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Review the accessibility of your department's documents [1]

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Making accessible PDFs or fixing accessibility problems in existing PDF files can be a lengthy and highly variable process.

To create an accessible PDF from a source file, two things must happen. First, accessibility best practices should be followed when creating the document in the original software. Secondly, the exporting to PDF must be done in a way that preserves the accessibility features of the original file. If either step does not occur, the resulting PDF will not be accessible.

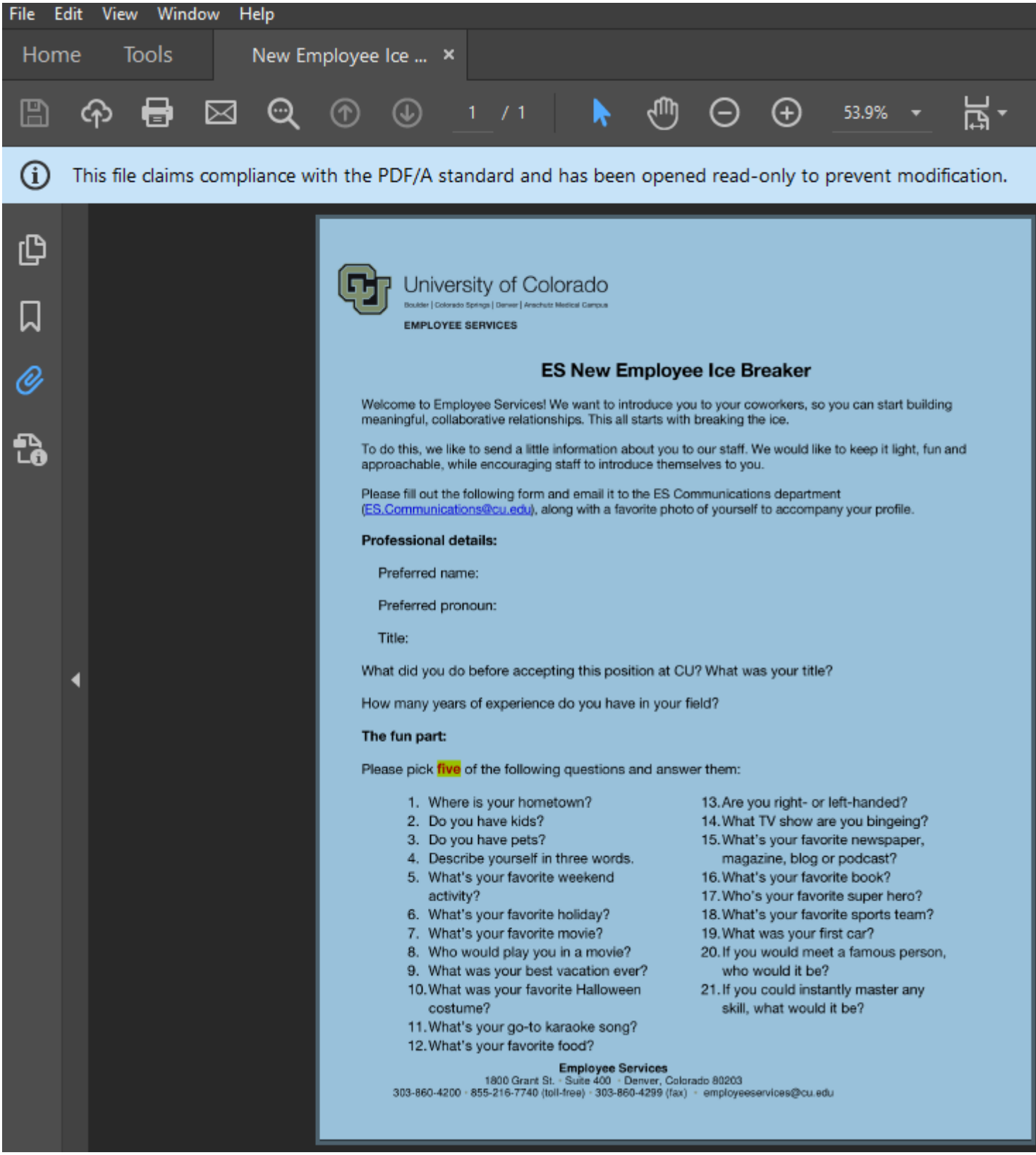
Assessing a PDF's accessibility

The University of Colorado adheres to the general webpage accessibility standards laid out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 [3] and the PDF/UA ISO 14289-1:2014 [4] document.

To begin assessing if a PDF lacks accessibility, evaluate the following criteria.

