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Group 5

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PP04: Final Project Deliverable

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## Section 1: Introduction

### Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to help users create effective UI for knowledge bases that are easily understood by their own users. By the end of this guide, you will be able to know the best practices of UX/UI design for web domain hosting software.

### Objective

Through using this guide, writers and designers of knowledge bases will gain the skills needed to create well-designed knowledge bases. Using this guide, you will be able to create a knowledge base that:

- Has easily identifiable navigation
- Is optimized for readability
- Includes accessibility for assistive technologies and device readers
- Prioritizes visual elements
- Has simple-to-find and consume information

### Audience

The audience of this guide is technical writers, UX and UI designers, and content managers working for domain and web hosts, or anyone else looking to create more easily understood and helpful knowledge bases. Our guide is aligned with UX goals of creating:

- Accessible designs
- Consistent branding
- Effective SEO terms
- Pleasing aesthetics that support functionality.

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By using our guide, you can create these knowledge bases without the frustrations of confusing layouts, inconsistent branding, and ineffective SEO terms.

## Section 2: UI/UX Best Practices

When creating a self-service knowledge resource for users, it's important to keep the four following principles in mind:

- Focus on design
- Write clear, concise content
- Use the same wording as your customers
- Design for readability and accessibility

### Focus on design

Design should be the focus of your knowledge base. It should be easy for readers to find the search bar, frequently asked questions, available support categories, and available contact methods. Having each of these components quickly identifiable provides a good user experience and reflects positively on your brand. Readers should be able to find the content they are looking for – or how to search for it – within a few seconds of visiting your page.

You'll also want to consider design elements such as colors, navigation buttons, and overall page space. Thinking about these elements will ensure that your page is readable, sections of information so it's easy to find, and can direct people where they might find relevant information.

### Write clear, concise content

After design, you want the content to also make sense and ensure that the readers can skim or search for the right answer. This means making content as straightforward as possible with the answer right at the top of the article and then includes any relevant resources or links that they can reference if necessary. This content is meant to be helpful first and foremost, so it does not require any marketing lingo or clever storytelling. Its tone should be as straightforward as possible. Ask yourself, "if my reader skimmed this page or used 'Ctrl+F', would they be able to find what they are looking for?" to gauge if your content is concise enough.

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## Use the same wording as your customers

Even if there is internal lingo for product features or buttons, it's not useful for your customers if they don't use the same wording or are unfamiliar with what you're talking about. Review support conversations and chat transcripts to understand how customers talk about your offerings and include those terms. You can run some rounds of user testing to confirm that the wording make sense, and that readers understand what you're talking about.

Because knowledge base content is designed to help your customers, it's best to have content lean towards having more information than less or assuming a certain level of knowledge. You should also make sure to spell out or explain any acronyms or industry terms that might not be common knowledge outside of your organization.

## Design for readability and accessibility

Readers don't want to come to a knowledge base and be met with huge blocks of text that are hard to decipher. Figure out how to use white space and chunk content so that it is easier to digest and find information. Additionally, consider how well your website will translate if it is being used with a screen reader or assistive device. Can it accurately display content? If read out loud by a screen reader, will it read the content in the correct order? Considering these factors will ensure that your knowledge base can reach a broader audience and get everyone the information that they require.

## Section 3: Design Critique

Let's look at some examples of knowledge base content and see how they follow the best practices outlined in the previous section.

### Example #1: [Bluehost](#)

#### Strengths of the Webpage

- **Clear Navigation Structure:**
  - The main categories (e.g., Webmail, Setup, PHP, Email) are clearly visible as clickable links. This approach makes it easy for the user to identify the topic they need help with.

