



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

HEADINGS IN DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Headings are vital for accessibility because they provide structure, helping users navigate the document easily. They enable screen readers to identify sections, allowing efficient jumps to specific content. Headings also give context to topics, enhancing comprehension. Properly formatted headings improve visual organization, benefiting all users, including those with cognitive disabilities. Overall, using headings significantly enhances document accessibility and usability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Introduction..... 1**
- Setting Up the Document Properties2**
 - Document Title2
 - Setting the Document Title2
 - Setting PDF Metadata to Use the Document Title..... 4
 - Setting the Language in PDF..... 5
- Full Accessibility Check on Document 6**
 - Full Accessibility Check - Newer Versions of Adobe6
 - Full Accessibility Check Older Versions of Adobe Acrobat8
- Headings..... 10**
 - Level 1 Headings..... 10
 - Level 2 Headings..... 13
 - Level 3-6 Headings..... 15
 - Incorrect Heading Issues..... 16
 - Cause of Incorrect Heading Issues..... 16
 - Examples of Incorrect Headings 16

SETTING UP THE DOCUMENT PROPERTIES

There are three parts to setting the basic document properties:

1. Setting the Document Title
2. Setting PDF Metadata to Use the Document Title
3. Setting the Language in PDF

Performing these steps first when opening any PDF document will help resolve the most common errors before you start the remediation process.

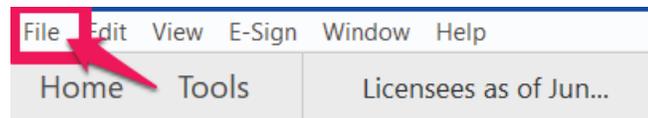
DOCUMENT TITLE

SETTING THE DOCUMENT TITLE

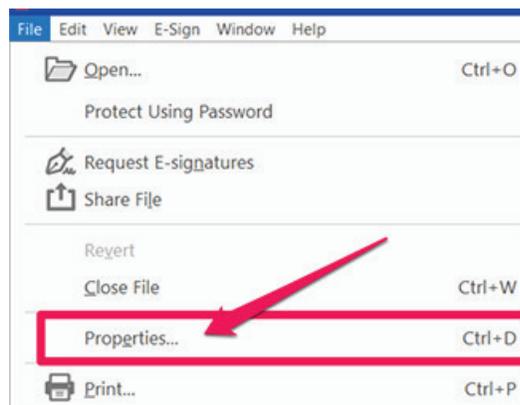
First check if the document has a document title. If it doesn't add the title. If the source document (such as Word, Excel, or PowerPoint) includes a title, the PDF will typically carry it over. Otherwise, you will need to add a title to the PDF. Follow the steps below to determine if the document title has been set properly.

Older Versions of Adobe Acrobat

1. Click on "File" at the top of the menu bar.



2. Select "Properties" to open the Document Properties window.

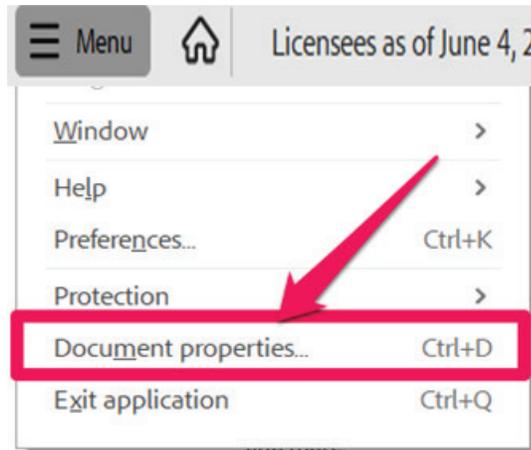


Newer Versions of Adobe Acrobat

1. Click on "Menu" at the top left of the window.

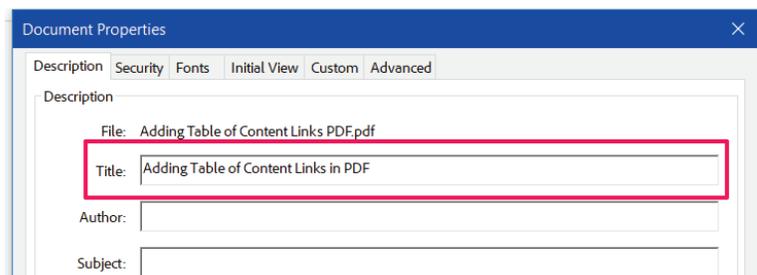


2. Select "Document Properties" to open the Document Properties window.



3. View the Description tab to determine if the document has a title and/or if the title is an appropriate description of the document. If the title is accurate, proceed to next section. If the title is not there or is not accurate, proceed to step 4.

