

# Adobe Acrobat 7.0 and accessibility

## TOPICS

- 1 How do the Adobe Acrobat 7.0 software enhancements improve accessibility for people with disabilities?
- 1 What are some of the accessibility features available in Acrobat 7.0?
- 4 Can I make fillable Adobe PDF forms accessible?
- 4 How do I make scanned pages accessible using Acrobat products?
- 5 Does Acrobat 7.0 adhere to the provisions in the U.S. government's Section 508 guidelines?
- 5 What makes tagged Adobe PDF files more accessible?
- 5 Are all of the accessibility features offered with both Macintosh and Windows operating systems?
- 6 I've heard that adding security to Adobe PDF files makes them inaccessible. Is that true?
- 6 Does Adobe offer training courses on creating accessible Adobe PDF files?
- 6 In addition to accessibility, what other advantages do Adobe PDF files offer?
- 6 What resources are available to help me learn more about Acrobat, Reader, and accessibility?
- 7 I have Reader 7.0 on my desktop, but it doesn't seem to support the accessibility features mentioned in this FAQ. Am I missing something?
- 8 Appendix I: Summary of key accessibility capabilities in the Acrobat 7.0 family

For detailed information on reading PDF documents using Adobe Reader, refer to "Reading PDF Documents with Adobe Reader 6.0: A Guide for People with Disabilities." Most of the information in this document is still applicable to Reader 7.0 and very useful.

### **Q: How do the Adobe Acrobat 7.0 software enhancements improve accessibility for people with disabilities?**

**A:** Acrobat 7.0 addresses the needs of both users with disabilities and the authors of accessible content. The new features and enhancements coupled with prior capabilities enable people with disabilities to access, read, and use Adobe PDF documents and forms—across multiple languages—more easily. And the improved tools for generating, reviewing, and enhancing Adobe PDF files found in the Acrobat 7.0 family simplify the creation and distribution of electronic content that is optimized for accessibility. *Appendix I* summarizes the key accessibility capabilities within the Acrobat 7.0 family.

### **Q: What are some of the accessibility features available in Acrobat 7.0?**

#### **A: Zoom in on text and reflow it to fit any size view in both tagged and untagged PDF files**

People with low vision often have difficulty reading small text. Magnifying the screen view is a cumbersome alternative because users then have to manually pan from left to right to read a single line of text. When users view an Adobe PDF file with the Acrobat 7.0 reflow feature, text displayed in large type will automatically reflow to fit the available screen space.

#### **Read PDF files and forms out loud using standard Microsoft® Windows® and Mac OS X operating systems' text-to-speech synthesis**

Acrobat 7.0 and Adobe Reader® 7.0 software synthesize the text in PDF documents and forms into speech using a regular Windows or Macintosh computer, so anyone can read basic Adobe PDF text files aloud—and interact with forms—even if they are not using a screen reader.

#### **Take advantage of advanced reading functions using Windows-based screen readers**

A screen reader with Acrobat 7.0 or Reader 7.0 provides the best reading experience for more complicated Adobe PDF files because products of this type typically offer easier navigation, allow users to toggle between table and text reading modes, and enable access to both PDF documents and the dialog boxes and controls of the Acrobat application. Acrobat 7.0 for Windows uses Microsoft Active Accessibility (MSAA), an application programming interface (API) that allows Windows-based programs to expose information about their content and user interface to assistive technologies utilizing speech and/or refreshable Braille output devices. Because MSAA is a widely supported accessibility standard, Acrobat 7.0 for Windows integrates with a broad range of assistive technologies, including screen readers and magnifiers from vendors such as Dolphin Computer Access ([www.dolphinusa.com](http://www.dolphinusa.com)), Freedom Scientific ([www.freedomscientific.com](http://www.freedomscientific.com)), GW Micro ([www.gwmicro.com](http://www.gwmicro.com)), Ai Squared ([www.aisquared.com](http://www.aisquared.com)), and IBM ([www-306.ibm.com/able/index.html](http://www-306.ibm.com/able/index.html)). Acrobat also provides support for the Japanese screen readers from the following companies: Kochi System Development, Inc. ([www.aok-net.com](http://www.aok-net.com)), System Solution Center Tochigi, Inc., ([www.ssct.co.jp](http://www.ssct.co.jp)), and IBM Japan (distributor), ([www.ibm.com/jp](http://www.ibm.com/jp)).

### **Use the preferences wizard to optimize Acrobat and Reader for use with assistive devices**

When you first launch Acrobat 7.0 or Reader 7.0 while running a screen reader, screen magnifier, or similar assistive technology, an accessibility preferences wizard automatically walks you through options for configuring the software for use with these technologies, simplifying the process and improving overall usability.

