

## Create an Accessible PDF (Adobe Acrobat Pro)

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### Overview

This tutorial will explain how to create an **Accessible PDF** using **Adobe Acrobat Pro**. Adobe Acrobat Pro provides many tools to improve your course documents' accessibility, including a reading order tool, an alt tag tool, and an accessibility checker. Proper use of this program ensures all of your text materials will meet [Winthrop University's Accessibility Guidelines](#).

The steps of this tutorial can be completed in (almost) any order, but the sequence provided in this document has proved the most efficient. If you need assistance with a specific topic, click the appropriate link from the following list to jump to that section:

- [Set Metadata and Reading Language](#)
- [Set the Document Structure](#)
- [Set the Reading Order](#)
- [Set Alt Text for Figures](#)
- [Run an Accessibility Check](#)

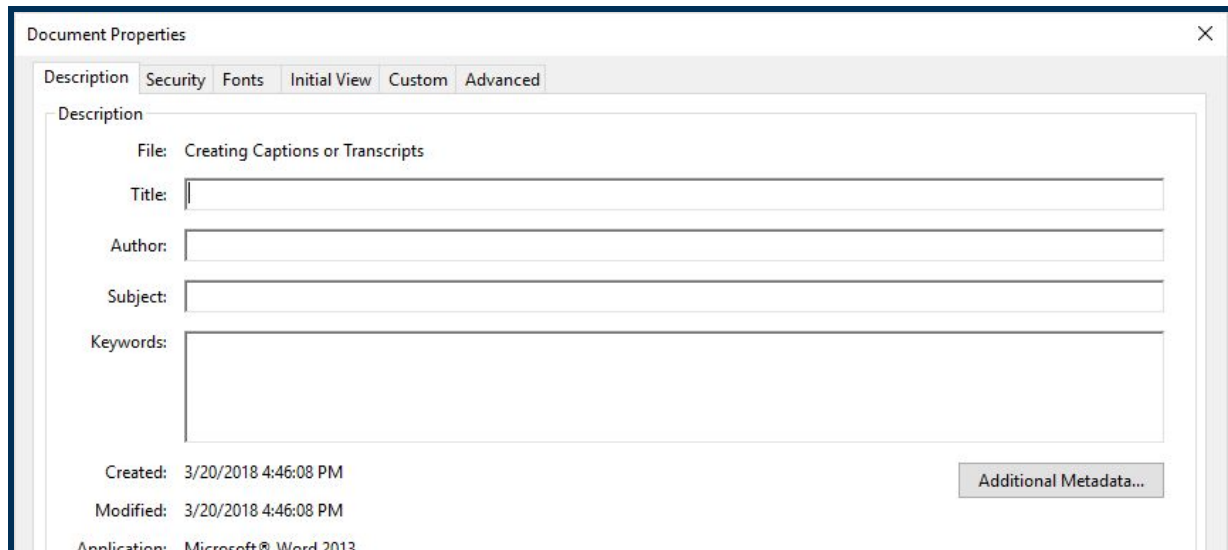
### Set Metadata and Reading Language

#### Step 1

To create an Accessible PDF, you must first open the document in Adobe Acrobat Pro. From the Adobe Acrobat Pro interface, click *File* on the Menu Bar and select "Open." Use the window navigation to locate the file you want to turn into an Accessible PDF (Word Doc, Google Doc, PowerPoint Presentation, etc.) Once selected, click the *Open* button.

#### Step 2

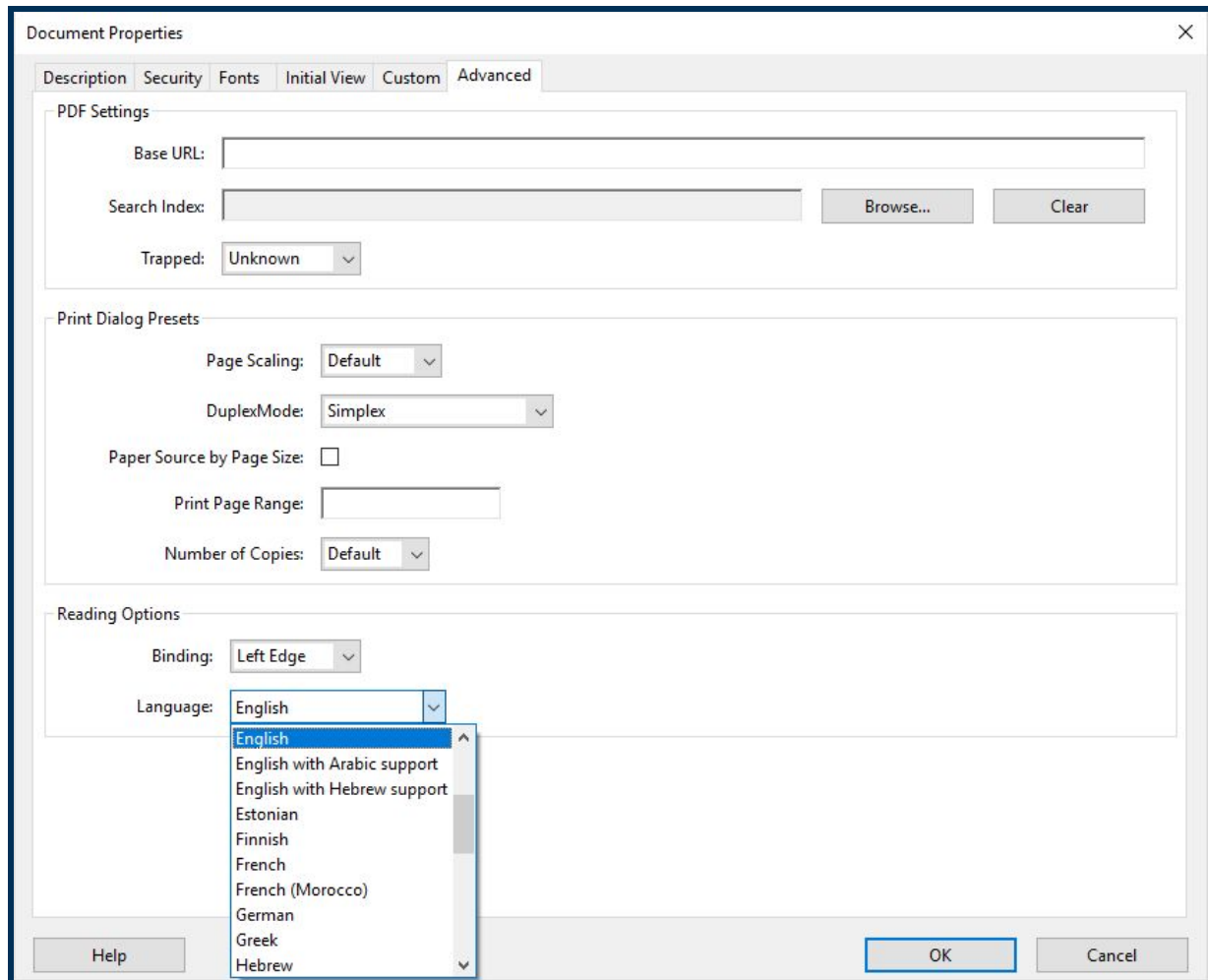
With your document or presentation open, click *File* on the Menu Bar again and select "Properties." The Document Properties menu will open. Use this menu to set important metadata that will assist students who use screen reading software. The menu also helps all students by making the document appear in search results when downloaded to their machine, and it allows you to ensure that your material is listed with copyright information.



