



How to Flatten PDF Files

NOTICE: When using a PDF fillable form, the user must "flatten" the PDF document after completing the form fields to ensure the document can be viewed on all devices and to prevent other users from manipulating or editing the information. The document filed and stored in CM/ECF cannot be altered once it has been filed; however, flattening the form will prevent any user from saving the document and editing the form fields. Additionally, if a document is created in Word and redacted in Word, it is possible to view the redacted words after that document has been converted to a PDF document. Users must redact in Adobe, not Word.

NOTE: This flattening process should also resolve the following error message when attempting to file documents :
"ERROR: Document is malformed or contains code which may cause an external action (such as launching an application). This PDF document cannot be accepted."

Follow the steps below to "flatten" a completed PDF fillable form:

For most Windows environments:

1. Open the PDF file.
2. If this is a fillable form, add appropriate data.
3. Right click on document and select Print. NOTE: if document opens in Adobe Acrobat, Select File and select Print.
4. Select the PDF printer driver. (The Adobe PDF printer is installed automatically with Adobe Acrobat. Numerous free PDF printer drivers are available for download from the Internet.)
5. Select OK.
6. Specify location to save the printed, "flattened" version of the form and name it.
7. Select Save.
8. File the "flattened" form in CM/ECF.

To flatten a PDF on a Mac:

1. Open the PDF in Preview
2. Go to File > Print
3. Select "Save as PDF" from the printer options - this will essentially print the document as a new PDF, effectively merging all layers and making it uneditable (flattened).

Key points:

- Use Preview: Mac's built-in Preview app is the easiest way to flatten a PDF.
- Print function: Access the "Print" function to initiate the flattening process.
- Save as PDF: In the print dialogue box, choose "Save as PDF" as your printer to create a new flattened PDF