MERGED OR SPLIT CELLS IN TABLES IN PDF

INTRODUCTION

Merged or split cells in a table can cause accessibility issues for users of assistive technologies, like screen readers. They disrupt the logical flow of data, leading to confusion about organization and relationships between data points. Navigating such tables can be difficult for keyboard users, as it may be unclear which cell is focused, hindering effective data retrieval. Different screen readers handle these cells inconsistently, resulting in unpredictable experiences and potential overlaps in announcements. Accessibility standards require clear data presentation, and merged or split cells can complicate compliance with these guidelines.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Click a title below to go to the destination page.

SETTING UP THE DOCUMENT PROPERTIES

There are three parts to setting the basic document properites:

1. Setting the Document Title
2. Setting PDF Metadata to Use the Document Title
3. Setting the Language in PDF

Performing these steps first when opening any PDF document will help resolve the most common errors before you start the remediation process.
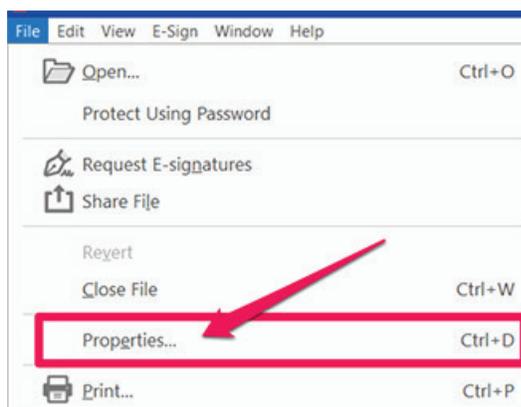
DOCUMENT TITLE

SETTING THE DOCUMENT TITLE

First check if the document has a document title. If it doesn't add the title. If the source document (such as Word, Excel, or PowerPoint) includes a title, the PDF will typically carry it over. Otherwise, you will need to add a title to the PDF. Follow the steps below to determine if the document title has been set properly.

Older Versions of Adobe Acrobat

1. Click on "File" at the top of the menu bar.
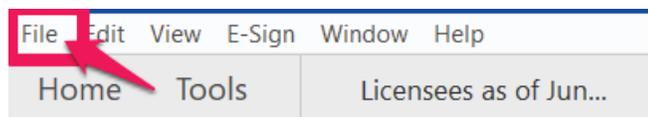
2. Select "Properties" to open the Document Properties window.
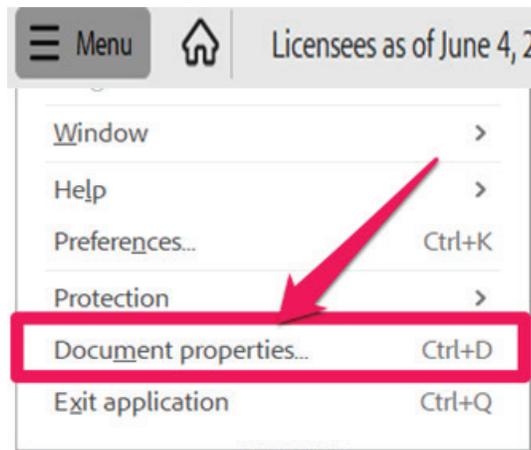
Newer Versions of Adobe Acrobat

1. Click on "Menu" at the top left of the window.


2. Select "Document Properties" to open the Document Properties window.

3. View the Description tab to determine if the document has a title and/or if the title is an appropriate description of the document. If the title is accurate, proceed to next section. If the title is not there or is not accurate, proceed to step 4.

Note: Steps 3 and 4 are the same in both older and newer versions of Adobe Acrobat
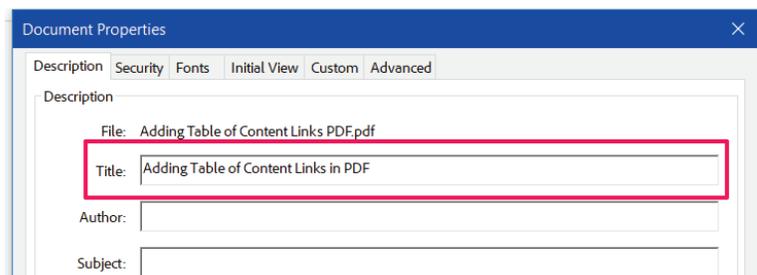

4. If there is no title, or if the title does not provide an accurate description of the document click in the Title field and select any text in it. Type in the new accurate document title.

