Quick Guide for Accessible PDF

provides guidance for using Adobe Acrobat XI Pro to make documents accessible by ensuring that the tagging and reading order are correct, and that other accessibility requirements have been met.

Tagging for Logical Reading Order

Document content is read in the order in which the content was tagged or appears in the tag tree. It is best to only manipulate the tags in the Tags pane.

Apply a Heading Tag

To help readers navigate a document and understand the logical structure of document content, tag content that represents a heading with the appropriate heading level to indicate its position in the document hierarchy.

- Select the Touch Up Reading Order tool, and then select the heading text in the PDF.
- In the Touch Up Reading Order dialog box, activate the button corresponding to the appropriate heading tag (for example, Heading 1, Heading 2).

Ensure that all heading elements are ordered properly. For example, H2 elements should follow H1 elements, H3 elements should follow H2 elements, etc. Content authors should not "skip" levels (e.g. H1 directly to H3). When headings are incorrectly ordered, users of assistive technology may become confused over the structure of the document and believe content is missing.

Apply Paragraph tags for paragraphs

A paragraph is a block of text in a document that centers on a specific idea. Draw a rectangle around text that you want to label as a Paragraph and click Text on the Touch-Up Reading Order Panel (Text and Paragraph are synonymous in Acrobat. They both create a Paragraph tag).

Headers and Footers

Non-distinct header and footer content should be labeled as artifacts
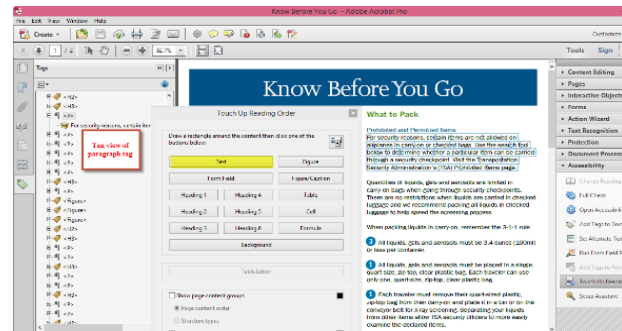
Structure of Lists & Table of Contents

It is important to structure list tags properly to ensure proper reading order. Under the <L> tag is a <LI> tag at the first nesting level. The <Lbl> tag is above the <LBody> tag and both tags are at another nested level beneath the <LI> tag. The bullet is nested under the <Lbl> tag and that the text of the list item is nested under the <LBody>.

Below is an example of proper list structure:
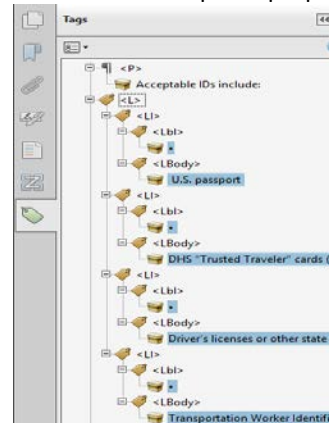
Ensure sub-lists are structured properly

A sub-list must be structurally under, as a child, the list item to which it is related. It is placed after the text of the parent list item

Planning the Structure of TOCs

Table of contents items need to be structured with <TOCI> tags nested under a parent <TOC> tag. Beneath the <TOCI> tag the item description, leader and page number need to be present.

It is recommended that lengthy documents (20 or more pages) contain a linked table of contents. For linked TOCs, each table of content item (TOCI) needs to contain a <Reference> tag. A <Link> tag needs to be placed as a child element under the <Reference> tag so that the item is associated to a content type. Underneath the <Link> tag the item description, leader, page number and Link - OBJR tag (which allows for keyboard accessibility) need to be present.
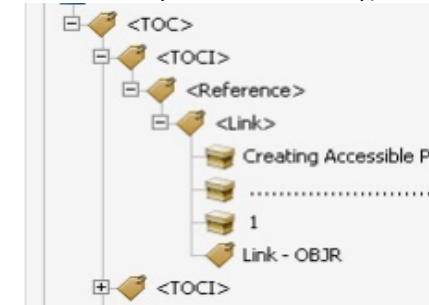
To properly structure a non-linked table of contents <Reference>, <Link> and Link-OBJR tags need to be omitted from the tag structure.
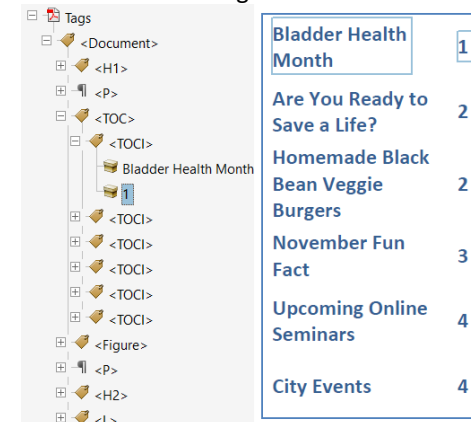
Links

