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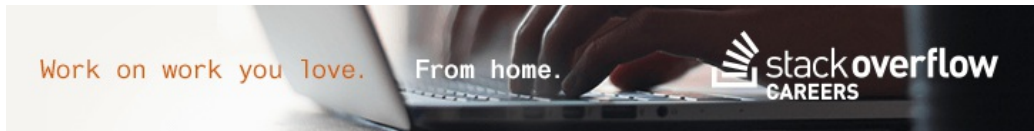


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## How can I create a link to a local file on a locally-run web page?



I'd like to have an html file that organizes certain files scattered throughout my hard drive. For example, I have two files that I would link to:

- C:\Programs\sort.mw
- C:\Videos\lecture.mp4

The problem is that I'd like the links to function as a shortcut to the file. I've tried the following:

```
<a href="C:\Programs\sort.mw">Link 1</a>
<a href="C:\Videos\lecture.mp4">Link 2</a>
```

... but the first link does nothing and the second link opens the file in Chrome, not VLC.

My questions are:

1. Is there a way to adjust my HTML to treat the links as shortcuts to the files?
2. If there isn't a way to adjust the HTML, are there any other ways to neatly link to files scattered throughout the hard drive?

My computer runs Windows 7 and my web browser is Chrome.

html anchor local-files

edited Aug 15 '13 at 4:42



doppelgreener

3,510 ● 2 ● 20 ● 45

asked Aug 15 '13 at 3:51



Brian Fitzpatrick

345 ● 1 ● 3 ● 9

### 3 Answers

You need to use the `file:///` protocol (yes, that's three slashes) if you want to link to local files.

```
<a href="file:///C:\Programs\sort.mw">Link 1</a>
<a href="file:///C:\Videos\lecture.mp4">Link 2</a>
```

**These will never open the file in your local applications automatically.** That's for security reasons, and I'll get to that in the last section. If it opens, it will only ever open in the browser. If it your browser can display the file, it will. If it can't, it will probably ask you if you want to download it.

Some browsers, like modern versions of Chrome, will even refuse to cross from the http protocol to the file protocol, so you'd better make sure you open this locally using the file protocol if you want to do this stuff at all.

### Why does it get stuck without `file:///` ?

The **first part of a URL** is the protocol. A protocol is a few letters, then a colon and two slashes. `HTTP://` and `FTP://` are valid protocols; `C:/` isn't and I'm pretty sure it doesn't even properly resemble one.

`c:/` also isn't a valid web address. The browser could assume it's meant to be `http://c/` with a blank port specified, but that's going to fail.

Your browser may not assume it's referring to a local file. It has little reason to make that assumption, because public sites usually don't attempt to link to peoples' local files.

So if you want to access local files: tell it to use the file protocol.

### Why three slashes?

Because it's part of the [File URI scheme](#). You have the option of specifying a host after the first two slashes. If you skip specifying a host, it will just assume you're referring to a file on your own PC. In other words: `file:///C:/etc` is a shortcut for `file://localhost/C:/etc`.

## These files will still open in your browser and that is good

Your browser will respond to these files the same way they'd respond to the same file anywhere on the internet. These files **will not** open in your default file handler (e.g. MS Word or VLC Media Player), and you **will not** be able to do anything like ask File Explorer to open the file's location.

### This is an extremely good thing for your security.

Sites in your browser cannot interact with your operating system very well. If a good site could tell *lecture.mp4* to open in *VLC.exe*, a malicious site could tell it to open *virus.bat* in *CMD.exe*. Or it could just tell your PC to run a few *Uninstall.exe* files, or to open File explorer a million times.

This may not be convenient for you, but HTML and browser security weren't really designed for what you're doing. If you want to be able to open *lecture.mp4* in *VLC.exe*, consider writing a desktop application instead.

edited Aug 24 '14 at 8:18

answered Aug 15 '13 at 4:31



[doppelgreener](#)

3,510 ● 2 ● 20 ● 45

Thanks Jonathan. Do you know if there's a way to "show file in folder" as an alternative? –

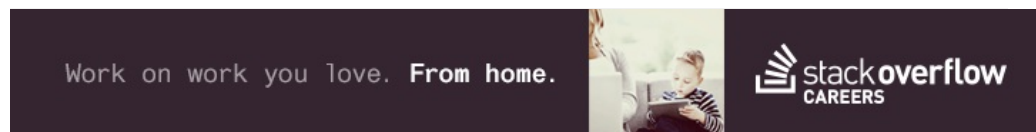
[Brian Fitzpatrick](#) Aug 15 '13 at 4:38

3 @Brian Your browser can't interact with your OS in that way, and you should be extremely glad it cannot. – [doppelgreener](#) Aug 15 '13 at 4:45

3 Seems like Chrome won't download local files using the file:/// protocol anyway (giving you a `Not allowed to load local resource` error) – [Loupax](#) Mar 24 '14 at 16:09

I want to give a link like this "file:///...\sort.mw" so that it goes back two folders and gets the file there. Because we are using the word file in dropbox. So is there any solution. – [Murtaza Munshi](#) Oct 28 '15 at 9:55

It might also worth mentioning you can not link from a website (e.g. local dev server) to a local file. [forums.mozillazine.org/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=1730](https://forums.mozillazine.org/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=1730) – [yoshi](#) Feb 20 at 23:30



Janky at best

```
<a href="file:///server/folders/x/x/filename.ext">right click </a></td>
```

and then right click, select "copy location" option, and then paste into url.

answered Apr 24 '15 at 1:25



[Chet Meinzer](#)

361 ● 4 ● 13

If you are running IIS on your PC you can add the directory that you are trying to reach as a Virtual Directory. To do this you right-click on your Site in ISS and press "Add Virtual Directory". Name the virtual folder. Point the virtual folder to your folder location on your local PC. You also have to supply credentials that has privileges to access the specific folder eg. HOSTNAME\username and password. After that you can access the file in the virtual folder as any other file on your site.

[http://sitename.com/virtual\\_folder\\_name/filename.fileextension](http://sitename.com/virtual_folder_name/filename.fileextension)

By the way, this also works with Chrome that otherwise does not accept the file-protocol file://

Hope this helps someone :)

edited Jan 27 '15 at 12:24

answered Jan 27 '15 at 12:07



[user3507261](#)

31 ● 2

Thanks for answer! I've put file:/// before a path to a file however when I click on it happens nothing. I have to open it with Ctrl (in new tab). Why is it so? – [Piotr Czyż](#) Jul 30 '15 at 9:30

This is an fantastic solution :) +1 for not just mentioning the file protocol – [Squazz](#) Jan 21 at 14:53