





SOFTWARE & APPS > APPS



# What Is a PDF File?

How to open, edit, and convert PDF files

by Tim Fisher Updated on September 05, 2021



### What to Know

A PDF file is a Portable Document Format file.

Open one with Adobe Reader, SumatraPDF, a browser, or another PDF reader.

Convert to DOCX, XLSX, JPG, PNG, etc. with <u>EasyPDF.com</u> or a <u>document</u> <u>converter</u>.

This article explains what PDFs are, how to open one, all the different ways you can convert one to a different format like an image or an editable file you can use in Word or Excel, and how to password protect one or remove the password.

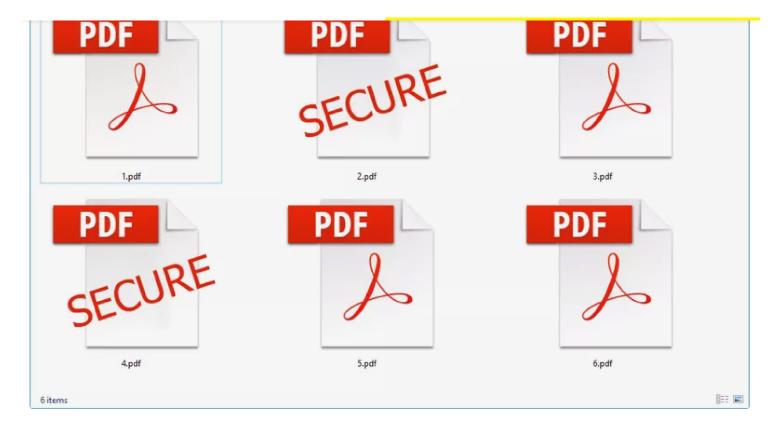
## What Is a PDF File?

Developed by Adobe, a file with the .PDF file extension is a Portable Document Format file.

PDF files can contain not only images and text, but also interactive buttons, hyperlinks, embedded fonts, video, and more.

You'll often see product manuals, eBooks, flyers, job applications, scanned documents, brochures, and all sorts of other documents available in the PDF format. Web pages can even be saved to PDFs, in their full formatting, for later reference.

Because PDFs don't rely on the software that created them, nor on any particular operating system or hardware, they look the same no matter what device they're opened on.



# How to Open a PDF File

Most people head right to <u>Adobe Acrobat Reader</u> when they need to open a PDF. Adobe created the PDF standard and its program is certainly the most popular free PDF reader out there. It's completely fine to use, but we find it to be a somewhat bloated program with lots of features that you may never need or want to use.

Most web browsers, like both Chrome and Firefox, can open PDFs themselves. You may or may not need an add-on or extension to do it, but it's pretty handy to have one open automatically when you click a PDF link online.

We highly recommend <u>SumatraPDF</u>, <u>Slim PDF Reader</u>, or <u>MuPDF</u> if you're after something with a bit more features; all three are free. See our <u>list of the best free PDF readers</u> for more options.

# How to Edit a PDF File

<u>Adobe Acrobat</u> is the most popular PDF editor, but <u>Microsoft Word</u> will do it, too. Other PDF editors also exist, like <u>PhantomPDF</u> and <u>Nitro Pro</u>, among others.

and more, and men download it back to your computer as a רטו.

A similar online PDF editor called <u>Fill</u> is great if you just need to add a signature to the PDF. It also supports including checkboxes, dates, and regular text, but you can't edit existing text with it or easily fill out forms.

See our <u>Best Free PDF Editors</u> list for a regularly updated collection of PDF editors if you're after something more than just form filling, like adding or removing text or images from your PDF.

ĬA Text	ıks ■ Forms ▼ 🖾 Images ▼ 🛝 Sign ▼ 🛇 White	eout Ø Annotate ▼	oâ Shapes ▼ ··· Mo	ore •
COVERSHEET  B I Tt Font Color T				
Minister	Hon Kri	Portfolio	Broad Comr Media	mι
Title of Cabinet paper	Early Access to 5G radio spectrum	Date to be published		ec
List of documents that have been proactively released				
Date	Title		Auth	or
9 December 2019	Cabinet paper: Early Access to Spectrum	5G Radio	Office Broad Comr Media	dc: mı
	Cabinet Economic Development Minute of Decisio Apply changes >			

Sejda PDF Editor.

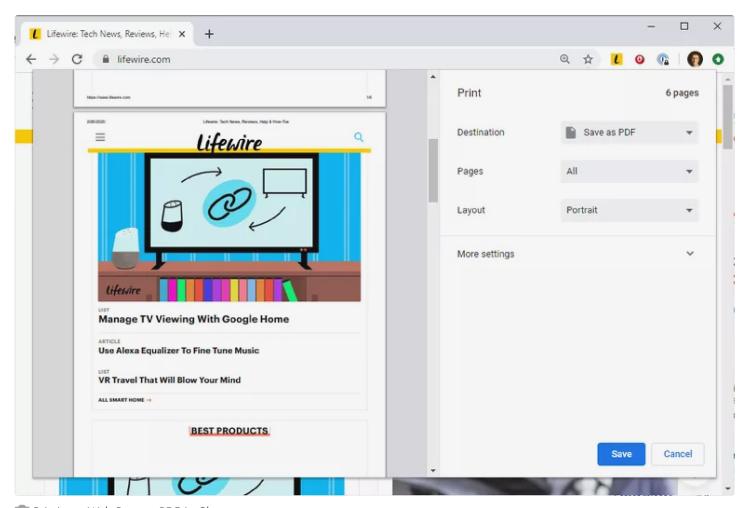
If you want to extract part of a PDF file as it's own, or split a PDF into several different individual documents, there are several ways to pull that off. See our <u>Best PDF Splitter Tools & Methods</u> for all the help you need to get that done.

