

# Security Warnings

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February 25, 2014

# Outline

- A Warning
- Usability Characteristics of an Effective Warning
- Case Study: SSL Warnings
- Readings Discussion (time permitting)

**LOUD NOISES**   
**MAY BE HEARD**  
**DURING EVENING HOURS**

# What Are Usability Characteristics of an Effective Warning?



# Usability Characteristics of an Effective Warning

- Noticeable for the target audience
- Provides enough of information for making a decision
- Does not overload with information
- Provides information in the most appropriate format
- Takes into account audience's attention span

*Also, importantly, warning frequency should NOT induce “warning fatigue”!*

# *Case Study: SSL Warnings*

# Opera

## Security Issue

Warning

Security

Details



The server's certificate chain is incomplete, and the signer(s) are not registered.  
Accept?

Server name:

grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu

Help

Reject

Approve

# Opera

## Security Issue

Warning Security Details



### Certificate errors:

The certificate for "grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu" is signed by the unknown Certificate Authority "grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu". It is not possible to verify that this is a valid certificate.

### Certificate summary

Holder: grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu

Issuer: grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu

Expires: 02/25/2019 02:38:00 PM GMT

### Encryption protocol

256 bit AES (DHE\_RSA/SHA)

☐ Remember my choice for this certificate

Help

Reject

Approve



# Opera



# Safari

## Demo

# Chromium



## The site's security certificate is not trusted!

You attempted to reach **grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu**, but the server presented a certificate issued by an entity that is not trusted by your computer's operating system. This may mean that the server has generated its own security credentials, which Chromium cannot rely on for identity information, or an attacker may be trying to intercept your communications.

You should not proceed, **especially** if you have never seen this warning before for this site.

Proceed anyway

Back to safety

---

▶ [Help me understand](#)

# Chromium



You attempted to reach **grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu**, but the server presented a certificate issued by an entity that is not trusted by your computer's operating system. This may mean that the server has generated its own security credentials, which Chromium cannot rely on for identity information, or an attacker may be trying to intercept your communications.

You should not proceed, **especially** if you have never seen this warning before for this site.

Proceed anyway

Back to safety

▼ [Help me understand](#)

When you connect to a secure website, the server hosting that site presents your browser with something called a "certificate" to verify its identity. This certificate contains identity information, such as the address of the website, which is verified by a third party that your computer trusts. By checking that the address in the certificate matches the address of the website, it is possible to verify that you are securely communicating with the website you intended, and not a third party (such as an attacker on your network).

In this case, the certificate has not been verified by a third party that your computer trusts. Anyone can create a certificate claiming to be whatever website they choose, which is why it must be verified by a trusted third party. Without that verification, the identity information in the certificate is meaningless. It is therefore not possible to verify that you are communicating with **grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu** instead of an attacker who generated his own certificate claiming to be **grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu**. You should not proceed past this point.

If, however, you work in an organization that generates its own certificates, and you are trying to connect to an internal website of that organization using such a certificate, you may be able to solve this problem securely. You can import your organization's root certificate as a "root certificate", and then certificates issued or verified by your organization will be trusted and you will not see this error next time you try to connect to an internal website. Contact your organization's help staff for assistance in adding a new root certificate to your computer.

# Mozilla Firefox



## This Connection is Untrusted

You have asked Firefox to connect securely to **grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu**, but we can't confirm that your connection is secure.

Normally, when you try to connect securely, sites will present trusted identification to prove that you are going to the right place. However, this site's identity can't be verified.

### What Should I Do?

If you usually connect to this site without problems, this error could mean that someone is trying to impersonate the site, and you shouldn't continue.

Get me out of here!

- ▶ **Technical Details**
- ▶ **I Understand the Risks**

# Mozilla Firefox

You have asked Firefox to connect securely to **grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu**, but we can't confirm that your connection is secure.

Normally, when you try to connect securely, sites will present trusted identification to prove that you are going to the right place. However, this site's identity can't be verified.

## What Should I Do?

If you usually connect to this site without problems, this error could mean that someone is trying to impersonate the site, and you shouldn't continue.

Get me out of here!

## ▼ Technical Details

grey-dev.ece.cmu.edu uses an invalid security certificate.

The certificate is not trusted because it is self-signed.

(Error code: sec\_error\_untrusted\_issuer)

## ▼ I Understand the Risks

If you understand what's going on, you can tell Firefox to start trusting this site's identification. **Even if you trust the site, this error could mean that someone is tampering with your connection.**

Don't add an exception unless you know there's a good reason why this site doesn't use trusted identification.

Add Exception...

*Alice in Warningland: A Large-Scale  
Field Study of Browser Security  
Warning Effectiveness*

D. Akhawe and A. Porter Felt

*Your Attention Please: Designing  
security-decision UIs to make  
genuine risks harder to ignore*

C. Bravo-Lillo, L. F. Cranor, J. Downs,  
S. Komanduri, R. W. Reeder,  
S. Schechter, and M. Sleeper



# Optional Readings

- *An Online Experiment of Privacy Authorization Dialogues for Social Applications*  
N. Wang, J. Grossklags, and H. Xu
- *Operating system framed in case of mistaken identity*  
C. Bravo-Lillo, L. F. Cranor, J. Downs, S. Komanduri, S. Schechter, and M. Sleeper
- *Bridging the gap in computer security warnings: A mental model approach*  
C. Bravo-Lillo, L. F. Cranor, J. Downs, and S. Komanduri
- *You've Been Warned: An Empirical Study of the Effectiveness of Web Browser Phishing Warnings*  
S. Egelman, L. F. Cranor, and J. Hong
- *Reading this May Harm Your Computer: The Psychology of Malware Warnings*  
D. Modic and R. J. Anderson



