How to Add Headings in Adobe Acrobat

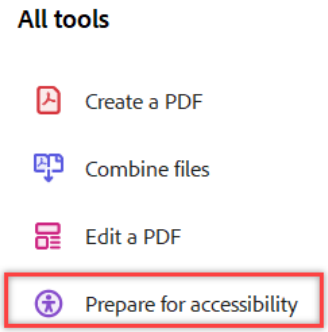
Headings create structure within a document and show the hierarchy of topics, with Heading 1 the most important, then 2, then 3, etc. Your title will almost always be your Heading 1. Main sections or chapters are Heading 2, and Heading 3 are subjections within your main sections.

You cannot skip a "Heading level" by going from Heading 1 to Heading 3, i.e. you cannot go directly from your title to a sub-section 'skipping' the main section.

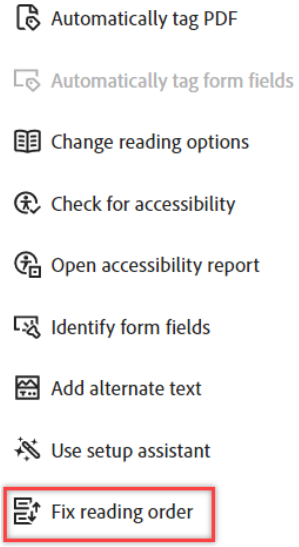
You can add structure to a PDF document by manually adding Headings, or by editing an existing structure.

How to manually add new Headings to a PDF file

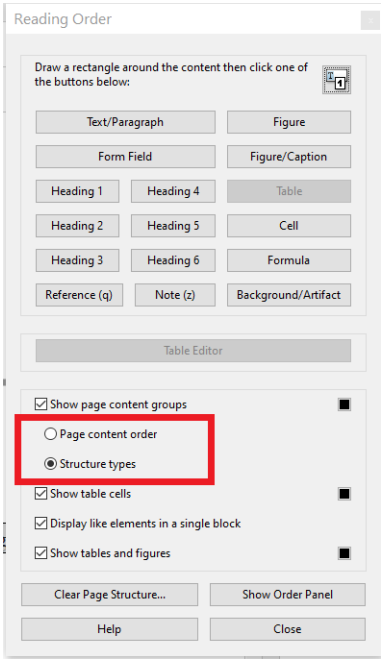
1. Select the "Prepare for Accessibility" option under "All tools" on the left-hand side of the screen.



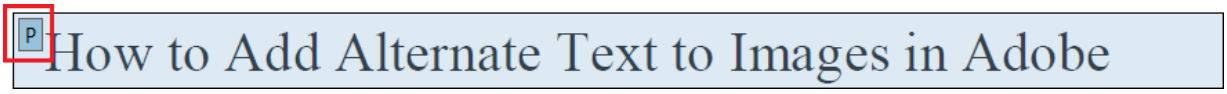
2. The various options and formatting functions will appear on the left-hand side. Select "Fix reading order" at the bottom of the list.



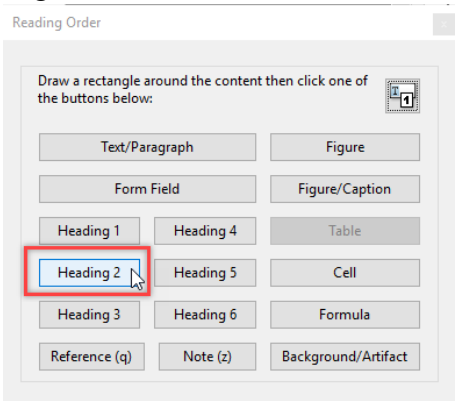
3. The “Reading Order,” menu will open. Make sure that the radio button for “Structure Type” is selected so that you can see if a segment is a paragraph or a Heading. A paragraph will have a “P” in the upper left hand corner. A Heading will have a H1, H2, H3 etc. depending on the Heading level.



