**Dos and Don’ts of Link Accessibility**

# [Mindful Linking](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.w3.org%2FTR%2FUNDERSTANDING-WCAG20%2Fnavigation-mechanisms-refs.html&data=04%7C01%7Ccam108%40pitt.edu%7Ce22090307a874156996a08d8dfd1ebfe%7C9ef9f489e0a04eeb87cc3a526112fd0d%7C1%7C0%7C637505440583721322%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=n4ZPu2J59oPC74u%2Fq5a%2FJVrYLtBYOJjDzB0Dt%2FR09Co%3D&reserved=0) - One of the most basic things that we do in digital media is to provide hyperlinks to other content.  It is also, therefore, one of the most common ways we can create accessibility barriers, especially for those using screen readers.  Screen readers rely on the text of the link, alt text, and sometimes the preceding text of the link to indicate the purpose of the link.

# Here are some dos and don’ts for creating links—

# **Do use** **link text that provides contextual clues** as to the content of the document to which you are linking.  For example, in the link above, the text “Mindful Linking” goes to a page that discusses accessibility standards for hyperlinking.  A person using a screen reader can make a reasonable decision as to whether the content on the landing page is relevant to them.

# **Don’t use the same text to link to different pages**.  This often occurs when someone uses “Go”, “Click here”, or “Learn more” as link text multiple times on a page to try to encourage engagement.  Links with this type of text are confusing because they provide no context to the content of the landing pages.  Additionally, as users of screen readers often navigate a page by jumping from link to link, it is easy for users to get lost on a page.

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| **Don’t do this…** | **Do this…** |
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# **Do add alternative text (alt text) to image links**.When using an image instead of text for a link, include alt text to give context to the link and to describe the image.  Failing to provide alt text may lead the reader to simply read the file name of the image.  The user’s experience may vary, but it will certainly not be as the author intends.

# **Don’t add too much text to a link**.  Link text should be concise and informative so that users can quickly and easily make a determination as to the intent of the link.  A screen reader will read the entirety of the link text so don’t highlight an entire paragraph of text when three words would do.

# **Do indicate the file type of the documents to which you are linking** that are not HTML.  For example, when creating a Word document and linking to an Excel spreadsheet, it is preferable to add “(XLSX)” to the end of the link text—

# [View the study’s data (XLSX)](http://www.pitt.edu/)  - note here, that the file type identifier is included within the link text.  If it is not included in the link text, the user won’t necessarily be made aware by the screen reader.

# This will alert the reader that a new application may open to render the document.

# **Don’t use color alone to indicate a link** in the body of your content.  For most, this simply means not removing the standard hyperlink underline; the underline in addition to the color indicates a link.  Conversely, don’t underline body text that is not a link.  (This doesn’t include end- or foot-notes that follow standards that require the use of underlining.)