

Within-page Links and Anchors across Pages

Within-page links and anchors can be a useful content tool, but should be used sparingly and only when appropriate. Using within-page links and anchors goes against a users' mental model of links*, so it's important to consider other content options before using this solution.

Within-page links:

Within-page links are useful when publishing lengthy pages of content where it doesn't make sense to separate the content into individual pages.

The primary purposes of using within-page links are as follows:

1. Table of Contents: when starting a page with a table of contents, use within-page links to link to the appropriate section further down the page.
2. Frequently Asked Questions: depending on the structure of your frequently asked questions, it may be useful to list the questions at the top of the page and link to the answer further down the page. This is not always the case though – consult with your content strategist or UX specialist.
3. Alphabetized Lists: when using alphabetized lists at the top of a page, link the letter to the corresponding section of the page.

Anchors across pages:

Using page anchors across pages can allow content writers to pull together information from different sections of gov.bc.ca without having to duplicate certain pieces of content. They can be useful but should be used with caution. Here's why:

When a user clicks on an anchor that directs them to a new page, they usually land in the middle of the page, providing no context for the user. The page's title, introduction and left navigation may not be visible to the user and this poses usability issues as the user needs to situate themselves when they land on a page. In addition, to continue reading the content from the page they just left, they would need to use the back button. Overall, it creates a broken user experience.

*Nielsen Norman Group, Avoid Within-Page Links: <http://www.nngroup.com/articles/avoid-within-page-links/>