

The difference between versions PDF 1.2 to PDF 1.7.

The extremely basic answers are:

PDF 1.2 – Acrobat 3.0 - basically obsolete now.

PDF 1.3 – Acrobat 4.0 - The first version of PDF containing the needed features to support "press-ready" PDF's including color management. It also added java script, interactive capabilities. PDF/X-3 and some other commercial print work flows are based on PDF 1.3.

PDF 1.4 – Acrobat 5.0 - Introduced with Illustrator 9. The main difference is it has both transparency and alpha transparency capabilities. It takes either the latest commercial RIPs or certain Level 3 PostScript printers to use these features properly. Remember not all Level 3 PostScript printers will handle transparency. The most distinguishing feature of PDF 1.4 is the ability to export true transparency in the PDF files.

Note: The only way you will be able to print the transparency features viewed on-screen exactly is to export file as Acrobat 5.0 – PDF 1.4.

PDF 1.5 – Acrobat 6.0 - There are many improvements for "press-ready" PDF, including the capability to have true layering within the PDF, PDF-X "pre-flight" capability, more security and interactive features, like the ability to add comments which are separate from the original doc. PDF 1.5 can also support compression options for images using JPEG 2000.

PDF 1.6 – Acrobat 7.0 - Some basic refinements to the 1.5 features with more extensive use of digital signing for document control, and extended commenting for group collaboration.

PDF 1.7 – Acrobat 8.x - Just some added 3D features.

So, which version you choose for export? You'll need to consider the following:

- 1) Where am I ultimately printing this file? - Always try to ask your commercial printer first.
- 2) Does my document have transparency features? Should they be flattened?
- 3) Am I exporting PDF forms and how do I know end receivers of my file can use it?
Also, what is the version of Acrobat or Acrobat Reader your users will have?
- 4) Do I need layers? - If Yes, only PDF 1.5 and up supports this.
- 5) What about the other kinds of PDF I have read about, like PDF-X and PDF-A ?
PDF marked as any of the following: PDF/X-1:2001, X-1a:2001 and 2003; X-2:2003; X-3:2002 and 2003 are all different formats of PDF-X, which is a way of creating a PDF with certain criteria specifically for pre-press.
The ISO standard choice right now is PDF-X1a which will automatically embed all fonts, check that all colors are cmymk, set the trapping and determine the output intent.