

How to make a PDF file of a printed document using Acrobat 8

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The user interface for making PDFs from a scanner in Acrobat is slightly tricky and has some unfortunate defaults. This paper explains how to make good PDFs in spite of all that.

PDF files are Adobe's file format for storing images of printed pages. They can be read with Adobe Reader (free), Adobe Acrobat, or other software. Some software, such as Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator, can open PDF files as graphics and edit them or extract pictures from them.

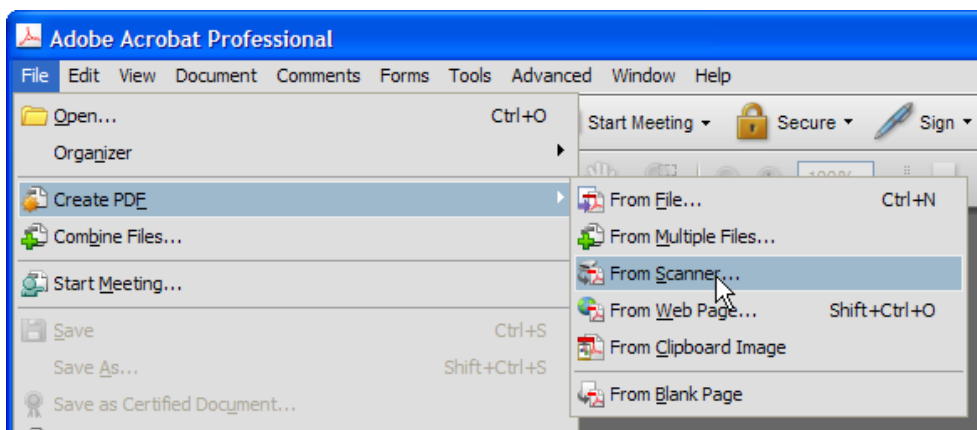
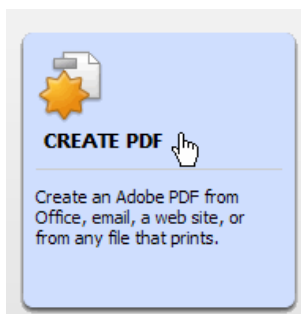
There are two kinds of PDFs, text and graphics. When PDFs are produced with a word processor, they are usually text – that is, they store the actual letters and words to be displayed. When produced with a scanner, they are graphics – *pictures* of the pages, not letters and words – and are not searchable. You can tell Acrobat to run an OCR (optical character recognition) program which will attempt to recognize the letters, but the results are (in my experience) not satisfactory and I don't bother with this.

WIA (Windows Imaging Architecture) is the simplest of several ways for Windows to communicate with a scanner. It is the one that will be used in this example.

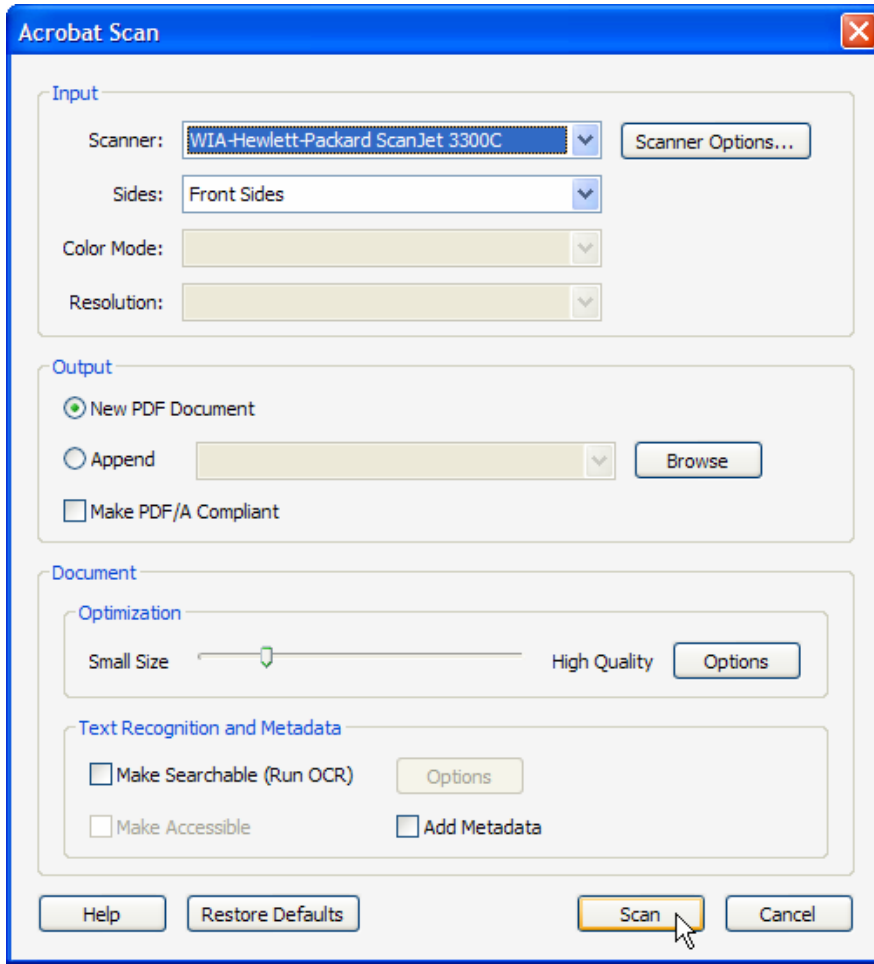
The exact details of your scanner may be different from what you see here. The key things to remember are:

- Most scanners default to 150 dots per inch (dpi), which is not sharp enough for academic papers. I'll show you how to set the scanner to 300 dpi.
- Color images take a *lot* more disk space than black-and-white (monochrome) images. Don't scan in color unless you actually need to.
- It is often best to *photocopy your document first* and scan the copy. When you make the copy, you get everything onto flat pieces of paper, and you can enlarge it. Also, when copying a book, you can *hold a piece of white paper across the unwanted page* so that there won't be an inch or two of the opposite page on every sheet. Naturally, if your document contains high-quality pictures, you will want to scan it directly rather than working from a copy.

To start, open Acrobat 8 and select "Create PDF" either from the splash menu or from File on the main menu:

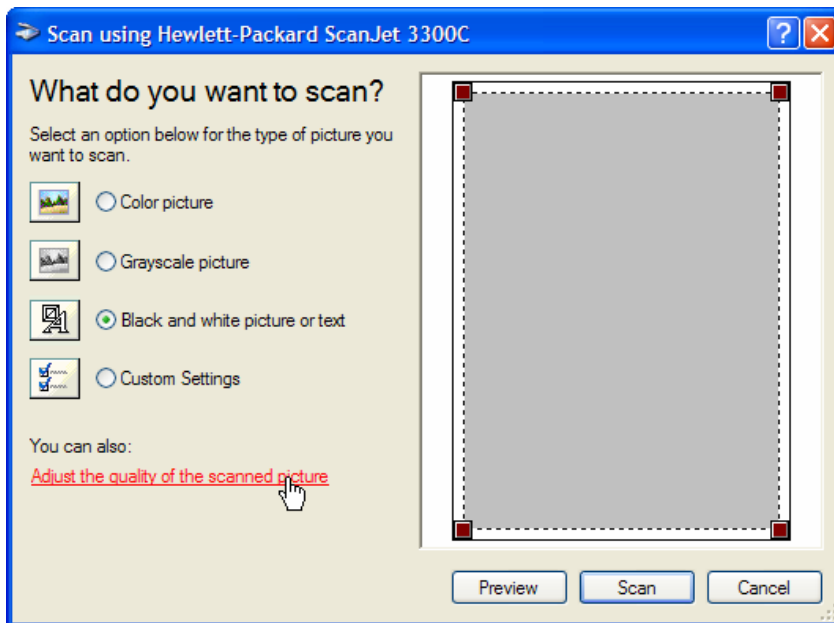


If using the WIA interface, you will have very few options, and on the Acrobat Scan menu (shown next) you should simply click **Scan**:

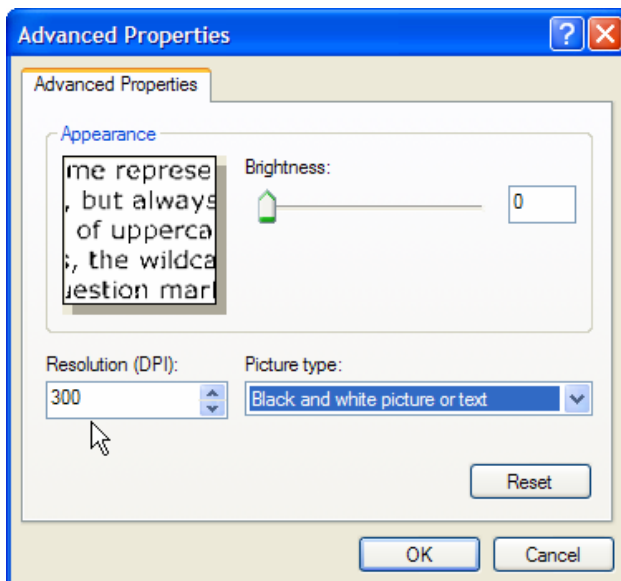


You will be asked to **supply a file name for your new PDF**. From here on, your PDF will be saved to disk as you make it; you don't have to save at the end of the process.

