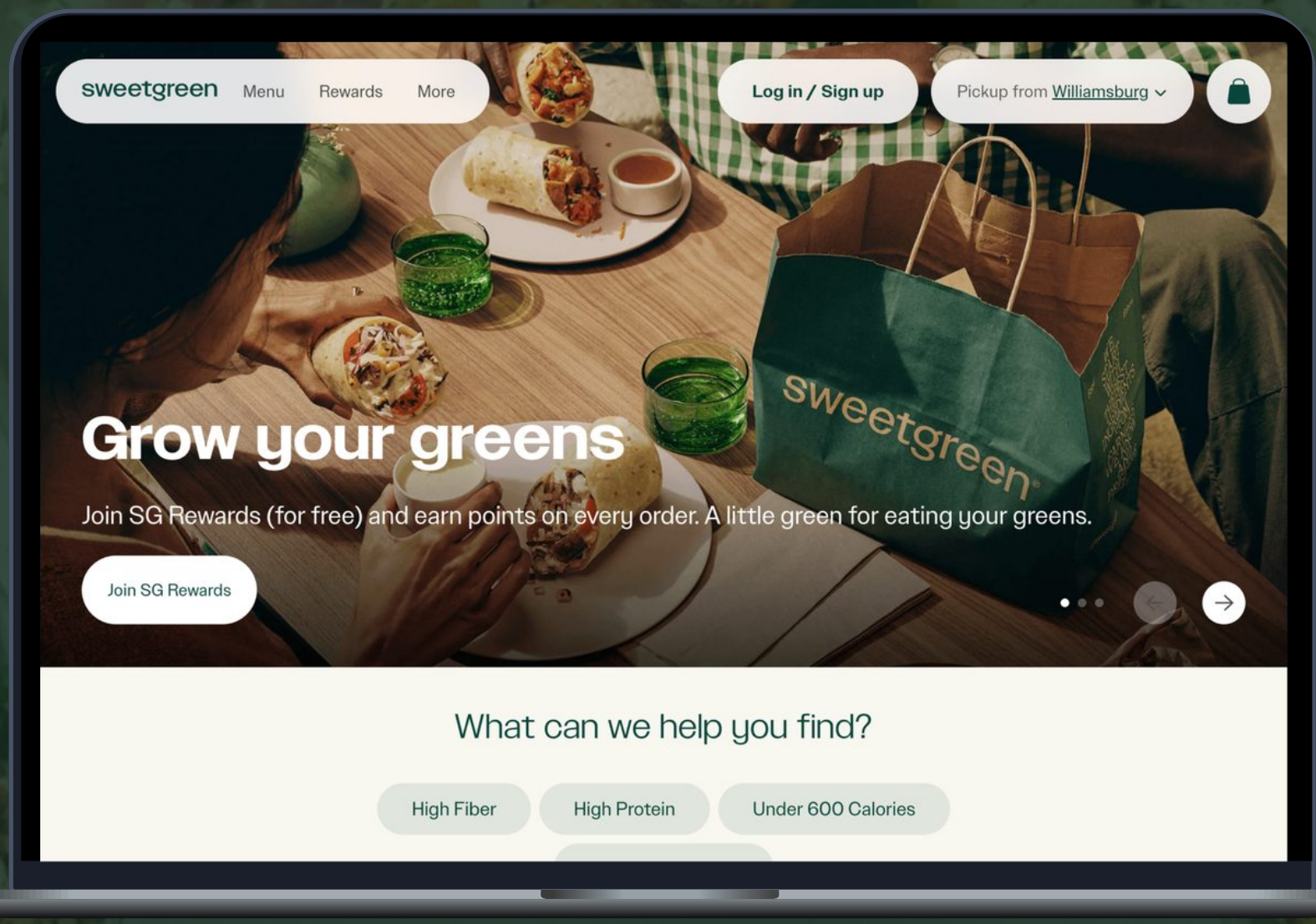
USABILITY THEORY & PRACTICE

# Heuristic Evaluation Report

## SWEETGREEN




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INFO 654: Usability Theory & Practice
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# Executive Summary

Sweetgreen is a fast casual health food chain with a website that allows customers to place orders for pickup or delivery from a location of their choosing. This report is intended for Sweetgreen stakeholders.

To analyze the usability of the Sweetgreen website, our team of three usability experts performed a Heuristic Evaluation, walking through the ordering process for pickup to a specific location. Problems were identified under Jakob Nielsen's 10 usability principles. Evaluators used Nielsen's 0–4 severity scale; identified usability problems received ratings from 1 (cosmetic) to 4 (catastrophe). A total of thirteen usability issues were found.

> Sweetgreen's website is visually appealing and easily allows the user to find what they're looking for, with clear and nicely placed images of their menu items and an order-building process that is user friendly and customizable. However, the most severe problems appear at the points where the user has to make a decision: checking allergens while building a salad, choosing a pickup location, and completing checkout without an account. Eight of the thirteen issues were rated Major or Catastrophe, and half of them fall within these three areas, which is why they are the focus of the recommendations that follow.

Issues were prioritized by the highest severity rating reported across the three evaluators, leading to three recommendations: making location search more flexible, showing allergen information while ordering, and offering guest checkout.



**#1 LOCATION SEARCH**

Medium



**#2 ALLERGEN INFORMATION**

High



**#3 GUEST CHECKOUT**

High

Overall, Sweetgreen's website provides a strong, visually appealing ordering and browsing process, and the recommendations that follow build on it without requiring a full redesign.

Each recommendation is presented with the problem and potential solution with a mock-up to show how it would look after the recommendation is implemented.

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# Introduction



Sweetgreen is a fast casual health food chain serving chef-crafted meals using ingredients that are locally and sustainably sourced where possible. It was founded in 2006 by college students Nicolas Jammet, Nathaniel Ru, and Jonathan Neman at Georgetown University, who were looking for healthy alternatives to what they saw as a gap in the market. There are now over 250 locations across the United States and all the locations are company owned. They have a website that allows customers to place orders for pickup or delivery from a location of their choosing.

This report presents a heuristic evaluation of the Sweetgreen online ordering system, carried out to identify usability problems in the pickup ordering journey and recommend improvements. The evaluation focused on ordering a custom salad for pickup, from finding the nearest location through to checkout. The full scenario and task list are detailed in the Methodology section.

Given time and user-access constraints, heuristic evaluations allow small teams of usability trained evaluators to surface real problems independently, within a defined evaluation window, and provide recommendations based on these findings.

## How to read this report

| | |
|---|---|
| **Methodology** | Explains the evaluation approach, heuristics, and severity-rating process. |
| **Results** | Presents the overall findings and three recommendations, each with mock-ups. |
| **Conclusion** | Summarizes the evaluation and next steps. |
| **Appendix** | Provides the full table of usability issues and severity ratings. |

# Methodology

A Heuristic Evaluation is a usability inspection method that helps to identify design problems within a user interface. A group of usability experts examine the interface against guidelines called heuristics that make systems more user friendly and efficient (Moran & Gordon, 2023). The goal is to identify the problems, rank their severity, then form recommendations from these to fix these problems without requiring a full redesign of the interface. This method relies on usability experts instead of users.

**Strengths & Limitations of This Method**

Strengths: cost-effective, can identify issues early, and doesn't require recruiting users.

Limitations: doesn't involve target users, is subject to evaluator bias, and may miss context-specific issues.

# Prepare

Any set of heuristics can be used to evaluate an interface; this evaluation uses Jakob Nielsen's 10 usability heuristics, which are based on psychology and rules of design (Nielsen, 1994), as seen in Figure 1. Evaluators also rated the severity of each problem using Nielsen's 0–4 severity scale (Nielsen, 1994), as seen in Figure 2. The severity of a problem depends on its frequency, its impact, and its persistence.

| Nielsen's Ten Heuristics |
| --- |
| H1: Visibility of system status |
| H2: Match system & real world |
| H3: User control & freedom |
| H4: Consistency & standards |
| H5: Error prevention |
| H6: Recognition rather than recall |
| H7: Flexibility & efficiency of use |
| H8: Aesthetic & minimalist design |
| H9: Help users with errors |
| H10: Help & documentation |

Figure 1 — Nielsen's Ten Heuristics

| Problem Severity Rating |
| --- |
| **0: No Problem**<br>I don't agree that this is a usability problem at all |
| **1: Cosmetic Problem**<br>need not be fixed unless extra time is available on project |
| **2: Minor Problem**<br>fixing this should be given low priority |
| **3: Major Problem**<br>important to fix, so should be given high priority |
| **4: Catastrophe**<br>imperative to fix this before product can be released |

Figure 2 — Problem Severity Rating

# Scope and Setup

**Evaluators: 3 (Evaluator 1: Dayna, Evaluator 2: Suhani, Evaluator 3: Keri, lead evaluator)**

Interface: Sweetgreen – sweetgreen.com

The evaluators were given the following scope and task list to complete independently.

