



Prevent Document Frustration: JAWS and PDFs

PDF stands for portable document format. PDF files are easily shared and cannot be modified when opened in Adobe Acrobat Reader DC or accessed in a web browser. They are commonly used in the workplace to share information and in school to access textbooks.

Many PDFs are accessible and can be read with JAWS once the accessibility preferences are set. PDFs that are created as image files or include information that is not arranged in the correct reading order are not accessible. Access these files using the JAWS feature called Convenient OCR.

Adobe Acrobat Reader Accessibility Setup Assistant

The first time you run Adobe Acrobat Reader DC with JAWS, the application detects your assistive technology and displays the Accessibility Setup Assistant. Use it to set accessibility preferences for reading PDFs.

Navigate through the items in this dialog using the **TAB** key. Select options in each category using the **UP ARROW** or **DOWN ARROW** keys.

Items in the Accessibility Setup Assistant include:

- Reading order
- An option to read the entire document or only visible pages
- An option to reopen documents to the last viewed page

Reading Order

When using a screen reader such as JAWS to read a PDF, the document may not read in logical order as it is visually displayed on the screen. The Accessibility Setup Assistant offers reading order options to achieve the best reading experience. The accessibility of the PDF document will determine whether it is read in logical order.

The recommended setting in the Accessibility Setup Assistant is Infer Reading Order from Document. Selecting another option may offer better results depending on how the document was created.

Read the Entire Document or Only Visible Pages

Choosing to read the entire document displays all the text on the screen at once while opting to read only visible pages displays one page at a time. Selecting to read only visible pages requires you to navigate to the next page using the keyboard when reaching the end of the current page.

Reopen Documents to the Last Viewed Page

This setting enables you to reopen a PDF on the page where you left off. This is especially helpful when reading large documents.



Press **ALT+E**, followed by **Y**, then **S** to open the Accessibility Setup Assistant at any time. Locate other settings in the Accessibility menu or in Preferences. Open Preferences by pressing **CTRL+K**.

Tagged vs Untagged PDFs

Tagged PDFs contain tags that provide a logical structure when reading them with a screen reader such as JAWS. Tags identify types of content. Examples include:

- Headings
- Tables
- Links

Navigate a tagged PDF as you would a web page using JAWS Quick Navigation Keys. For instance, press **H** to navigate headings, press **T** for tables, and press **INSERT+F7** to display a list of links in the document.

An untagged document can be read like any other document but will not contain tags. Because of this, you cannot navigate by heading, table, or links using JAWS Quick Navigation Keys.

Untagged PDFs will require processing when opened in Acrobat Reader DC. A start screen containing options for this will be displayed by default. Press **TAB** to navigate through the options in this dialog.

Press **INSERT+B** to read details about your document. These include the number of pages in the file, and a message informing you the document is untagged.

The Start screen includes the reading order checkbox, the option to read the entire document or only currently visible pages, and an option to not display this screen in the future. Checking this box will use the options set in the Reading Preferences.

The Start screen also includes Start and Cancel buttons. Choose Start to begin processing the PDF and Cancel to exit this screen. You will need to choose Start to read the document.

Reading PDFs in a Web Browser VS the Desktop App

You can choose to open PDFs in your web browser or download them to your computer and read them in the Acrobat Reader Desktop application. A web browser will not include accessibility settings and other Acrobat Reader features. Set this option in your web browser.

In Chrome:

1. Open Chrome.
2. Press **ALT+F**, then **S** to navigate to Settings.
3. Type "PDF" in the search box, then press **ENTER**.
4. Press **DOWN ARROW** to navigate to the Site Settings sub page and press **ENTER**. Alternatively, press **CTRL+F** to activate the Find dialog, type "Site Settings," then press **ENTER**.
5. Press **H** to navigate to the Content heading.
6. Press **B** to navigate to the Addition Content Settings button, then press **ENTER** to expand it.



7. Press **DOWN ARROW** to navigate to the PDF documents subpage and press **ENTER**. Alternatively, use the Find command described above to locate this option.
8. Press **DOWN ARROW** to locate the button, “DOWNLOAD PDF Files instead of automatically opening them in Chrome.”
9. If JAWS speaks the words “toggle button pressed,” this option is set to download PDFs rather than opening them in Chrome. If the words “toggled button pressed” are not spoken, Chrome is set to open rather than download. Press **ENTER** if you want to change the setting.
10. Press **CTRL+F4** to close Chrome Settings without closing Chrome. Your changes will automatically save.

In Edge:

1. Open Edge.
2. Press **ALT+F**, followed by **S** to open Settings and More.
3. Type “PDF” in the search box, then press **ENTER**.
4. Press **CTRL+F** to activate the Find dialog.
5. Type “PDF” and press **ENTER**.
6. Press **ENTER** on the PDF Documents button.
7. Press **X** to locate the checkbox for “Always download PDF files.”
8. Press the **SPACEBAR** to check or uncheck this box.
9. Press **CTRL+F4** to close Settings and More without closing Edge. Your changes will save automatically.

Use Convenient OCR to Read an Inaccessible PDF

If, after processing a PDF file, JAWS indicates the document is empty, chances are it is an image that contains text. This cannot be readily read by a screen reader, but you can use a JAWS feature called Convenient OCR.

Convenient OCR uses optical character recognition (OCR) to extract the text from the image file and display it in a JAWS Virtual Viewer or in Microsoft Word.

To perform OCR on a PDF:

1. Open the PDF and allow it to process as described above.
2. JAWS will most likely recognize the document is not accessible, and display a message asking if you want to use Convenient OCR.
3. Press the **TAB** key to locate Yes and press **ENTER**.
4. If you choose No, you can activate Convenient OCR from within the document.
5. Press **INSERT+SPACEBAR** to activate the command layer.
6. Press **O** for Convenient OCR, then **D** for document.
7. Allow several seconds for the OCR to process.
8. Once the text is displayed in the viewer, read it like you would any other document.



9. To open it in Word, press **TAB** to locate the link for Open in Word and press **ENTER**.
10. If you know a PDF is not accessible prior to opening it, navigate to the file on your computer and press **SHIFT+F10** to perform a right mouse click.
11. Press **DOWN ARROW** to locate the Convenient OCR options and choose to perform OCR and open the results in the viewer or in Word. Alternatively, when on the file, press **INSERT+SPACEBAR**, followed by **O**, then **R** to perform OCR and open in Word.