Then you will see the WIA interface window:

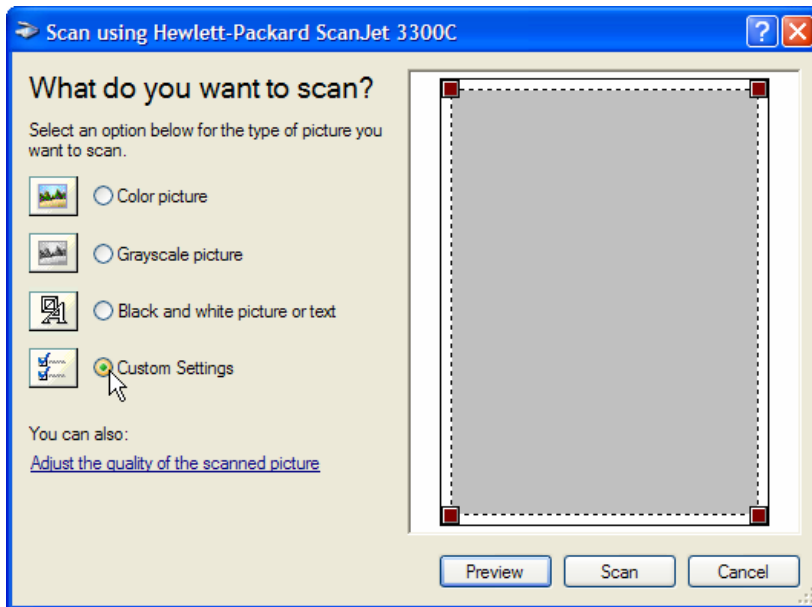


Now for an **IMPORTANT STEP**. Click on **Black and white picture or text** and then on **Adjust the quality of the scanned picture**. This is where you are going to set 300 dpi:



When you have set the resolution to 300 dpi, click OK.

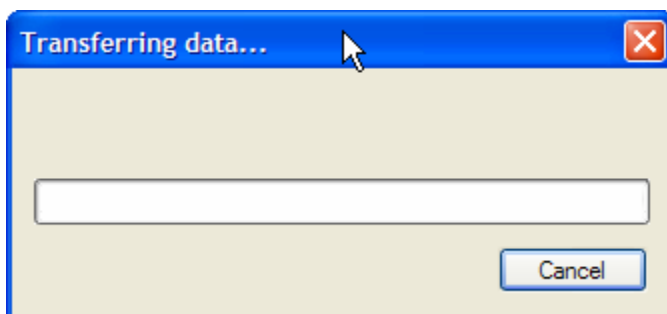
Now you're back at the WIA menu, but **Custom Settings** is selected. That's how it's going to be from now on. Unfortunately, the WIA window will require you to click Custom Settings every time you scan a page.



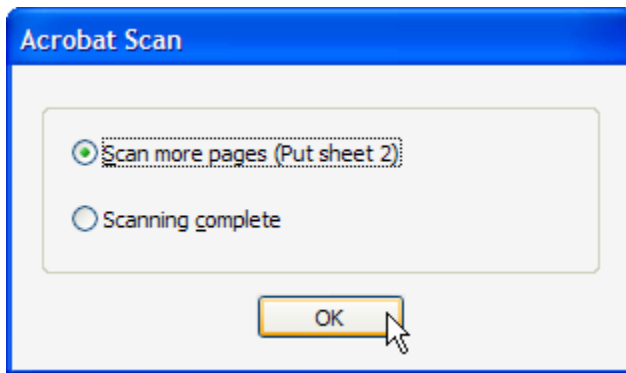
Assuming the first page is in the scanner, press Preview if you want to, then **Scan**. *Scanning the first page may take a very long time as the scanner warms up.*

Hint: The four brown squares indicate the edges of the scanned area. Resist the temptation to put them too close to the margins of your printed document; leave some "wiggle room." I usually leave them set to scan the full page.

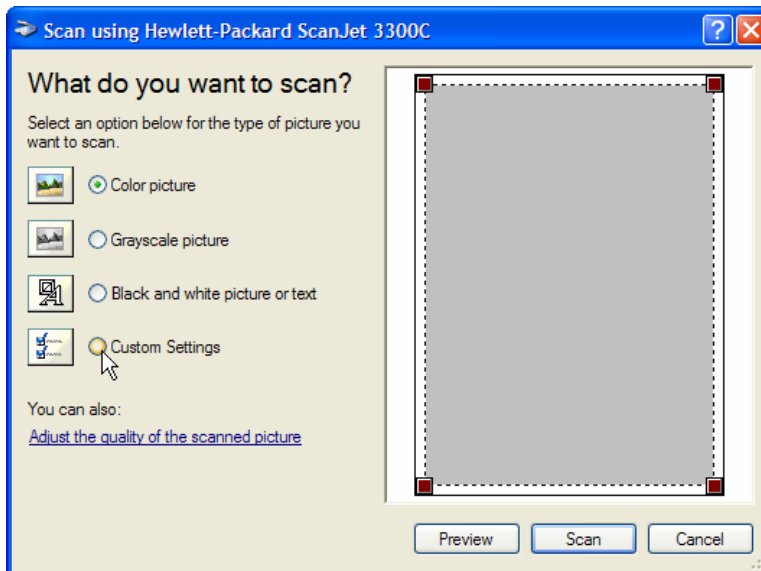
The scanning operation will proceed...



