

Section 1.0 - Introduction

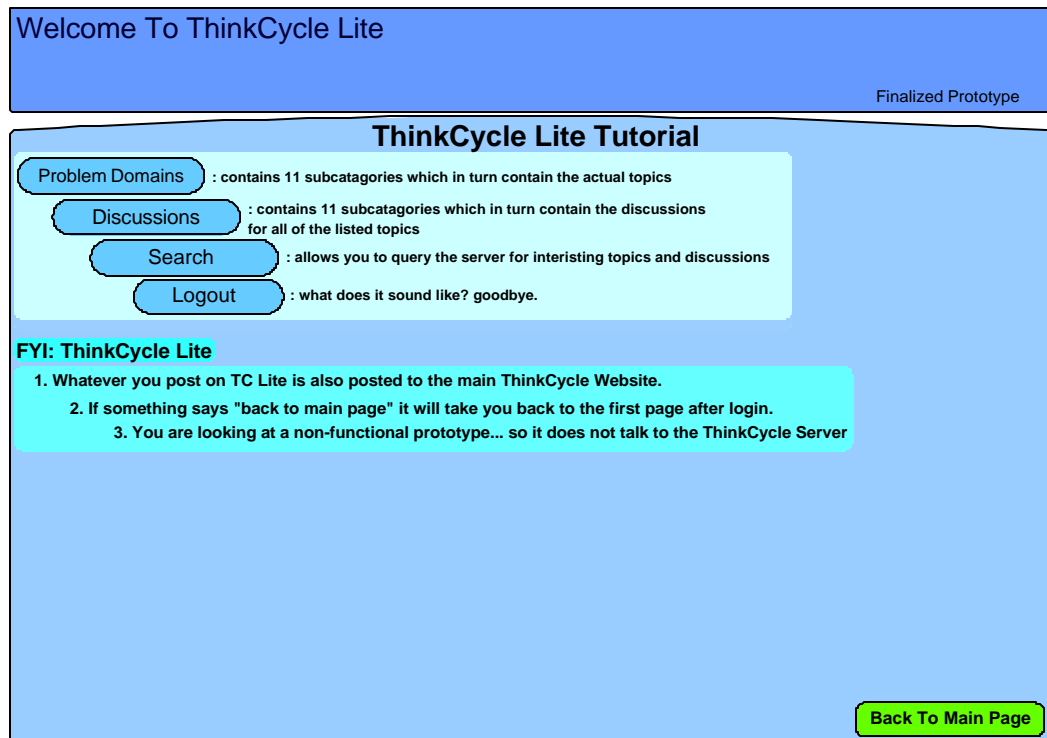
ThinkCycle Lite was used as a test case for the development of an ultra-simplified interface for the ThinkCycle System. The ThinkCycle Lite prototype (visual proof of concept) was created by Benjamin Wolfe during July and August 2001. The changes implemented into ThinkCycle Lite were designed to facilitate its use by teenagers and young adults. As it is currently unfeasible to create a "Second ThinkCycle" a.k.a. ThinkCycle Lite, the best features from it will be implemented in ThinkCycle Proper.

Section 1.1 – New Features in ThinkCycle Lite

The following section documents the most massive changes in ThinkCycle Lite.

Section 1.1a – ThinkCycle Tutorial

The ThinkCycle Tutorial system was created in response to feedback from Computer Clubhouse staff who felt that ThinkCycle Lite needed a user's manual. In the prototype, the tutorial feature is rather bare-boned as it was added at the last possible minute. As of this writing, it only covers a few of the button actions and some developers' notes. This feature (in a modified form) could be a great advantage for the users of ThinkCycle. The implementation of a tutorial on the ThinkCycle website could take the form of a flash movie (although alternative options that do not require high bandwidth should be investigated),.



A screenshot of the ThinkCycle Tutorial.

Section 1.1b – Thought Prompt Questions

The thought prompt questions were added to ThinkCycle Lite in an effort to stimulate the user. They were fabricated to stimulate discussions of issues on ThinkCycle. They have potential as an added section to the ThinkCycle Website, but they are not an earth-shattering modification.

1. What do I want to change in my world?2. What needs changing in my life?3 .Have you ever thought there must be an easier way to build something?4 .Could you imagine building something that would use less of our natural resources, and use them more efficiently?5. Have you done something that's made the world better?

