From Search Bars to Chatbots

Decoding User Expectations for AI Chat

Presented by:
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DrupalCon
Chicago 2026

Hi, We're Sandstorm®

DrupalCon Chicago 2026

We design and build accessible digital experiences for organizations that are trying to make the world a little better.

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DrupalCon
Chicago 2026
23-26 March

What We Studied and How

We Wanted to Understand...

1. Where people actually go when they need help
2. What makes them trust an answer
3. Where they expect AI to appear
4. What makes AI feel useful vs. annoying

Methodology

We ran **moderated usability tests** where participants:

- Completed **real tasks**
- Talked through their **thinking out loud**
- Used **real websites** and AI tools
- Then reflected on their experience in a **short survey**

Study Sample: 9 Participants

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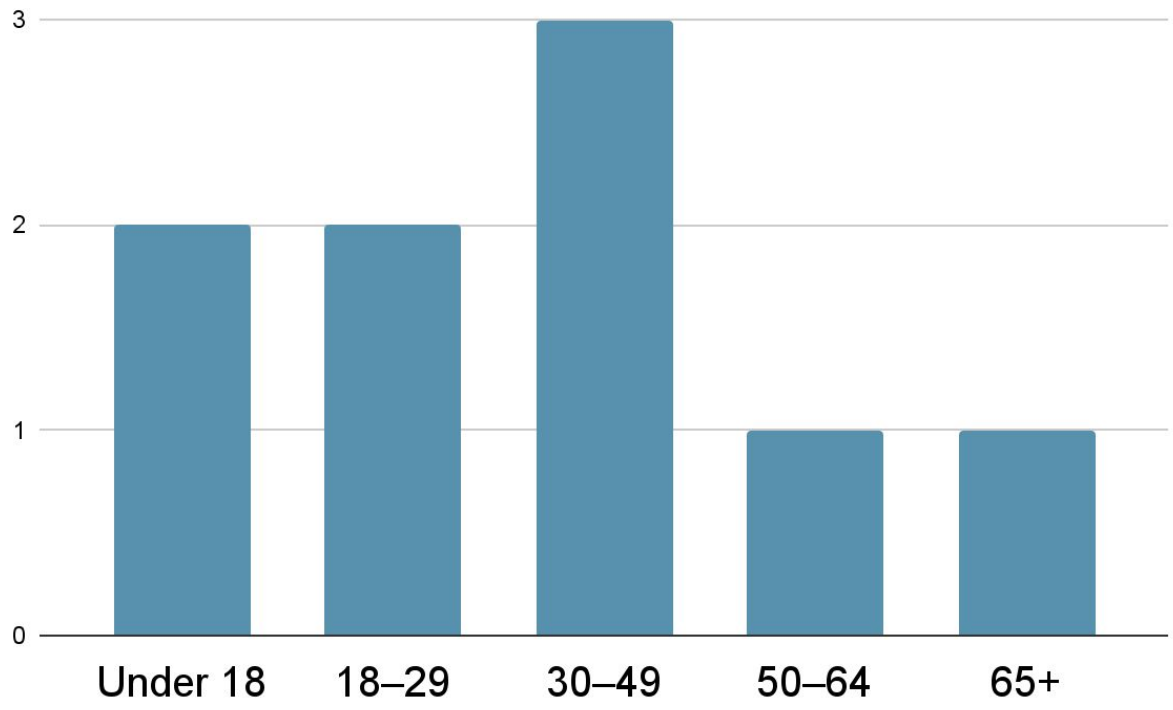
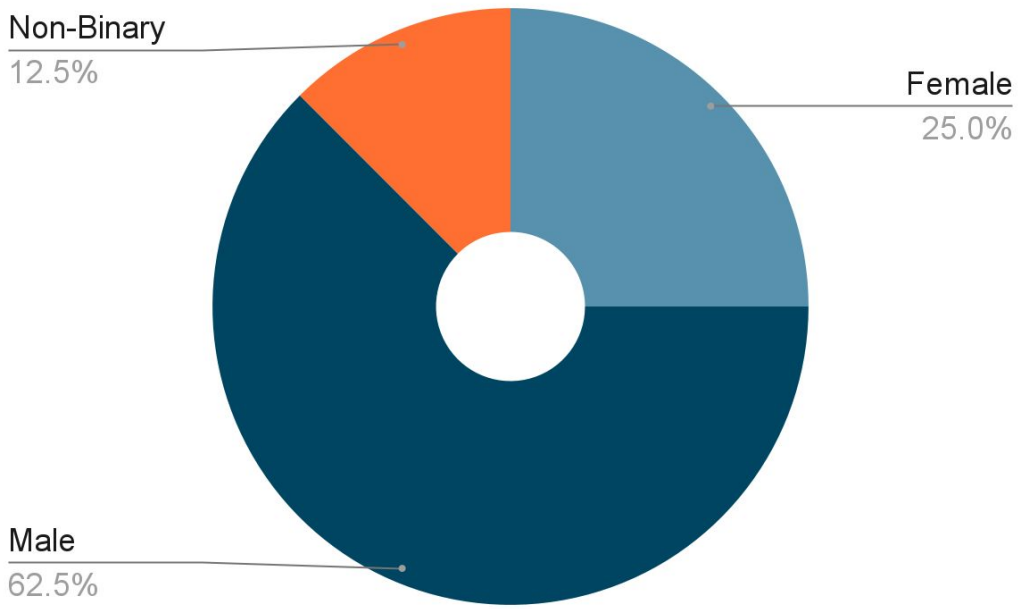