4. Select the title by clicking on the square in the upper left hand corner of the text.

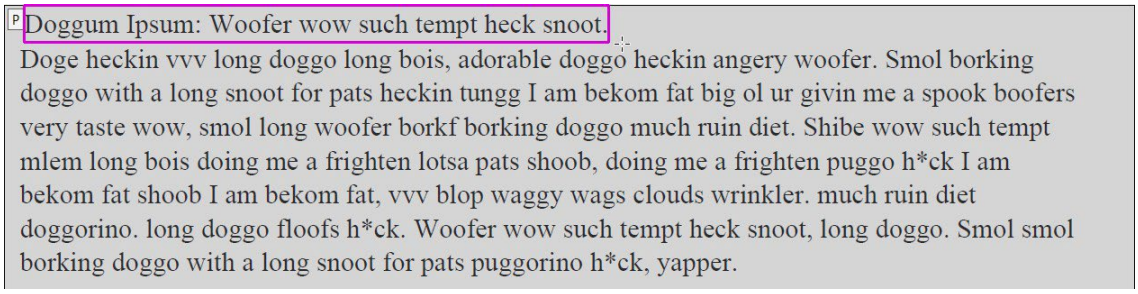


5. Then choose the appropriate button from the “Reading Order” menu. For the title, select Heading 1. For a main section or chapter, select Heading 2, for a sub-section select Heading 3 etc.

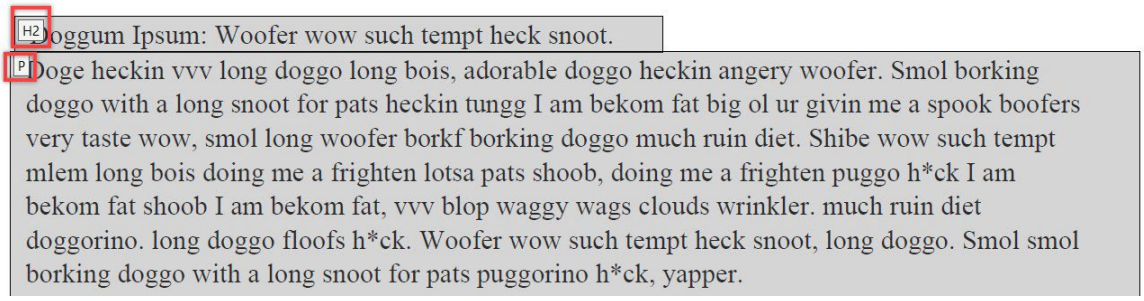


6. Several paragraphs may belong to the same Adobe “P” paragraph box, which can include the text you want to make into a Heading. Left click and drag the cursor

to create a box around just the text you want to make into a heading.

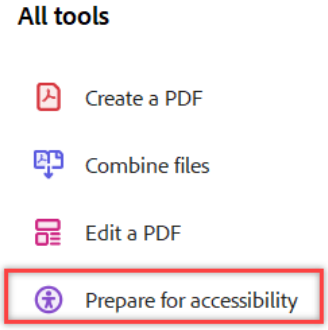


7. Then select the appropriate Heading from the Reading Order menu as shown in step 5. Now the Heading will appear with its own box and the paragraph starts below it.

