JOB AIDS JOB AID

“A job aid is a repository for information, processes, or perspectives that is external to the individual and that supports work and activity by directing, guiding, and enlightening performance.” – Rossett and Gautier-Downes, A Handbook of Job Aids, p. 45

Consider...

- Examples are everywhere! Phone books, sticky notes, tax forms, instruction sheets, online help, laminated cards, posters, …
- Low-tech embedded virtuality – smart objects.
- Job aids can be put online, but usability can suffer.

Design Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Job Aids When...</th>
<th>Avoid Job Aids When...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance is infrequent</td>
<td>Use damages credibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences of errors are high</td>
<td>Speedy or fluid performance is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-correction is appropriate</td>
<td>Novel situations predominate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large or changing knowledge base</td>
<td>User lacks skills/ability to use them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training resources are limited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Target expert-level performance.
- Any format might be appropriate for any category; natural fits are shown.
- Combine formats for complicated situations.
- Use color, typography, layout, cartoons, etc. for clarity.
- Test-drive the result.

Three Perspectives

1. Job Aids for Information

2. Job Aids for Processes
   Tell how and when…Provide feedback…Highlight verbs. Ex: instruction sheet.

3. Job Aids for Coaching
   Tell why, or tell how to think about a task…Provide suggestions, not directions…Help user form models…Accommodate new, difficult, or ambiguous situations…May reveal multiple perspectives. Ex: this section.

Resources

A Handbook of Job Aids, by Rossett and Gautier-Downes, Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 1991. (Their categorization was adopted for this aid.)
http://edweb.sdsu.edu/courses/edtec540/540WWW/home.html
http://www.qaproject.org/methods/resjobaids.html
http://www.stc.org/confproceed/2000/PDFs/00108.PDF

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A Gallery of Formats

Key: Common formats used for...\(\text{ⓘ}\)formation, \(\text{Ⓟ}\)rocesses, or \(\text{Ⓒ}\)aching aids

### ARRAY \(\text{ⓘ}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Samples</td>
<td>555-1234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staples</td>
<td>555-9872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subs</td>
<td>555-4321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Focused on data
- No natural starting point
- No natural path

### CATEGORIES or CHECKLIST \(\text{ⓘ} \text{Ⓟ} \text{Ⓒ}\)

- Your POV
  - What you want
  - What you need
- Their POV
  - Must-haves
  - Don’t-haves

- Considers many factors
- May require experience to use
- Need not imply a process

### COMBINATION \(\text{ⓘ} \text{Ⓟ} \text{Ⓒ}\)

- Mix and match any of the other formats
- For complicated situations
- Use whatever works!

### DECISION TABLE \(\text{ⓘ} \text{Ⓟ}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Enter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 or more</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Several conditions or variables
- Enter at any point
- Options are limited

### DIAGRAM or MAP \(\text{ⓘ} \text{Ⓒ}\)

- Physical or conceptual structure
- Add insets for extra detail
- No natural starting point

### FLOWCHART \(\text{Ⓟ}\)

- Apply binary decisions in order
- Clear path to solution
- Several decisions involved

### PSEUDOCODE \(\text{ⓘ} \text{Ⓟ}\)

IF Status = Married THEN Enter 1
ELSE IF Children = 0 THEN Enter 3
ELSE Enter 4

- An alternative to DECISION TABLE or FLOWCHART
- Implied order

### RECIPE \(\text{Ⓟ}\)

1 c. water    dash salt    ½ c. oats
Bring water and salt to a rolling boil. Add oats, stirring constantly. Gently boil 5 min., stirring occasionally. Serve.

- Textual description
- One path
- May have sub-recipes & variations

### STEPS \(\text{Ⓟ}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>CLICK icon</td>
<td>Window opens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SELECT box</td>
<td>Item highlights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>CLICK Reply</td>
<td>Window opens</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Simple
- Steps in sequence
- One path

### WORKSHEET \(\text{Ⓟ}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parts:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Implied sequence
- One path
- User writes responses