

Beginners' Guide to... PDF on the Mac

Adobe's Portable Document Format not only underpins the publishing industry, it's also a safe, secure medium for anyone who shares documents.

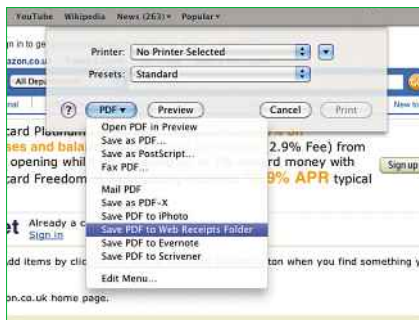
PDF is an open standard, but that wasn't always the case. Introduced by Adobe in 1993, it was designed as a cross-platform, application-agnostic means of defining the layout of a page, however many images, fonts or lines of text it contained.

It still performs that function today and forms the basis of almost all publishing operations. Its mass adoption by every part of the newspaper, magazine and book industries, from initial design right through to final print, gives publishers a feeling of smug confidence. They know that the pages they lay out will reach the newsstand or book shop looking exactly the same on paper as they did when laid out on screen.

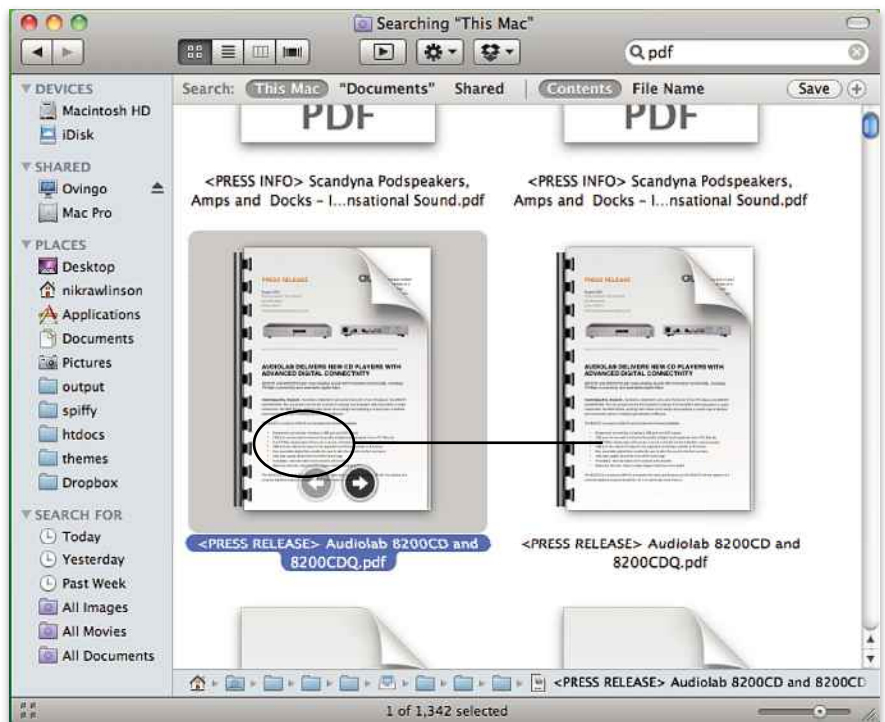
The Mac has long been the computer of choice for every kind of designer, so it's no surprise to find that Mac OS X's support for PDF is second to none. But why would you want to use it if your day-to-day Mac encounters have nothing to do with design?

PDF support is built in to the Mac's operating system at the most fundamental level, to the great benefit of well-written applications, which can use its hooks to 'print' virtual output to the format. This isn't only a page-saver, taking us one step closer to the fabled paperless office, but also an efficient means of helping you keep track of important documents without racking up a series of lever-arch files on your shelves.

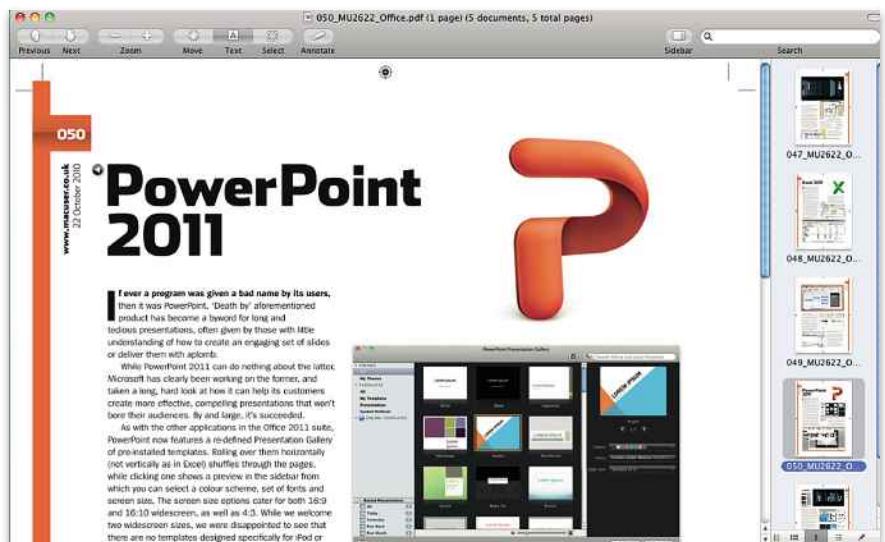
How can you achieve this? Well, next time you make an online purchase and want to keep a note of your confirmation number or an on-screen receipt, don't print it out and slip it into a folder. Instead, click the PDF button at the bottom of the Print dialog and choose Save PDF to Web Receipts Folder. The result is a perfectly formatted copy of the page saved at ~/Documents/Web Receipts. If that folder doesn't yet exist on



