

Heuristic Evaluation of Ajar

1. Problem

Ajar is an application for that provides an open, honest environment for parents to share their experiences in a welcoming and supportive environment fueled by encouragement and advice from a community of other parents.

2. Violations Found

1. **[H2-1: VISIBILITY OF SYSTEM STATUS]** [Severity: 3] [A, B, D]
It's difficult to track where you are in the app, and how to get back to the home screen, other than tapping the "Back" button multiple times and hoping for the best. It might be useful to have a sidebar that pops open from the left or right to navigate through the pages, or a banner which tracks where the user is in the application.
2. **[H2-1: VISIBILITY OF SYSTEM STATUS]** [Severity: 0] [A]
Could be useful to have a Facebook-style commenting system to make viewing what other people say about your response much easier.
3. **[H2-1: VISIBILITY OF SYSTEM STATUS]** [Severity: 3] [C]
The list of friends' jars is titled with "Encourage a friend," but clicking on a jar takes you to a more profile-looking page, but there is no clear indication of what you're looking at. It's not quite clear to a user what this page is for, and having a clearer indication of that at the top of the page would clarify its purpose and give the information and actions some useful context.
4. **[H2-2: MATCH SYSTEM & WORLD]** [Severity: 1] [A, C]
You've done a fantastic job applying the Jar concept to the UI: I love this. When it comes to the "Friends" screen, you might think about putting all these jars in a cupboard-like graphic, the way you might keep jars at home. Alternatively, maybe they could appear in a single horizontal row on a countertop, which you can scroll to the right or left to see other jars.
5. **[H2-2: MATCH SYSTEM & WORLD]** [Severity: 0] [A]
As people answer more questions throughout the week, it would be cool to see their jar fill up with post-its, before resetting at the beginning of the next week
6. **[H2-3: USER CONTROL & FREEDOM]** [Severity: 0] [A, B, D]
You may need a screen for updating settings/personal information and preference.
7. **[H2-3: USER CONTROL & FREEDOM]** [Severity: 0] [A]
It is unclear to me how you go about MAKING connections on this app: how will the friend request/acceptance process work?
8. **[H2-3: USER CONTROL & FREEDOM]** [Severity: 2] [B, D]
From a profile page, I can't get back to the question asked from the notes they answered on their page. It's unclear if I could answer the same question myself, or see other responses to the given question, with this interface.
9. **[H2-3: USER CONTROL & FREEDOM]**[Severity: 2] [D]
After selecting a friend to send a letter to, the user must go back to the bookshelf to select another friend. This limits the quickness by which a user is able to accomplish a task. Make it possible to swipe through users within the friend profile pages.
10. **[H2-3: USER CONTROL & FREEDOM]** [Severity: 2] [D]
The interface requires the user to go back a level in the application to change the date after clicking on the daily question. Have the user be able to change the date within the window that comes after clicking the daily question.
11. **[H2-3: USER CONTROL & FREEDOM]** [Severity: 2][C]
Clicking the "Login" button takes you to the login screen, but if a user accidentally clicked that,

there is no way to go back to the home screen, and they would be stuck on the login screen. This could be easily fixed by adding a way out, with perhaps a Back or Cancel button.

12. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 1] [A, C]
“Ajar” text shifts down and right in the transition between the welcome screen and login page, as do the glass with the plant in it and the mason jar of sugar cubes. This is not a huge deal if it’s a design choice, but it might look better to leave the text in the same place between these two screens.
13. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 3] [A, B, C, D]
The white font and background picture becomes an issue for the iPhone text (the phone and Wi-Fi signal, time of day and battery percentage). Either changing the background image or changing the color of the iPhone text would solve this problem (specifically in the “Today” and “Yesterday” screens).
14. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 3] [B, C, D]
The purpose of the blue arrow outline with the date inside of it is a bit unclear. I’m assuming clicking on it will lead me to a previous date, but having it on the right side to go backwards in time feels strange, and it appears there is already functionality to go backwards based on swiping. If that is its purpose, I wonder what it will look like when you are not on today; will yesterday also have a forward arrow? Since there are already swipe dots underneath the jar, it seems like the arrow might not be necessary to go backwards in time (if that is even its purpose!) There might be other stylings for dates that would be more clear.
15. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 4] [B, C, D]
When clicking “Leave a note” on a note in a jar page, the user is taken to a page on which they can write a note, and then when the user hits send, they are taken to an encourage a friend page. This is unexpected; as a user I expected to see the results of my note posting (and are we now supposed to select a person to send that note to??), perhaps seeing the note has been sent/posted?
16. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 2] [B]
Notes displayed in a note jar have the user’s image and name at the top, and then the note and a leave a note button. Notes on a user’s page have the question and then the response on the note, and no “leave a note” button. The inconsistency is a bit strange.
17. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]**[Severity: 2] [B]
Usernames on notes aren’t clickable; I expected to be able to navigate to a profile using those names/pictures! Making the names clickable would match my expectations as a user!
18. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 2] [C]
Most of the pages have a Back button in the upper left corner, but the note-writing and answer-writing screens have an X in the corner. Both are clear in their functions, but a user could potentially be confused by their inconsistency. Sticking with Back in the upper left corner could maybe mean that they could return to the writing to continue to edit their response, while adding a Cancel button might delete the progress so far and allow for clearer interactions.
19. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 2] [C]
On the Daily Question screen, clicking on a jar meant “entering” it, and the design switched to being actually inside the jar. When you click on a friend’s jar, the jar with their name on it just shows up on the side - the interaction of “entering the jar” isn’t the same, which is inconsistent. Having clicking on the profile also be equivalent to entering their jar would keep the metaphor consistent.
20. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 2] [C]
On the screen to comment on other’s answers, the button says “Leave a note,” but on a user’s profile, it says “Send a note.” I don’t see a reason why these should be inconsistent, and it might make the user wonder if there’s a difference. Choosing one to use everywhere would be more effective and clear.

