

## How to Create a Web-Ready PDF for EPA

Before posting a PDF on EPA's website, it must meet EPA's Web standards and accessibility requirements under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act.

In order to make a good, web-ready PDF, follow these steps:

### 1. Make sure your original document is "clean"

Keep the format as simple as you can and use styling built into the word processor. This makes it easier to tag the document for accessibility.

- Avoid placing graphics, text or tables side by side.
- Use standard fonts.
- Use styles, like Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.
- Use the function for creating bulleted and numbered lists rather than formatting list items manually.
- Use tabs and columns rather than spaces and tables for laying out your text.
- Add alt text to graphics.

### 2. Check document links

- All links to websites (URLs) in your document must include http:// or they will not be converted into active links in your PDF (example: <http://www.epa.gov>)
- Keep link text on one line. Links that wrap to a second line will not be converted into active links in your PDF. (Note: If a URL wraps to a second line and is hyperlinked in MS Office, the hyperlink will convert correctly.)

### 3. Add alternative text (alt-text) to images

Right-click the image. Go to Format Picture. Go to Web Tab and fill in alternative text. This step is important for accessibility.

### 4. Convert document to PDF

Start with any authoring software (Word, Excel, etc.).

If you are creating the PDF from a Microsoft Office application, choose the Acrobat Tab located underneath the header (on the far right of the home tab), choose Settings and click the following boxes: *Create Bookmarks*, *Add Links*, and *Enable Accessibility and Reflow with tagged Adobe PDF*. If not available use: Save as > PDF (use default settings check box which include, open file after publishing and optimize for online and printing).

**Note:** Do not use File > Print > Adobe PDF that you used in previous versions of Acrobat unless the Adobe PDF menu is unavailable in your authoring software. You will lose the document metadata and do not retain bookmarks if you use this method.

## 5. Make large documents user-friendly

Large documents pose two main kinds of problems:

- 1) People may not want to download a really large file. They may not have a fast Internet connection. They may not be willing to spend the time it takes to get the whole document. They may only want part of that enormous document.
- 2) It can be easy to get lost in a long document. For most people, flipping to the page you want is easier in a paper document than in a PDF.

To make large documents more user-friendly, [add bookmarks to your PDF](#) (links to Adobe tutorial).

**Note:** Breaking a large document into smaller parts – or “chunks” – is not recommended. Work with your local Web team if you think it may be appropriate to break a large document (>50MB) into smaller parts before posting on the Web.

## 6. Make PDF accessible

Making PDFs accessible is part of EPA's compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and it is required for all PDFs posted on EPA's website. PDFs generate a picture of how a printed document looks; this makes PDF a useful format for circulating picture perfect replicas of printed documents electronically. This is extremely useful when you need to preserve the look of a document, whether because of graphics and design or because of official pagination and formatting. Unfortunately, because a PDF is a picture of a page of text rather than actual text, PDFs are not inherently accessible to visually impaired people or search engines.

Adobe Acrobat Help has many resources about how to create accessible documents. Please see the help resources below in order to learn about how to make you PDF's accessible:

- [Adobe Acrobat PDF Accessibility Overview](#)
- [Adobe Acrobat Training Resources](#) (includes training for Acrobat 8, 9, X and XI)
- [Meet PDF Accessibility Standards](#)

### A note about scanned documents

EPA does not recommend scanning paper documents to post on the Web. You'll get better accessibility results with electronic PDF conversion (Convert to Adobe PDF or Print to Adobe PDF). Scanned documents are images instead of text, so anyone using assistive technologies will not be able to "see" the document unless you use Paper Capture in Adobe Acrobat or some other Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software.

### What about using a scanned image of a person's signature?

We often make documents available electronically to satisfy the E-FOIA requirements. Attorneys preparing for court are frequent requesters of EPA records and may need a copy of the signature page. Keep in mind that the web version of these documents would be courtesy copies, while the original with the signature is on file.

Our recommendations:

- Don't scan a document to include a signature. Use /s/ or "original signed by " as a way to indicate a hard copy signature is on file. Ex: /s/ *Charles Bert* or *Original signed by Charles Bert*.
- In cases where the record(s) has been requested 3 times or more, or when the agency anticipates the documents may be requested frequently, we should only scan the signature page.
- It's especially important to add metadata to a scanned PDF, particularly if you haven't used Optical Character Recognition (OCR) on it. Since the text of scanned documents is not searchable, search engines will have to rely on the metadata you provide. [Acrobat Help: PDF Properties and Metadata](#).

## 7. Reduce file size

The best way to reduce the file size of a PDF document is to use the PDF Optimizer tool in Adobe Acrobat. See [Adobe Acrobat Help: Optimizing PDFs](#) for information about how to reduce the file size of your document. While that guidance is for Adobe Acrobat Pro, there is also guidance on [Adobe Acrobat Help](#) for other versions.

## Questions?

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