## Scope:

You work in an office in the Empire State Building and have one hour for lunch, it is 1pm and you want to place an order for a custom salad for pickup at the closest Sweetgreen to you. You are allergic to gluten, so you need to confirm that the salad you are ordering doesn't contain any ingredients that contain gluten.

## Tasks:

| | |
|---|---|
| 01 | Find the nearest Sweetgreen location to the Empire State Building and select for pickup. |
| 02 | Build a custom salad with the following ingredients: quinoa, kale, apple, pickled onions, almonds, 2x chicken, avocado, parmesan, and green goddess ranch. |
| 03 | Confirm the order is gluten-free before proceeding |
| 04 | Add a Spindrift Lemon to your order |
| 05 | Proceed to checkout |
| 06 | Attempt to complete your order without creating an account or signing in. |

# Collect and Analyze

The three evaluators completed the tasks based on the scope provided and provided the lead evaluator with a list of problems, the heuristic(s) violated, and a severity ranking. The lead evaluator compiled the findings from all three evaluations into a single document, from which overlapping themes, findings independently flagged by two or more evaluators, were identified.

Findings were prioritized by severity first: problems rated Major (3) or Catastrophe (4) were carried forward for detailed analysis and recommendations, regardless of whether they were flagged by one evaluator or several. Where a finding was independently identified by multiple evaluators, this consensus was treated as additional supporting evidence of a real, repeatable problem, and the finding's severity was set to the highest rating reported across those evaluators rather than an average, to avoid under-prioritizing a potentially critical issue. Lower-severity findings (rated 1 or 2) and findings reported by only a single evaluator without reaching Major severity are documented in full in Appendix [X] but were not carried forward for individual recommendations, given the report's scope. Lower-severity findings that occurred within the same flow as a Major or Critical problem were included in that recommendation, since a single fix addresses them together.

## Prioritization of recommendations

| | |
|---|---|
| **Severity first** | **Major (3) or Critical (4)**<br>Carried forward for detailed analysis and recommendations, whether flagged by one evaluator or several. Anything catastrophe was of the highest priority. |
| **Independent consensus** | **Two or more evaluators**<br>Additional supporting evidence; use the highest reported severity, not an average. If all three evaluators flagged something this was the next priority. |
| **Full documentation** | **Appendix [X]**<br>Lower-severity findings (1 or 2) and single-evaluator findings below Major severity remain documented in full. |

# Communicate

Finally, the three most severe problems were identified and recommendations were formed on how to target them. The results have been detailed in this report, and a complete table of all the issues identified and their severities can be found in the appendix.

## Considered problems and recommendations

**01** **Location search and selection**

Users struggle to find and select a nearby store because the current search rejects valid addresses, map pins are not selectable, and distance information is missing.

Recommendation: flexible address search with autocomplete, clearer error guidance, distance labels, and selectable map pins with pickup options.

**02** **Allergen information**

Common allergens are not clearly available while choosing ingredients, requiring users to locate and interpret a separate chart.

Recommendation: ingredient-level allergen labels and dietary filters during ordering process.

**03** **Checkout account barrier**

Users encounter an account/sign-in requirement late in the ordering journey.

Recommendation: make guest checkout clearly available, asking for a name and one contact method, while retaining sign-in/create-account as an alternative.

# Results

## Overall Findings

The evaluators identified thirteen usability issues across the ordering process detailed in the scenario. Most were rated Major (5) or Minor (4), with three rated Catastrophe and one Cosmetic. Recognition rather than recall and flexibility and efficiency of use were the heuristics violated most often.

### INDIVIDUAL ISSUE REPORTS BY SEVERITY

1 bowl = 1 report

13 total reports

**4 — Critical** **3 reports**



**3 — Major** **5 reports**



**2 — Minor** **4 reports**



**1 — Cosmetic** **1 report**



### Overall Usability Assessment

Sweetgreen's website is visually appealing and easily allows the user to find what they're looking for, with clear and nicely placed images of their menu items and an order-building process that is user friendly and customizable. However, the most severe problems appear at the points where the user has to make a decision: checking allergens while building a salad, choosing a pickup location, and completing checkout without an account. Eight of the thirteen issues were rated Major or Catastrophe, and half of them., which is why they are the focus of the recommendations that follow.

# Recommendation #1: Enable flexible location search with distance labeling and selectable map pins

## The Problem

The location finder is easily identifiable on the website's main page, and the accompanying map helps the user see how far they are from Sweetgreen locations. However, the location finder only searches by zip code or store name. As seen in Figure 3, typing a full, valid street address returns an error that doesn't provide an alternative search to try. Once stores appear, they show no distance from the user, and the map pins can't be used to select a store, as seen in Figure 4.

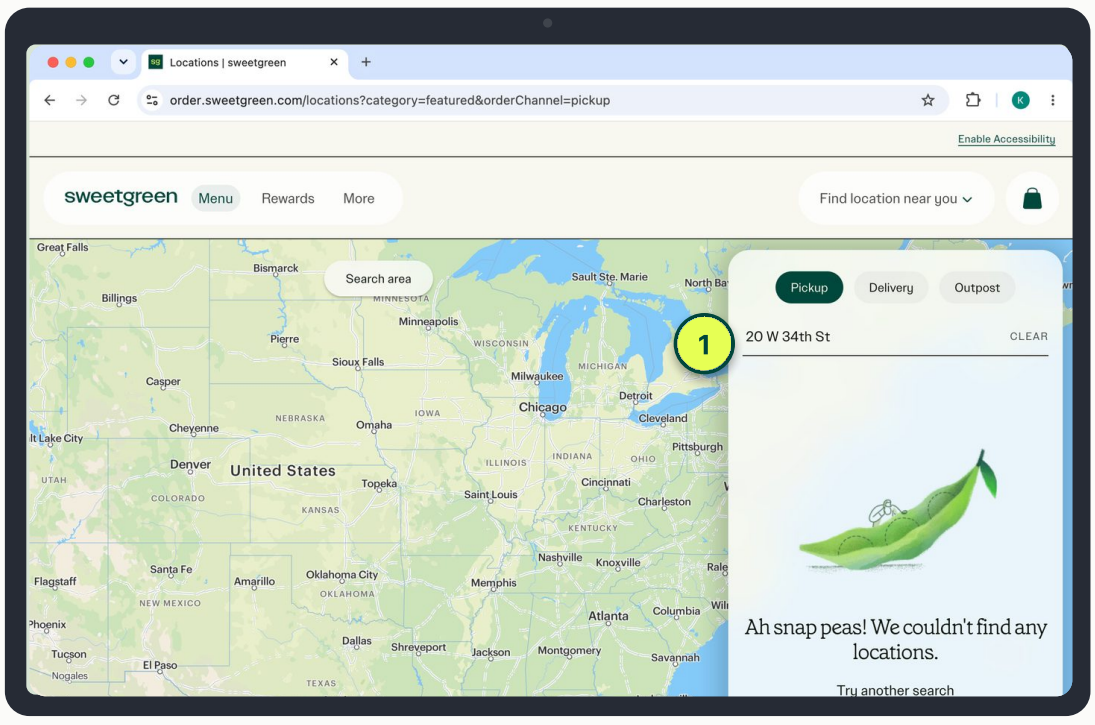



Figure 3 — Address search function

**1 Search rejects a valid street address**

This is the screen that opens when you go to place an order. Typing out a full and valid address produces an error message, as does putting in anything but a zip code or store name, and the message doesn't tell the user why their search failed or what the expected input is.

