



Accessible PDF Checklist

Best Practices

1. Check the PDF's Basic Settings

- In Document Properties → Security, “Content Copying for Accessibility” says Allowed.
- The Accessibility Full Check does not show a “Scripts – Needs manual check” warning.
- If something cannot be made accessible, an alternate accessible version is provided.
- If the PDF links to or includes other files, each linked/attached file has been checked for accessibility.

2. Images, Multimedia & Non-Text Content

- All images and image-based buttons have clear, concise **alt text**.
- Decorative or unnecessary images are marked as **artifacts** (ignored by screen readers).
- Complex images (charts, diagrams) have a **text explanation** on the page or on a linked page.
- Images of text (like logos) include that **text in the description**.
- Videos/audio clips have accessible **text descriptions**, captions, or transcripts.
- Animated content has a **text alternative**.
- Math formulas are provided as **text or an accessible alternative**.
- Time-based media (videos/audio) meets **508/WCAG 2.1 media rules**.



3. Tags: The Structure Behind the PDF

- The PDF is listed as a **Tagged PDF** in Document Properties.
- All content is correctly organized with **proper tags** (headings, paragraphs, lists, tables, etc.).
- Any **non-standard tags** are properly mapped in the **Role Map**.
- Headings use correct tags (**H1** → **H2** → **H3**, in order).
- Table of Contents (TOC) uses correct tags (**TOC**, **TOCI**).
- Lists use proper list tags (**L**, **LI**).
- Sub-lists are nested correctly.
- All meaningful content** appears in the Tags panel.
- Decorative or repeated content is marked as **artifacts**.

4. Accessible Tables

- Tables are used **only** for actual data — not for layout.
- Table headers are marked correctly (simple tables use **TH**, complex tables use **headers/ID**).
- Data cells are correctly **linked to their headers**.
- Any RowSpan or ColSpan merging is used carefully and correctly.
- Tables have **captions or summaries** when needed.
- Layout tables (if any) have **all table tags removed**.

5. Forms (if the PDF has form fields)

- Each form field has a **tooltip** or label that clearly explains its purpose.
- Related form fields are **grouped correctly** (e.g., radio buttons share the same group name).
- Required fields or format rules are clearly explained in text.
- Error messages are accessible, clear, and help the user fix mistakes.
- Users can easily **correct and resubmit** form entries.
- If changes could affect legal/financial/test information, users can **undo, verify, or confirm** the change.

6. Reading Order & Keyboard Access

- The **reading order** in the Tags panel is logical from top to bottom.
- The navigation order (links, forms, interactive elements) is logical.
- All meaningful elements are reachable using only a **keyboard**.
- Keyboard focus is never trapped or stuck.
- It is visually clear **which item has keyboard focus** while tabbing.
- No automatic pop-ups or major changes happen **just by focusing** on something.

7. Instructions & Visual Communication

- Instructions do **not** rely only on shape, size, location, or sound.
- Color is **not** used as the only way to show meaning.
- If color shows meaning, there is also text or patterns.
- Text and images of text have **good color contrast** (minimum 4.5:1).
- Content works when text is set to **reflow** (zoomed or on small screens).



8. Multimedia & Motion

- Any audio or video that plays automatically has a way to **pause, stop, or mute** it.
- Moving/blinking/scrolling content longer than 5 seconds can be **paused or stopped**.
- Nothing flashes more than **3 times per second**.

9. Scanning, Titles & Language

- No “Scanned Page Alert” appears (the PDF is **not an image-only PDF**).
- The PDF has a proper **Title** set in Document Properties and in Initial View.
- The document’s **main language** is set correctly.
- Any content written in a different language is marked with the **correct language tag**.

10. Links

- All links use correct tags (**Link** with **Link-OBJR**).
- Link text clearly explains where the link goes.
- If two links look the same but go to different places, they are **distinguishable**.
- The purpose of each link can be understood from the **text or its surrounding content**.