Note: Steps 3 and 4 are the same in both older and newer versions of Adobe Acrobat



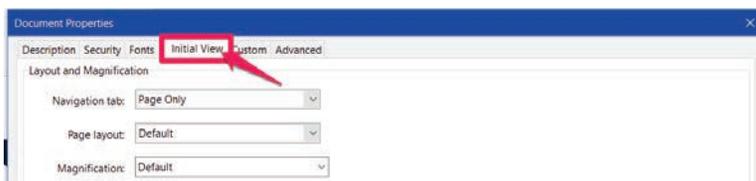
4. If there is no title, or if the title does not provide an accurate description of the document click in the Title field and select any text in it. Type in the new accurate document title.

SETTING PDF METADATA TO USE THE DOCUMENT TITLE

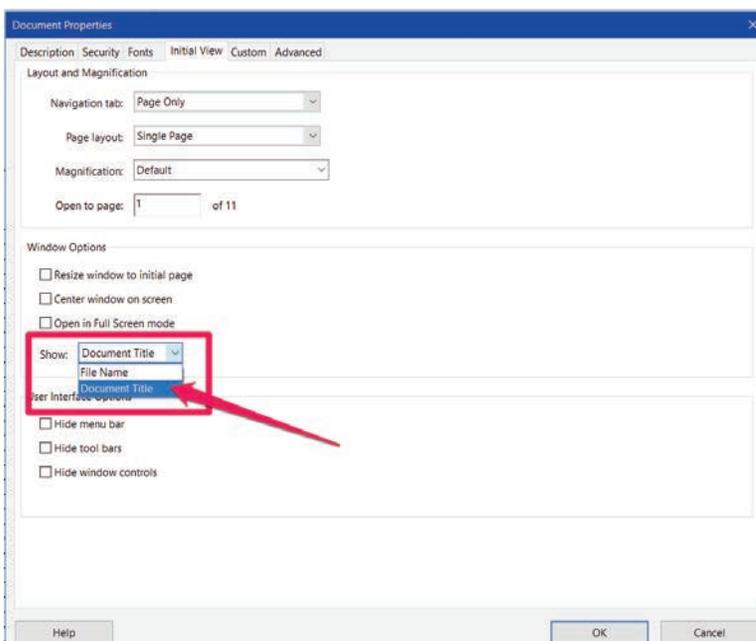
When adding a title to the document, the metadata must be updated to reflect the new document title instead of the file name.

Note: These steps are the same in both older and newer versions of Adobe Acrobat.

1. Make sure you are still in the Document Properties. See last section for guidance.
2. Click on the "Initial View" tab.



3. If the "Show" dropdown menu is set to "File Name" change this to "Document Title"



SETTING THE LANGUAGE IN PDF

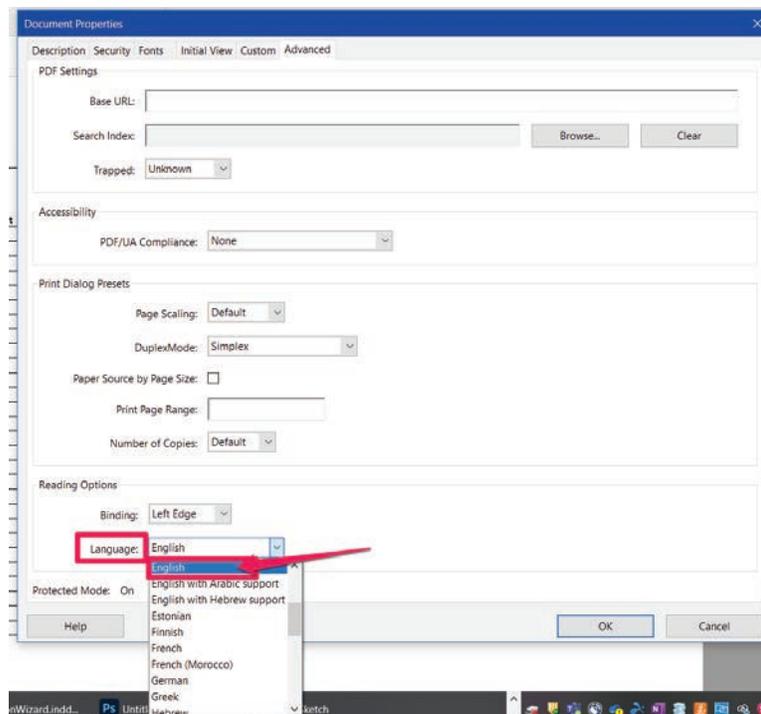
Screen reader technology will read the document to the user in the language set for the document. A document can only have one language setting. The steps to set the correct language in a PDF are:

Note: These steps are the same in both older and newer versions of Adobe Acrobat.