## Setting PDF Metadata to Use the Document Title

When adding a title to the document, the metadata must be updated to reflect the new document title instead of the file name.

Note: These steps are the same in both older and newer versions of Adobe Acrobat.

1. Make sure you are still in the Document Properties. See last section for guidance.
2. Click on the "Initial View" tab.
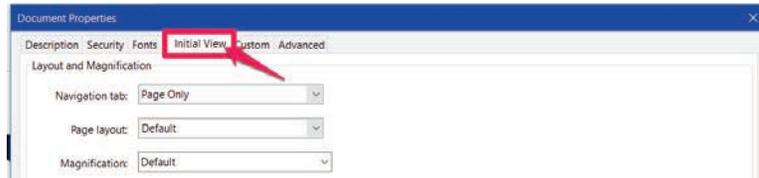
3. If the "Show" dropdown menu is set to "File Name" change this to "Document Title"
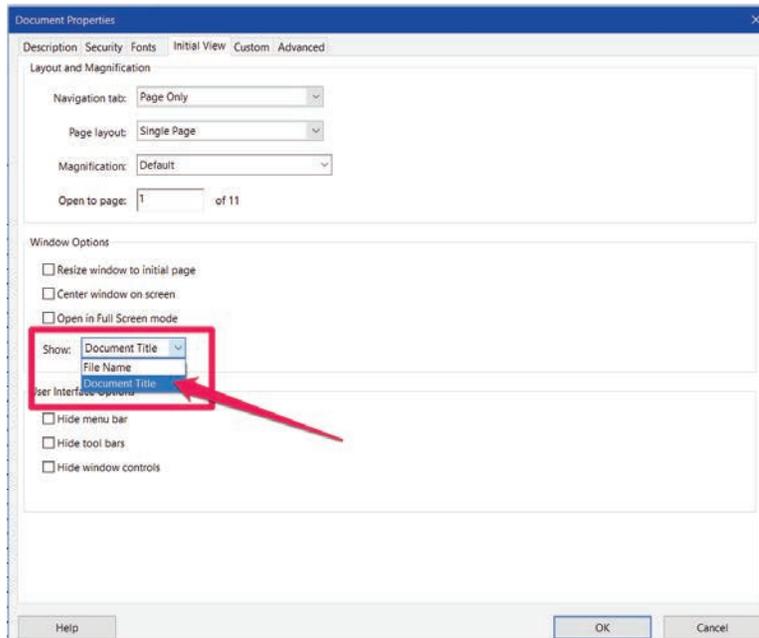
Setting the Language in PDF

Screen reader technology will read the document to the user in the language set for the document. A document can only have one language setting. The steps to set the correct language in a PDF are:

Note: These steps are the same in both older and newer versions of Adobe Acrobat.

1. Click on the "Advanced" tab in the Document Properties window.

2. Choose the "Language dropdown" and change it to the correct language. In this case "English."
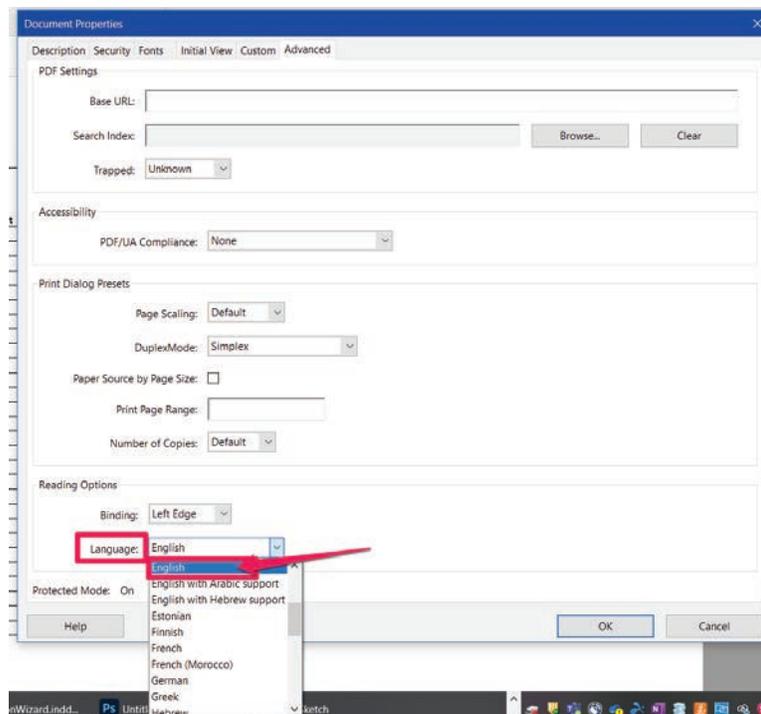

3. Click the "OK button to save any changes to the PDF title or language.

MERGED CELLS IN TABLES

Merged cells with multiple headings in a table can cause a regularity issue in Adobe and present a poor experience for keyboard users as well as for screen readers. This issue can be fixed by structuring the table inside of the tags panel.

