

A GUIDE TO:

# Creating Accessible PDF Documents

As greater numbers of faculty use Canvas to provide reading material for their students, opportunities for learning are greatly enhanced. Typically such materials are digitized using a flat bed scanner or photocopier with scanning capability, then saved as a PDF file. Students with print-related impairments appreciate the digitization of course materials, which often makes it easier for them to access their learning materials. Unfortunately, digitized course materials are often created in a manner that limits how usable (or accessible) they are for students with print-impaired who are making use of Access Technologies.

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) assists students in converting text-based materials to alternative and accessible formats for students with print-based disabilities. Such accessible formats may include converted PDF files, RTF (Rich Text Format) files, and DOC (document) files. The conversion process is time consuming and is more difficult when the PDF documents posted to Canvas being used as classroom handouts are of poor quality. Like any recipe, the better the ingredients (input) the better the final product (output).

This guide provides a brief tutorial for faculty and staff who are creating PDF documents for use with classroom lectures and/or for posting to course connected Canvas sites. Our goal is to provide information that will enable you to create high-quality, clean PDF documents. Not only will these clean PDF files make it easier for SAS to support the needs of students with disabilities, but these more readable documents will also be appreciated by other students and colleagues attending to your course materials.

This document is broken into four (4) examples of PDFs with explanations:

1. An example of a poorly scanned and created PDF document.
2. An example of an improved PDF document using site techniques.
3. An example of a greatly improved PDF document using slightly advanced techniques.
4. For the advanced interest, creating a PDF document with basic accessible functionality.

Also included are the steps for using the software program Adobe Reader to have your computer read the document out loud as student would use the program. This is a good test of the accessibility of any PDF document.

Student ••] ] o ] š Ç thank you for taking the time to review this document and consider these best practices while developing course



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## EXAMPLE 1: Poorly Developed PDF



Basic PDF documents are actually pictures of text (image files) and cannot be read by assistive technologies such as text-to-speech and screen reader software programs. This is an example of poorly developed PDF document posted to Canvas. Its problems include:

1. Low resolution of text.
2. Poor visual reproduction.
3. Curved text to the center spine area.
4. Side-by-side horizontal reproduction.
5. Skewed (non-straight) representation of text.
6. Gray or darkened areas at center spine and around outside.

As it is, this PDF may be difficult for any student to read. Additionally, due to the factors listed above, conversion to an accessible format using OCR (Optical Character Recognition) would not be feasible. Thus, this document would be *inaccessible* to a student with a print-based impairment.

EXAMPLE 2:

## Improved PDF

This improved PDF was created simply by pushing the spine of the book down against the copier-scanner. The key is to have the originating document as flat against the scanning screen and as straight on the scanning bed as possible. It is also important to make certain the

EXAMPLE 3:

# Great PDF Made Simple

It is easy to create clean PDF document files using Adobe Acrobat Pro DC. Free download is Run Advertised

1. Remove the dark edges caused by scanning and separate the pages individually from a multi-paged vertical document by cutting the copied pages and then copying the cleaned pages into a new PDF file.

EXAMPLE 4:

## Creating an Accessible PDF

FINAL STEP:

# Reading an OCR PDF Document

To access and read aloud an OCR PDF document using Adobe Reader, follow these steps:

To Activate Read Out Loud

1. Open the document using Adobe Reader.
2. Select the Read Out Loud icon in the toolbar.
3. Next select Read Out Loud and Read Out Loud from the drop down menus.

To Read a Document

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Questions?

Contact Assistive Technology Coordinator  
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