Working with Digital Signatures

Where were changes made in the 10/25/2017 version?

1. Pages 6-8 - Additional guidance was added regarding working with oversized documents (i.e. labels)

Where were changes made in the 6/23/2017 version?

1. Page 2 - Section was added regarding viewing headers and footers if in Read Mode or Web Layout.

"You also may not be able to view headers/footers (including the signature panel) if the document is in Read Mode or Web Layout. To check, go to the View menu, and ensure you are in Print Layout"

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The CVB applies digital signatures to PDF and Microsoft Word documents as part of official regulatory correspondence. This User Guide explains the mechanisms behind digital signatures and provides tips for saving digitally signed documents for archive.

## A word about digital signatures

Digital signatures perform two distinct functions:

- Confirm the identity of the signer
- Ensure the document has not been not altered since signing

They have authenticity only in digital form because the authenticity of the signature is backed by a "certificate". The text comprising a digital signature has no particular standing when printed on paper or when converted to another format (such as saving a MS Word doc as a pdf image). Always keep the *original* digital file for proof of authenticity.
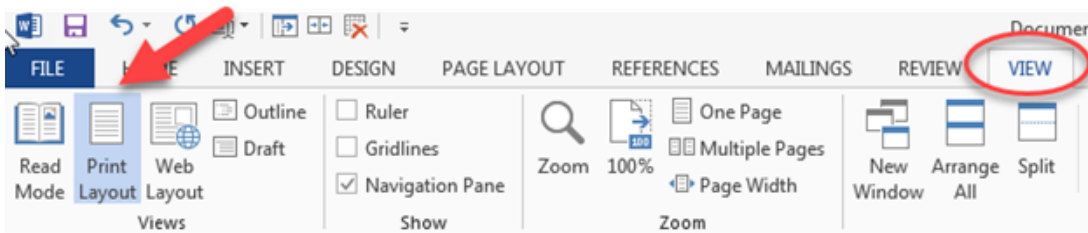
Displaying the Signature

MS Word documents, if opened in a protected view, may not display digital signatures. If this happens, it is OK to click on the "Enable Editing" button to take the document out of protected view. The signature will then display.
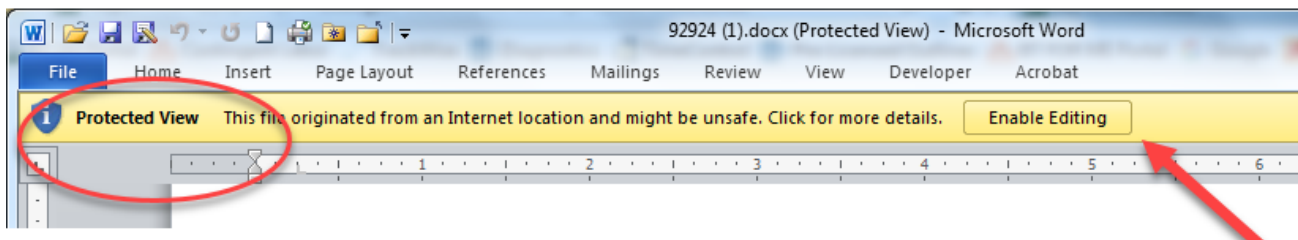
Do not confuse Protected View with the Marked As Final view. If you click on Edit Anyway, you will remove the signature from the document.
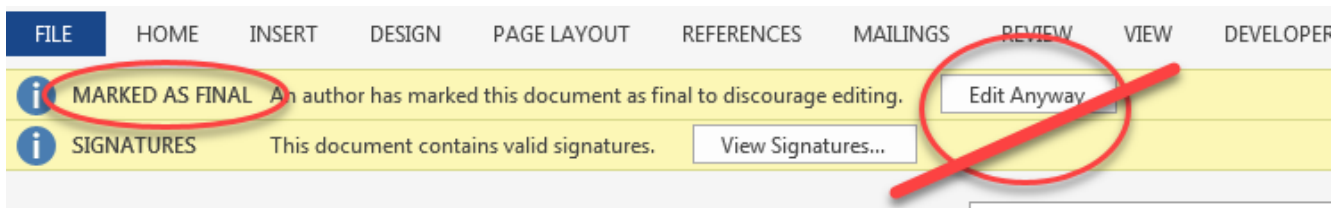
You also may not be able to view headers/footers (including the signature panel) if the document is in Read Mode or Web Layout. To check, go to the View menu, and ensure you are in Print Layout:

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Verifying the integrity of the signature/document

MS Word and Adobe Acrobat differ slightly in how to verify the signature.

