

PDF Program: Free, Low Cost, and Robust

I am looking for a PDF program for my laptop. I have Nitro PDF in the office, but looking for something that I may be able to edit, and manipulate PDF programs from my laptop when I am trying to catch up out of the office. I do not expect to use the program often, so not looking to really "invest" in something.

Being able to comment/annotate and OCR will be the extent of what I would need. Anyone have suggestions?

If you want robust, you can't beat the real thing. I use Adobe Acrobat DC.

Probably costs about 180ish a year (paid annually, not monthly) but it allows you to use it on 2 computers - office and home.

The MA Probate Court forms do not play nice with the PDF imitators.

Peter T. Clark, Massachusetts

I use Foxit PhantomPDF for Business. I ditched Acrobat when they went to a subscription model, and I haven't regretted it for a second.

PhantomPDF does everything Adobe does (at least for my needs), and the one-time acquisition cost was not outrageous (less than a year of Acrobat, IIRC). They have North America-based tech support, too, in the event there are any problems or issues. I think I've had to call once or twice, and both times the problem was quickly resolved.

YMMV.

HTH.

Scott I. Barer, California

Adobe has a perpetual license option, as well as the subscription model. I bought Acrobat Pro 2017 (which was the perpetual version, then...I think there is a perpetual license for Pro 2020, now). 2017 is still being updated, as of last week.

Mark E. Peneguy, Louisiana

I have had good luck with Kofax Power PDF Pro. <https://www.kofax.com/products/power-pdf> I need the version with redaction and haven't had any problems in any of our courts, state and federal.

I have also been impressed with PDF-Xchange Editor. <https://www.tracker-software.com/>

Michael J. Polk, South Carolina

It is a failing of courts most everywhere that they fail utterly to favor open solutions to commercial, proprietary solutions.

And why do I want to replace "to" with "over" before "commercial"?

robert thomas hayes link, California

+1 for Power PDF Pro.

It isn't free, but it's far less expensive than Acrobat and does everything I need it to, including editing and redaction.

Andrew C. McDannold, Florida

I do not think the forms play well with Acrobat either. They have to have instructions for when there is a problem and MANY people do not understand the directions. There is no reason that they cannot get it to work easily.

Also, I do not understand why they do not make ALL of the forms allow data to be saved. You need to find the alternative form and use that one if you want to save it. I do not think they tell you where the main link is that there is a savable version and why name the saveable version as "alternative" and not label it as "Savable."

I wonder if they ever test the website and forms with real life users. Not everyone is "tech savvy."

Phil A. Taylor, Massachusetts

I am familiar with and would recommend the same programs, Power PDF Pro and PDF Exchange Editor. I use the first option and play around with the second one.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

6 months ago I would have recommended Foxit's PhantomPDF, as it is the solution Microsoft uses in-house and is therefore most likely, after Adobe's offering, to produce a PDF file that is compatible with most systems and programs. However, a few months ago Foxit began pushing hard to get everyone using their new subscription version--to the point that pretty much every time I open a PDF in the Foxit PhantomPDF program it reminds me that a "major upgrade" is available.

Since the whole reason I switched to the Foxit solution was to avoid a subscription, this is extremely annoying. If I wanted to pay \$12 a month for a PDF program I would have subscribed to Adobe.

Kevin Grierson, Virginia

God Bless a clear review!!! Thank you, Andrew!!!

robert thomas hayes link

Honestly, just pay the \$180/year for Acrobat pro DC.

- 1) Works with everything
- 2) Includes e-signing--maybe not quite as good as DocuSign, but if you don't use it much it
- 3) includes some document sharing as well, if you want to use it
- 4) Good OCR, and reasonably good Word conversion, so you can scan; make a PDF, use OCR to "read" the PDF, convert to Word, and end up with a lot of time saved.
- 5) Lots of forums, support, advice, etc. out there.

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

Totally agree. I was initially resistant to the subscription model, but the services that I receive and capabilities of the software (which are constantly improved) make it a no-brainer for me at about \$15.00 per month. My practice is very document intensive and I use it every day. I don't have to spend time figuring out workarounds. I can easily redact, Bates number, add Exhibit stamps, and as Eric said, e-signing works well. I also like the add-in with Outlook that automatically creates a download link if a document is too large to send via email.

Caroline Achey Edwards, Pennsylvania

Agreed. I was resistant to the subscription model too, but at \$15/month, the amount of time saved re: work-arounds alone is worth it.

Amy L. Breyer, California

And I'm still happy with Acrobat Pro XI, which I got a few years ago, do not have to pay subscription fees for, and which does not seem to be in any way lacking as compared with the latest versions. And I'm still using older versions of Timeslips and Peachtree (now Sage) Accounting which are non-subscription.

Sure, there are newer versions of all of these things, but why should I "upgrade" if the new features do nothing to make my work simpler or easier? (Frankly, I wish I could go back to an even earlier version of Timeslips, which was much easier to work with for a solo.)

The software industry has become an ongoing gift, because, essentially, these programs reached maturity in terms of features some 20 years ago, and there's simply no particular benefit to "upgrading" to a new version any more for office software, accounting, billing, presentations, graphics, and other functions. Except that you generally need to buy new versions which have the graphic elements fiddled with somewhat to work with newer operating systems, which themselves have had their graphics fiddled with but do not work any better than older ones.

And I'm one of those folks that loves the efficiencies of scanning, email, and the Internet in general. I love organizing stuff and figuring out how to do things more efficiently.

Michael A. Koenecke, Texas