

Plan your help center's structure

Help center best practices

A good structure lets readers find an answer in a couple of clicks, and shows your team where each new article belongs. Build it from the questions your customers ask, not from how your company is organized.

Start from the questions people ask

Before you create a single category, collect real questions. The best sources are:

- **Support conversations:** tickets, emails and chat. Look through a few weeks' worth and note the topics that keep coming up.
- **Sales and onboarding calls:** what people ask before they buy, and where new customers get stuck.
- **Search logs:** if you already have a help center or a site search, what people type into it, especially the searches that find nothing.
- **Your product:** its main menu and settings pages show the areas people will need help with.

Write each question down in the customer's words, with a rough note of how often it comes up. A simple spreadsheet is enough.

Group the questions into categories

Sort the questions into piles of related topics, then name each pile. Some guidelines:

- **Aim for five to ten top-level categories.** Fewer is fine when you start. Many more than that and your home page gets hard to scan.
- **Use your readers' words.** "Billing and invoices" beats "Revenue operations". "Get started" beats "Onboarding module".
- **Organize by what people want to do,** not by which team owns it. Customers don't know or care who is responsible for a feature.
- **Make categories distinct.** If you can't tell which of two categories an article belongs in, merge or rename them.
- **Avoid catch-alls** like "General" or "Other". They fill up with articles nobody can find.

Keep it shallow

Two levels is plenty: categories, and subcategories inside them. Every extra level puts articles one more click away, and many readers give up before they reach the bottom.

Add a subcategory only when a category gets too long to scan and its articles split cleanly into groups. Search is the other way in, so you don't need a folder for every idea.

One topic per article

Give every task or question its own article. "Add your logo to invoices" and "Change your invoice numbering" are two articles, not one article called "Invoice settings".

Focused articles are easier to find in search, easier to link to, and easier for AI answers to quote. When an article covers several tasks, split it. When two articles cover the same task, merge them.

Name things consistently

Consistent titles tell readers what they'll get before they click.

Article type	Title pattern	Example
How-to	Start with a verb	Send a payment reminder
Troubleshooting	Describe the problem the reader sees	A client didn't get their invoice
Explainer	"What is..." or "How ... works"	How late fees work
FAQ	The question, as customers ask it	Can I change my plan later?
Reference	A plain noun phrase	Keyboard shortcuts

Use the same word for the same thing everywhere. If your product says "workspace", don't call it "account" in one article and "team" in another. A short glossary keeps your writers consistent.

Example: a structure for an invoicing app

Here's a starting structure for an online invoicing app, with the first few articles in each category.

- **Get started:** Create your account, Add your business details, Send your first invoice

- **Invoices and quotes:** Create an invoice, Add your logo, Turn a quote into an invoice, Send payment reminders
- **Payments:** Accept card payments, Record a bank transfer, Refund a payment
- **Clients:** Add or import clients, Merge duplicate clients
- **Reports and taxes:** See who owes you money, Export a tax report
- **Integrations:** Connect your bank, Connect your accounting software
- **Account and billing:** Change your plan, Update your card, Download your receipts, Cancel your subscription
- **Troubleshooting:** I can't sign in, A card payment failed, A client didn't get their invoice

Notice the pattern. "Get started" comes first because every new customer needs it. The middle follows the product's main jobs, in the order people meet them. Account and troubleshooting topics come last. As the help center grows, "Integrations" could gain subcategories such as "Banks" and "Accounting software".

Test it before you build it all

Give three to five people a few real questions, such as "How do I refund a client?", and ask which category they'd open. Use customers if you can, or colleagues who don't know that part of the product well. Where people hesitate or disagree, rename or regroup.

After launch, keep testing with real data. Searches that find nothing, and support questions about topics you've already covered, show where your structure doesn't match how readers think.

How HelpCenter.io helps

A new HelpCenter.io help center starts with a "General" category, so rename it to fit your plan or move its articles somewhere more specific. You create categories from the Articles page and nest one inside another by dragging it. Each category can have a description and an icon or image for its card on your help center. An article can appear in more than one category, so you never need to copy it, and you can set your own order for articles and categories. See [Create and organize categories](#), [Show an article in more than one category](#) and [Change the order of articles and categories](#).

Related articles

- [Create and organize categories](#)
- [The first 10 articles every help center needs](#)
- [How to write help articles people actually read](#)
- [Add a category icon, image and description](#)