

10 tips for using PDF online

PDF documents are quick and easy to create and publish but can cause problems if not designed properly or used appropriately.

1	Only use PDF when it's the best format	Don't use PDF just because it's faster or easier for you. Avoid PDF when it's the sole format for content that will be used online. PDF is great for print versions or distributing content intended for use offline.
2	Link from a 'gateway' page	Provide a summary or description of the content within the PDF unless it's just a print version. Direct links and search engines to the gateway page rather than the PDF.
3	Identify the content and format	Write a meaningful title and set the title as the window name. Link to the document with a clear label that includes a file format and size warning.
4	Offer download options	For large documents, offer a set of smaller downloads as well as a single download. Link to each part clearly, providing a summary of the contents if needed.
5	Ensure reader compatibility	Save to an earlier version of PDF for wider compatibility with the free reader. Avoiding locking text copying or printing.
6	Support navigation	In long documents, use a linked table of contents (or bookmarks with the initial view set to show the bookmarks panel). Make links out of the document look and behave like links. Don't underline text that isn't a link.
7	Avoid large images	If the content is published only as PDF, avoid large decorative images. If used, set initial view to show the pages panel.
8	Avoid print layouts	If the content is published only as PDF, use layouts that will still work well on screen. If horizontal layout is used, set initial view to fit page.
9	Tag for accessibility	If the content is published only as PDF, ensure the document is tagged for accessibility. It must have properly tagged structure, appropriate tab and reading order, text alternatives for images, and the default language must be set.
10	Test for accessibility	Test tagged PDF documents to ensure the tagging is correct, and fix any problems found.