- Ensure link text is meaningful when taken out of context
- Ensure link text is meaningful within context
- Ensure links are tagged structurally as links with a Link OBJR tag

Table

The following are some important keys to creating accessible data tables in Adobe Acrobat PDF documents:

- Ensure data tables are formatted using table elements.
- All data tables should use TH tags to identify header cells.
- Define column headers across page breaks.
- Associate table row and column headers with data cells.
- Place content that is in separate rows and columns into separate data cells.
- Merged row and column headers need to have RowSpan or ColSpan defined.

Example Table:

Header 1 Text	Header 2 Text	Header 3 Text
Row Header Text	Column 2, row 2 data cell text	Column 3, row 2 data cell text

Example tag structure:
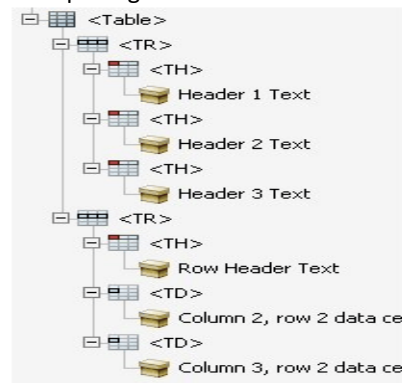

Providing Alternative Text for Images

Often types in Adobe Acrobat images, charts and graphs are presented within <Figure> tags. All meaningful images must provide a concise, meaningful description. A meaningful image is one that is important to understanding the surrounding content. Meaningful and concise alternate text should not be more than 255 characters.

There are essentially three types of images.

- Simple – A photo, clipart, or other image that is primarily for visual appeal but is relevant to the surrounding content.
- Decorative – A graphical figure that do not convey meaning or that are for decorative purposes should be marked as artifacts so that it is not read and disruptive to users of assistive technology.
- Complex – Graphs, charts, schemas, etc. These images need brief alternate text but a longer description needs to be provided in surrounding text or structure (ex. list or table) or in an appendix. When using an appendix, be sure to indicate where users can find the more thorough description of the graphic.

Alternate text can also be added or edited for an image using the TouchUp Reading Order (TURO) tool. To add or edit the alternate text of an image using the TURO:

1. Activate the TouchUp Reading Order tool by navigating to View > Tools > Accessibility > Touch Up Reading Order
2. In the main document, locate the image that needs alternate text or edits to the alternate text.
3. Activate the Context menu of the image and select Edit Alternate Text from the menu.
4. In the Alternate Text dialog, make the necessary changes or additions.
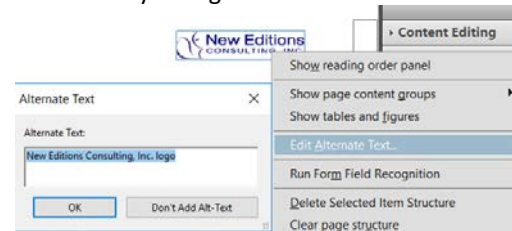
5. When finished, locate and activate the OK button.

Color & Contrast

Effective use of color will ensure that content is readable, accessible and appealing.

1. Color should not be used as the only visual means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.
2. Make sure your text color provides enough contrast with the background color and should have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1.

Forms

The structure of form fields is a <Form> tag with a nested Field Name – OBJR tag. In the Tags pane the form tags need to appear after the tag containing the text label of the field.
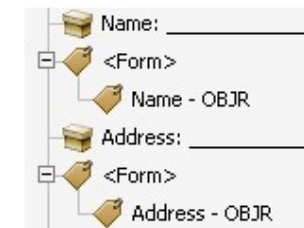
Setting Tooltips for Form Fields

Enter a short and concise label into the tooltip field on the General tab of the field properties dialog.

Tooltips for Radio Buttons

To create a radio button group, where only one field can be selected at a time, assign each field the same name and the same tooltip, but provide different Button Choices (values).

Structure and Best Practice

- Ensure that instructions text is placed at the beginning of a form
- Ensure checkboxes and radio buttons are positioned to the left of the labels

Document Properties

Go to File > Properties

- Ensure document specifies a language
- Provide a clear identifying title property and author for the document
- Ensure that lengthy documents provide bookmarks