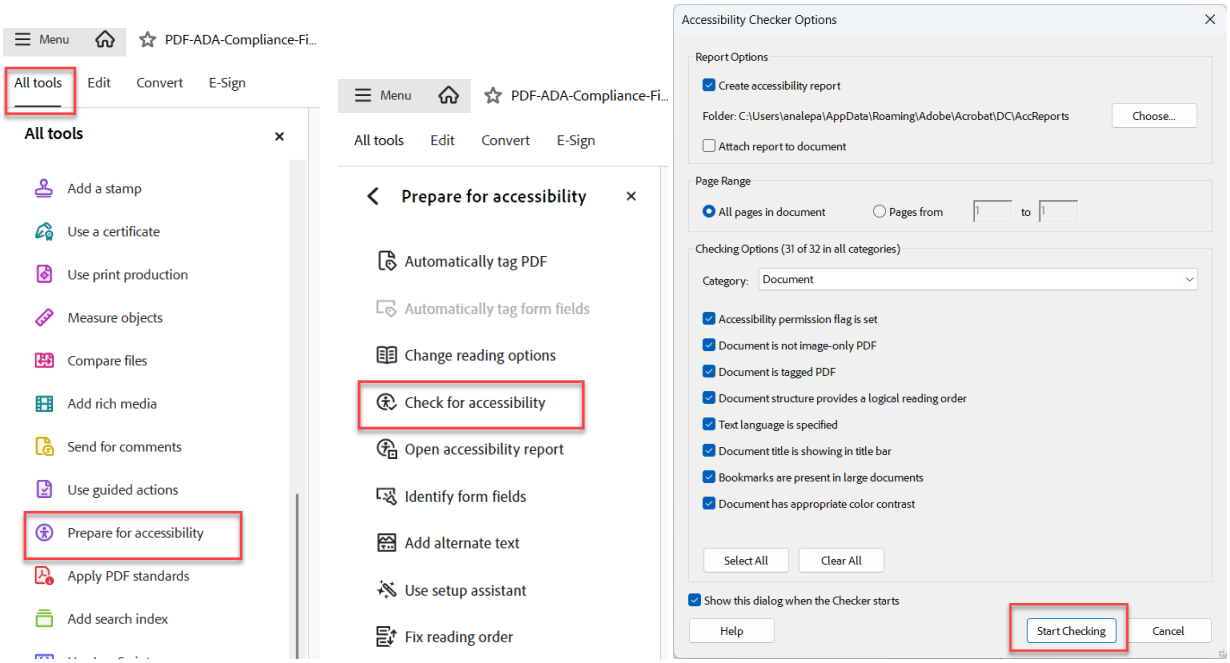
Adobe PDF Accessibility

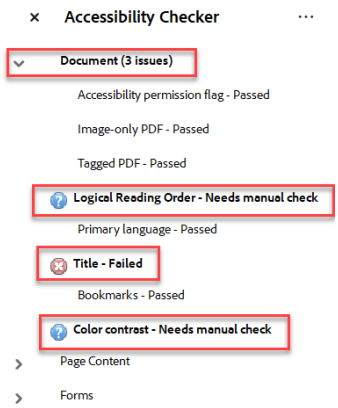
Running an Accessibility Check

Open your PDF file from the PDF, not the website.

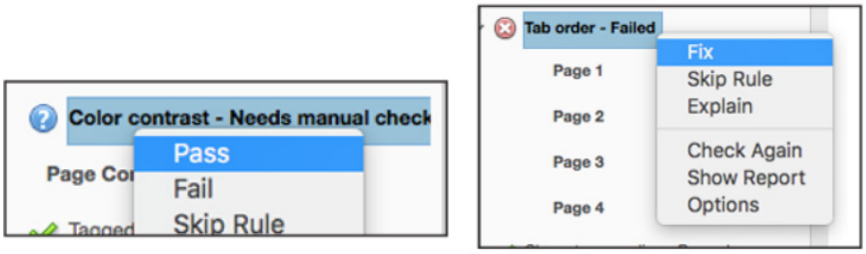
1. Click the All Tools tab then at the end of the list, click “View More.” Scroll down and click “Prepare for Accessibility”
2. When the new options are displayed, select “Check for Accessibility”
3. When the Accessibility options window opens, click “Start Checking.”



