How readers see other languages

Languages

Once your help center has more than one language, readers can read it in theirs. Here's how they reach each language, what they see in it, and how search engines, search, AI Answers and the widget handle your languages.

Plans: Growth and Catalyst

Addresses

With one language, an article's address looks like https://help.example.com/content/reset-your-password. Once you add a language, every article address includes a language code:

- https://help.example.com/en/content/reset-your-password
- https://help.example.com/de/content/passwort-zuruecksetzen

Each translation can have its own slug, so the address can be in the reader's language too. The home page of a language is its code, for example https://help.example.com/de.

Which language a reader sees

- When the address includes a language code, readers see that language.

- Otherwise, for example on your home page, readers see the language they chose last time, or your default language. A language they chose earlier that has no released articles yet falls back to your default language.

- On a first visit, readers whose browser prefers one of your other languages are taken to your home page in that language, once it has at least one released article.

What readers see in each language

- **Articles**: in a language other than your default, category pages and search show only articles whose translation is released. Opening the address of an unreleased translation shows your not-found page.

- **Categories**: a category without a translated name and description shows the default-language ones.

- **Buttons and labels**: built-in phrases show in English until you translate them. Japanese has built-in Japanese wording. See Translate buttons and labels.

- **Texts in your design**: headings and other texts you haven't translated show in your default language. See Translate texts in your design.

- **Right-to-left languages**: pages in Arabic, Hebrew and Persian display right to left automatically.

The language switcher

The **Language switcher** component lets readers change language, as a dropdown or an inline list. It lists your default language and every language with at least one published article released in it. On an article, switching opens the same article in the new language when it's released there, and that language's home page when it isn't.

Themes include the switcher only when your help center has more than one language. If you set up your design before adding a language, add the switcher yourself:

1. In the left menu, click **Template editor**, then **Pages**.
2. Open the **Header** region and click **Add component**.
3. Choose **Language switcher**.
4. Click **Publish**, then **Publish** again to confirm.

In the template editor's preview, the switcher lists all your languages, so you can place and style it before anything is translated.

Search and AI Answers

Search looks only at the articles available in the reader's current language: in any language other than your default, that means released translations. AI Answers draws on the same articles, so readers get answers based on what's available in their language.

The widget

The widget shows your default language unless you set another one in its code. Add lang to window.hcOptions in the widget snippet, using a language code from your **Localization** page:

```
window.hcOptions = {
    app_id: 'YOUR_WIDGET_ID',
    lang: 'de'
};
```

If the code isn't one of your help center's languages, the widget uses your default language. On a multilingual website, set lang to match the language of each page.

Search engines

Every page tells search engines about its other language versions with hreflang links, and points to your default language as the fallback (x-default). Each language version names itself as its main (canonical) address, so search engines don't treat a translation as a copy of the original. Your sitemap lists each released translation with the same links. This helps search engines show readers the version in their language. See SEO settings for your help center.

Related articles

- Add a language to your help center
- SEO settings for your help center
- Add the widget to your website
- A translation doesn't show