Creating Accessible Documents – a Brief How To

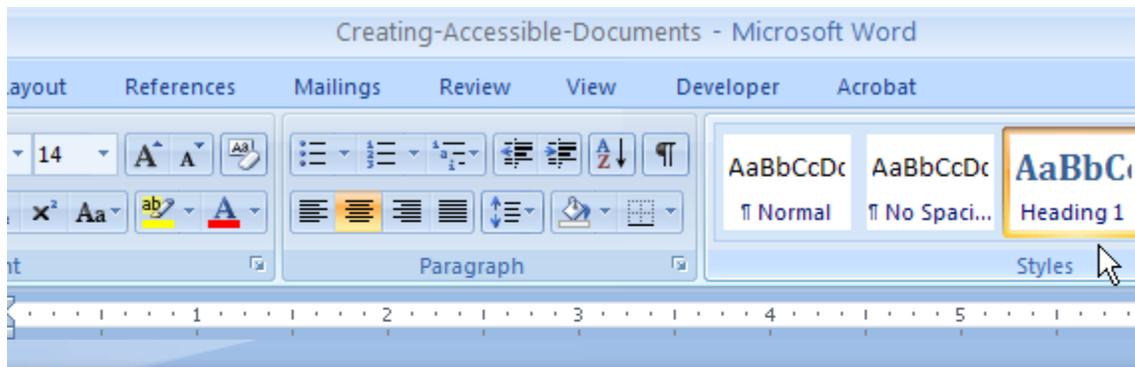## Writing an Accessible Word Document

Some of the key points are:

- Use Headings
- Identify pictures (non-text items)
- Create data tables properly
- Add tags to a PDF
- Add a language specification

An accessible document is usable by everyone – including people with disabilities. An accessible PDF has tagging information that makes it easy for a screen reader program to read it out loud. The United States government Section 508 guideline says that people with disabilities must have access to data and information comparable to that provided to people without disabilities.

Headings

A document's title should be a **Heading 1.** In Word 2007, setting a document's heading, sub-heading, paragraph, or other part of the document is fairly straightforward. To set the title, type it, hilight it, and click on the "Heading 1"


All main headings in the document should be **Heading 2**. If a section is broken into subsections, they would have a **Heading 3** style, etc. The headings in Word show a document's structure, similar to an outline.

One of the common 508 sayings is – "If it looks like a heading, it should be tagged as a heading." In otherwords, don't use just Bold and Font size to make something look like a heading. Use Styles.

Converting the Word document to a PDF

This assumes you have the Adobe PDF plug-in installed. The printouts use Adobe Acrobat Professional 9.0; Adobe Acrobat 8.0 works in a similar fashion.

1. Open the document in Word.
2. From the menu bar select Acrobat and ensure the Preferences are set appropriately.
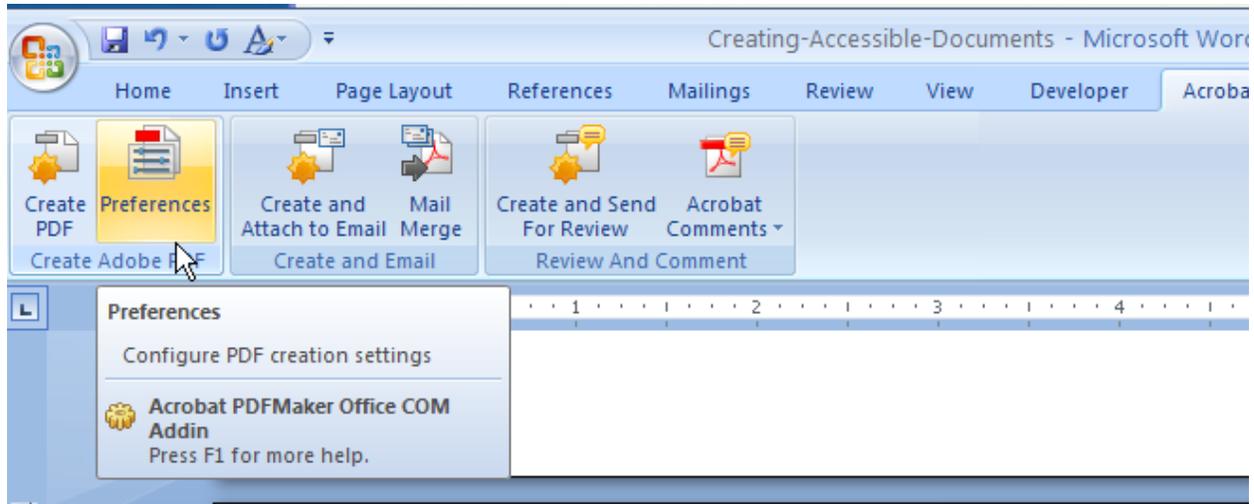
You should have:

- View Adobe PDF Results
- Prompt for Adobe PDF File Name
- Convert Document information
- Create Bookmarks
- Add links
- Enable Accessibility and Reflow with tagged Adobe PDF

Under the **Advanced Settings** button, change the **Compatibility** to **Acrobat 8.0 (1.7).** This ensures the latest accessibility features will be applied to the newly created PDF.

3. To create the PDF, select **Acrobat**, then **Create PDF**.

In most cases, PDF files created using Word formatting and Style elements will be 90% accessible. You can test the PDF using Adobe's **Accessibility Full Checker** and the **Read Out Loud** tools to test the PDF.
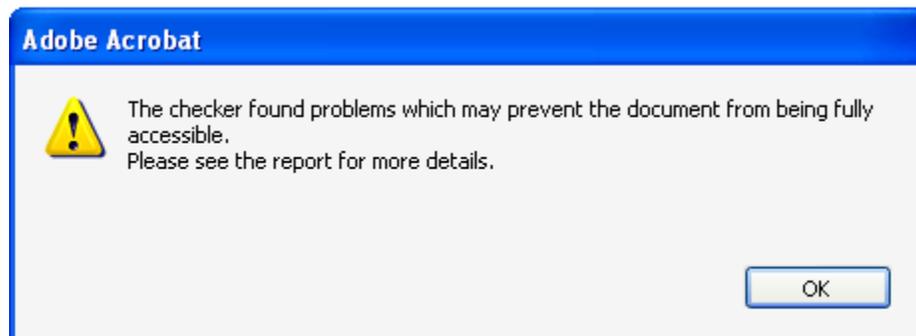
Testing the PDF for Accessibility

In Adobe Acrobat, select **Advanced > Accessibility > Full Check** …
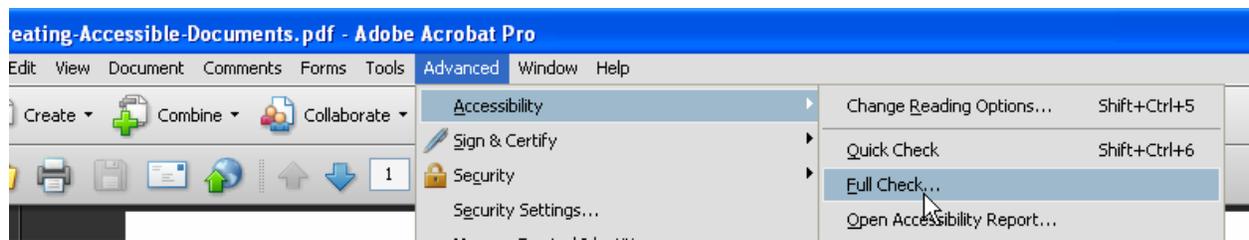
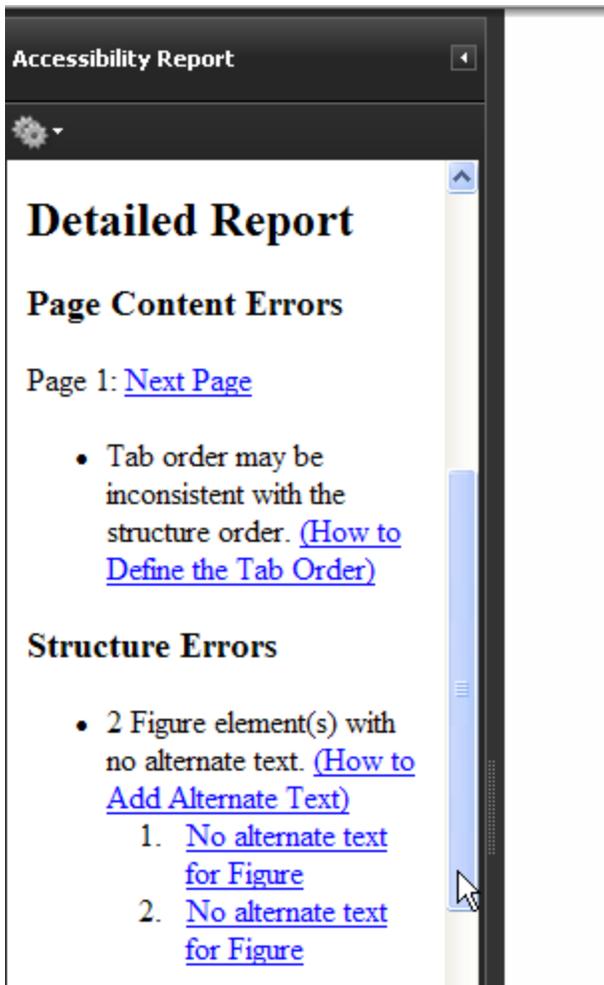Select all the **Checking Options** then the **Start Checking** button.

