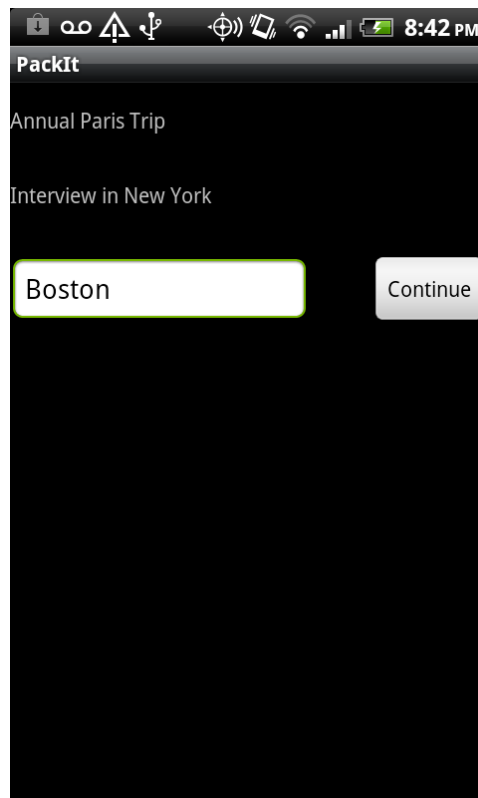


PackIt Heuristic Evaluation

Home Screen



The following comments refer to the screenshot of the home screen, shown above.

1. Text has unclear function and behavior.

Heuristics: Consistency and standards (consistency with actually selectable trips), help & documentation

Severity: major

The text at the top of the screen “Annual Paris Trip” and “Interview in New York” appear to be sample trips or trips that are already entered. However, they cannot be clicked. Thus, they do not serve their purpose of providing an example of how the app is to be used. Instead, the user is confused as to what the purpose of the text is. It also detracts from the main function of the page, which is the textbox input to create a new trip.

2. Helping text in the text box describes an action, not an input.

Heuristics: help & documentation

Severity: minor

The helping text in the text box “add new trip” appears to provide the help necessary to successfully complete the first step. However, “add new trip” is an action that the user can *do* (something more appropriate for the button), not a description of something that the user should *input* into the box. The contents of the preset text in the box should describe what goes into the box, such as “trip name” or “destination name”.

“My Trip” Screen

My Trip

Destination:
Boston

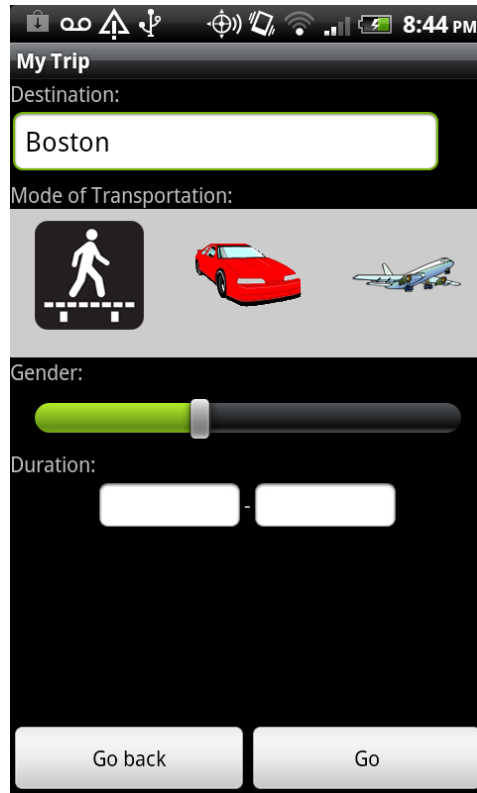
Mode of Transportation:

Gender:
Duration:

Go back Go

The following comments refer to the “My Trip” screen, shown above. Additional screenshots are included as needed.

3. The mode of transportation selection has an inconsistent look.



Heuristics: consistency & standards (buttons should look like buttons, consistency of how the page looks given the same state), visibility of system status, aesthetics

Severity: minor

If you select and then unselect the “mode of transportation”, the “button”-like look disappears. Instead, the user is shown three images on a gray background. It is not immediately obvious that the user can click again to change the transportation method.

4. The color of the highlighted mode of transportation clashes with the background.

Heuristics: aesthetics

Severity: aesthetic

The color of the highlighted mode of transportation (dark blue) clashes with the black background. In conjunction with the issue above, the selected mode of transportation can easily be outlined in some lighter color. However, this is just an aesthetic issue; it is obvious when a mode of transportation is selected, it's just not very pretty.

5. Gender input on a sliding bar doesn't make sense.

Heuristics: match the real world (we do not think of gender on a continuous spectrum), help & documentation (which side is male and which side is female?)

Severity: major

This input method for gender immediately gets the user confused and slows them down. Gender is a discrete description (male or female), and the ability to select any intermediate state is confusing. Furthermore, it is unclear what the two ends of the sliding bar correspond to. Which side is male and which side is female?

