

Searching Adobe PDF Documents

Finding words in a document





You can search for specific words in the text of an open Adobe PDF document, from within Adobe Reader or your Web browser. In general, you can search for words in the text, Comments, Bookmarks, document information, form fields, tags, digital signatures, XIF, XMP, and custom fields.

You can also conduct a single search across multiple Adobe PDF files, often without even opening the files. (See [“Searching across multiple Adobe PDF documents” on page 34.](#))

Doing a simple search of a document

You use the Search PDF pane to find a word, series of words, or part of a word in the active Adobe PDF document.

To search for words in a document:

- 1 Select or open the document you want to search.
- 2 On the toolbar, click the Search tool , or choose Edit > Search.
- 3 Type the word, words, or part of a word that you want to search for.
- 4 Select any of the following to apply to your search:
 - Whole Words Only finds only occurrences of the complete word you enter in the text box. For example, if you search for the word *stick*, the words *tick* and *sticky* will not be highlighted.
 - Case-Sensitive finds only occurrences of the words that are in the case that you typed.
 - Search in Bookmarks searches the text in the Bookmarks pane as well as the text in the document. Occurrences in the Bookmarks pane appear at the top of the list and are identified with a different symbol  than occurrences in the document .
 - Search in Comments searches the text in the Comments and in the document text. Instances in the Comments text are listed in the search results with a comment icon , the search word, and either a word or two of context, and so on. The order in which the occurrences appear is related to their location on the document pages.

Note: The above options are also available in the advanced Search PDF pane.

- 5 Click Search. The results appear in page order showing a few words of the context in which the search appears.



6 Click an item from the list.

Note: Adobe PDFs can have multiple layers. The Search feature automatically searches all layers. If the results include an occurrence on a layer that is hidden, when you select that instance an alert message asks if you want to make that layer visible.



During the search, you can click a result to go to that instance or you can use the Search keyboard shortcuts to navigate the results without interrupting the search. (See [“Keys for general navigating” on page 97.](#))

7 Continue clicking items in the results list, or choose Edit > Search Results > Next Result to see the next occurrence in the document. You can also use the Back ◀ and Next ▶ buttons to move forward and backward through search panes.

Interrupting searches

You can halt the progress of a search. This cancels any further searching and limits the results to the instances already found. It does not close the Search PDF pane or delete the results list. After you stop a search in progress, you cannot resume it. If you want to see more results, you must run a new search.

To interrupt a search:

Click the Stop button under the search progress bar.

Note: Do not try to use the Done button to clear the current search results. Done has a different function. (See [“Closing the Search PDF pane” on page 31.](#))


Closing the Search PDF pane

There are several methods of closing the Search PDF pane, each of which has a slightly different result.

To close the Search PDF pane, do one of the following:

- (Windows Only) Click the Hide button at the top of the Search PDF pane. This restores the document display area to its larger size. If you accidentally close the Search PDF pane, simply reopen the Search PDF pane to view your most recent search results.
- If a How To page was open before you started searching, click the Back ◀ button until that page reappears.
- Click Done at the bottom of the Search PDF pane. This returns the How To window to the state it was in before you clicked Search. If a How To topic was open, that page is reopened. This is usually more efficient than clicking the Back button until you reach that topic.



If you accidentally close the Search PDF pane while reviewing the results of a search, you can click the Search button  to display the results. You can also choose Edit > Search Results > Next Result or Edit > Search Results > Previous Result. The most recent search query remain displayed until you do another search or close Adobe Reader.


Using advanced search options

The advanced Search PDF pane offers more options for targeting the exact appearances of the words that you want to find. These options can either broaden or restrict your search results.

To search with the advanced Search PDF pane:

- 1 At the bottom of the Search PDF pane, click Use Advanced Search Options.
- 2 Type the word or words that you want to find.
- 3 For Return Results Containing, choose one of the search options.
- 4 For Look In select The Current PDF Document.
- 5 For Use These Additional Criteria, select the options that you want to apply to your search. For details, see [“Understanding advanced search options” on page 32](#).
- 6 Click Search. To review the results list, use the techniques described in [“Doing a simple search of a document” on page 30](#).

Note: If the results of a search are too numerous or too few to be helpful, you can run your search again using different criteria.

 You can set a preference to have advanced search options open instead of the basic search options open when you click Search. (See [“Setting Search Preferences” on page 37](#).)

Understanding advanced search options

Use the advanced search options to define specific search criteria.

