Glossary

Last Modified on 02/19/2025 3:08 pm EST

Populate a glossary with your own terms and provide contextual definitions through your knowledge base.

Overview

One of the challenges facing content creators is making sure that readers understand common terms, acronyms, and abbreviations without disrupting the flow of content. At its worst, editors are left defining a term once and linking back to that, or repeatedly manually adding definitions into the body of their articles by copying and pasting or retyping, which is either redundant work or potentially inconsistent work.

That's why KnowledgeOwl has a built-in Glossary (**Knowledge Base > Glossary**).

Sample glossary

Here, you can define the terms, acronyms, and abbreviations used in your documentation. They're sorted and displayed alphabetically automatically. If you have terms beginning with numbers, these will be sorted and displayed first. Readers can view your full glossary and you can add a link to it to your table of contents. You can opt to automatically highlight glossary terms a set number of times in articles, or to manually insert definitions as you create content.

Highlighted glossary terms get a double underline in articles and the definition will appear in a pop-up when

readers hover over that term:

Sample glossary term underlining and on-hover definition

The glossary highlighting feature is a great way to improve consistency in your documentation while minimizing redundant work and keeping your docs looking clean.

Glossary formatting

To use the glossary, you'll need to create glossary terms and give each term a definition. You can also include an optional display title.

The term is the word that you expect someone to see in your documentation; the definition is the definition you'd like displayed for that term. If you're using the built-in glossary page or are showing glossary terms in search results, the display title is used in those places instead of the term, which allows you to include an acronym alongside the term, etc.

	Glossary Term	Display Title	Definition
☐	IdP	Identity Provider (IdP)	Identity Provider (IdP), sometimes called an Identity Service Provider or Identity Assertion Provider, is an online service or website that authenticates users on the Internet by means of security tokens. In this case, via SAML 2.0.

Sample glossary term + definition

Terms

Glossary terms may contain:
- **Alpha-numeric characters**
- **Spaces ( )**
- **Dashes (- and --)**
- **Underscores (_)**
- **Apostrophes (')**

Other characters (like parentheses and quotation marks) will be removed.

Display titles

Use display titles to display a different title for the term on:

- The built-in glossary page
- **Glossary term search results,** if used

These titles are automatically formatted in bold. They can include parentheses and quotation marks, which are prohibited in the terms.

When a display title is used, that title's spelling will be used for the glossary page alphabetical listing.

> **Display titles are used for the glossary page display** *only* **and have no impact on automatic highlighting.**

Definitions

You can style text in glossary definitions using HTML:
- **Bold** `<b>`
- **Italics** `<i>`
- **Underline** `<u>`
- **Hyperlinks** `<a>`
- **Superscript** `<sup>`
- **Subscript** `<sub>`
- **Paragraph breaks** `<br>`
- **Strong** `<strong>`
- **Emphasis** `<em>`

Use plain HTML format to add these.

> **If you're not familiar with HTML, you can also format the text you want in an article editor, switch to the Code View or Source, copy the HTML from there, and paste it into your glossary definition.**

You can add links to articles or other pages in glossary definitions using plain html:

```
This is the definition. For more information, see <a href="/help/amazing-article">this amazing article</a>.
```

Glossary definitions cannot contain images. They often don't format well in the pop-overs and can lead to broken HTML, so we don't allow them. We recommend inserting a link to the image in the definition, instead.
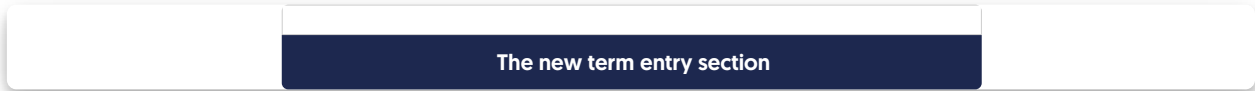
Add a new glossary term

You can add glossary terms and definitions individually or **in bulk**.

