Document Author

[Email address]

Abstract

[Draw your reader in with an engaging abstract. It is typically a short summary of the document.   
When you’re ready to add your content, just click here and start typing.]

Complex Document

Creating Accessible Documents

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### ****Discussion

Complex Word documents which include elements such as Footnotes, Endnotes, Page Numbering, Watermarks and other advanced features will also need to be reviewed for accessibility. While these documents may not be as common, they are just as important to those with disabilities who require this information as part of their job and so it’s essential that we ensure that these and other advance features be assessed for accessibility. When using the following features, you’ll have guidance from experts to learn what it means to make them fully accessible by screen readers and other technologies.

## Headers/Footers and Page Numbering

Many multi-page documents use these elements as standard on almost all documents. It’s fine to use these, however, once they are in a document converted to PDF they are not editable by PDF editors. They can be removed and replaced but they exist as static text on the page. If the text needs to be edited and reflowed in the PDF editor, these elements will likely get in the way.

**Recommendation**: As long as the original file is available to edit and update these elements it’s fine to leave them in. However, PDF editors may need to completely replace them at some point if the document is lost or deleted.

## Footnotes / Endnotes

It is generally recommended that any footnotes or endnotes that have been created in a complex document be replaced with text represented directly on the page. Although Foxit Phantom PDF can do a pretty good job of grabbing this content and enabling a screen reader to read it, it may mean the text is read out of context and it makes it nearly impossible for the listener to make sense of this information.

**Recommendation**: Place the text inline below the content that would normally reference it and apply a customized bullet style used just for footnotes. Put the leading word ‘Footnote’ or ‘Endnote’ where appropriate and this will warn the listener that this text belongs with the previous paragraph.[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Cross-References

Like Footnotes and Endnotes, Cross References are converted into static non-linked text that is like any other text on the page. There is no linking between the reference and the target, so this functionality is lost in the PDF version of the document.

**Recommendation**: Simply not of any use in a PDF file. See Footnotes / Endnotes

## Watermarks

Many documents now use a watermark to indicate that the document is still in development or is confidential. These watermarks are actually graphics that are placed behind text and show through the text because of their transparent formatting.

**Recommendation**: It’s critical that these be removed from your PDF document and replaced in your PDF editor with a more suitable object that can be updated in the PDF directly.

## Table of Contents

As with other complex document elements, the Table of Contents that is converted into PDF format is no longer dynamic meaning that it can no longer reflect any updates to the PDF file. As with Headers and Footer, it’s usually necessary to include them.

**Recommendation**: Include in the PDF file, but note that the original file will be needed if there are updates to the document that affect the Table of Contents.

## Indexes

Index entries, like Table of Contents entries become static in a PDF document and require the original document to be available if the content of the PDF file must change.

**Recommendation**: See Table of Contents.

## Comments

Comments do convert into the PDF files but are static text. They change the physical page width to accommodate the comment panel on the right. They are not editable and so have no value in PDF files other than for viewing.

**Recommendation**: Use the PDF editor commenting feature to provide for feedback on the PDF content when collaborating with others.

1. <https://www.accessibilityoz.com/training/online-training/creating-accessible-word-documents/formatting-layout/watermarks-footnotes-and-endnotes/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)