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6.813 Homework 2
Collaboration: None
April 23, 2013

Tech Wizard Heuristic Evaluation

The sections below group the heuristic observations by page to match the Tech Wizard GR4 Wiki Page. Observations that span multiple pages are listed in the final section.

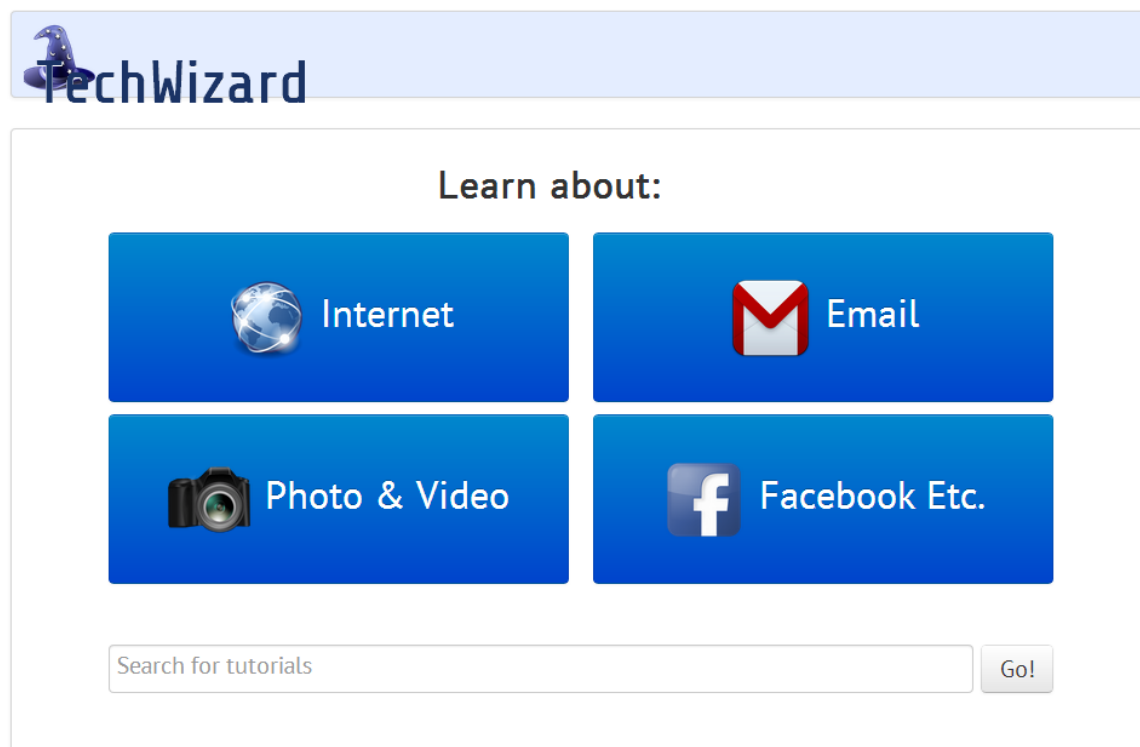
Main Page

✓ Simple layout

Heuristic: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design (Nielsen)

Severity: Good

The layout of the main page is quite simple, which makes it easy for the user to understand the available options. There are only four buttons, each of which is clearly labeled as to what it does, a search bar, with the hint to “Search for Tutorials!”, and a button to search. Also, the weight of the website is mostly centered, which is easier to look at. The rounded edges also give a more modern feel to the design.



✗ Button Spacing

Heuristic: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design, Consistency and Standards (Nielsen)

Severity: Cosmetic

This may seem like nitpicking, but the horizontal spacing between buttons is different than the vertical spacing between buttons. This difference draws the user's attention away from the actual content of the buttons and instead toward the layout. Since all the buttons are the same color and size, it seems like it would make more sense to have the vertical and horizontal spacing the same as well. There seems to be no grouping between the left buttons and the right buttons in terms of content, although the relative positions may suggest otherwise.



