Best Practices for Including Accessible Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks (or simply links) are used to redirect users to other resources or information. The following list will help you determine if a link is accessible whether you are assessing content for accessibility or inserting your own links:

1. The displayed text for all links must be a word or short phrase that indicates the specific content, destination, or purpose of the link.
   a. Example: For more resources on accessibility, visit Instructional Accessibility Basics and Best Practices
   b. Non-Web Content should also include the file type: e.g. "Best Practices for Including Accessible Hyperlinks (PDF)"
   c. Full URLs are inaccessible and should only be used when writing style-based citations (i.e. APA, MLA, or Chicago)
   d. Avoid ambiguous wording like "link" or "click here" as it makes it more difficult to quickly scan links on the same page/document.
2. Links need to be visibly identifiable by more than color
   a. Links are underlined by default; this is the preferred method for displaying links
   b. Body text links that are not underlined need to meet additional requirements:
      i. The link text needs to have a contrast ratio of 3:1 from the surrounding text.
      ii. A non-color indicator (i.e. an underline) should appear on both keyboard and mouse focus.
   c. Images and graphics can be used with additional considerations:
      i. Images/graphics need to appear as though they perform an action.
      ii. The alt-text for images serving as links needs to describe the content of the image and the link function.
3. Users should always have a way to return to the original context of any link
   a. This is common when adding footnotes in documents or webpages.
   b. Any link to a footnote needs to be accompanied be a mechanism (e.g. another link) that allows readers to return to where they were on the page before they navigated to the footnotes.

For any additional questions or to learn more about alternative text best practices, contact the Instructional Accessibility Group at InstructionalAccessibility@msudenver.edu