

10 Common Knowledge Base Writing Mistakes

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A knowledge base can significantly reduce support tickets, improve customer satisfaction, and empower users to find answers on their own. However, even the best knowledge base software cannot compensate for poorly written articles.

If users struggle to understand your content, find irrelevant information, they are likely to contact support instead of using self-service resources.

In this guide, we'll explore ten common knowledge base writing mistakes and explain how to avoid them.

1. Using Too Much Technical Jargon

Many knowledge base writers are experts in their products and unintentionally use technical terms that customers may not understand.

Why is this a problem?

Users often have varying levels of technical knowledge. Excessive jargon can make articles difficult to understand and discourage users from continuing.

How can you avoid it?

Use simple language whenever possible. If technical terms are necessary, explain them clearly the first time they appear or create a [glossary link](#) for them.

Example:

Instead of:

"Authenticate using SAML assertions."

Write:

"Sign in using your organization's Single Sign-On (SSO) system."

2. Writing Articles That Are Too Long

Long articles can overwhelm users who are looking for quick solutions.

Why is this a problem?

Most users visit a knowledge base with a specific question in mind. They want answers quickly, not lengthy explanations.

How can you avoid it?

Focus each article on a single topic or task. If a subject is complex, divide it into multiple linked articles.

Tip: Remove unnecessary background information and keep the content solution-focused.

3. Creating Vague Article Titles

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Your article title is often the first thing users see in search results.

Why is this a problem?

Vague titles make it difficult for users to determine whether an article contains the information they need.

How can you avoid it?

Use descriptive titles that clearly explain what the article covers.

Poor Examples:

- Account Issues
- Login Problems
- Troubleshooting Guide

Better Examples:

- How to Reset Your Password
- How to Fix Login Errors
- How to Update Your Account Email Address

4. Skipping Step-by-Step Instructions

Users need clear guidance, especially when performing tasks.

Why is this a problem?

Articles that explain concepts without providing actionable steps often leave users confused.

How can you avoid it?

Present procedures using numbered instructions.

Example:

1. Log in to your account.
2. Open Settings.
3. Select Security.
4. Click Change Password.
5. Save your changes.

This format makes tasks easier to follow and reduces user errors.

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5. Ignoring Visual Aids

Screenshots and diagrams can simplify complex processes.

Why is this a problem?

Text alone may not be enough to explain user interfaces or complicated workflows.

How can you avoid it?

Include screenshots, annotated images, or short videos where appropriate.

Visual aids can help users understand instructions faster and improve task completion rates.

6. Assuming Users Already Know the Basics

Knowledge base writers often overlook steps that seem obvious to them.

Why is this a problem?

What seems simple to an expert may be confusing to a first-time user.

How can you avoid it?

Write for beginners and include all necessary steps, even if they appear basic.

Remember that your audience may have little or no prior experience with your product.

7. Poor Content Structure

Large blocks of text can make articles difficult to read.

Why is this a problem?

Users typically scan articles rather than reading every word.

How can you avoid it?

Organize content using:

- Headings
- Subheadings
- Bullet points
- Numbered lists
- Short paragraphs

A well-structured article improves readability and helps users find information faster. With PHPKB's WYSIWYG editor, authors can easily format articles using headings, lists, tables, and other rich-text elements without requiring HTML knowledge,

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8. Publishing Outdated Content

Products, interfaces, and workflows change over time.

Why is this a problem?

Outdated articles can confuse users and create frustration when instructions no longer match the product.

How can you avoid it?

Review and update articles regularly.

Pay special attention to:

- Screenshots
- Navigation paths
- Feature names
- External links
- Product updates

Keeping content current improves trust and reduces support requests.

9. Not Optimizing Articles for Search

Even excellent articles are useless if users cannot find them.

Why is this a problem?

Users often search using customer-friendly language rather than internal company terminology.

How can you avoid it?

Research common user queries and incorporate those phrases into article titles, headings, and content.

Example:

If users search for "change password," ensure that phrase appears naturally throughout the article.

10. Failing to Test Instructions Before Publishing

Writers sometimes publish articles without verifying the accuracy of the steps.

Why is this a problem?

Even a small mistake can prevent users from completing a task successfully.

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How can you avoid it?

Before publishing:

- Follow the instructions yourself.
- Verify all screenshots.
- Check every link.
- Ask another team member to review the article.

Testing ensures your content is accurate and reliable.

Frequently Asked Questions

- What makes a good knowledge base article?
- How can I make my knowledge base articles easier to understand?
- Should every knowledge base article include screenshots?
- How often should knowledge base articles be reviewed?
- Can poor knowledge base articles increase support tickets?
- What is the ideal length of a knowledge base article?
- Why is search optimization important for a knowledge base?
- What should I do before publishing a knowledge base article?

Conclusion

Writing effective knowledge base articles is not just about documenting information—it's about helping users solve problems quickly and independently. By avoiding these common writing mistakes, you can create content that is easier to understand, easier to find, and more useful to your audience.

A well-maintained knowledge base improves the user experience, reduces support workload, and increases customer satisfaction. Small improvements in content quality can have a significant impact on the success of your self-service strategy.

Online URL: <https://www.phpkb.com/kb/article/10-common-knowledge-base-writing-mistakes-420.html>

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