and then you'll be prompted for the next page:



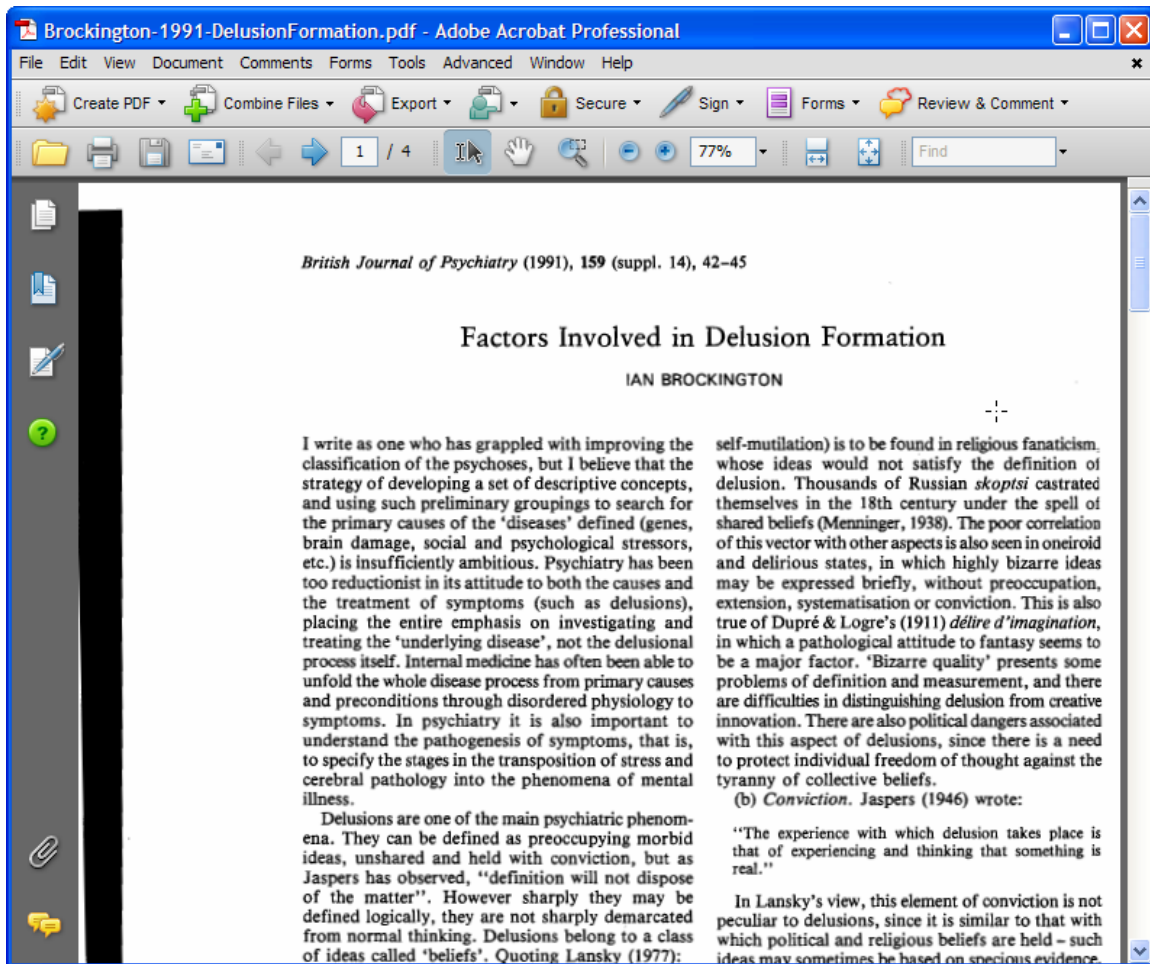
Now here's the tricky part. WIA doesn't remember what you're scanning. You must **check Custom Settings again** in the WIA menu:



(However, you do not have to go in and set 300 dpi again. WIA remembers what the custom settings were; it just doesn't remember that you're using them.)

Once you've clicked on Custom Settings, click Scan to scan the next page.

At the end of the whole process, when you check "Scanning complete," you finally get to see your scanned document, which has already been saved to disk:



You can review them and, if necessary, insert and rearrange pages.