

Bugs: Attributing the Correct Severity

A simple guide to selecting the correct severity.



What is Severity and Why It Matters?

What is Severity?

- Shows how serious a bug is
- High severity = big impact
- Low severity = small impact

Why it matters

- Help developers fix the most important bugs first
- Ensures clear communication
- Keep our testing consistent
- Improve product quality

Severity Levels

- Low
- Medium
- High
- Critical

How to Choose the Correct Severity

To choose a severity, think about:

1. **Category** - what type of problem it is?
2. **Reproducibility** – how often does it happen?
3. **The Five Helpful Statements** – Agree/Disagree checklist

1a. Categorization

The most common Bug Categories in a test are:

- **Malfunction**
- **(App) Crash**
- **Spelling/Grammar**
- **Display Error**
- **Other**

Note: Some tests may include extra categories (e.g., Content Error, Loading Issue, Security). Use the options available in your specific test.

If your test includes categories not in the severity matrix (next page), the five statements (see part 3) becomes even more important.

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1b. Category vs Severity Matrix

Check what type of problem it is.

Example: App Crash is almost always Critical

	Low	Medium	High	Critical
Malfunction		■	■	■
App Crash			■	■
Spelling/Grammar	■	■		
Display Error	■	■		
Security			■	■
Other	■	■	■	■

■ green = usually used | ■ light green = sometimes used | □ white = rarely used (edge cases)

2. Reproducibility

Ask: **Does it happen every time?**

- Always → higher severity
- Sometimes → medium
- Rarely → lower (unless impact is high)

Every bug submitted must be reproducible. A bug that is not reproducible has almost no value and would be accepted only under special circumstances and with a low severity.

3. Helpful Statements for Choosing Severity

Choose **Agree or Disagree** for statements:

- Q1: There is no workaround.** *The user cannot continue in any way.*
- Q2: A main/core feature is affected** *An important function is broken – e.g. purchases on an e-commerce site.*
- Q3: The app stops, freezes, or crashes.**
- Q4: A normal user would notice this bug.**
- Q5: The bug blocks another feature.** *It stops the user from using something else in the app.*

Count how many you agree with:

0–2 agrees → lower severity

3–5 agrees → higher severity

Examples in Practice

Let's look at 4 Bugs which are all Malfunctions and are all reproducible but get different severities based on the 5 Helpful Statements.

Examples in Practice (1a)

Example 1a: I am testing an E-Commerce Website and I find:

A URL link to the “Legal Imprint” section of the website is not working

Statements = 0-2 Agree = choose a lower severity

- Q1: There is no workaround - **Agree**
- Q2: A main feature is affected – **Disagree**
- Q3: The app stops, freezes, or crashes - **Disagree**
- Q4: A normal user would notice this bug - **Agree**
- Q5: The bug blocks another feature - **Disagree**

Selected Severity:
Medium

Examples in Practice (1b)

Example 1b: I am testing an E-Commerce Website and I find:

A link in the checkout process is not working e.g. the “Add to Cart” or Purchase button

Statements = 0-3 Agree = choose a higher severity

- Q1: There is no workaround - **Agree**
- Q2: A main feature is affected – **Agree**
- Q3: The app stops, freezes, or crashes - **Disagree**
- Q4: A normal user would notice this bug - **Agree**
- Q5: The bug blocks another feature - **Agree**

Selected Severity:
Critical

Examples in Practice (2a)

Example 2a: I am testing an online banking app and I find:

The “Complete Transfer” button on an online banking app is not working and the user cannot complete a bank transfer

Statements = 0-3 Agree = choose a higher severity

- Q1: There is no workaround - **Agree**
- Q2: A main feature is affected – **Agree**
- Q3: The app stops, freezes, or crashes - **Agree**
- Q4: A normal user would notice this bug - **Agree**
- Q5: The bug blocks another feature - **Agree**

Selected Severity:
Critical

Examples in Practice (2b)

Example 2b: I am testing an online banking app and I find:

An info icon on a page does not work

Statements = 0-2 Agree = choose a lower severity

- Q1: There is no workaround - **Disagree**
- Q2: A main feature is affected – **Disagree**
- Q3: The app stops, freezes, or crashes - **Disagree**
- Q4: A normal user would notice this bug - **Agree**
- Q5: The bug blocks another feature - **Disagree**

Selected Severity:
Low

Severity Summary

To select severity, follow these steps when possible:

01 _____
Check the category in the matrix

02 _____
Check reproducibility

03 _____
Check the 5 helpful statements

04 _____
Combine all three to select the best severity.

Remember: if your test involves a category not in the matrix, the 5 helpful statements should guide your assessment.