- **Title** - Use the Title field to give the document a title. We recommend matching the file name to the title to prevent confusion.
- **Author** - Use the Author field to credit the document's creator. This field will usually be filled with your name.
- **Subject** - Use the Subject field to specify the document's subject or type. We create many Blackboard tutorials, so we often fill the Subject field with "Blackboard." Persuasive techniques, chemical notation, or western philosophy are additional examples.
- **Keywords** - Use the Keywords field to categorize the document based on categories or topics. Keywords are helpful when organizing and searching for specific, related topics. The tutorials we create always use the keywords "blackboard" and "instructor training." For this document, we would also include "pdf," "accessible," "accessibility," "adobe," "acrobat," "reading order," "alt tags," "convert," etc.

### Step 3

With the Metadata complete, click on the *Advanced* tab in the Document Properties menu bar. From the Reading Options section, use the dropdown menu following the Language option to set the PDF's language to "English" (or the language you are using to present the material).



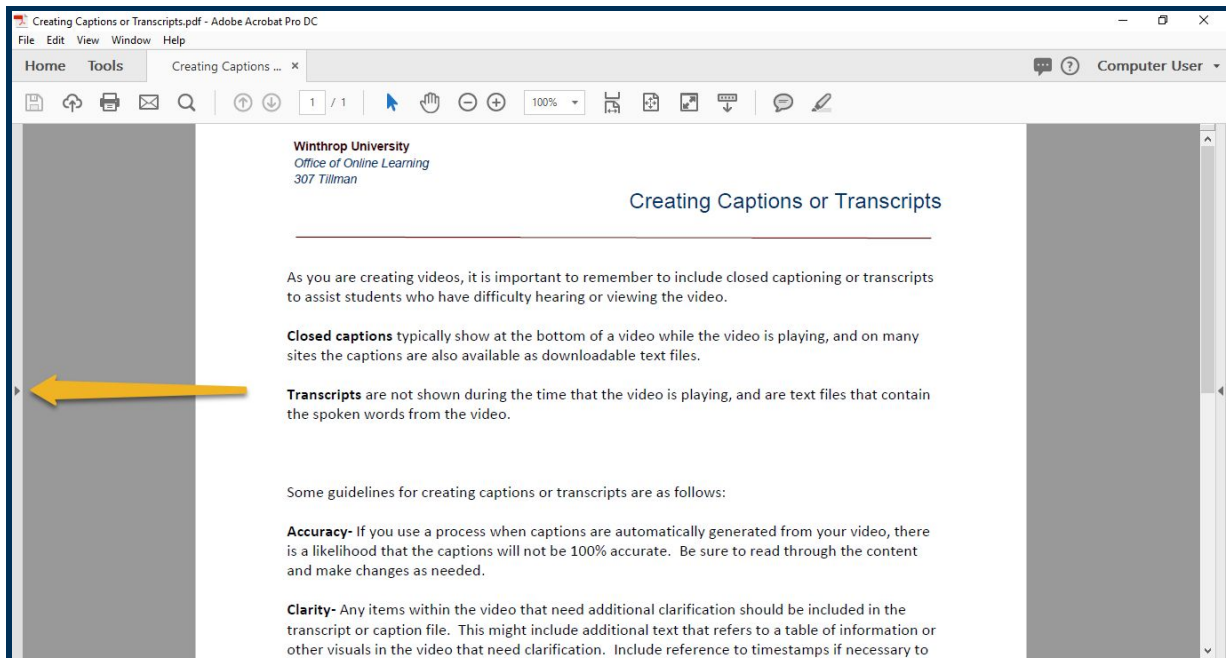
When finished, click the *OK* button.

## **Set the Document Structure**

Another important step to create an Accessible PDF is to set the Document Structure. The Document Structure is the order that pages will be read when using a screen reader.

