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How to remove security from a PDF file?

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66

I am trying to fill out some docs, but the provided PDFs are "SECURED", meaning I can't use FoxIt's typewriter tools.



Is there any way to remove the security?

[security](#)

[pdf](#)



26

asked Aug 22 '10 at 16:52



[AngryHacker](#)

7,453

52

122

179

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-
- 1 gallery.technet.microsoft.com/PDF-Unlocker-Ease-Up-The-e904178f – Sathyajith Bhat ♦ Feb 6 '13 at 7:58
-
- 1 What I understand is that these pdfs are *signed* - in acrobat all you need to do is remove the signature and then they will be editable (as it would be invalid after editing). Suppose foxit will have a similar feature. – bdecaf Sep 18 '13 at 9:48
-
- 1 For Linux users, [Thebozo](#) Already answered this question here: superuser.com/a/367356/278746 – Hello World Aug 10 '14 at 13:48
-

11 Answers



Contrary to the other solutions, you do not need additional software.

30



Anyone with Windows can do it with no extra software in 4 simple steps.



1. Open the PDF
2. Go to File > Print. **From your print options** choose **Microsoft XPS Document Writer**. Although you might expect it to print, it does not print anything, it will create an XPS Document.
3. Open the resulting XPS file
4. Press **Print**, go to **Microsoft PDF Creator**. It will now save it as a PDF again. Again, it will not print.

In my case I had to remove the first/last page of a document so I only printed the pages required.

[edited Feb 8 '18 at 17:16](#)

[answered Nov 10 '15 at 12:05](#)



Eoin

455 4 9

1 I love this idea and worked for me. Only issue was the quality change in conversion to XPS and back to PDF. It would be just specific to my document, though. – [fatih_dur](#) Aug 24 '16 at 13:16

Interesting, I have also found the MS PDF creator to be a bit pants. I use the Adobe PDF creator, although I believe it came with Adobe Creative Suite so not everyone will have a copy (could be wrong). – [Eoin](#) Aug 24 '16 at 13:36

2 This approach worked for me, by opening it in Chrome, printing, choosing 'Print to PDF' and then opening the outputted PDF. – [jonathanconway](#) Aug 31 '16 at 3:17

4 The major downside of this is that you cannot mark or copy text anymore. – [basseur](#) May 8 '18 at 9:49

1 nice and simple. – [Bilgin Kılıç](#) Dec 26 '18 at 6:55

62

Assuming it's simply a 'rights' (owner) password that restricts things like editing, printing, and copying (i.e. the password does not need to be entered to open the file) the following will remove the restrictions:

1. Grab <https://github.com/qpdf/qpdf/releases>
2. Unzip/Install and navigate to the bin folder that holds qpdf.exe (or similar for your platform)
3. Place the PDF you wish to work on in the same folder
4. Run: `qpdf --decrypt InputFile.pdf OutputFile.pdf`
(use " s if the file name has spaces).
5. Do what you like with the OutputFile.

If your PDF file is user password protected, change step 4 to `qpdf --decrypt --password=yourpassword InputFile OutputFile`

This won't work for Adobe Digital Editions and may have issues with digitally-signed files.

Some discussion on the background of these owner password restrictions at <https://lwn.net/Articles/335415/> .

edited Apr 11 '18 at 2:28



Rex Pan

103 1

answered Apr 18 '13 at 21:42



Dan

748 1 6 10

1 qpdf work well for me. I can install it in OS X using homebrew.
– Donny Kurnia Oct 6 '15 at 15:15

I had to use qpdf then PDFcreator to enable edits on one PDF document. (PDFcreator without qpdf first wouldn't work). It was a document both password-protected and certified. Using the save as .ps trick didn't work. (I couldn't compare against unlock PDF websites as the document was confidential.) –

Franck Dernoncourt Jan 11 '17 at 17:57

Works fantastic on government-issued W-9 form. Genius bureaucrats locked down the PDF so you can't apply a signature through Foxit, but this fixes it! – HerrimanCoder Nov 30 '17 at 0:00