MS Word is more stringent, and no changes to the document are permitted without removing the signature. If the signature displays, the document has not been changed since it was signed. However, not all signatures are valid (backed by a valid certificate of authenticity). Be sure to check the validity of the signature on any documents received from the CVB.

The document may open with signature validity information displayed in a banner across the top:
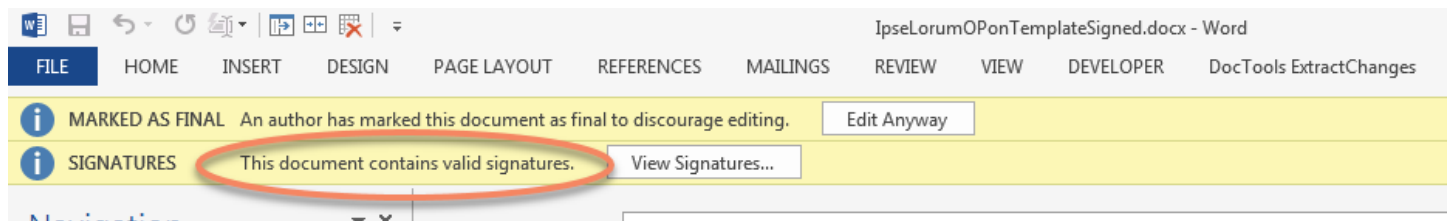
If there is no such banner, the validity of the signature may be checked by clicking on the Signatures button at the bottom of the document. It will look like one of the images below, depending on your version of MS Word.
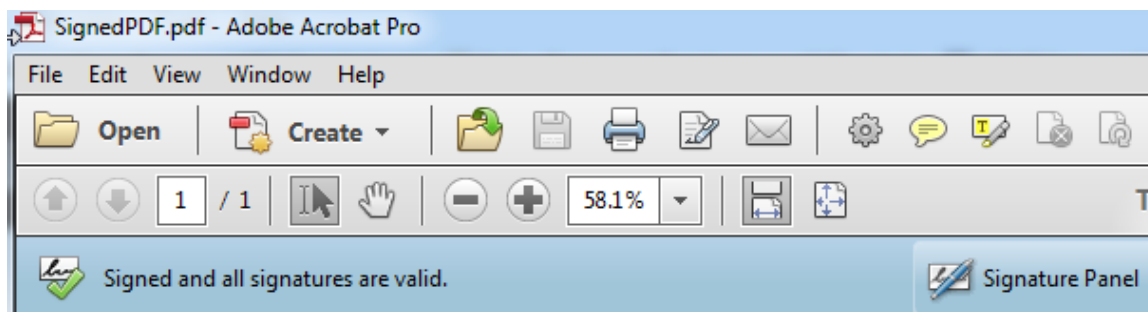

