

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 ensures that millions of Americans with disabilities have equivalent access to information regardless of how they access it. Electronic documents must meet certain guidelines and requirements in order to be compliant with Section 508. Compliance is more than meeting government regulations, at its heart, it's about ensuring all Americans have the opportunity to fully engage and contribute to society.

So, how do we make Adobe PDF Documents 508 compliant? By starting with a 508 compliant Word Document. Click on the Acrobat option on your ribbon and click on Create PDF, choose your location and click Save using the same filename. A PDF will automatically open. Using the Acrobat option in Word, the alt tags, document properties, and layout will all transfer over. When working with an existing PDF, make sure the text in the body is searchable and not a scanned image of text. You can test this by highlighting the text with your cursor.

If it's an image, the screen reader will have nothing to read. Make sure all hyperlinks contain the full and correct URL, and uses descriptive text. If this is done incorrectly, you will have to go back to the source Word or PowerPoint file to correct it. It is important that there is alternate, meaningful text provided for each image. Why is this important? Let's look at the following image in a document. An assistive screen reader would read this part of the document as: "Motivational speakers can help motivate your staff. Let's get motivated!"

Some meaning is lost without the image. So let's add alternate text that will be read by the screen reader. Do this by clicking on the Tools menu and then the Accessibility tab. Click on Set Alternate Text and Acrobat will show you which images in your PDF need alternate text. What you add here is important. Using the file name for the image or repeating the text around the image isn't helpful. The screen reader will read "Motivational speakers can help motivate your staff. Let's get motivated! Let's get motivated!"

Let's try something else. Let's use one word, "meeting" in the alt text. Now it reads "Motivational speakers can help motivate your staff. Meeting let's get motivated!" "Meeting" is a little more descriptive, but the lack of punctuation makes the reader read the sentences incorrectly. One more change, add a descriptive phrase and the document reads "Motivational speakers can help motivate your staff. A meeting of people getting excited by a speaker. Let's get motivated!" The alternate text now supplies an equivalent experience for the image to a user using assistive technology. Repeat these steps for all other images.

Purely decorative images can be hidden from screen readers by marking them as Artifacts. Click Tools, then the Accessibility Tab, then "Touch Up Reading Order." Draw a rectangle around whatever you want the screen reader to ignore and click the Background button.

The final step is to run a Full Accessibility Check on the document in Adobe Acrobat Professional 8 or higher. You can find the Check under Tools > Accessibility > Full Check depending on the version of Adobe Acrobat Professional you have. Correct any errors reported, run the report, and repeat until the report shows no errors.

You can also spot check the document using the Adobe Acrobat Read Aloud function. Perform a visual check on the document to ensure that no hidden data is present in the PDF file. When doing that,

ensure the reading order is correct - top to bottom, left to right. If there is no way to make the PDF, as is, compliant, you must create an alternate document that is compliant.

The IHS Web Document Specialist will review documents for compliancy as a final check before it goes online. Thanks for watching. Please review the [Web Services](#) page for more about Section 508 compliance and IHS Web standards.