Experiences We Tested

- Search (with AI elements)
- Generative AI
- Transactional
- Hybrid (AI with human escalation)
- Domain Specific

Search (with AI elements)

Google

Type 2 diabetes symptoms and treatment

AI Mode | All | Images | Short videos | Videos | Forums | Shopping | More | Tools

AI Overview

Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body resists insulin, causing high blood sugar. Key symptoms include **increased thirst, frequent urination, extreme fatigue, blurred vision, and slow-healing wounds**. Treatment focuses on lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, weight loss), blood sugar monitoring, and medications such as metformin or insulin to manage blood glucose. Cleveland Clinic +2

Common Symptoms

Symptoms often develop slowly and can be hard to spot. Centers for Disease Control and Preventi...

- **Increased Thirst and Urination:** High sugar levels pull fluid from tissues.

Show more

Understanding Type 2 Diabetes | ADA

This information does not constitute medical advice or diagnosis. Type 2 diabetes occurs...

Diabetes.org

Type 2 Diabetes | Johns Hopkins Medicine

Being more active. Get at least 150 minutes a week of exercise or physical activity. Don't let...

Johns Hopkins Medicine

Sponsored results

Search (with AI elements)

AI Mode ▾ All Images Short videos Videos More ▾

Type 2 diabetes symptoms and treatment

Type 2 diabetes is **a chronic condition where the body either resists the effects of insulin or doesn't produce enough to maintain normal glucose levels**. While often manageable through lifestyle changes, it requires consistent monitoring to prevent long-term complications. Cleveland Clinic +3

Common Symptoms

Symptoms often develop slowly and can be so mild they go unnoticed for years. World Health Organization (WHO) +1

- **Increased thirst and urination:** Frequent trips to the bathroom, especially at night.
- **Persistent fatigue:** Feeling worn out or weak because cells aren't getting enough energy from glucose.
- **Blurred vision:** High blood sugar can cause the lenses in your eyes to swell.

Ask anything

19 sites

Type 2 Diabetes| Adult-Onset Diabetes - MedlinePlus

Jan 21, 2026 — What are the symptoms of type 2 diabetes? Many...

MedlinePlus (.gov)

Type 2 Diabetes: Symptoms and Treatments - Yale Medicine

Type 2 Diabetes: Symptoms and Treatments * •A condition in which...

