

## 14.2 HEURISTIC EVALUATIONS

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The problem space I am working in is the frustration parents feel by the insufficiency and lack of facilities in the public sphere. I'd like to explore how we can improve the experience of parents with young infants and toddlers when they venture to new places. In terms of a digital solution, no exact competitor exists; however, the apps that come closest to a digital solution are Yelp, Winnie and Playground Buddy.



**Yelp** has over 199 million reviews of businesses worldwide. Whether you're looking for a new pizza place to try, a great coffee shop nearby, or need to book a haircut, Yelp is your local guide for finding the perfect place to eat, shop, drink, explore, and relax. The Yelp app is available for iPhone, iPad, and Apple Watch.



**Winnie** is the app that gives parents superpowers! Whether you want to find local daycares and preschools, new things to do with your kids, or ask for advice, we can help. Research child care providers: Research daycares and preschools near you by easily comparing photos, prices, parent reviews & more. Find family friendly places: Browse and search our unique directory of local activities, playgrounds, parks & more. Join a helpful community: Immediately join a community of moms & dads who can give advice about anything from pregnancy to child care. Help other parents by sharing your experiences and recommending your favorite places.



**Playground Buddy** is an app that helps you find playgrounds. It gives users access a worldwide database of over 200,000 playgrounds. Search for playgrounds near you, across town, across your country and across the world. Easily get directions to the playground of your choice. See a street view of playgrounds before you visit (where available). Share playground details and location with others, even to those without the app. Create and save a playground favorite list. Add new playgrounds and photos for the benefit of others.

I evaluated these three apps based on three standards of Jakob Nielsen's Usability Heuristics: #2 Match Between System and The Real World, #4 Consistency and Standards, and #7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use.

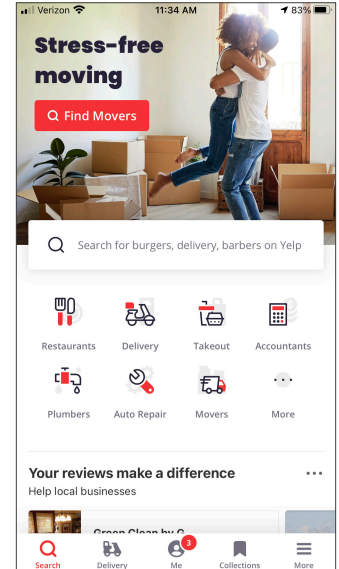
Here is the grading system I developed:

A	App is not only easy to use, it is pleasurable to use. It is a gold standard for Nielsen's Usability Heuristics 2, 4, and 7.
B	App is easy to use and mostly follows Nielsen's Usability Heuristics, but there is slight room for improvement.
C	App is usable, but strays from Nielsen's Usability Heuristics in significant ways. Lots of room for improvement.
D	App is not usable, is basically a waste of data on user's devices and gives UX design a bad name.

# YELP

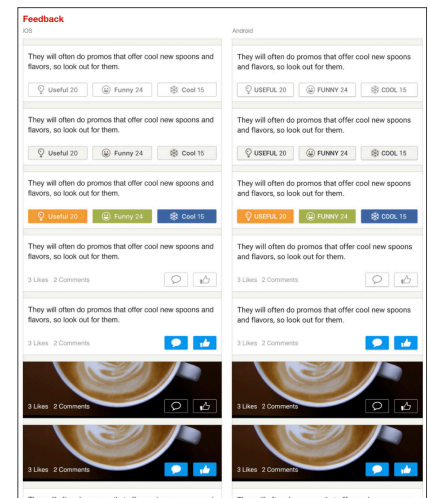
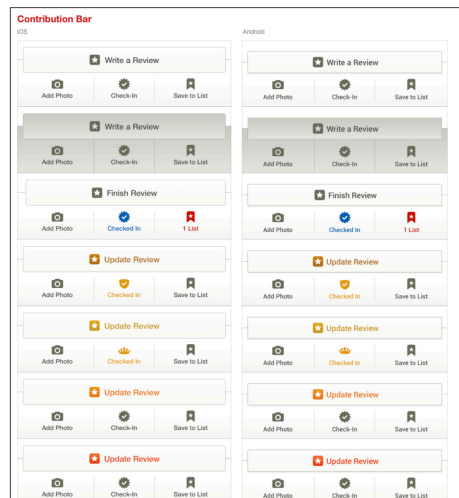
## #2 Match Between System and The Real World Score: A

Yelp exemplifies this principle very well. It uses recognizable and everyday terms such as restaurants, delivery, accountants, plumbers, etc. as well as icons to reinforce concepts. Icons in the search filters and bottom task bar are clearly labeled, to reduce the possibility of miscommunication. The information is presented in a natural and logical way.



