A 404 page appears when someone tries to open a page that cannot be found. The link may be out of date, the helpandadvice.co.uk address may contain a typo, or the page may have moved. On a phone, the problem can feel worse: there is less room to explain what happened, and the visitor may have to scroll or tap around to recover.



A useful mobile 404 page does not need to be clever. It should explain the problem in plain English, offer a few clear routes forward and make it easy to return to the site. Good mobile 404 design helps people regain their bearings without suggesting that the missing page was their fault.

Start with a clear, calm message

Put the key information near the top of the screen. “We can’t find that page” is usually more helpful than a joke or a technical message such as “Error 404”. You can include the error number, but do not make visitors work out what it means.

Keep the explanation short. For example:

We can’t find that page. The link may be out of date, or the address may have been entered incorrectly. Try one of the options below.

This wording explains what has happened without blaming the visitor or claiming to know the exact cause. Avoid messages that imply the page is temporarily unavailable unless you know that is the case. If it is a broken link, saying so plainly is more useful than suggesting people keep refreshing.

Make the layout work on a small screen

A simple 404 layout is easier to scan and use on a phone. Put the message first, then the most useful actions. Avoid forcing visitors to pinch, zoom or scroll past a large illustration before they can find a link.

- Use a readable text size and strong contrast between text and background.

- Keep the main message and key links near the top of the page.
- Make tap targets large enough to select comfortably.
- Leave space between links and buttons to reduce accidental taps.
- Use familiar labels such as “Go to homepage” rather than vague labels such as “Continue”.
- Check that the page works in portrait and landscape orientation.

Do not rely on colour alone to show what is clickable. Links should look like links, and buttons should have clear labels. If an icon is used, give it an accessible text label where needed. The page should also remain understandable to someone using a screen reader or navigating with a keyboard.

Offer quick links that help people recover

Quick links 404 pages should point to places visitors are likely to need, not a long list of every section on the site. The right options depend on the site, but a small set might include the homepage, a search function, a help area and the main category pages.

- **Homepage:** a clear route back to the start.
- **Search:** useful when people remember a topic but not the page title.
- **Relevant sections:** a few popular or closely related categories.
- **Contact or help:** a route to report a broken link or ask about site access.

On a mobile screen, keep these options concise. A search box can be useful, but make sure it is easy to focus and submit. If you include suggested searches, make them relevant to the missing page where possible. Do not fill the screen with generic links that make the visitor decide all over again where to go.

Use the missing address as a clue, not a promise

If your site can identify the topic or section from the address, you may be able to show a relevant link. For instance, a missing page under a “guides” section could link to the current guides page. Check that any suggested destination exists and is genuinely relevant. A confident but incorrect suggestion can make the experience more frustrating.

Do not automatically redirect every missing page to the homepage. Visitors may not realise they have been moved, and they can lose the context that brought them there. If a page has a clear replacement, a redirect may be appropriate. Otherwise, a helpful 404 page lets people choose their next step.

Build trust by being transparent

A 404 page is still part of the site experience. Use consistent branding and familiar navigation so visitors can tell they have not landed on an unrelated page. At the same time, keep the design focused: a large promotional banner or pop-up can make a simple error feel like a sales pitch.

Be clear about what your site does and does not provide. This matters particularly on sites that publish information about money, health, law or other high-impact topics. If a broken link leads to information about a financial product, for example, do not use the 404 page to make a recommendation or imply that a replacement page is suitable for the visitor.

Where relevant, distinguish information from advice. A general information page can explain a topic, but that does not mean it takes account of a reader’s individual circumstances. Do not label content as “advice”

unless it has been created and presented as such, and the publisher is entitled to provide it. Mentioning the FCA (the UK financial regulator) should not suggest that the regulator has approved, checked or endorsed your site. Any statement about the FCA should be accurate and relevant.