Yale Medicine

Type 2 diabetes - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic

Feb 27, 2025 — Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes can begin during childhood and adulthood. Type 2 is...

Mayo Clinic

Show all

Generative AI

ChatGPT 5.2

What are the symptoms and treatment options for Type 2 Diabetes?

Here's a clear overview of **Type 2 Diabetes (T2D)** — including common symptoms and treatment options.

🔎 What Is Type 2 Diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is a chronic condition in which:

- The body becomes **resistant to insulin**, and/or
- The pancreas does not produce **enough insulin**

This leads to **elevated blood sugar (glucose)** levels.

🚩 Common Symptoms

Type 2 diabetes often develops gradually. Some people have no noticeable symptoms at first.

Most Common Symptoms

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination

Ask anything

Transactional

ENABLE ACCESSIBILITY

MENU CATERING REWARDS OUR VALUES NUTRITION FIND A CHIPOTLE SIGN IN / JOIN

CONTACT SUPPORT

COMMON QUESTIONS CONTACT SUPPORT

COMMON QUESTIONS

YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS, WE'VE GOT ANSWERS ON ANYTHING CHIPOTLE

TOP QUESTIONS
REWARDS PROGRAM
DELIVERY
CATERING
COMPANY INFO

Why am I receiving an error message when I try to join Chipotle Rewards? +

S.O.S. - I forgot to scan for points in the restaurant. What do I do? +

Um, hello! Where are my points?! +

Who should I contact if I have a delivery issue? +

ASK PEPPER

Hey ! I'm Pepper, your automated assistant chatbot. Before we begin, please know that chats may be monitored, recorded, used, and disclosed by Chipotle, the vendor powering this chatbot, and other third parties as described in our Privacy Policy

Pepper | 13:13:17

I Agree, Start

Anonymous User | 13:13:59

How can I help you? Select from the pills below or write up a quick summary.

Pepper | 13:14:00

Order Issues | Where's my order? | Common Questions | Upcoming Promotions | Cancel Order

Type message here

Hybrid (AI with human escalation)

FRIGIDAIRE

Select appliance

* Denotes mandatory fields

*Model number

FFCD2413UD

*Serial number

12345678

Where can I find my model and serial number?

Your dishwasher's model number may vary, but is most commonly found in one of two places. Either along the interior side of the door or along the right side of the tub of the dishwasher and is visible when the door is open.

Fast tra

Did you
you car
straight

Log in

Message Us

This conversation will be recorded in accordance with Frigidaire's Privacy Statement, available at https://www.frigidaire.com/en/privacy-policy. After this conversation, we would appreciate feedback about your experience.

I see you're looking into a repair. You can ask me about the form, your appliance, or service availability - or tell me how I can help you today.

Pixie · 1:40 PM

Type your message here

Privacy - Terms

Domain Specific

Lou Malnati's - West Loop

4.7 (107) • $30 and under • Pizzeria

Overview | Concierge | Private dining | Photos | Menu | Reviews

About this restaurant

Good for groups | Kid-friendly | Neighborhood gem

No true Chicago experience is complete without a visit to one of the oldest names in Deep Dish Pizza: Lou Malnati's. Located in the trendy West Loop neighborhood of Chicago, join us to enjoy Legendary Chicago Deep Dish and thin crust at the...
Read more

Concierge

AI Beta

Our AI assistant, Concierge, is here to answer your questions about this restaurant.

- Does this restaurant have vegetarian options?
- What makes this restaurant unique?
- Is this restaurant dog-friendly?