1. **Is the PDF's text selectable or is it an image?**

   When attempting to select text within the PDF, if the entire page highlights when you click on it, that indicates the text is not selectable and your PDF is inaccessible to screen reader devices.



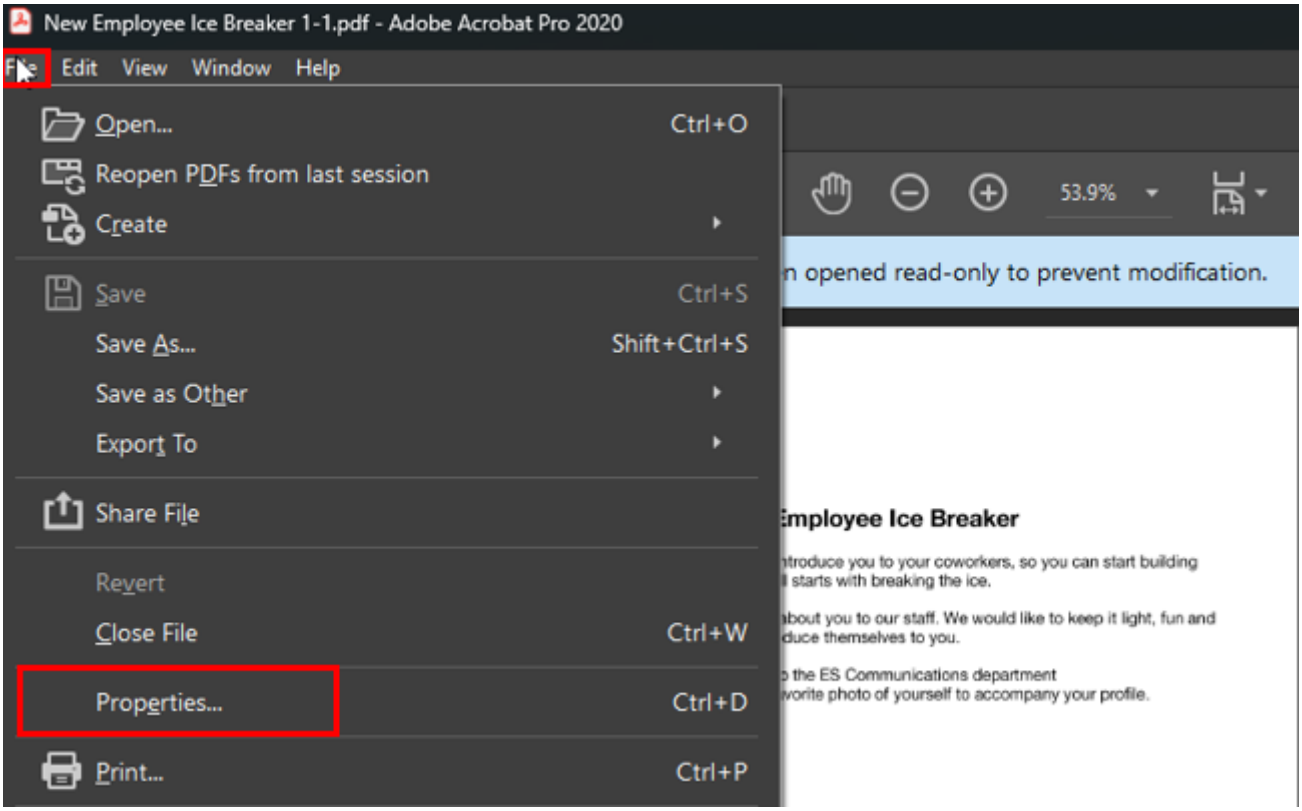
To fix this, run your PDF through an optical character recognition (OCR) program like SensusAccess [5], though note that OCR programs can only conduct automated conversions, and the output PDF will most likely require further editing in Acrobat Pro to ensure accuracy.

