Voter Guide Usability Sessions Script

This is a summary version of the researchers’ script for usability testing of a prototype voter guide with voters and non-voters as part of a project on how voters get information for the Future of California Elections.

More information about this project: civicdesign.org/how-voters-get-information

Introduction

Good to meet you! Thanks for helping us out. We’re doing a study to learn about how people use information about voting and elections. A group called Future of California Elections and the James Irvine Foundation fund the study.

We’re going to show you a new guide for voters and ask you some questions about it.

We’re going to use what we find out here to give election officials guidance about the best ways to write and present information for voters.

We’ll take about 45 minutes. You don’t have to participate, though, and you don’t have to answer all of our questions. You can stop at any time.

By the way, we won’t use your name in any of the reporting. Is it OK if we record this for our notes. [ Get OK for streaming, if it’s running.]

Any questions so far? If this is OK, could you sign here.

Warm up interview

Have you ever received anything in the mail about elections that looked official?

___ No  ___ Yes  

[If yes:] What made it official looking?

___ no color
___ cheap (newsprint) paper
___ seal
___ flags or other logos or insignia
___ looked like a tax form
___ other: _______________________________________________________

What’s that thing you got in the mail called?

Have you ever voted in an election?   ___ No  ___ Yes

[If has not voted:] Can you tell me about why you haven’t voted?
[If has voted:] When? What was that experience like? _____ year
Their questions

[If has voted:] Do you remember what questions you had about the election and voting? Tell me about some of your questions.

[If has NOT voted:] Let’s say an election is coming up. What questions do you have about voting and elections?

[Number in the box for the order in which the participant mentions a question.]

☐ What’s on the ballot? (What would I be voting for?)

☐ How do I actually vote? (How do I mark the ballot? What’s the voting system like?)

☐ What happens when I get to the polling place? (What’s the process like?)

☐ What are my options for getting to vote? Do I have to vote at the polls on Election Day?

☐ When is the next election?

☐ Can I vote before Election Day?

☐ How do I vote if I can’t vote on Election Day?

☐ What’s the deadline to vote by mail?

☐ What do I have to do to vote by mail?

☐ When is my vote-by-mail ballot due?

☐ Where do I go to vote?

☐ Am I eligible to vote?

☐ How do I register to vote?

☐ What’s the deadline for registering to vote?

☐ Am I registered to vote right now?

☐ Can I register on Election Day?

☐ Do I need to show ID to vote?

☐ Who is in office right now?

What was the most important question? The one you most urgently want answered? [Circle it above]

What makes that the most urgent question for you? [What might make the difference in whether they vote.]
First look at the guide

Hand the participant the voter guide.

This arrived in your mailbox today. What do you do with it?

___ immediately recycle it
___ flip through and then recycle it
___ try to figure out what it’s for
___ make a mental note about an election coming up
___ other: ________________________________________________

Why?

Ok. Let’s start by giving you some time to look at it.

We are focusing on a few pages today, because we want to make sure that they are written in a way you understand. They are marked with a post-it note.

I’ll give you some time to look through it in your own way, and then we’ll talk about it together.

What is your first impression? Any overview?

Page reviews

Let’s look back through this, page by page. As we go through, show me anything that you thought was confusing or that you didn’t understand.
Forced choice (5 min)

In a couple of situations, we actually showed the same information in two ways. We’d like to go back to those now. I’ll show you both versions, and I want you to compare the pages and comment on them. For each, ask: If you had to choose just one of these pages for a voter guide, which one would you choose? Why?

<table>
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<tr>
<td>___A (table)</td>
<td>___ easy to read</td>
<td>___ prefer?</td>
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<tr>
<td>___B (long form)</td>
<td>___ easy to understand</td>
<td>___ paraphrased OK?</td>
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 Measure Information

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<th>Measure Information</th>
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<tr>
<td>___Measure E (all of it)</td>
<td>___ easy to read</td>
<td>___ prefer?</td>
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<tr>
<td>___Measure F (summary)</td>
<td>___ easy to understand</td>
<td>___ paraphrased OK?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
<th>Pro/Con</th>
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Just a couple more questions

On pages 12-15, we showed this [flip back to the facsimile ballot]. How important is it that the example is exactly like what you will vote on?

[If Spanish or Chinese, and no comment before this:] How was the translation?

Demographic form

Before we finish, I just want to make sure that we’ve got all the details about you correct...

[ask or confirm questions on demographic form]

Wrap-up

Great! Thanks! This was very helpful. Anything else you’d like to add?