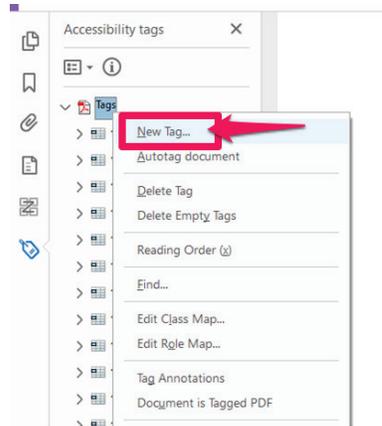## HOW TO CREATE A TABLE STRUCTURE IN THE TAGS PANEL:

1. Encapsulate and tag each text individually as a "Cell". Right click the element and select tag as "Cell"
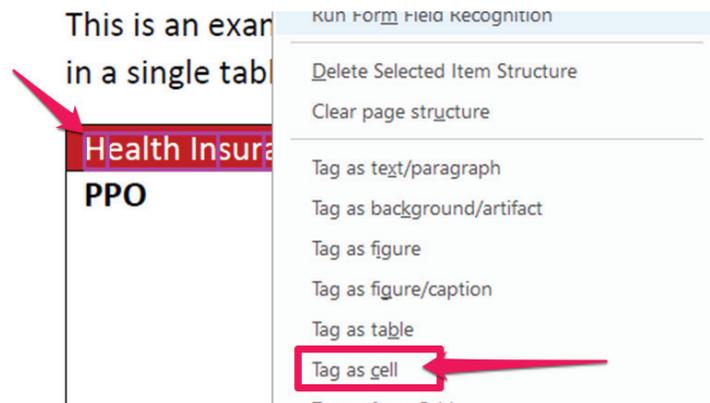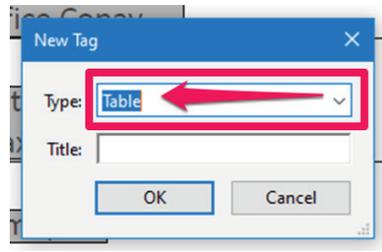

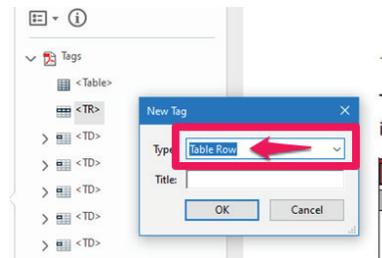2. Repeat for all cells. Tag as cell.

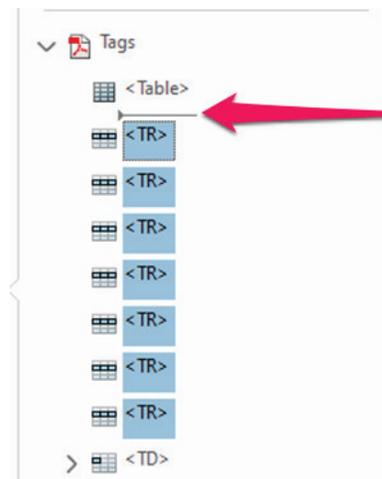3. Right click in tags panel and select the "New Tag" option.

4. Change type to "Table" and click OK to create a new Table tag in the tags panel.
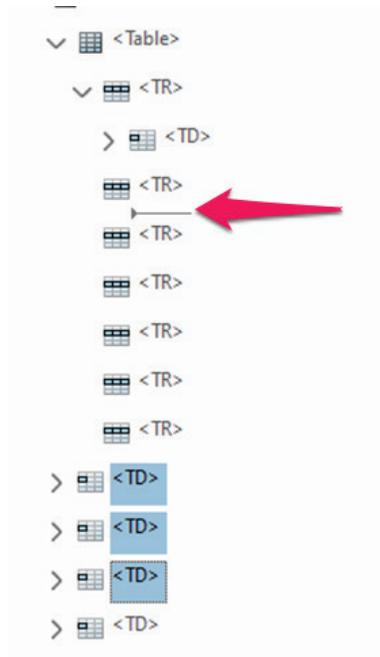

