KNOWLEDGE BASE ARTICLE

Searching the Knowledge Base and Paged Loading in Questions and Answers



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Table of contents

Overview 4

The search box 4

Paged loading 5

How search, categories and paging interact 6

Large lists 6

Terms 8

Overview

A knowledge base is only as good as the speed at which people find the right entry. Questions and Answers offers two mechanisms for that: a **search box** that queries the whole **list** on the server, and **paged loading** that keeps a page with hundreds of questions fast. This article describes both for editors and administrators - what exactly is searched, how the pages are fetched, how the two interact with categories and sorting, and what to consider when the list grows. The settings are in the **Behavior** and **Appearance** groups of the property pane; the steps are in KB10218. How to Add and Configure the Questions and Answers Web Part.

The search box

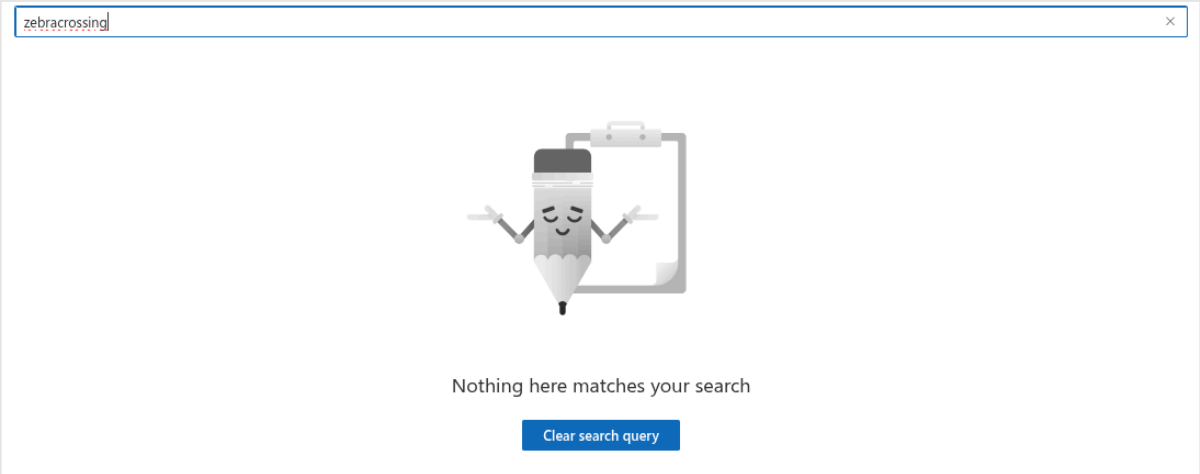
The search box is shown when **Enable search box** is on in the **Behavior** group (it is on by default). A reader types a term and presses **Enter**; the **web part** sends a query to the **SharePoint** list and shows the matching **published** questions.

Aspect	Behaviour
Columns searched	**Question** (the title), **Answer** and **Contact** (the name of the contact person)
Match	*Contains* - the term may appear anywhere in the text; the search is not case-sensitive
Scope	The whole list, not only the questions already loaded on the page
Several words	The words are searched as one phrase, in the order typed
Special characters and languages	Quotes, ampersands, angle brackets and non-Latin scripts are handled correctly; the term is escaped before it is sent
Unpublished questions	Never returned, even to editors
Result limit	Up to 5,000 matching questions in one response

The query is run by SharePoint on the server (a **CAML** `Contains` condition on the three columns), so it does not depend on the SharePoint **search index**: a question

published a minute ago is found immediately, and the list being excluded from search crawling (which is the case for lists created by the web part) does not matter.

While the query runs, the web part shows *Searching …*. When nothing matches, it shows *Nothing here matches your search* with a **Clear search query** action that restores the full list; the ✖ in the search box does the same.



The empty search result

What the search does **not** cover: attachments and their content, comments, the detail link and the video address, and the category name. A reader looking for a category uses the category tabs instead.