This opens a Signatures panel. Click on the down arrow next to a signature and select Signature Details.
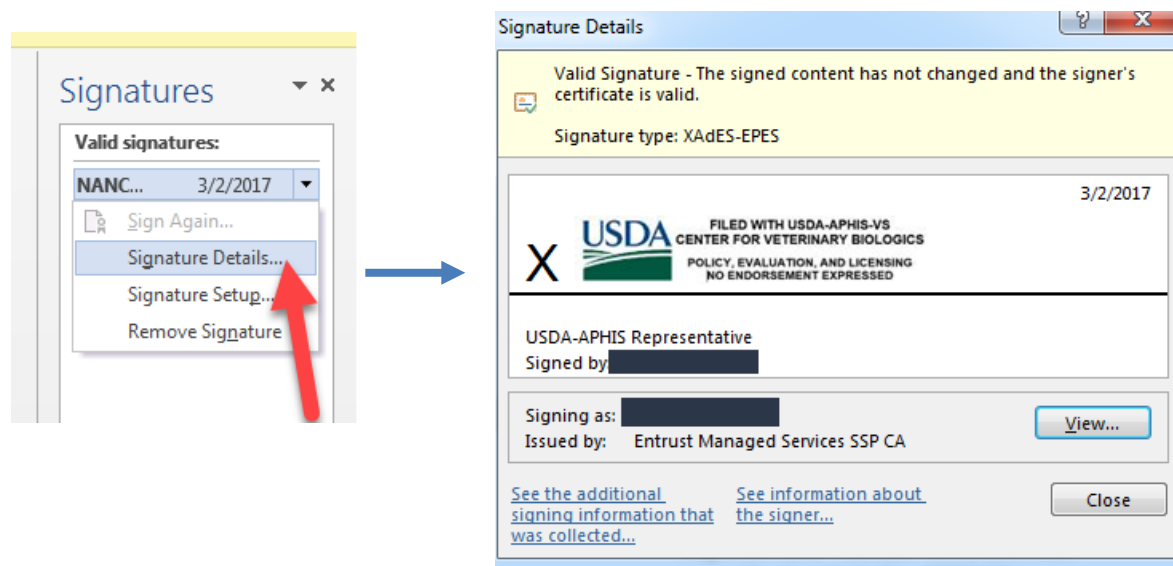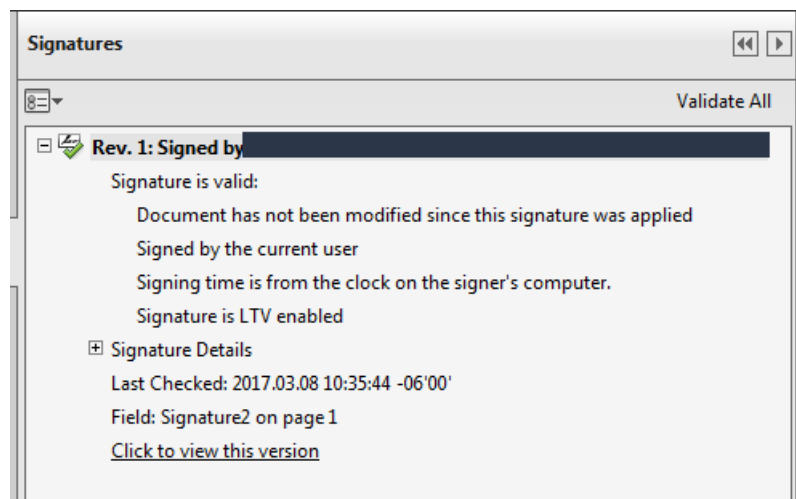
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Adobe Acrobat

Acrobat also will, by default, display a banner when you open a signed document.


You can obtain additional information by clicking on the Signature Panel icon.

> If you do not see a see a Signature Panel button, choose View > Show/Hide > Navigation Panes > Signatures. Likewise, you can right click on the signature itself to see Signature Properties.

Unlike MS Word, however, Acrobat may allow certain types of changes to a signed document without removing the signature. For example, I added a solid white rectangle to my signed document, which obscured the last word in a sentence but the alteration was not immediately obvious on a white background. This was allowed because it was considered to be a "comment" feature and not a revision to text. The signature remained and was still considered "valid". If there have been any changes, however, you will see Signature properties similar to that shown below:
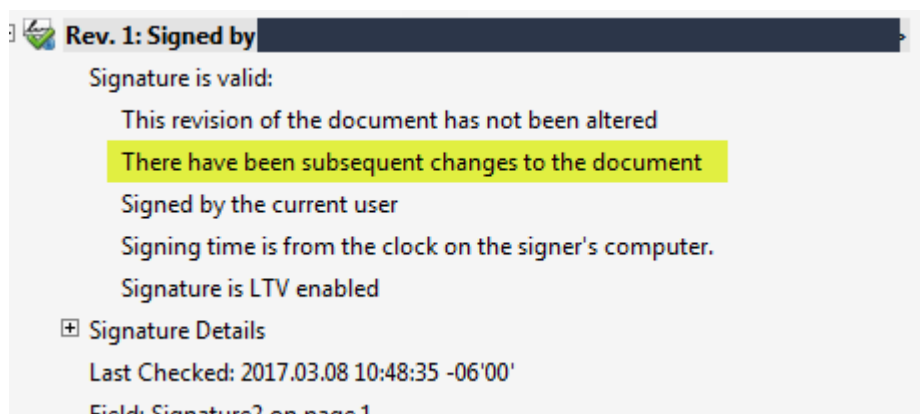
Ensure that documents received from the CVB have not been altered in any manner whatsoever after signing.