**H2, H6, H7, H9 Violation**
Severity: 3 (Major)

**Evidence / Evaluator Quote**
"Clicking the location icon on the map only shows the address; it doesn't let the user select it as the chosen location." – evaluator 1

**Evidence / Evaluator Quote**
"Location finder only searches by zip code or store name, covering a wide area instead of using the user's actual location to suggest the closest store, defeating the purpose of a locator." – evaluator 2

**2 Map icons aren't clickable**

Clicking a store's pin on the map only shows its address. The user can't select that store as their pickup location from the map, so they have to find it again in the list.

**H7 Violation**
Severity: 1 (Cosmetic)

**3 No distance indicator on locations**

Stores appear without their distance from the searched location, and it's unclear whether the list is sorted by proximity. The user has to compare addresses manually to work out which is closest.

**H7 Violation**
Severity: 3 (Major)

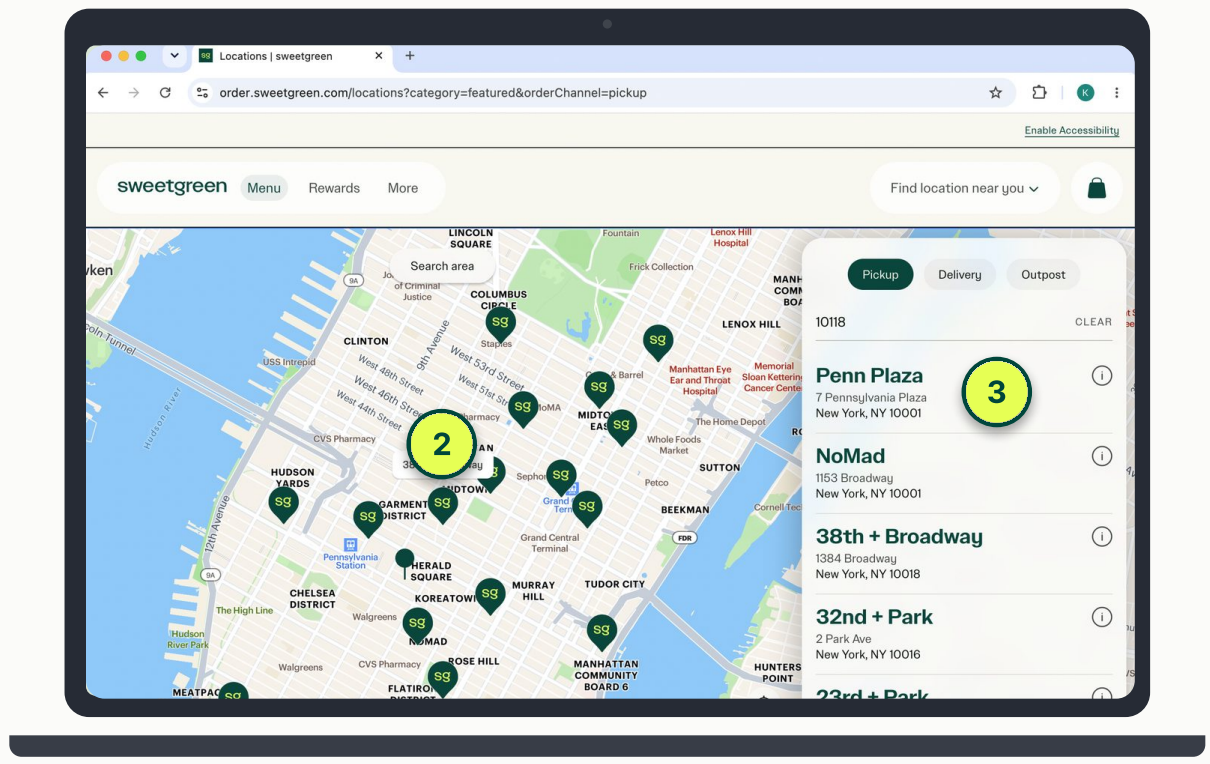



Figure 4 — Location pins

## Our Recommendation

Adding the ability to search by street address as well as zip code, with autocomplete so the user can confirm the full correct location Figure 5, and a clear error message that suggests alternatives when a search fails Figure 6. Additionally adding the ability to select a location directly from the pins on the map and organizing locations by distance to the user's location Figure 7. This lets users search the way they naturally think of where they are and compare stores by distance.

**EFFORT LEVEL: MEDIUM**

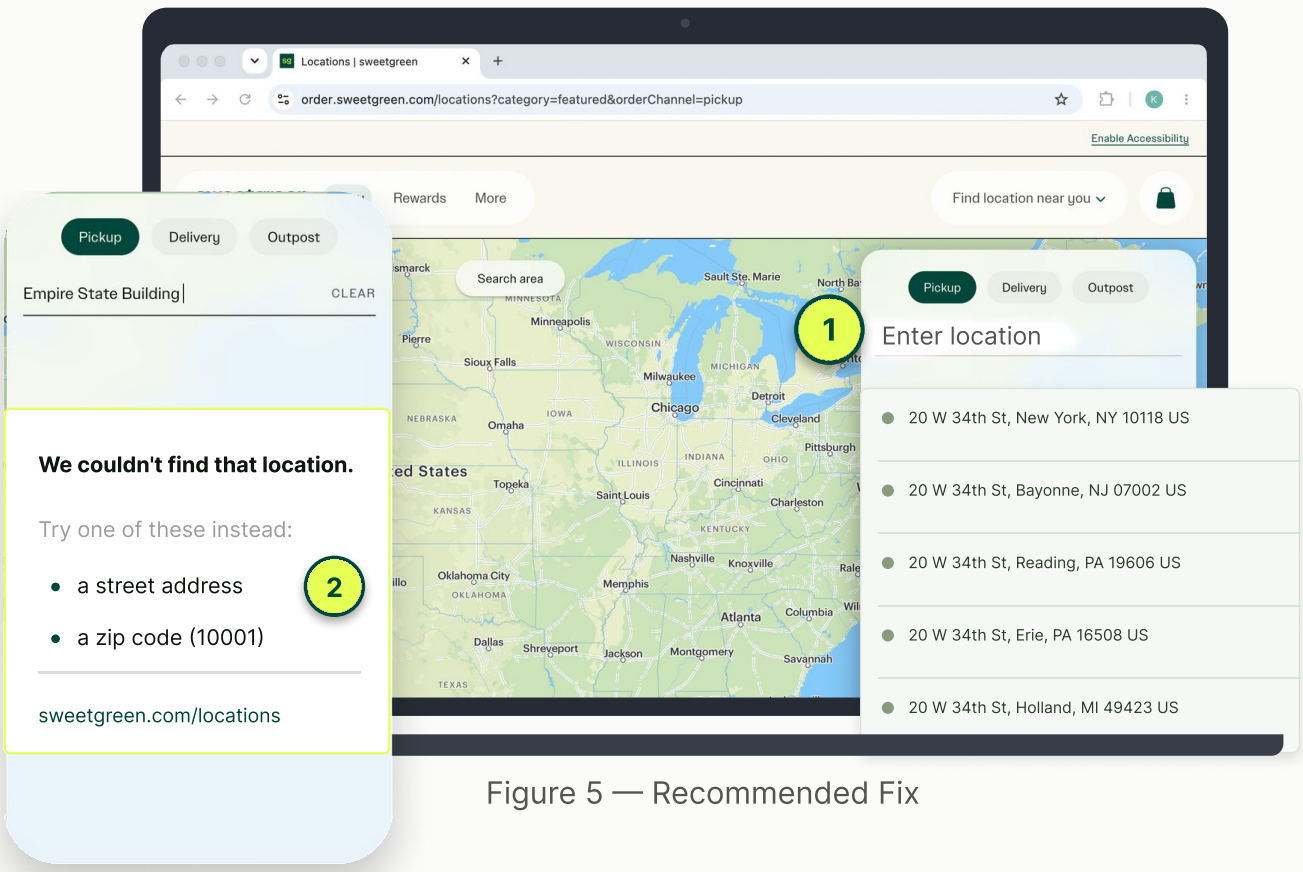



Figure 5 — Recommended Fix

Figure 6 — Recommended Fix

1 **Search field more adaptive**
The same input that previously failed, "20 W 34th St," now resolves successfully instead of returning an error. The field matches street addresses, not just zip codes. Search additionally matches as you type with a live autocomplete so the user can confirm the correct address.

