

## Deeper Dive into Severity

Every development organization has some form of Bug severity. Typical in the industry is 4 levels of bug, but some companies go to 5 or 6. Even my old company had 4, but sometimes split out a Sev 1 – the most critical as a Sev 1 versus a Sev 1 showstopper.

What might be new for you is that for conversational design, some of these "trivial" bugs can make a much bigger impact on a user - because text and understanding of language are the primary ways we communicate. We likely are not using text as a secondary supporting characteristic of a user experience. We have to re-think what is a bug and their severity. The interface is the conversation, so we have to understand the value of misdirection, hallucinations, miscommunication, or a lack of a response.

But with this, we are only focusing on the severity of the issue, not the priority. The severity might be high but has a lower priority due to higher priority issues or the value of delivering less costly fixes.

Put a stake in the ground, and you might have some examples to extend or adjust this list. That is ok. The point is a consistent and repeatable process, where different teams and owners can agree on an approach. Your service, product, or experience is likely to have many issues across all severities. Here are some more examples to help you form your rubric.

SEVERITY 1 (UI Importance: 4 - Severe) - Complete Loss of Service - Bug capable of triggering complete system shutdown<sup>\*1</sup>

- The service does not respond at all
- The service (or any related "system") responds with any "out of order" response
- Login or Sign-in does not work
- The main skill or ChatGPT does not load or respond
- A failure (for example, a null pointer exception) on a critical subsystem
- Functionality was missing / Incorrect implementation (major deviation from requirements).
- Performance Issues (>15 seconds for a typical flow response or >30 seconds for a complex technical result)
- Accessibility requirement not met – when there is no workaround

SEVERITY 2 (UI Importance: 3 -) Critical - Severe Loss of Service - Bug capable of collapsing large parts of the system

- Misrouted interactions (especially ones that might lead to further confusion or a follow-up action that is wrong because we sent them to the wrong place). This could be an issue

when using multiple ChatGPT-specialized instances. If your prompt gets misunderstood, your customer will fail.

- Unhandled interactions which the system should clearly understand
- "Infinite Loop" or other errors, which mean the service is broken and won't respond to this prompt or a bot returning an error where results were expected.
- Egregious typos, grammar errors, or layout/organization that obscure or change the meaning of the message.
- A missing solution/detail that is a common use case (greater than 1% of interactions within the service)
- Functionality incorrectly implemented (minor deviation from Requirements) - i.e., wrong first answer for a common utterance
- Performance Issues (>5 seconds for a typical flow response or > 15 seconds for a complex query-based result)
- Missing mandatory validations for mandatory information.
- Lack or loss of conversational context during a flow - either missing the current context or maintaining a previous context when the user switches to something new
- Missing or overlapping/obscured images and text that hinder functionality
- Front End / Main Page alignment issues that hinder functionality
- Links to external functionality fail
- Browser incompatibility and Operating systems incompatibility issues (for a popular supported configuration).
- Accessibility requirement not met - work around possible
- Missing Alt text for rendered functional images
- Missed context. Causing a question to be re-asked or asked when the information was previously shared. ("Expense 13\$ for a coffee from this morning" ... When was this expense?)
- Inability to retrieve business objects via attributes other than their formal title
- Failing to respect the user's time and date display preferences (Locale, currency, date, time misunderstanding). For example, "Schedule the big conference room for 5/4 at noon". Booking the main conference room for April 5th...

SEVERITY 3 (UI Importance: 2 - Important) - Minimal Loss of Service - Results in some unexpected or undesired behavior, but not enough to disrupt system function

- Unhandled prompts can be considered secondary to the overall goal of the skill
- Nonfunctional typos (lack of a period, spelling errors, use of the wrong tense, etc...) (Note: These are historically and intentionally higher than Sev 4 because they are so simple and become obvious markers for lack of quality. For example, [Using a period instead of a colon](#). "I found 6 accounts in Dallas:").
- Answers that don't mirror the response and answer the question (it gives an indirect answer)
- Browser incompatibility and Operating systems incompatibility issues (for a secondary supported configuration).
- Screen layout issues (which do not impact functionality, and do not require rotating a mobile phone to work around).
- Keyboard shortcuts not working (outside of Accessibility requirements)
- Links to external functionality work, but lack the right URL to go exactly to the indicated location
- Expected default or previously completed values missing for a field
- The Cursor Set Focus and Tab flow on components is not in the expected order
- Missing images or text that does not hinder functionality
- A missing intent, but not yet common (less than 1% use case), or for a new or "future" feature
- Missing customer-specific synonyms cause a question to be re-asked or asked when it is already known. ("The Retina display is broken on my iPhone." ... What is broken on your iPhone?)

SEVERITY 4 (UI Importance: 1 - Minor) - Minor Error, No Loss of Service - Bug won't result in any noticeable breakdown of the system

- Long-winded answers
- Short answers, which require the user to ask for more detail
- Extra or missing space or wrapping which does not cause a change in meaning
- Minor alignment issues that can't be easily resolved
- Wrong case in strings