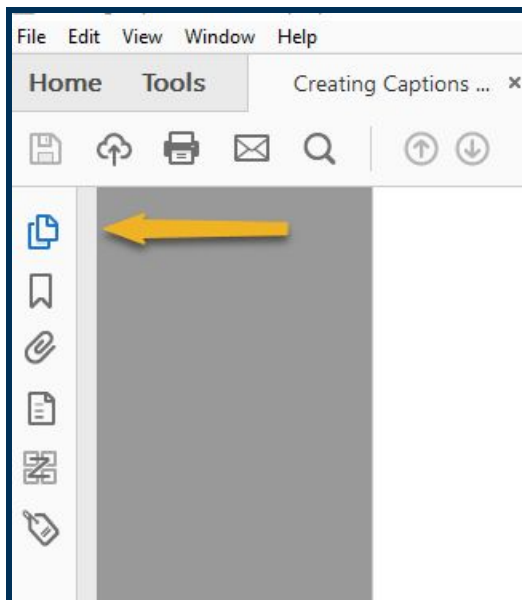
### **Step 1**

To set the Document Structure, locate the Navigation pane in the left sidebar. If you do not see the Navigation pane, click on the arrow icon in the left sidebar to show it.



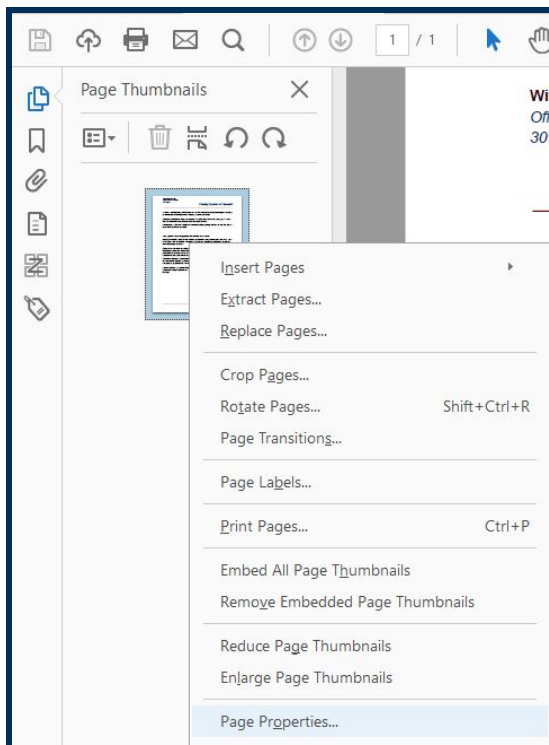
## Step 2

From the Navigation pane, select the "Page Thumbnails" icon.



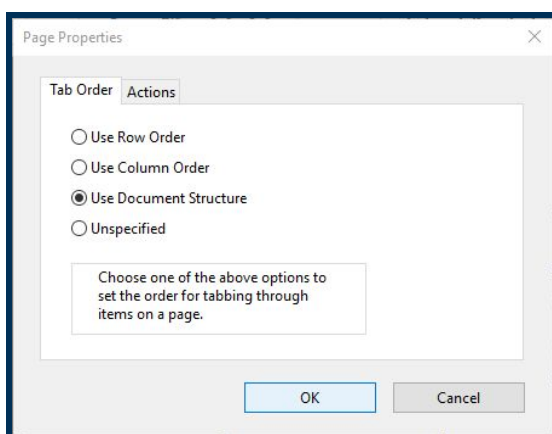
### Step 3

The Page Thumbnails menu will display. Click, hold, and drag your mouse across all page thumbnails in the window, or use the command CTRL+A (CMD+A if using a Mac). With all pages selected, right-click on any page and select “Page Properties” from the contextual menu.



### Step 4

From the Page Properties menu, use the radio button to select the “Use Document Structure” option in the Tab Order tab. Then, click the OK button.



## Set the Reading Order

### Overview

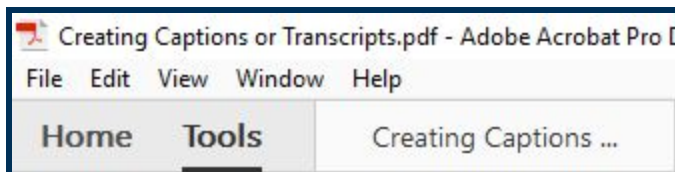
With your metadata, language, and document structure complete, the next step to create an Accessible PDF is to set the Reading Order. Documents created in other programs (like Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, Google Docs or Slides, etc.) do not always provide screen readers with a logical reading order for the content when imported to Adobe Acrobat.

There are many reasons for this issue, including files from another program not translating to Adobe Acrobat Pro correctly due to programming complications. Some issues can be resolved with proper document creation by following some simple guidelines, though.

For instructions to create an accessible document using a specific program, and to reduce the chance that these errors will occur, [see the tutorials in the Other Programs section of WOOL's Accessibility Information for Online Instructors page.](#)

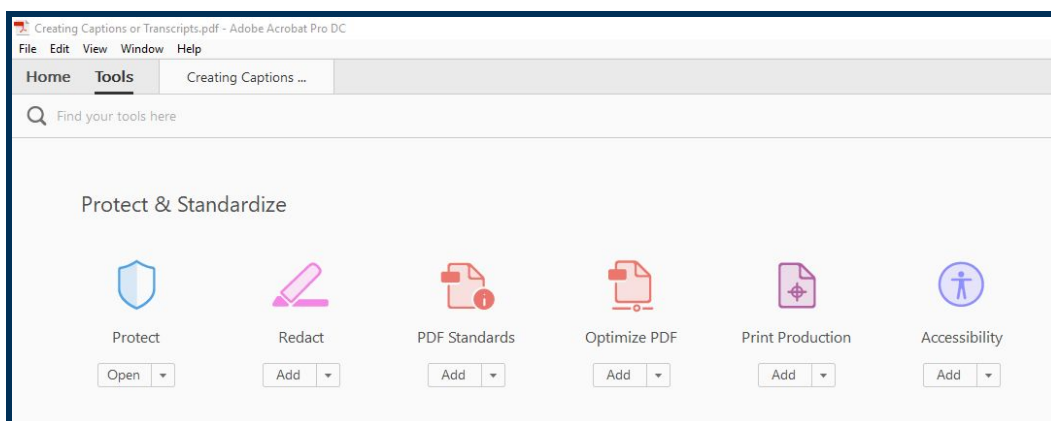
### Step 2

Even with proper technique, it is likely that some reading order errors will occur. For that reason, we strongly recommend setting the reading order manually using Adobe Acrobat Pro's Reading Order tool. To find this tool, click the *Tools* tab on the Main Navigation bar.



