can help validate the categorization within in the taxonomy. It tells you if your categorizations resonate with users and if there are any outlying cards that users don't know how to categorize.

Test with Task Testing

Task Testing with Users

Task testing involves coming up with scenarios and asking users to state where they would expect to find the answer to the scenario. You can use this for testing a site map and for testing a taxonomy. Task testing is a great way to benchmark and measure improvements: you can use the same tasks with different taxonomy to see improvement.

Task Testing with Authors

End-users aren't the only people who use taxonomies. Content authors do too! You can ask authors how they would categorize certain pages of content and see how well the scenarios perform. With this you can also judge how well authors understand the taxonomy and if any additional training needs to take place.

Test with User Testing on the Website

Browsing

On a website, users can browse information via the navigation and via the taxonomy. You can come up with new scenarios or use the scenarios in the task testing to see how well the taxonomy fares when users try to browse for information. This testing will give you feedback on the taxonomy and the UI design.

Searching

The taxonomy can be used for searching and refining search results within a website. If you want to test search, you can see how well the search results meet user expectations and how easily users are able to refine their search results. Note that this will give you feedback on the taxonomy and the UI design.