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Creating Section 508 Conformant PDFs Checklist

FHWA-HAD-21-002

This checklist is a companion to "[Creating Section 508 Conformant PDFs.](#)" See that documentation for detailed discussion on any checklist item.

Tagged PDF

- The file is tagged.
- "Document is Tagged PDF" is checked.

Document Properties

- The title is correct and complete.
- The author is FHWA (Agency guideline).
- "Content Copying for Accessibility" is allowed.
- The "Open to page" is set to open to the first page of the file.
- The document title is set to show instead of the file name.
- The default language matches the language of the document.

Sensory Characteristics

- Content is not referenced solely by color, shape, size, sound, or location.
- Text on a background meets minimum color contrast requirements.

Text as Text

- Text is rendered as text, not as an image unless an exception applies (e.g., logo, flowchart, infographic).

Bookmarks

- Documents with more than nine pages contain bookmarks that are accurate and representative of the document structure.

Page Numbering

- The page numbering found in the PDF viewer matches the page numbering in the document.

Logical Tab Order

- The tab order for each document reads in a meaningful and understandable order.

Tags

Tagging Meaningful Content

- All content conveying meaningful information is tagged.
- Content not conveying meaningful information is untagged.

Content Order Within Tags

- Content within each tag is in logical order.

Tag Order

- Tags are in logical reading order.

Split Content

- Split content is merged into one tag.

Semantically Correct Tag Usage

- All meaningful content is tagged in semantically correct tags per the checklist items below.

Container Tags

Document tag

- The “Document” tag is the main container tag.

Other Container Tags

- Where other container tags used to subdivide large content into semantically smaller sections under the <Document> tag, they are used consistently.

Title

- The title and subtitle, as applicable, of a document are tagged as paragraph.

Headings

- All visual headings are tagged with heading tags.
- The headings are used in hierarchal order.
- The content within the heading is text.

Paragraph

- One paragraph is contained in a single paragraph tag.

Table of Contents

- Tables of contents are tagged and nested correctly.

Lists

- All lists are tagged and nested correctly.

Tables

- Tables are properly tagged.
- The table tag does not contain alt text.
- The document does not contain irregular tables.
- Table tags are not used for layout.
- The tags for the outlines of cells are removed.

Figures

- All non-text content conveying information contains alt text.
- The alt text does not repeat the caption or surrounding text.
- The alt text does not contain information not in the non-text content.
- The alt text describes the non-text content in a level of detail matching the level of detail the figure is conveying in context.
- The alt text describes the meaning, not the look of the figure.
- The alt text does not start with “This is a figure of...” or the like.
- Alt text and actual text are not used in the same tag.
- Actual text is used where text is a graphic (e.g., a symbol converted as an image, text not recognized in a scanned document).
- Equations and symbols rendered as images contain alt text or actual text.
- Equations and symbols containing incorrect text contain alt text or actual text.

Caption

- Table and figure titles are tagged in caption tags.
- Caption tags are not nested under the parent table or figure tag.
- Caption tag content is limited to a description of the table or figure and does not contain other information such as an image source.

Links

- Links meet contrast requirement as needed.
- Nested under the link tag are the words in the document associated with the link and a Link-OBJR.
- Only one link tag is used per link.
- Ambiguous or repetitive links contain alt text describing the link destination, function, or purpose.

- Figures are not nested under link tags. When unavoidable, the figure alt text is the same as the link destination.
- Link tags containing only a nested figure tag contain alt text.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

- When using acronyms and abbreviations in alt text, do not add spaces between the letters.
- Acronyms and abbreviations do not need to be redefined in the alt text.

Footnotes and Endnotes

- Tag footnotes and endnotes using Reference and Note tags.
 - The cross-reference in the body text is nested in a reference tag.
 - The footnote/endnote is nested in a note tag.
- “Notes” and “References” in the document are not tagged as a note or reference because it says “note” or “reference” in the text.

Header/Footer/Watermark Content

- Page numbers are not tagged.
- Any meaningful header, footer, and watermark content, except page numbers, not tagged in the body of the document, is tagged once.

Nonstandard PDF Tags

- Nonstandard tags are mapped to the correct PDF tag.

Language of Parts

- The language of a word or phrase different from the default language is tagged with the correct language.

Flashing

- The document is free from any blinking or flashing content.

Zoom

- All content is readable when zoomed in to 200 percent except for images of text (if included) and captions.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

- Scanned text converted to text using an optical character recognition (OCR) is recognized correctly or is tagged using actual text.

Forms

- The document is free of forms and form-fillable fields.