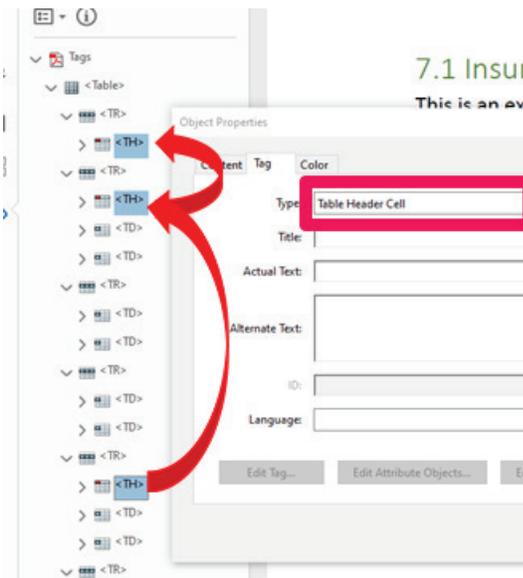5. Repeat steps 1-4 to create 7 Table Rows (TR) tags under the Table tag.

6. Highlight all Table Row tags and drag them up to nest them inside the Table tag.

7. Nest all cells into their respective rows with same method as step 6.

8. Select the proper header cells and right click to open "Properties". Change type to Table header cell so cells now show as <TH>.
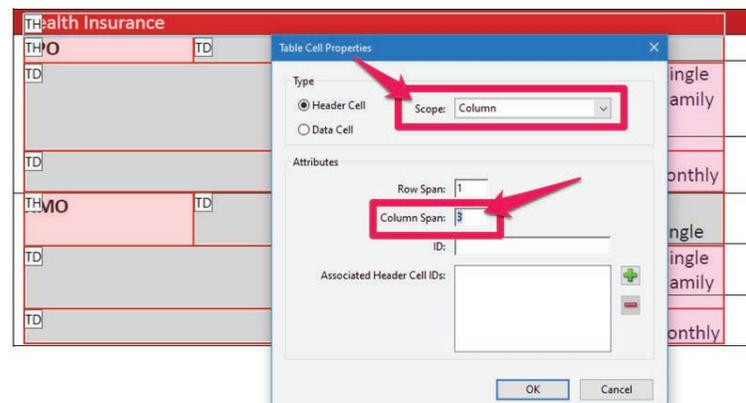
FIX REGULARITY ISSUES:

1. Table is currently irregular because not all rows have the same number of cells. Use table editor to open this view.


2. Right click on the first table cell and select "Table Cell Properties". Change the scope to Column and the column span to 3 to make this one cell seem like 3.

3. The next TH down needs to span 3 rows to cover the empty spaces in the two rows below. Use the same process as the last step but change the scope to "row" and the row span to 3.
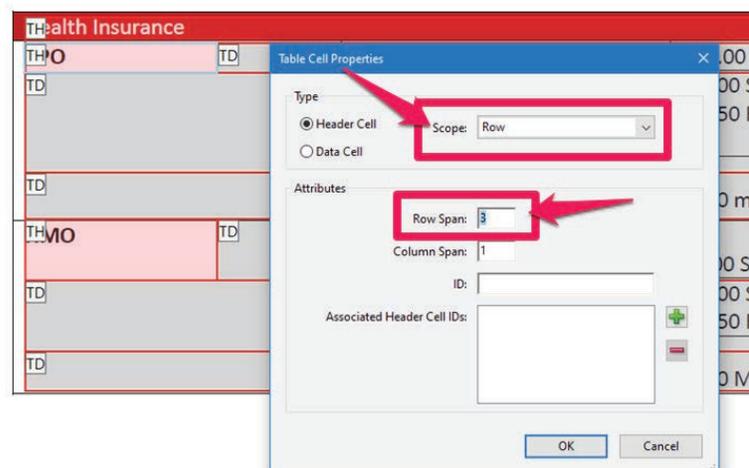
4. Repeat step 3 for the last "TH". This should make all rows regular and fix any header and regularity issues.

Headers - Passed

Regularity - Passed
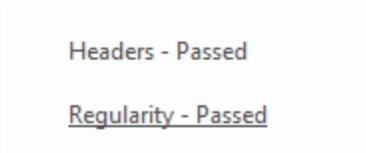
5. Run a Full Accessibility Check to verify the document is now compliant.