Use affiliate links carefully

If the site earns commission from links, keep commercial disclosures clear and separate from navigation. For example, a publisher participating in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program may earn from qualifying purchases made through links to Amazon.com. The wording should reflect the publisher's actual arrangement and be easy to find wherever required.

Tools such as Amazon Associates can help publishers manage affiliate links, but they do not remove the need to explain a commercial relationship clearly. A 404 page is rarely the right place to push a product link. If an affiliate link appears as part of a relevant alternative destination, label it appropriately and make sure the visitor can still choose a non-commercial route, such as the homepage or search.

For example, a site such as Help & Advice should make its purpose and any commercial relationships understandable to visitors. A company or brand name on a page should not be used to imply that it has reviewed or endorsed the 404 content unless that is accurate.

Keep liability wording proportionate

Some publishers use limitation-of-liability language to explain the scope and limits of their content. Such wording should not be used to excuse broken links, hide important information or suggest that visitors have no rights. A 404 page is not a substitute for clear site terms, privacy information or appropriate disclosures elsewhere on the site.

Keep any notice short and specific to the content. For example, where appropriate, a site might say that its material is for general information only and that it is not tailored to individual circumstances. Do not imply that this wording guarantees protection from liability or determines the legal outcome of a dispute. The effect of terms can depend on the circumstances and applicable law.

Example information-only wording: "This site provides general information, not advice tailored to your circumstances. Check important details independently before making a decision."

This is sample wording, not a legal assessment. Publishers should check that any disclaimer accurately reflects the service, does not contradict other site statements and is suitable for the relevant jurisdiction. If specialist legal or regulatory requirements may apply, seek appropriately qualified help.

Encourage visitors to check information for themselves

Doing your own research is particularly important when a missing page relates to a decision with financial, legal or practical consequences. The 404 page should not make the decision for the visitor or steer them towards a single commercial destination. It can instead offer neutral ways to continue, such as a search, a relevant information category or a link to an appropriate official source.

Be careful with phrases such as "the best alternative" or "the right choice for you". They may imply a comparison or personalised recommendation that the page does not support. A more measured label, such as "Related information" or "Browse this topic", describes the link without overstating what it offers.

Test the page, not just the design

A page can look tidy in a design file and still be awkward on a real phone. Test it on different screen sizes, browsers and connection speeds. Check that the page loads when the original address has extra characters, and that navigation, search and contact links work.

What to check Why it matters Message is visible immediately Visitors can understand the issue without searching the page. Links are easy to tap Small or crowded targets can lead to accidental selections. Search returns useful results A search box is only helpful if it works and gives a route forward. Page is accessible Clear labels, contrast and reading order support more visitors. Broken URLs are recorded Repeated errors can reveal outdated links or site problems to fix.

Review error reports periodically. A single mistyped address may not need action, but repeated visits to the same missing URL could point to a link on your own site, an old campaign or an external page that still sends visitors to the wrong place. Fixing the source is better than relying on the 404 page to make up for it.

Common mistakes to avoid

- **Making the message cryptic:** humour can be secondary, but the error should be unmistakable.
- **Offering too many choices:** a crowded menu is harder to use on a small screen.
- **Using a dead-end page:** give visitors at least one reliable route onwards.
- **Auto-redirecting without context:** visitors may not know why the page changed.
- **Turning the error into a sales page:** prioritise recovery and clarity over promotion.
- **Overstating disclaimers:** avoid claims that a disclaimer removes all responsibility or guarantees an outcome.

What to do next

Start by opening your current 404 page on a phone. Check whether the message is clear, whether the homepage and search are easy to reach, and whether every link works. Then review the page for accessibility, affiliate disclosures and any wording that could be read as personalised advice or a promise about liability.

Ask a few people who were not involved in building the site to use the page. Watch whether they can find a useful next step without help. Make changes based on what they struggle with, then check your error reports for recurring missing URLs. A simple 404 layout, honest wording and useful quick links can turn a dead end into a clear way back.


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