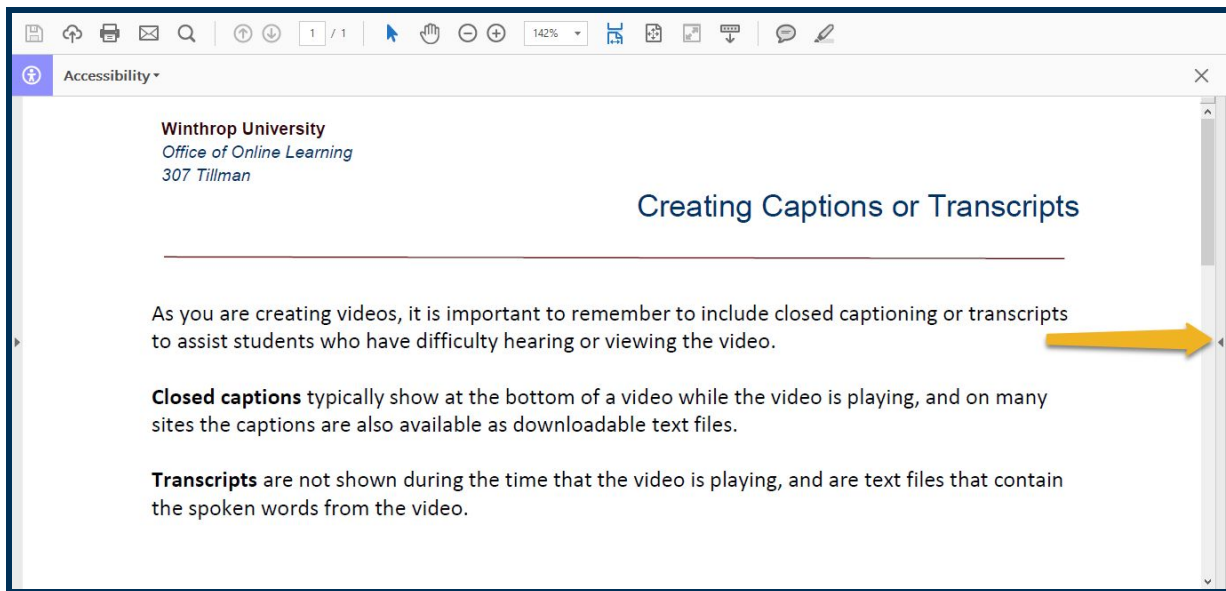
### Step 3

From the Tools page, find the *Protect & Standardize* section and select the "Accessibility" tool.



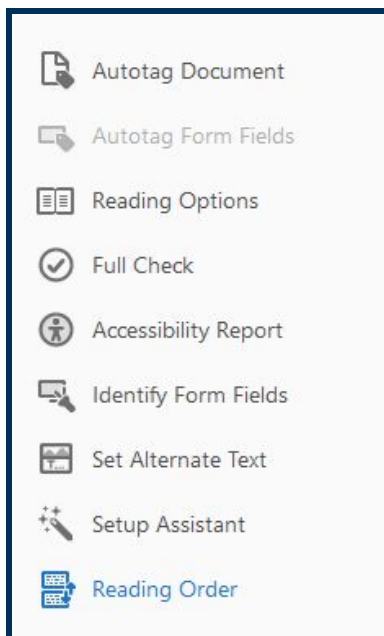
#### Step 4

The Accessibility editor will open and Accessibility options will appear in the right sidebar. If you do not see Accessibility options, click the arrow icon in the right sidebar to show the options menu.



#### Step 5

Select "Reading Order" from the Accessibility options menu.

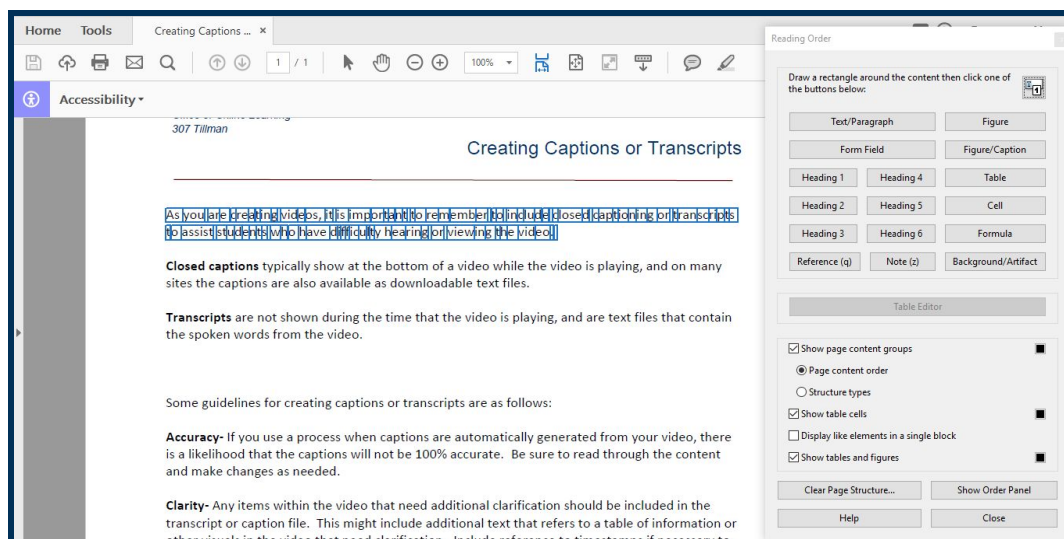


## Step 6

The Reading Order panel will open, presenting a variety of tags and tools you can use to designate sections of your content and specify the Reading Order. Most will not be active.

