Annotating PDF Documents with Adobe Acrobat Reader

These directions will provide an overview of the text and annotation tools available in the free (Reader) version of Adobe Acrobat DC.

Working with PDF Documents

Adobe portable document format (PDF) has been a common file type for sharing files electronically. PDF files are basically image/graphic files that often look identical to paper versions of the document. They are convenient because they can be readily opened on a variety of computers, tablets, and smart phones. PDF files can be generated electronically from other applications (e.g., Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat Pro), smartphone and tablet cameras, and copier machines or scanners. Depending on how the PDF file is created, the user of the document may find limitations on what can be done with the PDF.

Image-only PDFs

Image-only PDFs are commonly created by smartphone and tablet cameras or the use of copy machines. These generate a black-and-white or color copy of the document which is essentially just a picture of the page(s). If text appears in the PDF document, but a user is unable to select (highlight) the text with a mouse, it is likely an image PDF. An image PDF can be viewed by a user, but does not allow for text to be copied/pasted or read aloud by text-to-speech software.

PDFs with Selectable Text or Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

As opposed to Image-only PDF files, PDFs generated by word processors generally retain the ability to select text that was included in the original application. This would allow a user to search for a word or phrase using the Find feature, highlight text in the PDF document, copy it, paste it, or use it with text-to-speech software to hear the text read aloud. Some copy machines and scanners have an option to perform optical character recognition (OCR) when a PDF is created. Once the machine takes a picture of the page, it can analyze the image and recognize typeset print in the selected language. The resulting PDF would then include text that is selectable and usable in the manner described above. OCR often results in some errors in recognition, so special steps may need to be taken to correct errors that occur.

Accessible PDFs

Well-developed PDF documents address universal accessibility concerns to make the file usable to a much wider range of users and technology. Accessible PDFs will include information about graphics, layout, headings, and other features that can be accessed by screen reading programs and devices, text-to-speech software, and electronic readers. Accessible PDFs, for example, would allow a user who is blind to jump around a document using headings or read and listen to the PDF using a braille or speech device.

Secure PDFs

Some PDF documents contain security features which prevent users from printing them, sharing them, copying/pasting content within the document, or using the PDF with accessibility software. This is common for commercially published material provided by publishers. Teachers who need to provide students with accessible educational materials (AEM) should contact the publisher directly to request an accessible version of the material or utilize repositories such as Bookshare (http://www.bookshare.org), the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC, http://www.nimac.us/), or Learning Ally (http://www.learningally.org/) which provide access to accessible materials for individuals with qualifying print disabilities.

Adding Text to a PDF Document

Text annotations allow users to type directly on a PDF of

1. Open a PDF file in Adobe Acrobat Reader by selecting **File | Open** (or **CTRL+O** in Windows; **⌘+O** on Macintosh) or double-clicking the file's icon. *If Adobe Acrobat Reader is not configured as the default handler for PDF files, a box may appear asking whether Adobe Acrobat Reader should be used as the default reader of PDF documents. Check the box "*Do not show this message again*" and click* **No** *or* **Yes**.

2. Click the yellow **Comment** icon in the panel along the right-edge of the Adobe Acrobat window. If the panel is not present, navigate through the text menu at the top of the screen by clicking **View** | **Tools** | **Comment** | **Open**. The Comment toolbar will appear across the top of the document window.