Worked like a charm on some PDFs that are licensed CC but for some reason then secured. Now I can annotate! –

Luis Antolín Cano May 3 '18 at 17:08

34

1. Print to a PostScript (PS) printer (where the printer's port is set to print to file, not to the printer -- or check the "Print to file" option in the Print dialog)

2. Edit the resulting .ps file and remove:

```
mark currentfile eexec
54dc5232e897cbaaa7584b7da7c23a6c59e7451851159cdbf40334
```

...
cleartomark

3. Save and distill the .ps file

answered May 16 '12 at 18:16



vladr

439 1 4 4

Works for me. I have scripted it here:

andorian.blogspot.ie/2014/05/... – Lmwangi May 19 '14 at 15:37

I've used this trick before, but now I don't remember how I managed to convert to .ps :(– Isaac Kleinman Oct 28 '14 at 21:16

mark currentfile eexec
54dc5232e897cbaaa7584b7da7c23a6c59e7451851159cdbf40334
cc2600 -These are not present in a pdf version 1.3 (Acrobat
4.x) digitally signed file. It was decrypted with qpdf. But the
sign is still there and prevents editing. – Joel G Mathew Oct 15
'17 at 2:19



Easy!

11



1. From the full version of Acrobat (I used v9.3), select "File..Export..Postscript..Postscript". This creates a ".ps" file.
2. Click on the .ps file, it converts it back to pdf automatically with Acrobat distiller.
3. You now have a perfect copy of the original file, minus any signatures, restrictions on editing, etc.

I needed this technique fix the pdf file so it would display on my Kindle DX, via the "Advanced..Preflight" menu. This method worked perfectly on a file that had resisted all

attempts by the four major utilities that offer to remove restrictions on pdf files (i.e. A-PDF, pdftk, Kernel PDF, UnrestrictPDF) .

answered Sep 3 '10 at 8:55



Contango

814 5 13 36

5 Nope, this didn't work for me... Got this error: This PostScript file was created from an encrypted PDF file. Redistilling encrypted PDF is not permitted. Looks like they caught up with this trick. – Jon Apr 27 '12 at 13:03

7 This site unlocked a PDF for me. pdfunlock.com – Jon Apr 27 '12 at 13:10

By full version of Acrobat do you mean the paid version? – Eoin Jun 20 '18 at 21:58



Directly (see and) remove the restrictions from your pdf without any tricks:

8



1- Online method:

If you want to do in your browser (without installing a tool), then use PDFUnlock. You just need to upload your pdf (drop it to the available box) and it removes the security restrictions. However, up to 5MB files are converted for free.

2- Offline method:

But, like me, if you prefer having an offline tool on your machine, then you can install [Weeny Free PDF Password Remover](#).

edited Apr 23 at 19:00

answered Nov 13 '15 at 23:26



Alisa

229 2 7

The PDFUlock website reported "The uploaded file is not secured and does not have any restrictions that can be removed" even though FoxIt reader declares my PDF "SECURED" and disables comments. – [Jess Riedel](#) Aug 24 '17 at 15:40

- 2 Weeny soft PDF Password remover tool worked great for me! I have tried 6 others before this: PDF Password Recovery, Instant PDF Remover, PDF Password Remover, GuaPDF, PDF Crack, the expensive Wondershare PDF Remover, which worked.. others did not. – [Craig Lambie](#) Dec 21 '17 at 3:45
-



Using google chrome offline (without uploading anything)

6



It's a slightly old thread but as I use this often, I wanted to update it:

- Simply drag and drop the PDF in question on a blank chrome page.
- Chrome opens the "locked" PDF.
- Now print the document and use "save as PDF" as the printer of choice.
- Enjoy your perfectly conserved and unlocked PDF (esp. copy & paste ;-))

The "print"->"save as" step can be tricky when you do it the first time, as you might choose the PDF Writer/Maker for output and you will end up with a locked PDF again.

