Mental Workload and Information Processing

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Submit via hard copy or Canvas. Professionalism (legibility, cleanliness, etc.) of your submission will be worth 2 points. There are many different and valid ways to design this card, but any technique used should state assumptions in the design statement section.

Hand-drawn art is acceptable. The submission does not need to be “camera-ready,” but the product should be good enough to allow a graphic designer to make a finished product without additional questions. Color printing is within scope for the product. The size, shape, etc. of the submission is up to you to decide based on the information you are trying to convey, the user population, etc. The purpose of this exercise is not aesthetic, but rather to demonstrate your ability to incorporate design principles you’ve learned during this course.

This is an Information Design exercise to sharpen your skills in providing Need to Know information to a user population in such a way that they will remember it or can quickly refresh their memories under operational conditions.

Here is your scenario: A rental car company, Hit The Gas, Inc (HTG) has had complaints from customers that their popular rental minivan’s heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system is hard to figure out. HTG tried just copying the manufacturer’s owner manual pages pertaining to HVAC, and giving a copy to customers but that turned out to be unusable in many customers’ opinion. It was considered way too wordy and long. HTG wants a card no larger than 8 ½ by 5 ½ with air conditioning information on one side, heating/defrost on the other. They will laminate the cards and place them in the minivan close to the HVAC control panel. You are to design this card.

Keep the following design constraints in mind:
1. The target audience is anybody that might rent a car in the USA (including Texas drivers)
2. The typical renter doesn’t bother to check out much of anything about a rental car before they turn the key in the ignition and hit the gas. They are often in a hurry and figure they can learn to operate the car’s systems as they exit the parking lot
3. The driver may be forced to glance at the card while he/she is driving, rather than any leisurely study in the rental lot before they take off
4. Carefully consider NEED to know versus NICE to know

The vehicle in question is a 2005-2007 Dodge Grand Caravan, reference materials are in the “Dodge Caravan Info Packet.pdf” PDF file on the course site.

Additionally write a brief statement (about one paragraph or a bullet point list) justifying your design. Specifically include:
- The principles that you applied
- Any subtleties of your leaflet that you would like to explain
Assumptions and rationale for decisions you made

Grading for this exercise is out of 18 points, 1 being “Renters might as well use the Dodge instructions or just poke away at the HVAC until something happens, 18 being “One glance and the renter can set the HVAC with no problem even when pulling out of the lot.”

GRADING SHEET

PURPOSE
1. Inform of need to know info (3)
2. Well applied design principles (3)
3. Improved accessibility of information (3)

Subtotal

AUDIENCE
1. Hits intended audience (3)
2. Provisions for illiterate/low literacy (4)

Subtotal

PROFESSIONALISM (2)

Bonus for creativity, research “sweat” (2)

GRADE (out of 18)
My design:

- Because the purpose of this card is making HTG's customers know how to use the HVAC system, I chose the most associated and important information (“Need to know”) to place on it: how to turn on heating or A/C, and how to defrost.
- In order to make communication easier and show the position of each control as well, I put a picture of the panel and marked the controls with numbers.
- I highlighted the control names of main functions I want to emphasize with background color and same style rounded numbers used in the using steps:
  1. the switch of heating and A/C
  2. the switch of the front blower
  3. front mode control of air distribution / defrost
- I used different background colors as metaphors of hot (red) and cold (blue) air, which matches the two functions (heating and A/C). This can make the customers find what they want more easily.
- I made the using procedure looks short and easy: only 3 steps in each function and the steps are similar. Moreover, I highlighted the differences of the steps for the two functions by yellow color to make it more obvious. Other important tips are put below the 3 steps.
- The size of the card is 8.5 in x 5.5 in, and the main information words on it are big enough for a driver’s glance, including Texas drivers. If drivers are not able to read the words when driving, they can easily see the colors and numbers of steps and the controls’ position to know how to turn on the heating or A/C.
- The audience could be anybody that may rent a car in the U.S., including foreigners. Therefore, in order to increase the readability, I used simple words which are more easily to
understand. I checked the words and sentences I used to make sure that the Flesch Score is within the very easy level.