Accessibility Checkers for Documents

Because information is for everyone.

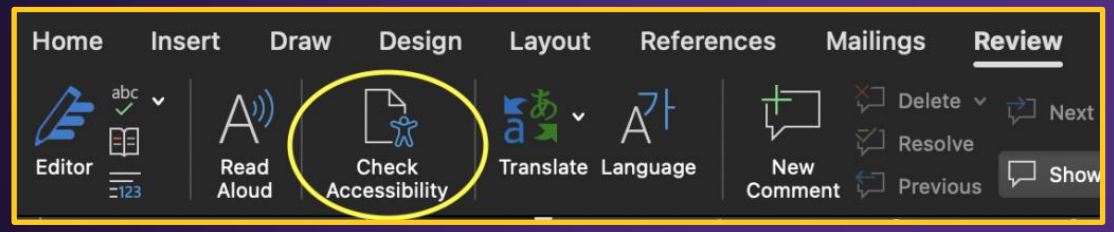
Ensuring Full Compliance Requires Multiple Tools

Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), we are legally required to ensure our digital content meets WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards. Because automated tools only detect around 30% of issues, manual testing is essential for full compliance.

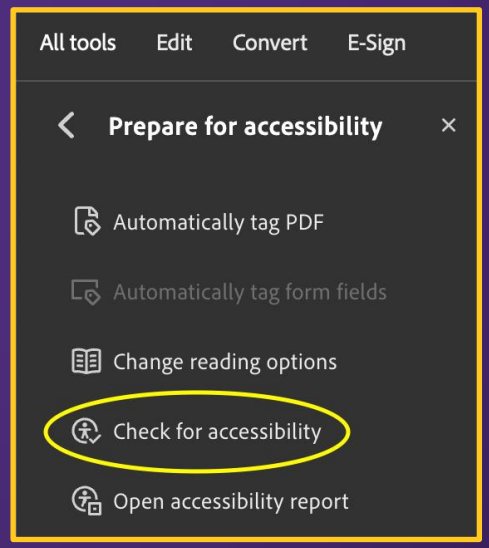
Note: If accessibility errors are found in a PDF file, it is always best to correct the issues in the source document and save a new PDF. Correcting errors in a PDF should be avoided.

Start with automated checkers

For Microsoft products, use the built-in checker on the Review ribbon.



For PDFs, use the built-in checker in Adobe Acrobat



Use PAC Checker if Using a Windows Machine

PAC Checker is a free program available for download on Windows machines that is capable of a more in-depth automated check for PDF accessibility.

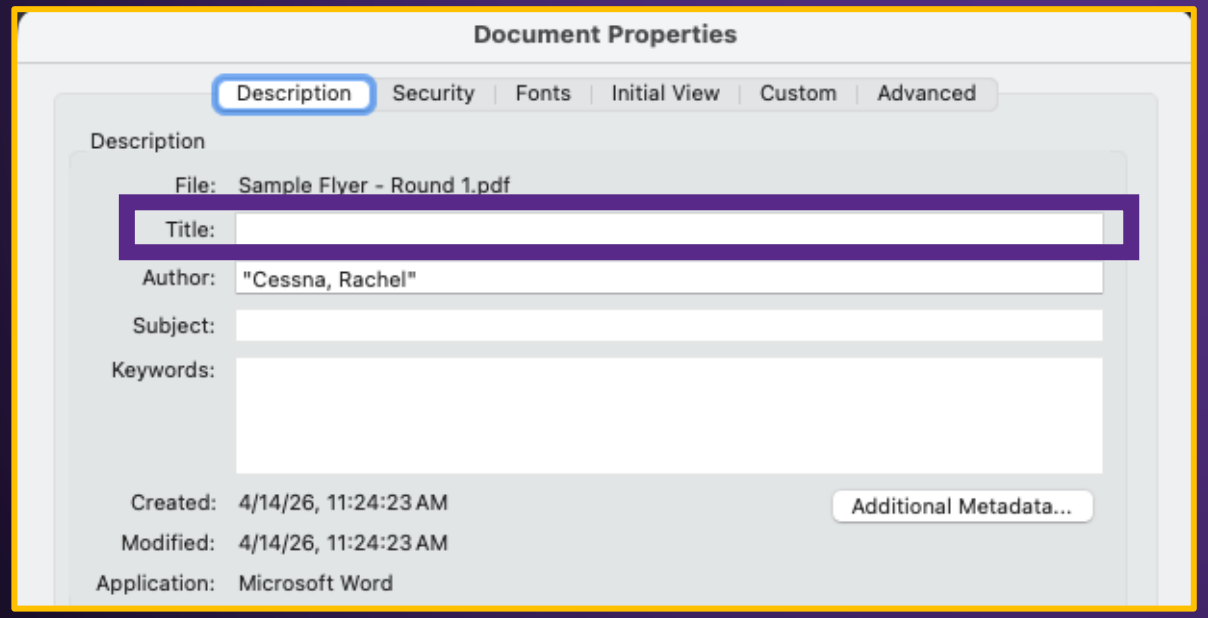
Automated Checkers Can’t Catch Everything