Ask a question

Private dining

Lou Malnati's - West Loop
4.7 • $30 and under • Pizzeria
West Loop

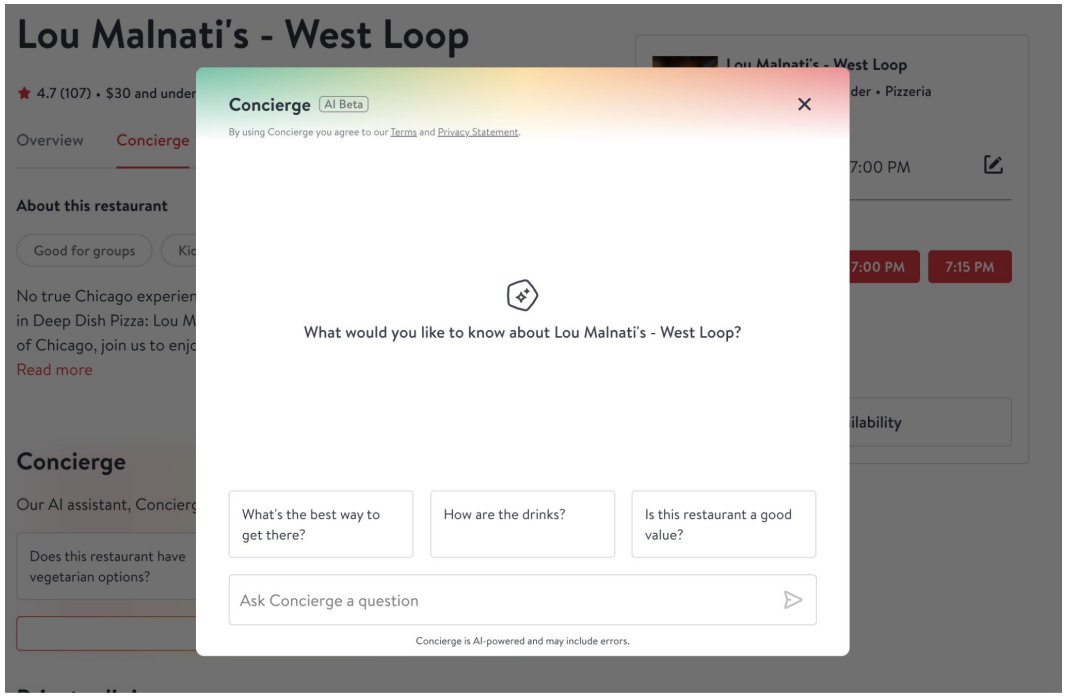
For 2 people, Mar 3, 2026, 7:00 PM

Select a time

6:30 PM | 6:45 PM | 7:00 PM | 7:15 PM | 7:30 PM | Notify me

Booked 9 times today

View full availability



Domain Specific

IRS File Pay Refunds Credits & Deductions Forms Report Fraud Search

Interactive Tax Assistant (ITA)

English | Español

- Interactive Tax Assistant
- Tools
- Report fraud
- Tax scams
- Identity theft
- Notices and letters
- Appeals
- Frequently asked questions
- Accessibility

You can use this tool to get answers to your tax questions. Choose a topic, then enter basic information to find your answer.

Your information is anonymous and only used to answer your question. We don't share, store or use it in any other way.

Search for a topic or find it in the list.

Interactive Tax Assistant Search

Do I need to file a tax return?

Filing requirement, forms, due date

Amended return - Should I file one?

IRS File Pay Refunds Credits & Deductions Forms Report Fraud Do I need to file a tax return?

ITA Search Results

Do I need to file a tax return?

Search Reset

All Forms Guides News Notices FAQs Statistics

Found 3 Matching Items; Displaying 1 - 3.

Do I need to file a tax return?

Do you need to file a tax return? Find out with the IRS Interactive Tax Assistant.

General Information

Am I required to file a nonresident alien U.S. individual tax return?

Determine if you're required to file a nonresident alien tax return or if you should file to receive a refund.

General Information

As a resident or nonresident alien, am I required to obtain a departure permit to leave the United States?

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5 Universal Behaviors

#1 Users Look for Search First

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Even before navigation.
Even before chat.
Even before reading the page.

One participant literally said:
“Where’s the magnifying glass?”

#2 Google Still Wins the Trust Game

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Participants trusted Google’s AI summaries more than standalone AI tools.

