# **Creating accessible PDF files**

PDF files are a convenient and common document format. However, not all PDFs are accessible as they do not allow readers to adjust the document to suit their needs, for example, by changing the font size and background colour.

There are many different approaches to making PDFs accessible. This resource focuses on the simplest ways to ensure accessibility when using PDFs.

## **Always use the ‘save as’ function**

When saving a PDF from a Microsoft Word document or similar, always use the ‘save as’ function rather than ‘print to PDF’. When doing this, go to ‘Options’ to check that the ‘document structure tags’ and ‘create bookmarks using headings’ boxes are ticked. Saving in this way will preserve accessible features present in the document.

## **Always use OCR software when scanning**

When scanning a document or printing to PDF, always use OCR (Optical Character Recognition) software (a variety of free OCR tools are available online). This converts a PDF image into a document that can be edited and is searchable, thus increasing readability.

## **Use SensusAccess**

[SensusAccess](https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/using/sensusaccess) is an automated service that enables staff and students to convert inaccessible files into accessible ones. This can be particularly useful for PDFs where there is no original source document (eg a Word file), such as those that have been inherited in reading lists.

## **Follow the accessibility guidance on handouts and documents**

Ensure the original source document used to create the PDF is accessible, for example, by using heading styles and clear font sizes that make it readable. Detailed guidance can be found in the following resources:

* [Creating accessible handouts and documents](https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/accessibility-teaching#collapse1852421)
* [Creating accessible PowerPoint presentations](https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/accessibility-teaching#collapse1852431)

## **Check your PDF accessibility**

If you are unsure about the accessibility of a PDF you want to share, it can be useful to test out the file by using it in the way your students might. This might include, for example, using the [immersive reader in Microsoft Edge](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/enter-reading-view-with-immersive-reader-in-edge-72ac6331-2795-42eb-b3e8-c03503231f32.) or to open the PDF in the Microsoft Word desktop app. If Word displays it as editable text, then the PDF is machine-readable and therefore accessible.