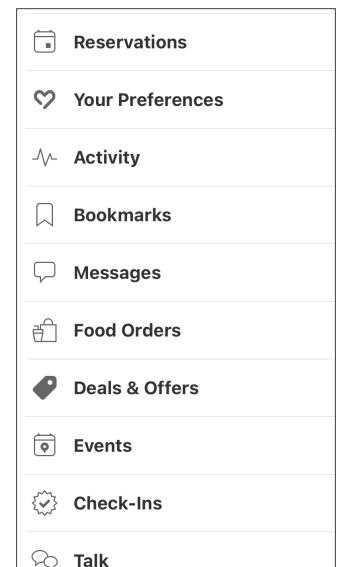
## #4 Consistency and Standards Score: C

Internally, Yelp does have brand guidelines for web, mobile, color, typography icons, and language; however, the brand guidelines are extremely complicated with too many variables. You can see in the screenshots below that there are an overwhelming number of options for styling buttons, contributions and feedback. This dilutes the brand and makes the interface appear inconsistent and messy.



Some of the icons look slightly inconsistent, some are filled in, some have thicker outlines, and some have thin outlines. See the example to the left. "Your Preferences" has a thicker outline than the rest of the icons, and "Deals & Offers" is the only icon with a fill instead of an outline.

Yelp follows the external conventional patterns: there is a task bar, hamburger menu, and search bar. In terms of navigation, it is very standard.



## #7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use

Score: B

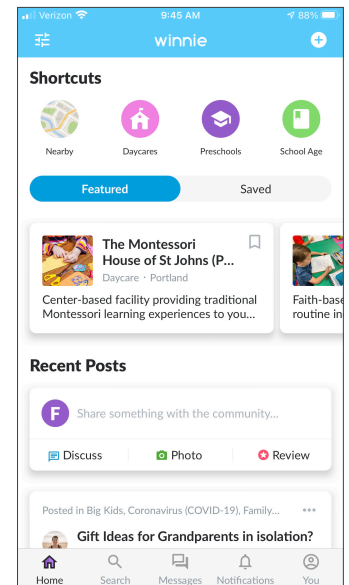
Yelp is very efficient and flexible to use. Users can conduct a search in a variety of ways. They can immediately begin by typing something into the search bar, or they can use the filter icons to get search suggestions and narrow search results. However, the only way to write a review is to find the business page and start a review. Yelp relies on reviews by users, so there should be a shortcut for users to write a review.

# WINNIE

## #2 Match Between System and The Real World

Score: B

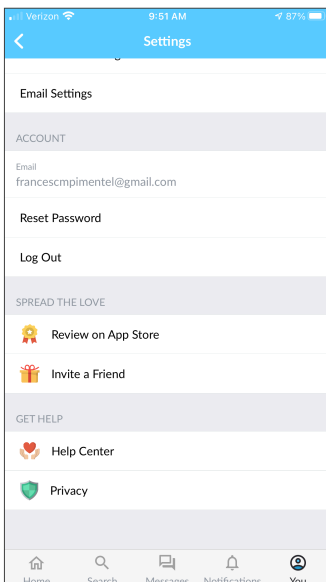
Winnie exemplifies this principle very well. It uses recognizable and everyday terms such as daycares, preschools, and school age as well as icons to reinforce concepts. Icons in the search filters and bottom task bar are clearly labeled, to reduce the possibility of miscommunication. The only negative thing about Winnie in terms of this heuristic is that the information does not present itself in a clear and logical way. See #7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use for a more detailed description.



## #4 Consistency and Standards

Score: C

I was not able to find a brand guidelines document for Winnie; however, they do seem to use illustration and pastel blues, purples, greens, and yellows overall. I don't give them a higher score because some of the outlines are flat with no outlines and some icons have some dimensionality with black outlines. I think Winnie follows external conventional patterns well. The task bar is where you would expect, the search bar, the settings, everything is where you would expect it to be.