Reasons:

- ✓ Citations
- ✓ Source links
- ✓ Familiar interface

#3 Nobody Takes AI at Face Value

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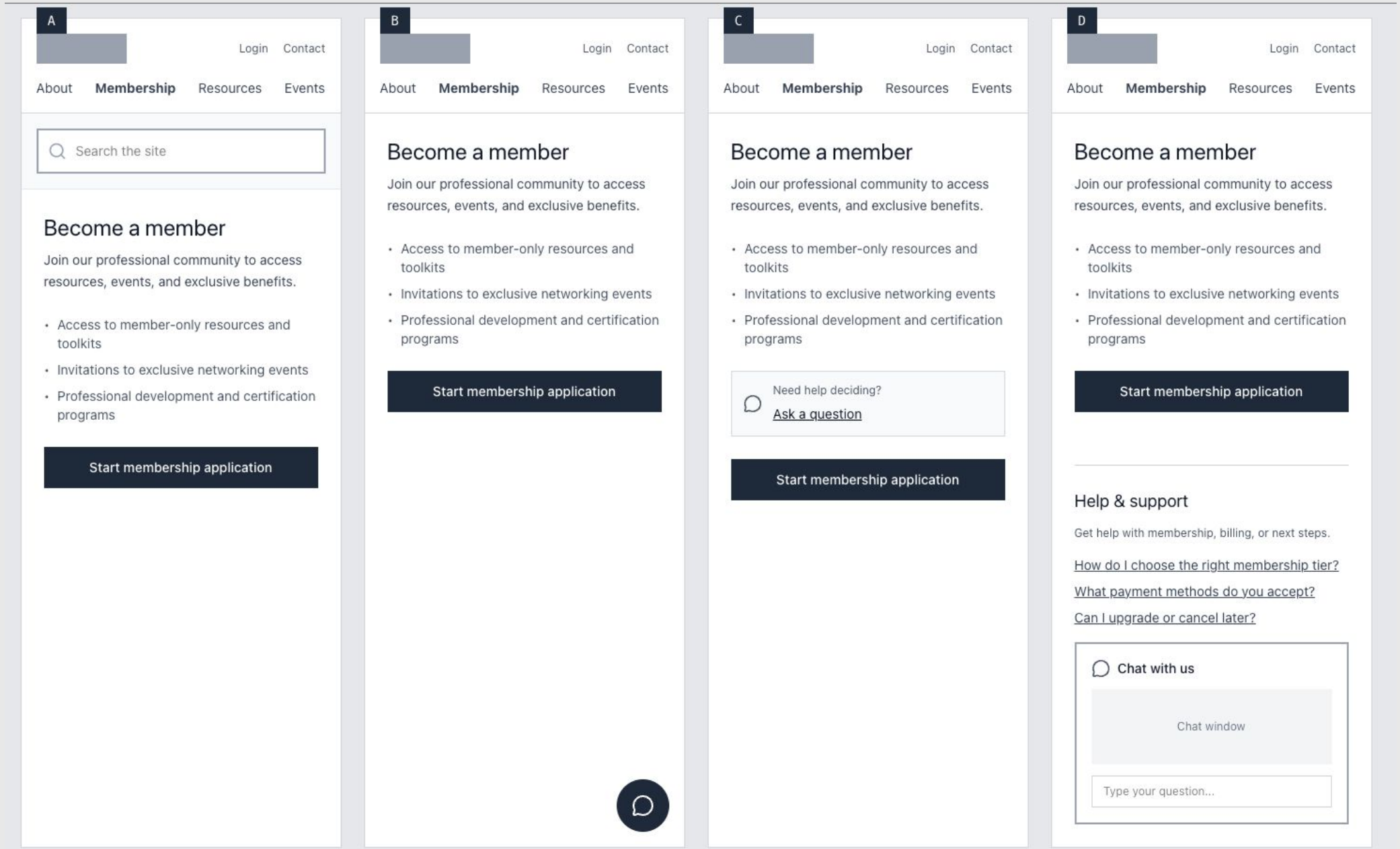
Participants used AI as a starting point, not a final answer.

