

# Creating and Optimizing PDF Documents

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## What is a PDF document?

“PDF” stands for “Portable Document Format.” It is created by the program Adobe Acrobat, or by the Acrobat “plug-in” (helper program) for Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, or Excel.

## What are the advantages of PDFs?

- Almost all computers can read and print PDFs.
- PDFs also ensure your document will be formatted perfectly, no matter what kind of printer a person uses.
- You can put clickable “bookmarks” in a PDF that lets people browse to subject headings within longer documents.

## How are PDFs used?

Our most common uses for PDFs are:

- posting articles (usually scanned from paper resources) for students to read online
- turning PowerPoint presentations into printable documents
- creating printable forms that will be distributed on the Web

## Why is it critical to optimize PDFs?

Optimizing PDFs – reducing the file size while keeping the print quality as good as possible – is important because large files take a long time to download. Many of our students – especially students who don’t live on-campus – only have access to slow dial-up modems. A 10Mb\* file can take up to **three hours** to download – and often students must download multiple files every week.

Optimizing PDFs also reduces the load on our web servers. By keeping file sizes down, we prevent server crashes and delay the need to purchase additional servers to keep up with traffic.

A good target size for PDFs is 35-50Kb per page – meaning a 10 page document would be under 500Kb or 0.5 Mb. It is unlikely that you can get an existing PDF down to this size without re-scanning it; however, you can reduce its file size significantly using the simple technique below.

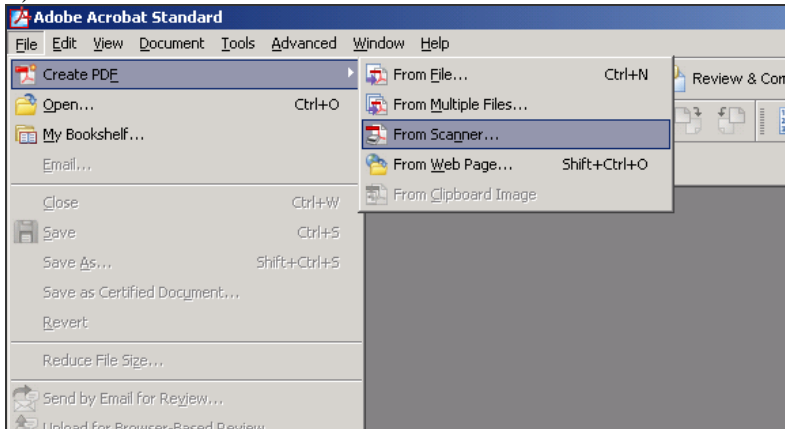
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\* Be sure to note if the size of your file is in megabytes (Mb) or kilobytes (Kb). 1Mb = 1000 Kb – so a 1.5Mb file is much larger than a 500Kb file.

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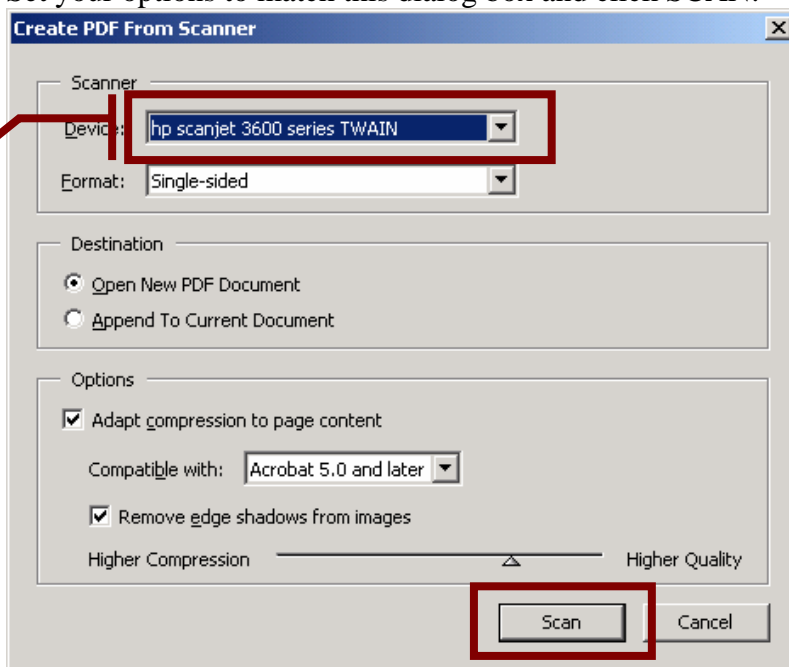
## Scanning files for optimized file size

- 1) Install Acrobat 6.0 on a computer connected to a scanner. It is worth the extra money to upgrade to version 6.0 for the ease of file optimization. (\$25 from MStores)
- 2) Open Acrobat.
- 3) Click File → Create PDF → From Scanner.