### **Quickly evaluate the accessibility of an Adobe PDF file**

When opening a PDF file, blind users have no way of knowing if the document is accessible or if it will read in the proper order. The Reader Quick Check feature in Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 automatically assesses a document's accessibility and informs the user if it's a scanned image or if tags are present.

### **Receive immediate feedback and assistance when accessing untagged PDF files with assistive technology**

When you open an untagged PDF file using assistive technology, Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 display what the current accessibility settings are and allow the user to override these settings for the current document.

### **Customize the font size in the bookmarks panel**

People with low vision can increase the text size in the Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 bookmarks panel, making it easier for them to read bookmarks in an Adobe PDF file.

### **Choose alternate reading orders**

Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 offer three options for improving the reading order of text and form fields in nonoptimized Adobe PDF documents. The ability to select a reading order is especially important for users who require screen readers. If one of the following options doesn't appear to be working, we recommend users try the other alternatives to see if they can obtain better results.

- *Let Acrobat Choose the Reader Order.* This default mode determines the document's reading order by looking for columns, boundaries, form fields, and other layout information in the Adobe PDF file.
- *Standard Word Order.* Acrobat uses the word order within the Adobe PDF document's print instructions.
- *Left to Right, Top to Bottom.* Acrobat reads the page from left to right and top to bottom for single-column documents.

### **Take advantage of Japanese-language support**

Both users with disabilities and document authors can utilize the full range of accessibility features when working with Japanese-language files.

### **Use keyboard navigation**

Operating a mouse can be difficult or even impossible for individuals with certain disabilities. Contiguous and noncontiguous selection of text, expanded keyboard shortcuts, arrow navigation, and other features enable users to easily navigate menus, toolbars, navigation panels, dialog boxes, the document window, and other parts of the Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 interfaces without using a mouse.

### **Access and navigate Help more easily**

Enhancements to the Acrobat user interface also make it easier to search and navigate Help using a keyboard. The Help file keyboard focus is in the Content pane when opened. There are improved instructions on "Using Help for vision- and motor-impaired users." And a prefix field in the index pane automatically moves to the index item that matches what you're typing.

### **Navigate the search panel using keyboard commands**

Improvements to the search feature make it easier to use.

### **View documents in high-contrast mode**

The contrast between text and page background can significantly impact legibility for individuals with low vision. Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 allow users to increase the contrast by replacing a document's specified colors with either custom color schemes created by the user or high-contrast color settings defined in the operating system.

### **Set your preferences so the cursor automatically appears at the beginning of a page**

You can choose to have the text-selection cursor focus on the first word in a page whenever you launch Acrobat 7.0 or Reader 7.0, making it easier to track where you are when using a screen magnifier.

### **Automatically open Adobe PDF files to the last page read**

If you've previously opened a PDF file, you can elect to have Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 open to the section where you left off, so you no longer have to search the document to find your place.

### **Save Adobe PDF content as text**

In addition to the previously listed accessibility features, users may, if they prefer, save the PDF file as text for special instances such as:

- Using a screen reader that isn't MSAA-compliant
- Sending text to a Braille printer
- Testing a document for accessibility (exporting text and reviewing the reading order)
- Adding text from an Adobe PDF file to a document created in another application such as Microsoft Word

Both Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 let you save Adobe PDF content, including alternative text for graphics, as ASCII text files. Acrobat also offers the option to export text to RTF, XML, HTML, and Word (DOC).

- To export text in Reader, choose File > Export Document to Text.
- To export text in Acrobat, choose File > Save As > Text (Accessible) or File > Save As > Rich Text Format or the file format of your choice (XML, HTML, DOC, etc.).
- The ability to extract text may be disabled depending on the document's security settings. See *"I've heard that adding security to Adobe PDF files makes them inaccessible. Is that true?"* on page 6 to learn about options for reading such files.

### **Create tagged Adobe PDF files from Microsoft Office applications**

Acrobat 7.0 for Windows allows authors to create tagged Adobe PDF files directly from Microsoft Office 2000 and Office XP for Windows. The tagged file incorporates logical structure and alternative text descriptions for graphics, making it easier for users to navigate a document in the proper reading order and understand the meaning of the graphics.

### **Add security while retaining accessibility**

The 128-bit security options available in Acrobat 7.0 allow authors to prevent the repurposing of content while still allowing the file to remain accessible to assistive technologies via MSAA.