It's likely that you will see there are some accessibility problems to fix. The report shows the problems and gives hints for how to fix them.

N.B.: The Accessibility Full Checker will not verify that the reading and tab order are correct. You need to use a screen reader to test the reading order and use the Tab key to test the tab order.

Accessibility Report

Detailed Report

Page Content Errors

Page 1: Next Page

- Tab order may be inconsistent with the structure order. (How to Define the Tab Order)

Structure Errors

- 2 Figure element(s) with no alternate text. (How to Add Alternate Text)
    1. No alternate text for Figure
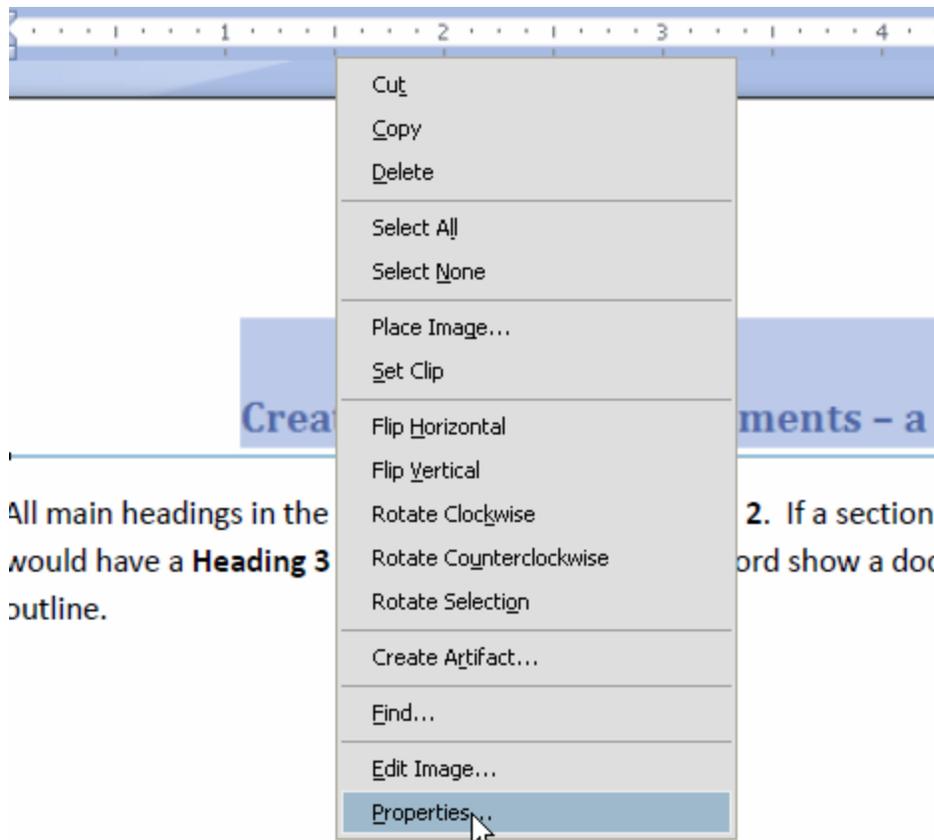   2. No alternate text for Figure

Add Alternative Text to Images

Alternative (or alt) text can convey the purpose of images to people who use screen readers. It's important to

1. **Have** alt text for an image
2. Have **good (meaningful)** alt text

You can add alt text in Adobe Acrobat.

1. Choose Tools > Advanced Editing > TouchUp Object Tool.
2. Right click on the image and select Properties.

Cut

Copy

Delete

Select All

Select None

Place Image...

