



CODESIGN TOOL:

Methods and Opportunities for Resource Testing



It's time to get feedback on the resource prototype and see if the team's ideas work as intended with their intended audience. Using this guide, the team will decide from whom they would like feedback, the kind of feedback they need to move forward, and a plan for collecting that feedback.

Why test?

Testing your prototype with its intended audience is a key component of any design process. It can help the team to:

- Gain insights about audience needs and preferences
- Improve prototypes to meet expectations and requirements for users,
- Save time by identifying potential problems early in the process, and
- Give your prototype the best chance of achieving goals for impact by ensuring a more useful and usable resource.

Guidelines for gathering feedback

Gathering feedback can be a huge task or a relatively small one, depending on timelines, resources, and the nature of the feedback desired. To keep developing rapidly and not be weighed down by process, use testing approaches that run quickly and easily, not elaborate pilot programs.

Getting information from the right audience

It is critically important to reach your target audience when resource testing. Look back on who your team is trying to reach. You should find your audience using approaches that are inclusive, recognizing that audiences are diverse and may experience your resource differently. Consider language barriers, backgrounds and experiences, diverse perspectives, and how you will reach marginalized communities. As with your dissemination plan, you can consider getting feedback from others, including *tangential* or unexpected users (e.g. an afterschool program provider, whereas classroom teachers were the intended audience), as well as *intermediaries* (those who will decide whether this resource can or should be used or serve as a gatekeeper for reaching audiences, such as a building leader or coach that provides resources to teachers, even if the primary user is teachers themselves).

How many people should you test the prototype with? There's actually a science to this, which suggests that in certain cases, no more than 5 users are needed to get useful feedback. So let's decide: how many users will give us the data we need? You might send out your prototype in its rough form to 5 users, in a simple, lightweight way. Or, you might decide that you won't have useful data until you've heard from 100 people. The team should work together to set those targets!

Key decisions include: who to reach, how many to reach, and how to incentivize their participation (if possible).

Asking the right questions

There are many aspects of your resource that the team may seek feedback on. These may include many of the design considerations that relate to content, visual, and technical components, as well as broader questions about audience needs and how useful the prototype is in meeting those needs.

Another issue is deciding which aspects of the resource are able to be changed. At this point, you may not feel too attached to the prototype yet, and should be open to both large and small changes. But in reality, we have budgets and deadlines, which means it is important to be clear with the team what is possible to change and what is not at this stage. For example, what if a tester says, 'Instead of a website, have you thought about making this a movie?' Is your team willing to consider fundamental feedback that could

change the nature of the resource? Or are you just going to make the resource you've designed the best it can be? There's no point in asking questions about something that the team is unwilling to change, so make sure the team can prioritize precious testing time on issues where feedback is especially valuable.

Characteristics of helpful and effective questions include:

- *Purposeful and actionable*: Focus on what you genuinely want to learn to guide next steps (e.g., usability, clarity, alignment with goals), not on broad approval.
- *Open-ended but focused*: Encourage reflection and explanation (“How did you decide what to do next when using this tool?”) rather than yes/no responses.
- *User-centered*: Frame questions around the user's experience—what they notice, understand, or struggle with—rather than what the team intended.
- *Specific to design intent*: Tie questions to the prototype's core design principles or features you want to test (“Does the figure help illustrate the issue as intended?”).
- *Non-leading and neutral*: Avoid implying a “right” answer; instead, invite authentic critique (“What aspects felt confusing or unnecessary?” rather than “Did you find the instructions clear?”).
- *Reflective of multiple perspectives*: Include questions that let different roles and identities (teacher, researcher, administrator, student) speak from their expertise and context. (“Are there parts of [this resource] that feel especially respectful of or responsive to classroom realities?”)
- *Scaffolded for depth*: Start with surface impressions, then probe reasoning and implications (“What stood out?” → “Why do you think that matters for implementation?”).

When deciding *how many* questions to ask, start by clarifying what the team most needs to learn—such as how usable, clear, or relevant the resource is—and let those priorities guide your selection. Questions should balance breadth and depth, with a few quick questions about first impressions or clarity and a smaller number of deeper “why” or “how” questions. The number should also fit the format—around six to eight open questions for a 30–60 minute interview or focus group, three to five for a short demo, and up to a dozen for a written or online survey. And always leave time for participants to share observations you didn't anticipate.

Key decisions: What and how many questions to ask

Gathering information

There are many ways to collect information and several decisions to make about how to do that efficiently and effectively. How much will we ask of our participants? How do we want them to engage with our resource? How will we document and collect their reactions? How long can we wait for responses?

Engage with the prototype. The team should decide whether and how the audience should engage with the prototype. Will they be able to interact with it? Try it out in their professional practice? Will they be able to use it on their own and provide feedback later or experience it in real time while providing feedback? Have you made sure that those with particular needs are able to access it fully?

Documenting and collecting feedback. There are many strategies for this.

- *Focus groups* can be efficient for engaging multiple audience members in a discussion of the prototype, but can also be overwhelming when there are many questions, many participants, and limited time for responses.
- *Interviews* can provide rich insight and enable authentic responses, particularly with sensitive questions, but are often time-consuming for the team to conduct.
- *Surveys and questionnaires* can be completed asynchronously, or at a time convenient to participants, at very low cost, but often get less rich information with lower response rates.
- Teams may also use *digital tools* such as Jamboards or Padlet to collect reactions and responses in both synchronous or asynchronous data collection methods.

Timeline. Finally, the team needs to decide a timeframe for gathering feedback. How long are you willing to let audience members spend with the prototype and provide feedback? How quickly can focus groups or interviews be conducted? If the audience is going to engage with the resource on their own before sharing feedback, they should have at least a week to do so, respecting prior obligations and giving sufficient time to develop ideas.

With these ideas in mind, the team should complete the following plan:

Audience(s)

Who is the audience(s)?

How will we reach a diverse pool of potential users? Can we incentivize their participation?

How many users will we include in the test?

Are there tangentials or intermediaries we want to reach, and how?

Questions

What are the key issues we want to ask about? Develop a list of questions for each audience here:

Methods

Will the team collect information by survey? Interview? Focus groups?

What directions will be given to participants?

Who will be responsible for conducting the interviews, surveys or other feedback gathering?

Where will data be collected and stored for team review, and how will you ensure confidentiality?