

# User Experience Issues in Forms

by

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Among all other UX problems, one major source of frustration is forms, which are the biggest obstacles between users and web-based businesses. Forms suck. There is no one who fills forms in his/her spare times for fun, is there?

An owner of a bar would not hire a bouncer who bounces everyone. Likewise, web forms need to bounce only the obvious non-clients.

Therefore, the form designers should first understand what their job actually is NOT for. To my opinion, common errors can be categorised as follows.

- Forms presented earlier than they need to be  
Users do not want to fill in any fields at all, even with fake data, in order to get some basic information only. Asking anyone's email address to email a price, is like showing the menu at a restaurant after asking the customer's street address.
- Fields asking gratuitous information  
No one appreciates when some forms ask cell phones plus home phones sometimes even a neighbours' phone, when there is no need for any voice contact. People do online shopping for a reason and that reason is not being called by a sales representative.

- Fields asking confidential information

How does a website expect to get a photocopy of someone's driver's licence, unless it is a 100% reliable source and the user badly needs that service?

- Overzealous validations

- Fields marked "required", are many more than the really required fields. I do not see why a customer complaint/feedback page should have even one required field. As long as the complainant does not want to provide real credentials, such forms will receive feedback from many John Does and the confirmation of receipts will be sent to addresses such as

[johndoe@hotmail.com](mailto:johndoe@hotmail.com)

- Fields mistakenly validating out real info, such as names

- Textareas not accepting certain characters due to XSS concerns of incompetent coders who cannot use HTML sanitisation concept

- Validation results displayed as a list in the next page that requires the usage of the back button

- And the worst of all, a lengthy form that resets itself to report an error, after the user fills in everything

- Too much action and interaction

Some forms have so many moving parts that either the user breaks or they break. Fields that generate fields based on the answers, error messages that pop up requiring okays, or unnecessary accordions, are just a few examples of bad motion graphics practices.

- Confusing designs

Just place the submit button on the extreme right of the screen, or far from the bottom of the form, and lose many real customers who filled in your form.

- Default values of checkboxes that initiate a spam spree without users real consent

- Legalese

Forms that cannot be submitted without accepting pages of terms and conditions no one can possibly read. Such forms are widely available in government websites.

Threats. If you renew your licence plate using Ontario's online application and if you take a look at the legal warnings, you will be shaking in your boots. There are warnings all around saying how long you will be jailed for providing false info, which technically can mean a typo or an incorrect odometer reading. (Besides, I personally think my odometer reading should be none of the government's business.) I don't want to be jailed while trying to pay, so I decided not to ever do it

online after surviving it once.

- Too much technical information

Browser versions' merits, better browser suggestions, download prompts, links to Adobe Acrobat...

These are all deal breakers.

- Jargonised discourse

Some companies have no idea about what persona is and their wording makes sense only to IT geeks. Imagine this hypothetical warning: "Malformed packet. The value you want to insert into db does not comply with that field's regex requirements. More information can be found [here](#)."

- Usage of wizard steps when no wizard is needed

Instead of simply presenting everything at a time on one page, some forms involve many steps.

User does not see what will come next unless he/she fills in one field. Fields are presented one-by-one at each user click, making the form