A 404 page appears when someone tries to open a page that can't be found. On a phone, that can mean a dead end: the visitor may have tapped an old link, mistyped a web address or followed a search result that is out of date. A useful page explains what happened and makes it easy to carry on.

Good **mobile 404 design** is not about clever error messages or elaborate animation. It is about clear wording, usable navigation and a small number of helpful next steps. The page should also preserve trust by being honest about what the site can and cannot do.

Start with the visitor's problem

Someone on a 404 page usually wants to get somewhere else, not learn how websites work. Keep the explanation short and place it near the top of the screen. For example: "We can't find that page. The link may be out of date, or the address may have been entered incorrectly."

Avoid blaming the visitor. "You entered the wrong URL" may be inaccurate and can sound abrupt. The problem could be a broken link on the site, a moved page or an outdated search result.

Make the main next step easy to spot. Depending on the site, this could be a link to the homepage, a search box or a link to a relevant section. Use labels that explain where each link goes, rather than relying on vague wording such as "Click here". On a touchscreen, clear labels also help people understand what they are helpandadvice.co.uk tapping.

Build a simple 404 layout for small screens

A **simple 404 layout** reduces the effort needed to recover. Put the essential information first, use a readable type size and avoid making people scroll past decorative content before they find a way forward.

A practical mobile layout might contain:

- A brief heading, such as "Page not found".
- A plain-English explanation of what may have happened.
- One prominent route back, such as a homepage link.
- A search field or a short list of relevant sections.
- A way to report a broken link, if the site offers one.

Keep the page visually consistent with the rest of the site. A familiar logo, colours and navigation help visitors recognise that they are still in the right place. But don't crowd the screen with the full desktop menu, multiple promotions or unrelated recommendations. On mobile, a focused page is often easier to use.



Make touch targets comfortable to use

Links and buttons should be large enough to tap without precision. Leave space between them, particularly if several options appear close together. Don’t make an entire block look clickable unless it really is; visitors should be able to tell which parts of the page respond to a tap.

Check the page on actual mobile devices as well as in a browser’s responsive preview. Look for text that wraps awkwardly, a search field hidden behind a fixed banner, or a button placed too close to the screen edge. Test with a slower connection, too, so that essential navigation does not depend on heavy images or scripts loading first.

Use quick links that genuinely help

Quick links 404 can get people moving again, but only if they are relevant. A short set of links to popular or important sections may be useful. A long list of every category on the site can create another decision problem.

Choose links based on the site’s purpose and, where available, on evidence such as frequently visited pages or internal search data. For an online shop, useful links might lead to product categories, orders or delivery information. For an information site, they might lead to topic pages, a contact page or a site search. Don’t assume that the most commercially valuable link is the most useful one for a visitor.

Page element What it helps with Mobile check Short explanation Shows that the page is missing without blaming the visitor Keep it easy to read without zooming Homepage link Offers a clear route back to the main site Give it an obvious label and comfortable tap area Search box Lets visitors look for the page or topic they wanted Make sure it is visible and works with a mobile keyboard Quick links Points to a small number of relevant sections Avoid a crowded grid or tiny links

Protect trust with honest wording

A 404 page is part of the visitor’s experience, not a place to disguise a problem. Say plainly that the requested page is unavailable. Don’t say that content has moved unless you know where it went, and don’t send visitors to a page that is only loosely related simply to keep them on the site.

If a page has moved permanently, a redirect to its replacement may be better than showing a 404. If there is no suitable replacement, keep the 404 and offer useful alternatives. Make sure the page returns the correct 404 status rather than displaying an error message while technically reporting that everything is fine. This helps browsers and search engines understand what happened.



For sites with account, payment or personal-information features, avoid asking visitors to enter sensitive details on an error page. If they need help, link to the site's normal, secure contact route and explain what information is safe to share.

Keep information separate from advice

Some sites publish information about financial, legal or other consequential topics. A 404 page should not suggest that a visitor has received a personalised recommendation just because it links to a guide or product page. Explain where a link leads, and avoid labels such as "the right choice for you" unless the site has a proper basis for making that claim.

Where relevant, distinguish general information from advice. For example, a publisher might say that its articles are for general information and are not tailored to an individual's circumstances. That wording should reflect what the site actually does; a disclaimer cannot change the nature of a service or make an inaccurate claim acceptable.

The FCA is the UK's financial services regulator. Mentioning the FCA or linking to its material does not mean that the regulator has approved, endorsed or checked a publisher's content. Avoid wording or design that could give visitors that impression.

Use liability language carefully

Some publishers include a limitation of liability or other disclaimer on their site. Keep any such wording accurate, readable and consistent with the site's actual terms. Don't use a 404 page to make sweeping statements such as "we are not responsible for anything" or to suggest that visitors have no rights. The effect of particular wording can depend on the circumstances and applicable law.

If a disclaimer is relevant to a linked article or service, it is usually clearer to explain it there, where the visitor can understand the context. A short 404 page should prioritise finding a route forward, not hide important information in dense legal text. For questions about the legal effect of a disclaimer, a qualified professional can assess the specific wording and circumstances.

Disclose affiliate links clearly

Some websites earn commission when readers buy through certain links. If your site uses affiliate links, make the commercial relationship clear at the point where it matters. Don't place a promotional link on a 404 page in a way that could be mistaken for a recovery tool or an independent recommendation.

For example, a publisher participating in the Amazon Services LLC Associates Program may earn from qualifying purchases made through links to Amazon.com. The site should follow the programme's current disclosure requirements and make sure that any statement about commissions is clear to readers. Amazon Associates is a programme name; mentioning it does not imply that Amazon has reviewed or endorsed the publisher's page.

A brand such as Help & Advice should likewise ensure that its page labels distinguish editorial information, navigation links and any commercial links. Clear presentation helps people decide what to open without confusing a useful route back with an advertisement.

Test the page and fix the causes

A polished 404 page is helpful, but it shouldn't become a substitute for fixing broken links. Review site links, monitor common missing URLs and update links that point to pages that have moved. If visitors repeatedly land on the same 404, investigate whether a redirect or a content fix is needed.

Test the experience with a few common situations:

1. Open an address with a small typo and check that the page explains the problem clearly.
2. Follow a link to content that has been removed and confirm the alternatives are relevant.
3. Use the search field with a phone keyboard, including its submit control.
4. Navigate with a screen reader or keyboard and check that headings and links make sense in order.
5. Check that the 404 status is returned and that the page remains usable when images or scripts fail.

Use feedback and analytics as clues, not as proof of what every visitor wants. A high exit rate may suggest that people are stuck, but it can also have other explanations. Look at the missing URLs and test the page yourself before making changes.

What to do next

Start with one mobile device and review your current 404 page. Can a visitor tell what happened, find a useful next step and distinguish navigation from promotion? If not, simplify the layout, make the main links easier to tap and remove anything that distracts from recovery.

Then check the site's broken links and the most common missing addresses. Do your own research using your site data, usability testing and reliable sources before changing important content or making claims about products and services. Treat general site content as information unless it is genuinely designed and presented as advice, and make any relevant limitations or commercial relationships clear.

A 404 page cannot guarantee that every visitor will stay, but it can avoid making a frustrating moment worse. A clear explanation, a few useful routes and honest wording are a solid place to begin.