

**Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts**  
Department of Program Services  
Case Management Systems Office

# ***CM/ECF***

## **PDF-Related Functionality for Public Filers in NextGen CM/ECF**

**Appellate Release 1.6**  
**District Release 1.6**  
**Bankruptcy Release 1.6**

**June 2021**

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## Update Summary

Date	Section	Change
November 1, 2020	All	Release Date
June 2021	PDF Content Criteria	Edit bullet

# PDF-Related Functionality for Public Filers in NextGen CM/ECF Release 1.6

This document provides an overview of PDF-related functionality for all three court types with the NextGen CM/ECF Release 1.6. Topics covered include:

- PDF Definition and Software
- Converting Documents to PDF
- Viewing a PDF Document Prior to Upload
- Document Size Requirements
- PDF Content Criteria (Updated June 2021)
- How to Flatten a PDF
- Viewing Combined PDFs in CM/ECF

## Introduction

Version 1.6 of Appellate, District, and Bankruptcy NextGen Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) includes modified functionality related to uploading and viewing PDF documents. In some instances, PDFs that were previously allowed to be uploaded will no longer be allowed to be uploaded in release 1.6 (and higher). This document provides information about preparing and uploading PDFs in CM/ECF and provides reasons why PDFs with certain content might be rejected.

REMINDER: Consult your local court's guidelines regarding additional PDF and filing requirements. Some PDFs may be accepted by the system but then rejected by the court based on their local requirements.

## PDF Definition

"The Portable Document Format (PDF) is a file format developed by Adobe to present documents, including text formatting and images, in a manner independent of application software, hardware, and operating systems." (from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PDF>).

A document created with almost any word-processing program can be converted to PDF. Scanned documents can also be converted to PDF. The PDF program, in effect, captures the original document and allows anyone to open the converted document across a broad range of hardware and software with the layout, format, links, and images intact. For more information on PDF, visit the websites of PDF vendors such as [Adobe Acrobat](#), [FinePrint](#), [Kofax Power PDF](#) (formerly known as Nuance) and/or [PrimoPDF](#).

## PDF Software

Filing users must have PDF capability both to view and to create electronically filed documents. To view documents that have been electronically filed with the clerk's office, filing users must install software that can display PDFs.

To create documents in PDF, filing users must have software that converts electronic files from any application to PDF. All new documents prepared for CM/ECF cases must be converted to PDF before they are entered into CM/ECF or transmitted to the Court.

## Converting Documents to PDF

Converting documents to PDF requires software that can save a document in PDF format.

## Viewing a PDF Document Prior to Upload

Once you have converted a document to PDF, you should view it as a PDF document on your device to ensure that the conversion worked correctly and that you converted the correct document.

To view a PDF document, take the following steps:

1. Open the PDF reader of your choice.
2. Select File on the menu bar and choose Open from the drop-down window.
3. Click on the location and file name of the PDF document you wish to view.
4. Click on the View menu for other options for viewing the displayed document. Choose the option that best suits your viewing needs.

## Document Size Requirements

- Each court determines the maximum file size for the PDF. Any PDF larger than the maximum file size will be rejected by the system. To find the current file size limit: In CM/ECF, from the Startup Page, click the **Court Information** link. In the page that opens, the **Maximum PDF File Size** shows you what the current limit is.
- If you have a document or filing that is larger than the maximum file size defined by the court, you can break the document or filing into smaller PDF documents and file those smaller PDF documents together in one event, with a main document and the remaining documents as separate attachments to the main document.

## PDF Content Criteria

The following list describes PDF content that will or will not be accepted by CM/ECF. If you try to upload a PDF with prohibited content, it will be rejected. The simplest way to address most PDF upload rejections is to flatten the PDF and then upload it. Instructions are provided in the following section for flattening a PDF.

REMINDER: Consult your local court's guidelines regarding additional PDF and filing requirements. Some PDFs may be accepted by the system but then rejected by the court based on their local requirements.

### 1) PDFs with the following content will be rejected:

- Does not comply with PDF format standards
- Encrypted or password-protected
- Contains scripts which can launch an external application
- Contains internal attachments

- Contains audio and video content
- Created with Mac OS X using a fillable form in the Safari browser
- Created with Mac OS X using MS Word and selecting the option, “Best for printing”

**2) PDFs with the following content will be accepted:**

- Contains editable forms will be accepted by the system but may be rejected by court policy

NOTE: Appellate CM/ECF may be configured to reject PDFs with editable forms.

- Contains hyperlinks to external web sites
- Meets the PDF-A standard
- Contains optical character recognition (OCR) meta-data
- Comprised of scanned documents.

NOTE: Local courts may stipulate acceptable dots-per-inch (dpi) standards. Please consult your local court’s PDF and filing guidelines.

- Created with Mac OS X using a fillable form in the Chrome browser
- Created with Mac OS X using MS Word and selecting the option, “Best for Electronic Distribution”

### How to Flatten a PDF

The simplest way to address most PDF upload rejections is to flatten the PDF and then upload it.

1. Open your PDF in Adobe Acrobat or another tool that lets you work with PDF documents.
2. Print the PDF file to your PDF printer (File > Print > select Adobe PDF or another PDF printer listed in the drop-down list).
3. Save the printed PDF and upload it for filing.

NOTE: In [Kofax Power PDF](#) (formerly known as Nuance), use the Flatten File feature found at Advanced Processing > Flatten File.

### Viewing Combined PDFs in CM/ECF

CM/ECF allows users to view multiple PDFs in a combined view in the docket entry and on the docket

report. In some instances, a PDF that can be viewed individually might not render correctly when combined with other PDFs. In such instances, you can view the PDFs individually.