Full Accessibility Check on Document

Full Accessibility Check - Newer Versions of Adobe

The first step is to conduct a comprehensive (full) Accessibility Check to identify any errors that need to be addressed in the Content Tool in the All Tools Menu on the left. This menu is displayed by default on the left side of the page.
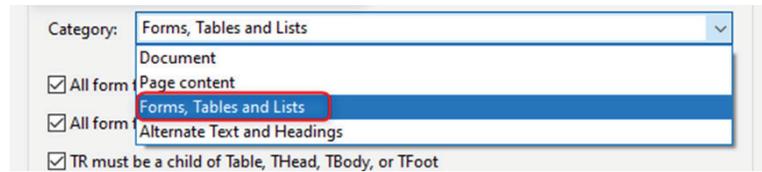
1. Locate the All Tools menu on the left and click the Prepare for accessibility button.
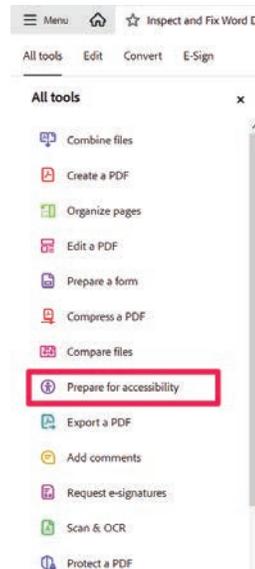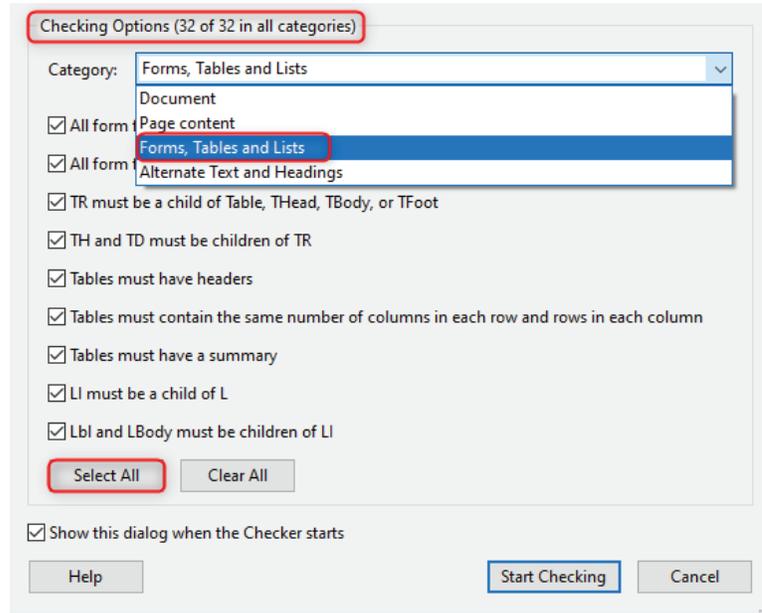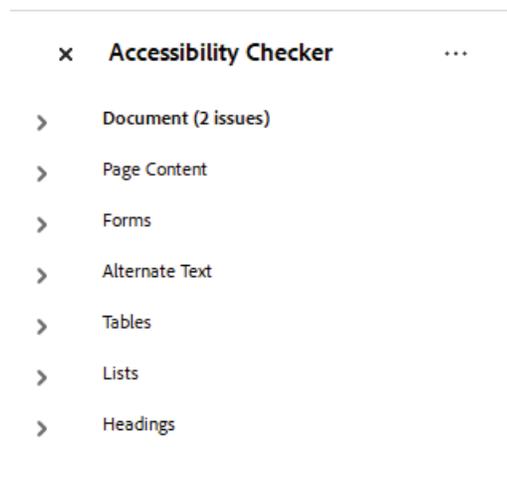

2. Click on Check for accessibility

3. Verify that the Category drop-down is set to "Forms, Tables and Lists".

4. In the Accessibility Checker Options dialog box, under Checking Options, verify that it shows (32 of 32 in all categories). Then click on Start Checking.
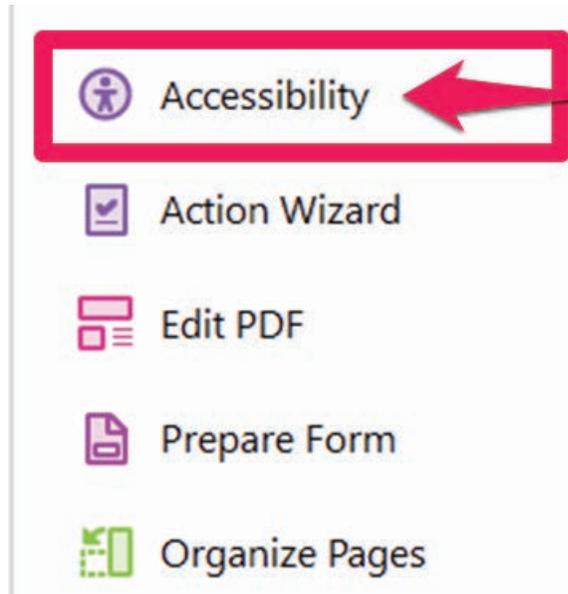