To add a single glossary term:

1. In the left navigation, go to **Glossary**. The Glossary page opens.

2. Select the **+ Add Term** button. An area expands just below the button where you can add the details for your glossary term:

	The new term entry section

3. Enter the word that you want to appear in the glossary as the **Term**. If you're using automatic highlighting, this term should be what you want the highlighting to match on.

4. Enter the **definition** you'd like displayed with that term. The definition can contain basic HTML, including hyperlinks and text formatting. Refer to Glossary formatting for more information.

5. *Optional:* If you want to display a longer or alternate version of the automatic highlighting term in your glossary, enter it as a **Display Title**. This won't impact the automatic highlighting, but does allow you to include an acronym after the without impacting highlighting. For example, if we have a term for SSO, we might set a display title of "Single Sign-On (SSO)" to explain the acronym. Refer to When should I use display titles? if you're unsure whether you need or want a display title.

6. Once you've added your term and definition, select the **Add Term** button.

7. Your term will now appear in the glossary. If you have automatic highlighting turned on, the term will also be highlighted.

Import glossary terms

If you already have a list of terms you'd like to add to your glossary, you can choose to import those terms in bulk, saving you time from having to create them each individually. To do so, you'll need the terms in a CSV file that includes columns for:

- The glossary **term**: the word or phrase you want to define
- An **alternate title** (in the interface, this is called the **display title**): If you want to display a phrase with an acronym or other prohibited punctuation, you'll need to use a display title. While you don't have to use a display title, the import won't succeed without having an alternate title column present.
- The term's **definition**

To add multiple glossary terms at once:

1. Go to **Knowledge Base > Glossary**.

2. Click the **^ Import Terms** button.

Click the Import Terms button

3. Click the **Example Glossary CSV** link in the lower left to download a sample CSV file you can use as a template.

Example Glossary CSV

4. Use the template as a model; replace the terms, display titles, and definitions there with your own. Once your CSV has all your glossary terms in it, you can repeat the steps above and click **Choose File** to add your file.

Import Glossary Terms from CSV   ✕

CSV File:

④ [Choose File] No file chosen

Import Options:

⑤ ☑ Skip the first row of the CSV

⑥ ⦿ Update existing terms with the new definitions
   ○ Skip existing terms

                                                          ⑦
⬇ Example Glossary CSV   Cancel   [Import Terms]

---

5. If your CSV contains a header row, like our sample CSV file, check the box next to **Skip the first row of the CSV**. If your CSV file has no header row, leave this box unchecked.

> ⚠️🦉 **Be sure that the first two rows of your CSV are not empty. (If they are, the importer won't "see" any data and won't import anything!)**

6. If this is your first time adding terms, you can choose either the Update or Skip option. If you already have glossary terms, you'll need to tell the importer what you want it to do if your CSV contains terms that match terms you already have:

   a. **Update existing terms with the new definitions** will overwrite the existing definition with the term's definition in your CSV file

   b. **Skip existing terms** will keep the existing definition you have for the term

   c. Here's a sample upload with my file added, skipping the first row and updating existing terms:

   Import Glossary Terms from CSV   ✕

   CSV File:

   [Choose File] glossary_ex…30_2020.csv

   Import Options:

   ☑ Skip the first row of the CSV

   ⦿ Update existing terms with the new definitions

   ○ Skip existing terms

   ⬇ Example Glossary CSV   Cancel   [Import Terms]

   Sample upload

7. Once you've made your selections, click the **Import Terms** button.

8. If for some reason we are unable to import your glossary terms due to an invalid character, a message will be displayed with the rows that threw the error. See Troubleshooting glossary term imports if you run into this issue.

9. If we're able to import the CSV file, you'll see a progress bar while the import processes. Depending on the size of your glossary, this may appear for a split second or up to a minute.

10. Once the progress bar disappears and redirects you back to the Glossary page, your terms have been imported.

Glossary terms will automatically be displayed in alphabetical order, with terms beginning with numbers appearing first. When your glossary gets larger, you can use the search feature to quickly find a term.

Add glossary terms to your search results

You can display glossary terms and their definitions at the top of relevant search results.