1. Click on the “Advanced” tab in the Document Properties window.



2. Choose the “Language dropdown” and change it to the correct language. In this case “English.”



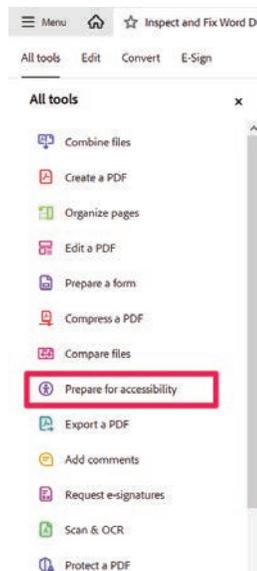
3. Click the “OK button to save any changes to the PDF title or language.

FULL ACCESSIBILITY CHECK ON DOCUMENT

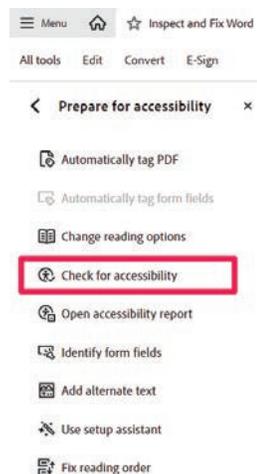
FULL ACCESSIBILITY CHECK - NEWER VERSIONS OF ADOBE

The first step is to conduct a comprehensive (full) Accessibility Check to identify any errors that need to be addressed in the Content Tool in the All Tools Menu on the left. This menu is displayed by default on the left side of the page.

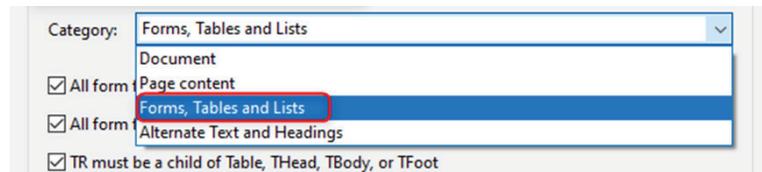
1. Locate the All Tools menu on the left and click the Prepare for accessibility button.



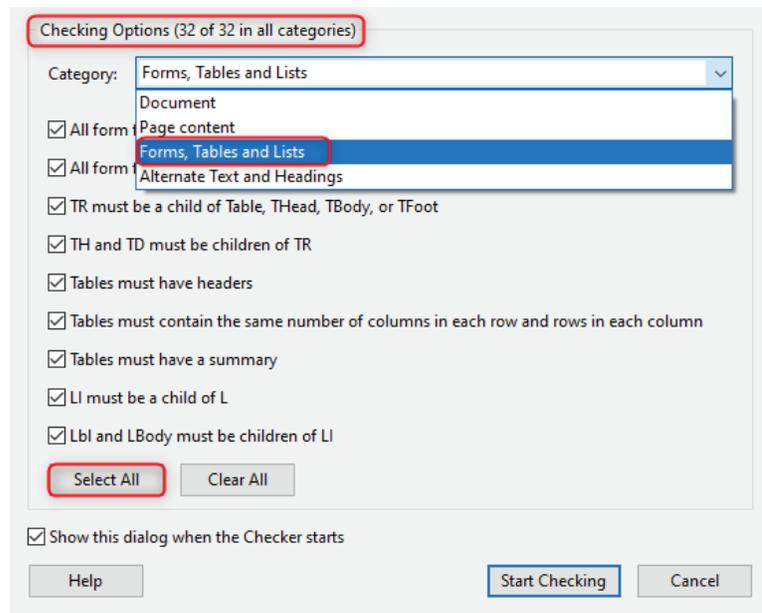
2. Click on Check for accessibility



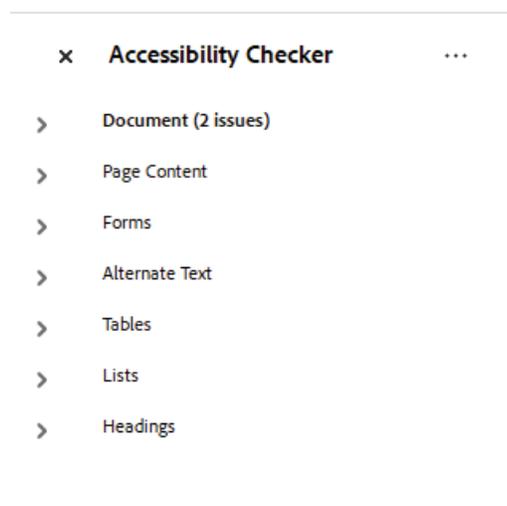
3. Verify that the Category drop-down is set to "Forms, Tables and Lists".



4. In the Accessibility Checker Options dialog box, under Checking Options, verify that it shows (32 of 32 in all categories). Then click on Start Checking.