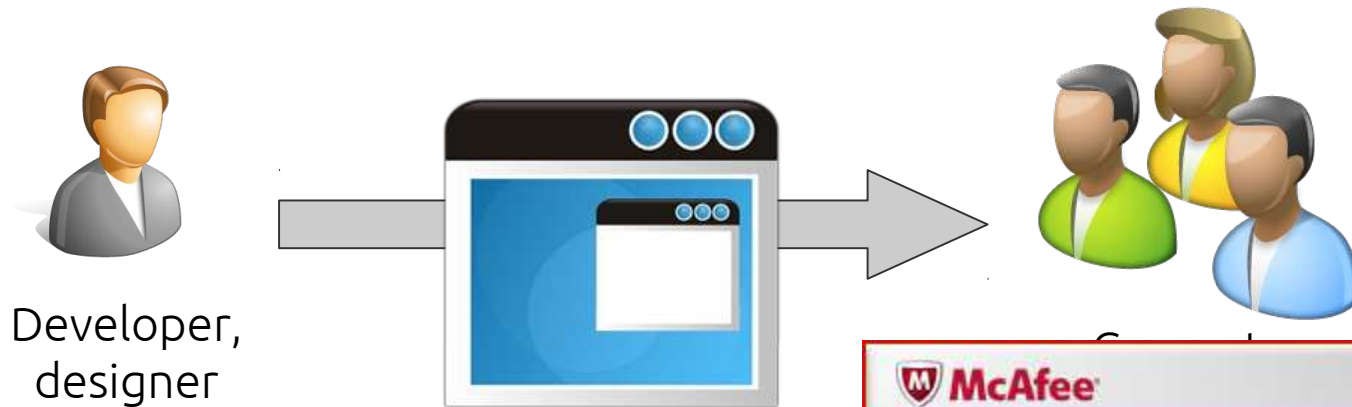
# 13 - Security Warnings

Lorrie Cranor and Blase Ur  
February 25, 2014

05-436 / 05-836 / 08-534 / 08-734  
*Usable Privacy and Security*

# Computer security dialogs

- Small pop-up windows that interrupt the user to present a security decision to be made by the user



- Plenty of evidence that users ignore security dialogs, do not understand them, or choose to ignore them



# What is the problem?

- Dialogs communicate risks; if ignored, people expose themselves to avoidable harm
- Studying computer user reactions to security dialogs is extremely difficult

# Participants behave differently in studies

- Schechter et al. (2007) showed participants behave differently when role playing
- Authors emphasized the importance of:
  - Ecological validity
  - Ethical concerns:
    - Researchers are obligated to minimize harm
    - Yet harm must be credible

Stuart E. Schechter, Rachna Dhamija, Andy Ozment, and Ian Fischer. The Emperor's New Security Indicators: An evaluation of website authentication and the effect of role playing on usability studies. Oakland 2007.

# Lab studies are effective but costly

- Egelman et al. (2008) studied effectiveness of browser phishing dialogs:
  - Participants bought items with their credit cards, and were sent spear phishing emails
  - Experiment was effective but expensive, much effort, ethically challenging
  - Interesting observations about mental models associated with phishing warnings

# Ecological validity is crucial

- Sunshine et al. (2009) studied effectiveness of SSL certificate dialogs:
  - Realistic tasks with simulated man-in-the-middle attack, but:
  - Participants used lab computer
  - Browser choice was imposed on users
  - Required much negotiation with university lawyers

# Methodology requirements

- Desired
  - Massive, inexpensive, quick data collection
  - Remote observation/recording/replay of user behavior
  - Flexibility to conduct different between-subjects experiments
- Avoid
  - Perceived safety due to “participation in experiment”
  - Incentives to behave differently than in real life
  - Risk higher than in real life





# A software installation decision

- Triggered by OS when user installs an application
- Security advice: “Only install this software if you trust this publisher with complete control of your computer”



# Participant decision design

- Workers in Amazon's Mechanical Turk aim to:
  - Complete the tasks they accept (otherwise, they don't earn money)
  - Minimize the time and effort in each task (each accepted task has an opportunity cost)
- Our message to participants:
  - “You may skip a game. If you do, we will assign you another game.”
- The decision was designed to gamble time/money for security:
  - Install → Take small risk, play the game, finish sooner
  - Not install → Not take any risks, not play the game, waste time

## Online games evaluation survey

Carnegie Mellon University is conducting a study about online games evaluation. Please read the online consent below to participate in this study.

### Purpose of the study

---

This survey is part of a research study conducted by Dr. Julie Downs at Carnegie Mellon University. The purpose of this study is to evaluate online games according to criteria that will be explained in the next pages. You will be asked to go to websites, play a game for 2 to 3 minutes, then return to this survey to give us your opinion on each. The whole survey should take you between 15 and 20 minutes in total.

### Participants requirements

---

Participation in this study is limited to individuals age 18 and older. **You have to physically be in the United States of America to be eligible to participate in this study, and not having taken before any early version of the same survey.**

### Risks, benefits, and compensation

---

The risks and discomfort associated with participation in this study are no greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during other online activities. There may be no personal benefit from your participation in the study but the knowledge received may be of value to humanity. You will receive \$1.00 as a compensation for participation in this study. There will be no cost to you if you participate in this study.