For Return Results Containing, you can choose one of the following options:

Match All of the Words Searches for instances that contain all your search words, but not necessarily in the same order as you typed them. For example, if you typed **of each**, the results would include instances of *of each* and *each of*. This option is available only for multiple document searches or index definition files.

Match Exact Word or Phrase Searches for the entire string of characters, including spaces, in the order in which they appear in the text box. For example, if you typed **Adobe Acrobat** as the words you want to find, the results would list only instances of *Adobe Acrobat* (both words, next to each other, and in that order).

Match Any of the Words Searches for any instances of at least one of the words typed. For example, if you typed **each of**, the results would include any instances in which either one or both of the two words appeared: *each*, *of*, *each of*, or *of each*.

Boolean Query Searches for terms or phrases you indicate using Boolean operators. This option is available only for searching in a designated location, not for single-document searches. (See [“Using boolean queries in multiple-document searches” on page 36](#).) (This option is not available in the minimal version of Adobe Reader 6.0.)

Under Use These Additional Criteria, you can choose as many of the options as you want. If you select more than one option, the results list includes instances that match all of the selected criteria only. For example, if you select Whole Words Only and Case Sensitive for a search of the word *Color*, the results will not include instances of *color* or *Colors*.

For Use These Additional Criteria options, choose from the following:

Proximity Returns only documents that contain multiple words in which the words are close to each other. For example, if you are searching for the words *Adobe printer*, proximity will find all instances of the search that contain the words *Adobe* and *printer* but the maximum number of words between them is not more than 900 words. This option is only available for multiple document searches or index definition files, and if Match All of the Words is selected. (This option is not available in the minimal version of Adobe Reader 6.0.)





Stemming Finds words that contain part (the stem) of the specified search word. This option applies to single words, and phrases when conducting a search in the current PDF, Find in Folder, or Adobe Reader indexes. For example, in English, stemming will find instances of the search word that end in *ing*, *ed*, *x*, *ion*, and so on, but not *er*. This option is not available when conducting searches for phrases in indexes created with Acrobat 5.0 or earlier. (This option is not available in the minimal version of Adobe Reader 6.0.)

Note: You cannot use wildcard characters (*, ?) in stemming searches.

Searching single Adobe PDF files in a browser window

If you open an Adobe PDF file in your browser window, the available search options differ slightly than a search conducted within Adobe Reader application.

To do a simple search of an Adobe PDF file in a browser window:

- 1 Select or open the document you want to search.
- 2 On the toolbar, click the Search  tool.
- 3 Type the word, words, or part of a word that you want to search for.
- 4 Select any of the following to apply to your search:
 - Whole Words Only finds only occurrences of the complete word you enter in the text box. For example, if you search for the word *stick*, the words *tick* and *sticky* will not be highlighted.
 - Case-Sensitive finds only occurrences of the words that are in the case that you typed.
 - Search in Bookmarks searches the text in the Bookmarks pane as well as the text in the document. Occurrences in the Bookmarks pane appear at the top of the list and are identified with a different symbol  than occurrences in the document .
 - Search in Comments searches the text in the Comments and in the document text. Instances in the Comments text are listed in the search results with a comment icon , the search word, and either a word or two of context or a description of the type of icon, such as Highlight, Note, and so on. The order in which the occurrences appear is related to their location on the document pages.
- 5 Click Search.

To do an advanced search of an Adobe PDF file in a browser window:

- 1 At the bottom of the Search PDF pane, click Use Advanced Search Options.
- 2 Type the word or words that you want to find.
- 3 For Return Results Containing, choose one of the search options.
- 4 For Use These Additional Criteria, select the options that you want to apply to your search. For details, see [“Understanding advanced search options” on page 32](#).
- 5 Click Search.

Searching across multiple Adobe PDF documents

You can use the Search PDF pane to find words in Adobe PDF files stored in a specific location on your hard disk or network, in prepared Adobe PDF index files, and in Adobe PDF files on the Internet.


Note: To search for words in multiple Adobe PDF documents, Adobe PDF indexes, or Adobe PDF files on the Internet, open the Adobe Reader application from your desktop rather than within your Web browser window.

Searching all Adobe PDF files in a specific location

You can search multiple Adobe PDF files that are in a specific location, such as a folder on your hard disk or local network. You do not need to open the files before running your search.

