This tip sheet will help you improve the accessibility of PDF documents for persons with disabilities.

This tip sheet will help you improve the accessibility of Microsoft Office documents that were saved in PDF format. This tip sheet is applicable to *Acrobat Professional* and *Acrobat DC*. *Note:* PDF files created from scanned documents are not accessible unless the content has been converted to text using optical recognition (OCR) software. More comprehensive information can be found at www.ryerson.ca/accessibility

General Considerations

It's best to ensure that the original document was designed with accessibility features before saving as a PDF. This makes it easier to improve or fix accessibility features in Acrobat.

Tagging an Untagged Document

Acrobat usually automatically tags the document. To enable, select **Tools → Accessibility → Add Tags to Document.** Review tags using the *TouchUp Reading Order Tool.*

TouchUp Reading Order Tool

This tool allows users to add, edit and rearrange the reader order of PDF tags.

- Go to **Tools → Accessibility → TouchUp Reading Order**

In this view, all the content is enclosed in numbered boxes, each representing a tag and the corresponding reading order. You can modify or add tags using the buttons. To add or change tags, drag a box around an element using the cursor, or select a box by clicking on the number. You can then assign a common tag to that box. For example, assigning a Heading 1 to the title of the page, and Heading 2 for all subheadings.

Order Panel

To enable panel, **TouchUp Reading Order → Show Order Panel**. This panel (featured on right sidebar) allows you to change the reading order of the page content. Ensure that there is a logical reading sequence. To edit sequence, click and drag a tag to the location that reflects the correct reading order.

Modify or Define PDF Tags

To view and edit tags:

- **View → Show/Hide → Navigation Panes → Tags**

You can change the type of tag by right clicking on the element, **Properties → Tag** tab → Select from **Type** dropdown menu. This would be useful if you are missing any Heading 1 tags, or would like to give your document good structural hierarchy.

To highlight tags, **Options Menu** (or right click on tags) → Check **Highlight Content.** This will give you an idea what content is associated with a tag, or the semantic structure of the page.

Alternative Text

Images can be tagged with alternative text by double clicking or wrapping a box around the image with the cursor → **Tag as figure**. To edit alternative text, right click on box number and **Edit Alternative Text.** Ensure alternative text conveys meaning of image, not a literal description. Images that are decorative or convey no meaningful content should be tagged as **Background.** Anything tagged as *Background* will be ignored by a screen reader.

Table Editor

Using the **TouchUp Reading Order** tool, right click on the tag number assigned to the table. Select **Table Editor** to modify cell properties, or identify the scope (Column, Row) or type (Header, Data) of cell. Or select **Table Summary** to add additional context to the table.

Forms

If creating a form from scratch, select **Create PDF Form or Online Form**, and follow the instructions. Many PDF forms are created in other programs, although form labels must be added within Acrobat before they can be filled out electronically. Acrobat may detect and label fields automatically, otherwise under **Tasks → Add New Field** → Select desired form field type and drag it to the correct place. Unnecessary form fields can be selected and deleted.

Form Field Tooltip

Form fields should have descriptive tooltips. The **Tooltip** adds additional help text to a field. Right click on a **Form Field → Properties** → Add descriptive text

to **Tooltip.** If field is required, identify as so in the Tooltip.

Tab Order
Confirm that the tab order is logical and the same as the reading order. If necessary the tab order can be changed manually or can be set to document structure (default), row or column.

- **Forms** → **Edit** → Under **Fields,** click on **Tab Order** dropdown → Check **Show Tab Number** → Check **Order Tabs Manually** to manually drag and drop fields in the Fields pane.

To test tab order, click **Preview** and press the Tab key to move through your form.

Accessibility Checker
Review the accessibility of your document before publishing by performing a **Full Check** from the **Accessibility Menu.** Review the Accessibility Report and make all necessary recommendations and fixes.

Other Resources
PDF Accessibility by WebAim
www.webaim.org/techniques/acrobat

PDF Accessibility Checker (PAC 2) is a free windows program used to test the accessibility of PDF files. www.access-for-all.ch/en/pdf-lab/pdf-accessibility-checker-pac

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