After using automated tools, save an accessible PDF and use Adobe Acrobat to check the following (PDF Accessibility Checklist):

- Make sure your document title is descriptive
- Ensure headings and lists are properly tagged
- Watch for empty paragraphs used to create space
- Ensure link text is descriptive
- Check your image alt text to make sure it is accurate
- Verify the document reading order matches the visual reading order
- Check your color contrast – especially for text over images

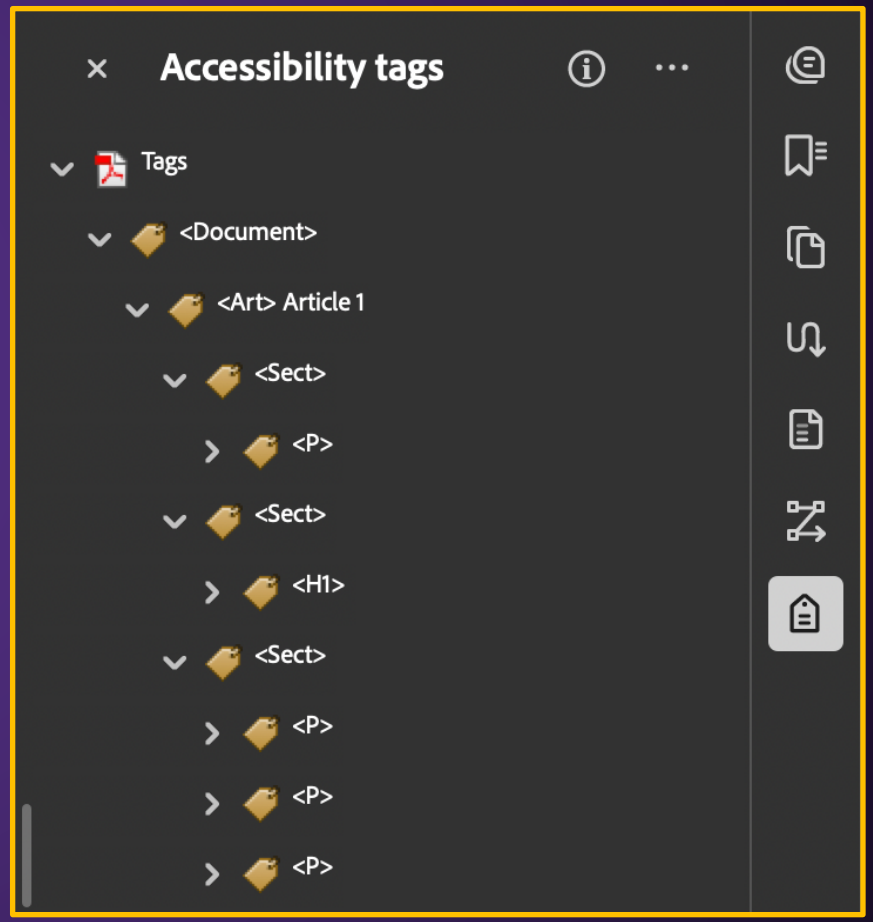
Checking the Document Title in Acrobat

- Go to **File** > **Document Properties**
- The document title will be listed in the **Title** field. Ensure the title accurately describes the document and is readable.



Checking Accessibility Tags in Acrobat

- Use the **Accessibility Tags panel** in Acrobat to ensure each element is tagged appropriately.
- Headings should be tagged as headings (<H1>, <H2>, <H3>, etc.)
- Lists should be tagged as lists (<L>)
- Regular text should be tagged as paragraphs (<P>)
- Watch for empty paragraph tags