2 **Guidance and a fallback**
When a location can't be matched, the message explains why and offers two paths forward: specific formats to try, or a link straight to the full locations finder.

3 **Distance markers on store locations**
Showing the distance from the user's location allows them to choose based on what's closest to them without having to rely on store addresses.

4 **Pin opens selectable pop up**
Selecting the pin now opens a card that shows location information and pick up option directly on the map. Additionally shows in the sidebar which location pin the user has selected.

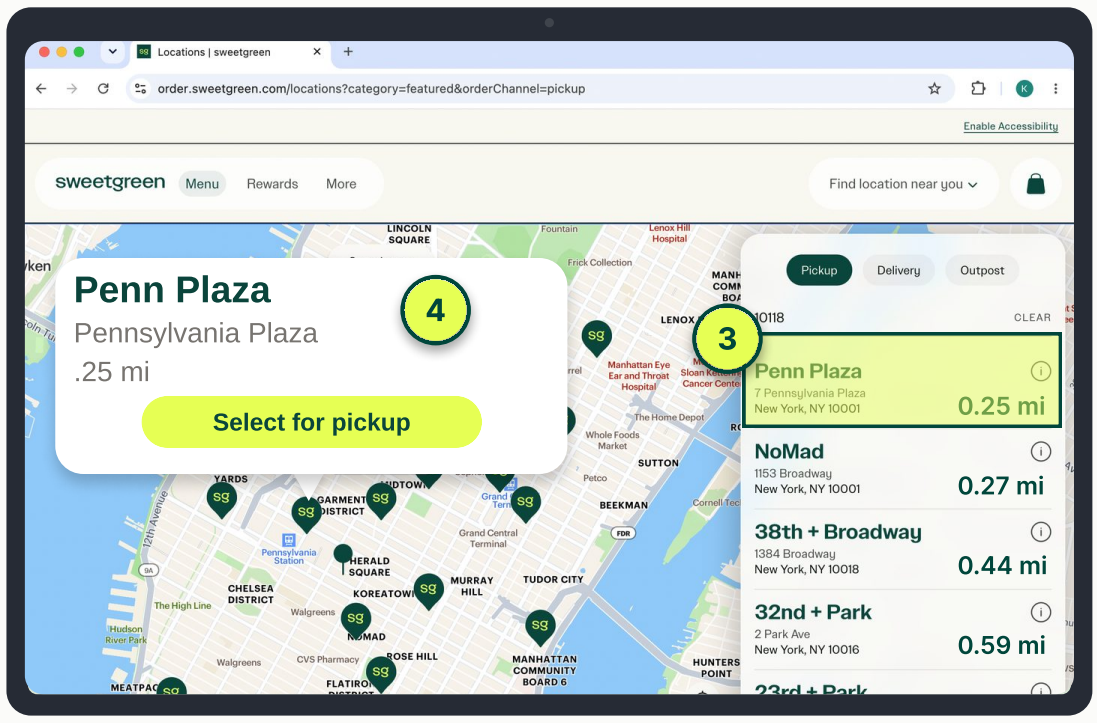



Figure 7 — Recommended Fix

# Recommendation #2: Dietary restriction customizations and allergen information

## The Problem

When building a salad or looking at the menu, users can't see which ingredients contain common allergens like gluten, nuts, and dairy, or filter by dietary restriction Figure 8. This information is only in a large nutrition chart that is hard to find and has to be cross checked by hand Figure 9, a health risk for users with allergies.

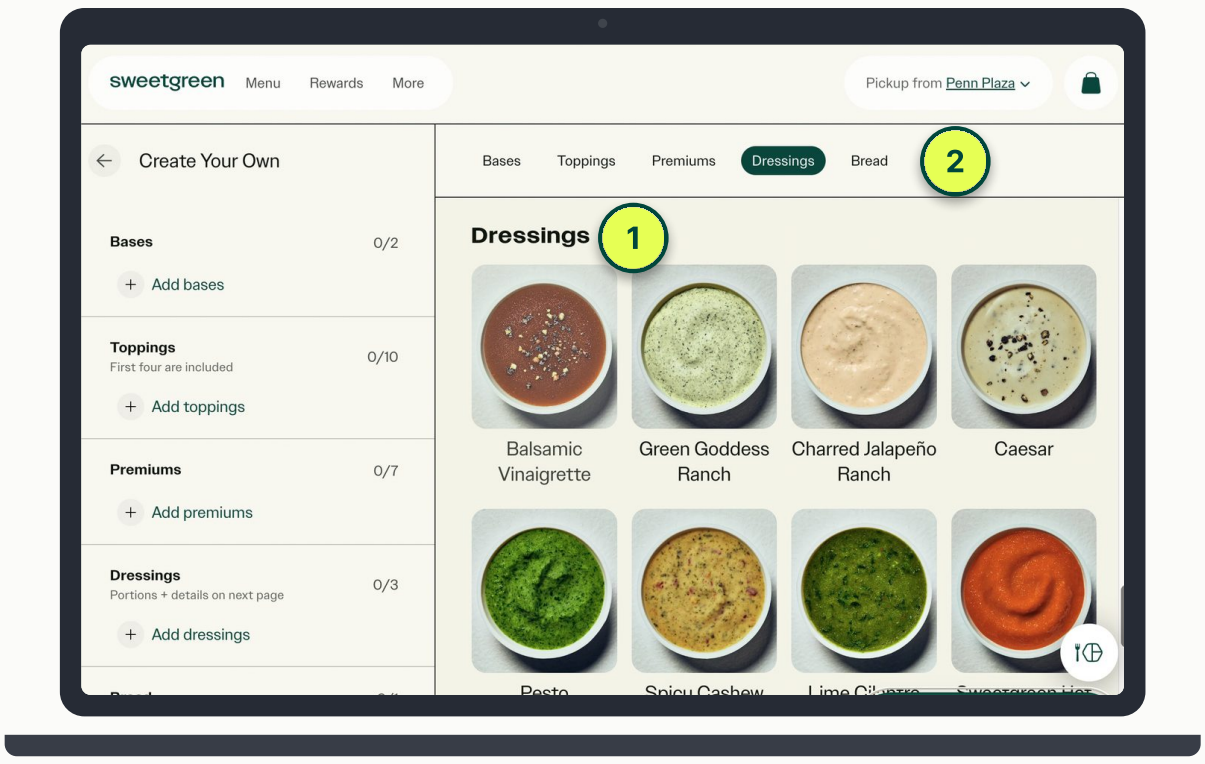



Figure 8 — Custom ingredient builder

1 **No allergen information listed on menu items**

Users can’t see if items have common allergens like gluten and dairy on ingredients when they go to add them to their meal.

**H2, H6, H8, H9, H10 Violation**
Severity: 4 (Catastrophe)

2 **No ability to sort by dietary restriction**

There is no filtering option for common dietary restrictions.

**H7 Violation**
Severity: 3 (Major)

**Evidence / Evaluator Quote**

“No indications on menu items for dietary options (gluten-free, vegan, etc.); macros are shown but no way to confirm dietary fit.” – evaluator 2

