

Creating Accessible PDF Files

Introduction

PDF files are made accessible in order to enable their use by the disabled and people with visual or hearing impairments by means of a screen review tool, a Braille embosser. In addition, accessibility functions make a document easier to operate and read when using, for instance, a computer or a mobile device. Accessibility functions can be divided into two categories: one makes reading PDF files easier, whereas the other makes it possible to create accessible files.

Accessible PDF files are marked with code tags (PDF codes), which define, for instance, the structure of the document. This means that the code tags indicate which parts of text are headers, and which parts form the content or function as a bookmark, etc. Adding code labels in a source application generally yields better results than adding them afterwards, for example, in Adobe Acrobat.

MS Word 2010

It is good to take accessibility into account as soon as you start creating a new document, particularly when designing headers, paragraphs, tables, images and links. In MS word 2012, use the **Styles** offered in the programme when creating paragraphs, lists and columns.

If the document you are creating contains images, they must be added to a textual substitution so that image content is transmitted to screen review utilities. An MS Word 2010 text substitute can be added in the following way: right click on the image and choose **Format Picture**. After this, find the **Alt Text** tab and give the image a **Title** and a **Description**.

Adding text substitutions for links is also worthwhile. In the case of links, a text substitution can be added by selecting the link, right clicking on the selection and choosing **Hyperlink**. The descriptive text is added in the **Text to Display** space. Enter the actual *http* address in the **Address** space.

Ascertaining Accessibility and Saving a Document

MS Word 2010 has an automated **Accessibility Checker**, which tracks and reports any errors or compatibility issues. In addition, this function suggests solutions to problems. The **Accessibility Checker** can be enabled using the **File** tab: choose **Check for issues** and then **Check Accessibility**.

After this, an accessibility checker window opens on the right; the results can be monitored in the window in real time.

In the **File** tab, save the document file with a name of your choice using the **Save as** function. Save the file in PDF form and ensure that the **Document structure tags for accessibility** have been enabled in the **Options** menu.

Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro

It is also possible to determine whether an existing document is accessible in Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro. This function is available in the **Advanced** menu: Advanced -> Accessibility -> Full Check. The **Full Check** function performs a more thorough check than Quick Check and also provides instructions for troubleshooting.

It is often the case that existing PDF files lack text substitutions for images. In Acrobat 9 Pro, there is a **TouchUp Object Tool**, which can be used for tagging images. This tool is available in: Tools -> Advanced editing -> TouchUp Object Tool. After you select the tool, left click on the image, then right click on **Properties**. After this, add **Title** and **Alternate text** using the **Tag** tab.

For screen review utilities, check the document reading order. For this purpose, Acrobat 9 has a **TouchUp Reading Order** function. This function can be found in the menu Advanced -> Accessibility -> TouchUp Reading Order. Reading order is determined by tagging headers, text, images, tables, etc. These are chosen for tagging by left clicking the mouse to open a box on a chosen target. Each box is given a tag from the **TouchUp Reading Order** window. The programme displays the reading order numbers above the targets.

Sources and Further Information

[Adobe instructions regarding accessible PDF documents](#)