3. Several text icons are presented across the Comment toolbar. Select the **Add Text Box icon**, which is the letter T surrounded by a square.
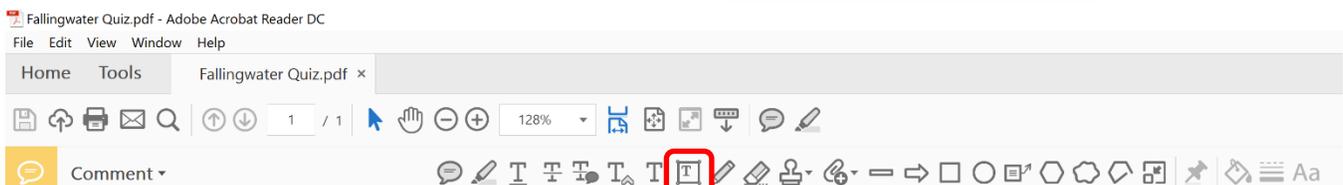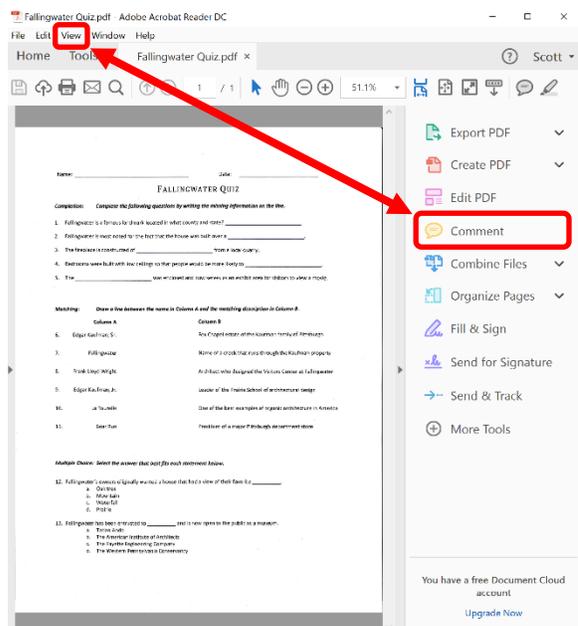

4. Click on any area of the page to begin typing. The panel on the right-side of the document window will add this as a Text comment to the list of changes made to the document—a handy, alternative way to select items, particularly those that are very small or overlapping with other comments.
   - Clicking directly on the text box or clicking on the Comment panel entry for it will select the item so that it can be moved, deleted, copied, etc.
   - Move an item with the mouse or use the keyboard arrows to nudge the selected item up, down, left, or right in smaller and slower increments.
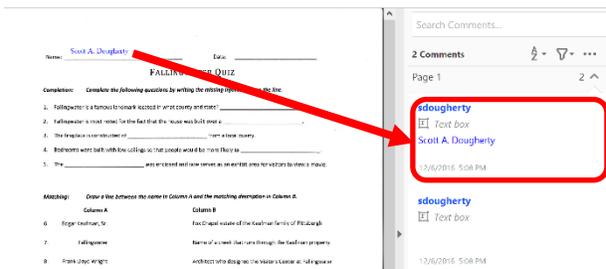
Changing the Properties of a Comment

1. To change the appearance of a comment, right-click on the text and choose **Properties…** to add or remove borders and backgrounds from the text box. Similar steps can be taken to change the properties of all of the other tools available in the Comment tool set.

2. Click **Fill Color** and then select **No Color** at the top of the palette to make the background transparent. This step is important to ensure that the text box does not obscure the contents of the page on which the text box has been drawn.

   ☐ *OPTIONAL:* Click on **Style** and select **No Border** to remove the framing line. If a frame is desired, the style selections will change the type of line that is displayed.

   ☐ *OPTIONAL:* Click **Border Color** to change the color of the line.

3. To save the settings for use with each new text box that is drawn, check the box to **Make Properties Default** and then click **OK**.
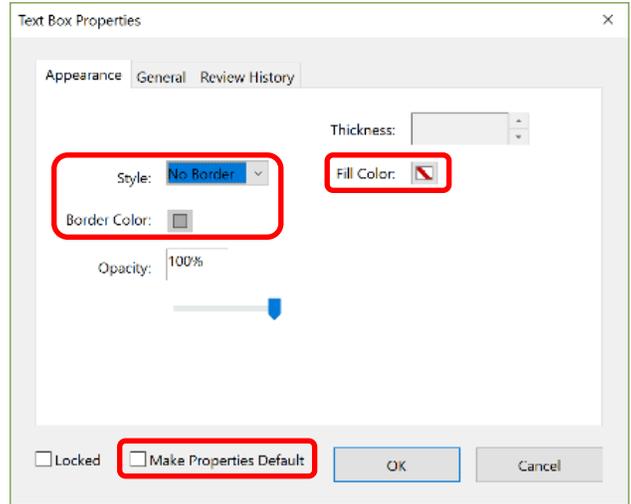
Adding Drawings to a PDF Document
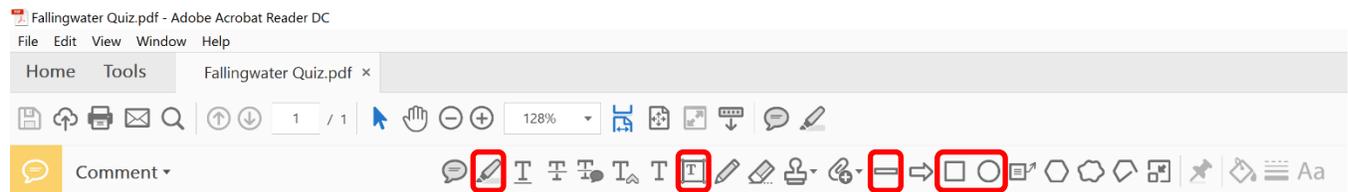
A variety of other drawing tools are useful for completing tasks that are typically performed when working with paper and pencil. Experiment with the **Shift** key when drawing. Hold the **Shift** key down while using some of these drawing tools will force the computer to draw 45° lines, 90° lines, 180° lines, squares, or circles.