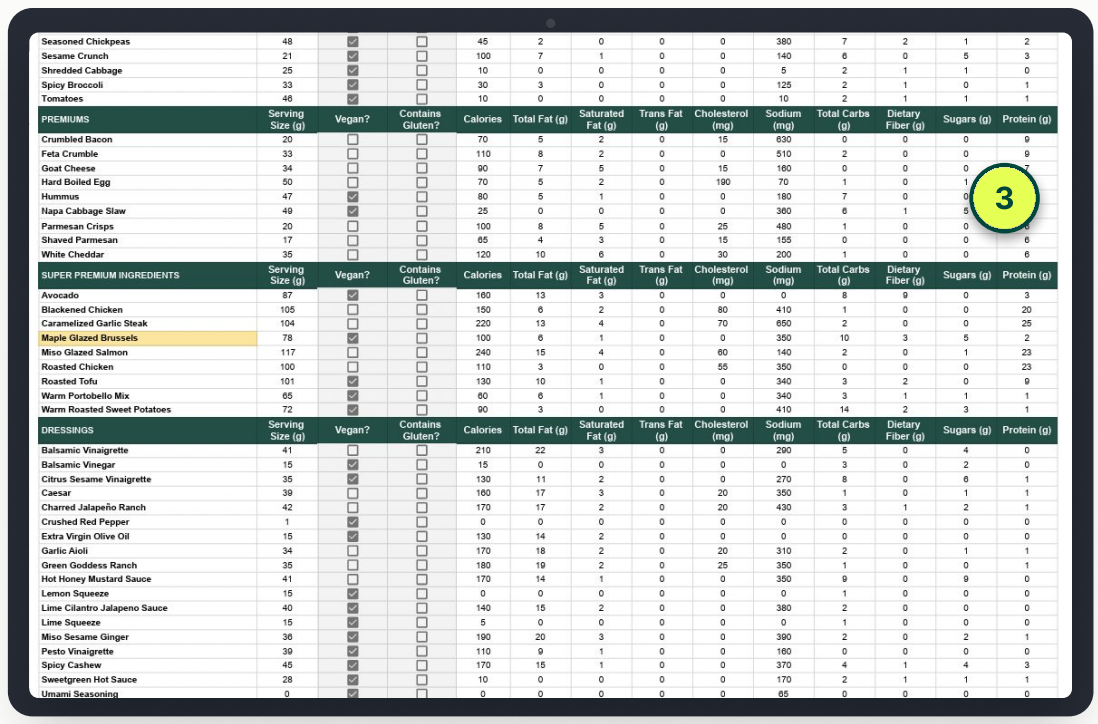
**Evidence / Evaluator Quote**

“No way to see common allergens while selecting ingredients; allergen info is buried at the bottom in an overwhelming chart.” – evaluator 3

3 **Difficult for user to locate and interpret allergen information**

This chart is the only place allergen information exists. To check an allergen while building a salad, users have to leave the builder, scroll to the bottom of the page, and download this chart, then cross check their ingredients with the allergens.

**H5, H6, H8 Violation**
Severity: 4 (Catastrophe)



| | Serving Size (g) | Vegan? | Contains Gluten? | Calories | Total Fat (g) | Saturated Fat (g) | Trans Fat (g) | Cholesterol (mg) | Sodium (mg) | Total Carbs (g) | Dietary Fiber (g) | Sugars (g) | Protein (g) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seasoned Chickpeas | 48 | ☑ | ☐ | 45 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 380 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| Sesame Crunch | 21 | ☑ | ☐ | 100 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 140 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| Shredded Cabbage | 25 | ☑ | ☐ | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Spicy Broccoli | 33 | ☑ | ☐ | 30 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 125 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Tomatoes | 46 | ☑ | ☐ | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **PREMIUMS** | **Serving Size (g)** | **Vegan?** | **Contains Gluten?** | **Calories** | **Total Fat (g)** | **Saturated Fat (g)** | **Trans Fat (g)** | **Cholesterol (mg)** | **Sodium (mg)** | **Total Carbs (g)** | **Dietary Fiber (g)** | **Sugars (g)** | **Protein (g)** |
| Crumbled Bacon | 20 | ☐ | ☐ | 70 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 15 | 630 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Feta Crumble | 33 | ☐ | ☐ | 110 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 510 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Goat Cheese | 34 | ☐ | ☐ | 90 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 15 | 160 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Hard Boiled Egg | 50 | ☐ | ☐ | 70 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 190 | 70 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Hummus | 47 | ☑ | ☐ | 80 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 180 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Napa Cabbage Slaw | 49 | ☑ | ☐ | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 360 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 1 |
| Parmesan Crisps | 20 | ☐ | ☐ | 100 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 25 | 480 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Shaved Parmesan | 17 | ☐ | ☐ | 65 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 15 | 155 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| White Cheddar | 35 | ☐ | ☐ | 120 | 10 | 6 | 0 | 30 | 200 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| **SUPER PREMIUM INGREDIENTS** | **Serving Size (g)** | **Vegan?** | **Contains Gluten?** | **Calories** | **Total Fat (g)** | **Saturated Fat (g)** | **Trans Fat (g)** | **Cholesterol (mg)** | **Sodium (mg)** | **Total Carbs (g)** | **Dietary Fiber (g)** | **Sugars (g)** | **Protein (g)** |
| Avocado | 87 | ☑ | ☐ | 160 | 13 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 9 | 0 | 3 |
| Blackened Chicken | 105 | ☐ | ☐ | 150 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 80 | 410 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 20 |
| Caramelized Garlic Steak | 104 | ☐ | ☐ | 220 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 70 | 650 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Maple Glazed Brussels | 78 | ☑ | ☐ | 100 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 350 | 10 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Miso Glazed Salmon | 117 | ☐ | ☐ | 240 | 15 | 4 | 0 | 60 | 140 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 23 |
| Roasted Chicken | 100 | ☐ | ☐ | 110 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 55 | 350 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 23 |
| Roasted Tofu | 101 | ☑ | ☐ | 130 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 340 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 9 |
| Warm Portobello Mix | 65 | ☑ | ☐ | 60 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 340 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Warm Roasted Sweet Potatoes | 72 | ☑ | ☐ | 90 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 410 | 14 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| **DRESSINGS** | **Serving Size (g)** | **Vegan?** | **Contains Gluten?** | **Calories** | **Total Fat (g)** | **Saturated Fat (g)** | **Trans Fat (g)** | **Cholesterol (mg)** | **Sodium (mg)** | **Total Carbs (g)** | **Dietary Fiber (g)** | **Sugars (g)** | **Protein (g)** |
| Balsamic Vinaigrette | 41 | ☐ | ☐ | 210 | 22 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 290 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 0 |
| Balsamic Vinegar | 15 | ☑ | ☐ | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Citrus Sesame Vinaigrette | 35 | ☑ | ☐ | 130 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 270 | 8 | 0 | 6 | 1 |
| Caesar | 39 | ☐ | ☐ | 160 | 17 | 3 | 0 | 20 | 350 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Charred Jalapeño Ranch | 42 | ☐ | ☐ | 170 | 17 | 2 | 0 | 20 | 430 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| Crushed Red Pepper | 1 | ☑ | ☐ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Extra Virgin Olive Oil | 15 | ☑ | ☐ | 130 | 14 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Garlic Aioli | 34 | ☐ | ☐ | 170 | 18 | 2 | 0 | 20 | 310 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Green Goddess Ranch | 35 | ☐ | ☐ | 180 | 19 | 2 | 0 | 25 | 350 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hot Honey Mustard Sauce | 41 | ☐ | ☐ | 170 | 14 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 350 | 9 | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| Lemon Squeeze | 15 | ☑ | ☐ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lime Cilantro Jalapeno Sauce | 40 | ☑ | ☐ | 140 | 15 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 380 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lime Squeeze | 15 | ☑ | ☐ | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Miso Sesame Ginger | 36 | ☑ | ☐ | 190 | 20 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 390 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 |
| Pesto Vinaigrette | 39 | ☑ | ☐ | 110 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 160 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Spicy Cashew | 45 | ☑ | ☐ | 170 | 15 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 370 | 4 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Sweetgreen Hot Sauce | 28 | ☑ | ☐ | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 170 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Umami Seasoning | 0 | ☑ | ☐ | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 65 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

