

Test, don't assume

The role of user testing

This document is a **quick reference tool.**

You don't always know where to start when it's time to choose a testing method. That's what this document is for.

Whether you're scoping a project, validating a prototype or evolving a product, you'll find for each method the ideal phase, the number of participants, the level of effort and the tools we recommend at Apptitude.

How to read this document

Qualitative method

Understand the why in depth, with few participants.

Quantitative method

Measure and validate at scale.

Level of effort

The dots show the level of effort needed to set up the method.

Methods 1/3

Moderated and unmoderated tests

In both cases, users are given a scenario and we observe their reactions, hesitations and misunderstandings. The difference is whether a facilitator is present. In a moderated test, the facilitator guides the session and can follow up on or dig deeper into a reaction. In an unmoderated test, users work through it alone, from their own environment. The first offers more depth, the second more volume and flexibility.

Interviews

One-on-one interviews let us explore users' needs, expectations and perceptions. We use them, for example, to test whether a concept is relevant, to validate a direction before designing, or to revisit what went wrong after a test session. It's a simple method to set up, but it takes real rigor in facilitation to avoid steering the answers.

Observation

Rather than asking users what they do, we observe them directly in their real environment. This approach reveals context-driven behaviors that never show up in a standard test setting: habits, workarounds, constraints you can't see from an office.

Structure and architecture tests

Methods such as card sorting and tree testing help us understand how users organize information and navigate a product. They are especially useful for testing a site structure or validating the logic of a menu before moving into detailed design.

Methods 2/3

Prototype tests (or usability tests)

This is probably the method we use most often. Users test an interface, even an incomplete one, so we can assess how understandable, logical and easy to use it is before development. The advantage: major issues can be spotted very early, while they are still easy to fix.

On a recent project, we used Optimal Workshop to validate a critical flow in an app. The principle: give users specific tasks, then analyze success data and the paths they took to complete them. This type of test reveals unexpected shortcuts, where users hesitate or get lost, and steps that seemed obvious but actually block them.

A/B testing

This method compares two versions of an interface or feature to see which performs better, based on real data. It is especially useful in production, when the goal is to optimize a specific element rather than understand overall behavior.

Analytics

By analyzing user journeys, conversion rates and drop-off points, we get an objective view of what works and what doesn't. Analytics don't tell you why users behave the way they do, but they clearly show where to focus further investigation.

Heatmaps

Heatmaps show areas of attention, clicks and scrolling on a page. They quickly reveal whether users interact with the right elements or whether their attention drifts elsewhere. Combined with qualitative tests, they help confirm or nuance what was observed in sessions.

Methods 3/3

Eye tracking

We track users' eye movements as they interact with an interface. It's a valuable method for identifying what draws attention first, what gets ignored and what causes confusion, without users having to put it into words. Especially useful for testing dense interfaces or critical content.

Sondages à grande échelle

When you need feedback from a large number of users, surveys bring out trends and validate perceptions at a scale qualitative methods can't reach.



Method guide

To understand

I want to ...	Recommended methods	Participants	Effort	Tools
Understand why users behave a certain way	User interview, Shadowing	3-5	●●●	Dovetail, Google Meet, Claude AI
Identify the motivations behind a behavior	User interview	5-10	●●●	Google Meet, Dovetail, Miro, Figjam
Observe users in their real context	User interview, Shadowing	3-5	●●●	Dovetail, Miro, Figjam
Compare my experience with my competitors'	UX benchmark	—	●●○	Claude AI, Miro, Figjam

To structure

I want to...	Recommended methods	Participants	Effort	Tools
Organize content and navigation	Card sorting	15–20	●●○	Optimal Workshop, Maze
Validate the logic of a menu or site structure	Tree testing	20–50	●○○	Optimal Workshop

To validate

I want to...	Recommended methods	Participants	Effort	Tools
Validate a concept or direction before designing	User interview	5–10	●●●	Google Meet
Test a prototype before development	Moderated test, Prototype test	5–8	●●○	Figma, Lyssna, Loop
Validate at a larger scale	Unmoderated test	10–20	●●○	Optimal workshop
Test on a limited budget	Guerrilla testing	5–10	●○○	Figma, papier

To test

I want to...	Recommended methods	Participants	Effort	Tools
Test whether an interface is understood at first glance	5-second test, First-click test	20–50	●○○	5 Seconds Test, Optimal workshop
Measure the emotional perception of an interface	Desirability test	10–20	●○○	Lyssna, Google Form, Typeform
Know where users look and click	Eye tracking, Heatmaps	5–100+	●●● / ●○○	Hotjar, Optimal Workshop

To measure

I want to...	Recommended methods	Participants	Effort	Tools
Measure satisfaction and usability	Questionnaire / survey, UMUX / SUS	20–100+	●○○	Optimal Workshop, Google Form, Typeform
Analyze real behavior in production	Heatmaps & recordings, Tracking / analytics	100+	●○○	Hotjar
Compare two versions of an interface	A/B testing	100+	●●○	-
Test in real conditions before official launch	Beta testing	50–100	●○○	Optimal Workshop, Lyssna

Have a project to design or improve? **Let's talk.**

At Apptitude, we challenge your assumptions and encourage exchange between areas of expertise.

We'll bring you method and perspective, so you don't get caught out!



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