

Reduce support tickets with self-service

Help center best practices

The surest way to reduce support tickets is to answer questions where they start: in your product, on your website and in your contact form, before anyone writes to you. Here's how to do that without making it any harder to reach a person.

Self-service isn't hiding the contact button. The goal is fewer questions that an article could have answered, not fewer customers who can reach you. People who can't find a way to contact you don't stop needing help. They get frustrated.

Start with the questions you get most

Go through a few weeks of support conversations and tag each one by topic. The topics at the top of the list are your biggest opportunity. For each one, check that an article exists, that it answers the question completely, and that people can find it.

Keep tagging as you go. That's how you'll see which questions still reach your team after the articles are live.

Put answers where questions happen

People rarely go looking for your help center. Bring it to them:

- **In your product.** A help widget lets people search and read articles without leaving the page they're stuck on. Next to a tricky setting, a small "How does this work?" link to the right article helps too.

- **At the right moment.** A short, well-timed message can offer help where people often struggle, such as a pricing page or a long form.
- **In the contact form.** Suggest matching articles while people type their question. Anyone who finds the answer there doesn't need to press send.
- **In your emails.** Link onboarding emails to your getting started guide, and release announcements to the articles you updated.
- **In your support replies.** Link to the article instead of retyping the answer. It shows customers where to look next time.

Make search find the answer

When search fails, people write to you. Help it succeed:

- Use your customers' words in titles and first paragraphs, not internal feature names.
- Mention the other words people use for the same thing where they fit naturally, such as "cancel", "close your account" and "end your subscription".
- Quote error messages exactly, so people who paste them into search find the fix.

Answer with AI, grounded in your articles

AI answers let people ask in their own words and get a direct reply written from your articles, with links to the sources. They catch the questions your titles didn't anticipate.

Two things matter: answers should come only from your own content, and they should say so when your content doesn't cover a question, then point people to your team. See [How AI Answers work](#).

Close the gaps

Every question that reaches your team is a clue. Each month, look at:

- **Failed searches:** what people looked for and didn't find. Write those articles, or add the missing words to existing ones.
- **Repeated searches:** people who searched again, often because the first results didn't help.
- **Low-rated articles:** answers that exist but don't help.
- **Tickets about topics you've already covered:** the article is missing a detail, or people can't find it.

Keep a clear path to a person

Make contacting your team the obvious next step when self-service doesn't work. A clear "Still stuck? Message our team" link at the end of an answer respects people's time far more than an email address hidden in a footer. Ask for the details you need in the form, so your first reply can solve the problem.

Measure self-service

You can't count the questions that never became tickets, but you can watch the signs:

- **Self-service rate:** the share of help center visits where people searched or read an article and didn't contact you afterwards.
- **Contact requests compared with visitors:** when visitors grow faster than contact requests, more people are finding answers on their own.
- **Tickets by topic:** after you publish or improve an article, watch whether that topic shrinks in your support queue.

Look at trends over months rather than single numbers. See [Help center metrics that matter](#).

How HelpCenter.io helps

The widget puts search and articles on your website or in your app on every plan, with an optional form for messaging your team. Proactive messages invite visitors into the widget at the right moment: page URL and time-on-page rules work on every plan, and Growth and Catalyst add triggers such as scroll depth and exit intent. Your help center's contact form can suggest articles while people type, and links on your own pages can open a help article right inside the widget (see [Open the widget from your own UI](#) on the developer portal).

AI Answers (Catalyst, or the AI add-on on Bootstrap and Growth) reply from your articles with sources, and the widget can then suggest articles based on the page a visitor is on. In **Statistics**, **What people search for** lists failed searches and content gaps, and **Visitor journeys** shows how many visits self-served and how many contacted support. See [Invite visitors with proactive messages](#), [Turn on AI Answers](#) and [See what people search for](#).

Related articles

- [Invite visitors with proactive messages](#)
- [See what people search for](#)
- [Turn on AI Answers](#)
- [Add the widget to your website](#)
- [Set up your contact page and form](#)