



## DOCUMENT ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES

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# Making PDFs [More\*] Accessible: Remediating PDFs using Adobe Acrobat

***\*It Starts at The Source:*** While the best time to ensure document accessibility is during the [authoring process](#) (pre-PDF), most issues are fixable via Adobe Acrobat's built-in accessibility tools.

### Overview

If you're relatively familiar with Web Accessibility (making a web page document accessible), you're in luck! A PDF is just another document; thus, most of the same guidelines & methodologies apply. Just like HTML tags/markup, semantically tagging a PDF document enables assistive technology users to understand the content structure. (Ever used the Formatting menu in Word/Google Docs to make text a heading or a bulleted list? Congrats! You've already practiced authoring an accessible document.)

*For simple text documents, this entails:*

- Setting the Title & Language of the document
- Conveying the Content Structure (e.g., indicating headings, lists & tables)

*If your document contains non-text content (e.g., images/graphics):*

- Providing equivalent text for meaningful images/graphics (like logos)
- Hiding images/graphics that serve a purely aesthetic purpose via markup

*If your document contains any links:*

- Ensuring links in scanned documents are converted into working links
- Assigning user-friendly labels to URL-only links (e.g., "<https://ny.gov/>")

*If your document contains a form field/control (e.g., text field, radio button):*

- Ensuring form fields are rendered as interactive, fillable form fields with an accurate label
- Indicating what type of form field/control it is, whether an option is selected/checked, and completing a field is required

*For content authors, this also means:*

- Using colors with sufficient contrast & not relying on color alone to convey information
- Providing visual labels for form fields & indicating when a form field is required

- Providing white space between sentences/paragraphs for readability

## Before You Begin

- **Have the working file handy?** If you have access to the source document, it's easier to check & fix your accessibility issues [using Microsoft's built-in Accessibility Checker](#).
- **But first, "Save As":** Whenever you begin working on a PDF, it is strongly advised to **make a copy first** and work on the copy (just in case).
- **Setting Up Acrobat:** Some of Acrobat's built-in accessibility tools are not visible by default. See [Configuring Acrobat Pro](#) or [Enabling the Accessibility Tools](#) to get setup for a painless remediation success.

## Using Adobe Acrobat Pro to Check & Fix Accessibility Issues

### Option 1: Use the Accessibility Checker to verify, review & fix issues

The Accessibility Checker does just that; it checks how compliant your PDF is and displays a panel listing the failures & successes with prompts to do address and explain each finding.

#### STEP 1:

Run the [Accessibility Checker](#) to check for any accessibility issues.

#### STEP 2:

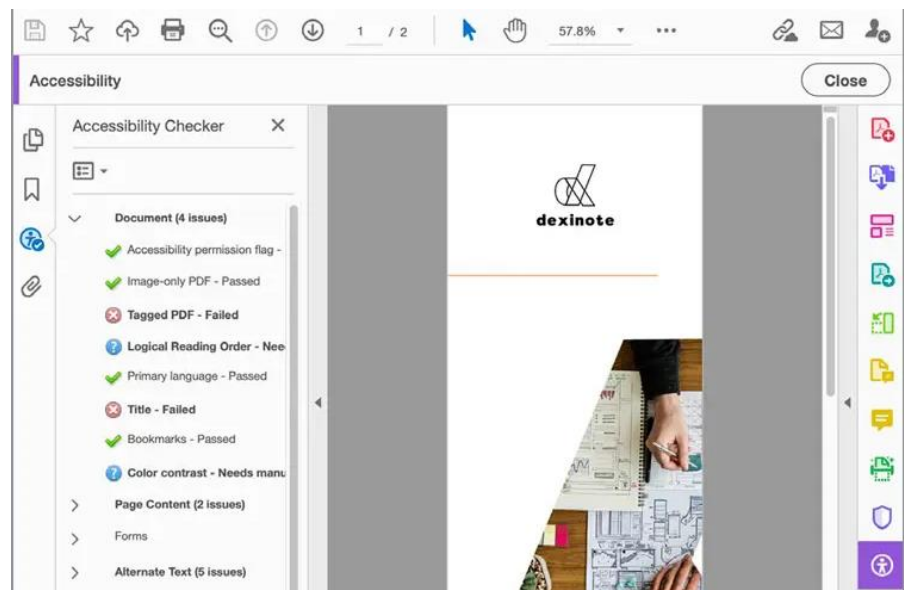
[Review the Accessibility Checker Results](#): Some

issues (e.g., adding a missing title), are easily fixable in the Accessibility Checker panel. "Tagged PDF" & Reading Order issues are most easily fixed via the Tags panel (Step 3).

#### STEP 3:

[Open the Tags Panel](#) to Review & Repair Tags: If most of your content is not tagged, you can use the Auto-Tag\*\* tool to automatically tag your content. Alternatively, edit/delete tags (including using drag-and-drop to reorder or combine tags) using the [Tags Panel](#).

Repeat Step 1 as needed. Rerun Accessibility Checker to confirm your issues are fixed.