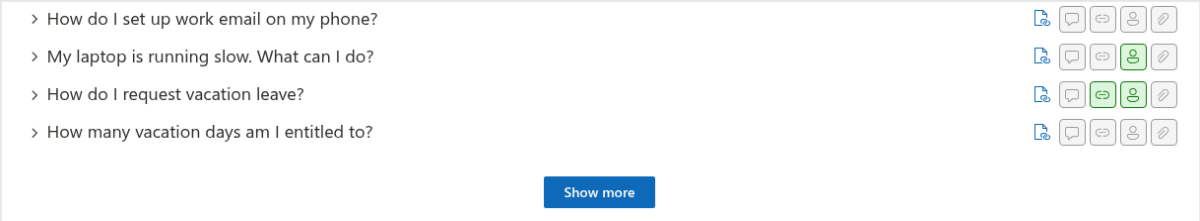
Tip

Because the **Answer** text is searched, a short answer that repeats the key terms of the question - and the words people actually use for the topic - is found more often than a terse one. Add synonyms to the answer where it reads naturally ("holiday, vacation, annual leave").

Paged loading

Page Size in the **Appearance** group controls how many questions are loaded at a time: **All**, **10**, **20**, **50** or **100**. New web parts start with 20; web parts configured before the option existed keep *All*.

With a page size set, the web part loads the first portion in the configured sort order and shows a **Show more** button under the list as long as more questions exist. Each click loads the next portion and appends it; the button disappears after the last one. While a portion is loading, a spinner replaces the button.



The Show more button

Three properties of the paging are worth knowing:

- **Sorting uses both server and client code.** Normal list pages request the selected sort column and direction from SharePoint. Loaded items are also sorted locally. Equal sort values have no explicit secondary key; do not rely on a guaranteed order for ties or concurrent list changes. Search queries have no server OrderBy and are sorted locally after retrieval.
- **A deep link loads its question.** When a page is opened with `?questionId=N` and the question is not in the first portion, the web part fetches that single question and shows it highlighted, together with the first portion. This separate fetch occurs only when the first response indicates that more pages exist.

With **All**, the web part requests the whole list in one query, with a ceiling of 5,000 questions.

How search, categories and paging interact

- **Search ignores paging.** A search queries the whole list and shows all matches (up to 5,000) in one portion; **Show more** is hidden while a search is active. Clearing the search returns to the paged list.
- **Category tabs reflect the loaded questions.** A category appears only once at least one of its questions has loaded. Choose All or a larger page size if showing more categories initially matters; no sorting option guarantees a representative mix of categories on the first page.
- **Grouping applies within the loaded portion.** With **Group By** → **Category**, the loaded questions are grouped under headers; the next portion is merged into the same groups.
- **Search results respect the category tab.** When a category is selected and a search is run, the matching questions of that category are shown; if the selected category has no match, the filter falls back to **All**. Grouping is temporarily disabled while a nonblank search is active. Search uses literal Contains conditions, not fuzzy or semantic matching; it does not search category names.

Large lists

SharePoint Online's list view threshold affects whether a query can execute; the web part's 5,000-row response limit is a separate limit. Every question query filters on Published and may sort on the selected column.

- Paging reduces the number of rows returned at once, but does not guarantee that SharePoint can execute a query below its threshold.
- Review suitable indexes and the actual filters and sorting with your SharePoint administrator. The web part does not create indexes automatically; adding them does not guarantee that every search will work. In particular, the Answer multi-line text field cannot be indexed for this Contains search.
- All and search use a single nonpaged query capped at 5,000 rows. Split large knowledge bases by department or topic when necessary, and test paging and search with representative data.

Choose a page size based on the size of your content and test initial loading, subsequent pages, filtering and searching. Loading time depends on the content, network and SharePoint response.

Terms

CAML
Collaborative Application Markup Language (CAML) is a case-sensitive, XML-based language used in SharePoint to define data definition objects such as lists, document libraries, views, content types, fields, and data rendering elements. For example, CAML can be used to build a query that filters and retrieves data from lists or libraries.

List
A list is a storage unit in SharePoint. A list can contain columns of different types, content types, and views. A document library is a special type of list and therefore inherits the functionality of a list.

Search Index
The search index is the store of content and metadata that the crawler has processed and that search queries run against. Only properties that are mapped to managed properties are included in the index.

SharePoint
SharePoint is a web-based collaboration platform that provides content management, document management, workflow applications, search, and other tools that empower employees and teams to work together. SharePoint is also a secure place to store, organize, and access shared information.

SharePoint Online
The cloud version of SharePoint, a web-based collaboration platform within Microsoft 365 that provides an extensive range of capabilities to store, share, and manage the digital information, content, and knowledge of an organization.

Web Part
A web part is a primary building block of functionality or content placed on a SharePoint page. Some web parts support customization, such as configuring the web part or changing its appearance.