

Heuristic Evaluation

Assignment 11: HE of Prototypes (Individual)

PROBLEM

PlateList is a mobile application designed to help people overcome small obstacles when trying to cook by allowing users to (1) keep a list of favorite recipes, (2) plan meals for the week, and (3) order ingredients required for the week.

In this assignment, I will perform a heuristic evaluation of PlateList's UI using the "Medium-fi Prototype" write-up and working demo using Jakob Nielsen's 10 usability heuristics.

VIOLATIONS FOUND

1. [H2-8. Aesthetic and minimalist design]

In the write-up, figure 2 shows screenshots of the "Moderate task" and I had trouble reading the text above "Cooking Time" because of the color scheme. Fix: Consider selecting a contrasting color to the grey background so that the text is visible or increase its size to match the rest of the text on the screen.

2. [H2-5. Error prevention]

In the write-up, I thought the complex task, which was to put together a shopping list of ingredients, was well designed though a little simple; it could have allowed for even better user testing if the user was also asked to add and remove an ingredient from his/her shopping cart. Fix: For the complex task, ask the user to also add an "accidentally selected ingredient" and remove that ingredient from the shopping cart.

3. [H2-6. Recognition rather than recall]

In the prototype demo, the user is greeted with a screen that says "Swipe to get started!" that looks similar to the homescreen on an iPhone; therefore, the user expects, by recognition, to swipe to the right, but the app is designed so that the user must swipe left. This baffled me a couple times. Fix: Change swipe to make it more natural by swiping to the right, instead of to the left.

4. [H2-4. Consistency and standards]

The name of the app in the write-up is "Platelist", while in the prototype demo it is "PlateList". Fix: Use either "Platelist" or "PlateList" consistently across all occurrences.

5. [H2-8. Aesthetic and minimalist design]

In the prototype demo, the background image on the welcome screen seems to be such that the top part of the image is repeated at the bottom, taking away from the beauty of the minimalist design of the app. Fix: Correct the image so that it looks like one image.

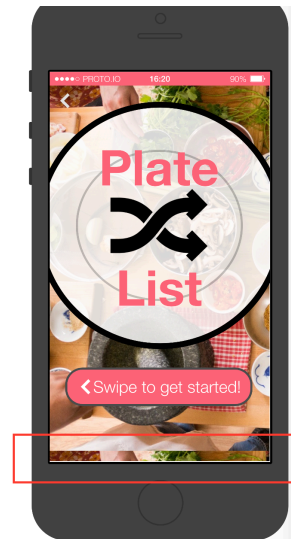


Figure 1: Violation 5

6. [H2-5. Error prevention]

The welcome screen in the prototype demo has a button that resembles a “back or undo arrow” in the top left corner, implying that there is a screen prior to the welcome screen which does not seem to be the case. Fix: Remove “back” button from the welcome screen as users may accidentally think it should take them back to some screen before the welcome screen, which has no screens before it.

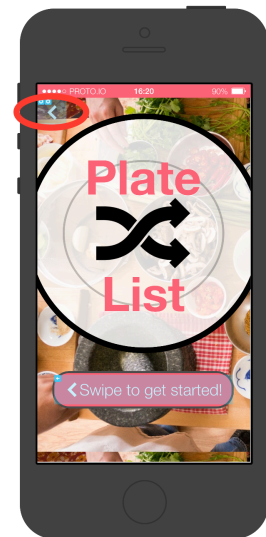
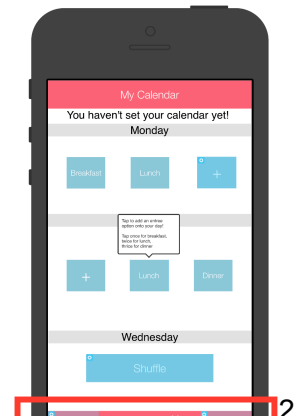


Figure 2: Violation 6

7. [H2-7. Flexibility and efficiency of use]

The prototype demo allows users to select meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, but most people have brunch on weekends, which is a combination of breakfast and lunch. Fix: Allow users to select meals for brunch.

8. [H2-1. Visibility of system status]



Multiple tabs are highlighted instead of just the one the user is currently active in. This may confuse the user as to which functionality of the app they are currently using. Fix: Highlight only the tab in which the user is currently working in (e.g., My List).

