

2.11 Formatting Tables in Acrobat

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Managing Tag Elements for Tables

Properly formatting tables deals heavily with tag structure and adjusting the table properties. We will walk through what a properly formatted table will look like, tagging table elements and further procedures for complex table designs.

Confirming the Table Tag Structure

Properly tagged tables will have a main tag that expands into tags assigned for each row of the table, under each of which all data cells can be found by their row. The names and descriptions of the table tags are as follows:

- 'Table' (which is the parent tag that superimposes all table tags).
- 'Table Row' or 'TR' (which holds all tagged table cells for a certain row of the table).
- 'Table Header' or 'TH' (used to designate header cells, usually found in the first row and column).
- 'Table Data' or 'TD' (for tagging data cells).

Converting Layout Tables to Text

A table will sometimes be used as a layout feature to organize information in the document. In these cases, the table borders must be set as artifacts. Also, table data cells should be tagged as paragraph elements and removed from the 'Table' tag tree. To do this:

1. Locate the table in the viewing window. Open the **Tags** menu and the 'Reading Order' window. Use the crosshair selection tool to highlight the first element of the table's intended reading order.
2. Navigate to the **Tags** 'Options' menu and select 'Find Tag from Selection'. The selected content will automatically be expanded and highlighted within the tag tree. The content should be found within a 'Table' tag. Reselect the content with the crosshair cursor and select 'Text/Paragraph'.
3. A new paragraph tag (labelled 'P') now holding the content should appear with an expandable carrot symbol in the same area of the table tag tree. The table header or data cell that contained the element will now be empty.
4. Repeat this process for each table in the intended read order. Confirm the intended reading order is reflected by the new paragraph tags in the tag tree.
5. Now that all table tags are empty, delete the empty tags.

Tagging Table Elements

If an actual table (that is relevant to understanding the data it contains) is instead tagged as paragraph content, table tags can be efficiently arranged with the 'Reading Order' window.

To Tag Table Elements:

1. Open the 'Reading Order' window from the **Tags** 'Options' menu.
2. Within the document viewing window, use the crosshair selection tool to create a box around all elements of the table. Select 'Table' in the 'Reading Order' window.
3. A section tag labelled 'Sect' will appear in the tag tree, superimposing a 'Table' tag. Move the 'Table' tag outside of the section tag and delete the section tag.

4. Expand the 'Table' tag to view the structure and content in the table. Acrobat will most likely have assigned 'Table Row' tags, each with 'Table Header' and 'Table Data' tags, to the table and content.
5. Expand each 'Table Row' and then each table tag to verify content was properly distributed and tagged properly. In some cases, multiple headers may have been grouped into a single 'Table Header' tag, or vice versa. Reference the proper table tag structure to arrange any tags or content.

To fast track this process, if a tag needs to be changed, it can be directly renamed as '<TR>' for 'Table Row', '<TH>' for 'Table Header' or '<TD>' for 'Table Data' all in the tag tree.

Formatting Complex Tables

Distinguishing Column and Row Table Headers

When screen readers are interpreting a table with both row and column headers, it is important that they can distinguish between the two. This is called the 'scope' of a table header, which is recommended to be set for all tables regardless if it contains only row headers.

To Set the Scope of Table Headers:

1. Open the 'Reading Order' window in the **Tags** options menu and ensure 'Show page content groups' is enabled with 'Structure types'.
2. Select any 'Table Header' or 'Table Data' content block in the viewing window.
3. In the 'Reading Order' menu, press 'Table Editor'. The table will now be overlaid with color coded boxes that differentiate table headers from table data cells.
4. Right-click the first table header and select 'Table Cell Properties'. In the 'Table Cell Properties' window, open the 'Scope' dropdown menu and select 'Column' or 'Row' to designate the header type. Press 'OK'.

Repeat this process for all table headers.

Formatting Merged Table Cells

It is important that tags accurately reflect table elements made of multiple merged cells. Tagged content will need to be grouped into one tag if multiple tags exist that represent the cells. Once this is done, numbers of cells high and cells wide can be specified by adjusting the 'span' for the table cell.

To Set the Column and Row Span for a Table Cell:

1. Open the 'Reading Order' window in the **Tags** menu and, with 'Show page content groups' enabled, select any table cell. Then, select 'Table Editor'.
2. With the superimposed 'Table Editor' grid, right-click the single cell made up of merged table cells. Open the 'Table Cell Properties' window.
3. In the 'Attributes' section, change the 'Row Span' to equal the number of cells that make up the height of the merged cell. Enter in 'Column Span' the number of cells that make up the merged cell width. Press 'OK' to finalize the settings. If a warning message concerning the column span appears, select OK.

Complete this process for all merged cells, which will no longer conflict with the table's accessibility.

Assigning Table Header IDs

Tables with special formatting or merged cells may have disparities between the data cells and the headers that reflect them. Headers are recommended to be tied to their data cells through 'header IDs'.

To Name and Associate Header IDs:

1. Open the 'Reading Order' window in the **Tags** menu and, with 'Show page content groups' enabled, select any table cell. Then, select 'Table Editor'.
2. Right-click the table header to be associated with table data cells and open the 'Table Cell Properties' window.
3. In the 'ID' text field under 'Attributes' replace the serial header ID with a simple and recognizable header name. Press 'OK' to save the new header ID.
4. Right-click the first table data cell under the header to reopen 'Table Cell Properties'. Next to the 'Associated Header Cell IDs' list box, press the 'plus' symbol to open a header ID dropdown menu.
5. Select the new header ID from the dropdown menu and press 'OK'. Press 'OK' again in the 'Table Cell Properties' window to finalize changes.
6. Continue these steps with each table data cell in the row or column of that specific header. Repeat the entire process to associate each header with data cells.

Keep in mind that a data cell can be associated with a column and a row header, in which case this can be set by adding both in the 'Associated Header Cell ID' list.

Conclusion

In this module, we've explored the basics of identifying and tagging table content. We've also covered some procedures on formatting complex tables with unique header layouts and merged cells. In the next module, we will learn about accessible list formatting in Acrobat.