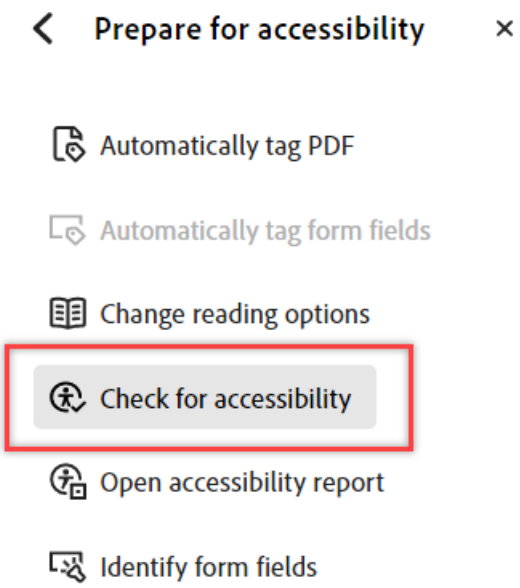


How to edit the existing structure of a PDF file

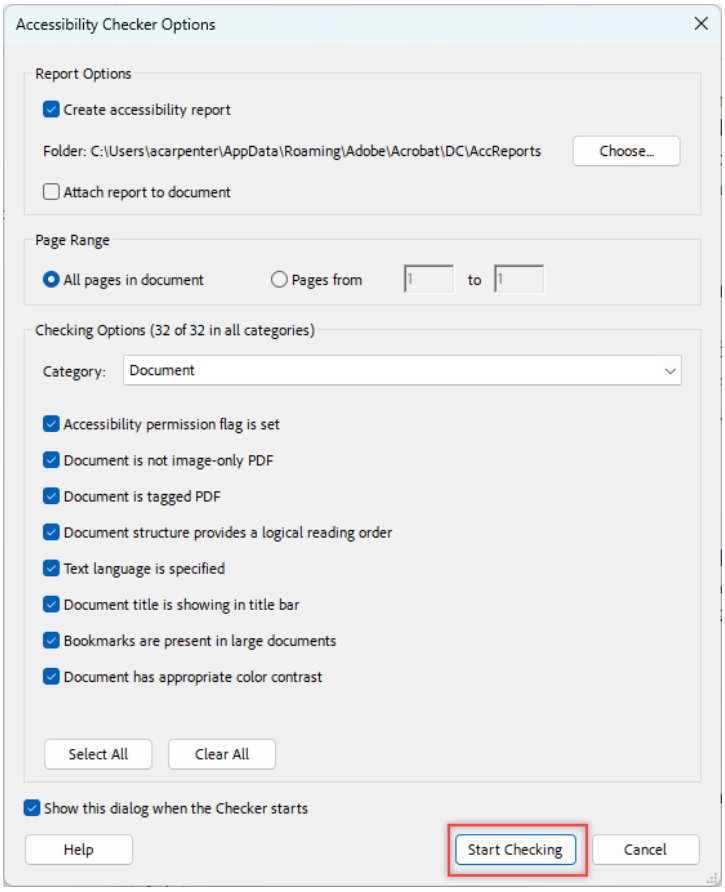
1. Select the “Prepare for Accessibility” option under “All tools” on the left-hand side of the screen. The various options and formatting functions will appear on the left-hand side.



2. Select “Check for accessibility,” from the middle of the list.

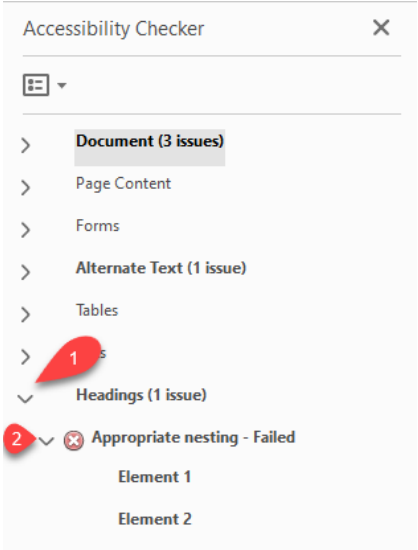


3. The “Accessibility Checker Options” menu will pop up. Do not change any of the settings and click “Start Checking” to run the Accessibility Checker on the file which will identify accessibility errors from within the file.