☐ **Highlight Text** works with PDF files that contain selectable text, but not with image-only PDF files.
   • Click-drag the text to highlight it to indicate answer choices or mark important content.
   • Right-click the highlight to change its properties (e.g., choose a different color).

☐ **Draw Line** can be used to connect matching items, underline, and cross out text that appears on the page.
   • Click-drag to draw a line.
   • Hold the **Shift** key down to force the computer to draw 45° lines, 90° lines, 180° lines.

☐ **Draw Rectangle** and **Draw Oval** can be useful for marking answers in a multiple choice list, distinguishing different pieces of text (e.g., circle facts supporting one side of an argument while boxing those that support the alternate view).
   • Click-drag to draw a line.
   • Hold the **Shift** key down to force the computer to draw a perfect square or circle.
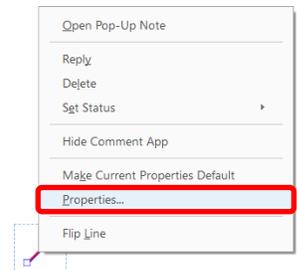
Customizing the Comment Toolbar

1. Right-click on an area in the Comment toolbar and select **Customize Comment Tools**.
   - *OPTIONAL:* Click **Show All Labels** to add a text description next to each tool icon.
2. Click on the tool icon that should be added to the customized Comment toolbar then click the **Add to Toolbar** icon. The tool will appear in the preview toolbar at the top of the window.
3. To change the order of the icons in the customized toolbar, click the item in the preview toolbar then click the **Move Left** or **Move Right** icon arrows to reposition the tool.
   - *OPTIONAL:* Click the **Add Divider to Toolbar** icon to insert a vertical line between Comment tool icons. This can be useful to

organize the tools for a user.
   - *OPTIONAL:* Click the **Remove from Toolbar** icon to delete an icon from the customized toolbar (do not fret – clicking the trash can does not permanently delete the tool from the application).
4. Click **Save** to retain the changes and return to the document.
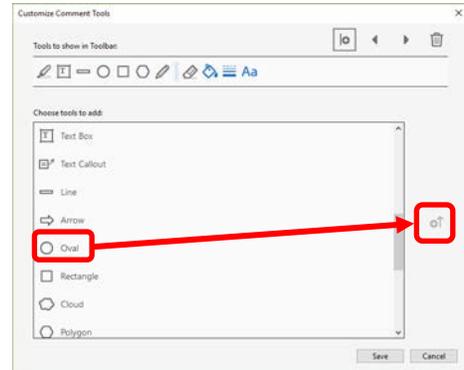
Saving, Printing and Emailing an Annotated Document

☐ Once text and drawings have been added to the document, click on **File | Save As…** to assign a new name and/or location to the file.

☐ To save a file with the current name, click on **File | Save**. Alternatively, click the **Save** icon on the Adobe Acrobat ribbon.

☐ Save files to an Adobe Document Cloud account by clicking on the **Adobe Document Cloud** icon.

☐ Print the file by selecting **File | Print…** and selecting the available printer.

☐ Send the file to someone via email by clicking **File | Send File | Attach to Email…** and selecting one of the options presented – *Default email application* or *Use Webmail*. Press **Continue** and follow the prompts presented onscreen.