



## Your 9-Step PDF Accessibility Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide to help ensure your PDFs are accessible.

### 1. Create an accessible source document.

The key to an accessible PDF is to start with an accessible source document.

- Review the [various document accessibility checklists](#) to make your source documents accessible. If your source document passes accessibility and you convert it to PDF properly, the document by default, will be mostly if not fully accessible.
- To confirm accessibility, once you have converted to PDF, run it through the [Adobe Acrobat Professional Accessibility Checker](#) or the [free PAC 2024 Checker](#).
- If you have followed the checklists and the checker confirms the PDF is free of accessibility errors, your work is done.

The following checklist items are especially helpful in cases where you don't have the source document or converting your accessible document to a PDF enterable form.

### 2. My PDF has tags and includes readable text.

- Tags should be semantic (headings, paragraphs, lists, tables, etc.).
- The first heading should be an "H1" and only heading levels 1-6 should be used.
  - Heading levels should not be skipped (e.g. H2 followed by H4).
  - Heading levels can restart (e.g., H3 followed by H4, followed by H2).
  - Headings give you the ability to automatically add a table of contents to your document.
- The document should not just be a scanned image of text. The text needs to be converted to readable text.

### 3. Meaningful images in my PDF have appropriate alternate text.

- Alternate text should be as clear and concise as possible.
- Phrases such as "image of" or "graphic of" should be avoided since screen readers already announce properly tagged images as "graphic".
- Decorative images should be properly artifacted (i.e., marked appropriately so they don't interfere with usability and accessibility).

#### 4. My PDF has a logical reading order.

- For most screen readers, the order in which your tags appear in the tags tree determines the logical reading order of the document. Properly ordering tags ensures a cohesive reading experience.
- The reflow order of your PDF should also be logical. This can be controlled by ensuring containers in your content pane are in the appropriate stacking order.

#### 5. My PDF passes color contrast requirements.

- WCAG 2.1 level AA requires a [color contrast ratio](#) of at least 4.5:1 ratio for normal text and 3:1 ratio for large text. Non-text images (like icon buttons chart objects) require a color contrast ratio of 3:1.
  - Large text is defined as 14 point bold, or 18 point.
- Information should not be conveyed solely through color.

#### 6. Tables in my PDF are tagged correctly.

- Data tables must have table headers for columns and rows.
- Column and row scope should be designated to associate header cells with data cells.
- Complex tables should be avoided. If they exist, they should use cell ID's for association.
- Avoid tables for layout.

#### 7. My PDF contains the necessary metadata.

- Specify the document language to assist screen readers in pronunciation and navigation.
- Include a meaningful title of the PDF and set the document title to show in the window options.

#### 8. PDF Form fields (created in Adobe Acrobat Professional) and other interactive elements in my PDF are tagged correctly and are navigable by keyboard alone.

- Ensure form fields have clear labels and descriptive tooltips.
- Ensure the appropriate tab order has been set.
- Ensure hyperlinks have meaningful link text. Avoid generic phrases like “click here.”

#### 9. I have thoroughly tested my PDF with a combination of automated PDF checkers and manual testing.

- Automated PDF checkers can help identify issues such as missing alternate text, untagged content, and missing metadata such as a document title or language.
- Manual testing of the PDF is always required to ensure accuracy, readability, and navigation.

Keep this checklist handy and refer to it anytime you create new PDFs. It's a great way to start making your website and digital content fully accessible.

## Need the ability to do more advanced PDF accessibility remediation for complex PDF documents?

A few examples include:

- Documents with a more complex design (like newsletters, brochures or data visualizations)
- Documents which combine multiple files from many different formats (like Annual Reports or large meeting agendas)
- Scanned documents where there is no source document and need to be converted to text

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