Yes, in most cases a useful 404 page should include a clear route to your homepage and a short list of relevant popular posts. A 404 page appears when someone tries to open a page that cannot be found. That might happen because a link is broken, a page has moved or the visitor has mistyped a web address.

The page should explain what has happened in plain English and help the visitor choose what to do next. A homepage link gives them a familiar starting point; carefully chosen popular posts can help them find something relevant without having to search from scratch. The aim is to guide people, not to overwhelm them with links or make them feel that the missing page is their fault.

If your website covers subjects such as money, health or consumer rights, your 404 page also needs to fit the standards you use elsewhere. Avoid wording that suggests your content is personalised advice, and make sure any commercial or affiliate relationship is disclosed where required. A helpful error page can support trust, but it does not replace clear disclosures or careful content elsewhere on your site.

Why put homepage and popular-post links on a 404 page?

A bare error message tells visitors that something has gone wrong but gives them no way forward. A well-designed 404 page answers two basic questions: “What happened?” and “Where can I go now?” That small amount of guidance can make the difference between a visitor continuing to browse and leaving immediately.

A 404 homepage link is useful because the homepage is usually the most recognisable destination on a site. It is a sensible fallback when the visitor does not know what they were trying to find, or when the missing page is no longer available. Use an obvious label such as “Go to the homepage” rather than hiding the link in a block of text.





Popular posts on 404 pages can also help, but only when they are selected with care. A list of genuinely useful articles gives visitors a few relevant alternatives. A long, generic list can feel more like a promotion than assistance, especially if it is crowded with affiliate links or unrelated topics.

Think of the 404 page as a small navigation page, not a sales page. It should help a visitor recover from a dead end while keeping the site's tone and standards consistent.

What should a useful 404 page include?

Keep the page easy to scan. Most visitors will want to act quickly, so put the explanation and the main navigation options near the top. A practical 404 page can include:

- **A plain explanation:** Say that the page could not be found. Avoid technical language unless your audience expects it.
- **A homepage link:** Make it prominent and easy to recognise.
- **A search option:** Offer a site search if it works well and can find relevant content.
- **A small set of alternatives:** Link to useful popular posts or main sections of the site.
- **A way to report a problem:** A contact link can help readers flag broken links.

You do not need every feature on every site. A small publication may only need a short explanation, a homepage link and a handful of article suggestions. A large site with many sections may benefit more from a search box and category links 404 visitors can use to browse by topic.

How to choose popular posts and category links

Do not select articles only because they attract the most clicks. Consider whether they are current, relevant and likely to help someone who has just reached a missing page. If you run a consumer-help site, for example, it may make sense to highlight explainers, practical checklists or pages that introduce a subject. Keep time-sensitive content under review so that a once-popular article does not remain prominent after it has become outdated.

Category links 404 visitors to broad areas of your site can be more useful than a list of individual articles when the visitor's original destination is unclear. Choose a small number of recognisable categories, using labels that match your navigation. Avoid creating a large directory that makes the 404 page harder to use than the rest of the site.

Link type Useful when Watch out for Homepage The visitor needs a clear, general starting point. Do not make it the only route if your site has useful topic pages or search. Popular posts You can recommend a few relevant, maintained articles. Popularity alone does not guarantee that a page is current or suitable. Category links Visitors may want to browse by subject. Too many categories can clutter the page or repeat the main menu. Search Your search returns useful results and is easy to operate. A poor search experience can send visitors into another dead end.

Use descriptive link text. "Read our guide to comparing mobile contracts" tells visitors more than "click here". Make sure each link works, opens the intended page and does not lead to another missing page.

404 page trust: be clear, calm and consistent

A 404 page can affect how trustworthy your site feels. A blunt message such as "Error 404" may be accurate, but it does little to reassure someone who is unsure whether they have reached the right website. A brief, calm explanation is usually better: "We couldn't find that page. It may have moved or the address may be incorrect."

Do not blame the visitor or pretend that the page is available when it is not. If you know a page has moved, link to the replacement. If you do not know what the visitor was looking for, offer a few sensible routes rather than guessing. A helpful site should be honest about what it can and cannot locate.

Keep the 404 page visually consistent with the rest of the website. Familiar branding and navigation can reassure visitors that they are still on the right site. At the same time, avoid turning the page into an advertisement. If you use commercial links, make the relationship clear and do not let them obscure the main routes back to useful content.

Keep information separate from advice

Some websites publish general information about financial products, legal processes or other important decisions. A 404 page may link to those articles, but the error page itself should not imply that the site has assessed a visitor's circumstances or is telling them what to do personally.