Especially for:

- Medical topics
- Financial questions
- Anything high-stakes

Locating Help Wireframe



#4 FAQs and Search Preferred

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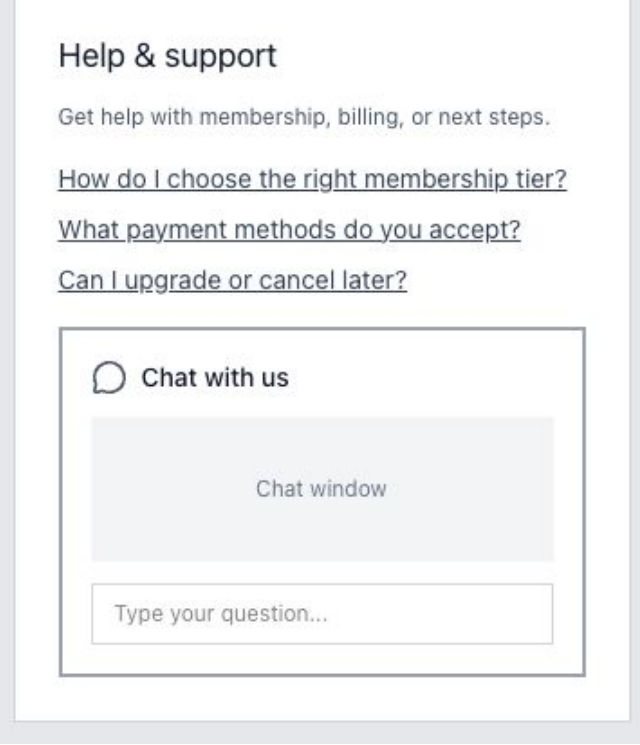
Participants chose Option D as the most comprehensive and trustworthy.

Reasons:

- ✓ Anticipated their need
- ✓ Multiple ways to get help
- ✓ Easy to use



#5 People Have Chat Baggage

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People remembered previous bots that:

- Couldn’t understand questions
- Never solved the problem
- Wasted their time

Those experiences shaped expectations before the interaction even started.

5 Universal Findings for AI Chat

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1. Users Look for Search First
2. Google Still Wins the Trust Game
3. Nobody Takes AI at Face Value
4. FAQs and Search Preferred
5. People Have Chat Baggage

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5 Surprising Findings

#1 Nobody Was Looking for Chat

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Despite all the hype around AI chat…

Users consistently tried search or the navigation first.

Chat was usually a last resort.

#2 Age Expectations Reversed

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Familiarity didn’t equal trust.

In several sessions, the younger users were actually the most critical of AI answers.

#3 The IRS Beat ChatGPT

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The IRS Interactive Tax Assistant was rated **more trustworthy** than:

ChatGPT

Google

Why?

Because **authority beat interface polish.**

#4 Users Type Completely Differently for AI vs. Search

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Multiple participants changed their query style when using ChatGPT versus Google — switching from keywords to full conversational questions.

This suggests users intuitively understand different interaction models.

#5 Standard Chat Placement Didn’t Work

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Even though designers expect users to see chat in the bottom corner…

Several participants never noticed it at all.

The question is not “How do we design better chat?”

The question is “When do users actually want chat?”

5 Surprising Findings for AI Chat

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1. Users are Not Looking for Chat
2. Age Expectations Reversed
3. The IRS Beat ChatGPT
4. Users Type Completely Differently for AI vs. Search
5. Standard Chat Placement Didn’t Work

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5 Tips for
Overcoming Chat Skepticism

#1 Position Chat as Backup

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Design help in layers

1. Search
2. FAQs
3. Chat

Chat should feel like: “Still stuck? Talk to us.”

Not the first thing users see.

#2 Don’t Hide the AI. Explain It.

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Show:

- Sources
- Citations
- Confidence levels

Transparency increased trust every time.