The process is further described here: [Save As PDF](#)

On some versions of chrome (older?) you have to activate the "save as PDF" option first.

As you can install chrome without giving them your email address, I would consider this a truly "free" solution.

edited Feb 4 '18 at 8:28



aparente001

246 3 20

answered Jul 25 '17 at 16:04



Xan-Kun Clark-Davis

347 4 8

Doesn't work any more. – [chrisdrobison](#) Mar 24 '18 at 23:04



4



I upload it to google drive with chrome, hit the print button and save it as pdf (which has to be enabled within chrome settings on some versions). I get the real deal, images are same resolution, file size checks out too, but all the security restrictions are gone.

Thanks Google! You guys are hackers :-)

answered Jul 25 '16 at 14:50



Xan-Kun Clark-Davis

347 4 8

Why is this downvoted? – [Eoin](#) Aug 24 '16 at 13:37

- 1 Yeah, I would also be very interested. As a matter of fact, I had some tricky PDFs with images and vectorgraphics and I tried all "free" solutions (most of them aren't really free, it's mostly trials and crippleware) and none of them worked. Maybe the purely commercial ones are so much better (don't forget, the Microsoft XPS Document Writer is the contrary of free and you better have a valid MS License when you export it, as it will be in your resulting PDF, along with your name and other "useful"

stuff.) Then I tried the google way and it worked like a charm for all PDFs so far. – [Xan-Kun Clark-Davis](#) Sep 1 '16 at 22:00



The best option I have found is this online tool:

<https://smallpdf.com/unlock-pdf>

4

Edit: they now have a desktop application too.



<https://smallpdf.com/desktop>

edited Sep 3 '18 at 5:08

answered Sep 4 '17 at 9:37



[Shadowfax](#)

256 2 14

Thank you, that was the only thing that worked for me. Many other solutions rely on being able to print the PDF, but some protected PDFs can't be printed. – [Oleksiy](#) Apr 2 '18 at 7:07

Glad it helped. Grateful to the guys who made that tool too :-)
– [Shadowfax](#) Apr 2 '18 at 9:09



Analog conversion. Print and re-scan.

2



answered Aug 22 '10 at 18:04



[easyegoism](#)

89 1

Hmmmm ... even if you wanted to go that way, isn't it easier to just "Print to PDF" from the full version of Acrobat? However, this ruins the margins, so you get a perfect conversion if you export to Postscript, then reimport to pdf (see my answer below)? – [Contango](#) Sep 3 '10 at 8:58

@gravitas That's only easier if you've paid for the full version of Acrobat, as the questioner is talking about FoxIt I'd assume they haven't got Acrobat Pro. – [GAThrawn](#) Sep 3 '10 at 12:07

2

Removing user/open password is next to impossible, but if your PDF file is only protected with owner password, i.e., PDF print, edit, copy and other functions are disabled then there are several programs available to remove PDF security like the one mentioned in this article:

<http://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-Remove-PDF-Password-Security-PrintEditCo/>

Due to security and privacy reasons I would not recommend those online services where you're supposed to upload your PDF documents to remove PDF security.

answered Sep 25 '13 at 7:55



[Andrew Sarris](#)

30 4

1

In my case, there was a view password that maintained its state through save -- but print, etc. were not blocked. That left open the [analog method](#), or print-to-PDF-printer, which is what I did. The resulting file lacked a password, and seemed to suffer no degradation.

edited Mar 20 '17 at 10:17



[Community](#) ♦

1

answered Mar 4 '14 at 17:27



[Michael Paulukonis](#)

1,314 2 13 19

protected by [nhinkle](#) ♦ Jul 24 '11 at 19:50

Thank you for your interest in this question. Because it has attracted low-quality or spam answers that had to be removed, posting an answer now requires 10 [reputation](#) on this site (the [association bonus does not count](#)).

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