# PDF Accessibility Checklist

## Purpose

The purpose of the Portable Document Format (PDF) Accessibility Checklist is to support Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) document creators to ensure that accessibility compliance meets the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/quickref/?versions=2.2) standards. Please note that the checklist only contains WCAG criteria that are related to the most common errors identified in PDF documents.

## Instructions

Verify the Criteria below to ensure common accessibility errors are found and resolved. We have built a glossary to assist you with various terms which is located after the table of criteria. Remember to answer NA (for not application) if a question is not relevant to your document. **If you answer ‘No’ to one of the following questions, then your document is not accessible.**

Please note that ESDC employees need to fill out this checklist **before** they request an accessibility audit from the IT Accessibility Office (ITAO).

## Criteria to validate

| Item | Criteria | Answer (Yes/No/NA) |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | The PDF title is specified and entered correctly using the title entry. This can be found in the Document Properties. |  |
| 2 | The language of the PDF is set for the document. This can be found in the Document Properties, under the Advanced tab (English / French). |  |
| 3 | The language of a passage, phrase, or word that differs from the language of the PDF is specified as the correct language. |  |
| 4 | Pages are appropriately bookmarked for easier navigation. |  |
| 5 | There are headers and/or footers as needed so users know where they are always in the PDF. |  |
| 6 | Pages are marked, such as 1 – 2 – 3 or A – B – C |  |
| 7 | The reading order of the PDF is correct. Screen readers read the contents in a logical order. |  |
| 8 | Using the tab key, the user can navigate through the PDF for all input fields, and links, in the correct order. |  |
| 9 | Headings with subheadings are included as needed. |  |
| 10 | Tables are correctly tagged so that they are recognized by assistive technology. |  |
| 11 | Lists of various related items are tagged as lists and list items correctly. |  |
| 12 | Visuals that do not add any additional value to the content, and contain no text are marked as decorative and ignored by screen readers. |  |
| 13 | Images always have an alternative text. Complex images have a long description in the body of the document. |  |
| 14 | When using colors, shapes, or visual aids to convey a message, there are other written descriptors to get the message across. |  |
| 15 | Text and images of text have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1; except for large text (above size 14 bold, or above size 18) which requires a contrast ratio of 3:1. This will ensure the color scheme is optimal for the visually impaired and/or color blind. |  |
| 16 | Links are marked and contain descriptive text. |  |
| 17 | Form input options and links are marked and described, such as   * Radio buttons allow for one selection – these are marked as circles. * Checkboxes allow for multiple selections – these are marked as squares. |  |
| 18 | Form controls are properly displayed and indicated on the form for users to easily access and identify. |  |
| 19 | All fields have a proper name, role, and value attached for users. |  |
| 20 | All text fields have associated descriptive text. This allows assistive technology to recognize and understand the different form fields. |  |
| 21 | When a user has failed to input information correctly in a field, there is a clear error indicator that visually and auditorily informs the user of the error, how to correct the error, and properly fill out the field. |  |
| 22 | The submit button is marked so that users know how to submit the form they are filling out. |  |
| 23 | Best Practice: when using an acronym ensure that the first time it is mentioned in the PDF that it is fully defined, such as ‘Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)’ |  |
| 24 | Best Practice: the font is sans serif and commonly used (for visibility). |  |

## Glossary

**Alternative Text:** Text associated with an image that conveys the same essential information as the image.

**Assistive Technology:** Any light-mid-or-high tech tool; or device that helps people with disabilities perform tasks with greater ease or independence.

**Bookmark:** A type of link with representative text that makes it easier to navigate through documents.

**Descriptive Text:** The text that describes a form field’s contents to a screen reader user. This is also called a "label”.

**Reading Order:** This is the order in which assistive technologies, like screen readers, present the content in a PDF. The tags in the Tags Tree determine this order.

**Running Headers/Footers:** Information that is repeated at the top/bottom of pages in a document. They often contain information such as page number, name of the document, and more.

**Screen Reader:** A software program used to allow reading of content and navigation of the screen using speech or Braille output. Used primarily by persons who are blind or have low vision.

**Tags:** The structured, textual representation of the PDF content that is accessed by screen readers, to read the document out loud.

## Tools and Resources

We established a list of tools and resources to help developers verify their document accessibility.

* [Foxit PDF Editor](http://iservice.prv/eng/imit/catalogue/software_application/foxit_phantomPDF_business.shtml): ESDC recommended tool to create accessible PDFs. ESDC employees can obtain the software by opening a ticket with the [National Service Desk](http://srmis-sigdi-iagent.prv/).
* [Color Contrast Analyzer tool](http://esdc.prv/en/iitb/es/ts/wscoe/tools/index-eng.shtml#colour): ESDC recommended tool to verify color contrast, ESDC employees can obtain the software by opening a ticket with the [National Service Desk](http://srmis-sigdi-iagent.prv/).
* [PDF Techniques for WCAG 2.1](http://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/Techniques/#pdf)
* [Foxit PDF Editor Accessibility](https://www.foxitsoftware.com/solution/accessibility/)
* [Foxit PDF Editor Instructional Tutorials](https://www.foxitsoftware.com/support/tutorial/?from=foxit%20phantompdf_business&utm_source=client-app)
* [Foxit: Use Action Wizard to automatically make PDFs 508 compliant](https://www.foxitsoftware.com/blog/use-action-wizard-to-automatically-make-pdfs-508-compliant/)
* [WebAIM: Foxit and PDF Accessibility](https://webaim.org/techniques/foxit/)

## Contact Information

If you have questions or comments regarding this checklist, or to request an accessibility audit of your document, please submit a [new request](https://itao-rmt.canadacentral.cloudapp.azure.com/openrequest-en.php).