

File Exchange

People use a boggling array of different computers, operating systems and programs. How can we be sure that the files we want to share can be used by other people? This is especially a problem with word processing documents, since there are many different formats which aren't always usable on every platform. By following the steps below, you can be confident that your work will be completely compatible with any computer.

- 1. *Always save word processing documents as Rich Text Format (RTF).*** To save your file as Rich Text Format (RTF) from any word processor:
 - Choose "Save As" instead of "Save".
 - In the "Save As" box, look for an option titled 'Save as type' or 'Format'.
 - Choose 'Rich Text Format' or 'RTF'.
 - When you name your file, avoid using spaces, colons, or slashes. Use dashes or underscores instead.
 - Important: add '.rtf' to the end of your file name. Example: mydocument.rtf
 - Save your file.
- 2. *Save other kinds of documents as PDF***
**Note that PDF documents cannot normally be edited-if you want to share a word processing document and have other people modify or edit it, you should use Rich Text Format.

Instructions for Macintosh OS X: Any Macintosh running OS X can save any file as a PDF. To save your file as Portable Document Format (PDF) on a Macintosh running OS X:

- Choose 'Print' from the 'File' menu.
- In the 'Print' box that pops up, click the button marked 'Save as PDF'.
- When you name your file, avoid using spaces, colons, or slashes. Use dashes or underscores instead.
- Save your file.

Instructions for Windows: In order to save your work as PDF on a PC-running Windows, you'll need to obtain a program that can do this. A free PDF converter is available online at www.adobe.com and should work fine for everyday use. Advanced users should purchase the professional version of Adobe Acrobat.

Once you have installed the PDF converter:

- Choose 'Print' from the 'File' menu.
- Depending on which PDF converter you have, select the printer named 'Adobe Distiller' or 'PDF Creator'.
- Click the 'Print' button.
- Depending on which PDF converter you have, follow the instructions on the next screen to save your file.
- When you name your file, avoid using spaces, colons, or slashes. Use dashes or underscores instead.
- Save your file.

3. *Sharing files such as Microsoft Excel or PowerPoint*

When you want to share files using specialized programs such as Microsoft Excel, you are assuming that the people you want to share the files with have that program. Free software such as Sun Microsystems Open Office can read Excel and PowerPoint documents, but there isn't any magic program available for every platform that can read any file type. Consider the following tips when sharing specialized files:

- ⇒ Think about your audience. If you are certain that your audience will have access to the same program you used to create the file, then it's usually safe to save it as you normally would.
- ⇒ Always save the file with its filetype extension. This means that for an Excel document, you should save it as 'mySpreadsheet.xls'. This helps ensure that different operating systems will be able to correctly identify the program that created the file. Common filetype extensions include:
 - Microsoft Excel: .xls
 - Microsoft PowerPoint: .ppt
 - Microsoft word: .doc
- ⇒ Consider saving your document as a PDF. Many kinds of files can be saved as PDF documents. If you don't need other people to be able to modify or edit your document, PDF is a good choice.