The mouse cursor will also change to a crosshair when moved over the document window. Click, hold, and drag the mouse across a section of the document to select content.

Once content is selected, the options in the Reading Order panel will activate. Use these options to tell screen reading software what type of content it will be reading.



The most useful options include the following:

- **Text/Paragraph** - Use the *Text/Paragraph* button to tag the content as normal, body text. Without using this tag, the text will be read very slowly (one word per second) and can be frustrating. Use this option for any hyperlinks, as well.
- **Heading 1** - Use the *Heading 1* button to tag the document's title. For example, the H1 for this document is "Create an Accessible PDF (Adobe Acrobat Pro).
- **Heading 2** - Use the *Heading 2* button to tag major section headings. For example, the H2s for this document include "Set the Metadata and Reading Language," "Set the Document Structure," "Set the Reading Order," etc.
- **Heading 3** - Use the *Heading 3* button to tag minor section headings. For example, the H3s for this document include each step (Step 1, Step 2...) you have read thus far. Use lower-level headings as needed.
- **Figure** - Use the *Figure* button to tag images, logos, banners, etc. Figures can be set as decorative, allowing screen readers to pass over them. Only use decorative figures when the image adds no instructional value to the document; otherwise, you must [Set Alt Tags for Figures](#).



Some useful situational options include:

- Show Order Panel - Click the *Show Order Panel* button to open a graphical interface that displays the current reading order of the page. You can use the panel to reorder content blocks by dragging and dropping a section higher or lower in the hierarchy.
- Table & Table Editor - Click the *Table* and the *Table Editor* buttons to identify and format tables. The Table Editor tool can be complicated and buggy, and creating accessible tables requires many steps; further, students using screen reading software must know advanced commands to interact with tables. For these reasons, we recommend using lists instead of tables whenever possible.
- Display like elements in a single block - Check the checkbox preceding this option to group strings of content into a single reading order block. This option is often used to create blocks of text and simplifies the reading order structure. Uncheck the box to separate content into distinct chunks. If you have a list of links (like the one in this documents [Overview](#)) unchecking this box can help you draw attention to each link.

## Step 7

Use the options presented in Step 6 to select sections of content and add tags in order of appearance. All content must be given a tag. If you select each group of content linearly from the beginning of the document to the end, your reading order will never become confused, as each designation will be added to the end of the reading order list.



*You can use the Autotag Document icon from the Accessibility Tools options menu to automatically detect the types of content that appear on the page; however, the algorithm is far from perfect. If you Autotag a document and find it is not accurate, use the Order Panel to clear the tags, or reload the document and set the Reading Order manually--which is suggested, anyway. It's more reliable.*

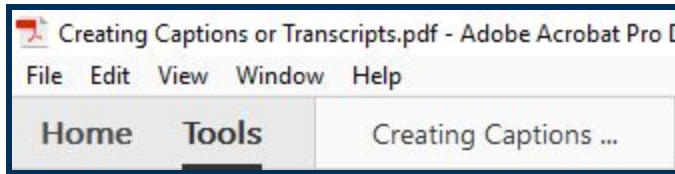
## Set Alt Text for Figures

The next step to create an Accessible PDF is to set Alt Text for all figures you identified when you [Set the Reading Order](#). This procedure is important, as screen readers must interact with visual content via the Alt Text you set while creating the PDF.

For guidelines on creating effective Alt Text, [see Alt Text Tips in the Images section of WOOL's Accessibility Information for Online Instructors page](#).

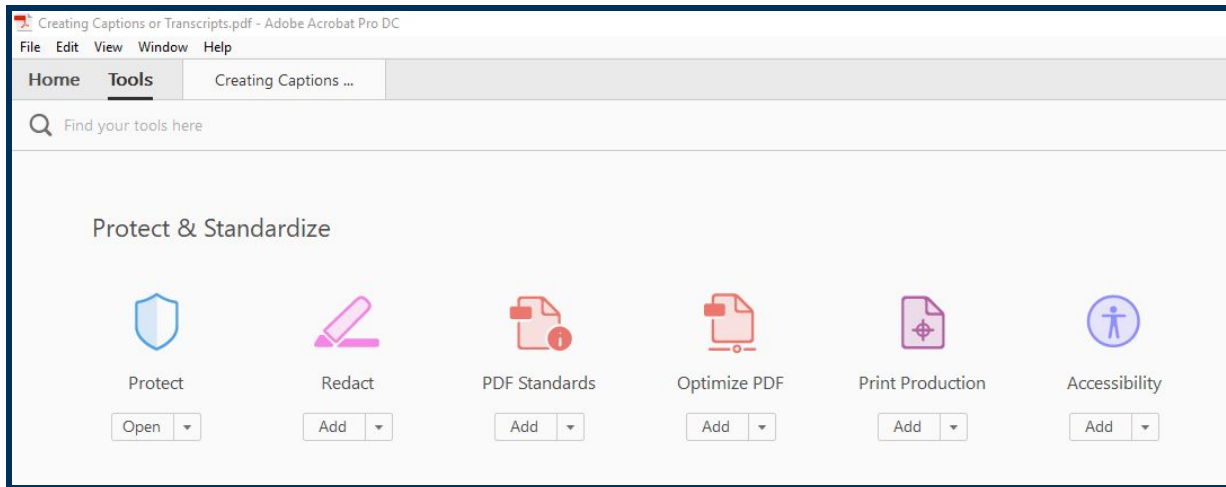
## Step 1

To find the Set Alternate Text tool, click the *Tools* tab on the Main Navigation bar.