✗ Inefficient Tabbing

Heuristic: Flexibility and Efficiency (Nielsen), Universal Design (Class)

Severity: Minor

When tabbing on the front page, it takes two tabs to pass each of the buttons. This is very inefficient for users who rely on their keyboards, and makes it more difficult for visually impaired users who must rely on voice software for information, since they will be hearing the same thing twice. Some may recognize that it has not changed buttons, but others may not which could cause confusion regarding how to use the interface. For users that are familiar with the interface that use tabbing, it is inefficient to have to push tab twice for each button.



Icon Specificity

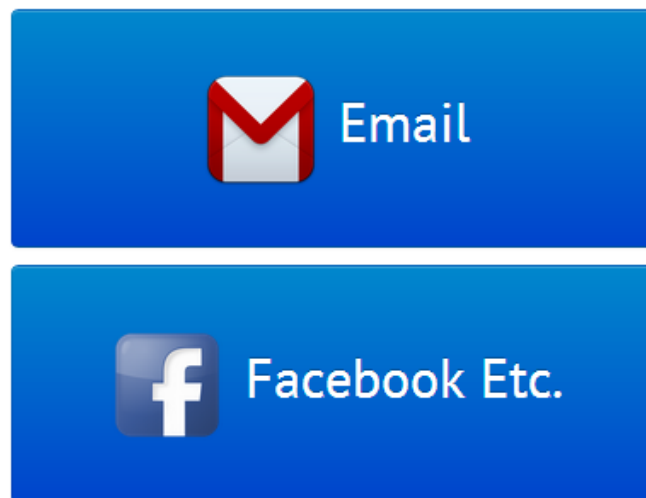
Heuristic: Consistency and Standards, Error Prevention (Nielsen), Mental Model (Class)

Severity: Major

While the “Internet” and “Photo & Video” buttons have generic icons, the other two buttons have application specific logos, Gmail and Facebook. This leads to a poor mental model of what the website actually does. Is it trying to teach how to use these broad categories in general, or will it teach them for one specific application within that category. Even further, will it teach about multiple applications within that category.

Furthermore, what happens when the user clicks the one of the two right buttons. Will they be learning about “Email” and “Facebook Etc.” in general, or will they be given a choice among applications that fall within those categories? The affordance of the application specific logos might even suggest that one of those buttons will teach the user how to use Gmail and the other Facebook.

This mistake can cause a major flaw in the user’s perception of what TechWizard is and will lead to problems down the road as the user continues to discover more of what TechWizard does, which might not match up with one of the several mental models afforded by the home page.



