

Accessibility Issue – Inaccessible Links

Links are used by users to quickly navigate from one page to another when browsing a website. Links found within a webpage can also point to pages found on other websites across the internet. When making use of links, one should always make sure that these are accessible as incorrect labels can confuse users. Other features such as correct use of colour and can also make links more accessible.

The examples below are some instances where correct use of links will assist users with different accessibility requirements:

- Users who make use of screen readers might prefer to listen to a list of the links that are present on the webpage.
- Users that use speech recognition software can avoid using a mouse by speaking out the text of the link that they would like to follow.
- Users that make use of keyboard navigation and cannot operate a mouse.
- Partially sighted and colour-blind users may find it difficult to recognise links if they are only distinguished by colour, thus using underlined or bold text will help such users.

What you need to know

Using different visual indicators for links

If links in blocks of text are identified only by colour, the colour contrast ratio between the link text and the surrounding text needs to be at least 3:1. Furthermore, colour should not be the only visual cue. An additional visual cue could be underlining the link or making it bold. This applies to links that are visually part of a block of text.

Please note that the 3:1 colour contrast ratio for links identified only by colour should be measured text to text and not text to background.

Adjacent links

The placement of more than one link that point to the same destination should not be next to each other. This may be the case when an image, a heading, and a word each link to the same destination. Assistive technology users may get confused with such a setting. Thus, one link should be provided. This can be done by either selecting one element to be the link or wrap all elements within one link.

For example in the image below the items marked in red point to the same destination. This can be confusing to users and thus they should be wrapped within one link.

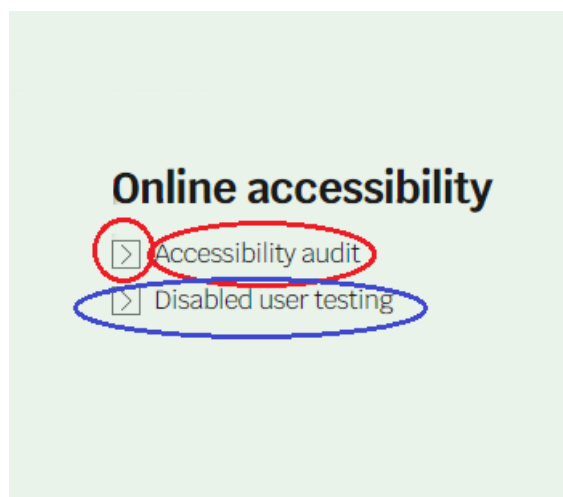


Image 1: adjacent links pointing to the same destination

Image link is missing alternative text

ALT (alternative) image attributes are used to convey an image's content in text format. It is important to create suitable ALT attributes for each image depending on the type of image. When determining appropriate alternative text for images, context is everything. More information about ALT attributes can be found in this page: "LINK TO IMAGES DOC created by luke"

Alternative text for image is identical to link text

An issue may occur where the alternative text for an image is a repetition of the adjacent link text. If the image is also a link, this issue can be solved by combining the image and the link, thus avoiding redundancy. If the image is not a link, the text of the link is sufficient and the alt attribute of the image should be left empty.

In the example below, the alternative text for the image is ``, whilst the text of the adjacent link also says "Home Page". A screen reader will read this as "Home Page Home Page", thus confusing the user.



```
<p><a href="index.html"><Home Page </a></p>
```

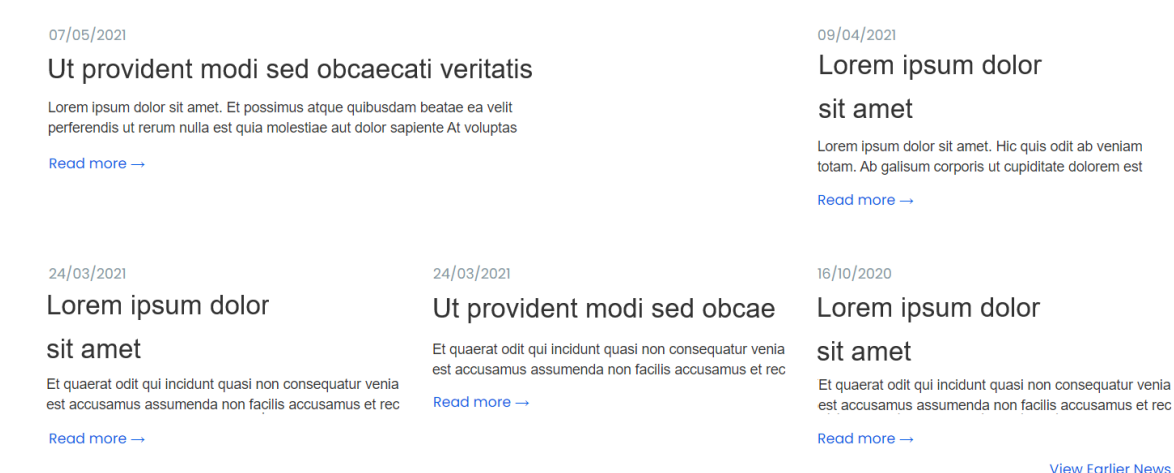
In this case the alternative text should be left empty (alt="")

Link text used for multiple different destinations

Many pages may be using the same link text for links that go to different destinations. This may be confusing for users. If the destinations are not the same, links should be distinguished by their link texts.

If, on the other hand, the links go to the same destination, this should not be considered an issue.

The image below shows several links using the same link text (Read more) that point to different destinations. These should have different link text.



[View Earlier News](#)

Image 2: Several links using the same link text

Link text is too generic in its current context

This issue occurs when the link text is too generic and doesn't identify the purpose of the link. Link text should be written in a way that makes sense. This text such as "Click here" or "more" should be avoided.

Related WCAG criteria:

Success Criterion 1.4.1: Use of Color

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/Understanding/use-of-color>

Success Criterion 1.1.1: Non-text Content

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/Understanding/non-text-content>

Combining adjacent image and text links for the same resource

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/Techniques/html/H2>

Success Criterion 2.4.4: Link Purpose (In Context)

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/Understanding/link-purpose-in-context>