Note: If documents are encrypted (have security applied to them), you cannot search them as part of a multiple-document file search. You must open those documents first and search them one at a time. However, documents encrypted as eBooks are an exception to this rule and can be searched as part of a multiple-document search.

To search Adobe PDF documents in a specific location:


- 1 Open Adobe Reader on your desktop (not in a Web browser window).
- 2 Click the Search tool  or choose Edit > Search, and type the word or phrase you would like to search for.
- 3 For the Look In option (Advanced Search) or Where Would You Like To Search option (Basic Search), select Browse For Location to find the location you want to search. Or, you can select All PDF Documents In (Basic Search), and then select a location from the pop-up menu.
- 4 Click Search.

The results appear nested under the document names and paths.

Note: If you want to halt a search, click the Stop button.

To review the results of a multiple-document search:


- 1 In the Search PDF pane, click the plus sign (+) (Windows) or flippy triangle ▶ (Mac OS) next to a document name to expand the list of results for that document.
- 2 Click one of the results. This opens the document, to the appropriate page and highlights the occurrence.

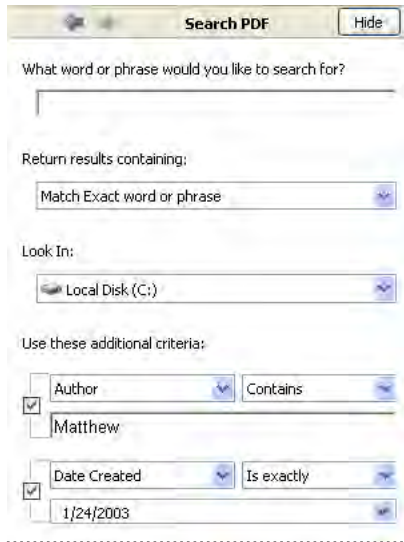
 You can sort the results of a multiple-document search in a number of ways. Select an option from the Sort By menu near the bottom of the Search PDF pane. The results are listed in the order in which you selected. Results can be sorted by Relevance Ranking, Date Modified, Filename or Location.

Using advanced search options for multiple-document searches

Many of the options on the Advanced Search PDF pane for searching multiple documents also appear on the Basic Search PDF pane for single documents. (See [“Using advanced search options” on page 31.](#))

When doing a multiple-document search, you can also use the options under Use These Additional Criteria to specify document characteristics as part of the search criteria.

 You can search just using document characteristics, without entering a search word. For example, you could search your local disk for all Adobe PDF documents that you created after a certain date.



The screenshot shows the 'Search PDF' dialog box with the following settings:

- Search text: (empty)
- Return results containing: Match Exact word or phrase
- Look In: Local Disk (C:)
- Use these additional criteria:
 - Author: Matthew
 - Date Created: 1/24/2003

Searching for document characteristics only

Refining results of multiple-document searches

After you search more than one document, you can use the Refine Results pane to reduce the number of search results by adding additional criteria. This can save time, because only the existing results are searched. For example, you can first search for all documents by a specific author, and then define a search query for that subset of documents. The result is a subset of documents by the specified author and that contain the search string.

To refine the results of a multiple-document search:

- 1 With the results of the first search still listed, click Refine Search Results at the bottom of the Search PDF pane.
- 2 Select the options you want, and click Refine Search Results.

You can continue to refine the new results by repeating this procedure.

Note: The Search In Bookmarks and Search In Comments options are not available on the refine results pane.

Searching Adobe PDF index files

Note: This feature is not available unless you have the full version of Adobe Reader.

An Adobe PDF index is a specially prepared file that spans multiple Adobe PDF files and is available through Search. If a full-text index is available for a set of Adobe PDF documents, you can search the index for a word rather than searching each individual document. A full-text index is an alphabetized list of all the words used in a document or, more typically, in a collection of documents.

Searching an index is much faster than searching all the text in the documents. An index search produces a results list with links to the occurrences of the indexed documents. It is highly recommended that you select the Match Whole Word Only option when searching indexes to significantly reduce the time taken to return results.

Note: To search an Adobe PDF index file, you must open Adobe Reader as a standalone application, not within your Web browser. On Mac OS, indexes created with some older versions of Acrobat are not compatible and cannot be searched in Adobe Reader 6.0 using the current Search feature until the indexes are updated.


