Guidelines for Accessible PDFs

This information was created using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC 2015 Release and MS Office 2013.

There are two ways to create a PDF from existing files. Either converting a source file, like PowerPoint or a Word document into a PDF or scanning a hard copy of a document to a PDF. The best way to create an <u>accessible</u> PDF is to create an accessible source document. Well-structured Microsoft Word or PowerPoint files make good source documents for conversion into a PDF. When a source document is converted into a PDF it is tagged. The PDF tag tree reflects the structure of the file, and it is this structure that screen readers use to navigate the file.

Organization

For a refresher on how to create accessible Word documents or PowerPoints, see the [RRCC Course Accessibility Resources](#) page. Make sure your files are well structured – they should be organized with headings, alt text, clear hyperlinks, and proper color contrast. Before you convert your file to a PDF don't forget to run the Microsoft accessibility checker to verify compliance.

Converting to a PDF

Click on the File tab and select **Save as Adobe PDF**.
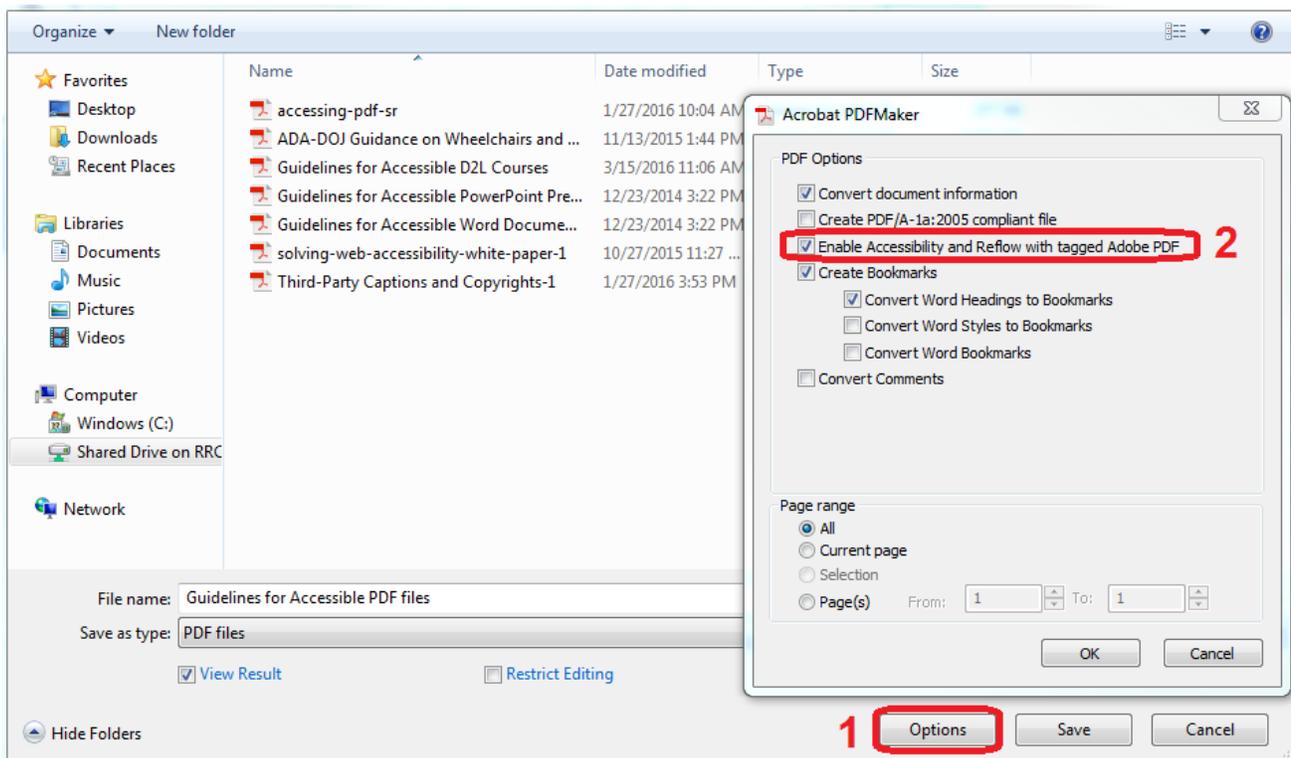
In the Save as dialog box, select Options (see 1 above), and select **Enable Accessibility and reflow with tagged Adobe PDF**. Select **OK** and click **Save**.

Tagging adds a layer of information to a PDF file that indicates what types of objects are included in the file, like headings, paragraphs, images, and tables. When you save your file as a tagged PDF, these tags are identified and assistive technologies like screen readers and magnifiers are able to use it to present the information to users. If you do not tag your file, assistive technologies may not be able to understand certain parts of your file and present the user with a confusing interpretation of the file or may not present some information at all.

Scanning to a PDF

The Instructional Design and Innovation Centers on both the Lakewood and Arvada campuses are equipped with high-speed, double-side, searchable document scanners. Follow the instructions from the pop-up window and select your choices. Choose PDF Searchable, or if your page is based on a text document, you can also scan in Word (.docx) format. The advantage to scanning in the .docx format is if your document is not accessible to start, you can easily make it accessible from the Word document.

Using Adobe Acrobat Pro to make your PDF accessible

Action Wizard

Another approach to make your PDF accessible involves opening your file in Acrobat Pro. You have two options at this point. Adobe offers an Accessible Action Wizard that will ask you some questions and make your file accessible for you. To use it, open the **Tools** panel (click **Tools** in top right) and choose **Action Wizard** then **Make Accessible**. Click the Start button and respond to the following prompts:

1. Description – enter a descriptive document title. Other fields are optional.
2. Recognize Text – if your PDF contains images of text, it will be converted into true text during this step.
3. Detect Form Fields – Skip unless your page contains fillable forms.
4. Set Tab Order Property – this step should run automatically.

5. Set Alternate Text – A window will appear that allows you to add alternative text to images. Use the arrows to move between images and check **Decorative figure** if the image should be ignored by a screen reader.
6. Run Accessibility Full Check – This checker will show any other potential issues. Right click errors and warnings and select **Fix** to address the issues. **Skip Rule** if the issue has been addressed, and **Explain** to read online help. You can also run an on-demand check at any time under Tools > Accessibility > Full Check. The checker will show any additional issues.

Correcting OCR Errors with Adobe Acrobat Pro

Enhance Scans

Open ▾

Acrobat Pro can also find and correct errors with the optical character recognition feature of the scanner. Open your scanned file in Acrobat Pro and open the Tools panel. Click on **Enhance Scans** and then **Recognize Text** and **Find First Suspect**. Acrobat will go through your file and identify any word conversion that it is unsure of and allow you to correct them. A pop-up window will sow the picture of the suspected word. The text on the page shows Acrobat's interpretation of the word. To fix spelling, clock on the word in the page and enter the correct text. Then click **Accept and Find** to move to the next suspect.