

User Experience Heuristic Report

Elaborated description of most important issues in [courserta.org discussion forum](https://courserta.org/discussion/forum)

This report describes findings in usability test made by applying of Heuristics evaluation method for training purpose on Introduction to User Experience Principles and Processes course on coursera.org portal.

It finds problems in user interface and classifies them into 10 main groups according to Jakob Nielsen methodology (<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/ten-usability-heuristics/>). Here is quick overview of heuristics:

1. FEEDBACK: Visibility of system status
2. METAPHOR: Match between system and the real world
3. NAVIGATION: User control and freedom
4. CONSISTENCY: Consistency and standards
5. PREVENTION: Error prevention
6. MEMORY: Recognition rather than recall
7. EFFICIENCY: Flexibility and efficiency of use
8. DESIGN: Aesthetic and minimalist design
9. RECOVERY: Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors
10. HELP: Help and documentation

Each finding has assigned severity of the problem:

- 1) Cosmetic problem only – need not be fixed unless extra time is available on project
- 2) Minor usability problem – fixing this should be given low priority
- 3) Major usability problem – important to fix, so should be given high priority
- 4) Usability catastrophe – imperative to fix this before product can be released

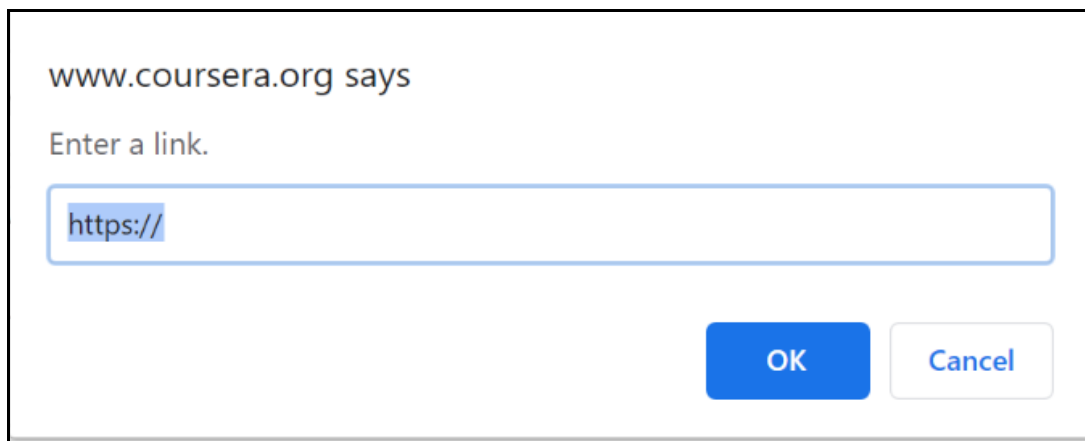
Finding 1: Adding link to a post is not predictable

Severity: 3/4

Heuristics violated: Match between the real world and system, Visibility of system status, User control and freedom

Currently link is created in two pop-out boxes – “Enter a link” and “Enter a link description”. User has to go through this process to find this out. It takes some effort to understand, what is going on. Here are the most important issues with this finding:

- 1) Accordingly to first Nielsen Heuristics *Visibility of system status* “The system should always keep users informed about what is going on”, which is not clear here.
 - a. Clearly visible header is missing
 - b. One simple task is divided into 2 windows.
- 2) According to second Heuristics *Match between the real world and system* “system should speak the users' language”. The announcement *www.coursera.org says* seems very robotic.
- 3) Description what is needed in second pop-up window is too long.

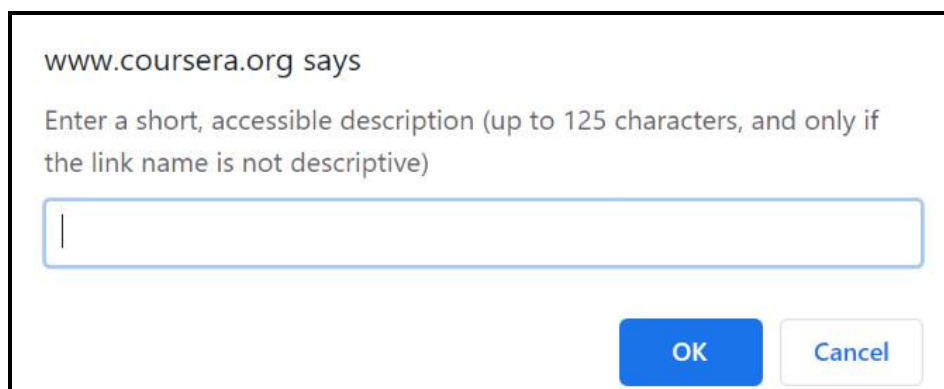


www.coursera.org says

Enter a link.

