



Welcome to "ITS Technology Tips," where we bring you some useful information about the technology here at Loyola and effective ways to use the technology. Please drop us a line at infoservices@luc.edu to let us know what you think or to send us topic ideas for future technology tips. Here is this week's technology tip.

Conquering PDFs: Creating them for Free & Quick Cures for Crashing

You see it all the time -- that tell-tale red swirl with ".PDF" on web pages everywhere. Tax forms, full-text e-journal library articles, newsletters, etc. Every form and manual seems to come in .pdf form now. But do you stay up at night wondering what .pdf stands for? Are you filled with dread and horror because Adobe Reader takes forever to load? Do you wonder why .pdfs are multiplying like bunnies on the Internet? Do you wish you could actually have the power and prestige and ability to impress your friends and create .pdfs with ease because gee, everyone is doing it? But are you baffled because Adobe Reader just won't let you?

This week's tech tip is dedicated to demystifying a file format that is becoming increasingly popular on the Internet. We'll provide some insight on the utility of .pdfs and give you tips on how to create them without spending a dime. We'll also give you some tips to speed up the time it takes you to load Adobe Reader and avoid the dreaded .pdf browser crash/burn/cry/wail/curse process.

What's a PDF?

.Pdf stands for Portable Document Format (hey, this might be on Jeopardy some day – pay attention). It's a file format created by Adobe Systems that enables a document to be viewed on any operating system (Apple, Linux, Windows, no matter) while preserving the layout. In order to view and print a .pdf file you need to download a reader, such as Adobe Acrobat Reader (or other programs such as Xpdf). The most useful feature of .pdf files is that it allows people to view documents in the same format in which they were created. If you uploaded your newsletter in Microsoft Word, for example, many of the fonts, page breaks, and text boxes, would not be retained unless the people who viewed it had the

same application and fonts on their computer. Imagine your lovely *Edwarian Script*

or *Curly* text in your invitations being replaced by Courier! Professors like to put their syllabi and course documents in .pdf form so students can download and print them easily, regardless of what type of computer they have. It is also useful to have a document that isn't as easily altered as a Word document, so students can't alter the grading scale and assignments and pass them along to every other student. .Pdfs can also get very fancy. They can have hyperlinks, extensive table of contents, keyword navigation. They can also be configured so that users can enter their information directly into a form. You can add annotations and comments to them for truly collaborative documents. You can see why they are becoming so popular!



Cures for PDF Crashes!

Despite the usefulness of .pdfs, a Google search for “I hate .pdfs” yields hundreds of results. We’ve all experienced the horrible .pdf browser freeze. Adobe Reader and the browser plug-in are memory hogs, pure and simple.

1. First, make sure your operating system meets the minimum requirements of the software! Basically, if you have a geezer of a computer, you’re out of luck. You should have at least 256 MB RAM, otherwise you’ll remain in the camp of unhappy-to-see-a-pdf-people.
2. Make sure you have upgraded to the [latest Adobe Reader](#) version. Adobe promises this is newer, faster, better, groovier, etc, etc, etc.
3. Disable the “view in browser” feature in Adobe Acrobat Reader. This solution will force your Acrobat documents to be opened inside the Acrobat Reader instead of within your web browser. Sometimes, it’s just too much for your measly browser to display the Acrobat document.
 - a. To disable the view, open Acrobat Reader. Go to Edit | Preferences. The preferences window will appear.
 - b. Choose Options, which is located in the left pane (look long and hard, there is a long list of items in alphabetical order). Remove the checkmark from the Display PDF in Browser from the Web Browser options box. Click OK and close out of the application.
 - c. Try [Adobe Reader Speedup](#), a freeware program that disables many of the unnecessary plug-ins and speeds up the loading time of your .pdfs! (NOTE: It is very important that after you download these files, you read the readme.txt files that are enclosed in the folder. These contain the instructions to installing the software properly and details about whether it’s actually compatible with your computer, version of Adobe, and information about who took the time to make this software and hand it out for free to the delight of many. Who are these people anyway?)

How to Make a PDF

In order to create a .pdf, you need to have .pdf writing software (surprise, surprise!). You can’t create .pdfs with Adobe Reader, which is a surprise to many. In order to make the darn things, Adobe wants you to fork over \$300 and upgrade to their Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Professional, which is the industry standard of .pdf creation. We don’t deny that Adobe Acrobat Professional is a fine piece of software – after all, these folks were the ones who were responsible for creating this very file format. However, not everyone has the room in the budget for this. Nor does everyone need to create interactive forms, table of contents, or need to compress and collaborate on forms on a daily basis. If you do, you might want to consider going whole hog and upgrading to Adobe Acrobat Professional 7.0. But if you just want to turn your syllabus into a simple .pdf that students can print out, why not try some of these free programs?



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To purchase Adobe Acrobat Professional at Loyola, you must make special arrangements through your department and contact [Purchasing](#) directly. Adobe Acrobat Professional does **not** come standard on Loyola computers.

That's our technology tip for this week. We hope we've given you some useful information. If you'd like to go back to our archive of technology tips please visit us on the web at <http://www.luc.edu/is/techtips>. We'll be back soon with another version of the "ITS Technology Tips."