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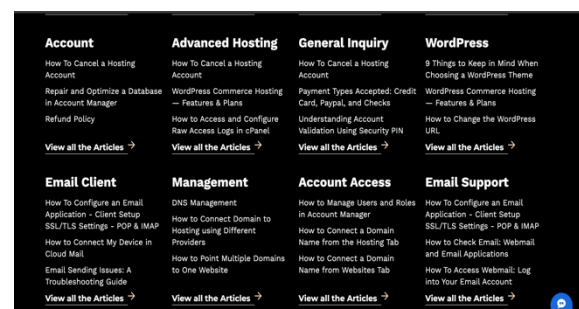
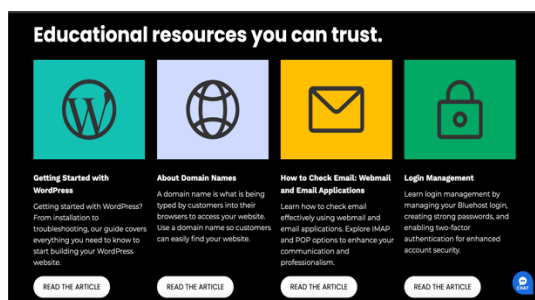
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- **Search Bar Functionality:**
  - The search bar is prominently placed at the top, encouraging users to search for specific queries directly. This is a good practice in knowledge base design.
- **Consistent Branding:**
  - The page maintains Bluehost's clean, minimalist aesthetic with a white and blue color scheme, thus reinforcing brand identity.
- **Resource Categorization:**
  - The use of categories and subcategories helps organize content and reduce cognitive and visual load for users.
- **Sticky Header with Quick Access:**
  - The Bluehost icon and header provides quick access to the main site. This ensures that users can easily navigate back to Bluehost's primary services.

## Areas of Improvement

- **Overwhelming Text-Based Interface:**
  - The homepage is very text-heavy, lacking visual hierarchy. Using icons, color blocks, or subtle backgrounds to distinguish sections would break up the monotony and make it more visually engaging.



- **Lack of Appealing Graphics:**
  - Despite being a help center, there are no videos, screenshots, or infographics to illustrate complex concepts. Many hosting-related topics

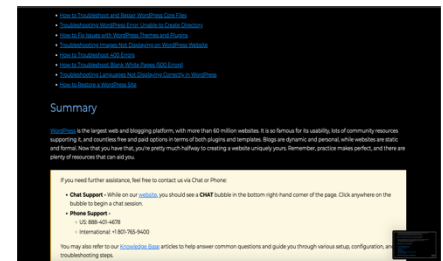
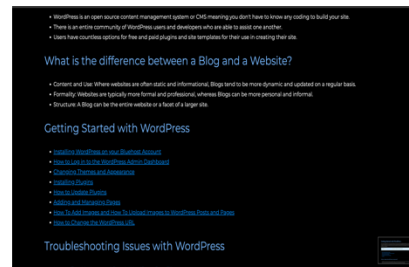
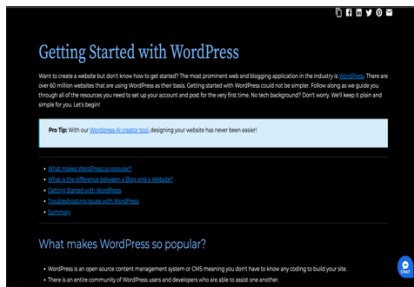
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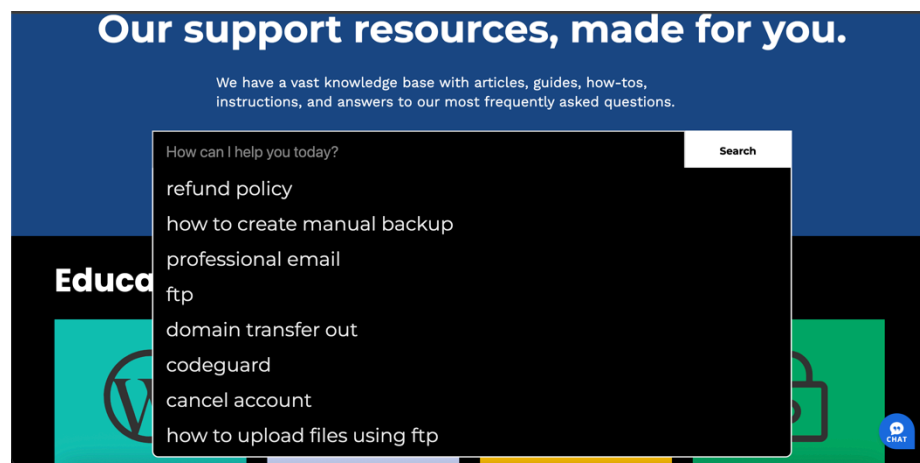
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(e.g., getting started with WordPress) are text heavy and lack necessary visuals that would help users.



### ▪ Search Experience is Generic:

- o The search bar doesn't suggest common queries or auto-complete terms. The presence of missing an opportunity to guide users more effectively.



### ▪ Content Presentation is Repetitive:

- o The layout and structure of multiple categories are quite similar, creating a repetitive experience. Introducing layout variations or adding quick links to FAQs and top articles could make the interface more dynamic.