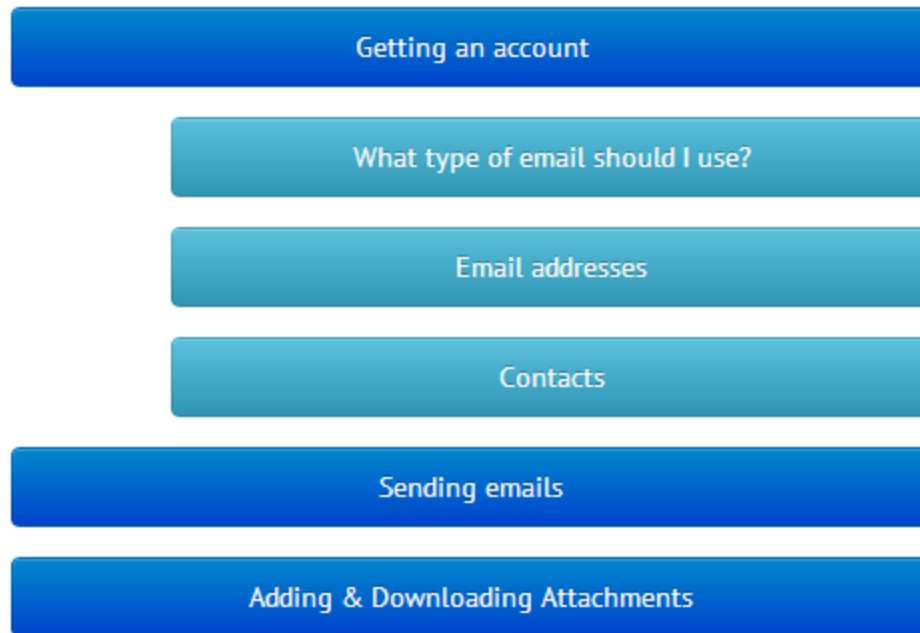
Tutorial List Page

Button Hierarchy

Heuristic: Match the Real World (Nielsen), Mental Model (Class)

Severity: Good

The use of a hierarchy for the subject buttons shows the user which topics are related. Indenting and color are both used to contrast between the category buttons and the subject buttons. The indentation to the right is a common way of showing a hierarchy, so this design is consistent with the real world.

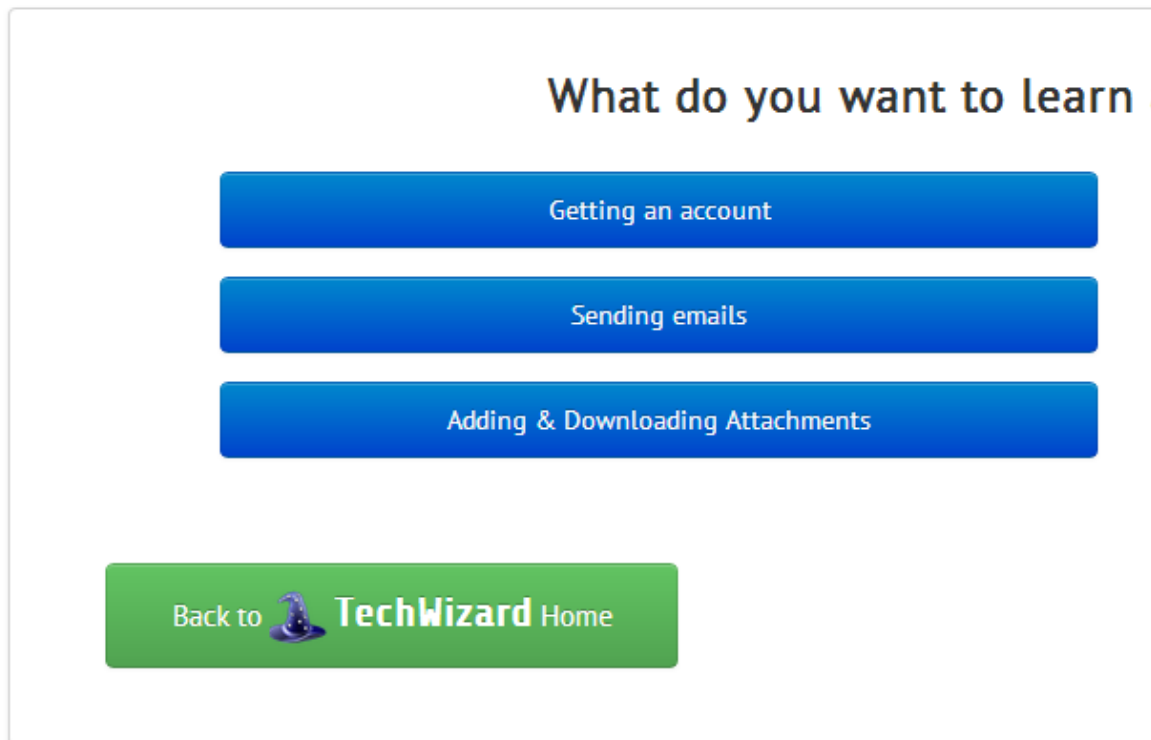


Misaligned Buttons

Heuristic: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design, Consistency and Standards (Nielsen)

Severity: Cosmetic

The category (dark blue) buttons are shifted to the right from where they would be expected given the outline. The "Did you know?" box is only a slight distance from the right edge of the box, and the "Back to TechWizard Home" buttons is also only a slight distance from the left edge of the box. The category buttons however do not follow this standard, and stand off to the right for seemingly no reason. Additionally, since this is the main content of the page but it isn't centered, it would make more sense to be aligned on the left.