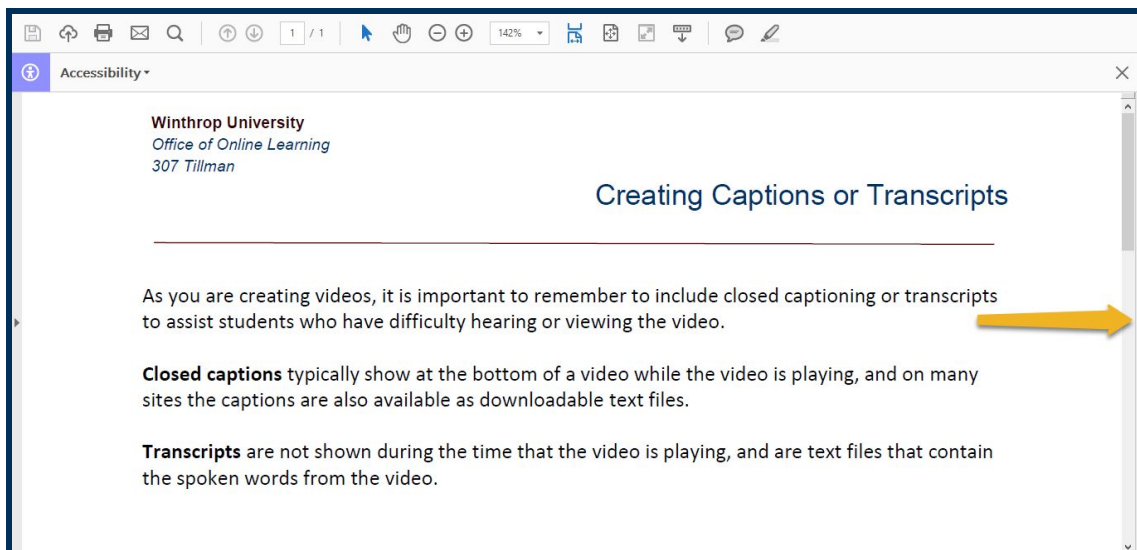
## Step 2

From the Tools page, find the *Protect & Standardize* section and select the “Accessibility” tool.



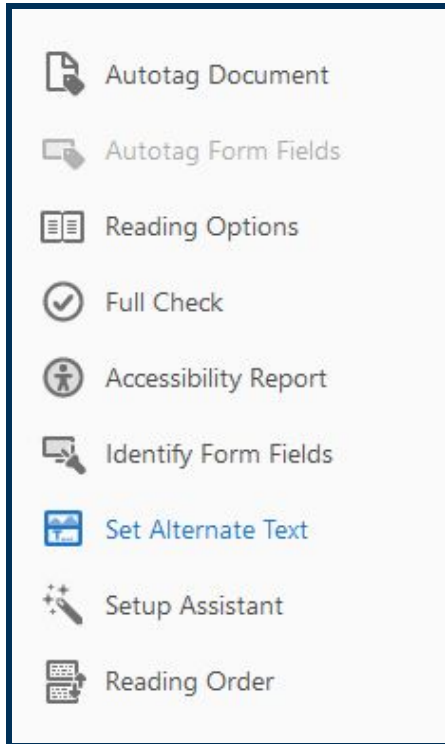
## Step 3

The Accessibility editor will open and Accessibility options will appear in the right sidebar. If you do not see Accessibility options, click the arrow icon in the right sidebar to show the options menu.



#### Step 4

Select “Set Alternate Text” from the Accessibility options menu.

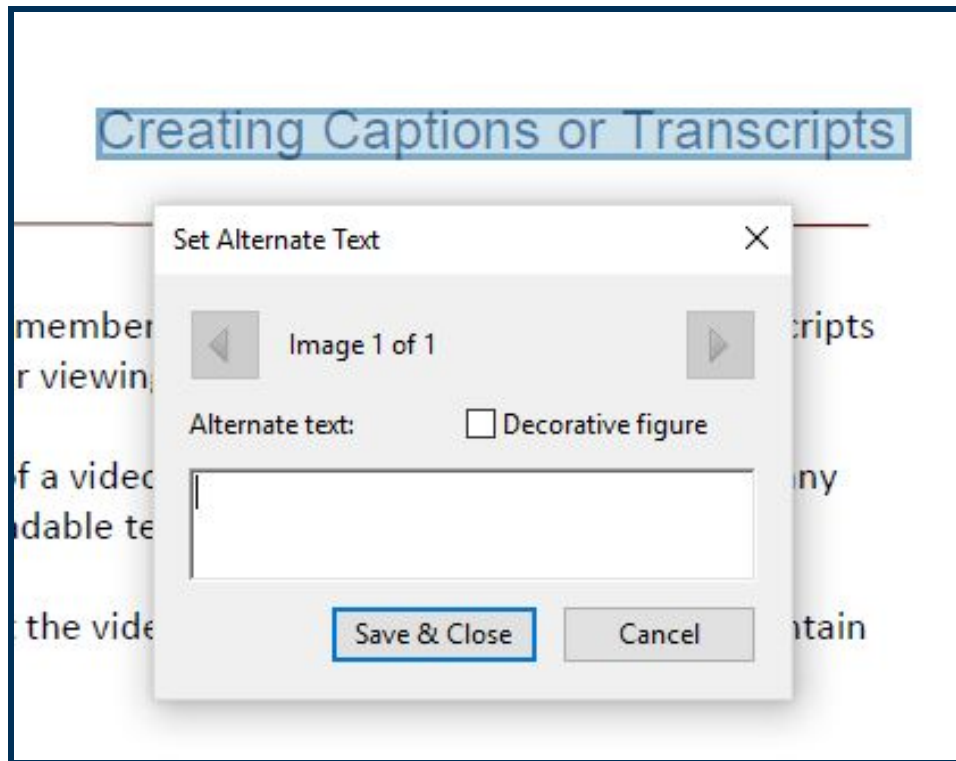


#### Step 5

A pop-up dialogue box will prompt you, “Acrobat will detect all figures in this document and display associated alternate text.” Click the *OK* button.