Add the glossary page to your search results

By default, your glossary page doesn't show up in search results. This means that if a reader enters "glossary" in search, the Glossary page won't be in their list of search results automatically. But don't worry--KnowledgeOwl has a setting for this so a link to the Glossary page displays in a box above all other search results:

Sample glossary page callout

Not for use in the Contextual Help Widget
Unlike the Glossary term callouts functionality, this result will NOT display in Contextual Help Widget search results.

To turn on this setting:

1. Go to **KB settings > Search and synonyms.** (Or, from the **Glossary** page, select **Edit in settings** next to "Definitions at the top of the search results.")

2. In the **Search page display** section, under **Glossary callouts,** check the box to **Display a link to the full glossary page when a reader searches for the word "glossary".**
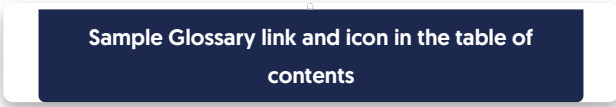
3. Be sure to **Save** your settings.

> **Make it your own**
>
> Want to change the look and feel of that callout box? Follow the steps in **Style the glossary snippet search results** to get what you want. Don't like the word "Glossary" or want to add more explanation to the box? Use the **Search section** of the **Customize Default text** to change the text that appears there!

Add glossary link to table of contents

If you're using the **Glossary,** you can add a link to the glossary to your table of contents. The link displays with a small book icon:

Sample Glossary link and icon in the table of contents

To add a glossary link to the top of your table of contents:

1. Go to **Customize > Website. (**Or, from the **Glossary** page, select **Edit in settings** next to **Link in the table of contents.)**

2. In the **Links and behavior** section, under **Table of contents elements,** check the box to **Add a glossary link to the top of the table of contents.**

3. **Save**. You should now see the glossary at the top of your TOC.

Refer to **Website settings** for more information on other settings available in **Customize > Website**.

When should I use display titles?

All glossary term highlighting is driven by the glossary term itself. This term cannot contain parentheses, quotation marks, and other special characters.

This works well for highlighting, but it's not uncommon to want to display a more complete version of the term in the Glossary page itself or in the glossary term **search results.**

For example: in our **glossary,** we have a glossary term for IdP. This is the term that we use everywhere in our documentation, so we keep that as the term itself so our highlighting works properly.

But for our glossary page itself, we like to display the full title alongside the acronym. This is what the display title is for: it's basically the version of the term you'd like to appear on the glossary page.

If no display title is specified, then the term itself is used. If a display title is present, that's what's used.

So here's what the term's setup looks like in **Knowledge Base > Glossary**:

	Glossary Term	Display Title	Definition
☐	IdP	Identity Provider (IdP)	Identity Provider (IdP), sometimes called an Identity Service Provider or Identity Assertion Provider, is an online service or website that authenticates users on the Internet by means of security tokens. In this case, via SAML 2.0.

And here's how it displays in our glossary:

I

Identity Provider (IdP)

Identity Provider (IdP), sometimes called an Identity Service Provider or Identity Assertion Provider, is an online service or website that authenticates users on the Internet by means of security tokens. In this case, via SAML 2.0.

Note that the display title is what's used on the glossary page, but IdP is still used in the autohighlighting of glossary terms.

Display titles can be great for:
- **Displaying the full term with an acronym in parentheses (e.g. term = We Love Owls and display title = We Love Owls (WLO))**
- **Displaying a term with a list of additional terms (e.g. term = Identity Provider and display title = Identity Provider (a.k.a. Identity Service Provider; Identity Assertion Provider))**
- **If you use the glossary to provide contact details on departments or individuals, this could be the full department name or the person's name + title (e.g. term = HR Dept and display title = Human Resources Department)**

View the glossary

The glossary is a default page in every knowledge base. Its permalink is always "glossary", so you can get to the glossary by going to "/help/glossary" in your knowledge base (or "/home/glossary" or "/docs/glossary" if you are using a different root path).

For example, here is the glossary page for our help and documentation (we haven't set ours up yet so you'll only see some test terms): https://support.knowledgeowl.com/help/glossary

The Glossary page displays all alphabet letters at the top. When that letter has one or more glossary terms available, the letter is hyperlinked, and clicking on it will direct you to that letter's section in the Glossary.

