Ten Usability Heuristics by Jakob Nielsen
These are ten general principles for user interface design. They are called "heuristics" because they are more in the nature of rules of thumb than specific usability guidelines.

1. Visibility of system status
The system should always keep users informed about what is going on, through appropriate feedback within reasonable time.

2. Match between system and the real world
The system should speak the users' language, with words, phrases and concepts familiar to the user, rather than system-oriented terms. Follow real-world conventions, making information appear in a natural and logical order.

3. User control and freedom
Users often choose system functions by mistake and will need a clearly marked "emergency exit" to leave the unwanted state without having to go through an extended dialogue. Support undo and redo.

4. Consistency and standards
Users should not have to wonder whether different words, situations, or actions mean the same thing. Follow platform conventions.

5. Error prevention
Even better than good error messages is a careful design which prevents a problem from occurring in the first place. Either eliminate error-prone conditions or check for them and present users with a confirmation option before they commit to the action.

6. Recognition rather than recall
Minimize the user's memory load by making objects, actions, and options visible. The user should not have to remember information from one part of the dialogue to another. Instructions for use of the system should be visible or easily retrievable when appropriate.

7. Flexibility and efficiency of use
Accelerators -- unseen by the novice user -- may often speed up the interaction for the expert user such that the system can cater to both inexperienced and experienced users. Allow users to tailor frequent actions.

8. Aesthetic and minimalist design
Dialogues should not contain information which is irrelevant or rarely needed. Every extra unit of information in a dialogue competes with the relevant units of information and diminishes their relative visibility.

9. Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors
Error messages should be expressed in plain language (no codes), precisely indicate the problem, and constructively suggest a solution.

10. Help and documentation
Even though it is better if the system can be used without documentation, it may be necessary to provide help and documentation. Any such information should be easy to search, focused on the user's task, list concrete steps to be carried out, and not be too large.
Standard Task Analysis Questions

1. Who is going to use the system?
2. What tasks do they perform now?
3. What tasks are desired?
4. How are the tasks learned?
5. Where are the tasks performed?
6. What's the relationship between the user and data?
7. What other tools does the customer have?
8. How do customers communicate with each other?
9. How often are the tasks performed?
10. What are the time constraints on the tasks?
11. What happens when things go wrong?