Adding accessible link text [1]

June 11, 2024 by ES and UIS Communications [2]

Hyperlinks connect **link text** to a particular destination on the web (such as a webpage, a particular section of a webpage, or a web-hosted document). Meaningful link text refers to link text that describes its destination. For example, "click here" is not meaningful link text, whereas "Digital Accessibility Office Resources [3]" is.

Why is meaningful link text important?

Screen reader users often hear link text out of context of its location on the page. One common way for screen reader users to get a quick digest of the page content is to listen to the list of all links that appear on the page, which are read out based on the link text rather than the destination URL.

Without informative link text, the screen reader user may just hear a list consisting of "click here", "learn more here", "click here". This is also why it is important to use unique link text for each unique URL destination: if you have links with the same link text that have different destination URLs, a screen reader user wouldn't be able to distinguish between those links out of context.

Web pages are the expected destination of a hyperlink. When a link's destination is a web-hosted document, the file often automatically downloads to the user's device. This change in context can be confusing if the user doesn't expect it. For this reason, it is important to inform the user if you are linking to a document rather than a web page.

Writing meaningful link text

Adding descriptive link text can be done by following a few best practices:

1. **Don't use the URL itself**

   Link text should consist of an informative description of the destination website rather than the actual URL.

   - **Bad example:** https://www.cu.edu/blog/tech-tips [4]
   - **Good example:** CU Tech Tips blog [4]

   The only exception to this rule is if users are intended to memorize the exact URL of a web page, such as canvas.colorado.EDU [5] or MyCUinfo.colorado.EDU [6].

2. **Use exact language and terms**

Generic and uninformative link text like "here", "click here", or "read more" should be avoided.

Bad example: For more technology help, click here [4].
Good example: For more technology help, visit CU's Tech Tips blog [4].

3. Indicate destination file type

If the link destination is a document rather than a web page, indicate the type of document in the link text. For example, "CU Boulder Digital Accessibility Standards (PDF) [7]".

4. Give unique names to each link

Avoid using the same link text for links that lead to different destinations. If you have multiple links on a page leading to the same destination, it is a best practice to use the same link text for each link.

- **Bad example:** We have a blog [4] for technology help and a blog [8] for maintenance alerts.
- Good example: We have the Tech Tips blog [4] for technology help and the Maintenance Matters blog [8] for maintenance alerts.

computer help [9], accessibility [10]
Display Title:
Adding accessible link text
Send email when Published:
No

Source URL: https://www.cu.edu/blog/tech-tips/adding-accessible-link-text

Links
[1] https://www.cu.edu/blog/tech-tips/adding-accessible-link-text [2] https://www.cu.edu/blog/tech-tips/author/110439 [3] https://www.colorado.edu/digital-accessibility/accessible-technology/node/44 [4] https://www.cu.edu/blog/tech-tips [5] https://www.cu.edu/canvas.colorado.edu [6] https://www.cu.edu/mycuinfo.colorado.edu [7] https://www.colorado.edu/accessible-technology/2020-digital-accessibility-standards [8] https://www.cu.edu/uis/maintenance-matters [9] https://www.cu.edu/blog/tech-tips/tag/computer-help [10] https://www.cu.edu/blog/tech-tips/tag/accessibility