OK Cancel

Pop-up window to enter the link.



www.coursera.org says

Enter a short, accessible description (up to 125 characters, and only if the link name is not descriptive)

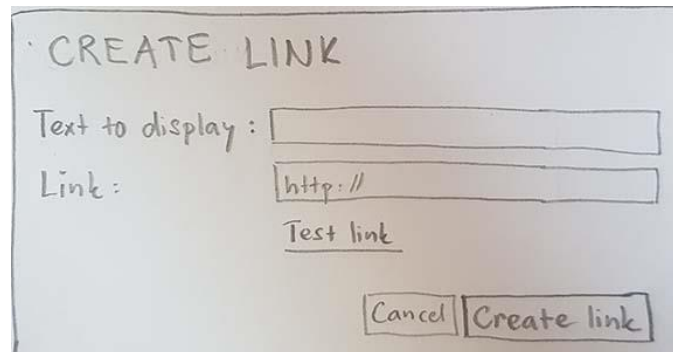
OK Cancel

Pop-up window to enter the link description.

Recommendation:

- 1) Use only one form with 2 fields “Link” and “Text to display” for link description

- 2) Use header Create link (or similar)
- 3) Text of button "OK" replace with "Create Link" text
- 4) Instructions for second link description field to be visible by JavaScript only if text is longer than 150 characters.
- 5) Add "Test this link" clickable link to allow user if the link is correct. Window in new tab will open after pressing this link.



Recommended pop-up window

Finding 2: Sharing the post is clumsy

Severity: 2/4

Heuristics violated: Visibility of system status, Flexibility and efficiency of use and Error prevention

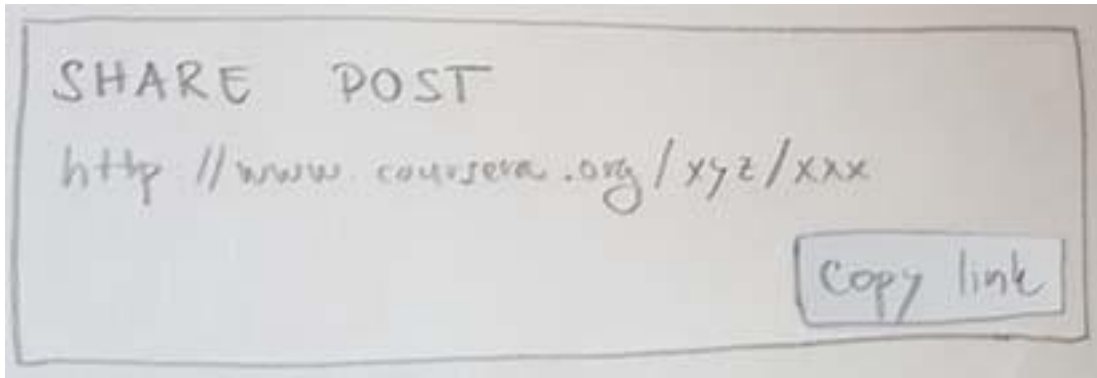
The text field with URL address is too small, user cannot see it whole and cannot be sure if the whole address was copied. This small bug violates already few Heuristics in the same time.