To search an index:

- 1 At the bottom of the Search PDF pane, click Use Advanced Search Options.
- 2 Type the word you want to find.
- 3 For Look In, select Select Index.
- 4 In the Index Selection dialog box, do one of the following:
 - Select the index you want to use.
 - If the index you want to use is not listed, click Add, locate the index file (.pdx) you want, and then click Open.
 - To view information about an available index, highlight the index name, click Info, and then click OK. The information displayed includes the title, information provided by the builder of the index, location of the index, the build date, creation date, number of documents in the index, and the index status.
- 5 In the Index Selection dialog box, click OK, and then proceed with your search. (See [“Using advanced search options” on page 31.](#))

Using boolean queries in multiple-document searches

A Boolean search offers more options for searching for exact phrasing, alternate words, and excluded words.

To use a Boolean query with multiple-document searches:

- 1 Choose Edit > Search or click the Search  tool, and make sure that the advanced Search PDF pane is displayed.
- 2 For Look In, select the location you want to search.
- 3 For Return Results Containing, select Boolean Query.
- 4 For the search terms, type the query, using Boolean terms and syntax.
- 5 Select any additional criteria you want to use and then click Search.

In your query, you can use commonly used Boolean operators, including the following examples:

- Use the AND operator between two words to find documents that contain both terms. For example, type **paris AND france** to identify documents that contain both *paris* and *france*. For simple AND searches, the All Of The Words option produces the same results.
- Use the NOT operator before a search term to exclude any documents that contain that term. For example, type **NOT kentucky** to find all documents that do not contain the word *kentucky*. Or, type **paris NOT kentucky** to find all documents that contain the word *paris* and do not contain the word *kentucky*.

- Use the OR operator to search for all instances of either term. For example, type **email OR e-mail** to find all documents with occurrences of either spelling. For simple OR searches, the Any Of The Words option produces the same results.
- Use the ^ (Exclusive OR) to search for all instances that have either operator, but not both. For example, type **cat ^ dog** to find all documents with occurrences of *cat* or *dog* but not both *cat* and *dog*.
- Use Parenthesis to specify the order of evaluation of terms in a query. For example, type **white & (whale | ahab)**. The query processor will perform an OR query on *whale* and *ahab*, and then perform an AND query on the result with *white*.


To learn more about Boolean queries, syntax, and other Boolean operators that you can use in your searches, refer to any standard text, Web site, or other resource with complete Boolean information.

Note: You can not do wildcard searches using asterisks (*) or question marks (?) when searching Acrobat 6.0 indexes. For indexes created with previous versions of Acrobat, make sure that you select the Boolean Query option from the Return Results containing menu.

Searching Adobe PDF documents on the Internet

If you have an active Internet connection, you can use the Web for Adobe PDF files meeting your search criteria.

To search for Adobe PDF documents on the Internet:

- 1 Choose Edit > Search, or click the Search  tool.
- 2 At the bottom of the Search PDF pane, click Search PDFs On The Internet.
- 3 Type the word or phrase that you want to find.
- 4 To limit the search results, select one of the search criteria options.
- 5 Click Search The Internet. After a pause, your default Web browser opens to a page of results.
- 6 Click an item to examine that document.

Setting Search Preferences

You can set preferences for the Search feature. Those Preferences options apply to all subsequent searches you run.

To set search preferences:

- 1 Choose Edit > Preferences (Windows) or Adobe Reader > Preferences (Mac OS).
 - 2 Click Search.
 - 3 Select the options you want, and click OK.
- Ignore Asian Character Width finds both half-width and full-width instances of the Asian language characters in the search text.
 - Always Use Advanced Search Options makes the advanced search options the default display, and the basic search options display is not available when this option is selected.

- Maximum Number of Documents Returned in Results limits your search results to a specific number of documents. The default selection is 100, but you can enter any number from 1 to 1000.
- Enable Fast Find automatically generates a cache of information from any Adobe PDF file. The cache is then available the next time you need to search the same location. This cache speeds the search process, because it remembers the contents of the searched files. However, this option will not automatically generate background indexes for Adobe PDF files opened in Adobe Reader unless a search is initiated. Excessively large caches can slow overall performance. (This option is not available in the minimal version of Adobe Reader 6.0.)
- Maximum Cache Size limits the temporary cache of search information to the specified size in megabytes. The default value is 20, but you can enter any number between 5 and 10,000. When the cache size starts to exceed the size specified, the least-recently used cache information is deleted. (This option is not available in the minimal version of Adobe Reader 6.0.)
- Purge Cache Contents deletes the entire temporary cache of search information. (This option is not available in the minimal version of Adobe Reader 6.0.)