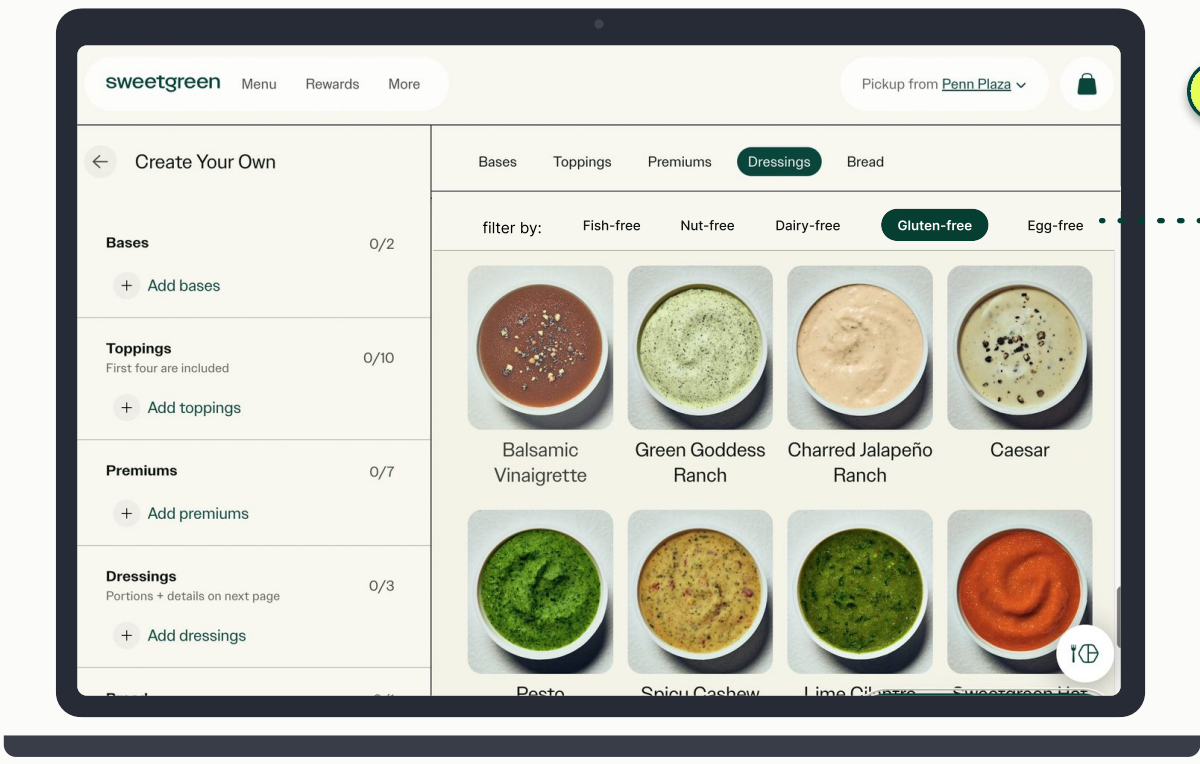


Figure 9 — Nutrition and allergen chart

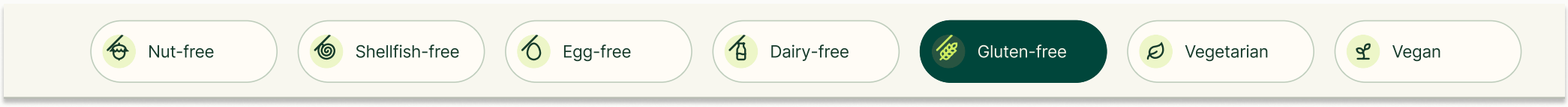
## Our Recommendation

Adding a dietary filter bar to the ingredient builder so users can select their needs and hide items that don't fit Figure 10, and labeling every ingredient with tags for the allergens it contains Figure 11. This brings the allergen information Sweetgreen already has in its nutrition chart into the builder, so users can confirm their meal is safe while building it instead of cross checking a separate chart.

### EFFORT LEVEL: MAJOR CHANGE




**1 Filter for dietary restriction**
A bar at the top that helps users filter by their dietary need. The user would select their specific need(s) and the system would eliminate the ingredients and menu items that contain things they cannot eat. The expanded bar below shows the full range of filter options.




**2 Allergen icons on items**
Every ingredient tile carries a small tag for each allergen it contains. Tags appear regardless of whether a filter is active, so users get the same information Figure 10 shows across the full menu, right where they're choosing ingredients.




Figure 11 — Allergen tags on ingredients

# Recommendation #3: Removing account barrier from the check out journey

## The Problem

Users only find out they need an account after building their salad and clicking continue to checkout (Figure 12). The next screen offers only sign in or account creation, with no guest option Figure 13, which can frustrate and deter first-time or occasional customers from completing their order.

### Guest checkout doesn't occur until the end of the user journey

The user goes through the entire process of making their salad and clicking continue to checkout to find out they have to create an account to get their order. This causes frustration for the user and they may not want to create an account.

**H1 Violation**
Severity: 4 (Catastrophe)

**Evidence / Evaluator Quote**

"No guest checkout; account creation or sign-in required to complete the order." – evaluator 3