"Share post" pop-up window in posts

Recommendations:

- 1) Display whole URL address as text (not text field)
- 2) Add "Copy link" button



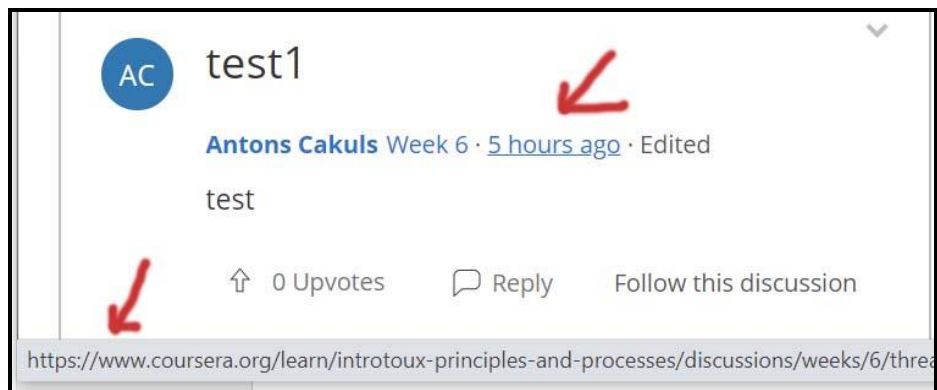
Recommended pop-up window for copying URL address

Finding 3: Link on time information has no sense

Severity: 2/4

Heuristics violated: Consistency and standards, Flexibility and efficiency of use

Time information contains a link to itself, which doesn't make any sense. This problem happens when a thread is open.



Link from time information leads to the same post as is currently displayed

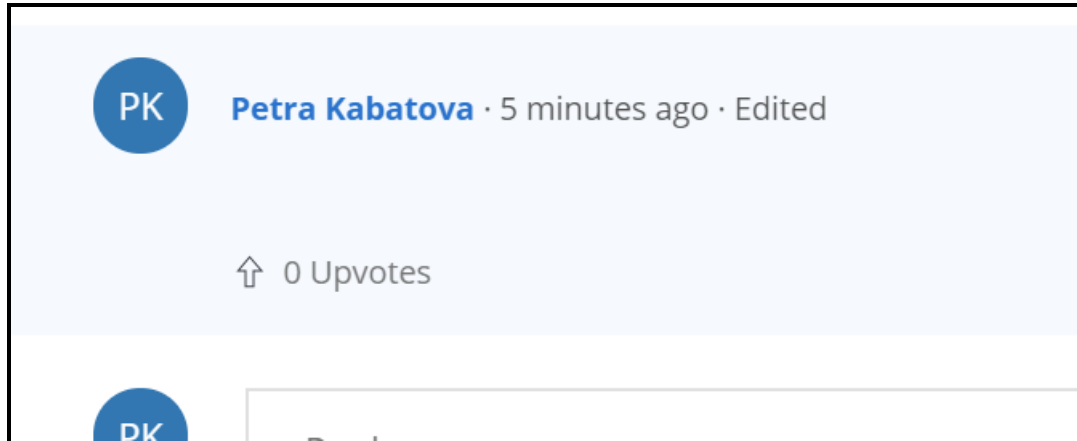
Recommendation: Delete the link, leave just time information

Finding 4: Creating empty post

Severity: 2/4

Heuristics violated: Error prevention

It is possible to create „empty“ post (with spaces). According to Error prevention Heuristics cases like this should be eliminated on the system side and not be possible to make input like this.



Empty post.

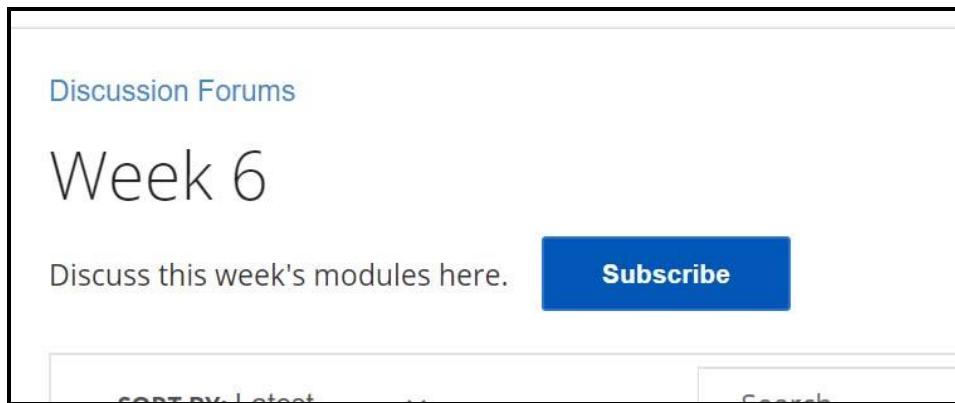
Recommendation: This error is easy to prevent, more detailed constraints should be applied to user text input.

