

Opening links in a new window

By Cal Henderson

The usual rule for accessibility purposes is to not open links in a new window - it's confusing for users, breaks the "back" functionality and is unnecessary - users can explicitly choose to open a link in a new window by holding down the shift (or apple) key while clicking, but cannot choose not to open a new window for links with a target attribute. So specifying target attributes is generally a bad thing.

But what if you're running a weblog, where your links take users off-site? Some users like having new windows for each link and don't want to (or don't know how to) do it themselves. Luckily, help is at hand. With a small piece of javascript you can offer your users the option of whether links should open in the current window or open a fresh window each time.

First you'll need to grab the javascript, which you can get from http://www.iamcal.com/files/new_links.zip. You'll need to tell your pages to load this file by putting in the following code. It should be inserted just before your closing body tag (</body>):

```
<script language="JavaScript" src="new_window.js"></script>
```

The only thing left to do is to add the checkbox to let users select whether they want new windows enabled. In the place on your page where you would like the control to appear, put the following HTML:

```
<form onsubmit="return false;">
<input type="checkbox" name="new_window_checkbox" id="new_window_checkbox"
  onclick="set_link_targets(this.checked);">
<label for="new_window_checkbox">open all links in new windows</label>
</form>
```

The script is pretty intelligent too - it uses cookies to remember users' settings, so if a user checks the checkbox, it will remain checked when they come back to your site next time.

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