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Saving Signed Documents

Submitters must save digitally signed CVB documents received via the portal because they are only retained in the portal for 60 days after submission completion. It is important to save the documents without converting to another document format (e.g., MS Word to pdf) so that the signature validity can continue to be verified.

Saving Signed MS Word documents

Even performing a "Save As…" action on an open signed MS Word document is considered to be a change and will remove the signature. This can be avoided by renaming files and saving them to different locations while they are *closed.*

When downloading a document from the portal, users are given the option to Open or Save. Click on the down arrow next to Save and select Save As… This provides an opportunity to save the document to the location of your choice and to rename for the save.

Once you have completed the save, open the document. The portal typically offers that option with the following bar that appears after saving:

If you wish to rename or move a digitally signed MS Word document after its initial download, you can

continue to do so with the *closed* document. Press E while holding down the Windows button to open Windows Explorer. Right-click on the desired document to obtain options to Cut/Copy/Rename.
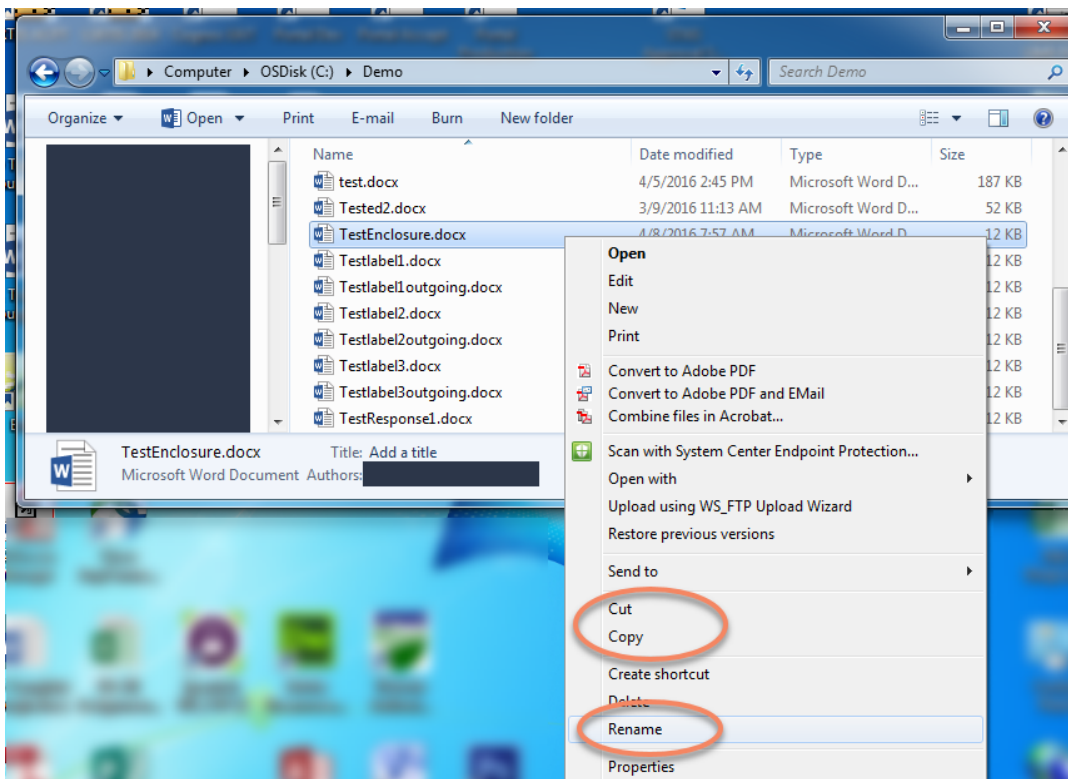
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Saving Signed Adobe Acrobat documents

In contrast, Adobe Acrobat does not consider a "Save As…" operation to be a document change. PDF files can be renamed and moved with the document open or closed, without jeopardizing the signature or showing any changes to the document after it was signed.