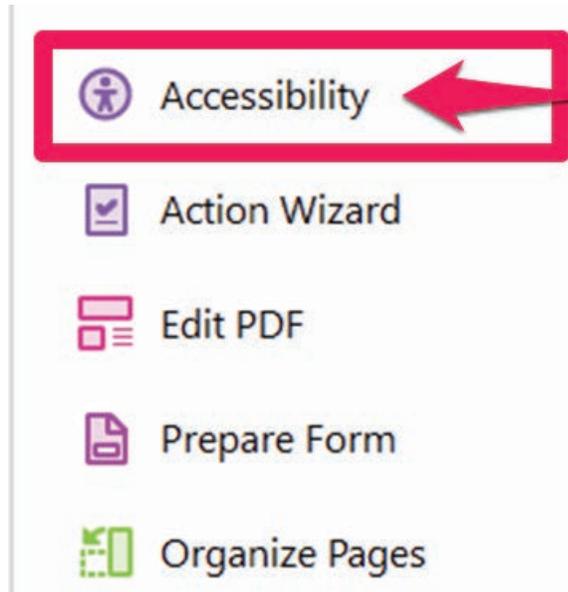
5. The Accessibility Checker panel will appear on the right side of the document. Expand the arrows to see the accessibility issues.



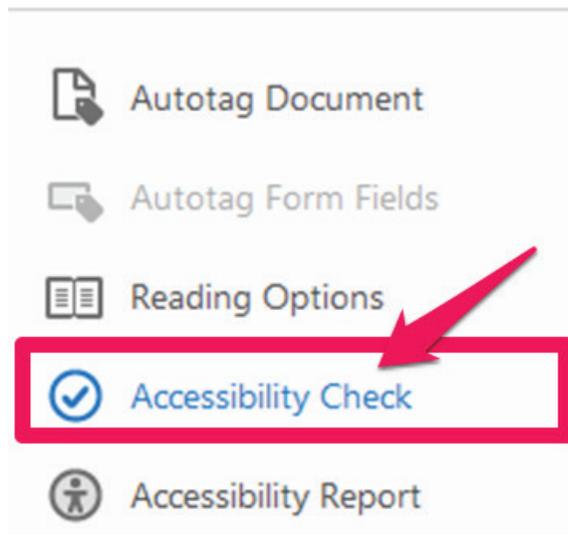
FULL ACCESSIBILITY CHECK OLDER VERSIONS OF ADOBE ACROBAT

The first step is to conduct a comprehensive (full) Accessibility Check to identify any errors that need to be addressed in the Content Tool on the left tool menu.

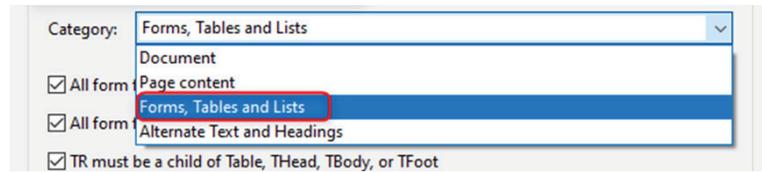
1. Use the Accessibility Tool on the right side of the document tool menu.



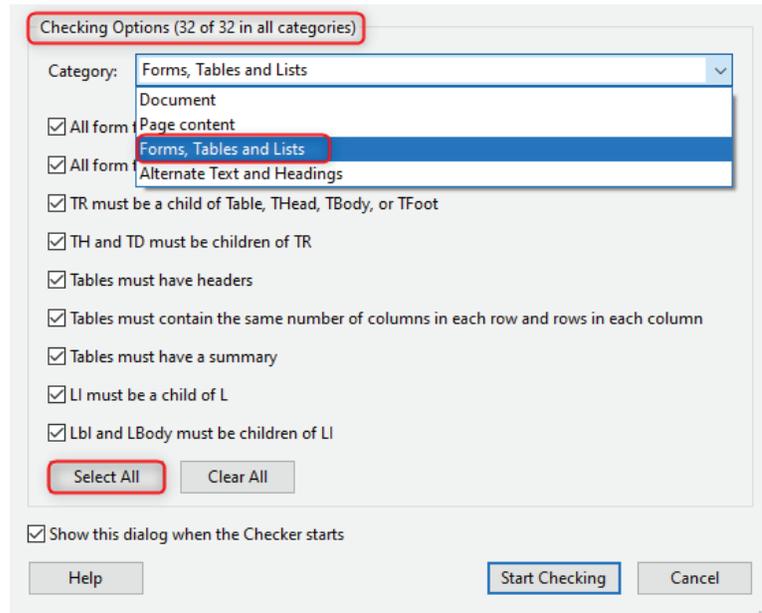
2. Select the Accessibility Check tool in the Accessibility tool to see if there are any errors.



