



Accessibility in Adobe InDesign

This guide does not cover all the 508 standards needed to make electronic documents accessible and assumes the author is already familiar with creating documents in InDesign. This guide provides techniques that when followed will result in more accessible documents and reduce the need to remediate the final PDF version of the document.

Using Paragraph Styles and Establishing Export Tags

InDesign documents are typically converted to PDF format as the final product. For Adobe to correctly label the headings in a document during the conversion, styles must be applied appropriately to paragraphs according to their hierarchical role in the document. To be sure that your styles are labeled correctly, follow these steps:

1. To open the styles toolbar, click **Window > Workspace > Typography**
2. Select/highlight the text you want to create the style from by clicking the **Text Tool** from the tool's menu on the left side of your screen or press the "T" key for Windows
3. Click the **Paragraph Styles** from the tools on the right and select the **Paragraph Styles** tab
4. Click the + button at the bottom of the window to create a new style
5. Double click the new style and give the style a descriptive name in the **Style Name** field
6. Click Export Tagging from the menu on the left and in the last option, PDF Tag, choose either a P for paragraph styles or an H tag for a heading level

The last step will associate the InDesign style with the Acrobat style during the export to PDF process. An InDesign document can have many different styles of text, but they are usually either a paragraph style or heading style.

If a project already has styles, you can map all styles in the document in one step by choosing **Edit All Export Tags** in the **Paragraph Styles** panel menu. In the resulting dialog, select the PDF option and assign PDF tags from the pull-down menus in the right column to the paragraph style names in the left column.

Adding Alternative Text to Images and Creating Artifacts

Images need alternative text for screen readers to read that will describe the purpose of the image. To add alt text to an image or object:

1. Right click the object and select **Object Export Options...**
2. On the **Alt Text** tab change the source to **Custom**
3. Add descriptive text in the **Alt Text Source** field
4. Select the **Tagged PDF** tab and choose **Based on Object** in the **Apply Tag** dropdown (choose **Artifact** if you wish to hide the object from screen readers)
5. Select **Custom** in the **Actual Text Source** dropdown

6. Select **Done**

Reading Order

Each block of text, image or shape that you add to a page is added onto a separate layer. This is useful in design because it gives you the ability to move separate pieces of the document around on the page to create the desired visual layout. However, this can make it so that the visual reading order is different from the programmatic reading order that screen reader software uses to read the document aloud. To ensure the programmatic reading order is correct, establish content order in the Articles panel:

1. On the Menu bar select **Windows** and then choose **Articles**
2. From the menu icon at the upper right corner of the Articles window, click on **Use for Tagging Order in Tagged PDF** to add a check to toggle this feature on
3. Add each content by dragging and dropping into the Articles Panel > adding a Name in the popup dialog box is optional
4. Drop each item above the line under the first item so they are all grouped together (separating each item will create a separate Article tag in the final PDF tags tree for each item)
5. To add everything you want all at once in the correct order:
 - a. hold the shift button down, using the selection select each item or content box in the desired order
 - b. while everything is selected, hold the mouse button down and drag all the items to the Articles Panel

Anchoring objects to be read in the correct location in the text flow

Each InDesign frame and object group displays a small blue square on its top edge. To anchor an object in an accessible location in the text flow without changing the original position of the object, click and hold the blue square, and then drag it to the desired location within the text and release. The blue square changes to an anchor icon indicating that the object is anchored.

Export to PDF

1. Click **File > Export...**
2. In the Export Adobe PDF dialog box:
 - a. for Compatibility choose Acrobat 7 (PDF 1.6) or higher.
 - b. Ensure Create Tagged PDF is checked
 - c. Choose Bookmarks and Hyperlinks if these are present in your document
3. Click **Export**