


Cheat Sheet for Accessible PDFs

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WCAG 2.1 & PDF/UA-1

1	Live Text —Is the body text live and reflowable? Not a scan, fax, or graphic.	PDF/UA WCAG
2	Tags —Is the document tagged?	PDF/UA WCAG
3	Tags — Are they the correct tags?	PDF/UA WCAG
4	RO —Are the tags in the correct <TAG> reading order? (Tags panel)	PDF/UA
5	RO —Is the architectural reading order good? (Order panel) Ideally, should match the Tag RO, but minor differences can be OK for some designs.	WCAG
6	Graphics —Do the graphics have Alt Text or are they Artifacted?	PDF/UA WCAG
7	Fonts —Were Unicode/OpenType fonts used?	PDF/UA WCAG
8	Fonts —Were Unicode special characters used, not look-alikes? Dashes, hyphens, minus sign, multiplication sign, STEM symbols, bullets, dingbats.	PDF/UA WCAG
9	Fonts —Are all the fonts embedded in the PDF? When missing, characters can disappear, become skewed, or appear as dots or white boxes. Can't be recognized by assistive technologies and create encoding errors.	PDF/UA
10	Page Headers/Footers —Are they artifacted? Or do they contain critical information that is not tagged or accessible?	PDF/UA
11	Tables —Were tables incorrectly used for layout purposes? Tables should be used only for tabular data where related columns and rows organize the information into a logical matrix.	PDF/UA WCAG
12	Tables —Are they correctly structured? No blank rows or columns.	PDF/UA WCAG
13	Tables —Do Column and Row headers have <TH> tags and span / scope attributes?	PDF/UA
14	Tables —If header cells are merged and span multiple columns or rows, have they been assigned Header IDs and related to the main <TD> cells in the table's body?	PDF/UA
15	Nav —Are there bookmarks in the PDF, and does the PDF automatically open with the bookmarks panel visible? Required for 10 pages or longer.	PDF/UA
16	Nav —Is there a TOC and is it hyperlinked? Required for 10 pages or longer.	PDF/UA
17	Nav —Are all the hyperlinks correct and functional? Footnotes, endnotes, URLs, emails, cross-references, jump lines, indexes.	PDF/UA WCAG
18	Nav —Are hyperlinks accessible? Must have <Link-OBJR> nested inside <Link> tag. Long hyperlinks should have meaningful text or Alt Text.	PDF/UA
19	Metadata —Is the metadata correct? File/Document Properties = <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description Tab <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Title Subject/Description (200 characters) Author Keywords (unlimited, separated with ;) • Initial View Tab <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Navigation tab: Bookmarks and Page Show Document Title (not File Name) • Advanced Tab <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language (global, for entire document) 	PDF/UA
20	Checker —Check the PDF with Acrobat's accessibility checker. It should pass without any errors.	PDF/UA
21	Checker —Preflight the PDF with Acrobat's Preflight utility for PDF/UA. It should correct most technical problems and add the PDF/UA-1 identifier. (Optional) Check with a 3rd party accessibility checker, such as PAC3, Commonlook, and Axes4.	PDF/UA
22	Color Contrast —See sidebar on the reverse of this chart. 	WCAG

How to Check Color Contrast

The required **color contrast ratio** is 4.5:1 to meet the WCAG AA standards (minimum requirement) and 7:1 to meet AAA standards.

Colors are recorded in **RGB Hexadecimal** (#####).

Once a PDF is created, it's extremely difficult to adjust the color of critical text, graphics, and other elements. So we strongly urge you to **check the colors in the source document** before exporting a PDF. In other words, do this task while still in Word, PowerPoint, Illustrator, Photoshop, or Adobe InDesign.

Check color contrast with any of these free testers:

- [www.W.webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker](http://www.webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker)
- <https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyzer>
- <https://contrast-ratio.com>
- <http://contrast-finder.tanaguru.com>
- <https://contrastchecker.com>

Designers, these tools help you choose accessible color palettes and themes:

- <https://material.io/collections/color/#>
- <https://toolness.github.io/accessible-color-matrix/>

Logical Reading Order Sequence

Based on user studies, this RO works well for most users, but you're free to adjust the sequence as needed for your specific document.

Standards require only that you make it "logical." You get to decide what is logical!

Traditionally, Office documents have a top-down left-right logical reading order, with graphics and sidebars anchored at appropriated places.

But highly-designed documents from Adobe InDesign or PowerPoint presentations usually don't follow such a predictable reading order, especially for marketing materials, advertisements, complex covers, magazine opening spreads, and info graphics.

Use your best judgment: what would you want to know first?

1. Title of document
2. Sub-Title
3. Author, agency, organization, or publisher
4. Logo or agency seal (logos and trademarks verify ownership of the content)
5. Publication date, edition, volume number
6. Publication Number / ISSN-ISSB
7. Begin the regular body content