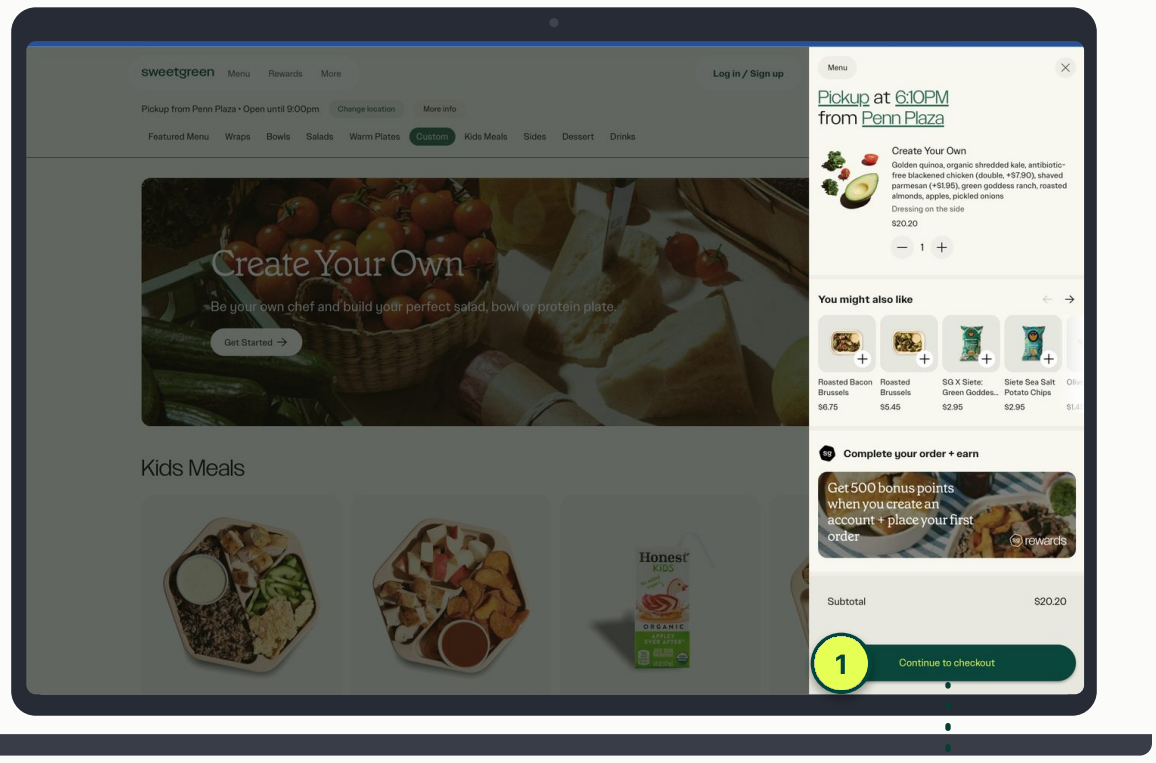



Figure 12 — Only one option forward

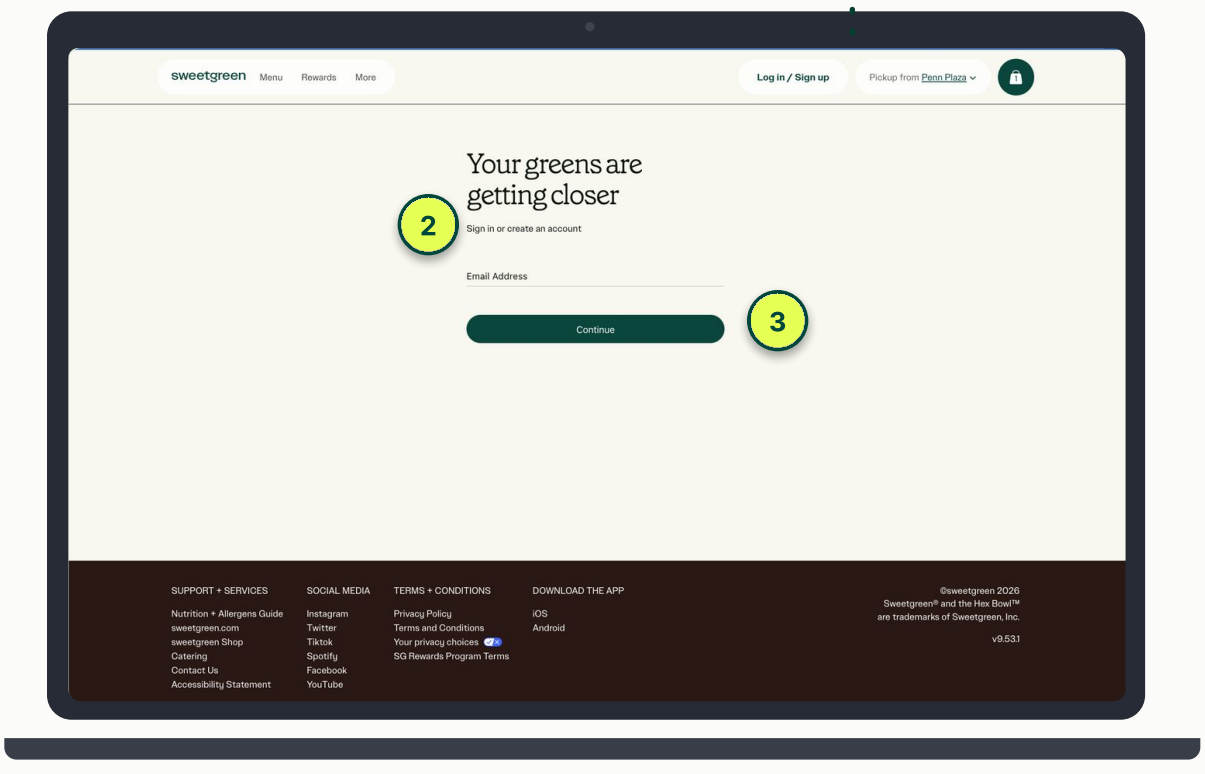



Figure 13 — No guest checkout

### 2 No guest check out

No option to check out as a guest and not have to make an account. This can be a deterring factor for a user trying to order for the first time or the occasional customer. This is where those users are most likely to abandon the order.

**H3 Violation**
Severity: 4 (Catastrophe)

### 3 Only one way forward

Entering an email and pressing "Continue" commits the user to full account creation (implying a password and profile step next), with no lighter-weight path offered at this exact decision point for someone who only wants to complete a single order.

**H7 Violation**
Severity: 4 (Catastrophe)

## Our Recommendation

Adding a "Check out as a guest" option alongside "Sign in or create account" in the cart, so users choose how to check out before being redirected Figure 14. The guest path asks only for a name and one contact method, while sign in stays available as a link for returning customers Figure 15. This removes the account creation barrier for first-time and occasional customers without taking anything away from rewards members.

### EFFORT LEVEL: MEDIUM

**1 Guest and account option added before the user is redirected**

"Continue to checkout" was replaced with two options, "Sign in or create account" and "Check out as a guest," so the user chooses before being redirected. This way they don't discover the account requirement after clicking through to a new screen.

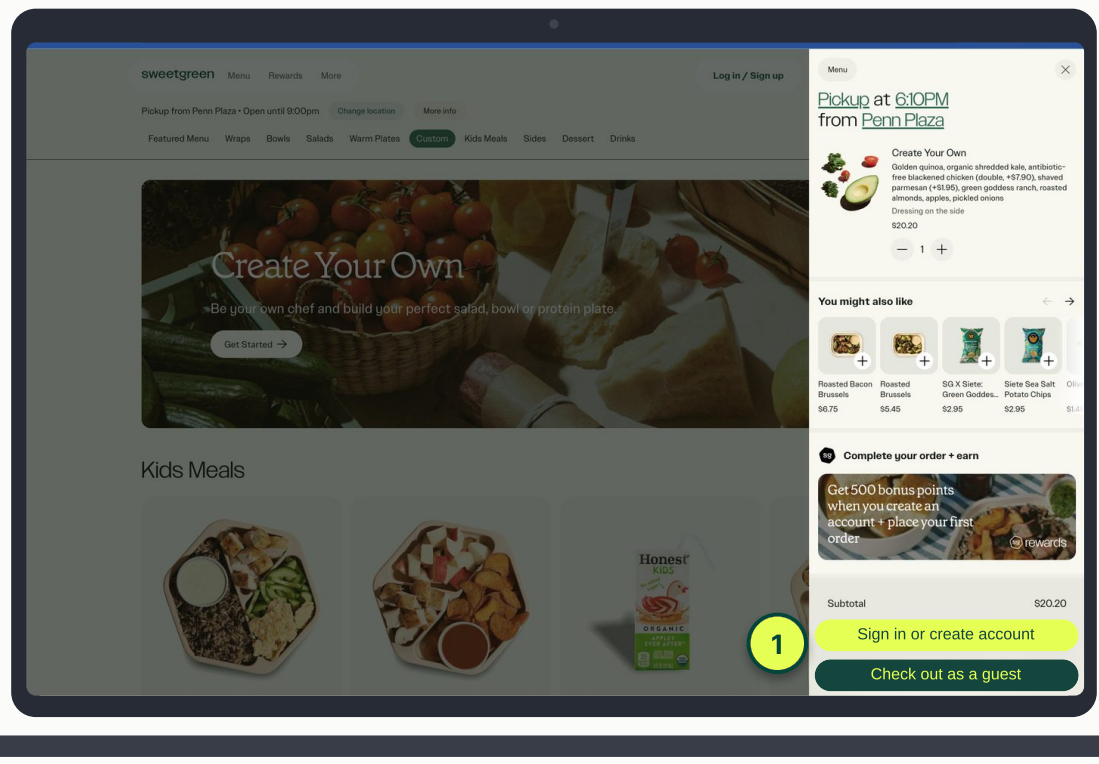



Figure 14 — Multiple checkout options

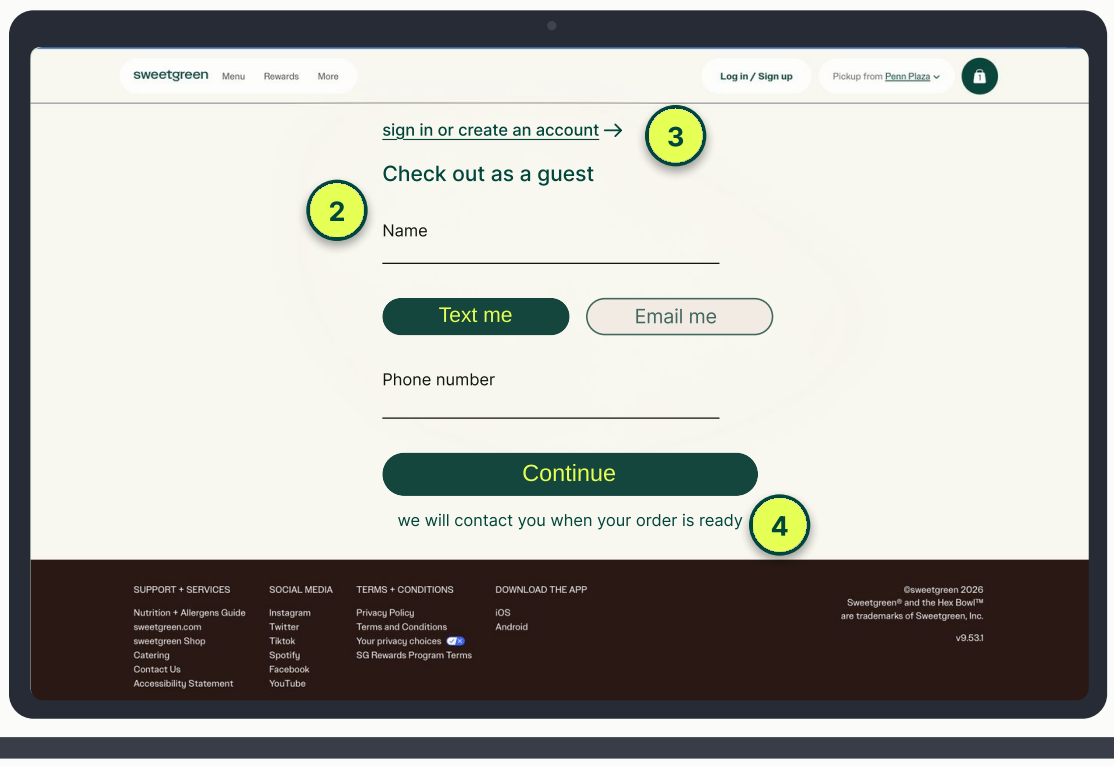



Figure 15 — Guest checkout screen

**2 Guest path as primary option**

"Check out as a guest" is now the default path, asking only for a name and one contact method (text or email), with no password or account profile required. This is a continuation from the previous screen, where someone with an account would likely have clicked "Sign in or create account." This page is built for guest checkout.