Set Clip

Flip Horizontal

Flip Vertical

Rotate Clockwise

Rotate Counterclockwise

Rotate Selection

Create Artifact...

Find...

Edit Image...

Properties...

Crea... ...ments – a...

All main headings in the... ...would have a **Heading 3**... ...outline.

2. If a section i... ...ord show a doc...

Choose the **Tag** tab of the **Properties** box and type in the appropriate alternative text. Remember that the text may be read aloud, so be accurate and concise.
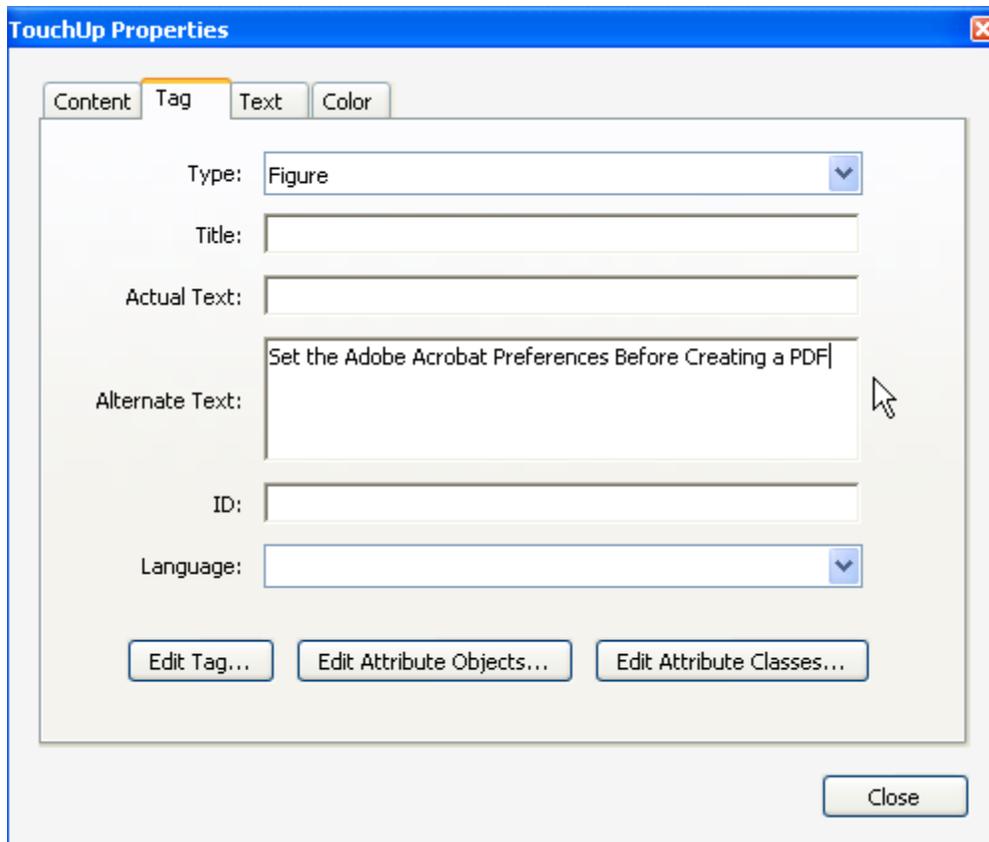
View the Tags Structure in Acrobat

Open the tags structure by choosing View > Navigation Panel > Tags. Then press Shift 8 (*) to expand all the tags.

PDF Accessibility Checklist

After you've created a PDF, review it for section 508 compliance. The answers to all the questions below should be either **Yes** or **NA** (not applicable).

508 Compliance QuestionsTest	Yes/No/Na
1. Does the document contain actual text? Scanned representations of text are not accessible.	
2. Does the document's content follow a logical reading order?	
3. Are tabable elements placed in a logical tab order?	
4. Has the document been tagged and has a clear document structure been defined?	
5. Has alternative text been appropriately applied to all images, objects and form field elements?	

6. Do data tables contain Column or Row header tags?	
7. Are elements that should be ignored by a screen reader tagged as artifacts?	
8. Has the document's native language been defined?	
9. Are hyperlinks active and link to the appropriate destination?	
10. Are bookmarks labeled properly and do they link to the appropriate destination?	

Reading Out Loud Screen Reader

Adobe Acrobat's screen reader can be used to check the reading of the document:

1. View > Read Out Loud > Activate Read Out Loud.
2. View > Read Out Loud > Start.