

Three Steps to Creating an Accessible PDF file (without Adobe Acrobat)



Disability Access Services

About Disability Access Services

Centralized Resource and Information on Disability Access

Disability Access Services provides technical assistance and informational guidance to promote the civil rights and equality for persons with disabilities in the following areas:

Employment
Reasonable Accommodation
Physical Access of built environments
Access to private sector goods and services
Digital Access of electronic and information technology
Access to government programs, services, and activities

[Disability Access Services Website](https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/DisabilityAccessServices)

<https://www.dor.ca.gov/Home/DisabilityAccessServices>

Disability Access Services

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Promoting an Accessible Future through Education and Information

Three Steps to Creating an Accessible PDF file (without Adobe Acrobat)

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Alternative Formats

In accordance with ADA requirements, this document can be made available in Braille or large print as a reasonable accommodation for an individual with a disability. To request a copy of alternative formats, please contact Disability Access Services.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

A Note About Hyperlinks in This Document

All links in this document have been created with meaningful text. The Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is also published to be available as a resource for those persons who print the document. The URL addresses that are spelled out in the document are not active links to avoid the confusion of presenting duplicate links.

Introduction

It is estimated that up to 4% of the population relies on some sort of Assistive Technology to access electronic documents and Web pages. Assistive Technology includes; Screen Reading software, Refreshable Braille displays, and Screen Magnifiers. In the United States alone that equals 12.5 million people. If electronic documents are not created with accessibility issues in mind, they become very difficult if not impossible to read or navigate for this large number of people.

Accessibility to electronic documents is a right that is protected by both Federal and State law. Creating accessible electronic documents is important to ensure access to persons with disabilities and the company or agency is protected against legal action. Additionally, it is just good business, when a very large segment of the population can equally participate and take advantage of the products or services that the company or agency provides.

Accessible PDF Files

Invented by Adobe Systems, Portable Document Format (PDF) is an open standard for electronic document exchange. PDF files and forms can be created, viewed and printed from almost any platform including Windows, Apple OS X, UNIX and Linux. This is why the use of PDF files to distribute information has become an industry standard.

Because the use of PDF files is becoming more and more widespread, it is crucially important that PDF files are created to be accessible to persons who are dependent upon assistive technologies. This document will help show how to create accessible PDF files for distribution via email or on the web without the Adobe Acrobat software.

A Few Words About Scanning or Print As Options

Don't Do It! The end result of choosing Print As or scanning a document to make a PDF file is basically one big, untagged graphic. The resulting files are completely inaccessible to persons using Assistive Technologies.

PDF's created this way can only be made accessible with the Adobe Acrobat software, or optical character recognition (OCR) software and an investment of extra time.

Step One: Create an Accessible Word Document

Usually when people talk of a PDF file being accessible it is a tagged document. A tag in a PDF is similar to a HyperText Markup Language (HTML) tag. Basically it is part of the coding of the document that Assistive Technologies (AT) can recognize, and provide a way for the AT to navigate the document. Preferably tags are assigned in a document when creating a PDF using Adobe's Acrobat software.

This document will show how to create an accessible PDF file without access to Adobe Acrobat software, by simply using Microsoft Word.

Without Adobe Acrobat, the easiest way to create an accessible PDF file is to first begin with an accessible Microsoft Word document. A document entitled *Seven Steps to Creating an Accessible Word document* is available on the [Disability Access Services](#) website. For any questions about how to create an accessible Word document take a few minutes to download and review this document.

Follow the directions provided in *Seven Steps to Creating an Accessible Word document* to easily create an accessible Word document. Then simply follow these next few steps to successfully convert the accessible Word document into an accessible PDF file.

Step Two: Save As a PDF

In order to save the accessible functionality of an accessible Microsoft Word document it must be **Saved As** a PDF. (DO NOT Print it as a PDF. The PDF created by choosing the **Print As** option will not be accessible).

Microsoft Word 2007 (Using Mouse)

In Microsoft Word 2007, to **Save As** a PDF using a mouse, from the **Office Button** menu, hover over the **Save As** option, then choose **PDF**.