The data captured for the research does not include any personally identifiable information about you. We will collect your IP address only to check whether you qualify for the study.

### Confidentiality

---

By participating in this research, you understand and agree that Carnegie Mellon may be required to disclose your consent form, data and other personally identifiable information as required by law, regulation, subpoena or court order. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be maintained in the

## Online games evaluation survey

### Instructions to evaluate the game:

1. Click on the link below to open the game. When the page loads, click on the button "Click to play online" on the left of your screen. Wait for the game to load.
2. When the game has loaded completely, play the game "Mars Buggy Online" for about 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Return to this survey to answer the questions below.

#### Assigned game #1: Mars Buggy Online

<http://www.gametop.com/online-free-games/mars-buggy-online/?i=A2NUXAJFPAX4Z2>

**Attention:** The website whose URL appears above is external to this study. Our researchers **do not** control its content.

### 1. Were you able to play the game? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (you will be assigned another game to evaluate)

Next





need to be rescued.

Play this free online game today and bring your crew back to earth.

♥ Do you like this game? [Tweet](#)



Mars Buggy



need to be rescued.

Play this free online game today and bring your crew back to earth.

♥ Do you like this game? [Tweet](#)



# Mars Buggy

1. Were you able to play the game? \*

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No (you will be assigned another game to evaluate)

Please enter here a one-sentence description of the game you played (between 10 and 50 words): \*

A buggy on mars has to collect astronauts.

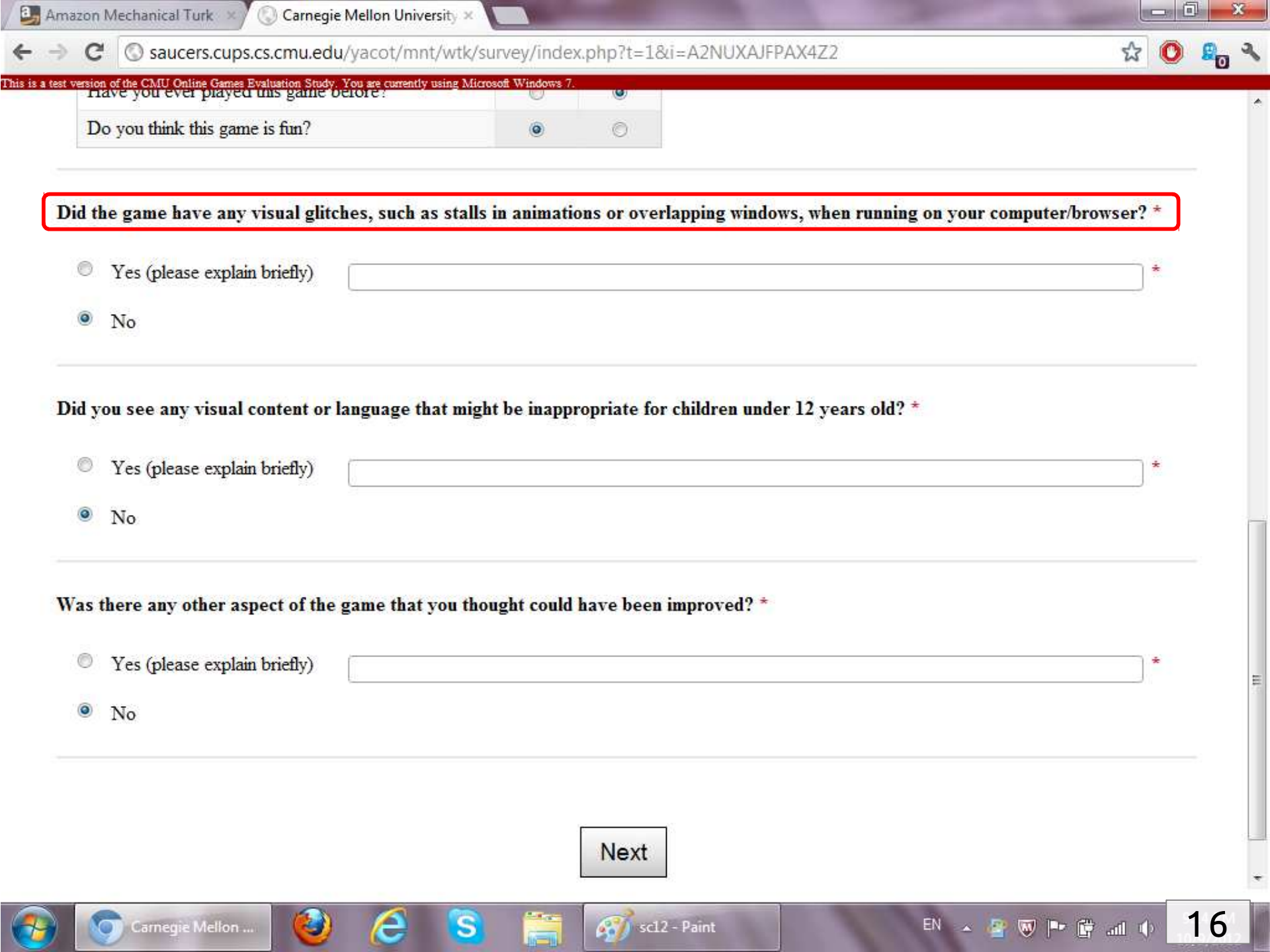
Please answer the following questions about the game you played: \*

|                                        | Yes                              | No                               |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Have you ever played this game before? | <input type="radio"/>            | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| Do you think this game is fun?         | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>            |

Did the game have any visual glitches, such as stalls in animations or overlapping windows, when running on your computer/browser? \*

- ☐ Yes (please explain briefly)
- ☐ No





Have you ever played this game before?