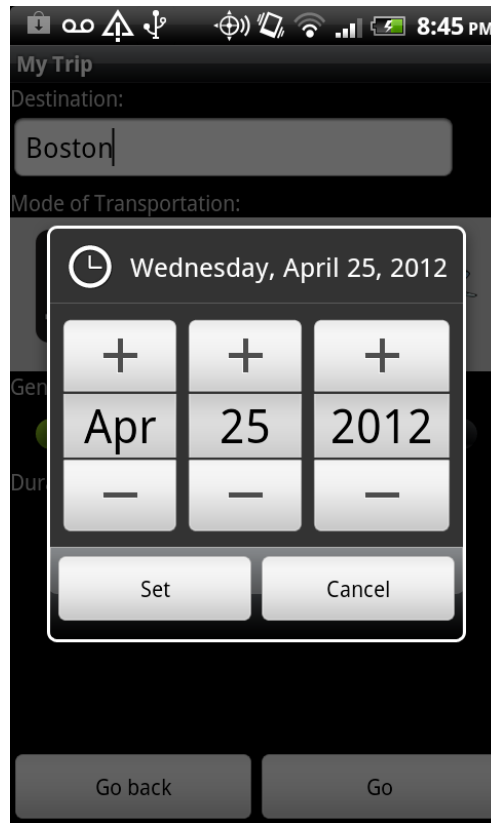
6. The start and end dates are described using the word “duration”.

Heuristics: help & documentation, error prevention

Severity: minor

The word “duration” tends to imply “amount of time” on a trip. Since the two boxes are not well described, the user could believe that they are supposed to enter a range of days (or weeks or even months!) that they will be away from home. Boxes with corresponding labels of “start date” and “end date” would be much more clear. This is not a major issue; as soon as the date selection popup appears, most users should be able to deduce that they are inputting the start and end dates of their trip.

7. The method for selecting the start and end dates can be more efficient.



Heuristics: flexibility and efficiency

Severity: minor

It seems like the only way is through the + and – buttons. This could potentially require a large number of taps for a date that is far away from the current date. Typing in the date and month require bringing up the keyboard, which also takes quite a bit of time.

There are more efficient ways to select a date. For example, a calendar can pop up, with options to increment or decrement by year or month. From there, the user simply needs to find the date on the calendar and tap on the number to select the date.

8. The function of the button labeled “Go” is unclear.

Heuristics: help & documentation, user control

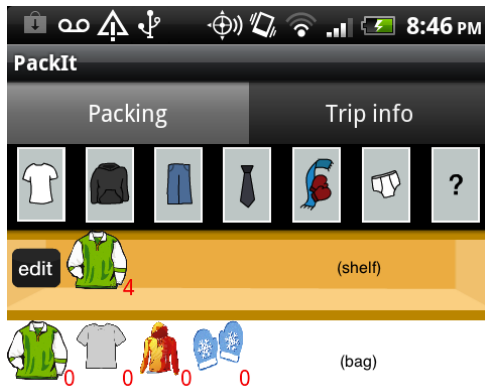
Severity: minor

The user does not know what to expect when the “Go” button is clicked. Will they be presented with information about their destination or a list of things to pack? The issue is a minor issue because it appears obvious that the “Go” button goes “forward” while the “Go back” button goes back, but its functionality could be made more clear using a clearer label.

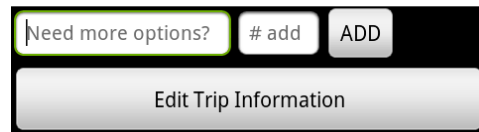
Packing screen

In the following descriptions, the “shelf” refers to the yellow-colored area that looks like a shelf, below the top row of icons and above the white container space.

The “bag” refers to the space with the white background directly above the image of the backpack.



(not editing)



(while editing)

The following comments refer to the screenshot of the packing screen, shown above. Labels have been added for clarity.

9. Icons are too small to use efficiently.

Heuristics: flexibility & efficiency, error prevention

Severity: minor

The icons are small and thus sometimes require multiple tries. They are also packed closely together, so the user may inadvertently tap an icon next to the intended target. It is also sometimes difficult to figure out exactly what an icon represents because the icon is small and not many details can be shown.

10. The “edit” button does not edit any item or the contents of the shelf.

Heuristics: help & documentation, consistency & standards (edit should edit the thing that it is placed on), user control and freedom

Severity: major

The edit button is found on the shelf, so one would expect it to either edit the numbers of each item on the shelf or the contents of the shelf itself. Instead, the button seems to add additional items to the bag. It does not appear that there is any way to add things to the shelf.

11. There is no obvious mapping between the text entered while adding an item and its icon.

Heuristics: match the real world, consistency & standards, visibility of system status

Severity: major

When I enter something while “editing” the shelf, I am prompted for a textual description. It is not obvious how that is transformed into an icon; it seems that anything I add automatically looks like a laptop. If I wanted to add many different things, this would start to get very confusing.

12. The helper text “need more options?” for editing is not effective.

Heuristics: help & documentation

Severity: minor

The phrase “need more options?” does not provide advice as to what should be typed into the text box. While I assumed it should be the name of the item, there is better helper text that can be placed into the box, such as “add an item” or even simply “item name”.