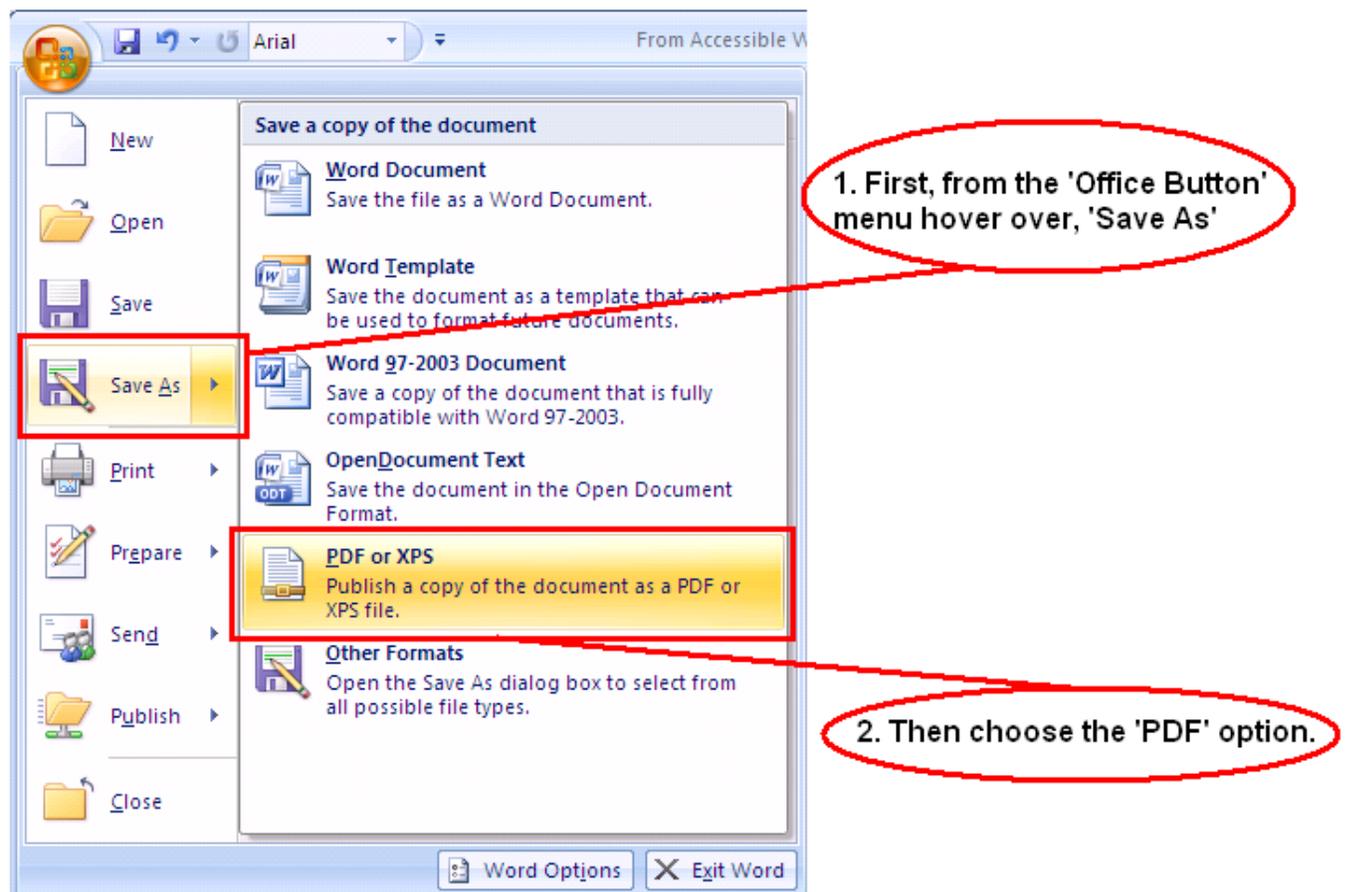


Figure 1: Office Button menu options in Word 2007

In the Publish as PDF menu, enter the **File Name** and then click on the **Options** button.