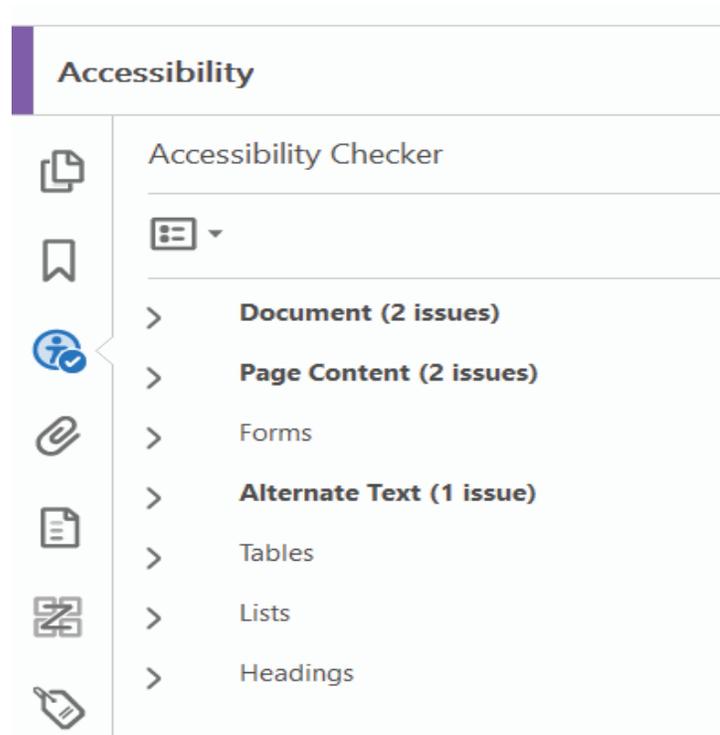
3. Verify that the Category drop-down is set to "Forms, Tables and Lists".



4. In the Accessibility Checker Options dialog box, under Checking Options, verify that it shows (32 of 32 in all categories). Then click on Start Checking.



5. The Accessibility Checker panel will appear on the left side of the document. Expand the arrows to see the accessibility issues.



HEADINGS

LEVEL 1 HEADINGS

Using a heading level 1 (H1) is essential for accessibility as it establishes a clear document hierarchy, indicating the main topic or title of the document. This helps users, especially those using screen readers, understand the layout and flow of content. Setting an H1 gives users immediate context about the content, making it easier to grasp the purpose of the document at a glance.

Please note that the Accessibility Checker may not always detect if a document is missing a level 1 heading, but it is essential for every document to include one. This is a manual review item, as automated checks cannot identify all accessibility issues; some must be assessed by a person. If your document does not have a level 1 heading, identify one at the top of the first page.

To add a Level 1 Heading to a page:

1. Click on "Prepare for accessibility" or Accessibility depending on the version of adobe you are using.

Newer Versions of Adobe Acrobat

 Prepare for accessibility

Appears on the left side of the screen

Older Versions of Adobe

 Protect

 Accessibility

 Prepare Form

Appears on the left side of the screen

2. Select the Reading Order tool

Newer Versions of Adobe Acrobat

 Add alternate text

 Use setup assistant

 Fix reading order

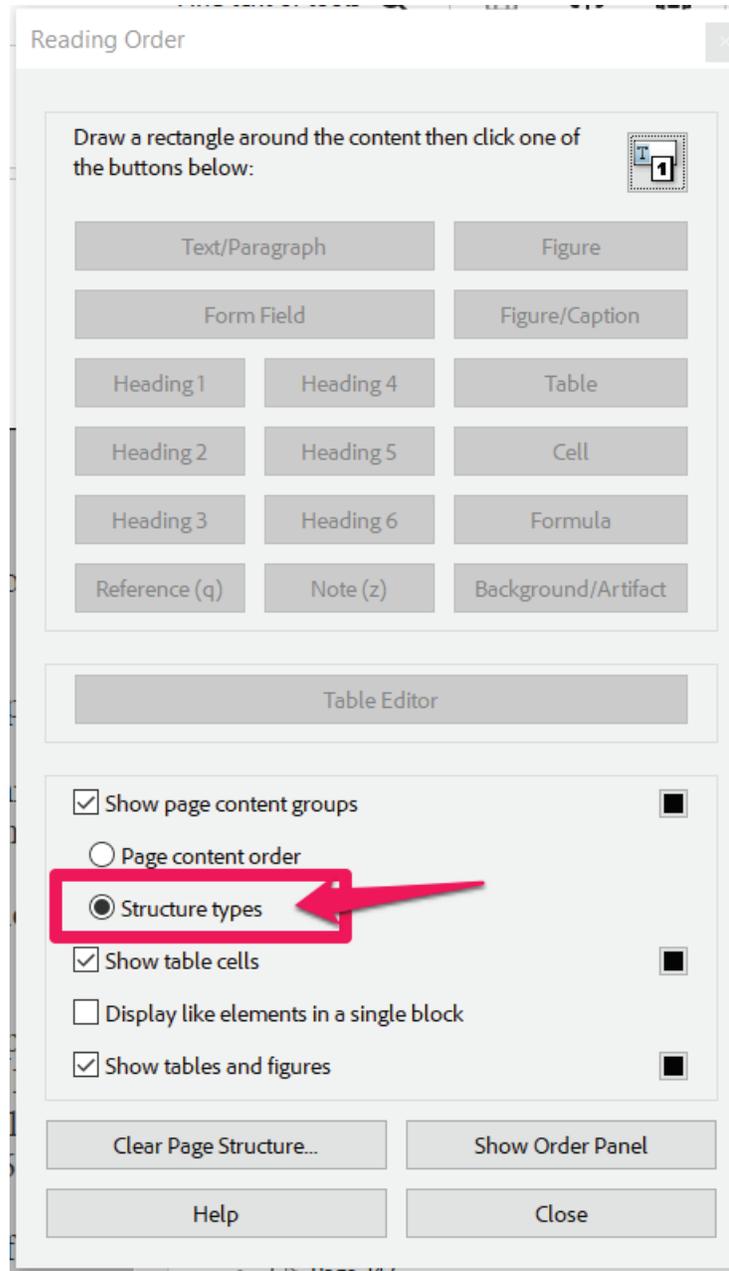
Older Versions of Adobe Acrobat

 Set Alternate Text

 Setup Assistant

 Reading Order

3. In the Reading Order dialog box make sure that Structure types are selected. This will allow you to see the structure of the document.



4. Right-click the text that should be the level 1 heading and choose "Tag as heading 1" from the pop-up menu.



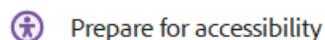
5. Run full accessibility check to see if issue has been resolved.

LEVEL 2 HEADINGS

For longer documents, adding level 2 headings provides key benefits for accessibility and usability. They create clear sub-sections, helping users understand the information hierarchy. Screen readers can easily identify these headings, allowing efficient navigation. Level 2 headings break content into manageable sections, enhancing comprehension and retention. They also improve visual layout, making it easier for all users, including those with cognitive disabilities, to follow the content. Consistent heading structures promote better readability and accessibility.

To add a Level 2 Heading to a page:

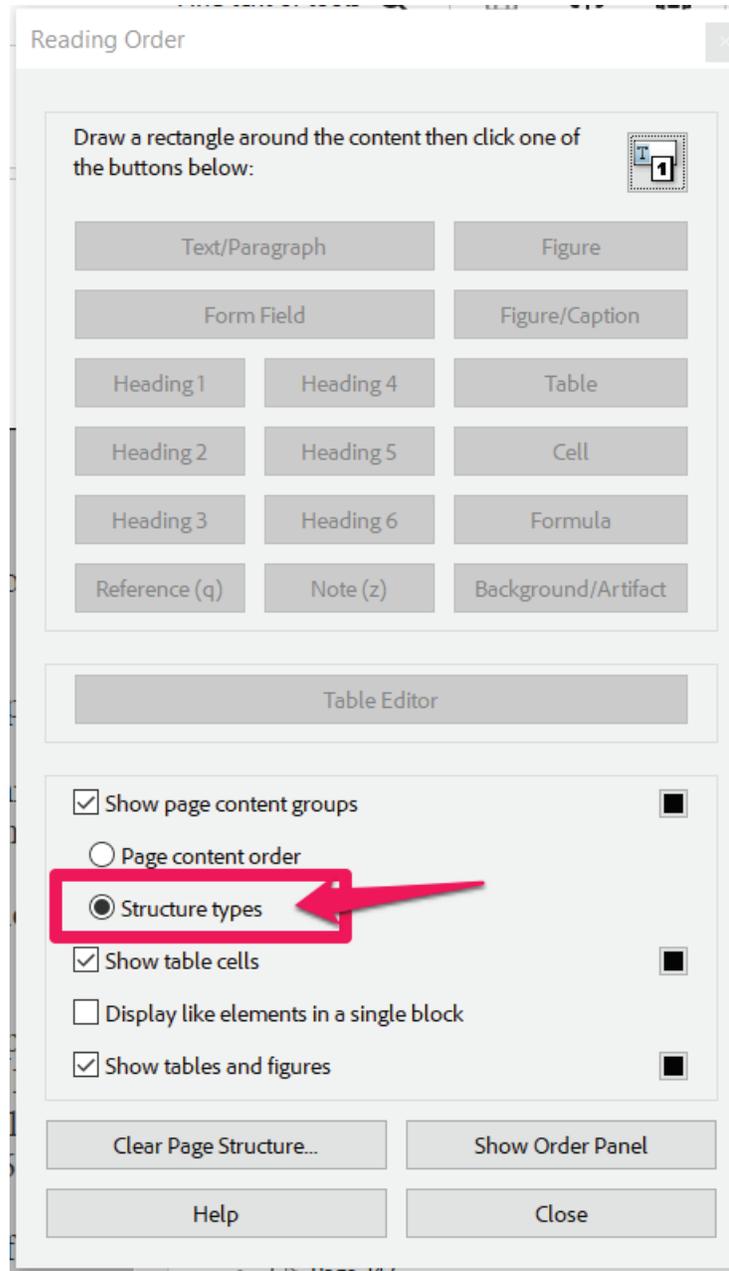
1. Click on "Prepare for accessibility"