The accessibility checker lets you know what issues need to be addressed in your document.



When you right click each issue, a list of options appear.



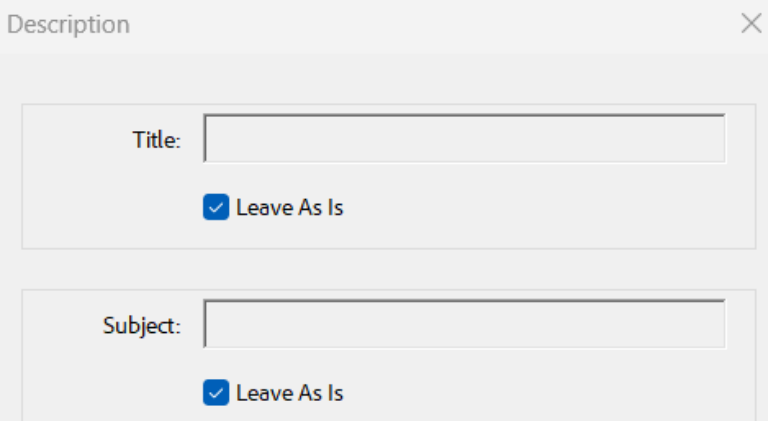
Manual check issues like color contrast and logical reading order, you will need to select pass or fail. (More on these issues below.)

Issues that have a "Fix" option will allow Adobe to correct the problem.

Solutions to Common Issues

Title

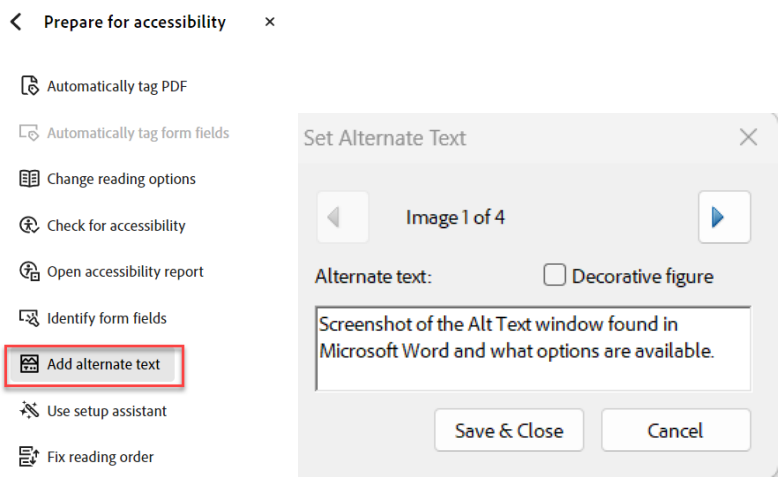
If your document has a Title error, right click the issue and select the "Fix" option. A description box will appear where you can type in a descriptive title.



Alternate Text

On the Accessibility tab on the left of the screen, select the "Add alternate text" option. A window will appear letting you know Adobe will detect images that need text. Click Ok.

The window will now highlight the image on your document and display an area to enter alternate text. Add a detailed description of the image and hit the arrow to the right to enter the next alternate text entry. Once you are finished, click Save and Close. ONLY select decorative figure if the graphic is a shape or line to separate text.

