

General

PDF includes several facilities in support of accessibility of documents to users with disabilities. In particular, many visually computer users with visual impairments use screen readers to read documents aloud. To enable proper vocalization, either through a screen reader or by some more direct invocation of a text-to-speech engine, PDF supports the following features:

- Specifying the natural language used for text in a PDF document—for example, as English or Spanish, or used to hide or reveal optional content
- Providing textual descriptions for images or other items that do not translate naturally into text, or replacement text for content that does translate into text but is represented in a nonstandard way (such as with a ligature or illuminated character)
- Specifying the expansion of abbreviations or acronyms

The core of this support lies in the ability to determine the logical order of content in a PDF document, independently of the content's appearance or layout, through logical structure and Tagged PDF. An accessibility application can extract the content of a document for presentation to users with disabilities by traversing the structure hierarchy and presenting the contents of each node. For this reason, conforming writers ensure that all information in a document is reachable by means of the structure hierarchy, and they should use the facilities described in this sub-clause.

NOTE 1 Text can be extracted from Tagged PDF documents and examined or reused for purposes other than accessibility.

NOTE 2 Additional guidelines for accessibility support of content published on the Web can be found in the W3C document Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and the documents it points to.