Tips for Accessibility in Adobe Acrobat Pro

Convert to Microsoft Word

To start with, if you need to make edits to a PDF and you do not have the Word version, go to "convert" in Acrobat Pro and pick Microsoft Word to convert it to Word. Word is much easier to use to correct issues than trying to use Acrobat.

Making a Word Document a PDF (Document must be accessible)

Once your document is ready, click File → scroll down to Export → click Create PDF/XPS Document → click Create PDF/XPS on the right side. If a yellow box comes up and says, "Investigate Accessibility," you need to fix the word document before saving it as a pdf. If the box does not come up, click on "Create PDF/XPS."

Adobe Acrobat Pro installs the "Create Adobe PDF" option into Microsoft Office. Using this method comes with many drawbacks, most notably accessibility issues. If you notice an accessible Office document is no longer accessible as a PDF, make sure you haven't used this.
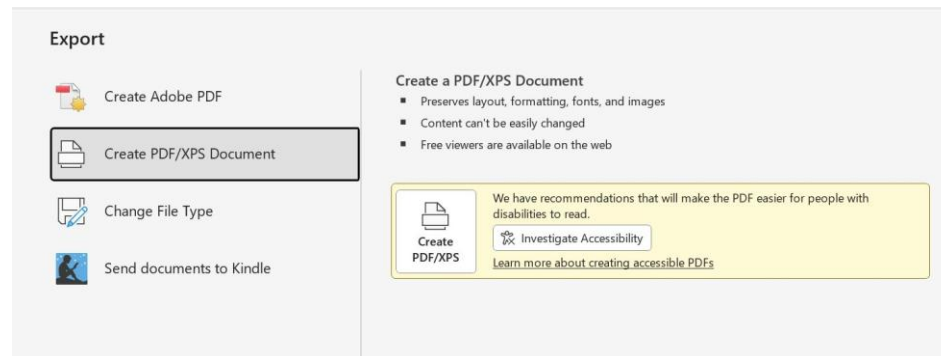
Quick Access Toolbar Customization

To get to the Accessibility Checker faster, add an accessibility icon to your toolbar – click the three dots on the Quick Access toolbar to customize.

The Three Big Items to Fix in Acrobat Pro:

Where possible, accessibility issues should be fixed in Microsoft Word. A missing title and alternative text for images can (and should) be fixed in Word but are easy to fix in Acrobat if there are mismatches. Often, tab order is easier to fix in Acrobat Pro.

1. First, make sure the proper title for the document is listed. You should have saved the document in Word with a title. If you forget to do this and the "fail" message for the title appears, click on the three dots and click "fix." Click to uncheck the "Leave as is" option under the tile, then type the document title and click OK.
2. Acrobat Pro will also fix Page content → tab order. Click on "Tab order" → click the three dots menu → click "Fix."
3. To fix alternative text, click on "Prepare for accessibility" → click "Add Alternative Text."

Manual Checks in Acrobat Pro

Color Contrast

If you use Word, it will fix the color contrast issues automatically. You can manually "pass" this issue in Acrobat.

Reading Order

You must manually check this. Choose "All Tools" → "Prepare for accessibility" → "Reading Order." To get to this faster, you can add it to the side panel on the right side of the Acrobat window by right clicking an empty spot on the panel and checking the box next to "Order" with an icon that looks like a "Z." Depending on which version was initially installed, it may or may not already be there.

1. Move objects around on the page to indicate your reading order (drag the item on the right panel to where you want it to be placed).
2. When moving layered items, always move the item around, as the text may disappear under the shading.
3. Change blank lines to artifacts by clicking blank lines and then clicking on "background/artifact" to remove them from the reading order.
4. If the document has shading, it will be indicated as a path, and these also need to be made backgrounds/artifacts. Be very careful when making these changes and save the document as you go.
5. Merge split paragraphs or separate combined paragraphs by clicking on the top right box in the reading order panel. Go to the text and draw a box on the area to be combined or separated and click "text/paragraph" to assign it.
6. Save your document constantly because once you change the Reading Order, it cannot be undone.

Report

After verifying the reading order, click on "Logical Reading Order" → click the three dots → click "Pass." Also, if you have not done so, click "Color Contrast" → click the three dots → click "Pass." Click on Accessibility Report, click on the three dots, and click on Attach Report to Document. This will let anyone know that the document has been manually checked and passed. The report will stay with the document unless a new check is run. You will have to repeat the process and reattach the report.

Read Aloud in Acrobat Pro

To confirm your accessibility fixes and experience the document in a similar way to how someone with vision impairments might experience it, you can use Acrobat's document reader.

Read aloud options

Click Menu → Preferences → Reading (click all but override the reading tagged order) → OK.

To read:

 Click Menu → view → read out loud → activate read out loud → select your option.

Document and Accessibility Best Practices

Fix as many issues as possible in Microsoft Office

PDF documents are not as easy to edit as Microsoft Office documents. Therefore, make sure you use the Accessibility tools in Office prior to saving as a PDF.

Table of Contents

Any document over 20 pages should have a table of contents. Not only can this assist people who have accessibility needs, it can help anyone get around in the document.

Header and footer content

Page headers and footers are usually placed automatically as a function of pagination. As such, this content is not part of the reading order of the document and is not considered to be "real content."