# How to Convert a PDF File

For example, converting a PDF to a Microsoft Word file (DOC and <u>DOCX</u>) lets you open the file not only in Word but also in other document editing programs like <u>OpenOffice</u> and <u>LibreOffice</u>. Using these types of programs to edit a converted PDF is probably a much more comfortable thing to do compared to an unfamiliar PDF editor.

If you instead want a non-PDF file to be a .PDF file, you can use a PDF *creator*. These types of tools can take things like images, eBooks, and Microsoft Word documents, and export them as PDF, which enables them to be opened in a PDF or eBook reader.

Saving or exporting from some format to PDF can be accomplished using a free PDF creator. Some even serve as a PDF printer, allowing you to virtually "print" pretty much any file to a .PDF file. In reality, it's just a simple way to convert pretty much anything to PDF. See <a href="How to Print to PDF">How to PDF</a> for a full look at those options.



Printing a Web Page to PDF in Chrome.

Also, many of the programs mentioned can also merge multiple PDFs into one, extract out specific PDF pages, and save just the images from the PDF. PDF Merge Free is an online method for quickly merging multiple PDFs into one.

EasePDF is one example of an online PDF to Word converter that can save the file to DOCX.

See How to Convert PDF Files to JPG if you'd like your PDF file simply as an image, which can be handy if you're not sure if the person you're sending the PDF to has, or wants to install, a PDF reader.

EasyPDF.com is another online PDF converter that supports saving the PDF to a variety of formats so that it's compatible with Word, PowerPoint, Excel, or AutoCAD. You can also convert the PDF pages to GIFs or a single text file. PDFs can be loaded from Dropbox, Google Drive, or your computer. <u>CleverPDF</u> is a similar alternative.

Another conversion you can make is PDF to <u>PPTX</u>. If you use <u>PDFConverter.com</u> to convert the document, each page of the PDF will be split into separate slides that you can use in PowerPoint or any other presentation software that supports PPTX files.

See these Free File Conversion Programs and Online Services for other ways to convert a PDF file to some other file format, including image formats, HTML, SWF, MOBI, PDB, EPUB, TXT, and others.

## How to Secure a PDF

Securing a PDF may include requiring a password to open it, as well as preventing someone from printing the PDF, copying its text, adding comments, inserting pages, and other things.

Some of the PDF creators and converters linked to from above, and others like PDFMate PDF Converter Free, PrimoPDF, FreePDF Creator, Soda PDF, and FoxyUtils, are some free applications out of many that can change these types of security options.

→ How to Password Protect a PDF

How do I make a PDF file smaller?

r review app το <u>πιακέ α τοι πιε βιπαπεί</u>, ορ<mark>επ πιε τοι > οποόδε **ι πε > Ελροίτ** > πι</mark> the Quartz Filter drop-down menu, select Reduce file size.

### How do I make a PDF file from pictures?

You can convert pictures to PDF files in most programs and operating systems by exporting or printing files as PDFs. In Windows, open an image > press Ctrl+P > and select Microsoft Print to PDF. Use the Print > Save as PDF option on Android smartphones, and on macOS and iOS, select File > Print > Save as PDF.

### Was this page helpful?





# More from Lifewire

**BEST APPS** 5 Best Free PDF to Word Converters

**UniPDF** Free home screen

FILE TYPES What Is a DO File? DO files in Windows 11

APPS What Is a PDF Owner Password?

Picture of a **PDF** lock icon

BEST APPS The 9 Best Free PDF Readers for Windows & Mac

**SumatraPDF** app for reading PDF files.

**BEST APPS** 8 Best Free PDF **Editors** 

**BACKUP & UTILITIES UniPDF** Review

UniPDF Free home screen

FILE TYPES
What Is a DAT File?

Document

Screenshot of several DAT files in Windows 10

APPS
How to Add Text to a
PDF File

Directly Above
Shot Of Person
Hands Typing On
Computer

**APPS** 

6 Ways to Work With PDF Files

on a tablet on a desk with glasses and a cup of

APPS

How to Password Protect a PDF Person adding a password to a PDF

WORD

What Is a DOCX File?

Cursor opening
a DOCX file on a
computer

FILE TYPES

What Is an RTF File?

RTF files in a Windows 10 folder

**FILE TYPES** 

What Is an INDD File?

FILE TYPES

How to Convert PDF Files to JPG Format

iPad with PDF image on the screen

Subscribe to our newsletter and get tech's top stories in 30 seconds.

enter email **SUBMIT** 

About Us News

Advertise **Best Products** 

Privacy Policy **Mobile Phones** 

Cookie Policy Computers

Careers

Editorial Guidelines

Contact

Terms of Use

California Privacy Notice

**TRUSTe** 



Lifewire is part of the <u>Dotdash</u> publishing family.