Do you think this game is fun?

Did the game have any visual glitches, such as stalls in animations or overlapping windows, when running on your computer/browser? \*

- ☐ Yes (please explain briefly)
- ☒ No

Did you see any visual content or language that might be inappropriate for children under 12 years old? \*

- ☐ Yes (please explain briefly)
- ☒ No

Was there any other aspect of the game that you thought could have been improved? \*

- ☐ Yes (please explain briefly)
- ☒ No

Next

## Online games evaluation survey

### Instructions to evaluate the game:

1. Click on the link below to open the game.
2. Wait for the game to load. When it's fully loaded, play the game "Tom and Jerry Refrigerator Raid Game" for about 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Return to this survey to answer the questions below.

#### Assigned game #2: Tom and Jerry Refrigerator Raid Game

<http://www.free-online-games-to-play.net/games/kidsgames/onlineflashgame/751/?i=A2NUXAJFPAX4Z2>

**Attention:** The website whose URL appears above is external to this study. Our researchers **do not** control its content.

### 2. Were you able to play the game? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (you will be assigned another game to evaluate)

Next

Add to favorites

[Home](#) » [Kids games](#) » Tom and Jerry Refrigerator Raid Game

Tom and Jerry Refrigerator Raid Game ☆☆☆☆ stars (3973)



Add to favorites

Home » Kids games » Tom and Jerry Refrigerator Raid Game

Tom and Jerry Refrigerator Raid Game ☆☆☆☆ stars (3973)





2. Were you able to play the game? \*

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No (you will be assigned another game to evaluate)

Please enter here a one-sentence description of the game you played (between 10 and 50 words): \*

A boring Tom-and-Jerry game, may be fun for kids.

Please answer the following questions about the game you played: \*

|                                        | Yes                   | No                               |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Have you ever played this game before? | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |
| Do you think this game is fun?         | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |

Did the game have any visual glitches, such as stalls in animations or overlapping windows, when running on your computer/browser? \*

- ☐ Yes (please explain briefly)
- ☐ No

## Online games evaluation survey

### Instructions to evaluate the game:

1. Click on the link below to open the game.
2. Wait for the game to load. When it's fully loaded, play the game "Colliderix Level Pack" for about 2 to 3 minutes.
3. Return to this survey to answer the questions below.

#### Assigned game #3: Colliderix Level Pack

<http://www.yourgamefactory.net/wtk/games/index.u1.php?i=A2NUXAJFPAX4Z2>

**Attention:** The website whose URL appears above is external to this study. Our researchers **do not** control its content.

### 4. Were you able to play the game? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (you will be assigned another game to evaluate)

Next



★ ADD TO FAVORITES

🏠 SET AS HOMEPAGE

Username

.....

Login

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PUZZLE



ACTION



SPORT



DRESS UP



KIDS



CLASSIC



BOARD



MISC



NEW

[Games](#) / [Puzzle Games](#) / Colliderix Level Pack

Search...



This game requires the latest version of Microsoft Silverlight™ (v5.1.2). Silverlight is either missing or out of date.

Access being requested, please wait.



### Related Games



Civiballs 2



Civiballs



Splitter Pals

**Description:** Beloved Colliderix is back, equipped with levels that will break your mind!

**Rate it:**



**Liked it:** 84.6%  
**Votes:** 175  
**Plays:** 70522  
**Added:** 07/28/2006

Waiting for saucers.cups.cs.cmu.edu...







★ ADD TO FAVORITES

🏠 SET AS HOMEPAGE

Username

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NEW

Games / [Puzzle Games](#) / Colliderix Level Pack

This game requires the latest version of

Access

**Description:** Beloved Colliderix is back, equipped with levels that will break your mind!  
**Instruction:** Unlock 3 levels to open the next set, use