Finding 5: Creating empty post

Severity: 2/4

Heuristics violated: Error prevention, Visibility of system status









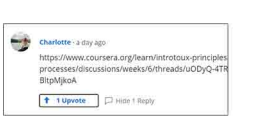
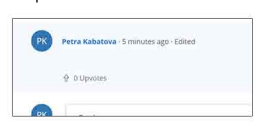

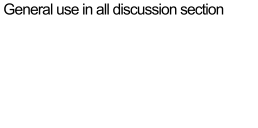
Text on button Subscribe is too common, especially on the portal where Subscription exists on multiple levels. It is not obvious what it is referring to. There is explanatory text next to it when pressed button. Since people doesn't read everything what is on the screen especially things with low hierarchy this is not in harmony with Error prevention and Visibility of system status. Users should always know what a button will do before pressing it. It is confusing what is user to be subscribe/unsubscribe from.



Button Subscribe (to discussion) is confusing on subscription portal

Recommendations: Change text on button „New posts notice“ or „Subscribe to discussion“

On desktop version text „You will receive emails whenever new threads are added.“ should be visible on mouse hover event.

Description	System Location	Heuristics Violated	Severity
The text field with URL address is too small, user cannot see it whole and cannot be sure if the whole address was copied.	<p>Sharing the post</p> 	<p>#3 User control and Freedom</p> <p>#5 Error prevention</p>	3
Adding a link is not predictable Link is created in 2 steps, but user has no clue how it works until he tries it out.	<p>Creating link in post</p> 	<p>#2 Match between real world and system</p> <p>#1 System Status Visibility</p> <p>#3 User control and freedom</p>	3
Time contains a link to discussion, which doesn't make any sense.	<p>time next on the post</p> 	<p>#3 User control and Freedom</p> <p>#4 Consistency and Standards</p>	3
Text on button Subscribe is too common. It is not obvious what it is referring to (there is explanatory text next to it, but people doesn't read that). I would suggest to what I subscribe/unsubscribe on the button.	<p>Subscribe button in discussion thread</p> 	<p>#5 Error prevention</p>	2
Automatic test for creating link is not working very well. It doesn't check the domain of first level (.org, .com etc) so user can add invalid link.	<p>Creating link in post</p> 	<p>#4 Error prevention</p>	2
Function is not working Changing the name of link is not working in dialogue box (only link change possible)	<p>Changing link name in post</p> 	<p>#3 User control and Freedom</p>	2
Function is not working well Link creation – it is not logical to ask for link name when I have highlighted text to which I want to add link. Name is taken from the text not the name user writes to dialogue box.	<p>Creating link in post</p> 	<p>#3 User control and Freedom</p> <p>#4 Consistency and standards</p>	2
Dialogue box for creating link: - www.coursera.org says - it is not user oriented, message sounds robotic - it is not obvious, what this box is about - missing header - used not recommended general OK button for forms	<p>Creating link in post</p> 	<p>#2 Match between real world and system</p> <p>#1 System Status Visibility</p> <p>#3 User control and freedom</p>	2
User cannot be sure, what this function means (probably it will make post more popular?) There is no explanation on hover eigher.	<p>Upvote button in post</p> 	<p>#3 User control and Freedom</p> <p>#2 Match between real world and system</p>	2
"Empty" message possible only spaces Constraints needed	<p>New post</p> 	<p>#5 Error prevention</p>	2
Second dialogue box for creating link: - instructions are too long and not always necessary, better would be to show them only when text is longer than 125 characters (javascript) before submitting. Since this field is not mandatory, I would recommend to indicate it rather visually.	<p>Creating link in post</p> 	<p>tttt</p> <p>#1 System Status Visibility</p> <p>#3 User control and freedom</p>	1
The word "threads" is not quite obvious, what is actually means. Dictionary should be user oriented. User can contextually understand that it stands for discussion. Since coursera.org has many foreign students I would suggest more common expression.	<p>General use in all discussion section</p> 	<p>#2 Match between real world and system</p>	1