Figure 3: Violation 8

9. [H2-4. Consistency and standards]

The tab names do not match. For instance, the tab “Calendar” is titled “My Calendar” in some screens. Fix: Use “Calendar” consistently.

10. [H2-9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors]

Once the user has selected a meal (e.g., lunch or dinner), the app does not allow them to change it to a different meal (e.g., breakfast). Fix: Allow meals to be dynamically edited.

11. [H2-3. User control and freedom]

Most screens do not have a “back” or “undo” button, which does not allow a user to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Fix: Add a back button consistently across all appropriate screens.

12. [H2-5. Error prevention]

On many occasions, I was in operating in the search tab, but the “Calendar” tab was highlighted instead of the “Search” tab. This may lead to errors and confuse the user. Fix: Highlight the correct tab (e.g., the tab the user is operating in)

13. [H2-4. Consistency and standards]

In the first “Search” tab, “Search by name” is italicized and written in black, but in the “Advanced Search” screen the same text in the same location on the page is “Search by Name” and is not italicized and is in white. Fix: Make same text consistent across both screens.

14. [H2-9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors]

Currently, the prototype demo allows users to enter non-numeric characters in the “Cooking Time” section, which is invalid and may lead to errors. However, the user does not receive any errors. Fix: Disallow non-numeric characters from being inputted in the “Cooking Time” section.

15. [H2-4. Consistency and standards]

Some search results use the “&” sign and some use “and” instead quite randomly. Fix: Use “and” consistently.



Figure 4: Violation 15 & 16

16. [H2-8. Aesthetic and minimalist design]

As can be seen in Figure 4, the names of the recipes are not visible because the white text blends into the light grey colored background. Fix: Darken background or change text color so that text is clearly visible.

17. [H2-4. Consistency and standards]

In the “Check Out” screen, all delivery times are stated in 3 hour blocks (e.g., 9 AM – 12 PM), except for one which is a 4 hour range (e.g., 12 PM – 4 PM). Fix: Make all blocks consistently 3 or 4 hour ranges.

18. [H2-4. Consistency and standards]

The “My List” tab is titled “My PlateLists”, which does not match the name of the tab. Fix: Use a single name consistently.

19. [H2-9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors]

If the user accidentally clicks on the “Shuffle” functionality, they are not able to go back and edit what they were previously working on. Fix: Allow users to recover from errors.

20. [H2-3. User control and freedom]

If the user clicks “Delete Platelist”, the application does not warn them or provide an “emergency exit” so the user loses all saved platelists. Fix: Provide emergency exit functionality for critical functions such as deleting platelists.

21. [H2-4. Consistency and standards]

The same screen on the demo has both “PlateList” and “Platelist”. Fix: Use one spelling consistently across the demo.

21. [H2-10. Help and documentation]

Currently, there is no help screen to help guide the user towards the functionality of the app. Fix: Create a simple help screen to help the user understand and make the most of the app’s features.

SUMMARY OF VIOLATIONS

Heuristic	Number of times violated
H2-1. Visibility of system status	1
H2-2. Match between system and the real world	0
H2-3. User control and freedom	2
H2-4. Consistency and standards	7
H2-5. Error prevention	3
H2-6. Recognition rather than recall	1
H2-7. Flexibility and efficiency of use	1
H2-8. Aesthetic and minimalist design	3
H2-9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors	3
H2-10. Help and documentation	1
TOTAL	22

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having read the write-up, I believe that this application can be very useful in the day-to-day lives of busy workaholics who want to find time to cook. I believe what is currently lacking in the prototype, which doesn't neatly fit into any of the violations, is that the application's various features are not intuitive; I'm sure much thought has been put into the design process, and so it would be immensely helpful to put together a simple help and documentation screen that guides the users through the features by showing screenshots. Above all, I believe that the application would most useful if allowed users to go back or emergency exit out of functions; given the complexity of some features, such as "Shuffle", or other critical features, such as "Delete PlateList", it would be beneficial to allow users to undo or recover from actions. I think the PlateList team should think about the flow of one screen to the next and adapt each screen to make the flow more intuitive; I think it will make for a great application.