### ▪ Mobile Optimization Unclear:

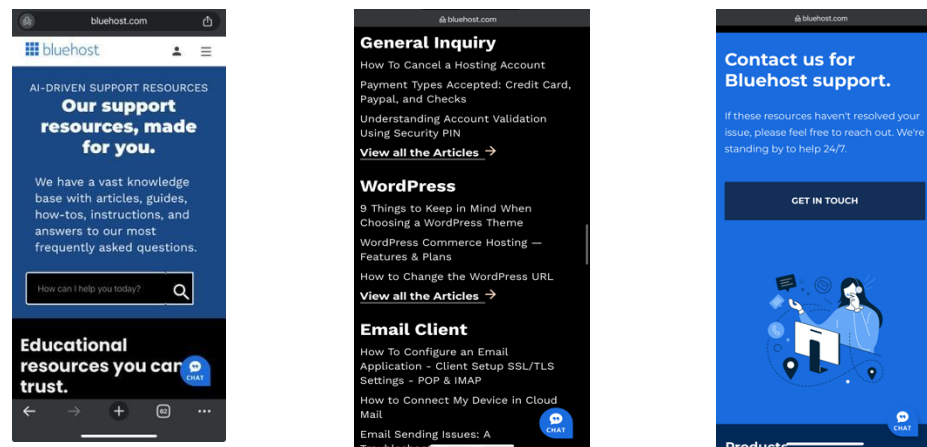
- o The website's layout appears very desktop centric. The text/icons don't appear to be optimized for mobile responsiveness (e.g., collapsible categories, sticky back-to-top button). A significant focus on enhancing the user experience for mobile web browsers would enhance the overall experience.

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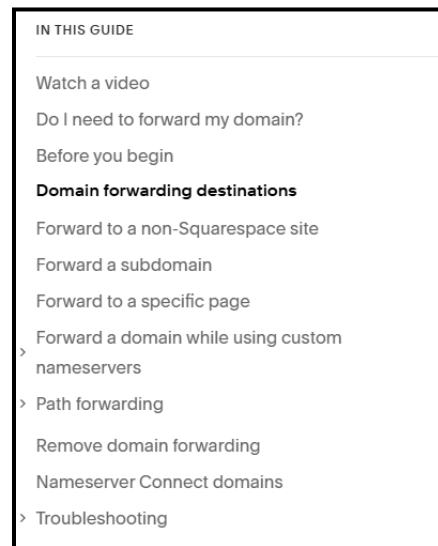
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## Example #2: [Squarespace](#)

### Strengths of the Webpage

- **Clear Navigation:**
  - The right-hand side of the page has a sticky navigation guide with clickable links to the sections in the article. This helps users move to specific topics covered by the article and know where they are within the article.



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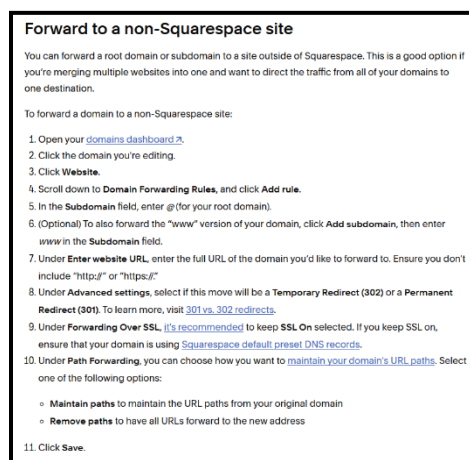
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- **Visible Search Bar:**
  - The search bar is at the top of the page. The top header is black with a white font, while the search bar is white with a black font. This change attracts the eye, so the user easily sees where the search bar is.
- **Enumerated Steps:**
  - The article is broken down into small, enumerated steps. This helps users complete the whole task without feeling overwhelmed by a wall of text.
- **Consistent Formatting:**
  - Each section of the article has a consistent format. There is a heading, a short introduction, and enumerated steps. Squarespace does not have a brand color; this consistent formatting reinforces brand identity where color does not.
- **Use of Bold Words:**
  - The key terms needed to complete the task are bold. This helps the user identify what they need to interact with.

## Areas of Improvement

- **Lack of Screenshots:**
  - The article has few graphics, none showing the user's steps to complete their task. Screenshots indicating where users need to click would prevent confusion.



- **Unhelpful Video:**
  - The article does have a video, but it doesn't cover all the topics of the article. Half of the video talks about similar help center pages.