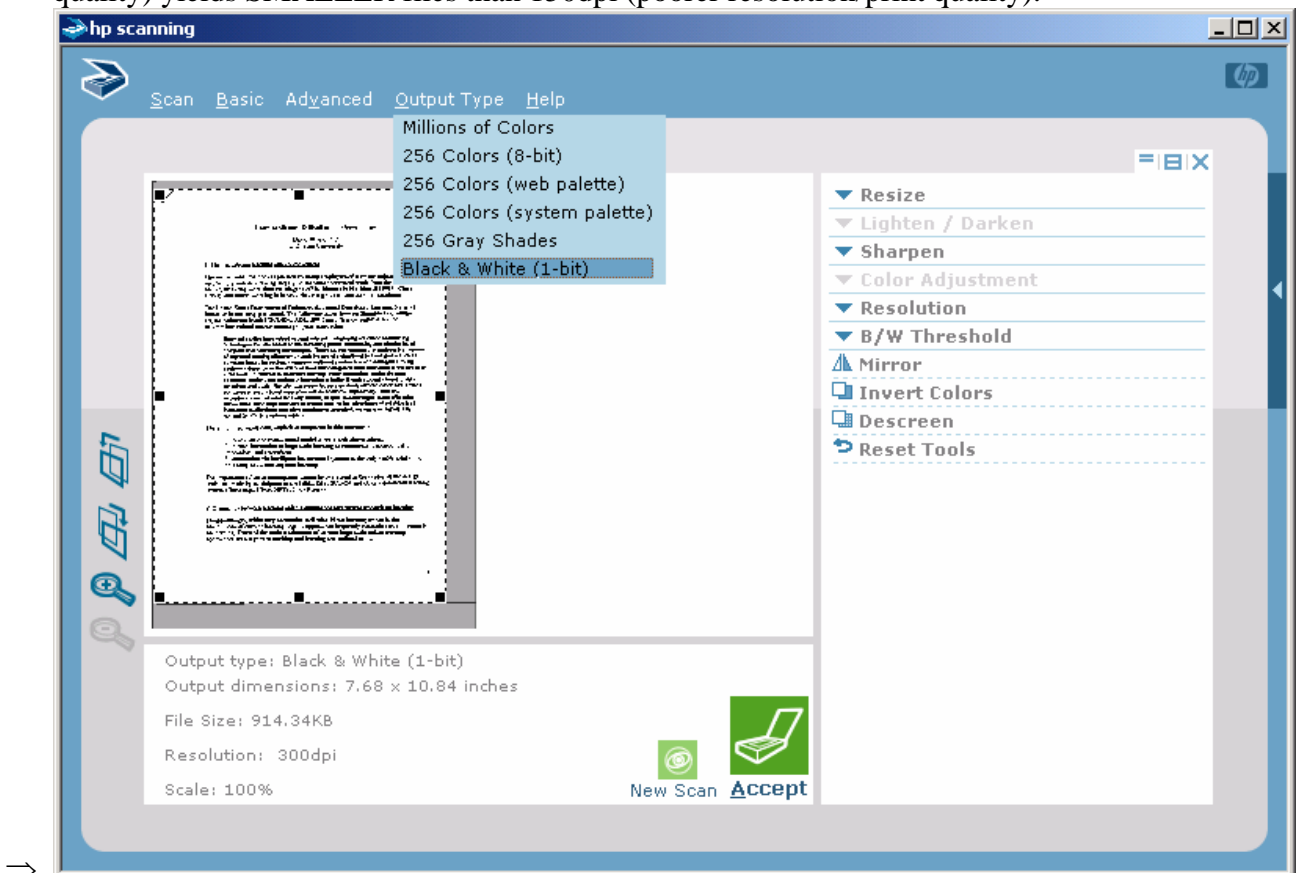
⇒ Set your options to match this dialog box and click SCAN:

This will list your scanner – may be different from the one listed here.