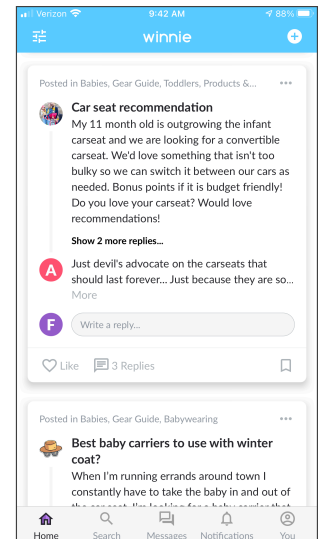
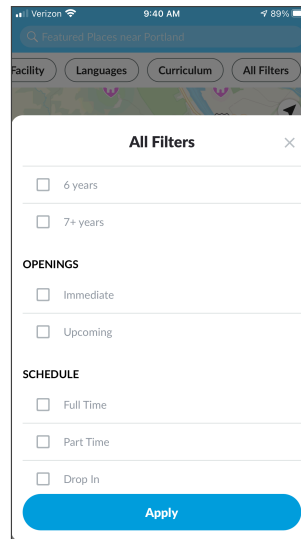


## #7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use

Score: D

The only thing the Winnie app seems like it is intended to do is to help parents search for daycares, but even that task is not a clear priority in the hierarchy of the home page. The app claims it can help parents find family friendly places and activities, in addition to daycares and preschools. They say they have a unique directory of businesses that are good for parents and families, but I was unable to find it.

There is no hierarchy or structure to the posts. The posts have a topic assigned to them, but I don't see how a user can choose which topic to search. The social feed and search shortcuts are labeled as "home." Because Winnie describes itself primarily as an app to find childcare, family activities, or ask advice, these should be the priority actions further up in the hierarchy a user can find on the home page. Messages and notifications could be nested under the user profile to declutter the task bar.

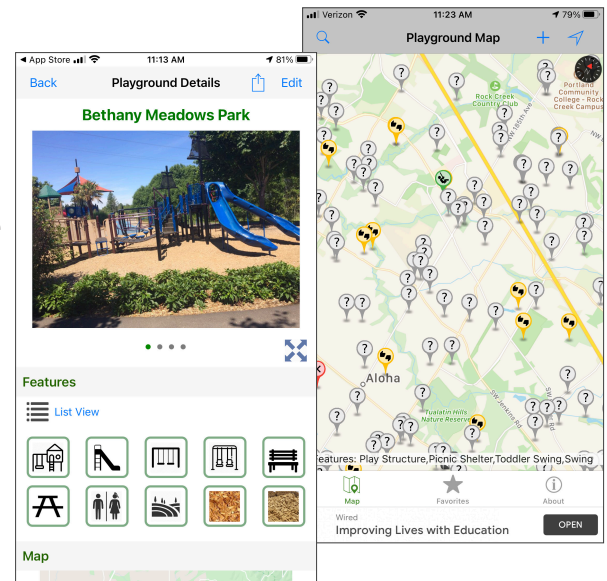


# PLAYGROUND BUDDY

## #2 Match Between System and The Real World

Score: C

Most of the icons are self-explanatory; however, the task bar at the bottom does not have a home button, which users usually expect to see. Park features are represented with icons which are not labeled, users have to click on the icon to figure out what the icon represents. There is no technical jargon; however, the app seems to have a rating system for the parks but this is not explained anywhere. If a user performs a search for a park and uses the filters, some geo tags are green, some are yellow, some are red and some are grey. Users are left wondering what these colors and icons mean.



## #4 Consistency and Standards

Score: C

I was not able to find a brand guidelines document for Playground Buddy. Overall, their branding is very basic and weak. The icons do not look custom or consistent in geometry or line weight. The map functions and looks similar to Apple maps, so that is beneficial for users who are familiar with Apple maps, but not for users who are used to Google Maps or a different map app.

## #7 Flexibility and Efficiency of Use: 3/5

Score: C

Playground Buddy is pretty easy to use because it is such a simple app and solves a very narrow and defined problem, which is to help users find playgrounds with the features they want. It might not look slick, but it is definitely straightforward and intuitive to use.

Two areas of improvement are: there should be multiple ways to add favorite playgrounds and multiple ways to add reviews of a playground. Currently, users have to go to the specific playground to add it to the favorite list or write a review. There should be shortcuts to these two tasks because the app relies on user-generated reviews.