## Option 2: Use the [“Make Accessible” Wizard Action Tool](#)\*\*

This wizard walks you through each step of making your PDF accessible, such as setting the title and tab order, detecting any form fields, adding alt text, and taking care of the tagging.

**\*\*Running the Wizard Action or Auto Tag tools will overwrite any pre-existing tags. Automated tagging tools are cool, but they cannot guarantee 100% correct results. To manually repair malformed any tags, check out the [Repairing Reading Order](#) resources.**

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## Resources for Fixing PDF Accessibility Issues

Listed in order of simplicity, from simple text documents to full-blown fillable forms.

- [Ensuring Security Settings Interfere w/Screen Readers](#)

### Converting Scanned Documents

- [Converting Scanned Documents \(Images of Text\) Into Real, Selectable Text](#)
- [Identifying Fillable Form Fields on Scanned Documents](#)

### Setting the Title of a Document

- [Setting the Title of Your Document](#)
- [Writing Descriptive Document/Page Titles](#)

### Specifying Language(s):

- For Single Language Docs: [Specifying your Document's Default Language](#)
- For Mixed Language Docs: [Specifying text in the non-default language](#)

### Conveying the Content Structure:

- Headings:
  - [Ranking Headings to Organize Content](#)
  - [Adding/Editing Headings & Subheadings](#)
- Lists:
  - [Repairing List Formatting](#)
  - [PDF List Tag Structure \(Overview\)](#)
- Tables:
  - [Repairing Table Tags](#) via the Reading Order tool
  - [Editing Table Tags](#)
- Abbreviations: [Providing explanations/expanded versions for abbreviations](#)



- Headers & Footers: [Indicating Running Headers & Footers \(e.g., Page Numbers\)](#) – *Note: The easiest way to provide page headers and footers is during the [authoring process](#).*

### **Repairing the Reading Order:**

- [Using the Tags Panel to Repair/Reorder Tags](#)
- [Combining Duplicate Tags](#)
- [Fixing Incorrectly Identified Tags](#)
- [About the Tags Panel \(Deep Dive\)](#)

### **Links/Hyperlinks:**

- [Creating/Adding a Hyperlink](#)
- [Replacing Visible Link Text for Screen Reader Users](#) (ideal for URL-only links, e.g., "<https://ny.gov/>")
- Repairing Broken Links:
  - [Editing/Deleting Text \(e.g., link text\)](#)
  - [Changing a Link's Destination \(Edit "Link Action"\)](#)

### **Non-Text Content (Images/Graphics)**

- [Alt Text for Meaningful Non-text Content \(Images/Graphics\)](#)
- [Removing decorative graphics from reading order \(via the Artifact tag\)](#)
- [Adding Alt Text to Images \(Figure tags\)](#)

### **Form Fields**

Applicable if your PDF contains a form field/component (e.g., text field, checkbox, radio button, dropdown, submission button):

- [Creating Accessible Form Fields \(Overview\)](#)
- [Specifying name, role, state, and/or value](#) for form fields
- [Labeling Form Fields/Controls via the Forms tool](#)
- [Indicating Required Form Fields](#)

### **Overviews, Tips & Tricks for PDFs**

- [Creating accessible PDFs with Acrobat Pro](#)
- [Using Semantic Structure \(Harvard University\)](#)
- [PDF Tips & Tricks \(TGPI Website\)](#)
- [Acrobat Accessibility Techniques \(Web AIM\)](#)



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## Authoring an Accessible Document

The best way to ensure a document's accessibility is by formatting the content in your authoring tool (e.g., Microsoft Word, Google Docs, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook too). Microsoft Office tools also come with built-in accessibility tools to check & fix issues.

While Microsoft's Accessibility Checker *is* awesome, it's not exhaustive. It will **not** report:

- ✗ Missing document title
- ✗ Inaccurate heading hierarchy
- ✗ Whether an image is decorative or required alternative text

## Using the Built-in “Accessibility Checker” in Microsoft Office

### Remediating documents you've already created:

Already done? [Run the Accessibility Checker](#), review the “Recommended Actions”, and resolve the issues found accordingly.

### Authoring an accessible document in Real-Time:

Just getting started? [Run the Accessibility Checker while you're working](#) and resolve your accessibility issues in real-time.

## Resources for Authoring an Accessible Document

- [Creating Accessible MS Office Docs](#) (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, & Outlook)
- [Best Practices for Creating Accessible Word Documents](#)
- [Using Word's Built-In Accessibility Checkers \(Overview, Tips & Tricks\)](#)
- [Making Word Docs Accessible \(Video Tutorials\)](#)
- [Understanding the Issues Flagged: "Errors" vs "Warnings" vs "Tips"](#)
- Have the latest Microsoft Word desktop app? If so, give their new [Accessibility Assistant](#) a try!

### For Designers/Creatives:

- [TGPI Color Contrast Analyzer](#)
- [WebAIM Contrast Checker Website](#)
- [Text Spacing\\*\\*](#) (\*\*Advisory: PDFs are exempt from text spacing WCAG criteria, but it's always great to make your text more readable for everyone.)