Bonus tip: Don’t use a fake photos or cute name.

Overview Experiences Private dining Concierge Popular dishes

Concierge

Our AI assistant, Concierg

Is this restaurant good for big groups?

Popular dishes

sau

fish
cas

62

15 Photos

Explore Girl & the Goat's

Girl & the Goat

der • Contemporary Am...

7:00 PM

7:30 PM 7:45 PM

4 timeslots left

ilability

Concierge AI Beta

Does this restaurant have vegan food?

Yes, Girl & the Goat offers vegan options! There's a dedicated vegan menu available upon request, and guests consistently praise the creativity and quality of the plant-based dishes. Examples of vegan-friendly items that have received rave reviews include:

- Crispy cauliflower
- Roasted beets with tangy sauce
- Vegetable curry
- Eggplant parmesan
- Vegan coconut flan (for dessert)
- Vegan ice cream

The kitchen is happy to accommodate multiple dietary preferences, so just let your server know if you'd like to see their vegan selections.

Ask Concierge a question

Concierge is AI-powered and may include errors.

#3 Design Seamless Human Handoff from Day One

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- Build clear escalation triggers ("Let me connect you with a specialist")
- Maintain chat history during transfers
- Set expectations about wait times
- Provide clear indication when the handoff occurs and acknowledge the AI conversation context rather than starting over

FRIGIDAIRE

Select appliance

* Denotes mandatory fields

*Model number

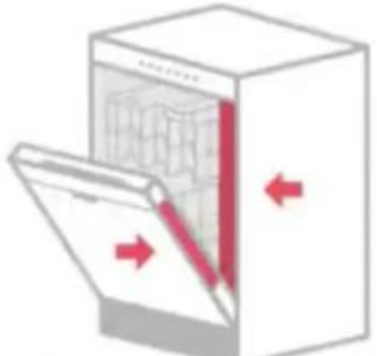
FFCD2413UD

*Serial number

12345678

Where can I find my model and serial number?

Your dishwasher's model number may vary, but is most commonly found in one of two places. Either along the interior side of the door or along the right side of the tub of the dishwasher and is visible when the door is open.



1. Model number
2. Product number (PNC)
3. ML code
4. Serial number

Fast track

Did you register your appli
you can log in, select your
straight to booking.

Log in

Message Us

almesnes@gmail.com

You · 1:59 PM

Before we proceed, please confirm if your name is Alma Meshes.

Pixie · 1:59 PM

Yes

You · 1:59 PM · Sent

Thank you. I will connect you to an agent now.

Pixie · 1:59 PM

Hello, my name is Mark. Thank you for patiently waiting. Before we get started can you please confirm you are still logged in to the chat?

Mark · 1:59 PM

Type your message here

#4 Give Users a Starting Point

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Instead of an empty chat box, provide:

- Common questions
- Quick actions
- Guided prompts

Users felt more confident when the system showed what it could do.

#5 Test With Actual Users

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Test different positions with your specific user base and content context.

Chat discoverability matters more than following design patterns that may not work for your audience.

5 Tips for Overcoming Chat Skepticism

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1. Position Chat as Backup
2. Don’t Hide the AI. Explain It.
3. Design Seamless Human Handoff from Day One
4. Give Users a Starting Point
5. Test With Actual Users

BONUS

What Users Actually Said About AI

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AI skepticism starts early

“It’s AI…you can’t 100% trust it.”

— 15-year-old sports fan

Personal experience shapes trust

“Impressed with AI accuracy” when using Google for medical research.

— 73-year-old self-described technology dinosaur

BONUS

What Users Actually Said About AI

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Some reactions are emotional, not logical

“Using ChatGPT for medical symptoms just felt… icky.”

— 29-year-old gamer

Users create their own trust hierarchy

“.gov sites → Wikipedia → AI tools → chat bots”

— 23-year-old guitar teacher

Not all AI is equal

“Gemini kind of sucks.”

— 11-year-old math junky

Say Hello

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We Would Love Your Feedback

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