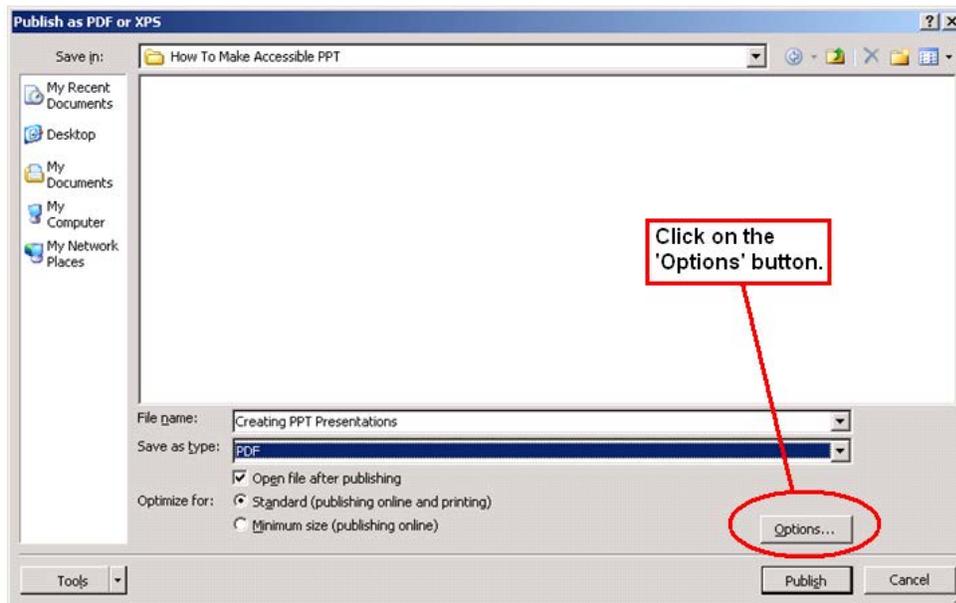


Figure 2: Publish as PDF Screen in Word 2007

In the **Options** menu box make sure the **Document structure tags for accessibility** box, is checked. Click on **OK** and then **Publish**.

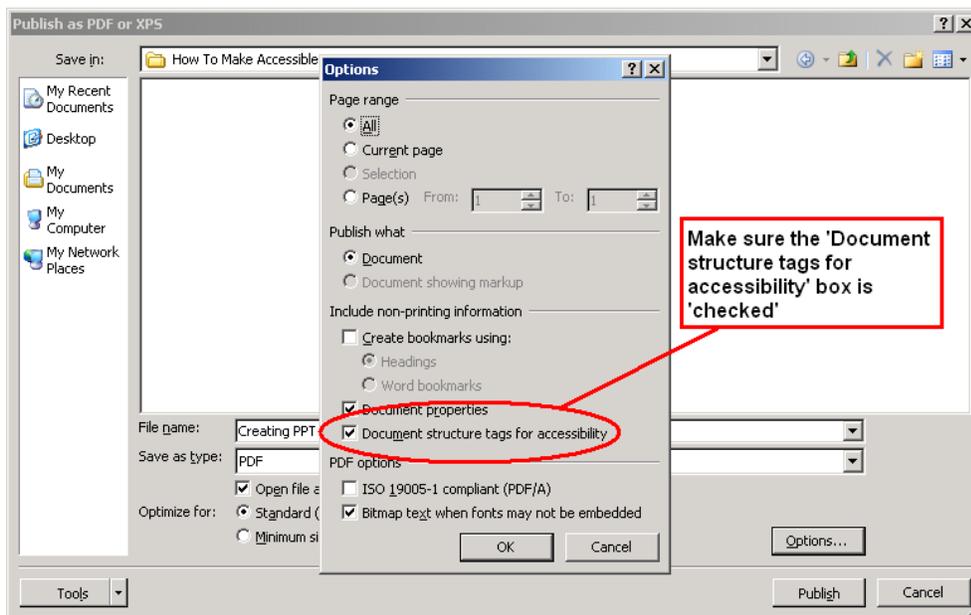


Figure 3: Options menu in Word 2007

Microsoft Word 2010 (Using Mouse)

In Microsoft Word 2010, to **Save As** a PDF using a mouse, click **File**, **Save As**, and in the **Save as type** options box, choose **PDF**.

