Use a private help center as an internal knowledge base

Help center best practices

A private help center makes a good internal knowledge base: one searchable place for your team's processes, policies and playbooks, written in the same editor you use for customers. Here's how to set one up, and when a private section inside your public help center is enough.

What to put in an internal knowledge base

Anything your colleagues ask each other more than once:

- **Support playbooks:** how to handle refunds, escalations and tricky cases, with reply templates.
- **Product knowledge:** how features work behind the scenes, known issues and their workarounds.
- **Processes:** how to ship a release, onboard a customer or order equipment.
- **Policies:** security, expenses, time off.
- **Onboarding:** a first-week guide for new colleagues that links to everything else.

Choose your setup

There are two ways to keep internal content in HelpCenter.io.

Setup	Best when	Keep in mind
A separate private help center	Most of the content is internal, or it's written for a different audience than your customers.	Each help center is its own subscription.
Private categories in your public help center	You have a handful of internal articles that belong next to customer content, such as support notes about a public feature.	Hiding a category also hides its subcategories, but an article that sits in a visible category too stays visible there.

If in doubt, keep them apart. In a private help center, the whole site needs a sign-in, so keeping internal articles internal never depends on getting a category setting right.

Set up a private help center

1. **Create a help center for your team,** or pick one you already have. See Create another help center.

2. **Make it private.** New help centers start Public but unpublished, so only your team sees them until you publish. If you pick an internal knowledge base as your goal in the setup wizard, it's set to Private for you. To switch one you already have, go to **Settings** → **General**. Under **Access & visibility**, choose **Private**, then click **Save changes**. From then on, only invited team members can open it. See Control who can see your help center.

3. **Invite your colleagues.** Give people who only need to read the **Viewer** role, and people who write the **Editor** role. See Invite your team for how invitations work and how many people each plan includes.

4. **Plan your categories** around your teams or the jobs people need to get done. See Plan your help center's structure.

Choose **Private** over **Password** for internal content. With Private, everyone signs in as themselves, and removing someone from your team removes their access. A password is shared, so anyone who has it can read your help center until you change it.

Private help centers stay out of search engines, and their content isn't open to outside AI assistants.

Let employees sign in with your company login

On Catalyst, single sign-on (JWT) lets people read your private help center by signing in through your own login system, with no invitation needed. Setting it up takes a small piece of code on your side that confirms who each person is. People who sign in this way are readers only: they don't join your team and can't open the dashboard. See Sign readers in with your own login (JWT SSO).

Because they aren't team members, readers who sign in with single sign-on don't see categories shared with **Team members only**.

Control who sees what

Inside any help center, you can narrow access further.

- **Private categories.** Share a category with **Team members only**, or with **Me and selected team members**, such as a category for managers only. Its articles are hidden from everyone else, in search and AI answers too. See Make a category private.

- **Private articles.** Limit a single article to you and the people you pick. See Choose who can read an article.

Hiding a category hides its subcategories and their articles too. An article that also sits in a visible category stays visible through it, so check where your internal articles are filed.

Leave context for other writers

Internal notes and comments in the editor let writers explain where a policy came from, flag a doubt or ask a colleague to check a step. Readers outside your team never see them, and search and AI answers never use them. Everyone on your team does see internal notes when they read the article on your help center, Viewers included, so keep anything confidential out of them. See Leave notes for your team.

Search and AI for your team

Search works in a private help center the way it does in a public one, and results only include articles each person is allowed to read. With AI Answers (Catalyst, or the AI add-on on Bootstrap and Growth), colleagues can ask questions in their own words and get answers written from your articles, with sources.

On Growth and Catalyst, your team can also connect AI agents such as Claude and ChatGPT to find, write and update articles. See Connect Claude, ChatGPT and other AI agents.

Keep it current

Internal knowledge goes stale fast: a policy changes, a tool gets replaced, a process gains a step. Give every category an owner and set review dates for the articles that change most. See Keep your help center up to date.

Related articles

- Control who can see your help center

- Invite your team
- Make a category private
- Sign readers in with your own login (JWT SSO)
- Help center vs knowledge base: what's the difference?