Adobe Acrobat Pro®

Accessibility Quick Card

Follow these best practices to help make PDFs accessible. It's always best to start with an accessible source document (for example, Word® or InDesign®). Then, create the PDF and use Acrobat Pro® tools to verify accessibility and fix any issues.

Use the Accessibility Check tool

This built-in tool in **Tools** > **Accessibility** > **Accessibility Check** provides details on potential accessibility issues and gives suggestions on how to correct them. However, it can't find everything. Do manual checks in addition to the automated accessibility checker.

Convert scanned text

Make sure the document contains real text. Scanned documents often render text as an image, which is not accessible for screen readers. If the document does not have real text, recreate the PDF file using the source document or convert it using character recognition software.

Check Document Properties

Confirm title, subject, and author are entered and correct. Verify the language setting matches the document's language.

Review alt text

Make sure informative and concise alt text descriptions exist for important non-text elements.

Artifact decorative images

Artifacts are elements that are ignored by a screen reader, such as a background texture that does not contain important text. You can change an element to or from an artifact using the Reading Order panel.

Check color contrast

Color contrast must meet standards throughout the document. Normal text to background ratio is 4.5:1 (for DHS, this standard is 7:1). Non-text elements and large text (a minimum of 14pt bold or 18pt) ratios are 3:1 (for DHS, this standard is 4.5:1). Fix the source document, if needed.

Check for tags

Check the Accessibility tags panel to ensure there are tags, and if not, add them. Tags contain the contents of the document and make it possible for assistive technologies to read and interact with PDF content. Headings (H1–H6), paragraphs (P), and images (Figure) are examples of tag types.

Check logical reading order

Review the order of the tags in the Accessibility tags panel to confirm logical reading order.

Check tag structure

While checking logical reading order, also check whether tagged elements are properly structured. This includes headings, tables, lists, and links.

Check form fields and buttons

If the PDF is intended to be an interactive document, add tool tips to the fillable form fields and buttons. Set the tab order for the form fields, and ensure proper keyboard focus.

Check tab order and hyperlinks

Use the tab key to check the tab order of all interactive elements. These include form fields, buttons, and links.