#### Step 6

The Set Alternate Text window will display, highlighting the first tagged figure in the document window.



Click the right and left arrow icons to proceed through all figures tagged when you [Set the Reading Order](#). As you navigate through the images, the highlighted figure will change.

Use the Alternate text box to set each figure's Alt Text.

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You can check the Decorative figure checkbox to designate a figure as decorative--meaning, it adds no instructional value to the content. This option is helpful if you use a header image (as we do at the top of this page) or use visual spacers or dividers to separate your content (as we do above and below this section).

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*A decorative image is not acknowledged by screen reading software, so make sure no content in the image is essential for understanding your learning objective.*

## Step 7

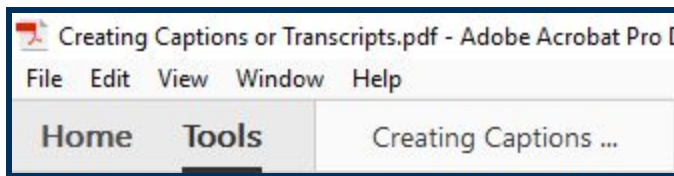
When you have finished adding Alt Text to all figures, click the *Save & Close* button.

## Run an Accessibility Check

Before distributing your Accessible PDF, run an Accessibility Check. The Accessibility Check will scan your document for any potential issues with the document's accessibility and generate an Accessibility Report. The report will present explanations and solutions to fix those issues.

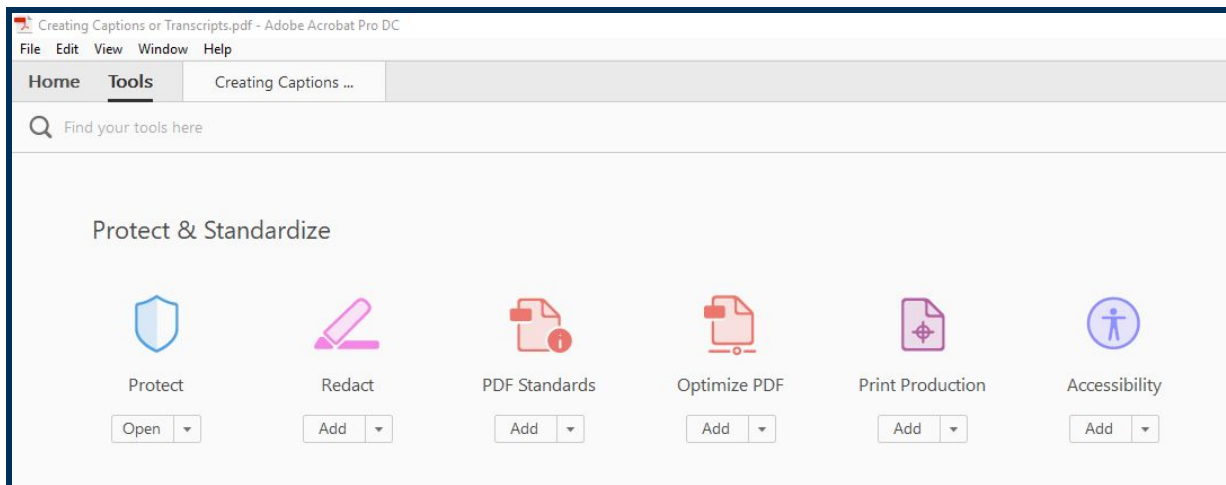
### Step 1

To find the Accessibility Checker tool, click the *Tools* tab on the Main Navigation bar.



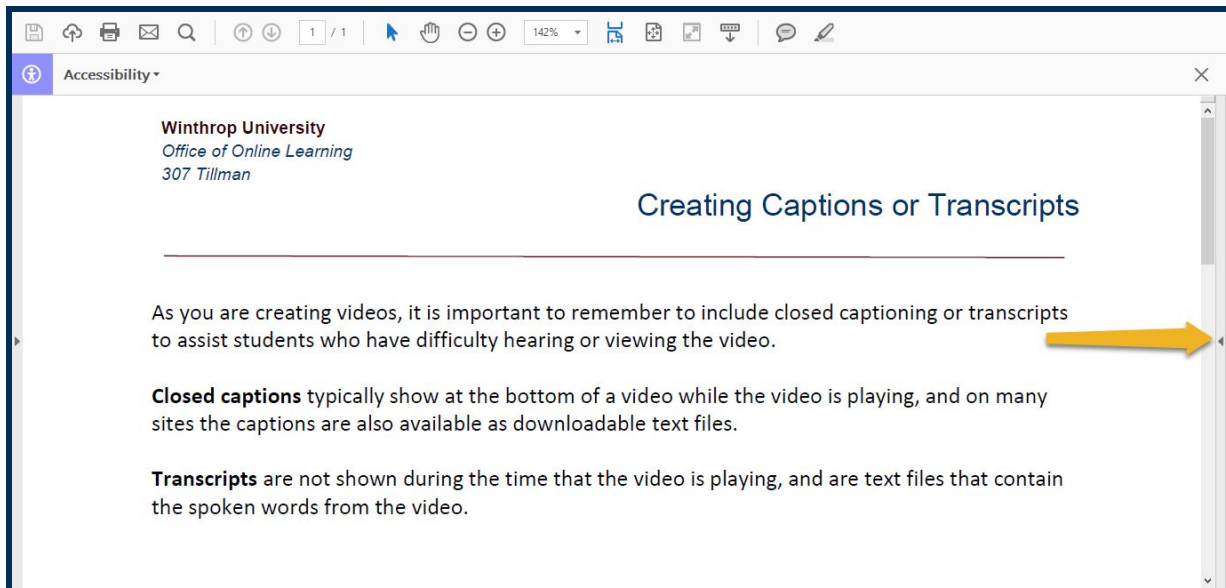
### Step 2

From the Tools page, find the *Protect & Standardize* section and select the "Accessibility" tool.



