Accessible Links in 5 Minutes: Your Quick Fix Guide[1]

Screen reader users typically don't listen to an entire document word-for-word. Instead, they use keyboard shortcuts to skim a document by moving between elements such as headings, links, and form fields, much like a sighted user would by visually scanning. This is why creating clear, descriptive hyperlinks is essential for accessible document navigation. The links should be descriptive enough to be understood without the context provided by the surrounding words.

Here is your quick fix guide to creating accessible links -- whether in documents, websites, or slides -- in just 5 minutes.

1. Replace Generic Link Text

❌ Problem: Generic links like "click here" and "read more" are not meaningful on their own
✅ Quick Fix: Use descriptive text that makes sense out of context
　　Instead of: "Our department has a syllabus template. Click here for more information."
　　Use: "Download the department's syllabus template (DOCX, 250KB)"
　　Pro Tip: Include file type and size for downloads (e.g., PDF, 1.2MB)

2. Clean Up Raw URLs

❌ Problem: Long URLs create visual clutter and are difficult for screen reader users to navigate
✅ Quick Fix: Create descriptive hyperlinks in your platform
　　In Word/PowerPoint: Highlight text → Right-click → Link → Paste URL
　　In LMS: Use the link icon in the Rich Content Editor
　　In Email: Highlight text → Use link button (or Ctrl/Cmd + K)

3. Address Links Opening in New Tabs

❌ Problem: Links opening unexpectedly in new tabs can disorient users
✅ Quick Fix: Either avoid this setting or warn users
　　Add "(opens in new window)" to a link's descriptive text
　　In LMS: When adding links, uncheck "Open in new tab" unless necessary

4. Make Image Links Accessible

❌ Problem: Images that function as links without proper alt text
✅ Quick Fix: Add alt text that describes not just the image but also its destination
　　Example: "USM logo - link to system office homepage"
　　In Word: Right-click image → Edit Alt Text
　　In LMS: When inserting image → Add alt text in the dialog box

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