NCAM WGBH

The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family
National Center for Accessible Media

PDF Quick List

The Carl and Ruth Shapiro Family National Center for Accessible Media at WGBH (NCAM) offers these tips for addressing the most common issues when converting documents to accessible PDF.

In your source document

Create structure from the start:
- Use tool features to create lists and tables. (In Word, use the bulleted or numbered list features on the Home ribbon and the Table feature on the Insert ribbon.)
- Use styles to create headings – only one H1 on the document title, H2 on major section titles, etc. Adjust styles to match the font features in your design, rather than changing font size and features for each piece of text.

Export for accessibility:
- Acrobat Plug-in for Office should be installed if you have Acrobat Pro. Look for Acrobat on the right end of the menu bar.
- Alternate instructions for Microsoft Office: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/create-accessible-pdfs-064625e0-56ea-4e16-ad71-3aa33bb4b7ed
- Instructions for InDesign: https://www.adobe.com/content/dam/acom/en/products/indesign/pdfs/creating-accessible-pdf-documentw-with-adobe-indesign-cs6-v3.pdf

In Acrobat

Check the File Properties Dialog
- In the Description tab
  - Fill in or confirm title and author
- In the Initial View tab
  - Set "Navigation tab" to "Bookmarks Panel and Page" (especially for longer documents)
  - Set "Show" to "Document Title"
- In the Advanced tab
  - Set "Language" to "English" or the language of the document if not English

Run Accessibility Full Check to get a baseline
- If not already in your view, choose View -> Show/Hide -> Navigation Panes -> Accessibility Checker
- Look at error messages; the suggestions below will resolve some of these errors.

For more information about NCAM's consulting services, contact us at ncam@wgbh.org

Confirm that the document is tagged
- Tags is the bottom icon on the Navigation Panel. If selecting it shows "No Tags available" then go back and re-do your export to create a tagged document.

Check the reading order
- Arrow through the tags list, expanding all sections, and observe the colored focus rectangle in the document to see if tags are in the logical order a reader would expect.
- Drag tags to the correct position to correct errors.

Check images for alt text
- For each Figure tag, right-click and open the Properties. Confirm or insert "Alternate Text".
- If an image is decorative, instead mark it as an artifact, using these instructions (note that the tool is now called Reading Order, not Touch Up Reading Order): https://theblog.adobe.com/accessible-pdfs-in-acrobat-dc-tagging-content-as-an-artifact/

Hide page headers and footers
- Make repeating headers and footers into artifacts using these instructions (note that the tool is now called Reading Order, not Touch Up Reading Order): https://theblog.adobe.com/accessible-pdfs-in-acrobat-dc-tagging-content-as-an-artifact/

Tables and lists
- Check the tag tree to make sure list items are within the list. Drag list items into a single list if needed. Drag multiple paragraphs into a single list item if they are split.
- Check the tag tree to make sure tables are defined with table tags. Check for table header rows/columns.

Run the Accessibility Checker tool again to see if issues have been resolved.