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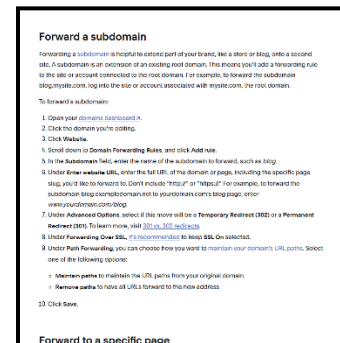
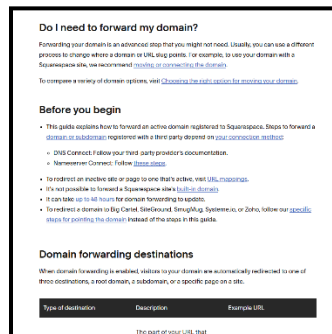
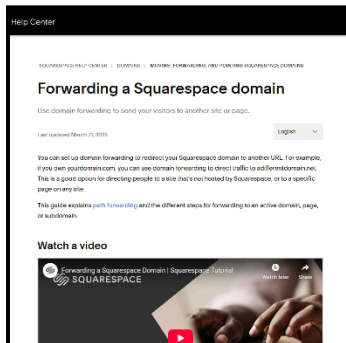
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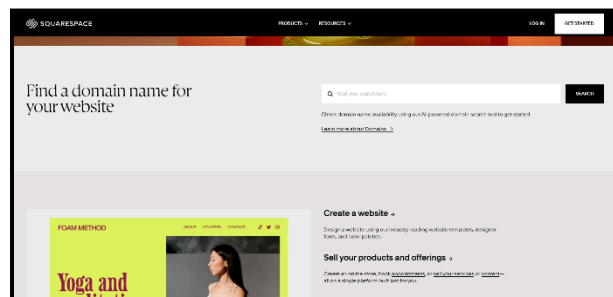
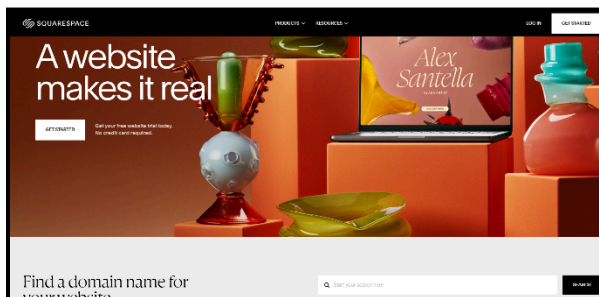
### ▪ Lack of Visual Appeal:

- The article is mostly black and white with few graphics. Squarespace is black and white as a brand but adding colorful graphics would enhance the user experience.



### ▪ Fixed Header:

- The webpage has a fixed header. Other pages on the website have sticky headers. This lack of consistency negatively impacts branding and user experience. Sticky headers improve user experience by providing easy access to important menu items, no matter where the user is on the page.



### ▪ Mobile Navigation Challenges:

- On mobile, the navigation guide is moved to the top of the page as a drop-down menu under the title header. It is unclear whether the navigation guide is for the article and not the entire Squarespace help center. Moving the navigation guide below the article title creates a more intuitive navigation.

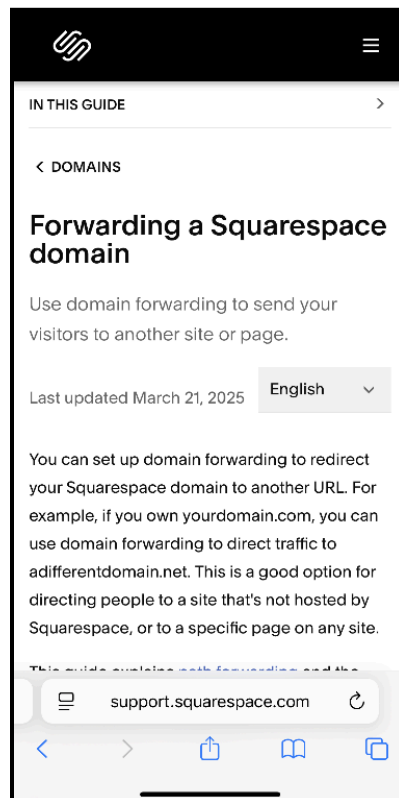


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## Section 4: Conclusion

While knowledge bases should follow UI/UX best practices, some of these best practices are compromised in favor of knowledge base best practices, which may conflict. Absence of, or of many, screenshots, for example, may be because the supported product experiences frequent A/B testing or interface updates. Heavy use of text may be necessary to bridge the gap of complexity between the product pertinent details and the audience that needs to know them. Without inside knowledge into the company's business practices, it's difficult to map what compromises were made at what point in the knowledge base development.

