

Digital exam papers for people with print disabilities

Guidance for learners, parents and carers

Learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries who have difficulties with standard examination arrangements can use 'Access Arrangements' to access examinations. Access Arrangements should not change the demands of the assessment, should be based on evidence of need, and should be consistent with the learner's normal way of working.

Learners with print impairments who have difficulty reading or accessing the standard exam paper can apply to awarding bodies for a digital version of their examination paper if their normal way of working uses resources in digital format. Not all awarding bodies offer all exams and assessments in digital formats. Each awarding body will need to be contacted individually to plan how to access each examination or assessment.

UKAAF (UK Association for alternative format) has published minimum standards and guidance to help awarding bodies make sure these digital examinations are as accessible as possible to the needs of print disabled learners.

The standard digital examination paper uses Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF). These can be viewed using a range of tools on Windows, Macs or tablet devices. If constructed properly they can have a high degree of accessibility, allowing a wide range of learners with different disabilities to independently access the exam onscreen using either the built-in features of PDFs or their own assistive technologies. If you are a screen

reader user or have complex communication needs you may still need to apply for a separately modified paper but for the vast majority of print disabled learners the guidance below should be helpful.

This guidance is based on using an up to date version of Adobe Reader. If you use a different tool, the features (and how you access them) may vary.

Click the links below to skip forward to any section

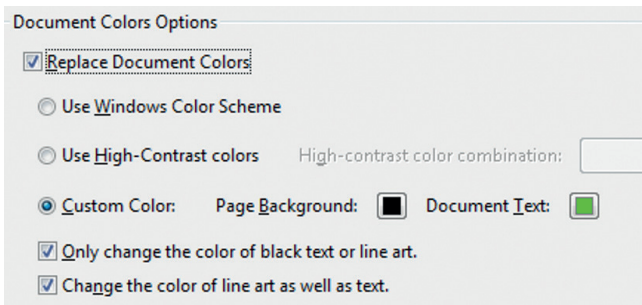
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I need to change colours

Many PDF applications will allow you to replace the colours within it. Within Adobe Reader this can be accessed through **Edit > Preferences > Accessibility** (Please note – if you go Edit - Accessibility you get a different option entirely).

In the Accessibility panel select **Replace Document Colors** then click on **Custom Color** and select the Page Background and Document Text colours from the coloured panels. Click **OK** when done.

Figure 1 - how to change document colours



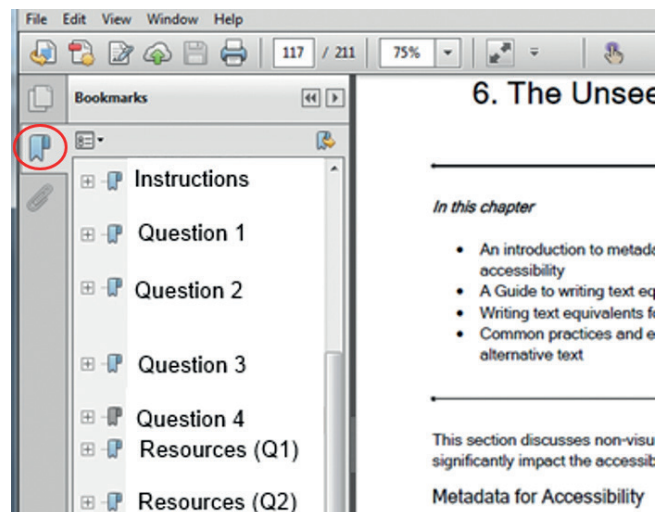
Alternatively, if the program you use for opening PDFs does not allow colour changes, there are a range of free and paid for colour changing programs that will replicate a colour overlay on the screen.

I need to find my way through the document efficiently

If you struggle to read quickly or have difficulty finding your way around information you can easily move through a long document using **Bookmarks**. This will enable you to jump between different locations in the file.

