

# Electronic Documents Guidelines

## Introduction

A common problem when an electronic document is distributed is the inability of a recipient to open the document in a usable form. This occurs quite frequently with material received from students, staff and other faculty. While there are many ways to alleviate this problem, such ways are not always in the knowledge base of document originators or receivers. These guidelines provide methods that faculty may use to ensure that their electronic documents may be distributed without providing recipients with undue difficulties.

## Recommendation

It is recommended that electronic documents meant for general distribution be encoded in PDF format. While other formats may be acceptable depending upon the situation, PDF format is an international standard format that is universally accessible.

## Creating PDF Files

### Windows

Users of Windows will need to install software before they can create PDF files. See the [PDF Software](#) section below. Good free choices are [OpenOffice.org](#) and [PDFCreator](#). [Adobe Acrobat](#) is a good choice for those wishing to use commercial software.

### Apple

PDF is a native format for OS X so it is simple to create a PDF version of any document. Simply print a document and click on the PDF button at the bottom of the print dialogue box.

### GNU/Linux

[Scribus](#) and [OpenOffice.org](#) work well. Those who need to make technical documents should probably use [L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X](#).

## PDF Software

Any two-dimensional electronic document may be converted to PDF format with the appropriate software. Many programs are available that allow for the viewing, creation, editing, or printing of PDF files. Some of these are listed below.

### Free Software

- [Adobe Reader](#): A free (as in price only) PDF file viewer that comes preinstalled on many systems.
- [CutePDF Writer](#): A free (as in price only) version of CutePDF for Windows.
- [Evince](#): A document viewer for GNU/Linux.

- [L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X](#): L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X (pronounced “lay tek”) is a typesetting system which allows the production of high quality documents in PDF and other formats.
- [OpenOffice.org](#): A free office suite which has a PDF exporting function. Uses the [GNU Lesser General Public License](#).
- [PDFCreator](#): Free PDF creation software for Windows. Licensed under the [GNU General Public License, Version 2](#)
- [PrimoPDF](#): A free (as in price only) PDF creation program.
- [Scribus](#): Document creation software licensed under the [GNU General Public License, Version 2](#) or any later version.

## Commercial Software

- [Adobe Acrobat](#): The most popular commercial program used to create PDF files.
- [CutePDF](#): PDF creation software for Windows.
- [deskPDF](#)
- [MyPDF Maker](#)
- [Nitro PDF](#)
- [PDF-Desk](#)
- [PDF direct](#)
- [PDF Format](#)
- [PDF-Pro-Office](#)
- [VeryPDF](#): This company offers several kinds of PDF manipulation programs.

## What is PDF Format?

PDF means Portable Document Format. Originally released in 1993 by [Adobe Systems Incorporated](#), the format has evolved into a full-featured digital format for representing electronic documents. In 2007, PDF 1.7 was approved as an international standard by the [International Organization for Standardization](#) (ISO). This standard was published in 2008 as [ISO 32000-1:2008](#) (also available [here](#)). While Adobe holds some patents on PDF, anyone is permitted to develop software that utilizes the format without the need to pay royalties on the patents.

PDF format has several advantages over other formats.

- PDF is an open international standard.
- PDF is widely used. It is truly a standard format.
- Documents in the PDF format may be viewed and printed exactly as the author intends.
- Fonts may (should) be embedded in a PDF document to ensure that a viewer will render the document correctly.
- PDF document readers are freely available and are standard software on almost all computers.

- Any type of software may be used make a document initially. Only when a document is finished is it converted to a PDF.
- PDF documents may contain links, buttons, text boxes, embedded Javascript and other things usually found on web pages. However, not all PDF viewers support these features.

Unfortunately, the nature of PDF format means that it has some disadvantages.

- It is usually not possible to edit a PDF file directly. The source document is required for editing. However, this seeming disadvantage is really a positive feature.
- It is sometimes difficult for a casual user to convert a document into PDF format. These guidelines provide links to software that may be used for such conversions.

## More Information

- [ISO 32000-1:2008](#)
- [GNU PDF](#)
- [PDF Reference and Adobe Extensions to the PDF Specification](#)
- [pdfTeX](#)
- [PDFzone](#)
- [Planet PDF](#)
- [Portable Document Format: An Introduction for Programmers](#)

## Document History

These guidelines were devised and approved by the Technology Advisory Committee of Summit College during the 2008-2009 academic year.

- Scott Randby, Chair
- John Boal
- Wayne Brummert
- Kelli Chronister
- Zarreen Farooqi
- Mike Johanyak
- Thomas Kellar
- David Licate
- John Luthern
- Ronald Shaffer
- Larry Shubat