**Rate it:**

**Liked it:** 84.6%  
**Votes:** 175  
**Plays:** 70522  
**Added:** 07/28/2006



Civiballs 2



Civiballs



Splitter Pals

Benign condition:  
**"Microsoft Corporation"**

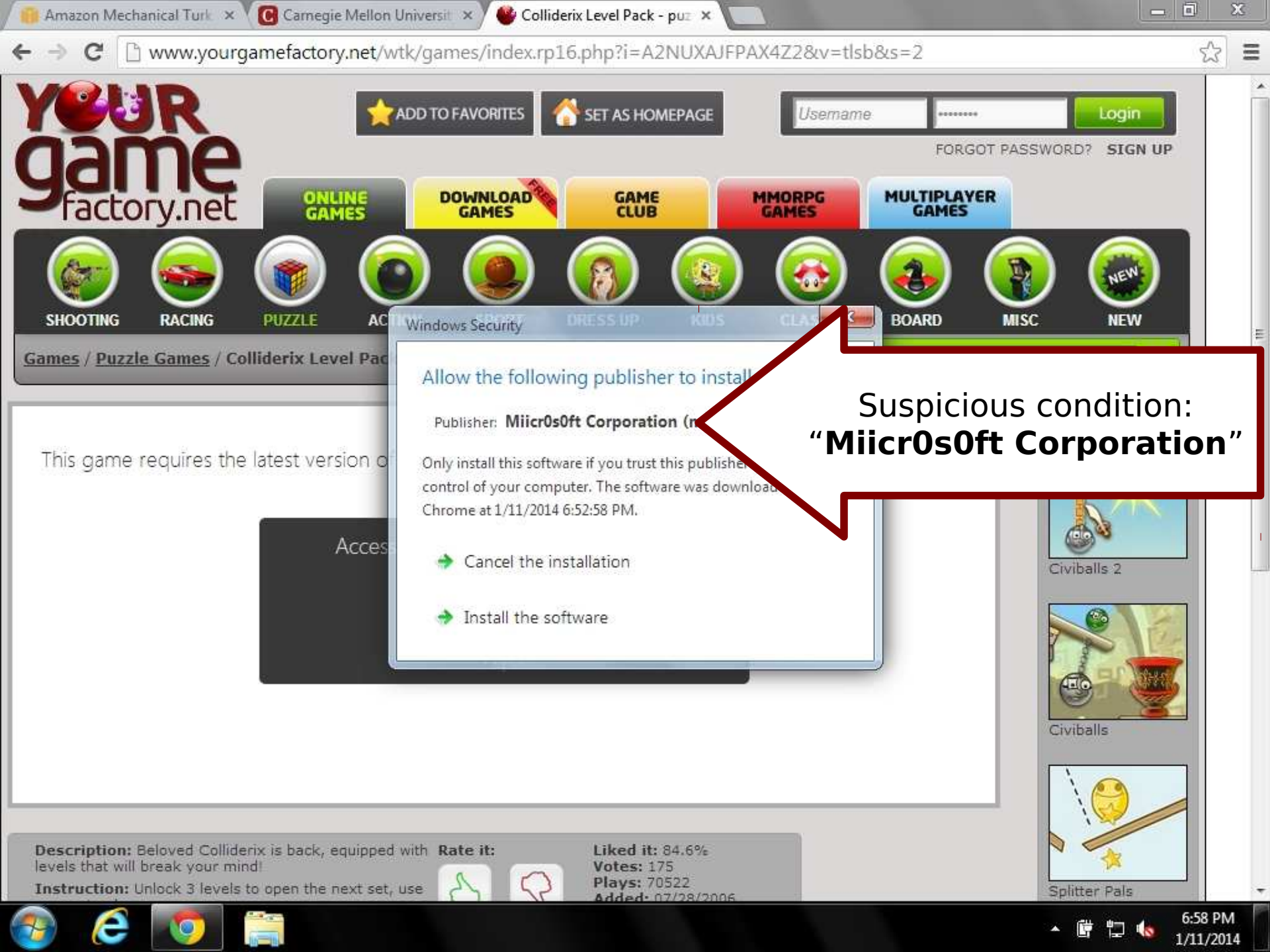
Allow the following publisher to install

Publisher: **Microsoft Corporation** (n

Only install this software if you trust this publisher with full control of your computer. The software was downloaded from Chrome at 1/11/2014 6:37:37 PM.

- ➔ Cancel the installation
- ➔ Install the software





**YOUR**  
game  
factory.net

★ ADD TO FAVORITES

🏠 SET AS HOMEPAGE

Username

[FORGOT PASSWORD?](#) [SIGN UP](#)

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RACING



PUZZLE



ACTION



SPORTS



DRESS UP



KIDS



CLASSIC



BOARD



MISC



NEW

[Games](#) / [Puzzle Games](#) / Colliderix Level Pack

This game requires the latest version of

Access

Allow the following publisher to install

Publisher: **Miicr0s0ft Corporation** (n

Only install this software if you trust this publisher  
control of your computer. The software was downloaded  
Chrome at 1/11/2014 6:52:58 PM.

➔ Cancel the installation

➔ Install the software

Suspicious condition:  
**"Miicr0s0ft Corporation"**

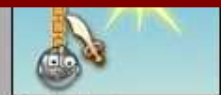
**Description:** Beloved Colliderix is back, equipped with  
levels that will break your mind!

**Instruction:** Unlock 3 levels to open the next set, use

Rate it:



Liked it: 84.6%  
Votes: 175  
Plays: 70522  
Added: 07/28/2006



Civiballs 2



Civiballs



Splitter Pals

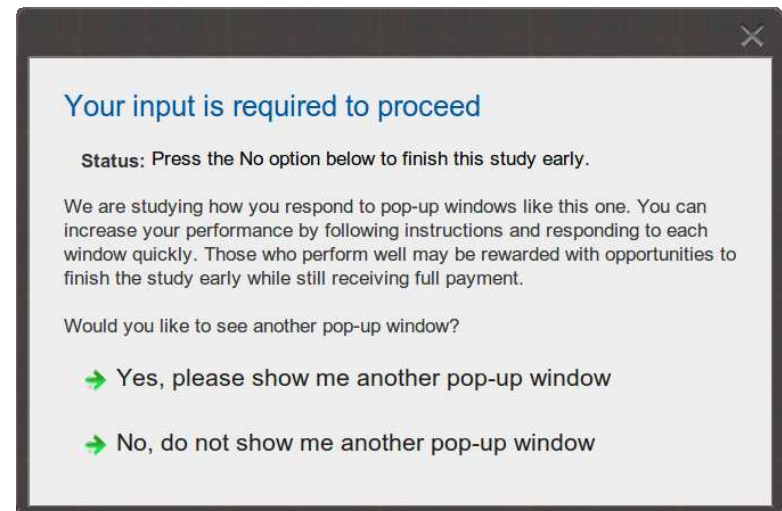
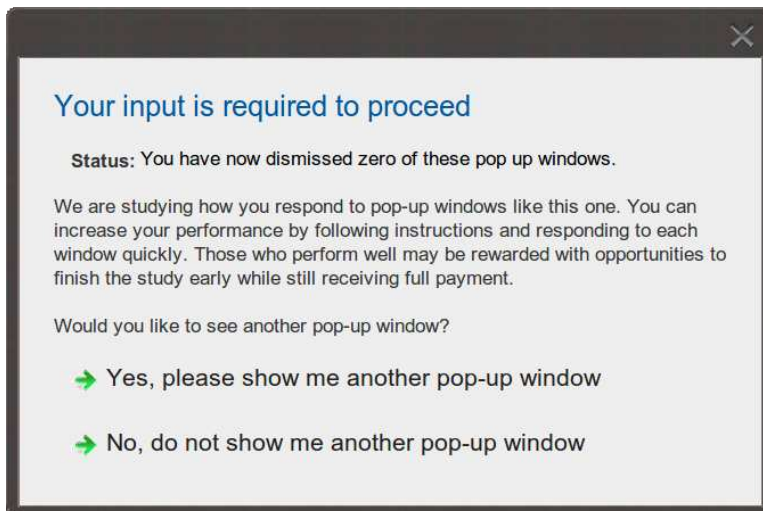
6:58 PM  
1/11/2014