**3 Sign in/create account as secondary option**

"Sign in or create an account" is still available as a link at the top of the screen, so returning users or people who want the rewards account aren't punished by this change.

**4 Guest users know the next steps in their order**

The message "we will contact you when your order is ready" tells the user what will happen before they put in their information.

# Conclusion



Sweetgreen's website excels at pulling the user in, making key features easy to find, and making the order building experience enjoyable and relatively seamless, especially when creating a custom order. The menu bar in particular makes it easy to sort by section and the accompanying imagery provides a fantastic visual aid.

Upon completing a heuristic evaluation of Sweetgreen's online order for pickup process, our team of three usability experts made three recommendations to improve the website's usability. More flexibility in the location search would allow customers to find their nearest store with ease. Searching by address, selecting pins on a live map, seeing the distance to each store, and having address suggestions limits the potential for user error when it comes to location. Allergen information is the most crucial and requires a filtering bar for common dietary restrictions, and allergen tags on every ingredient. This reduces user frustration and health risks when users try to idenitify whether their order includes potentially harmful allergens. Finally, a guest checkout option in two places allows users that may not need a Sweetgreen account to place orders, potentially increasing orders by removing this roadblock in the user journey.

### #1 LOCATION SEARCH

Search by address, clearer error messages, distance labels, selectable pins.
**Priority: Medium**

### #2 ALLERGEN INFORMATION

dietary filters and allergen tags in the builder.
**Priority: High**

### #3 GUEST CHECKOUT

a guest option before redirecting to sign in.
**Priority: High**

These recommendations have the potential to make ordering faster, safer, and more user friendly, and build on the website's existing strengths. If not all of these are feasible in the short term, some quick wins include clearer error messages with suggested alternatives, and distance labels on store results. Medium effort changes include address search with autocomplete, and a guest checkout option.

## Next Steps

Future research should include usability testing with real users, especially people with food allergies, to validate the findings. An evaluation of the mobile app would determine whether any of these recommendations could carry over to that system.

# Appendix

## Table A1. Raw findings

| ID | Evaluator | Context / Problem | Heuristics | Severity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Dayna Eval. 1 | **Location selection · Pickup location** Clicking the location icon on the map only shows the address; it doesn't let the user select it as the chosen location. | H7 | 1 Cosmetic |
| 2 | Dayna Eval. 1 | **After choosing ingredients · Dietary/allergen** Could not find whether the custom salad was gluten-free; found a macros section but no gluten/allergen info. | H1, H6 | 2 Minor |
| 3 | Dayna Eval. 1 | **While choosing ingredients** No indication of added charges for individual ingredients while selecting them; the total only appears at the bottom, with no other cost info beyond ingredient name. | H1 | 3 Major |
| 4 | Keri Eval. 3 | **Location selector (Task 1) · Pickup location** Search only accepts a zip code, not a landmark or street address, forcing the user to leave the site to look it up. Once stores appear, they don't show the distance from the user's location. | H2, H6, H7, H9 | 3 Major |
| 5 | Keri Eval. 3 | **Menu page (Task 2) · Custom-build** Featured/pre-made items sit at top; custom build requires scrolling and looks like an ad rather than a menu item, though it is in the top bar. | H7, H8 | 3 Major |
| 6 | Keri Eval. 3 | **Custom salad builder · Dietary/allergen** No way to see common allergens while selecting ingredients; allergen info is buried at the bottom in an overwhelming chart. | H6, H5, H8 (allergy safety) | 4 Catastrophe |
| 7 | Keri Eval. 3 | **Homepage** Homepage shows a featured item and “order now,” implying you're ordering that item, not ordering in general; categories reinforce this over a general start-order button. | H2, H6, H7 | 2 Minor |

Individual evaluator ratings. H1–H10 legend on page 19.

**Severity:** 0 Not a usability problem · 1 Cosmetic · 2 Minor · 3 Major · 4 Catastrophe


Continued on page 18

# Appendix

## Table A1. Raw findings (continued)

| ID | Evaluator | Context / Problem | Heuristic(s) | Severity |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | Keri Eval. 3 | **Location selector (Tasks 1 & 5)** Pickup time can't be selected with location, only after the order is in the cart. | H1, H2 | 3 Major |
| 9 | Keri Eval. 3 | **Checkout (Task 6)** No guest checkout; account creation or sign-in required to complete the order. | H7, H3, H1 | 4 Catastrophe |
| 10 | Suhani Eval. 2 | **Location finder tab · Pickup location** Location finder only searches by zip code or store name, covering a wide area instead of using the user's actual location to suggest the closest store. | H4, H6, H7 | 2 Minor |
| 11 | Suhani Eval. 2 | **Menu navigation** Shows a limited menu that can be mistaken for the full menu. The full menu is accessed via the nav bar or footer, without clear indicators. | H1, H4, H8 | 3 Major |
| 12 | Suhani Eval. 2 | **Customization section · Custom-build** The custom-build option is separated from the salads in the nav bar, but on scrolling it looks visually distinct from other menu items and isn't recognizable as a menu item; language also differs between the nav bar and the CTA. | H4, H6, H8 | 2 Minor |
| 13 | Suhani Eval. 2 | **Product descriptions · Dietary/allergen** No indications on menu items for dietary options (gluten-free, vegan, etc.); macros are shown but no way to confirm dietary fit. | H2, H6, H8, H9, H10, H7 | 4 Catastrophe |

**Positive observation**

Dayna: “Actually like the banner for the custom order.” Unrated; excluded from issue counts.

Individual evaluator ratings. H1–H10 legend on page 19.

**Severity: 0 Not a usability problem · 1 Cosmetic · 2 Minor · 3 Major · 4 Catastrophe**


Continued on page 19

# Appendix

## Table A2. Theme analysis

| Theme | Rec | Consensus | Ratings | Median | Highest |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dietary/allergen info hard to find** | Rec #2 | Dayna, Keri, Suhani 3/3 | 2, 4, 4 | 4 | **4: Catastrophe** |
| **Issues pinpointing/selecting a pickup location** | Rec #1 | Dayna, Keri, Suhani 3/3 | 1, 3, 2 | 2 | **3: Major** |
| **Custom-build option hard to discover** | No | Keri, Suhani 2/3 | 3, 2 | 2.5 | **3: Major** |
| **No guets check out row** | Rec #3 | Keri 1/3 | 4 | 4 | **Catastrophe** |

## Heuristics and priority rationales

**Dietary/allergen information** H1, H2, H5, H6, H7, H8, H9, H10

Unanimous and highest severity. Every evaluator found this issue independently.

**Pickup location** H2, H4, H6, H7, H9

Unanimous: search restrictions (Keri, Suhani) and map-pin selection (Dayna). Task 1 blocker; address both search and map.

**Custom-build discoverability** H4, H6, H7, H8

Keri and Suhani found this independently. Ad-like styling makes it easy to scroll past. Documented only; full recommendation out of scope this round.

**Guest checkout** H1, H3, H7

Found by one evaluator, but rated Catastrophe: users cannot complete Task 6 without creating an account.

**Analysis notes.** Priority is based on consensus and highest severity, not averages. Median severity is reference-only.

Guest checkout was identified by one evaluator (report 9) but is included as a recommendation due to its Catastrophe severity rating.

Custom-build discoverability was additionally not carried forward because feedback was mixed: Keri and Suhani found it hard to discover, while Dayna liked the custom-order banner.

## H1–H10 legend

- **H1** Visibility of system status
- **H2** Match between system and real world
- **H3** User control and freedom
- **H4** Consistency and standards
- **H5** Error prevention
- **H6** Recognition rather than recall
- **H7** Flexibility and efficiency of use
- **H8** Aesthetic and minimalist design
- **H9** Help users recognize, diagnose, and recover from errors
- **H10** Help and documentation

# References


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