2. Select the Reading Order tool



3. In the Reading Order dialog box make sure that Structure types are selected. This will allow you to see the structure of the document.



4. Right-click the text that should be the level 1 heading and choose "Tag as heading 1" from the pop-up menu.



5. Run full accessibility check to see if issue has been resolved.

LEVEL 3-6 HEADINGS

Adding level 3 to level 6 headings is not recommended due to accessibility challenges. Too many heading levels can complicate the document structure, making navigation harder. Some screen readers may misinterpret these headings, causing confusion. Additionally, excessive levels can clutter the layout, hindering focus, especially for users with cognitive disabilities. Inconsistent use of headings can disrupt the reading experience. To enhance accessibility, it's best to limit heading levels to 1 and 2 for clarity and effective navigation.

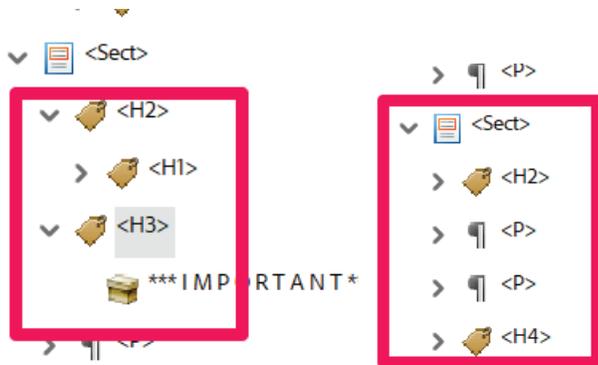
INCORRECT HEADING ISSUES

CAUSE OF INCORRECT HEADING ISSUES

This is often caused by heading levels being used out of order, formatted without the correct styles leading to a lack of or confusion about the content structural hierarchy.

EXAMPLES OF INCORRECT HEADINGS

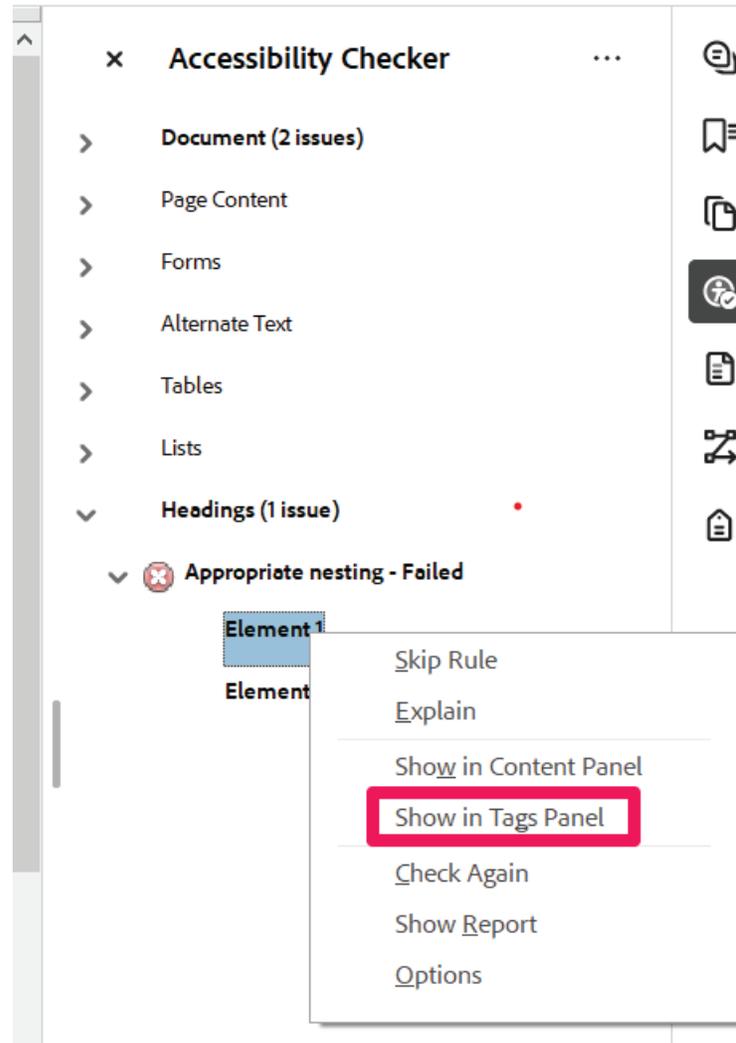
The examples below illustrate a level <H3> heading used immediately after a level <H1> heading, without an intervening level <H2> heading, and a level <H4> heading following a level <H2> heading, without a level <H3> heading in between. Headings must follow a proper order, which is often the source of these issues. To meet ADA requirements, headings cannot be used out of order.