5. The Accessibility Checker panel will appear on the right side of the document. Expand the arrows to see the accessibility issues.
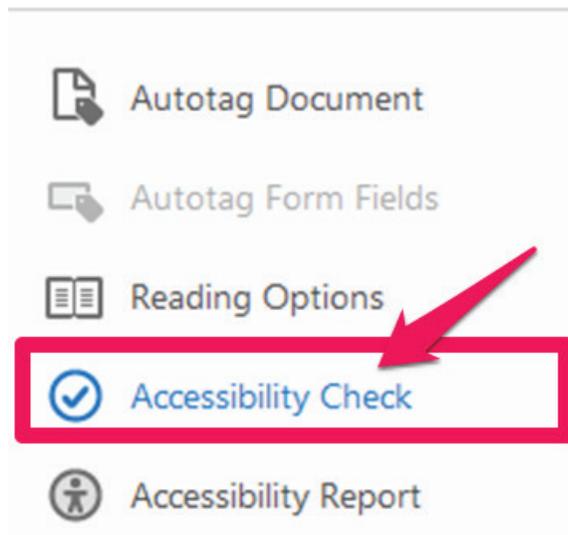
The first step is to conduct a comprehensive (full) Accessibility Check to identify any errors that need to be addressed in the Content Tool on the left tool menu.
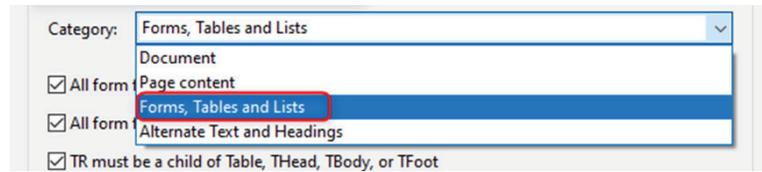
1. Use the Accessibility Tool on the right side of the document tool menu.
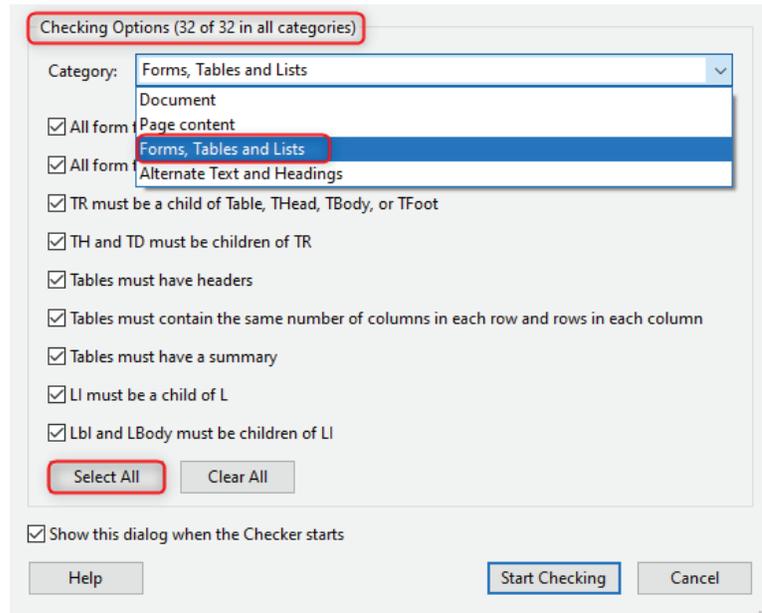

2. Select the Accessibility Check tool in the Accessibility tool to see if there are any errors.

1. Verify that the Category drop-down is set to "Forms, Tables and Lists".

2. In the Accessibility Checker Options dialog box, under Checking Options, verify that it shows (32 of 32 in all categories). Then click on Start Checking.

3. The Accessibility Checker panel will appear on the left side of the document. Expand the arrows to see the accessibility issues.