### **Convert existing Adobe PDF documents to tagged Adobe PDF files**

Acrobat 7.0 automatically analyzes a document's logical structure and creates a new version that approximates the original structure and reading order. In most cases, this file will translate better with a screen reader than an untagged file will. You can also use this tool in conjunction with the Acrobat 7.0 batch processing function to convert volumes of documents efficiently.

### **Reduce the size of tagged Adobe PDF files**

The Tagged PDF Compression feature in Acrobat 7.0 improves access to Adobe PDF files by reducing download times.

### **Check and touch up documents for accessibility**

Improvements to the Accessibility Checker and the Add Tags feature in Acrobat 7.0 Professional simplify the optimization workflow, making it easier to find and correct accessibility problems quickly. You can view and interact with the Accessibility Checker log directly within the Acrobat user interface. The Add Tags to Document report identifies areas in your Adobe PDF file that might need additional optimization, as well as figures and images that require ALT tags. And the Add Tags feature now offers faster, more accurate recognition of complex document structures such as tables for fast and consistent optimization.

### **Create and optimize accessible Adobe PDF forms**

As authors create fillable Adobe PDF forms, Acrobat 7.0 Professional can automatically insert each new form field into the Tags panel. Tagged Adobe PDF forms allow screen readers to recognize form fields, read any descriptive text associated with the fields, and identify the proper reading order. They also allow recipients to interact with forms using the Read Out Loud feature in Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0.

With Acrobat 7.0 Professional, users also have the option of creating accessible Adobe PDF forms using Adobe LiveCycle™ Designer 7.0 software, which is included with Acrobat 7.0 Professional for Windows. Adobe LiveCycle Designer 7.0 offers a more efficient means for creating accessible forms using XML templates. See “*Can I make fillable Adobe PDF forms accessible?*” below for more information.

### **Review and modify the tag structure on a page**

The new TouchUp Reading Order tool in Acrobat 7.0 Professional makes it much easier for users to quickly review and modify a document’s reading order and basic object structure.

#### **Q: Can I make fillable Adobe PDF forms accessible?**

**A:** Yes. Adobe offers three options for creating accessible Adobe PDF forms:

- **Acrobat 7.0 Professional.** Turn any Adobe PDF document into an Adobe PDF form and add tags for accessibility.
- **Adobe Acrobat Capture® Agent Pack with Adobe PDF Forms Access.** Quickly optimize existing fillable Adobe PDF forms for accessibility.
- **Adobe LiveCycle Designer 7.0—included with Acrobat 7.0 Professional for Windows.** Author new forms using XML templates; connect them to back-end systems; and automatically generate tagged Adobe PDF forms or accessible HTML forms.

#### **Q: How do I make scanned pages accessible using Acrobat products?**

**A:** Adobe offers paper capture solutions with Acrobat 7.0 and Acrobat Capture 3.0. Both software packages let you apply OCR to the scanned pages. The resulting Adobe PDF files contain computer-generated text, which is necessary for making the document’s information accessible via screen readers and other assistive technologies.

For users who simply want to add a layer of text to their documents, the Paper Capture feature in Acrobat 7.0 provides this functionality. However, Acrobat Capture 3.0 and Acrobat Capture 3.0 Agent Pack offer a much more comprehensive set of tools for working with scanned documents. Acrobat Capture 3.0 makes it possible to ensure accuracy in text output, add navigational elements such as hyperlinks and bookmarks automatically, and process high volumes of scanned documents quickly and easily. In addition, the Acrobat Capture Agent Pack includes a specialized tool that reduces the amount of time it takes to turn a fillable Adobe PDF form into an accessible form.

Following is a summary of the key accessibility capabilities of each product.

#### **Acrobat Capture 3.0—for converting large volumes of paper to accessible Adobe PDF files**

- Retain the exact look and feel of the original document while embedding a layer of searchable, accessible text using OCR software.
- Review and fix suspect text quickly and easily with the QuickFix tool.
- Exclude page areas from the OCR process with the Zone tool, so graphics and random text won’t confuse readers.
- Automatically generate hyperlinks and bookmarks based on tables of contents and indexes, so document navigation is easier.

#### **Acrobat Capture Agent Pack—for automatically tagging high volumes of simple Adobe PDF documents and more**

The Acrobat Capture Agent Pack includes both an Acrobat Capture Agent that supports automated workflows and a standalone utility capable of running on any desktop—even those where Acrobat Capture isn’t installed—thus enhancing the accessibility of Adobe PDF files viewed in Acrobat. For more information on Acrobat Capture, go to [www.adobe.com/products/acrcapture/main.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrcapture/main.html). For more information on the Acrobat Capture Agent Pack, go to [www.adobe.com/products/acrcapture/agentpack/main.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrcapture/agentpack/main.html).

