

Flattening PDFs

Questions? Call us at (855) 272-7638 and ask for the I.T. Department, or email tech@bsasoftware.com.

Flattening in Acrobat

PDF files can contain layered content if they are created from layered documents by using applications such as Adobe InDesign. As a result, a single page of the PDF file can contain different layers with different content.

Note: Merging or flattening layers can't be undone. For this procedure, use a copy of your PDF.

To determine which version of Acrobat you are using, choose Help>About Adobe Acrobat (Windows), or Acrobat>About Acrobat (Mac OS).

For Acrobat 8 Professional or later:

1. Make a backup copy of your PDF file by choosing File>Save As and giving the copy a new name.
2. Open the copy and choose Advanced>PDF Optimizer. If asked whether you want to save and continue, click Yes.
3. Select Discard User Data.
4. Select Discard Hidden Layer Content and Flatten Visible Layers, then click OK.
5. When prompted, save the Optimized PDF with another new name.
6. Open the Layers panel (if the Layers panel is not visible, choose View>Navigation Panels>Layers).
7. Click the Options pop-up menu, and then select either Merge Layers or Flatten Layers. Merged layers acquire the properties of the layer into which they are merged. Flattening layers discards any layer content that isn't visible onscreen.
8. Save the PDF file and try to print it.

For Acrobat 7 Professional:

1. Make a backup copy of your PDF file.
2. Open the copy and choose Advanced>PDF Optimizer.
3. Click the Clean Up tab.
4. Select Remove Hidden Layers Content and Flatten Layers, then click OK.
5. When prompted, save the Optimized PDF with another new name.
6. In the Layers panel, choose Options, then select either Merge Layers or Flatten Layers. Merged layers acquire the properties of the layer into which they are merged. Flattening layers discards any layer content that isn't visible onscreen.
7. Save the PDF file and attempt to print it.

Flattening in Nitro Pro

Saving your PDF as a flattened document makes it such that it is not possible to change the contents of a form field and the form itself is no longer interactive. This process also saves additions such as mark-ups, typed text, and any other parts of the PDF that would be interactive properties as no longer interactive.

To save a Flattened PDF:

1. Open your PDF in Nitro Pro.
2. Add your mark-ups and changes to the document.
3. Click on File>Save As.
4. Click the button on the far right to switch from Standard PDF to Flattened PDF.
5. Rename the PDF to prevent from overwriting the original and select the location you wish to save it in.
6. Click Save.

Flattening in AutoCAD

Issue: You have a drawing that should be 2D but some linework accidentally has a Z elevation and you want to flatten the entire drawing.

Causes: Possibly caused by snapping to a block or other geometry that had a Z value.

Solution: Use the FLATTEN command to change the Z values of all lines, arcs, and polylines to 0 (requires Express Tools to be loaded).

1. Turn off or freeze any hatch layers with hatch patterns so they are not included in the selection.
2. Type FLATTEN at the command line.
3. Select all objects and hit Enter.
4. Type N for No when prompted to Remove Hidden Lines.

Optionally, you can try to use the CHANGE command:

1. Type CHANGE.
2. Type ALL to select all objects and then hit Enter.
3. Type P for Properties.
4. Type E for Elevation.
5. Type 0 and then hit a final Enter to end the command.