

PDF Accessibility Guide

This guide is designed to help you make your Adobe PDF's as accessible as possible to all users. The guide is broken up into sections based on what type of source file you are creating a PDF from. I will be referring to the location of the controls in Acrobat Professional 8. The controls may or may not be in similar locations for earlier versions. If you have any questions or are unsure of how to do something, you can always contact the Faculty Technology Center at 618-650-5697 or at ftc_help@siue.edu.

Microsoft Word

Microsoft Word is probably the most common source of a document before it becomes a PDF. Here are a few things to keep in mind when you are creating your original document in Word.

Headings

Always make sure that your document is structured with proper paragraph styles. For instance, use headings, such as heading 1, heading 2, etc., listed in the drop down box next to fonts to structure it. Just making the text larger, or bolding it, does not work. This makes it impossible for any software to identify the text as a heading.

Alternative Text

If you have added an image to your document, you will need to add alternative text to the image to convey what you have included an image of. To add alternative text, simply right click on the image and select **Format Picture**. Then select the **Web** tab and enter the alternative text into the box. The alternative text should be short but descriptive.

Tables

As opposed to using a series of spaces and tabs to format data, choose the table editor by clicking the **Table** menu item, **Insert**, then **Table**.

For creating a two column effect on a page, do not use the table editor. Word will format this for you if you click on the **Format** menu item and then select **Columns**.

PDF Maker

If you have Adobe Acrobat installed you will also have Adobe PDF Maker installed within Word. There are a few settings you will want to make sure are enabled before you create your PDF. To change the settings, select the **Adobe PDF** menu and then click **Change Conversion Settings**. Below I've listed two of the tabs you will see and what values to look for in these particular tabs.

Settings: “Enable Accessibility and Reflow with tagged Adobe PDF” should be checked.

Word: Select which Word elements get converted to their PDF equivalents, convert Word headings to PDF bookmarks, and establish heading levels.

When you have done that, click **OK** and choose the **Adobe PDF** Menu item and then click **Convert to Adobe PDF**. Do not print to Adobe PDF, this will not tag your document correctly and will make more work for you later.

Repairing Existing PDF's

Documents Scanned as Images

Many times people will scan a text document into a computer as an image and then attempt to create a PDF with it. While the PDF may look okay, it is impossible for screen readers to pick up the text or for Adobe Reader/Acrobat to adjust the text for users with disabilities. Here are a couple of ways to tell if it is a scanned image:

- Zoom in on the page and look for jagged edges on the text
- Try searching for text on the page, if it can't find any text, it is an image
- Try running Acrobat's **Read out Loud** function under the **View** menu

Here are two ways to fix these kinds of documents:

- One method is to scan the document as an OCR (Optical Character Recognition) instead of an image
- Another method, if the document is already in PDF form, is to let Acrobat convert the image to text using OCR.

To convert an image to a text document, open the PDF in Adobe Acrobat. Under the **Document** menu choose **OCR Text Recognition** and then **Recognize Text Using OCR**. You should now be able to search the document and manipulate the text as you would a normal PDF.

Adding tags to a PDF

Tags allow for the document to be broken down into different sections, typically by the way you have used headers in your document. This allows your users to easily jump through your PDF only concentrating on the sections that are of interest to them. This is especially helpful for users using a screen reader as they will not want to listen to your entire 60 page document read out loud, when they are only interested in a particular section.

To check and see if your PDF is a tagged document, click on the **File** menu and select **Properties**. In the bottom left of the new window, there should be a field named **Tagged PDF**. There will be a simple Yes or No next to the field, indicating whether or not your document is a tagged PDF. If the answer was No, read on to find out how to quickly and easily tag your document.

To add tags to your PDF select the **Advanced** Menu, **Accessibility**, and then **Add Tags to Document**. Acrobat will take care of the rest for you.

Document Structure

After Acrobat has tagged your PDF, it is a good idea to take a quick look and make sure it put your PDF into the sections you had in mind. To do this click on the **Advanced** menu item, **Accessibility**, and then **Touch Up Reading Order**.

You should notice that your document is broken up into sections with gray boxes. If Acrobat didn't break things up properly, you may have multiple sections merged together or broken up too much. To fix this, just drag a box with your left mouse button around the area you would like and click one of the text, heading, table, or other boxes to define what that area will be labeled as.

You can also add alternate text to images here if you have not already done so. Simply right click on the image and select **Edit Alternate Text**.

Accessibility Check

You're finally ready to check your document for accessibility. To start the accessibility check, click on the **Advanced** Menu item, select **Accessibility**, and then **Full Check**. On the next window, click **Start Checking** and you're ready to go.

You should be given a report in the left hand window on errors that were found. Acrobat does a good job of telling you what these errors mean and how to fix them. Occasionally you will receive errors that are difficult to pinpoint or seem meaningless. If you can't find what is wrong, or it seems trivial, your document is most likely in good shape.