



[Canada.ca](#) › [About Canada.ca](#) › [Design](#) › [Specifications](#)

## Canada.ca Specifications

# Designing content on Canada.ca

The Canada.ca templates, page layouts and design patterns have been developed to support departments in designing web content that will help people complete their tasks.

## On this page

- [How to design for Canada.ca](#)
- [Design principles](#)
- [Help improve this design](#)

## How to design for Canada.ca

When designing content, always focus on the task. All design decisions should make it easier for people to:

- **find the page:** how do users get to the page, either by navigating or searching
- **understand the information:** does the content provide the right answers, using the right words
- **use the content to complete their task:** do the design patterns help people succeed

## **Template and pattern library for Canada.ca**

Find the template or pattern you need for your content

### **Content style guide**

Writing principles and techniques to make content clear and accessible to all

## **Design principles**

Canada.ca is based on the following principles.

### **Open, collaborative concept design**

The rules and concepts presented here have been developed in collaboration with Government of Canada Theme lead departments. Other departments and agencies have also provided input.

We are actively engaging with the community in several ways:

- a blog that presents our work
- regular meetings with the Government of Canada web community
- events and presentations for all departments and agencies

### **Evidence-based iteration**

These principles and guidelines have been designed and revised based on evidence of people's needs and their success on the site.

The structure of the main menu on Canada.ca was based on an understanding of what Canadians are looking for. This came from a review of public web usage data. The data was collected across government departments and agencies.

The Canada.ca information architecture (IA) and templates and patterns have been adjusted since 2013. This reflects the outcomes of user research and usability testing with thousands of Canadians. Usability tests have been performed in English and French, on mobile, tablet, and desktop environments, and with assistive technologies.

As new research and testing is undertaken and departments try new ideas, the Canada.ca design will continue to be updated.

The role of the design is to help departments save time and money by using existing patterns and styles for their specific content. It provides a consistent framework for the Government of Canada web presence, while being flexible enough to allow innovative design solutions.

## People first

Canada.ca is based on user needs. It ensures that the most in-demand information and services are easy to find, understand and use.

Non-priority content must not interfere with someone's ability to find what they are looking for. Content must be organized to present a government-wide perspective to users, wherever possible. For example, information from multiple departments on the same topic of public interest must be grouped together. When duplicate content is identified, it should be removed.

Canada.ca must provide current, relevant, accurate, unique and authentic information about the Government of Canada's programs and services. This reduces confusion for people.

Content for which the Government of Canada is not clearly the authoritative source must not be published on Canada.ca. Instead, Canada.ca can refer to this content by providing links to an external source.

To ensure content is always current, it must be actively managed throughout its life cycle. This is required by the Government of Canada Information Management policy requirements.

## Task-centred approach

People visit Canada.ca to complete a task. A task is something a person has set out to do. To accomplish a task, a person may need to read a web page or undertake a complex transaction online. All content supporting a task should be simple, consistent and predictable.

The Canada.ca Specifications provides people with consistent navigation, content labels, templates and patterns. Whether they enter Canada.ca pages directly through Internet search engines or by way of social media or direct traffic, consistency helps ensure users can find, begin, and complete the most in-demand tasks.

## Optimized for mobile devices

Canadians are increasingly using mobile devices, including tablets and smart phones.

The existing Canada.ca design helps people easily find the same content on either their mobile or desktop device. The Canada.ca templates and patterns, including Web Experience Toolkit (WET) templates and design

components, have been tested and verified as mobile-friendly.

A separate mobile instance of the site is not needed.

To perform well on mobile devices, the IA is as simple and as flat as possible. In-page navigation is more effective than menus and page sizes must be limited. The content specifications and writing guidance take this mobile context into account. They also specify how to create content that will be easily downloaded on mobile devices. This allows people to access information quickly while on the go.

## Integrated with search

The IA must be well integrated with the site's search function. This integrated approach:

- provides people with the necessary navigation cues, when search doesn't take them to the right place
- ensures filters are based on the underlying IA, such as the topic structure, to improve overall search precision and relevance

## Help improve the Canada.ca design

When designing for Canada.ca, keep in mind that the measure of success is more than just conformity to guidelines. It is equally important to help users successfully complete their tasks. Improving the rules is encouraged. Always share your ideas to make things better with the Digital Transformation Office at [cds.dto-btn.snc@servicecanada.gc.ca](mailto:cds.dto-btn.snc@servicecanada.gc.ca).

**Date modified:**

2024-08-26