The above list is in ThinkCycle Lite. (Thought Prompt Questions)

Section 1.1c – Featured Challenge & Featured Solution

The “Current Featured Challenge” and the “Current Featured Solution” were added to ThinkCycle Lite to give the user a taste of what lay beneath the surface in ThinkCycle Lite. The system had been designed so that the users of ThinkCycle would be able to post and / or nominate challenges and solutions that would be shown on the front page of ThinkCycle Lite. The purpose of this feature is to draw the user into ThinkCycle and to catch their eye. This feature could be a great addition to the ThinkCycle Website. Using this feature in ThinkCycle proper would require an automated refresh system for both the challenges and the solutions. This feature could be added to the current front page of the ThinkCycle website in an unobtrusive form.

The screenshot displays two side-by-side panels. The left panel, titled 'Current Featured Challenge', has a light blue background. It includes buttons for 'Post New Challenge' and 'View All Challenges'. The challenge text describes a device for power generation and storage. Below the text is a 'Related Topic' button labeled 'Human Power Generation'. The right panel, titled 'Current Featured Solution', has a light green background. It includes buttons for 'Post New Solution' and 'View All Solutions'. The solution text describes variable focus lenses for eyeglasses. Below the text is a 'Related Topic' button labeled 'Glasses For Everyone'.

A screenshot of the “Current Featured Challenge” and the “Current Featured Solution” sections of ThinkCycle Lite.

Section 1.1d – Contributors To This Project

This feature in ThinkCycle Lite was designed to create a sense of one-on-one interaction between members of the ThinkCycle user community. The feature was designed to allow users to see the last five people who had contributed to the project as well as E-Mail them, view their profile, and Instant Message them. This feature is ripe for modification and insertion into ThinkCycle, as currently there is no centralized way for a user to see a list of contributors. A possible implementation of this feature could be on the main page for each topic in a text-only form that links the name of the last five (or more) contributors to their respective profiles.



This screenshot is of the “Contributors to this Project” feature and shows the possibilities that this feature has. In the prototype, if the user clicked on the image of the contributor, the profile belonging to that person would come up. So, if the user clicked on the image next to John Doe, his profile would come up.

Section 1.2 – Interface Changes in ThinkCycle Lite

The following section goes into detail regarding the massively changed interface in ThinkCycle Lite. The interface was originally designed with teenagers and young adults in mind, and therefore is designed to be eye-catching and visually engaging.

Section 1.2a – The Simplified Interface

As was stated earlier, the interface in ThinkCycle Lite was aimed mainly towards teens and young adults, therefore the interface is simple and “requires only about four neurons to operate.” Some of this simplification could be added to ThinkCycle, but it is not a pressing need.

(Examples of the ThinkCycle Lite interface can be seen in both the attached Flash 5 movie and in the screenshots within this document. To see the interface of the ThinkCycle website, please go to ThinkCycle.org)

Section 1.2b – The “Teen / Young Adult Friendly” Features

Since the ThinkCycle Lite prototype was created with feedback from Computer Clubhouse staff members, and was considered for deployment at the Computer Clubhouses around the world it had to be customized for that general age group (10-18 years of age). Therefore, the interface of ThinkCycle Lite is slightly quirky and is designed to be visually engaging as well as informative. So, the interface is designed to be self-explanatory for the user. An example of this is with the buttons used in ThinkCycle Lite. The idea of making ThinkCycle attractive to younger users could prove quite useful in the event that schools start to use ThinkCycle. At the present time, however, changes of this sort are not really needed.



Examples of buttons from ThinkCycle Lite.

All of the buttons were designed to express their functions very clearly so as to not confuse the user. They were also designed to stand out from the background so they would draw attention to themselves.

Section 1.3 – Conclusion

The ThinkCycle Lite Proof of Design Prototype was an extremely useful design exercise and should hopefully allow some new features to be added to the ThinkCycle Website. The prototype can be used to demo the possibilities of ThinkCycle to interested parties should the need ever surface for a “slimmed-down” version of ThinkCycle. The ideas and design concepts created in ThinkCycle Lite have great potential for use on the ThinkCycle Website.