▲ Don't bother printing out online receipts: choose Save PDF to Web Receipts Folder in the Print dialog.



▲ PDF is so well integrated into OS X that you can preview multi-page documents in a Finder window. Clicking the left and right arrows leafs through the pages without opening the document in a dedicated app at all.



▲ OS X's Preview displays each page of a PDF in its sidebar, enabling you to scroll through them one by one.

your Mac, it will be created the first time you save a PDF in his way.

Adobe would probably rather we used its own PDF display tool, Acrobat Reader X, but OS X ships with a native alternative in the shape of Preview. You may well use this lightweight file opener for viewing images,

but it really comes into its own when you feed it a PDF file. Not only will it display each page of the document in a sidebar, allowing you to scroll through them individually or display them two at a time like an open book, but it will also let you open several PDFs at once in a single instance.

Beyond simply opening the files, Preview mimics many of the features found in the full-blown Acrobat. Chief among these is the ability to add notes to open documents, which can then be saved as part of the file and sent back to the originator for approval.

Preview's commenting tools are brought into focus by clicking the toolbar's Annotate button. They appear in the form of a narrow bar at the bottom of the screen, with notes appearing on the document pasteboard.

Working with Acrobat Pro

Preview may well be the best application for occasional PDF users to view and annotate documents, but power users, and anyone who uses the format in business, should upgrade to Adobe Acrobat Pro – particularly if document security is a concern.

Acrobat has been adopted by governments as an official archive format, with the US Government Printing Office using it to preserve government information with guaranteed authenticity.

Acrobat Pro, of which the current version is X (adobe.com/products/acrobatpro.html), can be used as a means of guaranteeing authenticity in your own documents. Its digital signature tools can use MobileMe, among others, as a certificate authority. Signed documents can be verified along the distribution chain to ensure they haven't been tampered with at any point. Further, basic rights management tools enable you to specify what can be done with your documents. Setting a simple password is enough to stop people printing or copying content without your permission.

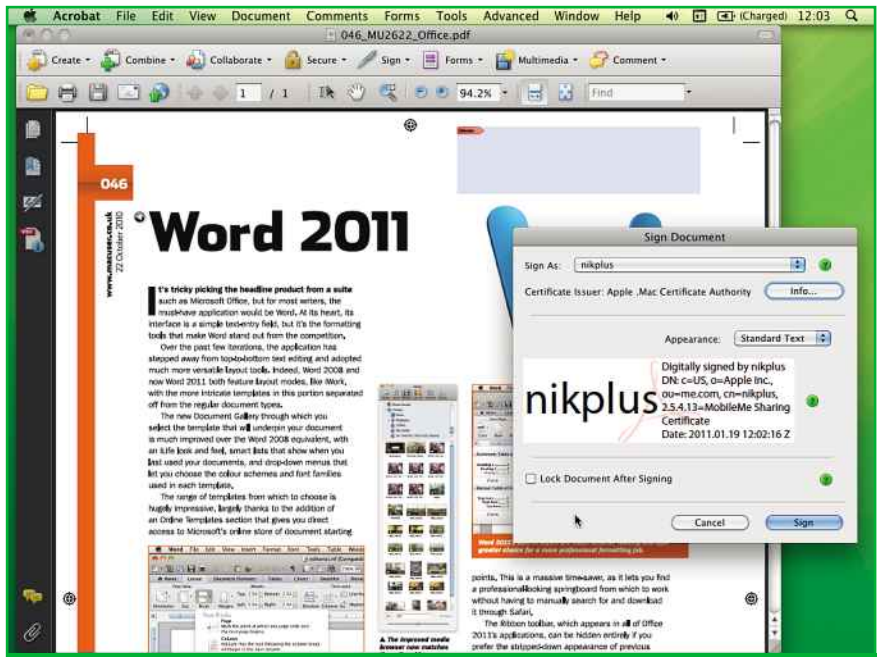
Acrobat X Pro is also a fully fledged PDF management tool which can be used to compile multi-page documents from separate files. Once combined, pages can be removed or re-ordered before saving.

