



# Tailor your Adobe Acrobat X Pro workflow with automated Actions

Eliminate repetitive commands in Acrobat X Pro by building them into self-running Actions that prompt for settings and provide on-screen instructions.

**A**dobe's decision to turn Acrobat Pro's interface inside out for the recently launched version X has divided users into love-it and hate-it camps. Certainly, the new interface is much cleaner thanks to heavy pruning of (some would say 'laying waste to') the program menus and toolbars. The time-honoured tradition of finding all program features in the menus doesn't apply to Acrobat X.

The effect of this is to hide a lot of commands and tools, forcing users to navigate stacks of them crammed into the new Tools panel to find what they want. This can be tiresome when carrying out repetitive tasks. Thankfully, Acrobat X also introduces an Actions feature that slices through the new interface like a machete. Unlike the Actions feature in Photoshop, Acrobat X

Actions must be constructed in a dialog box rather than recorded in real time as you work. That said, the Actions interface in Acrobat X is quick to learn and easy to work with, as long as you're familiar with the program features you want to automate.

So in this tutorial, we're going to take a real-world example. A designer has provided you with single-page hi-res PDFs from a printed publication, complete with press crop marks, and you need to turn them into one multi-page low-res PDF for emailing and reading online. You could ask the designer to re-export the pages using different PDF settings, but this is out of your control. Besides, it's easily done in Acrobat.

Furthermore, in Acrobat X, it's easier still because you can turn the entire process into a self-running Action.



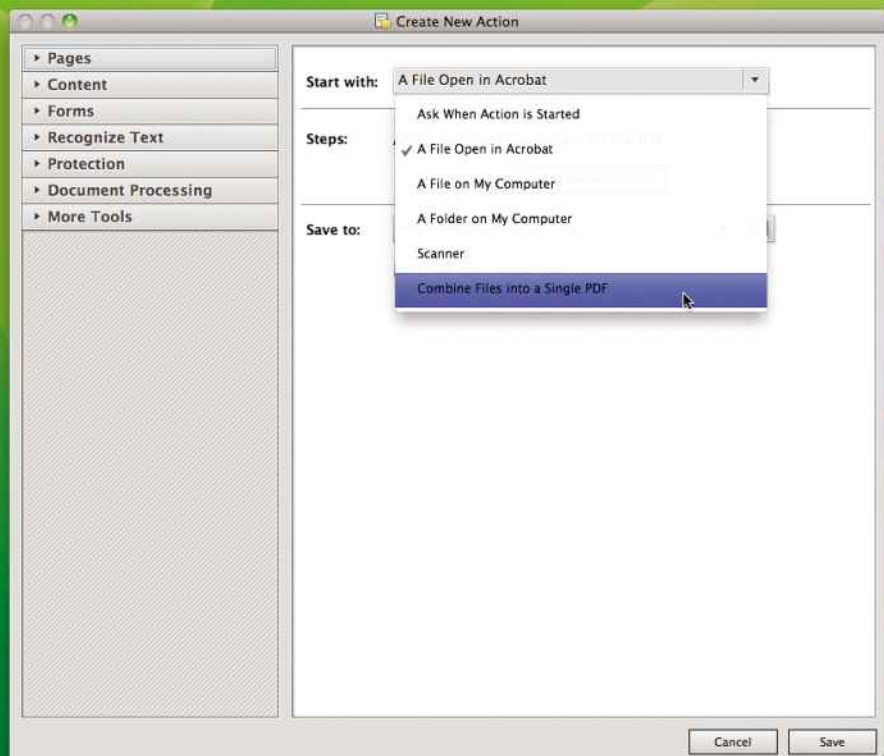
**Alistair Dabbs** is a freelance journalist, editorial trainer and Adobe Certified Instructor specialising in print and digital media publishing. The black belt in karate comes in handy, too.

