

# Distance Learning Systems

## Teaching Tips #20 — Optimizing PDF Files for Web Distribution

The Portable Document Format (PDF) has rapidly established itself as the standard for cross-platform document exchange for documents with complex formatting or those originating with a print document. Although creating a web (HTML) document is preferable, and a native Word document will usually be smaller than its PDF counterpart, it is not always feasible to create/re-create documents in these formats. For these needs, as well as distributing readable documents from any application, PDF is a sound, accessible solution.

### Adobe Acrobat

Reading PDF files demands only the [free PDF Reader](#)<sup>1</sup>, but to create them you will need the full Adobe Acrobat program. This software allows you to create PDF files from any file/program on your computer or from paper using a scanner.

Acrobat is available free to UAF faculty and staff as part of the [UAF Shared Use Software](#)<sup>2</sup> program. As long as your machine is on the UAF network (which includes most rural campus sites) you can download and use this keyed software. Otherwise you will need to arrange to purchase Acrobat, currently \$99 at the [UA Tech Center](#)<sup>3</sup>.

### Starting with a Digital Document

Adobe Acrobat places handy toolbar buttons in some Office Applications so that you can create a PDF file by clicking a single button and choosing where to save the new version. For applications that are not supported this way, you can create a PDF from any application which can print by sending your document to the special “Acrobat PDFWriter” printer, which will prompt you for a filename and location for the resulting document.

Either way, press a button or choose a menu entry, select a filename and location, hit OK and you are done!

### Starting with a Paper Document

If you are beginning with an existing print document, and you don’t have—or want to take—the time to re-create the file, you will need a scanner. Any modern flatbed scanner should work, including models available for \$50-\$80 from various online vendors, discount warehouses, office supply stores, etc.

Creating the document is simple:

1. Start Adobe Acrobat and choose File > Import > Scan...
2. Select your scanner from the list and choose single-sided format
3. Click the Scan button and Acrobat will start your scanning software
4. If necessary, preview the document, select the area you wish to scan, and choose 150dpi
5. Press Scan. When that page is finished you can either choose to stop or add more pages
6. When you stop adding pages, use File > Save to save your new PDF document

### More Resources

For more information on creating PDF file, including examples of file output and sizes based on scanning, Microsoft Word, and graphics files, see the resource page: <http://distance.uaf.edu/dls/resources/tt/pdf/>

For more Teaching Tips and other Distance Education information, please visit the new and enhanced Center for Distance Education Distance Learning Systems website at:

<http://distance.uaf.edu/dls/>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.uaf.edu/dcc/keys/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.computersales.uaf.edu/>