Its most powerful feature, though, lies in document annotation and approval. As a format that creates direct digital copies of source documents, PDF is the ideal medium for cross-working, allowing all members of a team to see a file in the same stage of production and add their own comments.

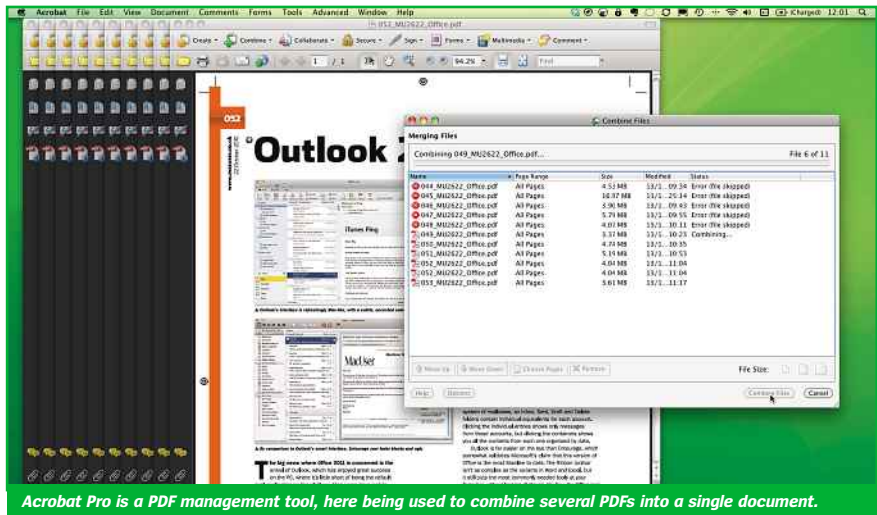
Acrobat Pro sports several mark-up tools, including arrows, strikethrough, highlighter markers and a cloud tool that draws a twisted outline around elements on the page and is highly effective at drawing attention to a point.

For more extensive annotations, the sticky note tool attaches speech bubbles to specified areas of a document, which, when clicked, bring up associated memos. These are organised in a dedicated pane that can be hidden from view when not in use. It even has text editing tools for striking out and replacing copy in a PDF-encoded document, so team members can make changes to a file without having access to the original material.

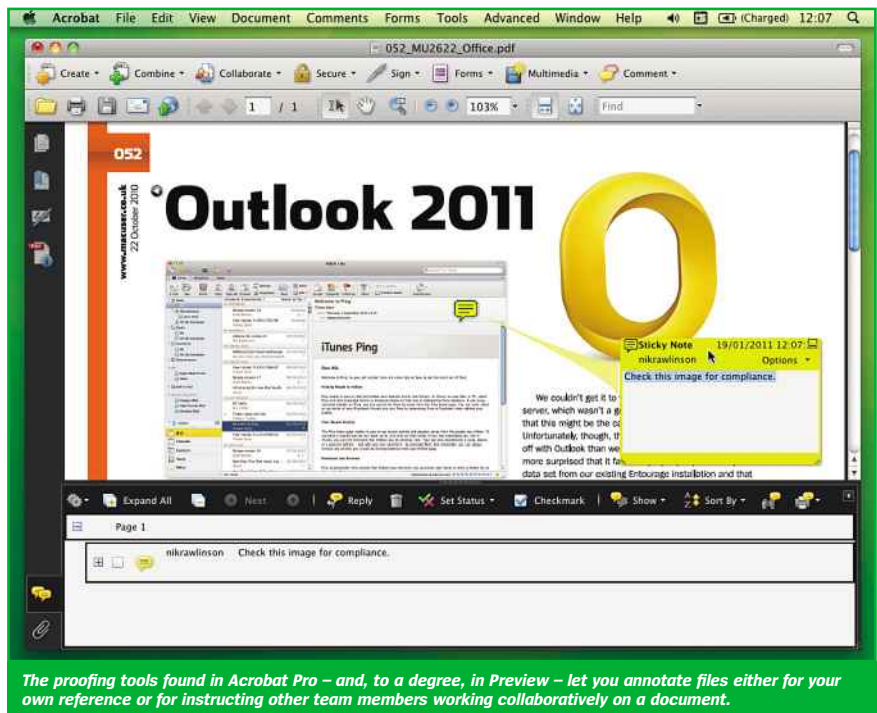
Adobe Reader X (adobe.com/products/reader.html) offers a subset of Acrobat X Pro's features, including commenting, but can't itself create PDF files from scratch.



Digital signatures can be generated from MobileMe and help with tamper detection on shared documents.



Acrobat Pro is a PDF management tool, here being used to combine several PDFs into a single document.



The proofing tools found in Acrobat Pro – and, to a degree, in Preview – let you annotate files either for your own reference or for instructing other team members working collaboratively on a document.