If you are ready to share your glossary with your readers, you can add it to the table of contents:

1. **Go to Settings > Basic.**

2. **Look for the Website Settings.**

3. **In the Table of contents section, check the box next to "Add a glossary link to the top of the table of contents".**

Website Settings

Navigation	☑ Enable breadcrumbs
Top navigation	☐ Add a reader login / logout link
Related Articles	☑ Automatically suggest related articles based off of the article titles
	☐ Backward suggest articles which list the current article as related
	If both of these options are enabled, the reverse related articles will be ranked higher.
Glossary Terms	☑ For each glossary term that appears in an article, automatically highlight the term [1 ▾] time(s)
Table of contents	● All categories closed by default
	○ All categories open by default
	Sub-categories are not affected by this setting. Can be overridden on a per category basis.
	☐ Add a search bar to the top of the table of contents
	☑ Add a homepage link to the top of the table of contents
	☑ Add a glossary link to the top of the table of contents
	☐ Add a full PDF download link to the knowledge base table of contents — manage PDF
Content	☐ Disable conditional content in articles
	☐ Disable the default code syntax highlighter

Settings > Basic > Website Settings

4. **Save.**

You can also manually link to it from your top navigation, homepage, or articles using the link "/help/glossary".

Rename the glossary

If you'd like to rename the Glossary to something else (like Dictionary), update these settings in **Customize > Default text**:

- **Miscellaneous**: Update the **Glossary page title** text string. Refer to Section breakdown: Miscellaneous for more information.
  - If your search has the box to **Add the glossary page to your search results** checked, the custom text string you enter here will also return the glossary page when it's searched for. For example, if we use "Dictionary", someone will be able to search for "dictionary" and the glossary page will return in search results. Refer to the Search settings below on how to update the text there!
- **Table of Contents**: If **Customize > Website** has the box to **Add a glossary link to the top of the table of contents** checked, update the **Table of contents glossary link** text string. Refer to Section breakdown: Table of Contents for more information.
- **Search:**
  - If **KB settings > Search and synonyms > General settings** has the box to **Add the glossary page to your search results** checked, update the **Glossary snippet link to Glossary** text string.
  - If **KB settings > Search and synonyms > General settings** has the box to **Display glossary definition for matching term** checked, update the **Glossary snippet search result link to Glossary** text string.
  - Refer to Section breakdown: Search for more information

Automatically highlight definitions in articles

Once you've set up glossary terms, you can automatically provide hover-over definitions for these terms in your articles. This helps ensure terms are consistently highlighted without any extra work for your authors or anyone having to remember to insert them.

To turn on this option:

1. Go to **Customize > Website**. (Or, on the Glossary page, select **Edit in settings** next to **Automatic article highlighting** to jump there!)

2. In the **Links and behavior** section, under **Glossary terms**, check the box to **For each glossary term that appears in an article, automatically highlight the term xx time(s)**.

3. Use the numeric dropdown to set the number of times you want each term to be automatically highlighted in each article. We'll highlight terms starting from the top of the article.

4. **Save** your changes.

For automatic highlighting to work, the terms in the articles must exactly match the terms in the glossary. If your article contains variations of a term (such as abbreviations, plurals, etc.), you can manually create a link to the glossary definition.

Limitations
Auto-highlighting will not work on glossary terms within tables, divs (including the Well, Alert Danger, Alert Info, Alert Success, and Alert Warning divs), and embedded topic articles. To highlight terms within tables, divs, or topic articles, Add glossary definitions in articles manually.

Refer to Website settings for more information on other settings available in **Customize > Website**.

Add glossary definitions in articles manually

In addition to automatically highlighting up to 10 glossary terms per article, you can also manually insert glossary definitions. Manually inserting definitions has several advantages:

- Since you are specifying when and where you want to define terms, it gives you the most control.
- Automatic highlighting requires an exact match; manually inserting definitions allows you to include definitions for variations of words, acronyms, and so on.
- It can help guarantee that a multi-word term is properly highlighted even when it includes another glossary term.