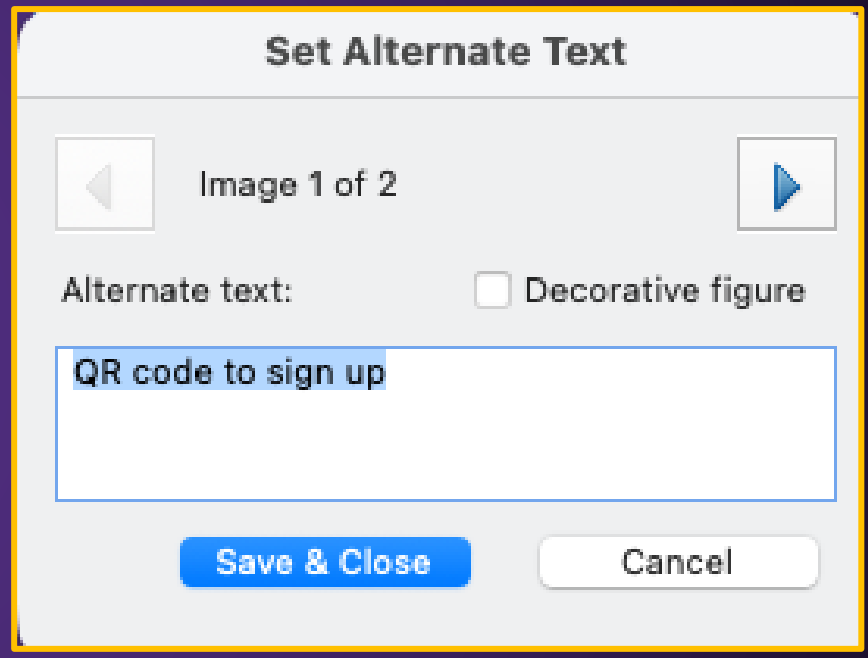


Checking Link Text

- Ensure text for links clearly explains their purpose and destination.
- Avoid generic phrases like “click here” or “read more,” as these provide no context for users relying on screen readers.
- Avoid using URLs as your link text (https://www.ecu.edu). Use the name of the page or site you are linking to instead to help the user understand where the link will take them.

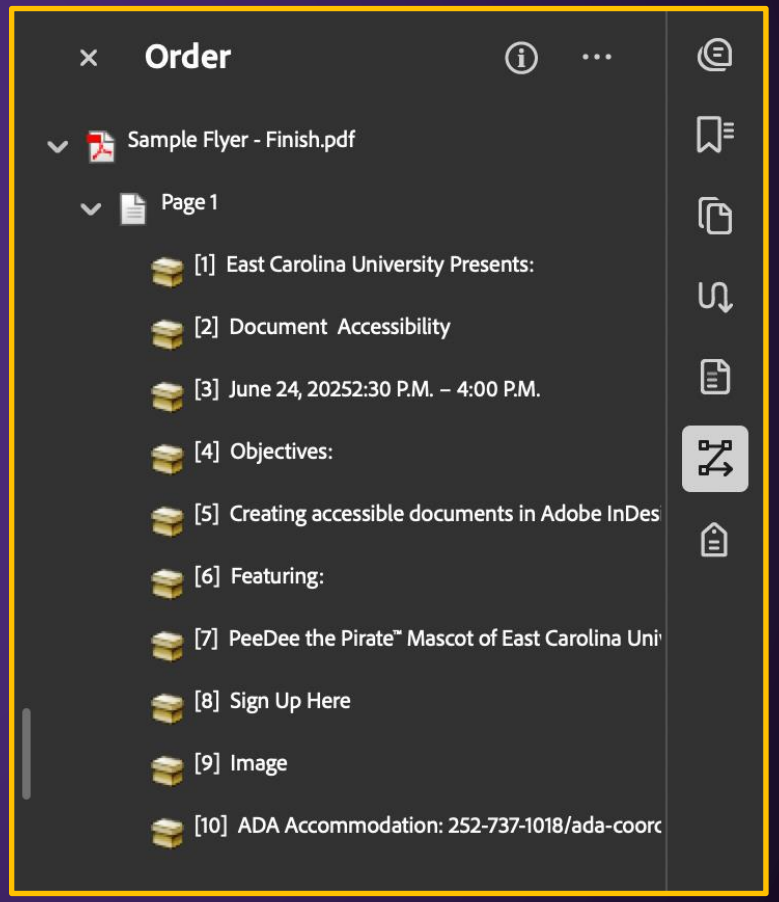
Checking Image Alt Text in Acrobat

- Select the **Prepare for accessibility** tool
- Choose **Add alternate text**
- Use the **Set alternat text** window to verify the alt text on each image
- Ensure alt text accurately describes the image, and decorative images do not have alt text applied