Lack of Bulleting

Heuristic: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design (Nielsen)

Severity: Minor

The “Did you know?” box has a list of four facts in it. However, the text looks like a line of prose instead of a list, which is confusing when the user is trying to read it. Since the facts do not seem to be in any order, using bullets would give the affordance of a list and make the section easier to read.

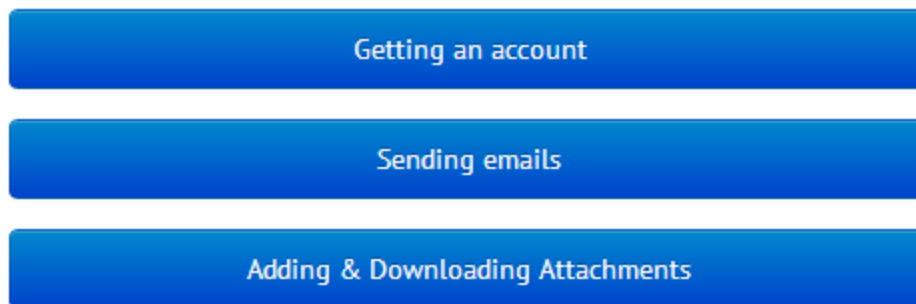


X Hidden Hierarchy

Heuristic: Help and Documentation, Visibility of System Status (Nielsen)

Severity: Major

Even though there is a helpful hierarchy that categorizes the tutorials, there was never any indication on the home page that there was a hierarchy, and there is no affordance on this page either. The user does not learn that there is a hierarchy until clicking the category button, which is expected to go to a tutorial page. Without visibly showing this hierarchy, the user will not immediately learn how the web site is organized. One possible fix to this solution is to add a collapse/uncollapse arrow on the right side of the category buttons to show that it expands to show the tutorials in that category.



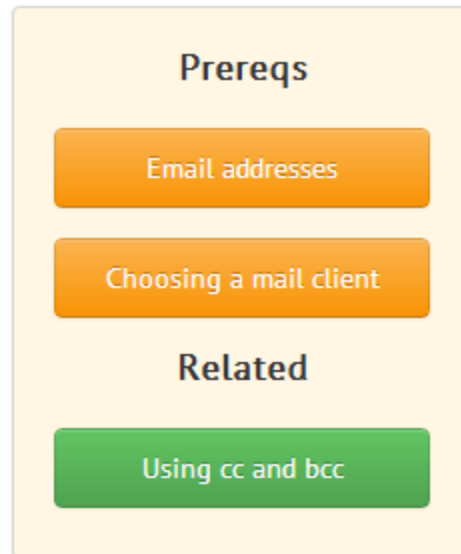
Sample Tutorial Page

✓ Prereqs and Related

Heuristic: Help and Documentation, Flexibility and Efficiency, Error Prevention (Nielsen)

Severity: Good

The prerequisites and related section on the right side of the page is a very nifty feature that gives the user lots of flexibility for navigating the site. The user is not required to return to the tutorial list page to find related tutorials, or even tutorials for something the user does not yet know. This section helps prevent users from trying to learn something they don't know by telling them what they should know before starting, and giving an easy way to get to that tutorial for those who don't.



X Next Button Alignment

Heuristic: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design (Nielsen), Internationalization (Class)

Severity: Cosmetic

The next button is not aligned on the right hand side with the right hand side of the text. This is inconsistent with the previous button which is aligned with the left hand side of the text. Additionally, users with right-to-left languages may be confused by the previous and next buttons.



So you've got email all set up and you want to send an email to your friend. Now what?