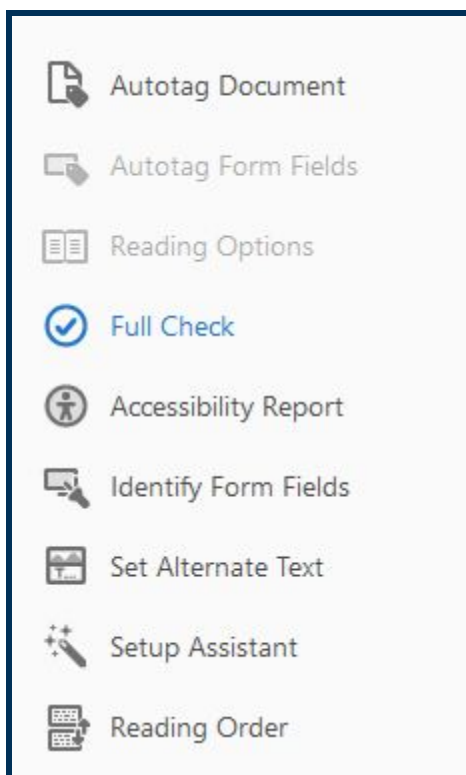
### Step 3

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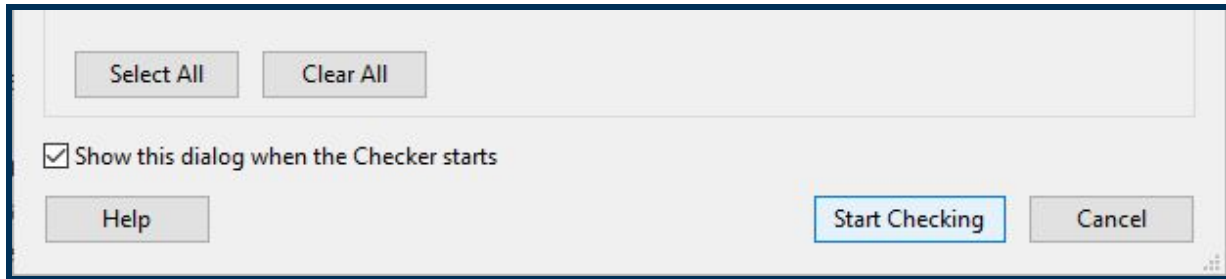
#### Step 4

Select "Full Check" from the Accessibility options menu.



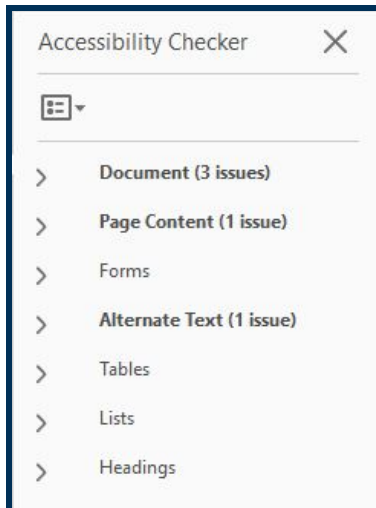
#### Step 5

Leave all Accessibility Checker Options settings on default and click the *Start Checking* button.



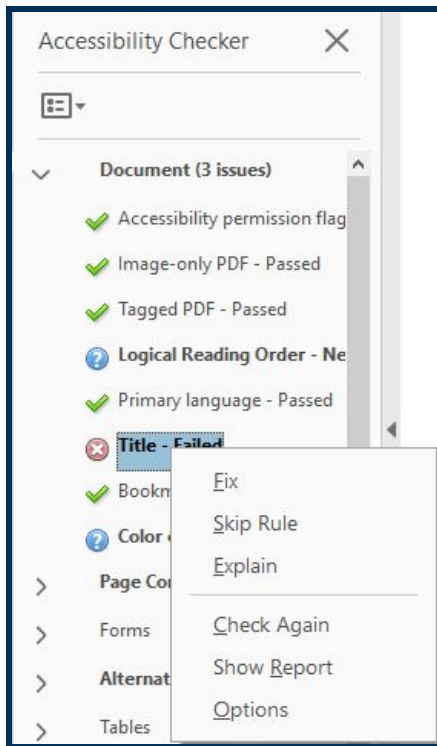
## Step 6

Once complete, the Accessibility Checker tool will open in the Navigation Pane (the left sidebar). Issues will be categorized as “Document,” “Page Content,” “Forms,” “Alternate Text,” “Tables,” “Lists,” or “Headings” issues, and the number of issues detected will appear in parentheses following those categories.



## Step 7

Clicking on a category will reveal a dropdown list of each criteria checked during the scan.



- A “check mark” icon indicates that the criteria has passed the Checker’s scan.
- An “x” icon indicates that the criteria has failed the Checker’s scan.
- A “?” icon indicates that the criteria must be manually reviewed.
- An “!” icon indicates that the criteria was skipped during the Checker’s scan.

Right-clicking a criteria will reveal a contextual menu offering to Fix, Explain, and/or Check Again for the issue’s resolution, depending on the issue’s complexity.

Selecting the Explain option will open Adobe support documentation to help you fix the issue.