Checking Reading Order in Acrobat

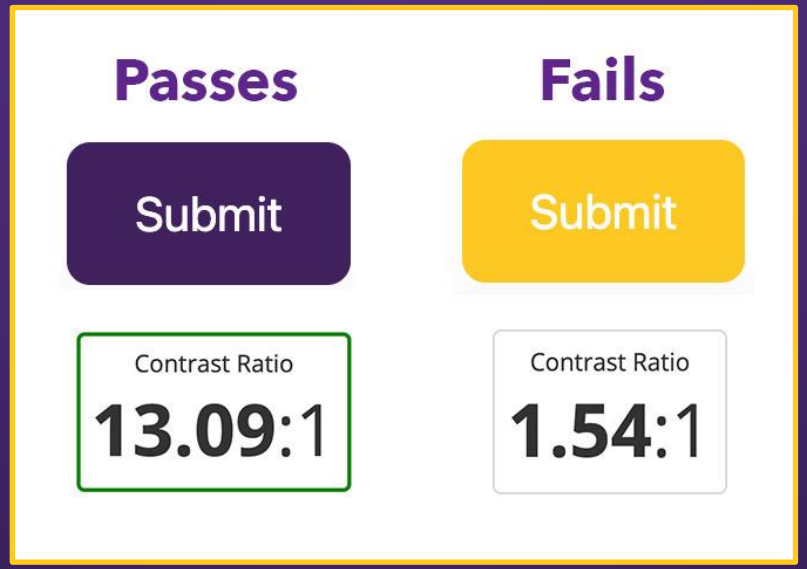
- Use the **Order panel** in Acrobat to ensure the order of elements listed matches the visual order of elements in the document.
- If adjustments need to be made, go back to the source document, if possible.
- To adjust reading order in the PDF, use the **Content panel**.

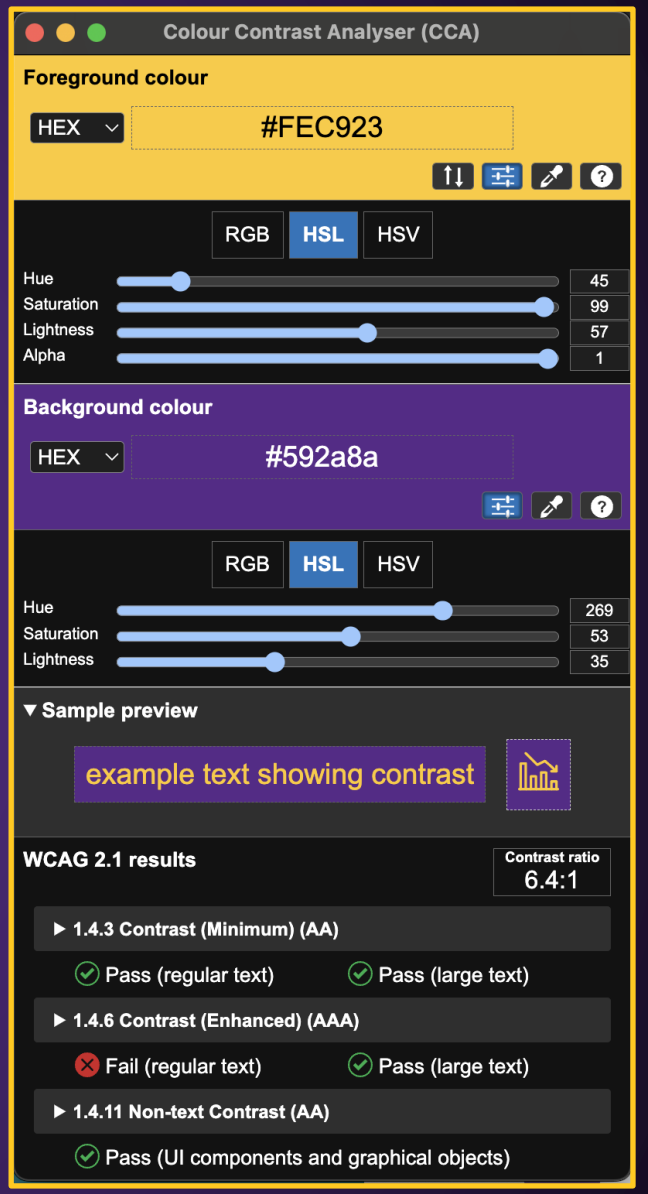


Checking Color Contrast

Ensure that text has sufficient color contrast against its background to be readable by users with visual impairments. Tools like the Colour Contrast Analyser can help evaluate color contrast.

(available in Company Portal for Windows users)





Using a Screen Reader for Document Testing

Using a screen reader is another way to test for accessibility. Check for the following as you listen:

- Headings are announced as headings and use the proper levels
- Lists are announced as lists
- Image alt text provides accurate descriptions
- Link text is meaningful when read on its own
- The reading order matches the visual layout

Note: Learning to use a screen reader takes practice. It is not required to test with a screen reader to ensure compliance.

Screen Reader Resources

- Learn to use VoiceOver (built into Mac OS)
- Deque VoiceOver Keyboard Shortcuts
- Learn to use Narrator (built into Windows 11)
- Deque Narrator Keyboard Shortcuts

Where can I learn more?

Learn More About Digital Accessibility

Visit the OFE Accessibility Workshop Series page to view recordings of previous sessions.

Visit ECU's Digital Accessibility website for more information about creating accessible digital content, links to training, and other accessibility resources.

accessibility.ecu.edu/digital

Questions?