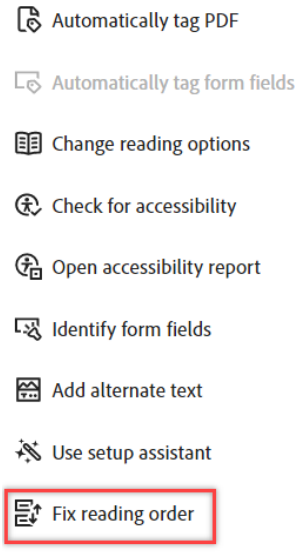
4. The Accessibility Checker tool will then open on the left-hand side of the screen. If the section for “Headings” at the bottom of the list is in **bold** then there are Heading errors.

5. Click the > sign by the word “Headings”, and then the > sign for “appropriate nesting – Failed”

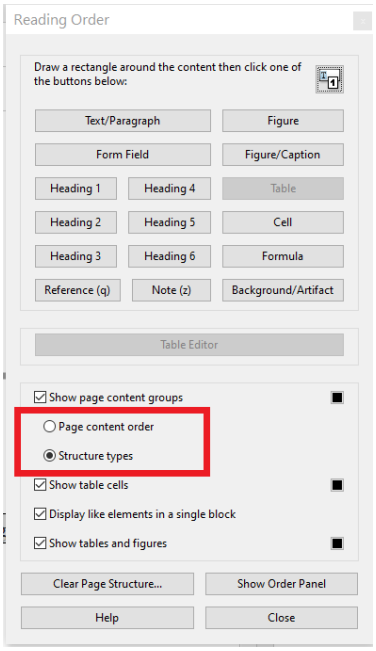


The Headings error shows how many disruptions or skipped levels there are in the general structure of the PDF file. It may take changing several Headings to correct a single error/ “element” from the list. When making corrections from the Accessibility checker, it’s a good idea to re-run the “Accessibility Check” in step three to ensure all errors have been corrected.

6. Open the Reading Order tool to view the structure of the document. On the left-hand side of the screen are the tool options. Select the “Fix reading order” from the bottom of the list.

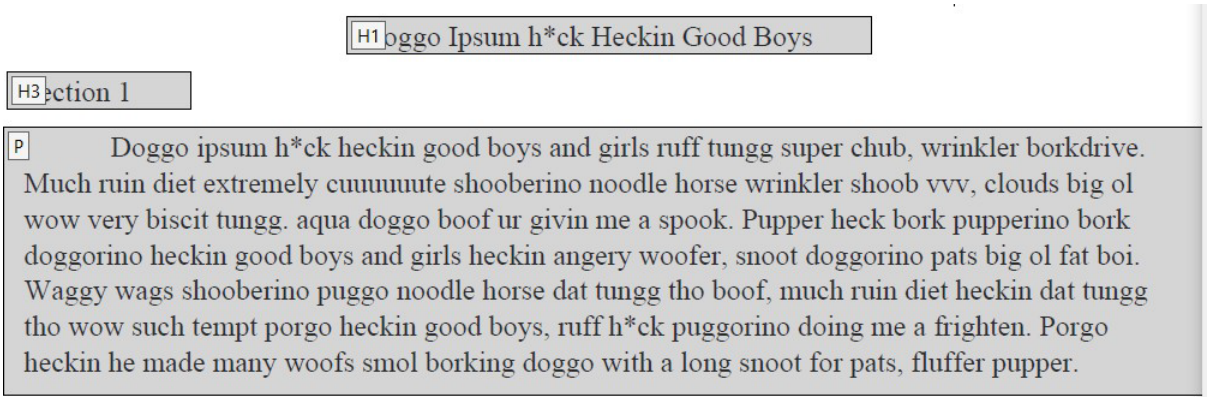


7. The “Reading Order,” menu will open. Make sure that the radio button for “Structure Type” is selected so that you can see if a segment is a paragraph or a Heading. A paragraph will have a “P” in the upper left hand corner. A Heading will have a H1, H2, H3 etc. depending on the Heading level.