2. **Does the PDF have tags?**

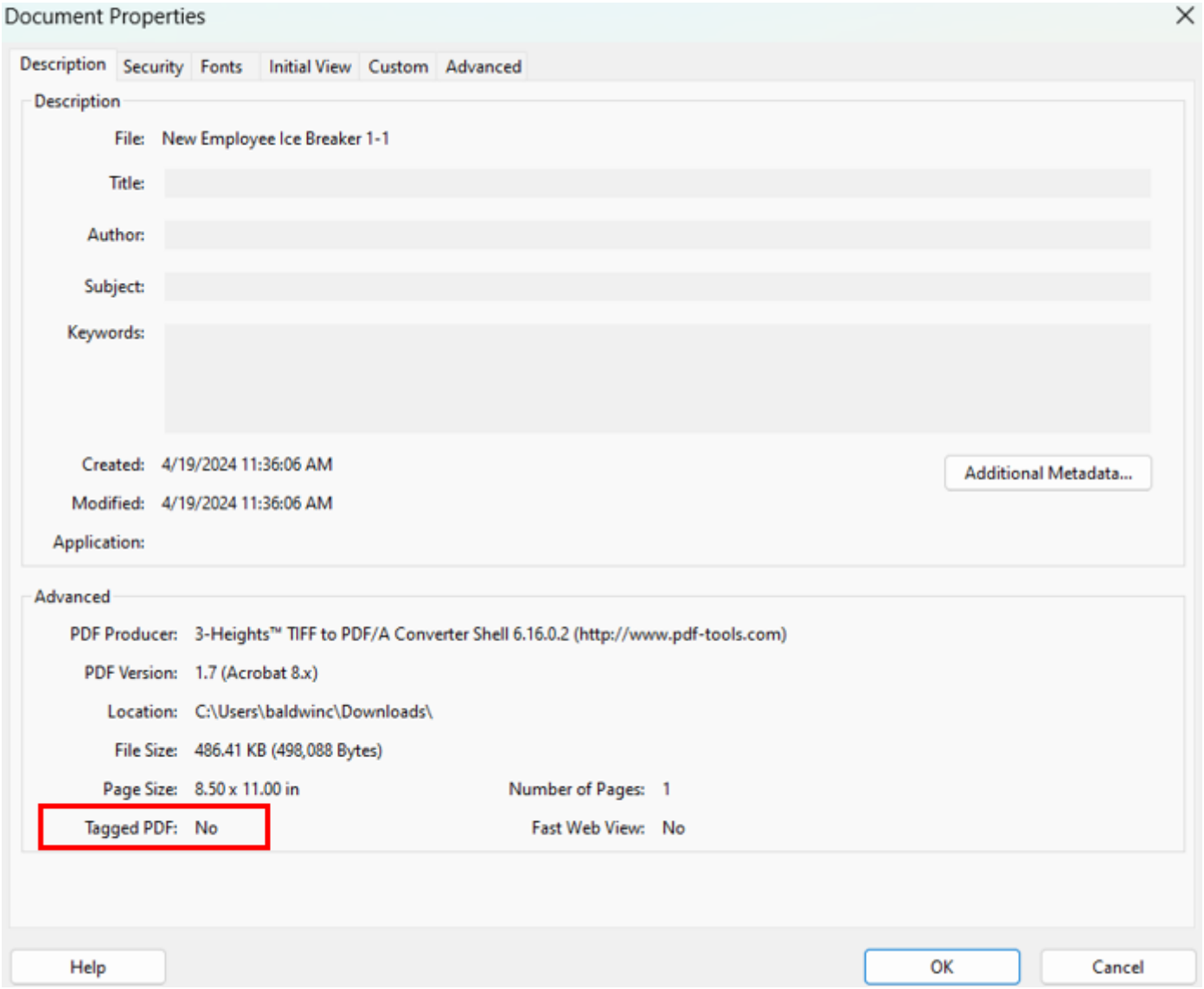
A tag allows assistive technology to identify the type of content contained in a PDF, such

as paragraphs, images, or tables. Programs such as Word and InDesign will tag most elements properly and in the appropriate reading order automatically upon saving.

In Adobe Acrobat, you can ensure your PDF has the proper tags by clicking **File** in the top left and **Properties** from the dropdown menu.



Under the **Description** tab, locate the **Tagged PDF:** option. An accessible document will read **Tagged PDF: Yes**. If you encounter the **Tagged PDF: No** option, or the **No Tags available** text when you open the Tag pane, then your document is not accessible.



If your PDF fails either of the two tests above, you will need to remediate it. If it passes both, then you may or may not have an accessible document, and more assessment is needed.

PDF accessibility trainings and resources

The Accessibility Checker in Acrobat Pro [6] is a good next step in assessing your document. However, it will only alert you to errors detectable by a computer, like missing alt-text, and is not able to accurately assess things like the accuracy or usability of the alt-text.

To determine if your PDF is fully accessible, you may need to consult with an expert or develop your own understanding of PDF accessibility by reviewing the tutorials below, or by taking the Creating Accessible PDFs [7] and Advanced Accessible PDFs [8] LinkedIn Learning courses. The courses are 4.5 and 2.5 hours in length respectively and are most informative for individuals who are frequently required to create accessible PDFs in their position.

- Creating Accessible Microsoft Word source files [7]
- Creating Accessible PowerPoint source files [9]
- Creating Accessible InDesign Files: CS5.5 [10], CS6 [11]
- Remediating PDFs in Acrobat Pro [12]

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