Task Scenarios

As we design something, we should have real users and real tasks they want to accomplish in mind.

To avoid staying to abstract and risking having an illusory customer and/or illusory tasks, one thing we can do is generate task scenarios that will describe how a user might come “to” our creation with a task to accomplish.
A good task scenario example will...  (Page 1 of 2)

...say what the user wants to do, but not how they would do it. You do not want to tie any interface assumptions into the scenario description. This will allow you to compare different approaches without preconceptions.

...be very specific. It needs to be clear exactly what the user wants to be able to do. It needs to present what “input” the user will need to be able to make (though not necessarily how they will provide it).

...describe the complete task. These aren’t meant to be lists of the individual things that are done in general. We want to be able to see the big picture, not just unlinked sub-goals.

A good task scenario example will...  (Page 2 of 2)

...identify the user. By knowing more specifics about the user, we can do things such as design based on what the user will already know how to do.

...be evaluated with users. Ask them if there are any things that need to be corrected or clarified, whether things have been omitted, and if there are general suggestions for additions.
An Example Task Scenario
Imagine you have a store that plans to have a catalog station where customers browse for products, then order items from a clerk.

Scenario: A man carrying a demanding toddler buys an umbrella stroller (red is preferred but blue is acceptable), pays for it in cash, and uses it immediately.

What interface implication can we extract from this?