Ultimately, a customer needs an intuitively navigable knowledge base, and the knowledge base needs to be maintainable by its support staff. By focusing on:

- Accessible designs
- Consistent branding
- Effective SEO terms
- Pleasing aesthetics that support functionality

This balance within UI/UX design, once struck, leaves an effective, well-designed knowledge base, and a customer with quickly completed tasks to be done.

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## Section 5: Updates to Previous Projects

There are no additional updates to previous projects at this time.

## Section 6: Project Narrative

Here's how we all felt our project went and our comments on the overall experience.

### **Lauren Bahm**

The real-world execution of the project aligned with what I had planned and expected. I knew that we were going to be creating a guide based on UX/UI principles and applying those to some existing knowledge bases.

The one area that was different from what I was expecting was the interview: I got to interview a friend of mine who works as a UX researcher. I had limited knowledge of what UX researchers do and so I thought her answers were very informative. She deals a lot with usability testing and less to do with design, but she stressed the importance of existing mental models on other websites for ease of “findability,” something that is crucial to keep in mind when formatting a knowledge base. She also introduced me to the concepts of heatmaps, click paths, and time on task as metrics that they use in their usability testing. I'd love to look more into these metrics and UX researching in general as it sounds like an area I'd be interested in!

An “Aha!” moment I experienced along the way is related to the interview and that within the field of UX, there are many different jobs all related to technical writing that I find interesting and may want to pursue in the future!

### **Aashna Haryani**

The real world execution of the project was far from what I'd imagined. With limited to no knowledge about the world of UX/UI writing and designing to actually reading and learning about it has been very different.

I also did not expect the minute details I would have to hunt down to understand how color schemes, sizes, and placements of icons, text, and images would impact the overall UI/UX experience. Although quite meticulous, the experience gave me great insight into what makes a successful website especially on the UI/UX front.

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Furthermore, it also helped me educate myself more about UI/UX writing as a profession around which I had very limited knowledge.

An “Aha!” moment I had while working on this project was that UI/UX writing requires a person to be highly empathetic, as the profession demands keeping the user at the center of every decision—no matter how small. A UI/UX writer or designer must constantly step into the user’s shoes to ensure clarity, accessibility, and a seamless experience.

### **Katie Davis**

In the beginning, I was not sure what the document would look like in its final form. I thought the final document would be a full analysis of the entire Squarespace support center. Our project became a guide of UI/UX best practices. The websites were used as examples of UI/UX best practices instead of the in-depth analysis I expected. I think this final product turned out better than my original expectations.

An “Aha!” moment for me was realizing how universal UI/UX design is. We interviewed people in multiple industries and roles; they all provided us with similar answers. The data was interesting to me and confirmed the importance of UI/UX design in all forms of technical communication.

Another lesson for me was the impact of the interviews on the rest of the audience analysis. I created the user persona based on the interview results. Without the interviews, I would have had a difficult time creating that persona. I had a clear idea of what was important to my audience from the interviews. It was a good reminder to use all my tools to analyze my audience.

### **Toni Renardo**

The real world execution of this project was, for me, more challenging than I expected due to circumstances beyond the project itself or my team. The deliverable itself was as I anticipated and imagined in terms of format. I did, however, imagine something closer to a critique versus a best practices guide. I also learned a lot about our subject matter from working on this project.

The “Aha!” moments for me both came from my project teammates and my interview with a Knowledge Base Technical Writer. With my team, how beautifully empathetic and

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professional they've been while I've grappled with work, family, storms, and some personal struggles.

The communication within our group was great, and because of that, they helped me manage expectations and meet my project objectives. I feel I've had more space and support than I could ever ask for. With the Technical Writer, I learned more than I could have imagined about the limitations and workflows within content creation, knowledge base management, and working with product specialists.

### **Jess Lulka**

The real-world execution of this project was what I expected it to be – as we wanted to set out and find a way to convey what good UI/UX was, feedback on sites that are designed to help others gain information and get experience with UI/UX evaluation. I do think there was some clarification among team members trying to figure out what our expectations were and the document's final form would be, but I think it benefited from acting as a “best practices guide” instead of simply just being a design critique of knowledge bases.

There were some constraints over the course of the project, including schedule coordination, finding subject matter experts to interview, and how much we were able to do with the short turnaround times between classes.

An “Aha!” moment was reading over the input from interviews and learning just what can go into UI/UX design, and how professionals balance the different requirements that go into UI/UX creation. I also gained a lot of insight from having to create the audience analysis and figure out just who would benefit the most from this type of document.