21. **[H2-4: CONSISTENCY & STANDARDS]** [Severity: 3] [C]
The button on the Daily Question screen says “View your friends,” but then the instruction at the top of the next page is “Encourage a friend,” which is a different action. A user just aiming to look at a friend’s profile would be thrown off by the new instructions. Having the documentation on the friends’ jars page be more encompassing would cover more actions.
22. **[H2-5: ERROR PREVENTION]** [Severity: 0] [A]
It’s difficult to see how these heuristics might pan out given the state of the medium-fidelity prototype, but think about what will happen if people try to answer the same question multiple times, or what happens if somebody types nothing and adds a note.
23. **[H2-6: RECOGNITION NOT RECALL]** [Severity: 1] [A]
The animal-based profile avatars are cute, but I think that a profile picture would look cleaner and nicer, and would reduce the amount of time the user spends thinking about which “Grace” they are writing to.
24. **[H2-6: RECOGNITION NOT RECALL]** [Severity: 1] [A]
It could be useful to include a pencil icon to write a new note instead of the very well-designed blue & white plus button, which would go with the entire Post-it aesthetic
25. **[H2-6: RECOGNITION NOT RECALL]** [Severity: 2] [D]
There is a lack of clarity as to what the white dots at the bottom represent. The dots might not be necessary as the date that the viewer is looking at is already present. It might be best to simply get rid of the dots.
26. **[H2-6: RECOGNITION NOT RECALL]**[Severity: 2] [D]
The ordering of the friend jars seems pretty arbitrary. The lack of organization would make it harder for a user to find a specific friend. Have a most common friends selection at the front with the rest being alphabetically ordered. A search option would also be helpful.
27. **[H2-6: RECOGNITION NOT RECALL]** [Severity: 3] [C]
On the Daily Question screen for Yesterday, the “Tap jar to enter” tooltip is missing - this may be unclear to users who end up on this page and do not know how to proceed. Users shouldn’t have to remember the instructions from the previous page - showing the same tooltip here would be more consistent and clearer about the intended interaction.
28. **[H2-7: FLEXIBILITY & EFFICIENCY OF USE]** [Severity: 1] [A]
On the login page, rather than make the user tap the “Your username” field, it could be better to have the keyboard pop up automatically (not sure how this is implemented)
29. **[H2-7: FLEXIBILITY & EFFICIENCY OF USE]** [Severity: 2] [A, B, C, D]
These blue buttons at the bottom are pretty aesthetically great, but they are a bit small: may require more precision and effort from the user.
30. **[H2-7: FLEXIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY OF USE]** [Severity: 0] [D]
Although most the letters are likely to be meant to be personal, sometimes it might be useful to have a way to send a letter to multiple users. During the creation of the note have there be an option to add more receivers of the note.
31. **[H2-7: FLEXIBILITY AND EFFICIENCY OF USE]** [Severity: 3] [C, D]
The Daily Question screen asks a question, like “What are you grateful for today?” but then there is no way (on this screen) to answer that question. This could be both confusing to new users, who are unsure why a question is appearing there with no answers given or way to answer, but it also might be inconvenient for experienced users that want to answer the question without first going into the jar. Adding a + button to quickly add an entry would be a useful feature.
32. **[H2-8: AESTHETIC & MINIMALIST DESIGN]** [Severity: 2] [A, B, C, D]
On the Daily Question screens, the text for “Today” & “Yesterday” is hard to read due to the background photo. I think the white sketch outline of the jar looks great on the background, and the white text goes great with that, but you may need to find another image to put behind the jar so you can read all of the text (Task 2). This same thing occurs a few places in your UI: the “Back”

button is in white on the question_jar0 and question_jar1 pages. You may think about moving it to another part of the screen. On the Posting pages, the first posting page (posting1) has a great background photo, but posting2 (Jenna, Kate, Grace and Mary) the white text is lost on the edge. A different background image here might solve this problem

