
5.3 Link Targets

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Synopsis: Usability guidelines on how to handle link targets for State of Georgia websites.

5.3.1 Links should open in the Same Window

In most instances, links should open in the **same window** as the existing page. This applies to both internal links (links to pages on your domain) and external links (links to pages outside your domain).

This allows the user to maintain control of their browsing experience, providing a better overall user experience. Many web content managers want external links to open in a new window as a way to keep users from leaving their website. However, studies show that opening a page in a new window can frustrate and disorient users.

5.3.2 Opening Links in a New Window

The following are appropriate instances to open links in a **new window** (adding a `target=?_blank?` attribute to the `<a>` tag).

- **Links to documents** such as PDF, Word, and other attachments should open in a new window so that the document can load without disrupting the browsing experience.
- **Link to assistance or Help documentation** should open in a new window, as the user is looking for help with the existing page.
- **Links while a user is filling out a form** (such as a full Terms of Service or Privacy Policy) should open in a new window so as not to disrupt the ongoing process and lose the information the user has typed in.

When opening a link in a new window, it can help to provide text indicating that the link opens in a new window, either using the title attribute `` or adding text that follows the link: Terms of Service (opens in a new window).

Alternately, you can append a `?new window icon?` to the end of a link, in conjunction with a title attribute that explains the icon (example above). In this case the site must remain consistent in showing the icon each time a page opens in a new window.

e.g. Terms of Service 

5.3.3 References

- [Beware of Opening Links in a New Window](#) ^[1]
 - [Should Links Open In A New Window?](#) ^[2]
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