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PDF/A specifies requirements for archivable PDF documents, combining the universal strengths of the PDF format with an unambiguous, technically detailed ISO standard suited to the needs of organizations requiring solutions for long-term archiving.

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PDF already supports embedded digital signatures as part of the core file format. PDF/A permits digital signatures with a few usage requirements. PDF/A documents may be signed without losing PDF/A conformance.

■ A flexible yet stable platform for archiving

PDF/A's three parts offer maximum flexibility. PDF/A-1 is based on an older PDF specification and suffices for many simpler applications. PDF/A-2 adds support for transparency, PDF/A attachments and many other features. PDF/A-3 allows users to embed non PDF/A data, such as XML, CAD or Office files, in PDF/A-conforming documents.

The PDF/A Competence Center

The PDF/A Competence Center of the PDF Association focuses on assisting software vendors and consulting firms develop solutions using ISO 19005, the international standard for archive-quality PDF. The PDF/A Competence Center offers PDF Association members the following benefits:

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- Quality assurance support for individual PDF/A solutions
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- Participation in the PDF/A Technical Working Group (TWG)
- Access to draft documents developed by the ISO Working Group for PDF/A

veraPDF and the PDF Validation TWG



The veraPDF consortium is an EU-funded project led by the PDF Association and the Open Preservation Foundation to build a definitive open-source PDF/A validator based on industry-accepted test files.

PDF Association members may join the PDF Validation Technical Working Group (TWG) overseeing the veraPDF project, and thereby contribute to and gain from functional, technical and policy discussions.

About the PDF Association

Founded in 2006, the PDF Association promotes the adoption and implementation of International Standards for PDF technology, including ISO 32000 and PDF subset standards PDF/A, PDF/E, PDF/UA, PDF/VT and PDF/X. We work closely with the respective ISO working groups on the development of future PDF standards. To follow the PDF industry, become a member today! Learn more by visiting: www.pdfa.org/join.

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PDF/A

ISO 19005: Standards for long-term digital archiving of electronic documents

- Why PDF/A matters
- How PDF/A is used
- The power of PDF/A

The PDF/A standard

ISO 19005 defines “a file format based on PDF, known as PDF/A, which provides a mechanism for displaying electronic documents in such a way that the visual image is maintained over time, irrespective of the tools and systems used for their production, storage and reproduction”.

PDF/A is the ISO standard for archiving electronic documents using the PDF format. PDF/A-1 was published in 2005. PDF/A-2 (2011) and PDF/A-3 (2012) added support for additional PDF features, including embedding other files or data, support for transparency, and much more.

The PDF/A past and present

The creation of PDF/A is the result of many years of co-operation between international delegates representing software developers, industry associations and government agencies. Today, PDF/A is required or recommended by policy, regulation or statute around the world as the archival format of choice for permanent electronic records.



The PDF/A objective

PDF/A ensures reliable access to PDF documents, making PDF ideal for long-term archiving decades or even centuries after the file’s creation.

What PDF/A is not

PDF/A is not an authentication or security system. While digital signatures are encouraged for authentication purposes, PDF/A does not permit encryption.

PDF/A does not define an archiving strategy; the standard simply details technical requirements for PDF electronic documents to ensure reliability.

PDF/A Applications

PDF/A can be used to archive any electronic document that may be printed, and any non-electronic document that may be scanned. Applications that benefit from PDF/A implementations include:

■ **Mail processing** Regardless of the medium, incoming and outgoing mail – paper, fax or e-mail – must be archived. The most suitable uniform storage format is PDF/A.

■ **Automated workflows** Improved efficiency is a key draw for PDF/A-3, which can contain and associate various data with an archival document.

■ **Legal records management** Court systems are increasingly relying on PDF/A to provide assurance of archival quality while leveraging PDF’s searchability, compact size, metadata and other features.

■ **Computer-Aided Design (CAD)** Converting to PDF/A ensures that technical drawings can still be viewed or printed with total fidelity to the original, even without the original software. PDF/A-3 allows the original CAD file to be attached to the archival PDF pages.

■ **Scientific papers** To ensure long-term archivability, some universities require dissertations be submitted in PDF/A format wherever possible.

■ **Archive migration** Many institutions have already migrated their existing document archives over to PDF/A to comply with new regulations or policies, or to enhance functionality.

ZUGFeRD: PDF/A-3 for e-invoicing

A new German electronic invoicing standard leveraging PDF/A-3, ZUGFeRD will enhance transaction processing by delivering both human and machine-readable versions of the same information in the same PDF package.



Sectors

Long-term archiving is a critical theme in many sectors, with the focus varying from industry to industry. Below are some examples of long-term archiving requirements in selected sectors. While not exhaustive, these examples illustrate how PDF/A can be applied in any organization requiring high reliability or under a mandate to maintain long-term archives.



■ **Public Administration** Government agencies were among the first organizations calling for a non-proprietary format for electronic document archiving. Typical government applications for PDF/A include legal filings, court documents, forms, zoning files and official notices.

■ **Financial Services** Company credit and insurance records must often be kept for fifty years or more. Electronic archiving based on PDF/A has become increasingly popular not only for new files, but also as a migration target for existing archives. PDF/A delivers a single, consistent standard for archiving.

■ **Healthcare** Medical records come from a variety of sources and often include detailed information for which searchability is vital. PDF/A provides a standardized means of handling diverse records and metadata while providing a high degree of functionality as part of the file-format.

■ **Engineering** Long-term archiving is of great importance to engineering organizations, especially aerospace and civil engineering concerns. For example, the design specifications of bridges, aircraft or machinery are often required by law to be stored for 50 or sometimes over 100 years! Some regulations specify that all document versions must be archived; PDF/A readily accommodates this requirement.