**Q: Does Acrobat 7.0 adhere to the provisions in the U.S. government's Section 508 guidelines?**

**A:** Each time Adobe creates enhancements for Acrobat, it is done with Section 508 in mind. To help government customers determine their own compliance, Adobe has prepared a document that details the accessibility features of Acrobat 7.0, including Reader 7.0, in the context of Section 508 guidelines. Look for this document at [www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/section508.html](http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/section508.html).

**Q: What makes tagged Adobe PDF files more accessible?**

**A:** The ability to tag Adobe PDF documents is a part of the PDF specification that allows Adobe PDF files to contain logical document structure such as a title page, chapters, sections, and subsections. Tagged Adobe PDF files created in Acrobat 7.0:

- Include a complete logical structure, plus additional information about a document's contents that substantially increase accessibility
- Allow precise control over document reading order, including table data and form fields
- Include paragraph attributes, which are necessary for accurate text reflow
- Enable the export of document content and structure to other formats, such as RTF and TXT files
- Support alternative text descriptions for graphics
- Allow accessible interaction with documents such as filling in form fields and following links
- Represent all text as Unicode—a standard for describing text characters—so characters and words are presented to assistive technologies in a clear manner; for example, differentiating between soft and hard hyphens so a word broken across two lines reads as single word

**Q: Are all of the accessibility features available for both Macintosh and Windows operating systems?**

**A:** There are a few areas where Macintosh and Windows functionality differ. These differences are the result of the programming options available to Adobe via the two operating systems or software applications from other vendors.

- **Screen reader support.** Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 for Windows support screen readers via the MSAA API. Vendors who utilize this accessibility standard include Dolphin Computer Access, Freedom Scientific, GW Micro, Ai Squared, and IBM. Adobe incorporated the newest set of accessibility APIs introduced with Mac OS X v.10.2, but there were still no known assistive technologies supporting the Apple API during the development of Acrobat 7.0. Adobe looks forward to working with its assistive technology partners to develop an accessibility solution for the Mac platform.
- **Automatic creation of tagged Adobe PDF files.** Acrobat 7.0 for Windows enables authors to create tagged Adobe PDF files directly from Microsoft Office 2000 and Office XP applications.
- **Improved reading experience for untagged Adobe PDF files.** Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 for Windows open a dialog box for users who open untagged Adobe PDF files in Acrobat and Reader using assistive technology.
- **Keyboard navigation.** Acrobat 7.0 and Reader 7.0 for Windows offer a wide variety of keyboard options, including noncontiguous text selection, shortcuts, arrow navigation, and an improved Help section that's easier to navigate. Options are more limited with the Macintosh version of these products.

**Q: I've heard that adding security to Adobe PDF files makes them inaccessible. Is that true?**

**A:** Acrobat 7.0 offers 40-bit and 128-bit encryption for documents. The default settings for both levels allow for accessibility. However, 128-bit encryption provides a specific option that lets authors prevent the copying and pasting of text and still ensure document accessibility for those who depend on assistive technology such as MSAA-compliant screen readers. With 40-bit encryption, if the author doesn't allow content copying and extraction in Acrobat 5.0, the file is inaccessible. When developing Acrobat 6.0, Adobe worked with assistive technology partners to develop a solution that enables screen readers to read 40-bit encrypted files while preserving copy permissions. This capability is currently available in the most recent releases of the JAWS (Freedom Scientific) and Window-Eyes (GW Micro) screen readers. Dolphin Oceanic will be including this capability in a future release. Contact Dolphin for more details.

Furthermore, the security settings of documents can be easily modified to make them available to screen readers. To change the security settings in an existing document, simply follow these steps:

1. Open the document in Acrobat 7.0, entering the appropriate password, if required.
2. Choose File > Document Properties, and then click the Security tab.
3. Choose Password Security for the security method.
4. Choose Acrobat 5.0 and later from the Compatibility menu.
5. Check the box for "Use a password to restrict printing and editing of the document and its security settings."
6. Select "Enable text access for screen reader devices for the visually impaired."
7. Select any other security options, and click OK.

**Q: Does Adobe offer training courses on creating accessible Adobe PDF files?**

**A:** A large number of Adobe Certified Training providers offer training on Adobe software products. To help both customers and trainers understand the subtleties of creating accessible Adobe PDF documents, Adobe offers a number of educational resources on creating accessible content, including how-to guides, a list of training providers, and downloadable training courseware at [www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/training.html](http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility/training.html).