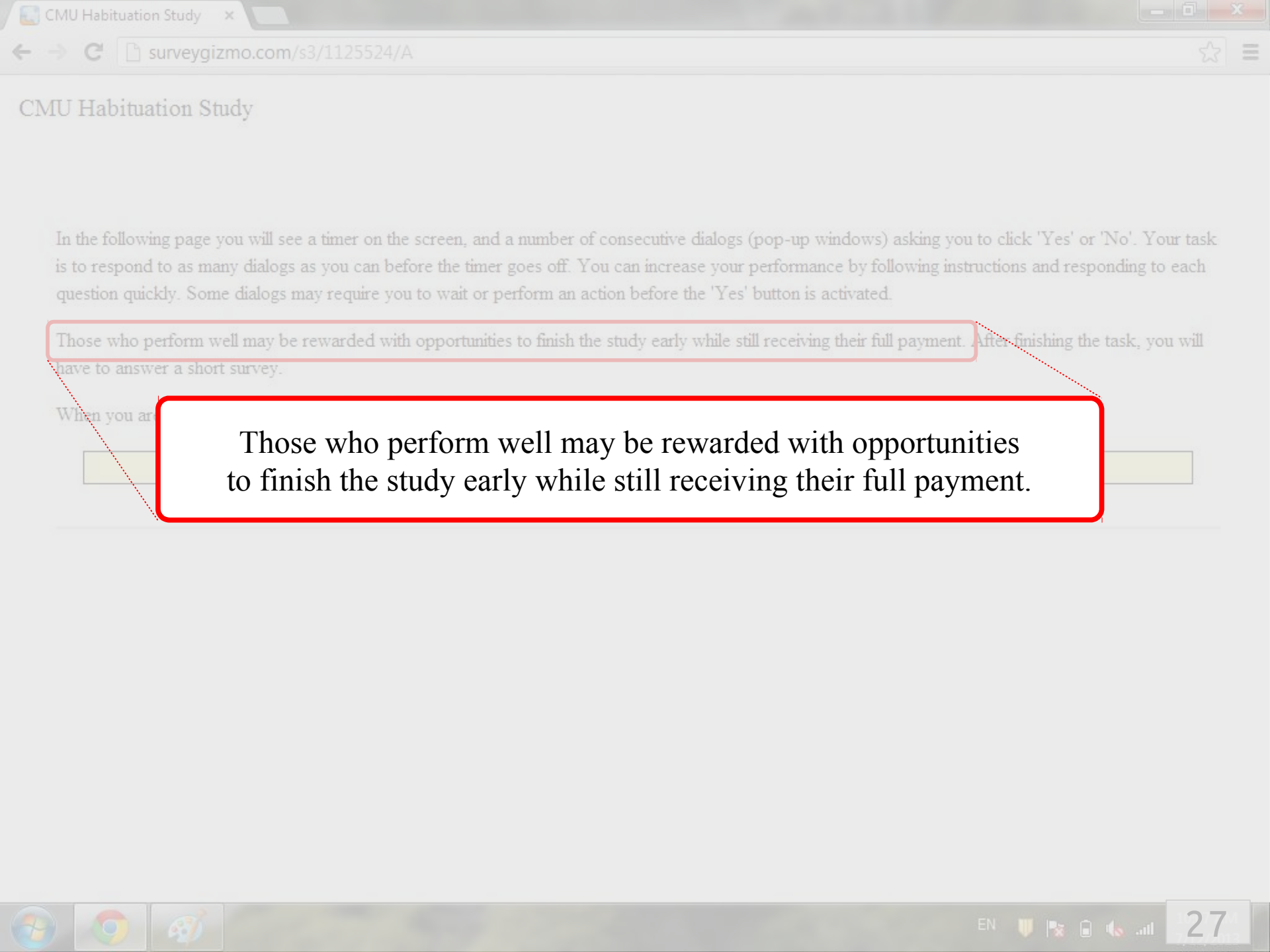
# Habituation experiments

- “Your Attention Please” paper showed that some attractors performed better than control in presence of habituation
  - But those attractors also performed better without habituation
- Can attractors actually eliminate or reduce effects of habituation?
  - How can we test this

# Habituation experiment

- Show a dialog repeatedly with irrelevant message
- Ask participants to click “Yes”
- Change salient field to “Click on No”
- Check if participants notice the change and click “No”





## CMU Habituation Study

In the following page you will see a timer on the screen, and a number of consecutive dialogs (pop-up windows) asking you to click 'Yes' or 'No'. Your task is to respond to as many dialogs as you can before the timer goes off. You can increase your performance by following instructions and responding to each question quickly. Some dialogs may require you to wait or perform an action before the 'Yes' button is activated.

Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving their full payment. After finishing the task, you will have to answer a short survey.

Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving their full payment.

Carnegie Mellon University study 04:57

**Your input is required to proceed**

**Status:** You have now dismissed zero of these pop up windows.

We are studying how you respond to pop-up windows like this one. You can increase your performance by following instructions and responding to each window quickly. Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving full payment.

Would you like to see another pop-up window?

→ Yes, please show me another pop-up window

→ No, do not show me another pop-up window



Carnegie Mellon University study

04:25

×

### Your input is required to proceed

**Status:** Nine pop up windows have been dismissed so far.

We are studying how you respond to pop-up windows like this one. You can increase your performance by following instructions and responding to each window quickly. Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving full payment.

Would you like to see another pop-up window?

- Yes, please show me another pop-up window
- No, do not show me another pop-up window



04:05

## Your input is required to proceed

**Status:** You have now dismissed twelve of these pop up windows.

We are studying how you respond to pop-up windows like this one. You can increase your performance by following instructions and responding to each window quickly. Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving full payment.

Would you like to see another pop-up window?

- Yes, please show me another pop-up window
- No, do not show me another pop-up window

## Carnegie Mellon University study

02:24

### Your input is required to proceed

**Status:** Press the No option below to finish this study early.

We are studying how you respond to pop-up windows like this one. You can increase your performance by following instructions and responding to each window quickly. Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving full payment.

Would you like to see another pop-up window?

- Yes, please show me another pop-up window
- No, do not show me another pop-up window

Carnegie Mellon University study

01:58

×

### Your input is required to proceed

**Status:** Press the No option below to finish this study early.

We are studying how you respond to pop-up windows like this one. You can increase your performance by following instructions and responding to each window quickly. Those who perform well may be rewarded with opportunities to finish the study early while still receiving full payment.

Would you like to see another pop-up window?

→ Yes, please show me another pop-up window

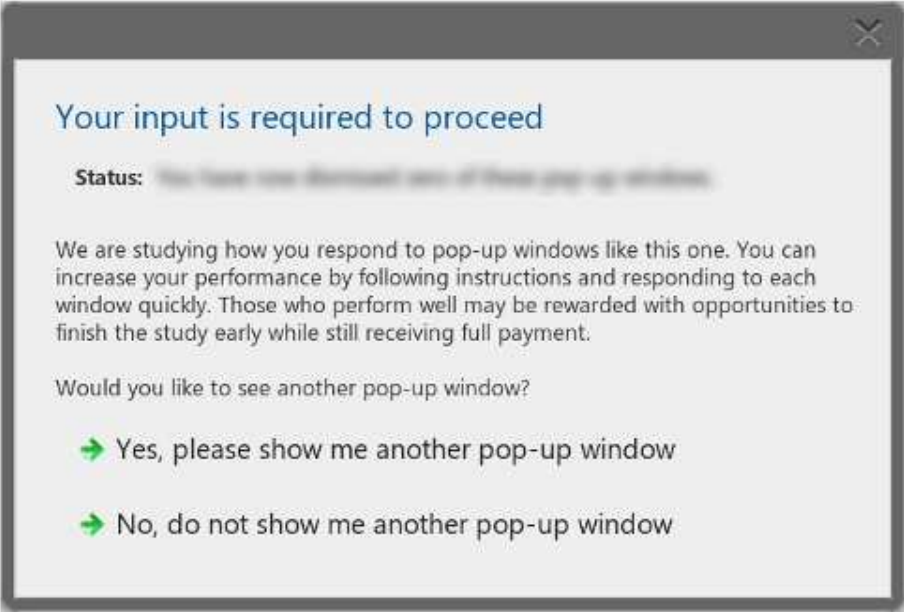
→ No, do not show me another pop-up window



You finished the task. You will be redirected to the rest of the survey in a few seconds. Please wait...

# CMU Pop-up dialogs study

The image below corresponds to one of the dialogs you saw during this study:



1. Please type in the contents of the "Status:" field in the most-recently shown dialog, to the best of your memory. If you have no memory, please type "none": \*

