Google Doc or PDF?

This is the current best practice:

1. Links to Google Docs are usually for internal use only for staff, partners and patrons.
2. Links to PDFs are typically for public use.

An updated PDF can be reuploaded to the same area, so URL stays the same. Suggest using a version number at the bottom for changes, so you know which one is the most current.

Updates can be made in Google Docs as normal, saved, exported as PDF and then someone can upload to Media. With picking the right options, the file URL can stay the same and Vanity URL stays the same.

More in depth information (AI):

A Google Docs link might not be ideal on a website because **it can disrupt the visual flow of your page by opening a separate Google Docs interface, potentially requiring users to log in to view the content, and may not seamlessly integrate with your website's design, making the experience less user-friendly**; furthermore, depending on the sharing settings, users might be able to edit the document if you haven't set appropriate permissions. [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

Key reasons why a Google Docs link might not be good on a website: [2, 3, 4]

- **Visual disruption:** When a user clicks a Google Docs link, they are taken away from your website to a separate Google Docs page with a different layout and navigation, which can be jarring for the user experience. [2, 3, 4]
- **Login requirement:** If the Google Doc isn't set to "Anyone with the link" viewing permission, users might be prompted to log in to their Google account to access the document, creating an extra step for the viewer. [4, 6, 7]
- **Lack of design control:** You cannot fully customize how the Google Doc appears within your website, potentially leading to a mismatch in style and branding. [2, 3, 5]
- **Editing concerns:** If you share the Google Doc with "Editor" access, users could inadvertently make changes to the document when they click on the link. [1, 4, 7]

Better alternatives to using a direct Google Docs link on a website: [2, 5]

- **Embed the document:** Use the "Publish to the web" option in Google Docs to generate an embed code that can be directly integrated into your website, allowing for better visual control. [2, 5]
- **Export as PDF:** Download the Google Doc as a PDF and upload it to your website, ensuring a static and consistent view for all users. [2, 3, 5]
- **Copy and paste content:** If necessary, manually copy the content from the Google Doc and paste it directly into your website's text editor, formatting as needed. [2, 3, 5]

Generative AI is experimental.

[1] https://ecins.com/us/the-limitations-and-dangers-of-using-google-docs-and-spreadsheets-for-student-support-case-management/

[2] https://learninginhand.com/blog/google-document-url-tricks

[3] https://www.reddit.com/r/gsuite/comments/ki2bfq/why_doe_embedded_google_docs_look_so_terrible_it/

[4] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X0XrRBKgOU

[5] https://support.google.com/docs/answer/183965?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop

[6] https://www.reddit.com/r/sysadmin/comments/o3dja3/clicking_google_doc_links_safety_concerns/

[7] https://support.google.com/drive/answer/2494822?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop

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