

# Heuristic Analysis: Club Penguin

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# Heuristic Assessments

- **What is a *Heuristic Assessment*?**

A Heuristic Assessment is a systematic inspection of a user interface design (i.e., a website) in relation to a site's objectives and key user activities.

- **What is a *Heuristic*?** A heuristic is a specific standard or rule derived from experience with site design, usability, and user experience  
eg. Users should be prevented from making errors.

- **How are these applied?** A contextual evaluation is provided by considering not just the heuristics standards, but business goals and the abilities and interests of the users as well.

# Heuristic Standards

Heuristic	Definition
Nomenclature/Labels	The language and taxonomy used on the site is clear
Clear/Simple Navigation and Orientation	Navigation on the site is easy to follow and user is quickly able to determine where they are on the site
Consistency/Standards	Site elements or processes are consistent throughout the site
Intuitive Design	Required actions, site elements, and processes are easy to comprehend and understand
User Control and Freedom	User is in the driver's seat throughout their site experience
Efficient	Steps have been taken to ensure the user can execute requirements quickly and easily
Clean/Simple Design	Overall design is clean and simple, with only the necessary information
Provides Help Functions	Help functions and customer service options are offered for assisting users
Content/Information	Content is related to user requirements and objectives, useful and valuable
Prevents Errors*	Specific processes that require user input (e.g. purchasing) are comprised of steps to eliminate errors
Help users recognize, diagnose and recover from errors*	Specific processes that require user input (e.g. purchasing) create error messages that are clear and point to the origin of error

\*Generally applied to ecommerce.

# Club Penguin Goals

- Increase use of paid features
  - Improve communication of benefits of paid features
- Optimize site for natural or “organic” search
- Improve general usability
- Improve tools offered to parents

# Child/Teen Online Behavior

- Nearly one-third of all 12 to 17-year-olds report playing video games every day or multiple times each day, and 75% report playing at least once a week. (Includes hand-held, mobile, console and PC games)
- There are no gender, racial, or ethnic differences in who visits virtual worlds. However, younger teens are more likely to have visited virtual worlds than older teens, with 13% of 12- to 14-year-olds visiting them, compared to just 8% of teens ages 15-17.
- Children aren't sophisticated about content: They don't distinguish between content and advertising, rarely scroll pages, and enjoy animation and sound effects much more than adults.
- Children are impatient: if an activity is not immediately satisfying, young visitors move on.
- Children are often frustrated online: designers often overestimate children's language skills, using complicated or vague words that prevent younger visitors from understanding the choices that are available. Interestingly many young visitors are willing to read the instructions (girls more likely than boys)
- Children 6-12 years old usually have limited time after school for computer activities – roughly 4 hours between arriving home and going to sleep. During that period they are responsible for chores, homework, eating dinner , family activities, etc.
- Parents often grant or retract computer privileges as punishment or reward for child's behavior.

## Sources:

The Civic Potential of Video Games, Sept 7, 2008 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Digital Media and Learning Program  
Teens, Video Games and Civics, September 2008, Pew Internet and American Life Project  
Usability of Websites for Children, April 2002, Nielsen Norman Group

# Club Penguin: Detailed Analysis

- The following slides display annotated screenshots from Club Penguin, describing issues, the heuristic standard they violate, and a suggested remedy.
- Additionally, each slide shows the most relevant Club Penguin goals.
- The sequence deliberately mirrors the user experience, in order to present issues relating to the conversion funnel in their most relevant context. The analysis covers the following areas:
  - Club Penguin Website
  - Creation of a free account
  - Parent Authorization
  - Parent Tools
  - Virtual World Environment

# **WEBSITE PAGES**



# Club Penguin: Home Page



## Navigation/Content

Global Navigation is clear and obvious, but it points to content of interest mostly to parents – membership costs, etc.

Suggest including Nav elements aimed at children as well, and create pages with content that will engage the children and prompt to sign up or log in. Also: Toys links to store that includes clothing as well. Consider changing name to “Shop.” Also: Change “Select Language” control to stop covering Play Now if user is not precise with mouse.

## Content





Interactive graphic on home page is engaging, but not connected to exploration of CP features or signup/log in.

This experience should include content illustrating the different game features, as well as clear CTA for sign up or learn more. Also: the home page could include elements that show the vibrancy of CP– how many accounts exist, how many users logged in, or feature an avatar or igloo on the home page.

## Content

Parents will come to the site with a limited set of questions about safety, cost, management, etc. These links are scattered.

Create 1 callout for Parents, with links to costs, tools, account management, FAQs. Use the remaining real estate to highlight engagement.

Content	Goals
Kids 	Revenue 
Adults 	SEO
Play: Free	Parent Tools 
Play: \$\$	Usability

# Club Penguin: Home Page (Continued)



## Usability

Row of callouts at bottom is below the fold on a screen in 10x7 resolution.

Suggest altering home page layout as suggested and ensure that main CTA are not below the fold.

## Intuitive







If user is logged in, there is no indication of this on the home page.

Suggest creating a version of the home page that recognizes a user who has created a penguin and one who has a membership and tailor the content appropriately. For example include elements to up sell a free player to a membership or display toys the user might want to buy, or show a list of actions taken by the user's friends. For parents, consider including links to parent tools, reminders when hours on account are low, special deals to renew...

## Intuitive

"Unlock Items Online" link is not prominent.

If this is a high priority element, it should have more weight on the page. Consider creating a special URL for unlocking content and printing it prominently on the packaging to avoid any confusion.

Content	Goals
Kids 	Revenue 
Adults 	SEO
Play: Free 	Parent Tools
Play: \$\$ 	Usability 

# Club Penguin: Membership

## Navigation & Orientation

Membership link in global nav also targets a Membership page within section.

This is inconsistent with other sections. Eg. Community link in global nav targets a community landing page, not the What's New page

## Nomenclature, Copy

Copy in the tab structure is written for the children (“membership allows you...”) However the parent is the audience. Content should acknowledge the child’s needs but realize the parent is reading.

Rewrite the copy to address parental concerns – security, privacy, guarantees if any. Include tab showing parent tools screenshots. This content exists elsewhere, but should be included at this decision point.

## User Control





Different payment methods are not referenced on this page.

Consider mentioning the different payment methods accepted by the site on this page.

## User Control

Gift certificates and membership cards are different, and gift certificates are not mentioned here.

Include gift certificates as an option here.

Content	Goals
Kids	Revenue 
Adults 	SEO
Play: Free	Parent Tools 
Play: \$\$ 	Usability

# Club Penguin: Membership




## User Control

As mentioned in the Analysis Summary, the monthly/6-monthly/yearly 'all-you-can-eat' pricing plans for Club Penguin does not line up with the needs of the audience, who use the service intermittently.

Children of this age group have limited free time during the week, during the school year, further limited by vacations or parents who cut off computer access as punishment.

As a result, a usage plan structured like a cell-phone or internet contract for adults may not be appropriate.

*Suggest offering blocks of hours, weekend only memberships or summer-only memberships as a option, so that parents can allocate hours to their children when the children are available to play.*

Content	Goals
Kids	Revenue 
Adults 	SEO
Play: Free	Parent Tools 
Play: \$\$ 	Usability