

# Wayfair Online Purchase Usability Evaluation

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## Caveats

1. This write-up was conducted as an exercise to demonstrate my thought process from project inception through reporting.
  2. This was conducted with a single participant interview as a constraint of the exercise.
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## Research Questions

1. What are users' expectations for online retail sites when buying furniture?
  2. Do users find the Sort and Filter options helpful in searching for new furniture?
  3. Are the item specifications and resources discoverable for users?
  4. Is the check-out process understandable for users?
  5. Are the shipping options clear to users?
  6. What are users' reactions to needing an account to purchase from Wayfair?
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## Recruiting Requirements

If I were to conduct a full study based on this mock session looking into Wayfair, my recruitment requirements would be:

- 10-15 participants
- Gender: 50/50 gender split
- Age: 18-65
- Technology usage: 50/50 new to online furniture buying/experienced with online furniture buying

I propose these recruitment criteria to provide standard insights into the usability of the site from a general population perspective, such as discoverability of features, ease of use, etc., as well as to look for differences in the experience between novice and experienced users.

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## Study Methodology

For this study, I used a 1-on-1 interview to examine the usability of the site to purchase two standard items for a living room - a sectional sofa and a floor lamp.

Before starting the tasks on Wayfair, I asked the participant some questions to gauge her familiarity and experience with online furniture stores and to establish what her existing expectations for those sites are.

The participant was presented with the scenario that she had just signed the lease for a new apartment and were looking for new furniture for her living room. She was given four tasks to complete the search for their new living room furniture:

1. Browse for a new sectional sofa
2. Add sectional to cart
3. Find a floor lamp to go with their new sectional
4. Checkout/Purchase their selections

The participant was encouraged to speak aloud while completing the tasks to provide insight into her thoughts during the process. After completing each task, she answered questions specific to the task.



Sale



Ellendale 81" Reversible Sectional with Ottoman by Ebern Designs

from \$709.99 ~~\$879.99~~  
As low as \$60/mo. for 12 mos.\*\*  
FREE Shipping



Kate 105.4" Velvet Stationary Sofa & Chaise by Foundry Select

from \$2,443.99 ~~\$2,969.99~~  
As low as \$141/mo. for 12 mos.\*\*  
FREE Shipping

## Key Findings

### Participant expectations

The participant for this study was an experienced online shopper who was familiar with using Wayfair to purchase new furniture. She remembered Wayfair being a good experience because of the variety of options for new furniture and flexibility with the site's filter

<p><b>Sectionals, Sectional Sofas &amp; Couches</b> 6,358 Results</p> <p>Upholstery Color ▾ Price Per Item ▾ Orientation ▾ Shape ▾ Upholstery Material ▾ <b>Sort &amp; Filter</b></p>	<p><b>Floor Lamps</b> 7,111 Results</p> <p>Lamp Type ▾ Finish ▾ Style ▾ Price Per Item ▾ Number of Lights ▾ <b>Sort &amp; Filter</b></p>
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and sort options to help narrow down her selection.

From her experiences with online shopping, the participant identified these key functions that she expected to see on Wayfair:

- Filters to assist in narrowing down the selection of furniture
- Product photos that include multiple angles of the product and allow purchasers to zoom in to see details of the photos
- Product details to inform the purchaser of product dimensions, materials, and manufacturing details such as the location of origin

### Areas of Success

Based on the participant's expectations for shopping sites and her experience completing the tasks, the top successes for the Wayfair site are:

- A variety of filters helps narrow down options and keep the amount of options from being overwhelming to users.
- Filters seem based on product type, so the suggested filters are relevant to which piece of furniture is being searched for.
  - "I like all the filter options, I'm thinking maybe the ones that are featured here are based on what they know people tend to use when looking for a sectional. They might be different for different items." - Participant 1
- Product specifications, such as dimensions, material, country of origin, and product photos from multiple angles are readily available on the item page.
- The product full-view page opens up in a new tab automatically, allowing users to peruse large amounts of furniture options without losing their place in their search results.

### Opportunities

The participant noted several points of confusion or frustration during the purchasing process that would have caused her to need more information or potentially stop using Wayfair to purchase furniture altogether.