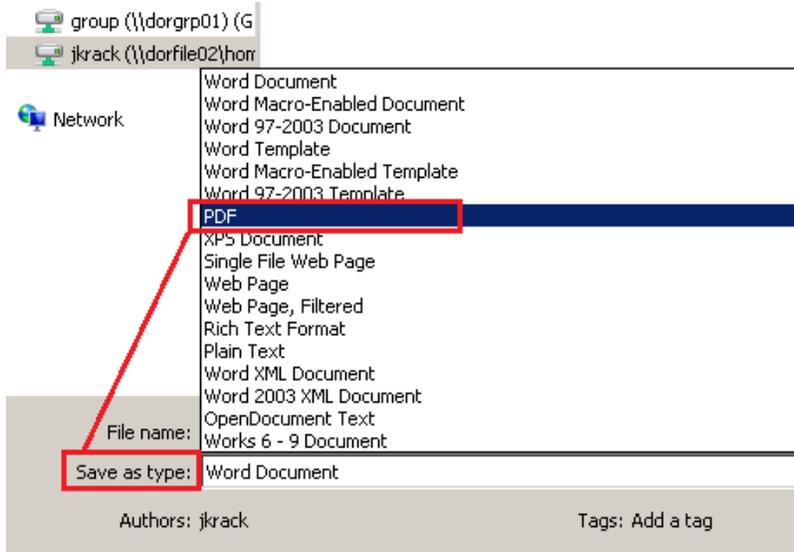


Figure 4: Save As screen in Word 2010

In the **Save As** menu screen, click on **Options**. Ensure the **Document structure tags for accessibility** box, is checked. Click **OK** then **Save**.

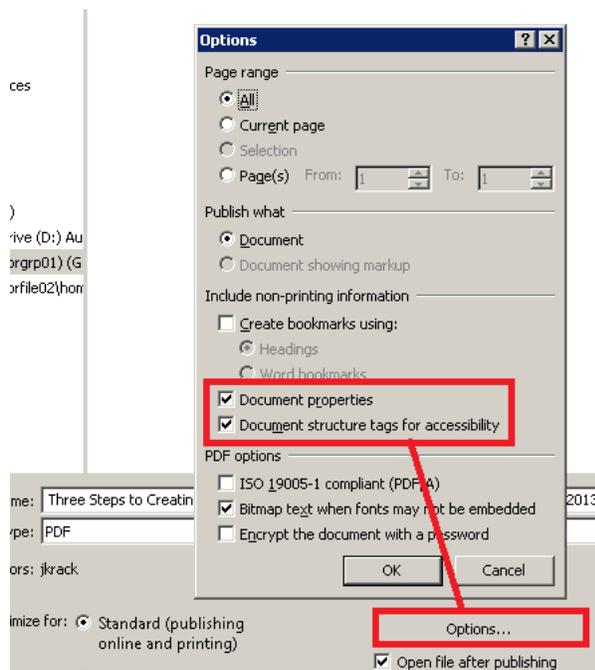


Figure 5: Options screen in Word 2010

Microsoft Word 2007 and Word 2010 (Using Keyboard)

To Save As PDF using just the keyboard in Word 2007 and 2010 follow these steps:

1. **Alt, F, A**, type in the file name, Press tab, **Arrow Down** to PDF then press **Enter**.
2. **Save As PDF**, tab to the **Options button**, press **Enter**.
3. In the **Options** menu tab down to the **Document structure tags for accessibility box**, use the **Spacebar** to make sure it is checked.
4. Tab to the **OK button** and **Enter**.
5. Tab to the **Publish button** in Word 2007, or the **Save button** in Word 2010 and **Enter**.

Step Three: Check Accessibility

Because Adobe Acrobat is the native program for creating PDF files, the PDF just created using this method is possibly not perfectly accessible. However, if it was an accessible Word document, the PDF created should also be accessible and ready for distribution.

Perform a test of the PDF document's accessibility prior to distributing it either via email or by posting it to the internet. To test a PDF use a screen reader such as JAWS, NVDA, Window-Eyes, etc. Preferably, develop an Accessibility Testing team of persons experienced at using Assistive Technologies.

References/More Resources

[How do I construct accessible content?](https://dor.ca.gov/Home/ConstructingAccessibleElectronicContent)

<https://dor.ca.gov/Home/ConstructingAccessibleElectronicContent>

[Social Security Administration \(SSA\) Guide: Producing Accessible Word and PDF Documents](http://www.ssa.gov/accessibility/files/The_Social_Security_Administration_Accessible_Document_Authoring_Guide_2.1.2.pdf)

http://www.ssa.gov/accessibility/files/The_Social_Security_Administration_Accessible_Document_Authoring_Guide_2.1.2.pdf

[Save as PDF – Word - Office](http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/save-as-pdf-HA010064992.aspx)

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/save-as-pdf-HA010064992.aspx>

[JAWS Screen Reading Software](http://www.freedomscientific.com/products/software/jaws/)

<http://www.freedomscientific.com/products/software/jaws/>

[NVDA \(Free Screen Reader for Microsoft Windows\)](http://www.nvda-project.org/)

<http://www.nvda-project.org/>

For more information and technical assistance
contact the [Disability Access Services](#)

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