



508 Document Accessibility – Creating Accessible PDFs

Preconditions

Converted Documents

If you convert another format to a PDF, verifying accessibility before conversion makes accessible PDFs easier. For example, check the accessibility of a Word document before converting to a PDF will make the tagging process easier in Acrobat.

Some PDF print tools do not carry accessibility data when converting documents. Use Acrobat to convert the document and assure the best results.

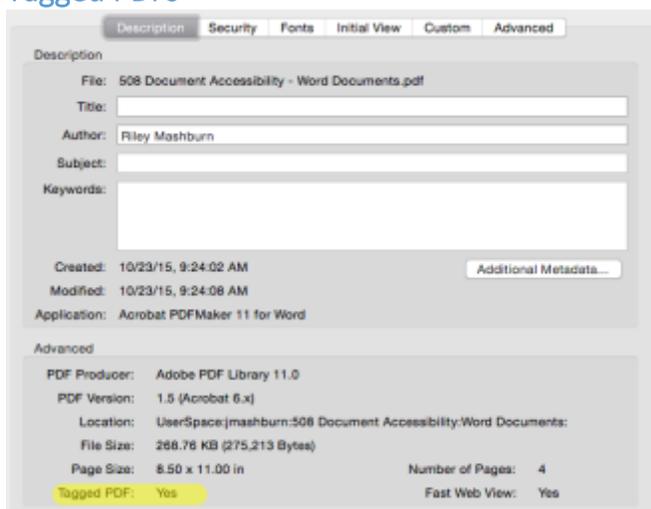
PDF Portfolios

PDF Portfolios combine multiple PDFs and/or other document types to make one PDF document. When looking at accessibility, you need to first address the accessibility of each of these documents independently using the appropriate processes for testing that document type.

Adobe LiveCycle

If you have documents that were created with Adobe LiveCycle, you cannot verify accessibility in Acrobat Professional. For accessibility of LiveCycle documents, see [Adobe's Accessibility Site for LiveCycle](#).

Tagged PDFs



For 508 Accessibility, you must verify that a pdf is “tagged.” To do so, go to File> Properties, and the advanced section of the description tab has a field that specifies if a PDF is tagged.

Auto-Tag PDF

If the PDF isn't tagged, you can go into the accessibility tools and click "Autotag document" to generate tags. You will need to go back through to verify correct tagging and reading order

Scripts

Scripts in a PDF have to be manually checked for accessibility.

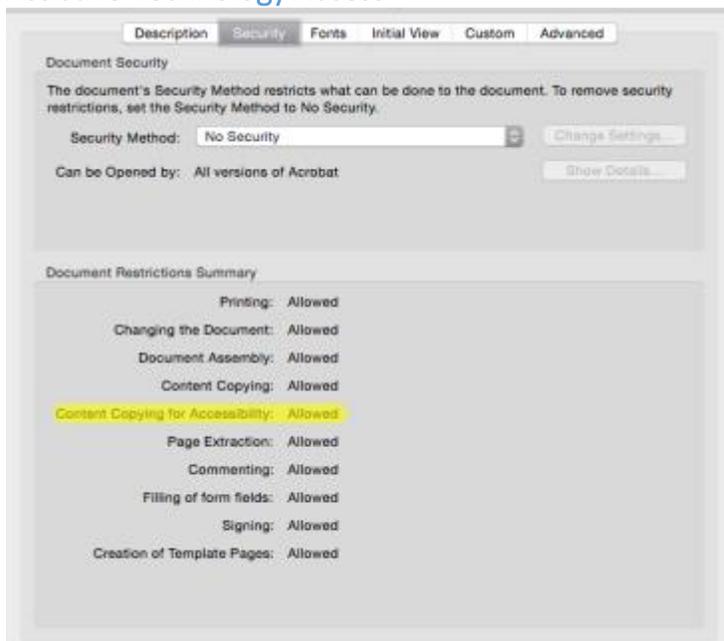
Scanned Documents

If a document was scanned in and made a PDF, if it wasn't processed through an Optical Character Recognition (OCR) process, it's considered an image-only PDF, and will automatically fail any Adobe accessibility checks. The biggest issue with OCR is inconsistencies between character recognition and actual intended text. You will have to verify all text detected by OCR is correct. Adobe Acrobat Pro has OCR built in to it, but it won't always detect the text. In this case, it may be best to recreate the document manually if you need a 508 accessible copy of it.