#### *Item Display - Confusion About Item Pricing*

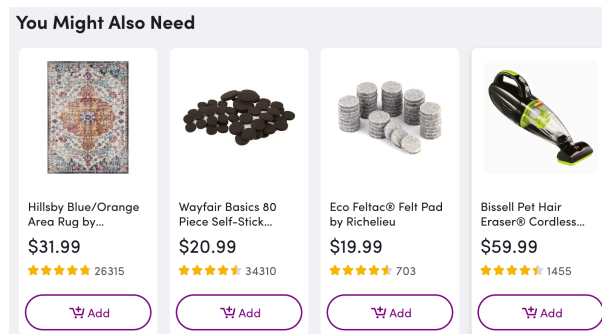
- The presentation of sale prices was confusing for the participant. Most products were shown with a slashed price, and some had an additional "sale" icon on the product image and displayed the price in red.
  - "One thing that I noticed was confusing, this is on sale and it's red and has a slashed price, but these others have slashed prices but are not on sale, and I don't know why." - Participant 1
- Recommended items seem to be randomly suggested

#### *Discoverability of Resources - Desired Resource was Available, But Difficult to Find*

- Instructions for assembly were not found by the participant, but were available on the product page in a drop-down menu.
  - "And if it needs to be assembled, how much assembly is involved? Something that is nice that I've seen on other websites are details about the assembly, like seeing the instructions for how to assemble it. Like a PDF that I could reference later." - Participant 1

#### *Account Creation - Frustration About Needing an Account to Purchase*

- Having to create an account to buy furniture is annoying to most users, especially those who do not buy furniture often.
- Account creation is sudden - a user can go through the entire process of searching for furniture, adding it to their cart, and deciding to purchase before being informed that they need an account.
- "I don't like it. I like to have options, and maybe I would create an account, but I tend to check out as a guest when it's somewhere that I only use once in a while. I don't like the idea of having my information stored at lots of retailers, so I wouldn't



*Recommended items for a sectional sofa: a rug, two types of furniture pad, and a vacuum.*

*"And they're recommending some kind of random things, like a rug and vacuum." -*

want to. And it makes me think they're going to email me all the time." - Participant 1

#### *Shipping and Delivery - Confusion About Shipping Dates and Delivery*

- Shipping and delivery specifics can be easily missed, especially if the user selects the buy now option when proceeding to check-out.
- Scheduling a delivery time seemed confusing to the participant because she would be contacted after the product ships to schedule a delivery date and time, which was the inverse of what she expected (to schedule a delivery date and time before completing her purchase).

- "This is fine, but it might be nice if they gave me the option to pick a delivery date and time when I order it, because it feels like I'm going to have a hassle having to call and talk to someone multiple times and play phone tag." - Participant 1

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## Recommendations

### **Allow users to check out as guest**

The participant was surprised when she found out that she needed an account to finish her purchase with Wayfair, despite having used the site in the past to buy furniture. Furniture-buying is not a frequent activity for most users and many are skeptical of providing their email to sites because they don't want to receive frequent emails about products they have no reason to buy.

Provide users with the option to "check out as guest" and not make an account with Wayfair. In this process, users can provide an email and/or phone number for the purpose of contacting them with updates about their specific order.

### **Provide users with a photo or PDF of assembly instructions within the carousel of product photos**

The instructions for the assembly of the sectional that the participant chose were hidden in "Specifications" drop down menu. Though she did not find the assembly manual, the participant stated that she would expect to see something like it in the carousel menu of product photos.

Consider including a page or two from the assembly manual as photos in the carousel after the product photos, or in the general description of the item in-line with the "Assembly Required" note.

### **Be consistent with the display of sale prices**

The participant recognized that there were three different methods being utilized to indicate sale prices on the site - prices that were slashed through, prices displayed in red, and product photos with a "sale" icon, but could not tell why one method was being used for some furniture and a different method was being used for other furniture.

Consider consistency with messaging for sale items, such as using slashed through prices with the phrase "recommended retail price" and "our price" to show the standard Wayfair savings, and red prices with the sale icon for items further discounted from the Wayfair price.

### **Provide users with Shipping and Delivery options before purchase**

The participant stated that she was unclear on when her purchases would arrive at her home and expressed frustration that scheduling the delivery would occur in a game of "phone tag" with a Wayfair representative.

Consider providing shoppers with delivery date options during checkout, after shoppers provide their shipping address, to decrease confusion and increase customer confidence in the shipping and delivery process.

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## Reflections

- I would want to provide more time on each task to allow participants to really think through the process and talk about the good and bad parts of the experience. This may take the form of a longer session or merging similar or combinable tasks, such as browsing and adding items to the cart as one task.
- On the same note of taking more time with the participant, I would want to get to know the participant's context with the experience more in the pre-session interview by digging deeper into their past experiences and expectations for future experiences.

- I want to always get better at self-debriefing after a session to collect my thoughts on that individual participant's responses in the context of the research questions to help distill the session's findings and integrate them into overall findings for a final report. This would help me keep a finger on the pulse of the research day by day and provide updates to clients when requested.