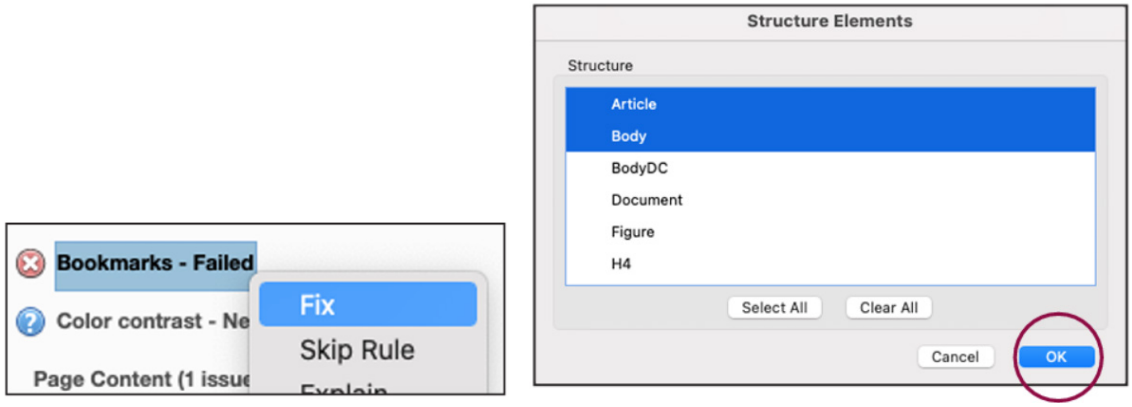


Primary Language

Setting the document language allows screen readers to change the language as they need. Right click the issue on the accessibility check report and click fix. When the Set Reading Language window appears, set as English and click ok.

Bookmarks

Bookmarks allow screen readers to jump to specific pages. If your document has 21 pages or more, the Bookmarks issue will be flagged. Right click the Bookmarks issue on the report and click fix. Select the elements you want to use as Bookmarks in your document and click Ok.



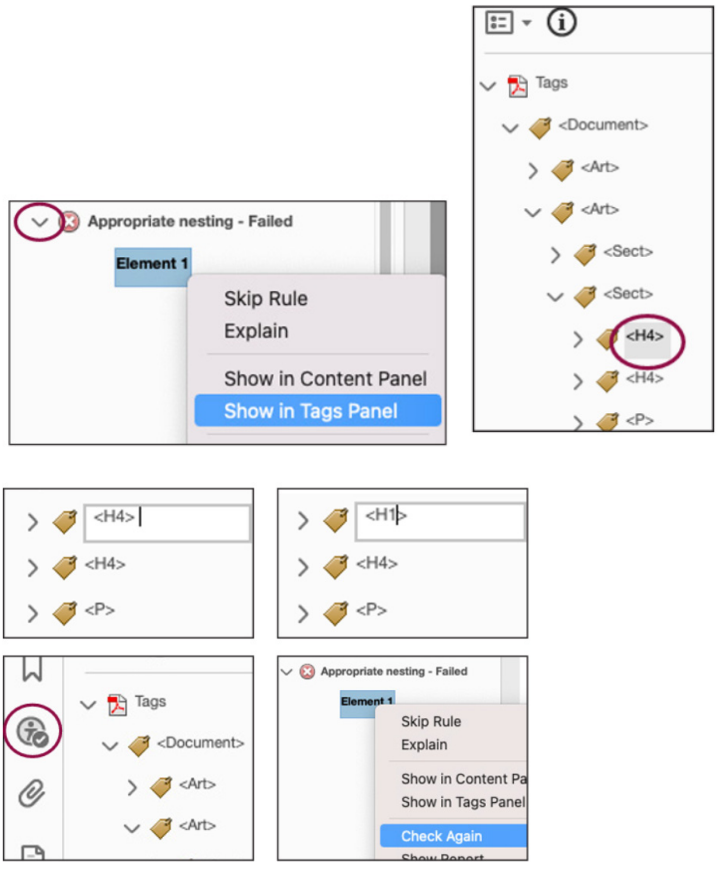
Headings

Heading basics: Headings range from <H1> most important to <H6> least important. The font size for H1 is the largest on the page and following headings reduce in size. Headings need to follow a logical order: H1 then H2, then H3, etc. Avoid skipping levels like H1 then H3. Headings are used for organization, not visual style.