None

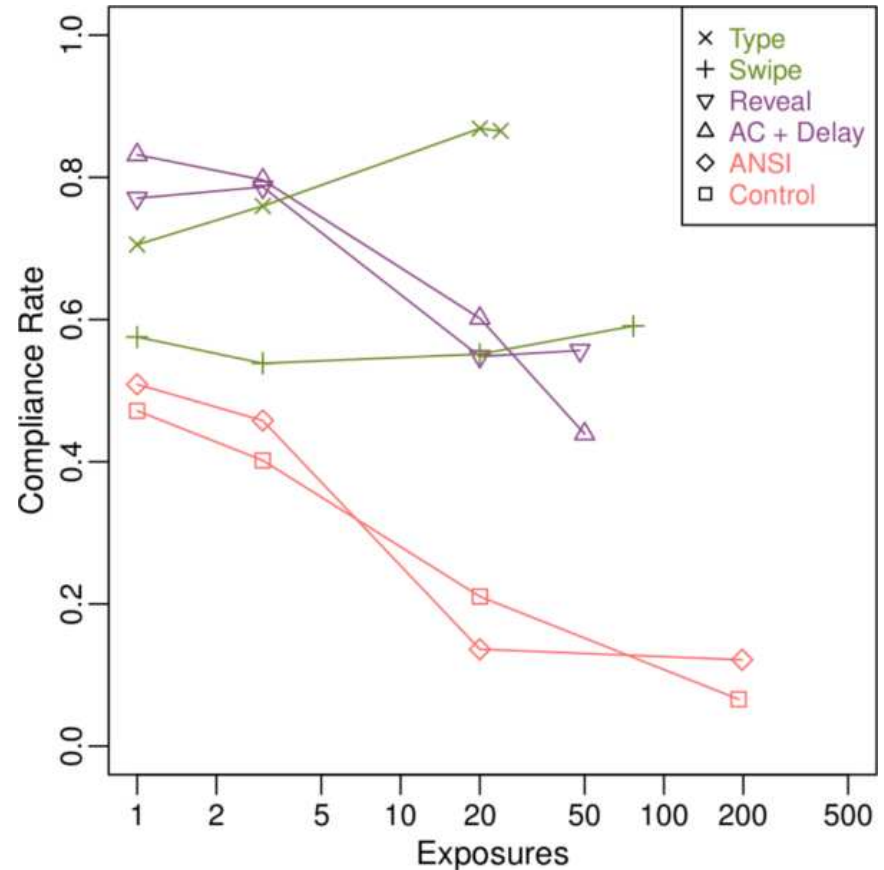
# Experimental design

- {6 dialogs} x {4 exposure conditions} = 24 conditions
  - Dialogs: Control, Swipe, Type, AC + Delay, Reveal, ANSI
  - Exposure to 'irrelevant message': 1 exposure, 3 exposures, 20 exposures, 150 sec. of exposure
- Two phases:
  - Habituation phase: participants are shown irrelevant message, they could only click on “Yes”
  - Test phase: participants are asked to click “No”



# Swipe and Type are resilient to habituation

- Control and ANSI (red) are not significantly different
- Reveal and AC+Delay (purple) have same performance of Control and ANSI, but with higher compliance rate
- Swipe and Type (green) show steady or increasing compliance rates



N=2,567 participants, 29.4 years old ( $\sigma=10.1$ ), 55% male, 77% caucasian. Top two reported occupations: 'student' (25%), 'unemployed' (15%).

# NEAT and SPRUCE

Rob Reeder, Ellen Cram Kowalczyk, and Adam Shostack.  
Poster: Helping engineers design NEAT security warnings.  
SOUPS 2011.  
[http://cups.cs.cmu.edu/soups/2011/posters/soups\\_posters-Reeder.pdf](http://cups.cs.cmu.edu/soups/2011/posters/soups_posters-Reeder.pdf)

Ask yourself: Is your security or privacy UX:

**NECESSARY?**

Can you change the architecture to eliminate or defer this user decision?

**EXPLAINED?**

Does your UX present all the information the user needs to make this decision? **Have you followed SPRUCE? (see back)**

**ACTIONABLE?**

Have you determined a set of steps the user will realistically be able to take to make the decision correctly?

**TESTED?**

Have you checked that your UX is NEAT for all scenarios, both benign and malicious?



**NEAT**

When you involve the user in a NEAT security or privacy decision, explain the decision using these 6 elements:

**SOURCE:** State who or what is asking the user to make a decision

**PROCESS:** Give the user actionable steps to follow to make a good decision

**RISK:** Explain what bad thing could happen if the user makes the wrong decision

**UNIQUE KNOWLEDGE** user has: Tell the user what information they bring to the decision

**CHOICES:** List available options and clearly recommend one

**EVIDENCE:** Highlight information the user should factor in or exclude in making the decision



***SPRUCE***

For more info, contact [neatux@microsoft.com](mailto:neatux@microsoft.com)

# Class assignment

- USB flash drives can spread infections in a number of ways. See <http://www.cioinsight.com/security/the-dangers-of-unsecured-usb-drives>
- Attackers may distribute infected flash drives by leaving them around where employees of a target company are likely to pick them up. In addition, a user who uses a flash drive to exchange files with another user whose machine is already infected, may pick up the infection on the flash drive and bring it to their own machine. Some companies are prohibiting their employees from using flash drives, but others are just asking their employees to be careful.
- Imagine a security tool that runs on a user's computer and monitors the USB ports, looking for programs that run automatically when a flash drive is plugged in. When an autorun program is detected it prevents it from running and displays a warning. The warning dialog offers users the option of letting the program run.
- Your first task (to be done in class) is to design the warning using the design tool at: <http://saucers.cups.cs.cmu.edu/~cbravo/woda/>
- You may do this yourself or work with someone else. If you are not in class, do this at home. Use the NEAT and SPRUCE guidelines as you develop your design [http://cups.cs.cmu.edu/soups/2011/posters/soups\\_posters-Reeder.pdf](http://cups.cs.cmu.edu/soups/2011/posters/soups_posters-Reeder.pdf)

# Homework assignment

- Your next task (to be done at home and turned in with your homework) is to critique someone else's warning. Go to <http://saucers.cups.cs.cmu.edu/~cbravo/woda/>
- Critique the warning that was submitted immediately before yours. If you submitted the first one then critique the last warning submitted. Please write one bullet point addressing each of the NEAT and SPRUCE messages. Then briefly discuss any additional factors you think might be relevant that are not addressed by NEAT and SPRUCE.