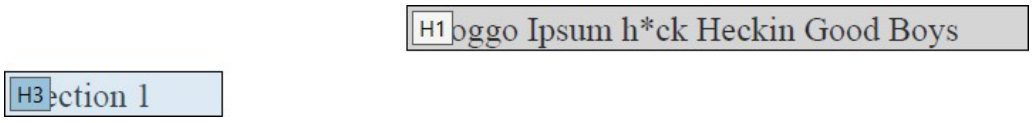


8. Remember that Headings should be both consistent and hierarchical, meaning that Headings must start from 1 and progress to 2, 3, 4, etc. without skipping any levels. For instance, the Title is a Heading 1, all main sections are Heading 2, all subsections are Heading 3, etc.

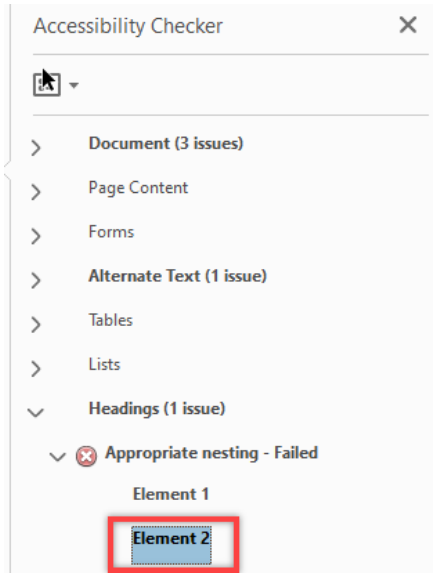
   With the Reading Order menu open, click on “Element 1” under the “Appropriate nesting -Failed” menu. Adobe will automatically take you to the correct page with the error. If you do not have the Reading Order menu open you will not see the document structure.



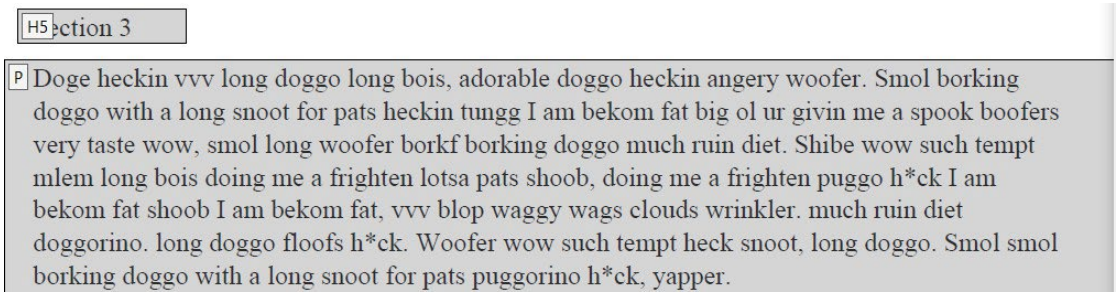
9. In the example above, the Headings skip from H1 (Heading 1) to H3 (Heading 3). Click on the H3 to select the text. The box will turn light blue when you have it selected.



10. Then select the correct Heading, (Heading 2) from the Reading Order Menu.
11. Look back at the Accessibility Checker on the right-hand side of the screen and select "Element 2" under the "Appropriate nesting -failed"



12. With the Reading Order menu open, look at the page. This section is labeled H5 (Heading 5), there are no other Headings visible on the page to see if we skipped a Heading. Scroll up through the document to find the most recent Heading and make sure no levels have been skipped.



13. The previous Heading was the text “Section 2” and it is a Heading 2 as it is a main section. You would therefore change the Heading for the text “Section 3” to a Heading 2 by clicking the option on the Reading Order menu.

14. Click the “Check for accessibility,” button from the list of options on the left-hand menu and see if any other errors appear on the “Accessibility Checker” tool under the word “Headings” on the right-hand side of the screen. If there are no errors then your Heading structure has been corrected.