FIXING INCORRECT HEADING ISSUES

To fix this problem, change the structure of the element:

1. Right-click on the element under the Appropriate Nesting – Failed message and choose “Show in Tags Panel” from the drop-down menu. This will highlight the problem element in the tags panel.

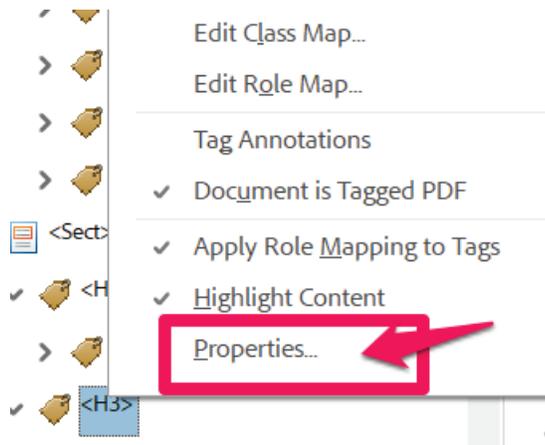


2. Review the content of the tag and its surrounding elements to determine if the tag should be changed to a paragraph <P> tag, or if another type would be more appropriate.

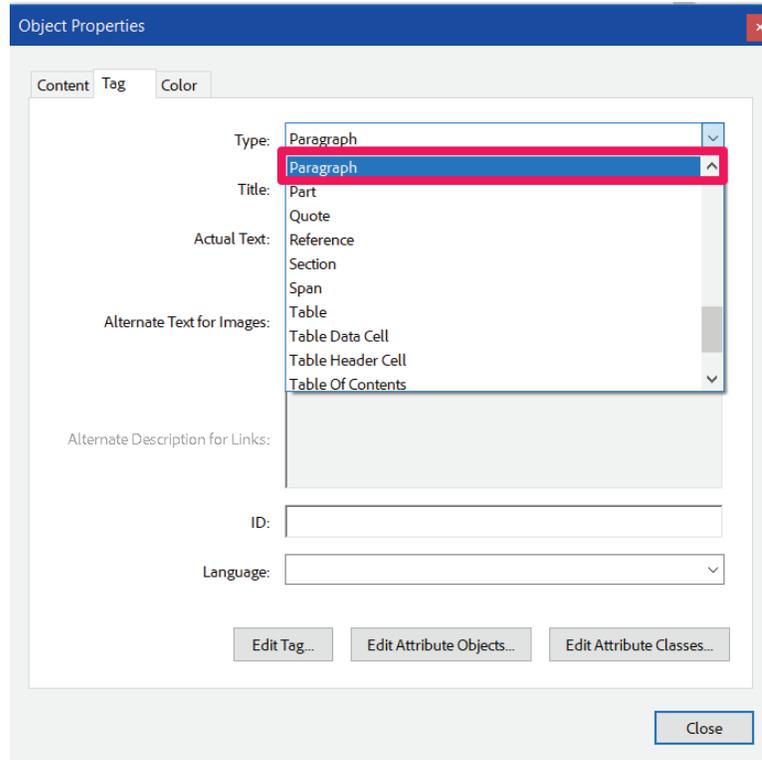
In this case, the word "Important" should not be a heading, so we would change it to a <P> tag by following the steps below.



- a. Right-click the element's tag and choose Properties from the pop-up menu



- b. Change the tag to a <P> tag by clicking on the Type field drop-down menu and select the appropriate tag from the list. Then click the close button.



3. Perform a complete accessibility check to determine if the issue has been resolved. Please note that fixing one issue can sometimes result in the total number of issues remaining the same or even increasing, as this may disrupt the order of other elements. Continue addressing each issue until the total decreases and remember to run a full accessibility check after each fix.



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