- You can see in the article editor which definition terms will be highlighted (with automatic highlighting, you have to preview or view the published article).
- Manually inserting definitions is the only way to highlight glossary terms within tables, embedded topic articles, and divs, including the Well, Alert Danger, Alert Info, Alert Success, and Alert Warning divs.

To manually insert a definition for a term in an article:

1. Make sure the glossary term and definition exist in the glossary.

2. In the article editor, highlight the word or phrase you want to provide a definition for.

3. Click on the Add Glossary Term icon in the editor.

Add Glossary Term icon
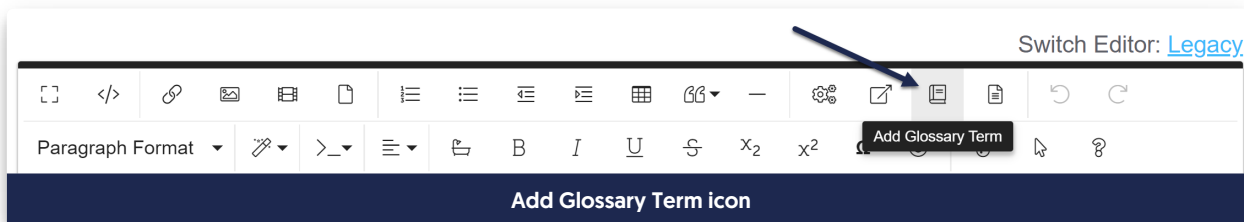
4. This will open a pop-up where you can search for and select the glossary term.

5. **Text to Display** will display the text you had highlighted to begin this process. You can edit it here if you'd like to change it.

6. Once you've selected the term you want, click the **Insert Glossary Term** button to finish inserting the definition into your article.
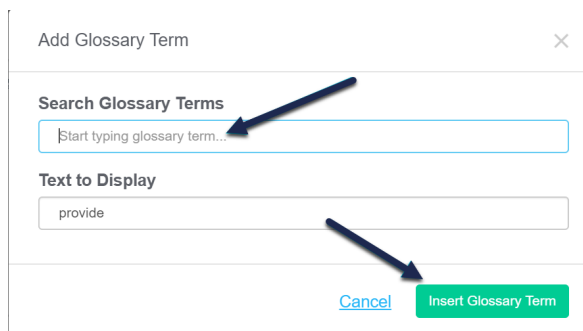
7. Be sure to **save** your article with these changes.

Once you insert the glossary term, you will see a double underline in the editor. The hover-over definitions can be viewed in preview or using the article live.

When one glossary term contains another glossary term

Sometimes, you might have a glossary term that is contained in a longer glossary term. For example, I might have glossary terms defined for **check** and **price check**.

If you use these terms in the same article, the automatic highlighting won't always behave consistently. In some

cases, it will highlight the <u>shorter</u> term (check) and won't highlight the <u>longer</u> term (price check). In other cases, it will highlight the longer term (price check) and won't highlight the shorter term (check). It depends a bit on the order the terms appear in, how you've configured your automatic highlighting (how many times it will autohighlight the same term), punctuation, and other formatting.

If you run into this situation, we recommend manually adding the glossary terms using the steps in **Add glossary definitions in articles manually**.

For example, <u>nocturnal owl</u> is a glossary term. So is "nocturnal". If you hover over the definition earlier in this sentence, you'll see only the definition for nocturnal is showing--not for the full multi-word term.

But I can force this to show the correct definition if I manually insert the <u>nocturnal owl</u> term and definition to ensure it highlights properly (which I've done in this sentence). I can also manually insert the <u>nocturnal</u> definition to ensure it shows properly.

This manual highlighting of multi-word glossary terms should only be necessary when you have other glossary terms that contain a portion of that term, or when you want to include highlighting for a term that doesn't match exactly, such as <u>nocturnal owls</u>.

Change the style of glossary terms, the glossary page, or glossary search results

See **Glossary look and feel** for a more detailed look at all the ways you can change the style of glossary terms, the glossary page itself, or glossary search results!

