



# Three Things to Know About Linking

In the discipline of online marketing, you will find much written about the importance of linking. There are seemingly endless strategies, philosophies and suggestions on how to get more, and get better links to point to your site.

This abundance of often contradictory information might cause a new site owner to step back and wonder: "What do I really need to know about links?"

For a better understanding of why linking should receive attention in your online marketing efforts, we spoke to recognized linking expert Debra Mastaler of Alliance-Link to learn some simple things about linking.



## Brief Anatomy of a Link

A hyperlink is a reference activated in a page of web content that a user can follow to another online resource or document. Often it will be in text form (referred to as "hypertext") but images are also frequently used as hyperlinks.

Hyperlinks have anchors, which are the "hotspots" or areas activated to allow users to follow the links. If words are used as the anchor, they are referred to as anchor text.

The resource holding the hyperlink is referred to as the source document and the link leads to its target.

## Why Links Help Your Website

Links pointing to your website are seen as "votes" for your content. This means that where links to your site appear and what they say communicates a little bit about what your site is about, who finds your site valuable, and why.

For example, if within an article The Wall Street Journal (WSJ) links to your site using the anchor text "Creole food," this "vote" tells users and search engines alike that the WSJ associates your site with Creole food. It also suggests that the WSJ (a trusted source) thinks users would find value on your website.

Mastaler points out that in this manner, links can help your site in three key areas:

1. Improved ranking in the search engine results pages (SERPs)
2. Bringing traffic to the website
3. Brand building

"The right link from a trusted website could have a tremendous impact on a site," says Mastaler. She points out how our example link in the Wall Street Journal could affect all three areas.

"From a ranking perspective, the WSJ is considered an authority site, so links coming from it would pass a measure of quality to the site being linked to. That quality factor plays an algorithmic role in determining how a webpage ranks."

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The WSJ would also play a significant role in driving traffic to a webpage which, in turn, helps to build brand. Mastaler says, "The WSJ is a very popular website with a large readership, having a link on one of its pages would be a boon to any site looking to attract visitors. The more people click, the greater the opportunity for brand exposure and engagement."

#### What's Coming Next

In Part Two of this two-part article, we will look more specifically at how to review the competitive link-landscape, identify new linking opportunities, and reach out to potential resources to build more and better links into your site.

Debra Mastaler is President of Alliance-Link, a link building training firm based in Northern Virginia