

Preview vs. Reader

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Ever wonder what you can do with pdf display software like Adobe Reader and Preview? Probably not, but you should have. Here's a run-down of many great features of Apple's Preview, with a few snippets about Adobe Reader thrown in.

First and foremost: for most purposes, Preview is more powerful, more useful, and also easier to use. If you're using Reader on a Mac, it's likely that you'll be happier or at least as happy with Preview.

How do you change the default software to open a file or a file type? Easy! Finder>>click on file>>File menu>>Get Info (or Command-I) opens a box that gives you control over a lot of stuff. It's best to not play with the "Ownership and Permissions" part of this box, but the "Open with..." is a powerful tool. To change what software opens when you double click on this file, just pick another application from the pull-down list, or go to the bottom of the list, choose "other...", and browse to the application you want. If you want to change the default for all files of this type, such as making Preview your default pdf reader, click the "Change All" button.

Why is Preview so great? First and foremost, it's not just a pdf reader. It can open and manipulate many graphics file types. Try taking a list of jpg files in the Finder (after confirming that Preview is the preferred jpg viewer), double click on them and, voila, they open in Preview as pages within one window. With files like jpg and tiff, you have access to major color and density editing tools through Tools>>Adjust Color (or Command-Option-C). Try this on a jpg photo, adjust the sliders, and see how you can easily alter a picture.

Other key tools and techniques:

- **Select:** Select button in tool bar or Command-3, or Tools menu>>Select gives you a selection marquee. Select part of a graphic, then Tools>>Crop, or Edit>>Copy (Command-C) and then File menu>>New from clipboard (or Command-N) to open the selection as a new file.
- **Text:** Text button in tool bar, or Command-2, or Tools menu>>Text. Select text by dragging over it, copy (File menu>>Copy, or Command-C), then paste into any text editor like Word, Pages, Appleworks, or an HTML editor like Dreamweaver. If it's actually a graphic, like text scanned in a photocopier, this tool doesn't work and is grayed out.
- **Zoom in/out:** Command +/-
- **Adjust Size** (for jpg and other graphic files): Tool menu>>Adjust size... The resulting dialog box gives various ways: fit to a certain format, type in the pixel width or height. Keeping the boxes checked for "Scale proportionally" and "Resample image" is highly recommended. This is a quick way to reduce pixels and thus cut file size dramatically.
- **Save as:** For file type conversion, compression of jpps, etc., this is the place. File menu>>Save as... Here you can go back and forth among a wide variety of file types. In jpg files you have the option to increase compression with a slider. Pdf to jpg and back (although text formats to graphics aren't reversible).
- **Mark up:** Tools menu>>Mark up>> choose among Highlight (Command-shift-H),

Strikethrough (Command-shift-S), Underline text (Command-shift-U) you have already highlighted.

- **Annotate:** Tools menu>>Annotate>>Add Oval/Rectangle/Note/Link. These four give you the ability to easily make electronic markups.
- **Slide show:** View menu>>Slide show (or Command-shift-F) runs through a slide show of selected jpgs.
- **Rotate left:** Command-L, **Rotate right:** Command-R.
- **Inspector:** Tools menu>>Inspector opens a pane showing a wealth of useful information (click on the icons near the top of the pane to learn more).

Adobe Reader does a fairly good subset of this, but with less breadth and a slower user interface if you're a touch typist who likes keyboard shortcuts. It also has a few user dead-ends that might require you to quit the application to get out of them, or other confusing software "features" to leave you stranded high-and-dry.

That being said, it has a few nice features. For some pdf documents, it provides a menu bar button that strips the graphic files out of pdf and saves them to a file. But Reader's selection marquee doesn't provide for adjustment, saves files before you want them, and gives you no control over file type or location.

All in all, you'll probably be happier with Preview, except that one in a blue moon you might find a pdf feature that doesn't work, like fillable forms, and you'll go back to Reader for that one instance.

Preview is installed as part of the Macintosh operating system. Adobe Reader is a free download from Adobe.com, and is often preinstalled during set up.