13. The plus signs next to the items in the bag have no functionality.

Heuristics: consistency & standards (consistency with what other icons with plus signs do), user control & freedom, visibility of system status

Severity: minor

It is unclear what the icons with plus signs at their corners do. Intuitively, they would add to the count of the item. However, from previous interactions, it appears that the only way to add items is to get them from the shelf.

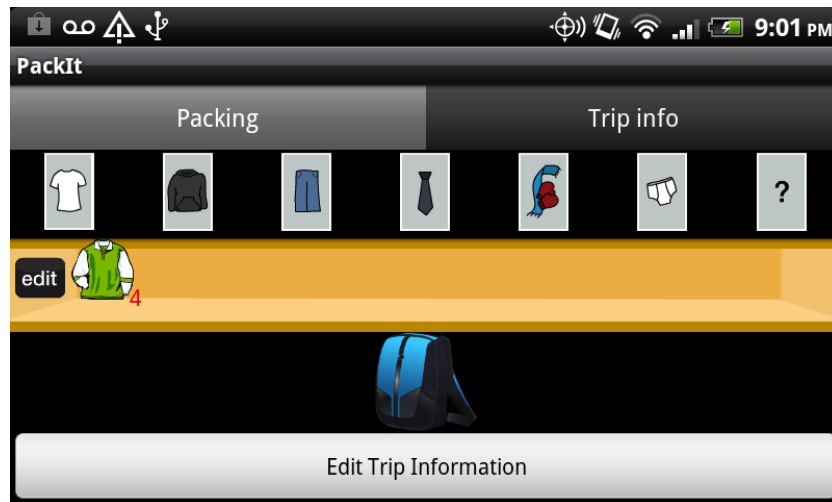
14. In edit mode, tapping something on the shelf removes it from the shelf without inserting it into the bag.

Heuristics: consistency & standards, help & documentation, user control & freedom, error prevention

Severity: major

When “edit” is tapped, there is nothing that changes about the icons in the shelf. However, tapping on an icon will reduce its count. One would assume that the item goes into the bag, as it would if edit were not active. However, the item does not. The net effect is that the item “disappears” or is deleted, but there is no indication that tapping an icon while editing will delete an item. There is also no way to recover once this has happened.

15. Changing the orientation to horizontal hides the objects in the “bag”.



Severity: major to catastrophic

When the phone is turned so that the screen is horizontal, the entire white “bag” area is lost. This results in a complete loss of functionality. **This is more of a bug** than a usability issue, but nonetheless something to fix.

16. The shelf metaphor is generally effective.

Heuristics: match the real world, visibility of system status

Severity: good!

The shelf metaphor is implemented effectively. Tapping on an item in the shelf to put it in the bag, and tapping on an item in the bag to put it back onto the shelf corresponds to the natural shuffling of items from a traveler's shelf or closet and his or her bag.

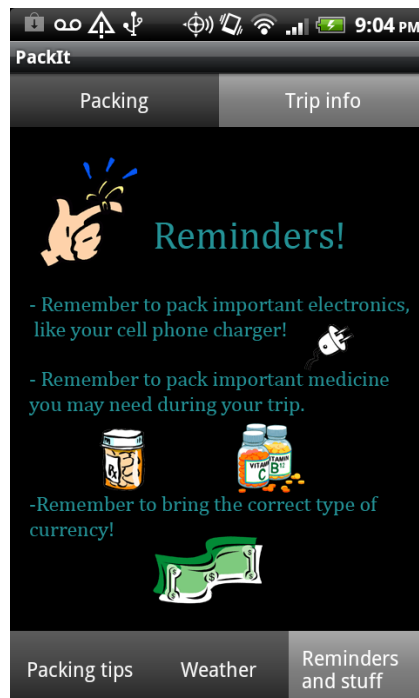
17. The image of the backpack does nothing.

Heuristics: consistency & standards

Severity: major

The user expects the backpack to have some sort of functionality, especially since this app helps the user pack for a trip and the backpack is so prominent on the screen. The shelf and bag metaphor could be greatly enhanced if items animated into and out of the backpack. As it currently stands, the backpack just wastes valuable space.

The “trip info” pages (packing tips, weather, reminders and stuff)



The following comments refer to the “trip info” section. The screens that make up the trip info section are shown above.

18. The “trip info” button does not do what is expected.

Heuristics: consistency & standards, help & documentation, error prevention

Severity: major

Users tapping on the “trip info” button expect to find information about their trip, such as destination, transportation method, dates, and other information. Instead, the only relevant information they get is the weather. The other two pages of packing tips are not the same as trip information as suggested by the button. The button should say something other than “trip info” if it gives the user packing suggestions and reminders.

19. The color of the text in “packing tips” and “reminders and stuff” are clash with the black background.

Heuristics: aesthetics

Severity: aesthetic

The blue text on black is difficult to read – a color such as white or a bright shade of gray, used in other areas of the application, would be better.