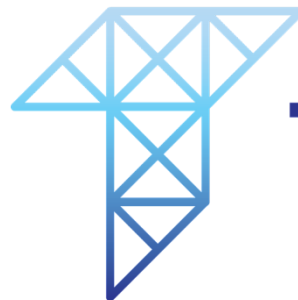


Overcoming the Barriers to WCAG and PDF/UA Compliance in PDFs

Understanding how to meet the standards

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The Standards



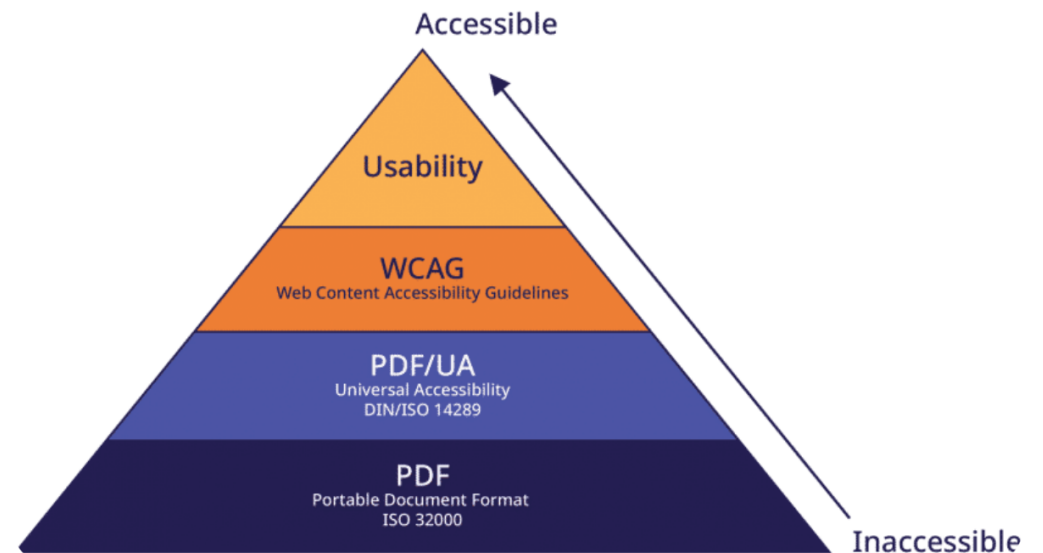
The Standards

Understanding PDF Accessibility Requirements

Between Validity and Compliancy

PDF accessibility requirements can be seen as a four-layer pyramid. Every layer builds on the previous layers:

- Level 1: PDF
- Level 2: PDF/UA
- Level 3: WCAG
- Level 4: Usability



How to Check for Compliance



- You need to use a checker that checks for compliance
- The Adobe Acrobat Checker does not check for compliance, only for common barriers

Compliant Checkers



- PAC 2024 Checker (free)
- Commonlook PDF
- Commonlook Validator (free)
- GrackleDocs
- PDFix

Common Errors

Error: Title Missing or Not Displayed

- Every PDF file needs a descriptive title
- That title needs to be displayed when the PDF file is opened

Error: Object Not Tagged

- Every object in a PDF file needs a tag
- Many source applications fail to tag elements such as paths
- Some content can be artifacted if it has no value

Error: Language

- A PDF file needs to have a language defined for the document
- Specific text in a document can be identified at the tag level

Error: Nesting of Heading Levels

- Headings in a PDF file need to fall in sequence. (i.e. H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6)
- If you skip a heading level in your heading sequence, you'll receive an error
- If your first heading is anything other than an <H1> you'll receive an error
- You can use up to six heading levels in a PDF file

Error: Possible Inappropriate Use

- This error occurs when an element is in the wrong position
- Tag elements in a PDF are either inline elements or block-level elements
- You cannot put a block-level element inside of another block-level element
- Common Block level elements are <P>, <Table>, <H1>, <Figure>
- Common Inline level elements are , <link>, <Reference>, <Lbl>

Error: Table Regularity

- When table rows contain different numbers of cells, you will often see a regularity error
- Merging cells is a sure way to cause a regularity error
- Regularity can be fixed!
- By setting a `colSpan` or `rowSpan` attribute you can address regularity errors
- A great tool for evaluating table regularity is the PDFGoHTML plug-in by Callas Software

Error: Table Header Cell Has no Subcells



- This error occurs when the appropriate scope attribute is not assigned to a table header cell
- Many source applications including Adobe InDesign, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft PowerPoint fail to add the scope to table header cells

Error: Standard Structure Type is Remapped

- A PDF document contains a role map which maps the name of the style you used in the source application to the tag that it is connected to.
- You cannot map a standard tag name to a standard tag name
- If you create a style called <Caption> and map it to a <P> tag you have mapped a standard tag name to a standard tag name which is not allowed

Error: Alternative Text Missing for Element

- <Figure> tags need to contain alternative text that describes the figure in context.
- If a <Figure> tag has no alternative text, the user will not understand what the figure is about.
- Hyperlinks also are required to have alternative text

Error: Alternative Text Missing for Annotation



- Hyperlinks in a PDF document are required to contain alternate text according to the PDF U/A Standard
- This requirement came from a time when it was common for all of your hyperlinks to be [Click Here](#) or [Download Here](#).
- Best practice is to ensure that all of your hyperlinks contain meaningful text. [Download the 2024 Annual Report](#).
- If your hyperlinks contain meaningful text, this error can be easily fixed.

Error: ID Missing for <Note> Structure Element

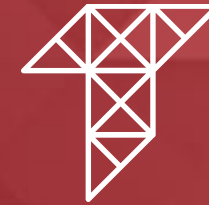


- <Note> tags in a PDF file must each contain a unique ID number to make each note in the document unique.
- Acrobat contains a fix-up that allows you to automatically assign IDs to <Note> elements with one click.

Thank you!

It's unmistakable that the world has a greater reliance on digital content. This increased demand means that **equal access for all** is more critical than ever before.

Wherever you are on your digital accessibility journey, **Tamman** and **Chax** are here to help!



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