Use neutral descriptions such as "Read our information about budgeting" or "Browse our guide to understanding insurance terms". Avoid claims such as "Get the right answer for you" unless the service genuinely provides an appropriately designed, personalised service and its wording has been reviewed for that purpose.

For financial content, be especially careful not to suggest that an article is a recommendation or a substitute for regulated advice. The FCA is the UK financial services regulator. Naming the FCA on a page does not mean the FCA has approved, checked or endorsed your website. Do not imply any such approval unless you have a sound basis to make that statement.

For example, a 404 page on a site called Help & Advice might offer links to general explainers and clearly describe them as information. The site name alone does not determine whether content amounts to advice. The wording, context and service offered all matter, so review the whole page and the articles it links to rather than relying on a short disclaimer to do all the work.

Affiliate links and commercial disclosures

If your site earns commission from links, the 404 page is not a reason to hide that relationship. You might choose not to include affiliate links there at all. If you do include them, make sure the commercial nature of the links is clear and that your approach follows the rules and platform terms that apply to your site.

For example, publishers in the Amazon Associates programme may earn from qualifying purchases. The Amazon Services LLC Associates Program requires participating publishers to use its specified Associate disclosure. Check the current programme terms and use the required wording in the appropriate places on your site. A short label beside a link may also help visitors understand why it is there.

Amazon Associates is a programme, not a guarantee that a recommendation is suitable for every reader. A link to Amazon.com should not be presented as independent or personalised advice if it is an affiliate link. Keep any product content accurate, explain relevant limitations and do not suggest that a commission-based recommendation is automatically the best choice.

Liability limitation language: useful, but not a cure-all

Some publishers use a short notice to explain that their content is general information and not tailored advice. This can help set expectations, particularly when a 404 page links to finance, legal or other specialist content. Keep the wording readable and avoid making sweeping promises about what the site is or is not responsible for.

For instance, a notice might say: “Our articles provide general information and are not a substitute for advice based on your individual circumstances. Check information with an appropriate professional where needed.” Adapt any wording to the service you actually provide, and have it reviewed if the subject matter or business model warrants it.

A disclaimer should not be treated as a way to remove every possible responsibility or override legal rights. Whether a limitation is effective can depend on the wording, the facts and the law that applies. Avoid absolute statements such as “we are never liable for any loss” unless they have been properly assessed for your circumstances. A short notice on a 404 page is not a substitute for sound content, transparent disclosures or suitable legal review.

Encourage readers to do their own research

When you direct visitors to an article from a 404 page, give them room to make their own informed decisions. This is particularly important when content discusses products, providers or financial choices. Do not present a short list of popular posts as a complete comparison or imply that it covers every available option.

Where relevant, encourage readers to check current details directly with the provider, compare alternatives and consider their own needs. If a decision is significant or complex, they may want to seek suitably qualified help. Keep this language proportionate: “Do your own research” should support useful information, not excuse inaccurate or incomplete content.

How to test and maintain your 404 page

A 404 page is only useful if it works. Test it on desktop and mobile, check keyboard navigation and make sure the page remains readable with assistive technology. Review the links periodically, especially if your site

changes its categories or removes popular articles.

1. **Open a deliberately broken URL** on your site and confirm that the correct 404 page appears.
2. **Test every link and search function** to make sure visitors are not sent to another error.
3. **Check the page on different screen sizes** so the main route back is easy to find.
4. **Review suggested posts** for relevance, accuracy and freshness.
5. **Check disclosures and wording** if the page includes affiliate links or links to sensitive topics.
6. **Use analytics carefully** to identify common broken URLs and fix the source where possible.

If the same old URL keeps generating 404 visits, consider whether it should redirect to a genuinely relevant replacement page. Do not redirect every missing URL to the homepage: a visitor who expected a specific article may find that confusing, and the destination may not meet their needs. Where there is no suitable replacement, a clear 404 page is often the more honest option.

What to do next

Review your current 404 page and ask whether a first-time visitor can understand what happened and find a useful next step. Add a prominent 404 homepage link, then decide whether a short list of maintained popular posts, category links 404 visitors can browse, or a working search function would be more helpful for your audience.

Check that your links are relevant, accessible and up to date. If your site publishes sensitive or commercial content, review whether its wording clearly distinguishes general information from personalised advice, and whether any affiliate relationship is disclosed. Treat liability language as an explanation of scope, not a guarantee of legal protection. If you are unsure about the effect of a disclaimer or a regulated-content claim, seek appropriate professional review.

A good 404 page does not need helpandadvice.co.uk to be elaborate. It needs to be honest about the missing page, make navigation easy and give visitors a few worthwhile options without overstating what your site can do.