1. Find the button that creates a new message in your email client. Typically, this button says "Compose" or "New email." Here it is in gmail, outlook, and apple mail.
2. Type the email address of the person you are sending it to in the "To:" field. More in-depth instructions about using contacts to do it here. For now, ignore the cc and bcc field.
3. In the "Subject:" field, write a short (less than 1 sentence) topic sentence for your email. Something like "Thought of you today". "Information for tomorrow's meeting". or "Check out this cool article I

X Prereqs Label

Heuristic: Match the Real World (Nielsen)

Severity: Minor

While the prereqs is a very useful feature, there are some who may not know what prereqs are

or even that prereqs stands for prerequisites. The most frequent time I see prerequisites are in course requirements, but it seems to not be used as much elsewhere. Using another label like "Required" may be more applicable to a wider user group.

Lack of Effective Numbering

Heuristic: Help and Documentation (Nielsen), Contrast (Class)

Severity: Major

The tutorial seems to have a structure based around the numbering of it's steps. However, the numbers are simply in line with the other text and no special fonts techniques are applied. Since the tutorial is based around steps, it would be useful to emphasize this by contrasting the numbers of the steps with their actual content. This way, users can easily find where they are in the tutorial and see the step-by-step nature of the tutorial.

So you've got email all set up and you want to send an email to your friend. Now what?

1. Find the button that creates a new message in your email client. Typically, this button says "Compose" or "New email." Here it is in gmail, outlook, and apple mail.
2. Type the email address of the person you are sending it to in the "To:" field. More in-depth instructions about using contacts to do it here. For now, ignore the cc and bcc field.
3. In the "Subject:" field, write a short (less than 1 sentence) topic sentence for your email. Something like "Thought of you today", "Information for tomorrow's meeting", or "Check out this cool article I read today" will do.
4. Write your email, make it shiny, shiny pictures go here.
5. Press send! Your email will be delivered instantly. But, don't be surprised if you don't get a reply. Some people don't check their email very often, and not every email is seen as needing acknowledgement.

Lack of Navigational Information

Heuristic: Help and Documentation, Visibility of System Status (Nielsen)

Severity: Major

The page does not have any information on where the user is within the tutorial list. There were categories of tutorials on the previous page, but there is no indication on this page of which category the current tutorial belongs to. Furthermore, there is no indication of which major section the tutorial belongs to (one of the four from the front page). Breadcrumbs could be an effective way to solve this problem.

Writing a New Email

◀ Previous

Next ▶

So you've got email all set up and you want to send an email to your friend. Now what?

1. Find the button that creates a new message in your email client. Typically, this button says "Compose" or "New email." Here it is in gmail, outlook, and apple mail.
2. Type the email address of the person you are sending it to in the "To:" field. More in-depth instructions about using contacts to do it here. For now, ignore the cc and bcc field.
3. In the "Subject:" field, write a short (less than 1 sentence) topic sentence for your email. Something like "Thought of you today", "Information for tomorrow's meeting", or "Check out this cool article I read today" will do.
4. Write your email, make it shiny, shiny pictures go here.
5. Press send! Your email will be delivered instantly. But, don't be surprised if you don't get a reply. Some people don't check their email very often, and not every email is seen as needing acknowledgement.

