

Software: Acrobat 9 Professional  
Publisher: Adobe (<http://www.adobe.com>)  
Reviewer: Loren Elks (<http://www.d-mag.org>)  
Rating: 4 of 5 stars

Acrobat has been a required tool for anyone wanting to create documents for the web for years. Acrobat's flexibility, security, editing and commenting features are legendary.



Now, the new Acrobat 9 comes in three flavors:

- Acrobat Standard
- Acrobat Pro
- Acrobat Pro Extended

To get a better feel for the differences between these versions, I suggest you visit this matrix:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/matrix.html> .

For this review, I tested Adobe Acrobat 9 Pro Extended.

## What is Adobe Acrobat?

For the new user, Adobe Acrobat enables you to convert documents, pictures and some other file types in to the worldwide recognized standard known as PDF (Portable Document Format). This is non-OS dependent format (you can use on Macs, PC, Unix, etc.) enables you to share these files with others, who only need the free version of Acrobat, called Acrobat Reader, to open the files.

There is a distinct difference between Reader and the full versions of Acrobat. Acrobat Reader users can only view the PDF documents and interact with them. They cannot modify or create PDFs with Acrobat Reader. The full version of Acrobat has all of the toolsets to not only create PDFs, but to edit them, apply security features, combine existing PDFs, develop forms (with Designer) and other features.

A full version of Acrobat is a must have for any designer of web, visual or print content. You can create portfolios and other PDFs documents.

## What's new in Acrobat 9?

Being really impressed with the leaps that Acrobat 8 took in almost all areas, I was anxious to get a look at Acrobat 9. However, this version does not have the global type of focus on the program that Acrobat 8 did. This version is more narrowly focus on specific areas. These areas include more of document collaboration and review focus, and some focus on forms.

So, what are some of the high points I liked?

- **Launch Speed** – I noticed right away that Acrobat 9 launched faster than Acrobat 8. This is a nice to have feature, when speed is an issue.
- **PDF Portfolio** – This is a REALLY cool feature that enables you to build advanced portfolios in Acrobat that have Flash-type scrolling effects. This is bound to make an impact on those you submit the portfolios too.
- **3D Features** – Yet another cool feature. Acrobat 9 contains controls right in the PDF that will enable the users to rotate and view 3D contents. This is awesome if you use 3D for visual effects or to show CAD / CAM designs.
- **Forms** – Anyone who has tried to create forms in Acrobat has known that it has been a challenge over the years. While the completed forms are great, the path to creating them in the interface has been a little “clunky”. The other problem always came on the backend with the post-production aspects of managing and collecting the information. Most designers I know tended to give up and opt for HTML forms, which were easier to use.

For Acrobat 9, the “powers that be” at Adobe got together and focused their energy on making it easier to create and manage the forms. The new Forms Editor module is easier to work with than its predecessor, the Forms toolbar. It's now easier to use because Adobe has made the module so that your workspace is more easily manageable and streamlined specifically for creating forms. The new Forms Wizard is cool because it enables you to create new forms from scratch, or from existing documents.

The result is that the forms provide a richer experience for the end user, with a visually appealing dynamic look, as opposed to the stale look that most forms have. The forms developer can also feel the difference in the ease of creating the forms and collecting them.

- **Web Capture** – Another cool feature for us web designers is the Web Capture features of Acrobat have been approved. You can create PDFs of the entire web page, or just portions of it. You can also comment on the pages easier. This is great when collaborating with a team or clients.
- **Share Video** – You can share video from a variety of formats (QuickTime, FLV and others), and Flash animations without a special player. You just import them as video into Acrobat 9. The can be handy for Flash designers like myself who may want to show someone a Flash presentation offline. It can also be great for video designers as well.
- **On Demand Presentations** – You can import slides and audio from Power Point to create slide shows in your PDF using Adobe Presenter features.

- **Document Comparisons** – Acrobat 9 has a more accurate document comparison feature which you can compare various PDFs and highlight their differences. This can be handy for those print designs, or technical documentation designers.
- **ConnectNow** – By purchasing the software, you can login and create your own personal meeting space, complete with a permanent URL. This works similarly to GoToMeeting or WebEx, because you also get a phone number and participant code for meetings.

This feature also comes with audio over the phone, or VOIP (Voice Over IP) through the computer's microphone and speakers.

You can invite up to two people and yourself to the meeting to show presentations and share screens. If you need more, you can purchase the upgraded service called ConnectPro that enables you to invite up to 1,500 participants.

You can also store up to 5GB online, use the online word processor (Buzzword), share PDFs and other handy features.

- **Synchronized Documents** – You can now share a PDF with another user, and as long as you are both online, the page views will be synchronized to ensure “everyone's on the same page” at the same time. In the Collaborate Live panel, you can also chat while viewing the document.

## Summary

While not really advanced some other areas of the product (PDF creation, print workflows etc.), Adobe 9 has progressed in the areas mentioned above. On a down side, there is currently no LiveCycle Designer available for Mac users either.

However, the new features will have an impact on how you create and deploy PDFs, and collaborate with associates and clients. Anyone who collaborates will definitely notice the improvements with the integration of Acrobat 9 and Adobe.com.

My favorite new features as a web designer are the awesome PDF portfolios you can now create, improved web capture, along with the embedded video players.

## Testing Parameters

OS: Windows XP Pro  
CPU: Centrino DUO (2 GHz)  
RAM: 2 GB  
HD: 100 GB