33. **[H2-8: AESTHETIC & MINIMALIST DESIGN]** [Severity: 1] [A]
 Three-color (blue, white and gray) text scheme is good on the home80 screen, but you could change the “tap jar to enter” button from gray to blue, and simplify the number of colors from 3 to 2.
34. **[H2-8: AESTHETIC & MINIMALIST DESIGN]** [Severity: 1] [B]
 The handwritten note text is tricky to read on the writing notes page, where it has “Type your note here...” in grey. A darker color, larger font size or more readable font could help with readability.
35. **[H2-8: AESTHETIC & MINIMALIST DESIGN]** [Severity: 2] [B]
 Blue date in arrow on the person screen is hard to read on a dark background. Making the background lighter or making the arrow solid could make this date more readable.
36. **[H2-8: AESTHETIC & MINIMALIST DESIGN]** [Severity: 1] [B]
 The notes on a user’s page have both the question and the response written in the handwriting font, which makes it unclear if that was the user’s writing or the prompt. Making the prompt be in the clean font would make the distinction more clear.
37. **[H2-8: AESTHETIC & MINIMALIST DESIGN]** [Severity: 1] [B]
 On Mary’s user page, I didn’t initially realize the see through foldover part was showing the image below, and I thought the fold coloring had some special meaning.
38. **[H2-10: HELP & DOCUMENTATION]** [Severity: 3] [B]
 The functionality of the “Leave a note” button is unclear. I’m not sure if this is a private or public message, or where I would go to see the messages I’ve sent or received. Is this supposed to be a note related to the note they wrote, or just any message?
39. **[H2-10: HELP AND DOCUMENTATION]** [Severity: 2] [C]
 The instruction on the Daily Question screen, “Tap jar to enter,” is unclear. What does “entering” a jar mean? We commonly think of “opening” a jar rather than “entering” it, so this wording is not only unfamiliar to a user, but unclear as to what it really means. Having a clearer instruction or even just using “open” instead of “enter” could make the help text more useful and less confusing.
40. **[H2-10: HELP & DOCUMENTATION]** [Severity: 0] [A, C]
 How will you walk people through the use of this application? Will there be a tutorial or helpful tips?

3. Summary of Violations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
[H2-1: Visibility of Status]	1	0	0	2	0	3
[H2-2: Match Sys & World]	1	1	0	0	0	2
[H2-3: User Control]	2	0	4	0	0	6
[H2-4: Consistency]	0	1	5	3	1	10
[H2-5: Error Prevention]	1	0	0	0	0	1
[H2-6: Recognition not Recall]	0	2	2	1	0	5
[H2-7: Efficiency of Use]	1	1	1	1	0	4
[H2-8: Minimalist Design]	0	4	2	0	0	6
[H2-9: Help Users with Errors]	0	0	0	0	0	0

[H2-10: Documentation]	1	0	1	1	0	3
Total Violations by Severity	7	9	15	8	1	40

4. Evaluation Statistics

NOTE: a box is (# of severity X that evaluator found) / (total number of severity level found)

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C	Evaluator D
sev. 0	6/7	1/7	1/7	2/7
sev. 1	6/9	3/9	2/9	0/9
sev. 2	2/15	6/15	7/15	7/15
sev. 3	2/8	4/8	6/8	4/8
sev. 4	0/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
total (sev. 3 & 4)	2	5	7	5
total (all severity levels)	16	15	17	14

5. Summary Recommendations

[merge the general recommendations you made here]

Overall, we really liked the design of the app; aesthetically, it was very pleasing. Most of the errors we found involved confusing navigation and inconsistencies. Making the navigation more clear and usable in the app, especially in the flow from sending a note or answering a question, would really help the user interact with various aspects of the app with ease. As far as consistency, some naming and phrasing is unclear, and some of the designs don't follow general design standards, such as the blue arrows with dates that look like navigation buttons. Also there are some cases with inconsistent flow - for example, clicking "View your friends" leads you to a page with the call to action of "Encourage a friend." While the tasks themselves were clear and easy to follow, the backgrounds on various pages sometimes distracted from the purpose of the page. Text was often difficult to read because of font size or color, especially on top of the irregular backgrounds.

Severity Ratings

- 0 - don't agree that this is a usability problem
- 1 - cosmetic problem
- 2 - minor usability problem
- 3 - major usability problem; important to fix
- 4 - usability catastrophe; imperative to fix

Heuristics

[H2-1: Visibility of System Status]

- keep users informed about what is going on

[H2-2: Match Between System & Real World]

- speak the users' language
- follow real world conventions

[H2-3: User Control & Freedom]

- “exits” for mistaken choices, undo, redo
- don’t force down fixed paths

[H2-4: Consistency & Standards]

[H2-5: Error Prevention]

[H2-6: Recognition Rather Than Recall]

- make objects, actions, options, & directions visible or easily retrievable

[H2-7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use]

- accelerators for experts (e.g., gestures, kb shortcuts)
- allow users to tailor frequent actions (e.g., macros)

[H2-8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design]

- no irrelevant information in dialogues

[H2-9: Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors]

- error messages in plain language
- precisely indicate the problem
- constructively suggest a solution

[H2-10: Help & Documentation]

- easy to search
- focused on the user’s task
- list concrete steps to carry out
- not too large