**Q: In addition to accessibility, what other advantages do Adobe PDF files offer?**

**A:** Adobe PDF documents and forms offer a number of advantages:

- Digital signature capability
- Consistent access to Adobe PDF content across multiple platforms using the free Adobe Reader
- Ability to leverage the same document or form for both print and Web
- Document integrity, with fonts, layout, and colors preserved
- Ability to convert and combine multiple documents from various applications into one compact, accessible Adobe PDF file
- Document security

**Q: What resources are available to help me learn more about Adobe products and accessibility?**

**A:** There are a variety of resources on the Adobe Web site, including additional information on reading and creating accessible content and government accessibility compliance (such as Section 508), as well as a free online tool for converting PDF files to HTML or ASCII text.

Visit [www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility](http://www.adobe.com/enterprise/accessibility) to see all the available resources.

**Q: I have Reader 7.0 on my desktop, but it doesn't seem to support the accessibility features mentioned in this FAQ. Am I missing something?**

**A:** Make sure you have the most recent and complete version of Reader 7.0. Two versions are available for download on the Adobe Web site. The basic version minimizes download time and is for users requiring only the most commonly used features. The full version comes with additional functionality, including accessibility support. The download is available at [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html). A text-only version of the download page is available at [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/alternate.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/alternate.html).

**Adobe Systems Incorporated**  
345 Park Avenue, San Jose, CA 95110-2704 USA  
[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

Adobe, the Adobe logo, Acrobat, Acrobat Capture, Adobe LiveCycle, and Reader are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Adobe Systems Incorporated in the United States and/or other countries. Mac OS and Macintosh are trademarks of Apple Computer, Inc., registered in the United States and other countries. Microsoft and Windows are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

© 2004 Adobe Systems Incorporated. All rights reserved.  
Printed in the USA.

95004553 12/04



## Appendix I: Summary of key accessibility capabilities in the Acrobat 7.0 family

READING ADOBE PDF FILES					
FEATURE	ADOBE READER 7.0*	ACROBAT 7.0 STANDARD	ACROBAT 7.0 PROFESSIONAL	WINDOWS	MAC OS X
<b>Improved:</b> Zoom in on text and reflow it to fit any size view in both tagged and untagged PDF files	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Improved:</b> Read PDF files and forms out loud using standard operating system text-to-speech synthesis	X	X	X	X	X
Take advantage of advanced reading functions using Windows-based screen readers	X	X	X	X	
<b>New:</b> Use the preferences wizard to configure Acrobat and Reader for accessibility	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Improved:</b> Quickly evaluate the accessibility of an Adobe PDF file	X	X	X	X	X
<b>New:</b> Receive immediate feedback and assistance when accessing untagged PDF files with assistive technology	X	X	X	X	X
Customize the font size in the bookmarks panel	X	X	X	X	X
Choose alternate reading orders	X	X	X	X	X
Take advantage of Japanese-language support	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Improved:</b> Use keyboard navigation	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Improved:</b> Access and navigate Help more easily	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Improved:</b> Navigate the search panel using keyboard commands	X	X	X	X	X
View documents in high-contrast mode	X	X	X	X	X
<b>New:</b> Set your preferences so the cursor automatically appears at the beginning of a page	X	X	X	X	X
<b>New:</b> Automatically open Adobe PDF files to the last page read	X	X	X	X	X
Save Adobe PDF content as text (TXT)	X	X	X	X	X
Export text from Adobe PDF files to Rich Text Format (RTF), XML, HTML, and Word (DOC)		X	X	X	X
CREATING ACCESSIBLE ADOBE PDF FILES					
FEATURE	ADOBE READER 7.0	ACROBAT 7.0 STANDARD	ACROBAT 7.0 PROFESSIONAL	WINDOWS	MAC OS X
Create tagged Adobe PDF files from Microsoft Office applications†		X	X	X	
Add security while retaining accessibility†		X	X	X	X
Convert existing Adobe PDF documents to tagged Adobe PDF files		X	X	X	X
Reduce the size of tagged Adobe PDF files for faster downloads		X	X	X	X
Add text to scanned pages for improved accessibility		X	X	X	X
OPTIMIZING ADOBE PDF FILES FOR ACCESSIBILITY					
FEATURE	ADOBE READER 7.0	ACROBAT 7.0 STANDARD	ACROBAT 7.0 PROFESSIONAL	WINDOWS	MAC OS X
<b>Improved:</b> Check and touch up documents for accessibility			X	X	X
Create and optimize accessible Adobe PDF forms			X	X	X
<b>Improved:</b> Review and modify the tag structure on a page			X	X	X

\* Included in Acrobat

† Also a feature in Adobe Acrobat Elements, available only through volume licensing