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- 4) Every scanner seems to use different scanning software! Your scanner may not have the exact features shown below, but it should have something similar.
- 5) When the dialog for your scanner comes up, use the following settings as a starting point.
  - a) Resolution: 300dpi
  - b) Color settings: Black and White. You can also try “Shades of Gray” or “Grayscale” – sometimes this gives a smaller file size.
  - c) Lighten the document so you can’t see any “bleed through” text and so the page background is white, not gray.
    - ⇒ NOTE: Scanners differ greatly. Using these settings on your scanner may not give the best (smallest) results.
    - ⇒ TRY NUMEROUS OPTIONS – scanners are temperamental and “logical” settings may not yield the best results. For example, on some scanners, 300dpi (a higher resolution/print quality) yields SMALLER files than 150dpi (poorer resolution/print quality).



⇒ On some scanners, re-selecting the resolution will improve the results. That is, if your dialog box automatically says “Resolution: 300dpi” and you open the drop-down menu and re-select “Resolution: 300dpi”, you will get a smaller final file than if you accept the default setting.

⇒ Make note of the settings that work best on your scanner and use them in the future.

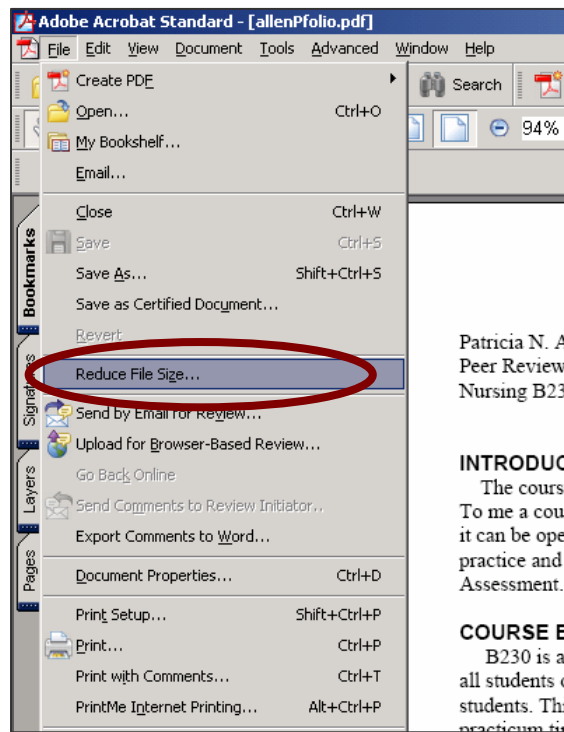
- 6) After previewing the document, “Accept” the document or “Send to Acrobat.”
- 7) You’ll be given the choice to scan more pages or to be done scanning.
- 8) In Acrobat, choose File Menu → Save.
  - a) Save it with a logical name, e.g., author and abbreviated title.
  - b) Try to keep it under 20 characters.
  - c) DO NOT put any spaces in the file name. This can cause downloading problems.

# Creating and Optimizing PDF Documents

## Quick-and-dirty file optimization – for existing files

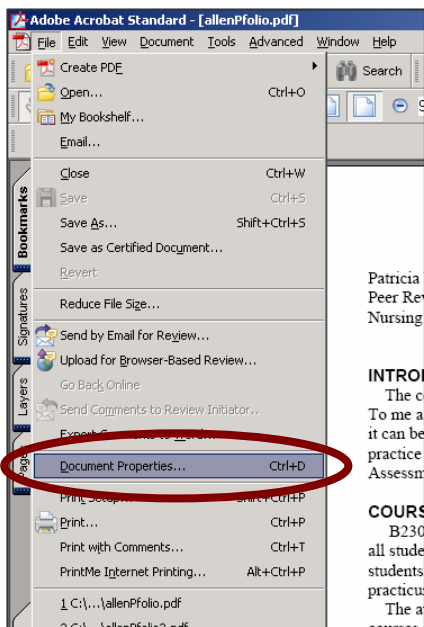
This technique will reduce the size of existing PDF files. It yields dramatic results – often cutting large file sized by 1/2 to 2/3 – but scanning images properly in the first place yields even better results. I only recommend using this technique for things you’ve already scanned – for new documents, follow the instructions on pages 2-3.

- 1) Install Acrobat 6.0 if you are not using it already. It is worth the extra money (about \$25) to upgrade to 6.0 for the ease of file optimization.
- 2) Open an existing PDF file.
- 3) Choose “Reduce File Size” from the File menu.
- 4) This will automatically reduce your file size. Often it can shrink files by 80% with one click.



## Determining the size of a document

From within Acrobat, you can check the size of a file by choosing “Document Properties” from the File Menu.



From there, click the “Description” button on the left – and the file size will be listed toward the bottom.

Remember: 1Mb = 1000Kb, so 500KB is half the size of 1Mb