Troubleshooting glossary term imports

Sometimes, your CSV file might contain characters that our Glossary doesn't support. If this happens, after you click the button to import terms, you'll see an error message displayed near the top of the page, noting that we were unable to import the glossary terms due to non UTF-8 characters in the spreadsheet. We'll provide a list of the rows from the CSV that contained these characters.

Here's what the error message looks like:

Glossary

ⓘ Adding glossary terms is a great way to get new users quickly up to speed with your terminology. Add terms and definitions below to easily provide them hover-over definitions in article content.

Glossary terms may only contain alpha-numeric characters, spaces, dashes, underscores, and apostrophes. Other characters will be automatically removed.

⚠ We were unable to import the glossary terms due to non UTF-8 characters in the spreadsheet. Please check the file and replace any non standard characters.

Rows with bad characters: 2, 3, 5, 9

Sample error message for failed glossary term import

Resolving this message can get a little tricky. If you open the CSV in Excel or another spreadsheet program, they will often hide or display nothing for non UTF-8 characters.

So here's what we recommend for trying to resolve your errors:

1. Find wherever you have the CSV File stored on your computer.

2. Right-click and select **Open With**.

3. Choose a text editor, such as Notepad, Notepad++, Visual Studio Code, or any other basic text editor you have installed on your computer to open the CSV.

4. Find the rows in the CSV that correspond to the rows in the warning message displayed in KnowledgeOwl.

5. Text editors generally either display the characters outright OR they'll display an icon when they're unable to display a character (such as �). Look for an icon like that, an unusual character, or any kind of weird code/characters.

6. Once you find what you think is the offending character(s), delete them from the CSV in the text editor.

7. Once you've edited all of the rows that threw errors, **Save** your CSV file.

8. You can now try re-importing this same CSV file. Hopefully those changes did the trick!

If you're continuing to get glossary import errors and you can't figure out why, please contact us and include a copy of the CSV file. Our support owls should be able to help get things sorted out.

Glossary FAQs

Do glossary terms show up in search?

They can, yes! The Glossary snippets option to "Display glossary definition for matching term" in **Settings > Search** will display a glossary term that exactly matches the search phrase. See Glossary snippets for more details.

Does the Glossary page show up in search?

Not by default, but you can set it so that searching the word "glossary" will direct readers to your glossary. See Add the glossary page to your search results for more details.

Can you add synonyms for glossary terms?

You can add synonyms as part of a definition or add synonyms as separate terms with text like "See xyz". We recommend defining the most commonly used term and listing synonyms in the definition. You can always manually provide definitions for the synonyms in articles using the Add Glossary Term option.

Example:

This is a definition. Synonyms: this, that, the other thing

We do have a feature request to add a synonyms feature. Contact us if you are interested in this feature and we can add you to the list!

Can you link from one glossary term to another?

Not currently. You can alternatively use text like "See also: this, that, this other thing" or link to an article. **Contact us** if you are interested in this feature and we can add you to the list!

Can you have more than one glossary?

No. Each knowledge base has a single glossary that is used for the glossary page as well as for automatic highlighting. If you have a need for multiple glossaries, you might consider having separate knowledge bases for the content that requires different glossaries.

Can you share a glossary between multiple knowledge bases?

We don't currently have a way to share a single glossary across multiple knowledge base. However, you can create a glossary in one, export the terms, and import them into other kb. You will need to manage the glossary for each knowledge base independently.

Can you insert the full definition into an article as plain text rather than a popover?

Not currently but we do have a feature request to create a merge code or snippet for glossary terms. **Contact us** if you are interested in this feature and we can add you to the list!

Can you prevent a term from being highlighted in a particular article?

If you want to prevent a glossary term from appearing highlighted in a particular place, go to the Code View and put a span tag around part of the word. For example, if you have a glossary term for an acronym like ARE but you want to prevent highlighting on something like: "These are the instructions":

```
These a<span>re</span> the instructions
```

This will prevent the glossary term highlighting.