Converting "working copies" of signed Word documents to pdf

Firms should always maintain a copy of original signed Word documents for the validity reasons discussed above. It is permissible, however, to create a **working copy** of the signed document as pdf if there are features of Adobe Acrobat documents that make this working copy attractive.

If you use the "Save as Adobe PDF" feature in Word, the digital signature will be removed altogether.

To convert a Word document to pdf while retaining an *image* of the signature, use the following procedure.
- Elect to print the Word document.
- Select "Adobe PDF" as the printer.
- When you hit the Print button, you will be prompted where to save the pdf document being created. Nothing will actually print to paper.

If you are attempting to convert an oversized label submission, you will need to adjust the paper size settings to accommodate the larger page layout used in MS Word. There are different ways this can be done, and there are certain documents that seem to work better one way vs. the other.

Go to the next page to see different methods.

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Method #1:

After selecting Adobe PDF as the printer, adjust the paper size setting on the same screen. Then go to Page Setup. Set the Paper Source to OnlyOne, so the system is not expecting a tray with custom-sized paper.
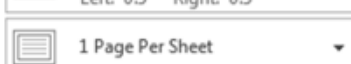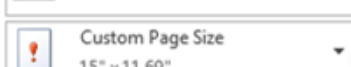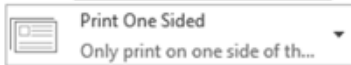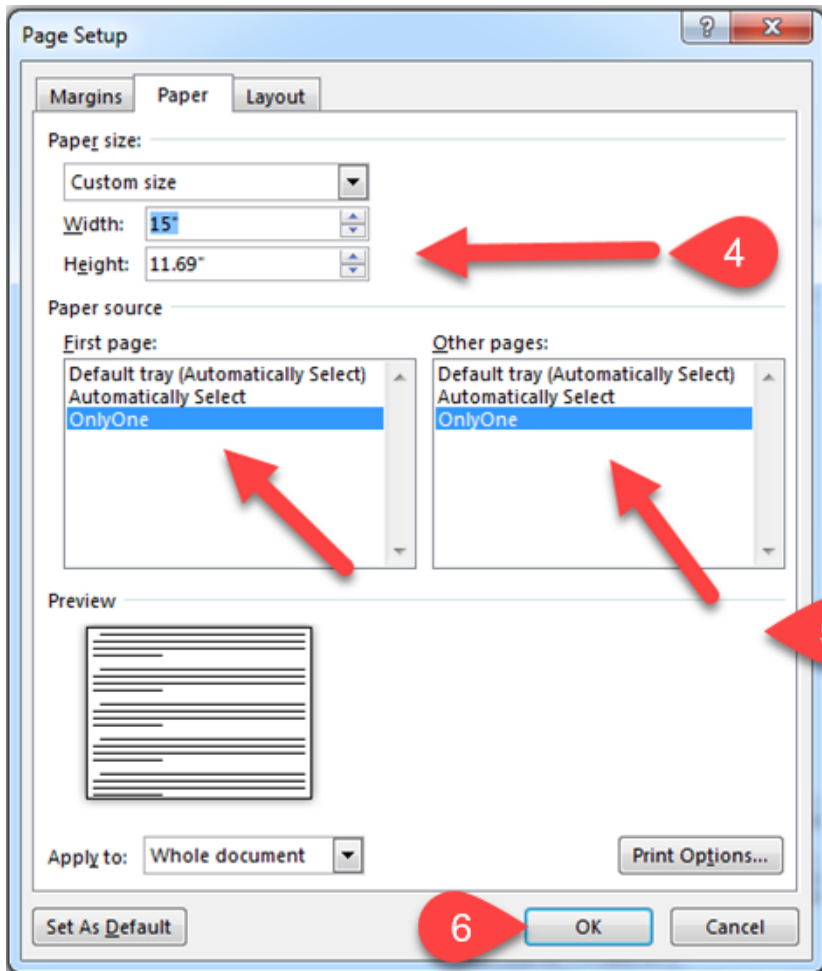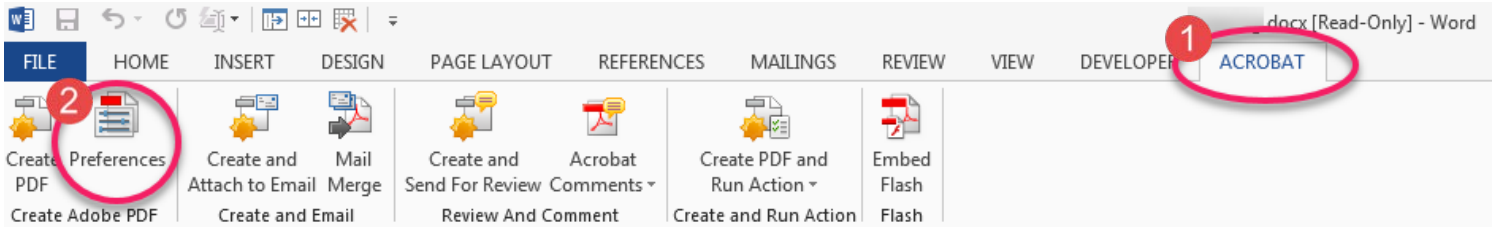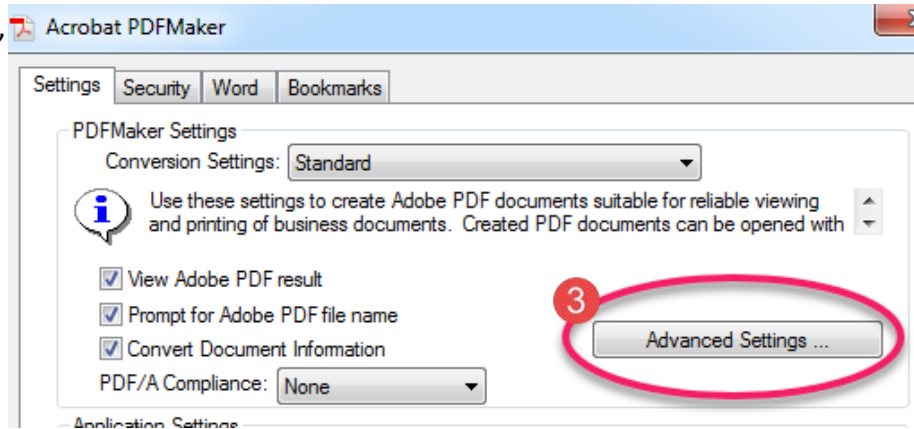
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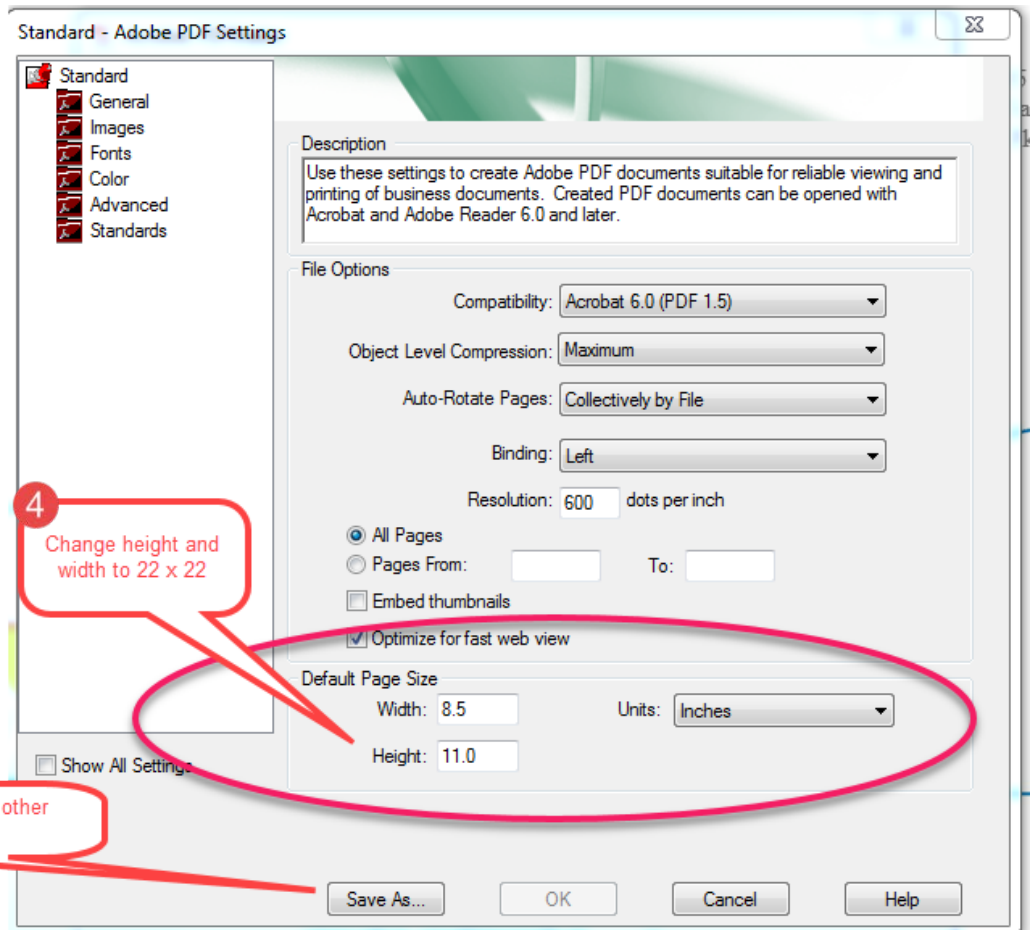
Method #2:

Go to the Acrobat menu in MS Word and select Preferences.



Once in the Preferences screen, select Advanced Settings

On the settings page, change the Default Page Size and save the setting as a file name you will remember:

Change height and width to 22 x 22

Save as "Custom22x22" or some other recognizable filename

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Return to the Advanced Settings screen and click on the down arrow to change Conversion Settings from "Standard" to the file name you just created in the previous step (in the example this would be "Custom22x22").
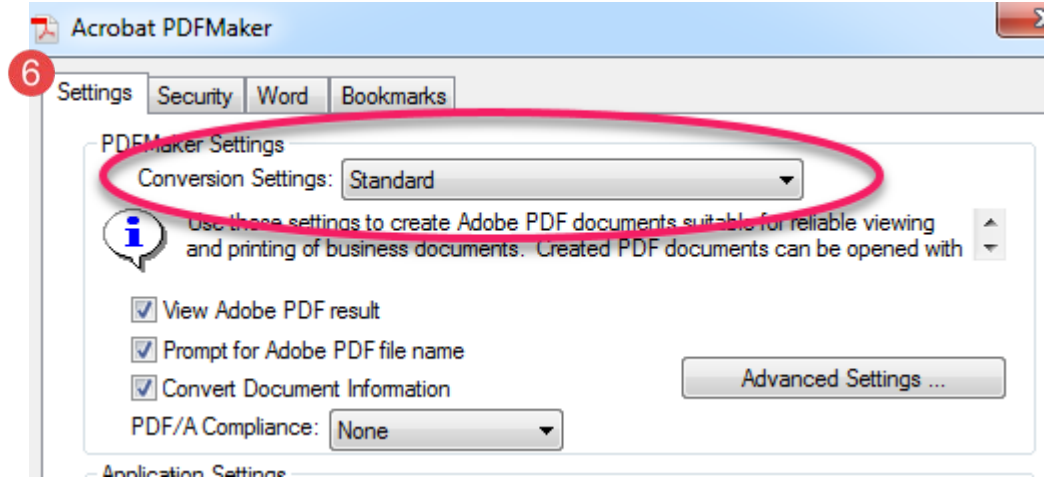
⚠️ When you are done converting the oversized image, return your Conversion Setting to "Standard" so it will work with standard 8.5 x 11" paper again.

Printing an Oversized PDF document

If you wish to create a print copy of an oversized label document but do not have paper large enough to accomodate, first convert to pdf. You can then use the "Poster" option to print, which will allow you to assemble a print copy from multiple pages.

1. Open the pdf document in Adobe Acrobat and Print to the printer of your choice.

2. Select the Poster option within the Print settings. The document will then print on multiple letter-sized pages in a manner that they can be assembled to form the oversized page