

Acrobat Pro 9 scan and OCR

Acrobat Pro 9 has a built-in tool for scanning and converting paper documents into PDF. The main advantage of scanning to PDF is that the digital copy looks very similar to the original paper version – unlike scanning and converting to Word, for example, where pages with lots of graphics usually look a mess.

Before you start, make sure your scanner is connected to the computer and that the scanner driver software is installed.

Open Acrobat Pro and click **File > Create PDF > From scanner** (Acrobat Pro 8) or **File > Create PDF > From scanner > Configure Presets** (Pro 9).

Click on Scanner options and set the page size (usually to **A4**).
Set the User Interface to

Making a **Searchable Image** creates a PDF that looks like the original page, and the recognised text is an invisible 'layer' over the page. Searchable Image (Exact) is similar and is 'recommended for cases requiring maximum fidelity to the original image' according to Adobe.

ClearScan is a new option in Acrobat Pro which puts a text layer on top of the page in a font chosen by the program to match the original. The text is usually clearer than a PDF made with Searchable image. The disadvantage is that the text font may look slightly different to the original paper copy.

We recommend using ClearScan because the text of the end result looks much cleaner, and because when you view the PDF in Adobe Reader you can change the page background and text colours using the Accessibility Preferences. If you scan and save a 'Searchable Image' you'll find the page background colour can't be changed in Reader.

Now place the first page of the prelim on the scanner and click **Scan**. The scanner will scan in the page and convert it to text. Repeat with the rest of the pages.

The quality of the end result depends very much on the quality of the original paper document – if it is a tenth generation dog-eared photocopy with faint text and marks all over it, you are unlikely to get very good results. But if it is a reasonably good clean sheet it should come out quite well.

If you get poor results try increasing the resolution or the scanner settings. Look in the Adobe Help files for hints and tips.

The big problem with Acrobat Pro 9's scanning is that...

... **you can't see or edit** the recognised text. This means you can't tell if it's not recognised accurately, and you also can't fix it, which can be a major disadvantage.

If you want to make sure your scanned copy is 100% accurate you are better with a specialist scanning and OCR program like FineReader Pro or OmniPage (both about £70). Both these programs generally do a better job than Acrobat, let you edit and correct any mistakes, and can save the scanned files as PDF and Word documents.

Your scanner may come with basic scanning and OCR software but we recommend getting FineReader or OmniPage if you're going to scan regularly.

You can buy them from software supplier such as www.dyslexic.com, www.pugh.co.uk or www.pcworld.co.uk.

You can also download a full functioning trial version of FineReader from <http://www.abbyy.com/>.

But good news! Acrobat Pro X lets you correct any errors!

The new Acrobat Pro X does let you see and correct mis-recognised words. It's fairly straightforward and easy to use although FineReader and Omnipage are probably still slightly quicker if you are scanning and correcting large files.