

What should I keep in mind when making an accessible PDF?

- **Create your PDFs by creating your document and exporting from Microsoft Word.** This will make tagging your PDFs easier. You can also use design software like Adobe InDesign or Adobe Illustrator, but this will make tagging your document more complicated. **Do not create your documents in Photoshop.**
- **Practice accessible content guidelines**, such as keeping your text simple, having descriptive link text, and explaining acronyms within your text the first time they appear.
- **Don't scan in your PDFs** if you can avoid it.
- **When in doubt, test it out!** Test your PDF after tagging with assistive technologies such as screen readers, and have your peers try it out as well.
- **Consider whether you really need a PDF.** Web content is more easily accessible and might suit your content goals better.

What's a tag?

- Tags are a “**set of standard structure types and attributes that allow page content such as text, graphics, and images to be extracted and reused for other purposes.**”
- Without these tags, assistive technologies will have a hard time interpreting your PDF file. **No tags = no accessibility!**
- Tags have no impact on the visual layout of a PDF. **Think of your PDF as a three-layer burrito.**
 - **The visual layer** is the whole thing. It contains the layout and appearance of the PDF.
 - **The content layer** contains basic text formatting like fonts and colors.
 - **The tags layer** contains the document's structure, such as links, lists, tables, headings, and the like.



How do I tag a PDF in Adobe Acrobat?

1. **Open the Tags Panel.** View > Show/Hide > Navigation Panes > Tags
2. **If you have no tags, create them.** In the Tags panel, select “Autotag Document.” This will generate tags for you in what Adobe Acrobat thinks is the correct hierarchy. **Check to make sure this is correct because more likely than not, it isn’t.**
3. **Edit your tags.** If you see a tag that needs changing; right click it and navigate to “Properties.” In the given “Object Properties” modal, navigate to the “Tag” tab, select the appropriate tag from the “Type” menu drop down (you may need to scroll through the options), and fill in any of the relevant fields.

What common tags might I see?

Heading tags (<H1>, <H2>, <H3>...)

Headings are the main way a PDF provides structure to its content. Do not skip heading levels (such as going from <H1> to <H3> without an <H2>), or have more than one <H1> tag per document.

Paragraph tags (<P>)

Most informational text other than headings and lists will fall under a paragraph tag.

List tags (<L>, , <LBody>)

List tags help separate listed content from general paragraph content. Much like HTML, a list will start with an <L> tag, followed by a List Item tag for each item, followed by an <LBody> tag for each item’s content.

Link tags (<Link>, Link-OBJR)

Link tags help denote hyperlinked text in your PDF. Every link tag needs to have a Link-OBJR tag following it.

How do I review my PDF’s reading order?

1. **Start by using your up and down arrow keys in the Tags pane to check the order.** As you navigate through each tag, that tag’s content will be highlighted. Make sure it makes sense.
2. **If it doesn’t make sense, go to All tools > Prepare for Accessibility > Reading Order.** Alternatively, you can right click the tags panel and select **Reading Order**.
3. **Select Show Order Panel.** Your left-hand panel will change slightly to show the reading order.
4. **Drag the item you want to the order you want it listed in the Order Panel.** After you complete this drag, the highlighted regions will re-number themselves to match that order.

Where can I learn more?

General PDF Accessibility

- [Tagged PDF Best Practice Guide from the PDF Association](#)
- [PDF Techniques section from the WCAG 2.2 guidelines](#)
- [A number of authoring guides and checklists from Section508.gov](#)

Tagging PDFs in Adobe Acrobat

- [A near complete list of PDF tags from accessible-pdf.info](#)
- [Training videos on how to test and remediate PDFs from Section508.gov](#)
- [A simplified guide on tagging PDFs from Harvard University's digital accessibility office](#)
- [Adobe's Creating Accessible PDF guide \(and displaying the many different ways to do so\)](#)