In Adobe Reader there will be a bookmark icon on the left hand side of the main reading pane if the file contains bookmarks. **Figure 2** shows the bookmark icon (**red highlight**). Click on this to open up the Bookmark Panel which – depending on the extent of navigation included by your awarding body – allows you to navigate to other questions or reach supplementary resources. Some bookmarks have a small Plus Sign next to them. Click on this to open up lower heading levels.

Figure 2 - using the Bookmarks panel it is easy to navigate quickly through the document



I need to magnify the font without having to scroll left and right

It is easy to increase the magnification in a PDF through zooming. In Adobe Reader this is accessed through the drop down box on the main menu bar (figure 3) but other applications may use a magnifying glass symbol like this...

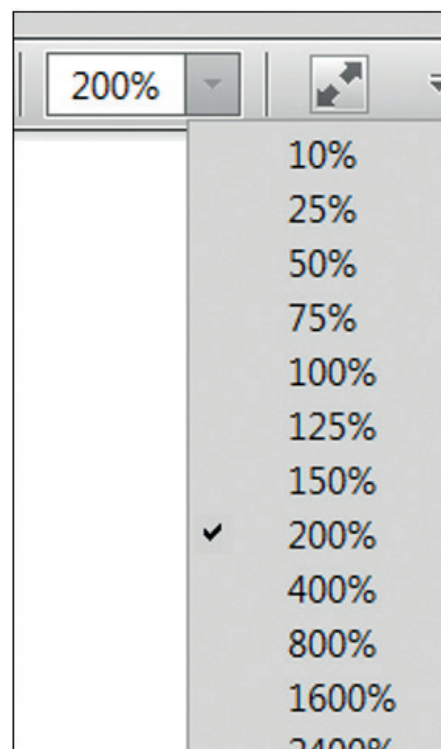


However, on its own, zooming may result in lines of text being too long to fit the page. This makes reading inefficient and disadvantages you in a timed exam. If available, **text reflow** can help resize the page when you magnify it.

In Adobe Reader this is accessed through **Click View > Zoom > Reflow** before you increase the magnification. Once the text has reflowed you can increase magnification as you require.

Please note that using this technique will change the layout of the page so images and tables may move from their original position near text they relate to. Also, if your exam paper has answer boxes for typing answers, it will not re-flow.

Figure 3 - The drop-down Zoom feature on the main menu bar of Acrobat Reader



I need to read magnified text without lots of mouse clicks

Whenever you magnify text you also magnify the number of screens of information you need to scroll through. If the text is 600% bigger than normal the document will be 6 times longer than normal. This results in lots of extra scrolling, interrupting the flow of the reading.

In Adobe Reader you can however make the text **autoscroll** so you can concentrate on reading instead of clicking. **Autoscroll** is only valuable if you have magnified and reflowed the text (see section above). To switch on autoscroll click on the **View menu > Page Display > Automatically Scroll**. Once autoscroll begins, change the speed and direction (up or down) using the up and down arrow key on the keyboard.

I need to listen to the text

Adobe Reader has a built-in text-to-speech tool for listening to the text and questions. However, it is quite basic and there are many other text-to-speech programs, including free tools; see Further Links opposite.

To read a paragraph, just click on it. To read the whole page, click **View > Read Out Loud** again and select **Read This Page Only**.

To deactivate read out loud click **View > Read Out Loud > Deactivate Read Out Loud**. Keyboard shortcuts can also be used to control the Read Out Loud.

The quality of the speech will depend on the voices installed on your system. In Read Out Loud Options, deselect **Use default voice** and choose a voice from the menu. Deselect **Use default speech attributes** and choose the pitch and speed you prefer for the voice.



Further links

Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments 2014-15, Joint Council for Qualifications

jcq.org.uk/exams-office/access-arrangements-and-special-consideration

Past / specimen papers are available from awarding body websites. However, the publically available past papers may have limited accessibility functionality and you may need to contact your awarding body directly to request past versions of non-interactive digital papers.

SQA

sqa.org.uk/sqa/30030.html

Using Digital Exams

adapteddigitalexams.org.uk/Using-Digital-Papers/

Text to Speech Tools for Exams

bdatech.org/what-technology/text-to-speech/exams/computer-readers/