When a document is converted to a PDF, the accessibility checker guesses what your headings are (unless you created the headings correctly in your source document like Word.) For example, you might have Heading 1 and Heading 3 in that order. Because there is no heading 2, the checker will assume your headings are out of order.

Click the down arrow next to Headings on the report. Then click Appropriate nesting – Failed, then right-click Element 1, and select Show in Tags Panel. The Tags Panel will show on the left side of your screen. The tag that is causing an issue will be highlighted in grey.

To fix the issue, you must determine what the highlighted tag should be. Click the tag and change the heading to the correct number. After changing the tag, navigate back to the Accessibility Panel. Right click Element 1 and click Check Again. Repeat these steps for each flagged element.



Change Reading Order

This issue will have a question mark for a manual check as Adobe cannot check it automatically. Check to see if your document is laid out in logical order before right clicking the error and selecting the Pass option. For documents with columns, the document's tags will need to be laid out top to bottom left to right. Reach out to Allison Nalepa for help with this if you need help with tags.

Color Contrast

Check color contrast (aim for 4.5:1 for normal text). Black text on a white background will always have sufficient contrast. If the contrast is sufficient, right click the error and select the Pass option. If you have used colorful backgrounds or changed the color of your text you will need to confirm you have used sufficient color contrast. Use https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/ for a quick look.

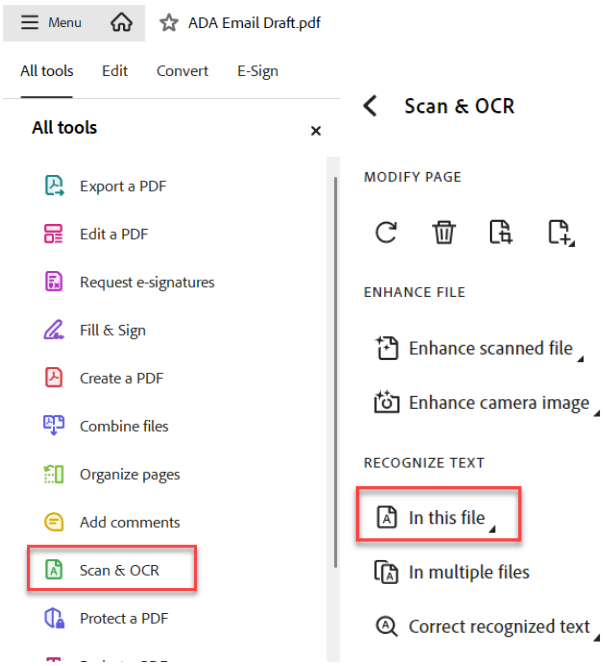
If it fails, return to Adobe Acrobat:

1. Select the hamburger menu ☰ > **Preferences**.
2. In the dialog that opens, from the left panel, select **Accessibility**.
3. Select **Replace Document Colors** and then select **Use High-Contrast Colors**. From the High-contrast color combination, choose the color combination that you want and then select **OK**.

Scanned Documents

Scanned documents will take more effort to fix, because Adobe has to translate a picture to text. You must review to ensure that the translation is accurate. Additionally, the underlying settings that are set in your source document are not available through a scan.

1. To convert the scan to text, go to the All Tools tab and select Scan & OCR.
2. In the options that appear, select Recognize Text in This File. You will need to click recognize text in the pop-up window once more.
3. Adobe will convert your image, and now you will need to go through and ensure the text is correct.


Menu
ADA Email Draft.pdf
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Convert
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Export a PDF
Edit a PDF
Request e-signatures
Fill & Sign
Create a PDF
Combine files
Organize pages
Add comments
Scan & OCR
Protect a PDF
Scan & OCR
MODIFY PAGE
ENHANCE FILE
Enhance scanned file
Enhance camera image
RECOGNIZE TEXT
In this file
In multiple files
Correct recognized text