Descriptive Filename

Part of 508 Accessibility is the file name. Any default name given by software such as "portfolio1," "document1," or any internal name you may have given a document such as "final working copy" won't be descriptive enough. The file name doesn't need to list every detail, but something as simple as "Chapter 6 Assignment" will suffice. Think of the filename being read to you and trying to recognize it only by the title. Would you be able to identify it from the title?

Assistive Technology Access



Some security settings on PDF documents will keep the content from being read by accessibility software. In the security tab of the document properties, verify that "content copying for accessibility" is allowed.

Document Language

Setting the document language allows screen readers to know how to pronounce words that it reads. This setting is in the “advanced” tab of document properties.

Details of Accessible PDFs

Document Tags



Screen reader use document structure tags to read PDF documents in the correct order. Anything relevant in the document, including headings, paragraphs, lists, images, tables, forms, and any other meaningful objects need a tag so that screen readers will recognize their information. To view tags in Acrobat, go to View > Show/Hide > Navigation Panes > Tags. The easiest way to check your tags is to click on the first one and go down the line to make sure that the tags are in the correct reading order and to verify there aren't any inconsistencies or errors in the tagging.

Decorative Content and Images

Any images that have meaning to the user need to have alternative text for screen readers. Purely visual elements can be tagged as an artifact or decorative item so that screen readers will skip them.

Headers, Footers, & Watermarks

Any information in a header, footer, or watermark needs to be corresponded to a tag at or near the top of the page.

Heading Tags

Custom formatting is great for visual appeal, but screen readers can't differentiate text formatting. Any headings need to be tagged as such so that screen readers can specify this to the user.

Lists

Lists need to be tagged as a list. Microsoft Word will typically automatically convert a numbered list, but Acrobat does not. Be sure that lists show in your tags pane as a list and not plain text.

Section Language

Some documents may have multiple languages. In this case, you can use a tag to specify section language.

Data Tables

Tables need to be tagged accordingly. The entire table should be in a <table> tag. Any header cells within the table need to be tagged with <th>

Accessible Example

<i>ID</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Grad. Year</i>
81111111	John Doe	2016
81111112	Jane Smith	2018

Links

Links need to be described clearly by the link text or within the text around it.

- Accessible examples
 - Details on Homecoming week can be found at angelo.edu/homecoming
 - [More details](#) on Homecoming Week can be found on the Angelo State website.
- Inaccessible example
 - [Click here](#) for more information.

Color and Sensory Characteristics

Screen readers can't convey color, size, shape, and specific location to the user. If you have documents that use these elements to convey meaning, there needs to be corresponding text that also conveys the meaning.

Accessible Example

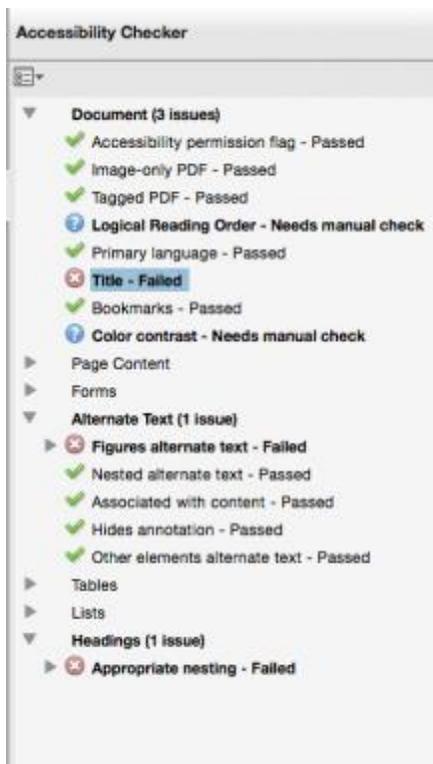
A	
B	
C	

Checking Accessibility in Acrobat

-  Autotag Document
-  Autotag Form Fields
-  Reading Options
-  Full Check
-  Accessibility Report
-  Identify Form Fields
-  Set Alternate Text
-  Setup Assistant
-  Reading Order

In Acrobat, select View > Tools > Accessibility to open the tool drawer with the accessibility tools. Select Full Check from the menu, and select all options in the report and select “Start Checking.”

Once the report runs, the Accessibility Check will open and show any issues listed in categories. If an object is listed as “Failed,” Acrobat will give you options on how to fix the issue. Figure 6 (Shown on the next page) is an example of some errors you may see after a typical PDF conversion.



Notes

PDF accessibility isn’t all that hard, it only takes a few extra minutes of work once you convert a document to PDF. The errors you will typically encounter on an average PDF conversion take only a few minutes to address as long as you correctly convert the documents to PDF