Prereqs


Email addresses

Choosing a mail client

Related

Using cc and bcc

Back to  TechWizard Home

Back to  Tutorial List

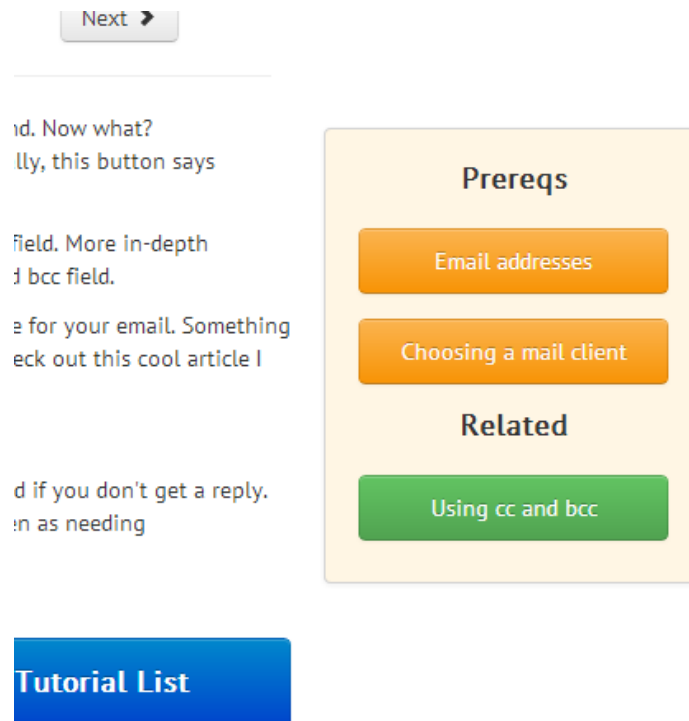
Multiple Pages

✓ Section Outlines

Heuristic: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design (Nielsen)

Severity: Good

I like the use of the dim gray outlines to categorize things into sections. This was helpful for the "Did you know?" and "Prereqs and Related" boxes, since they were able to separate the main content of the page from other extra affordances.



✓ Icons and Words in Buttons

Heuristic: Consistency and Standards, Help and Documentation (Nielsen), Mental Model (Class)

Severity: Good

I like that the “Back to TechWizard Home” and “Back to Tutorial List” buttons had both icons and words. This made it easy for the user to learn how to navigate, in addition to creating a mental model of the website framework for future use.



✗ Main Logo Coloring

Heuristic: Aesthetic and Minimalist Design (Nielsen), Color, Contrast (Class)

Severity: Cosmetic

The main TechWizard logo at the top of every page is fairly difficult to read. The dark blue on purple/black provides very low contrast and will especially cause problems for older users.



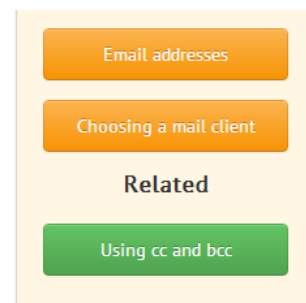
✗ Button Color Inconsistencies

Heuristic: Match the Real World, Consistency and Standards, Error Prevention (Nielsen), Color (Class)

Severity: Major

The buttons on each page have many different colors. However, these colors don't tend to match up with the real world nor with each other across the website. First, the "Back to TechWizard Home" button is green, which usually means go and would offer the affordance of moving to the next page, when in fact it returns to the previous one. One good feature is that the Prereqs are orange, which give the aura of caution before approaching the tutorial.

2. Type the email address of the person you are sending it to in the "To:" field. More in-depth instructions about using contacts to do it here. For now, ignore the cc and bcc field.
3. In the "Subject:" field, write a short (less than 1 sentence) topic sentence for your email. Something like "Thought of you today", "Information for tomorrow's meeting", or "Check out this cool article I read today" will do.
4. Write your email, make it shiny, shiny pictures go here.
5. Press send! Your email will be delivered instantly. But, don't be surprised if you don't get a reply. Some people don't check their email very often, and not every email is seen as needing acknowledgement.



The dark blue seems inconsistent overall. It is used for the major categories, the smaller categories, and the "Back to Tutorial List" buttons. The categories are blue, unlike what the tutorial list button implies. Another inconsistency is the color of buttons that go to a tutorial page. There are teal buttons on the Tutorial List Page, but orange and green on the Sample Tutorial Page.

✗ Search Feature Availability

Heuristic: User Control and Freedom, Flexibility and Efficiency (Nielsen)

Severity: Major

The search feature, although yet unimplemented, will be very useful for users that already know what they need. However, the search feature is only available from the homepage. Users elsewhere must return to the homepage to use the search feature. This is inefficient and significantly decreases the control the user has within the website. These problems can be fixed

by adding the search feature to every page. The top bar has a lot of empty space in the top right for a search bar which would also help even out the horizontal symmetry of the page.