**Kit required**  
Acrobat X Pro



## 1. Create a new Action

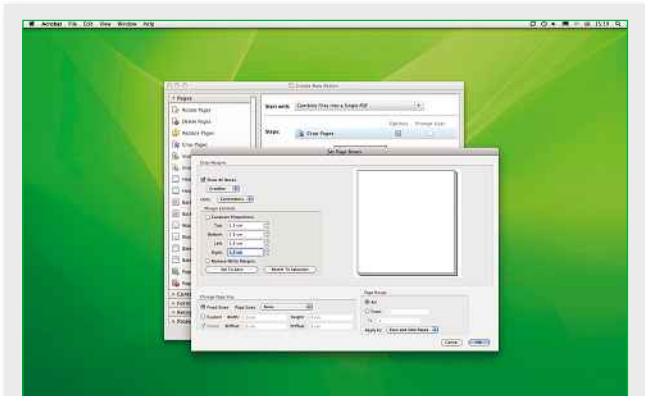
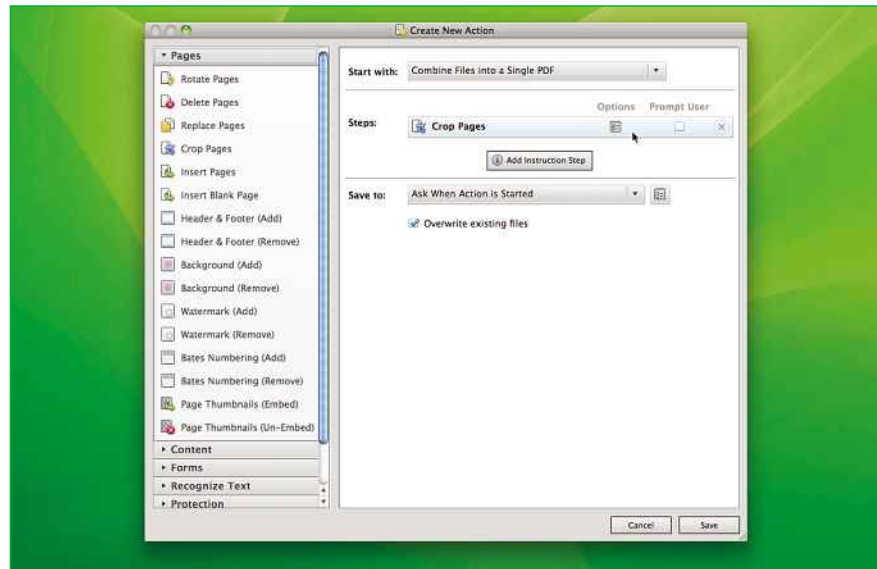
From Acrobat X's File menu, choose Action Wizard > Create New Action. In the Create New Action dialog that appears, program commands are listed in sections down the left-hand panel, while the main area presents a basic three-step workflow: open something, do something to it and save the result. Since our workflow involves combining multiple PDFs into one file, start by clicking on the 'Start with' drop-down menu and choosing 'Combine Files into a Single PDF'.



## 2. Remove crop marks

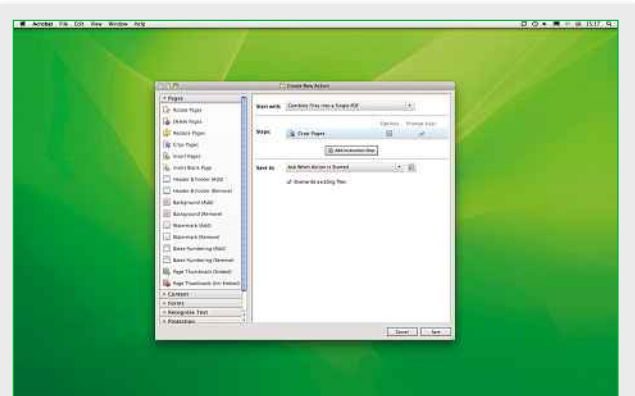
All the press PDFs have crop marks that need to be removed, so click on Pages in the left-hand panel and choose the 'Crop Pages' command to add it as your first step.

If you make a mistake, you can easily remove an unwanted command by hovering the mouse over it and clicking on the 'X' button. For now, click on the Options button to open the Set Page Boxes window.



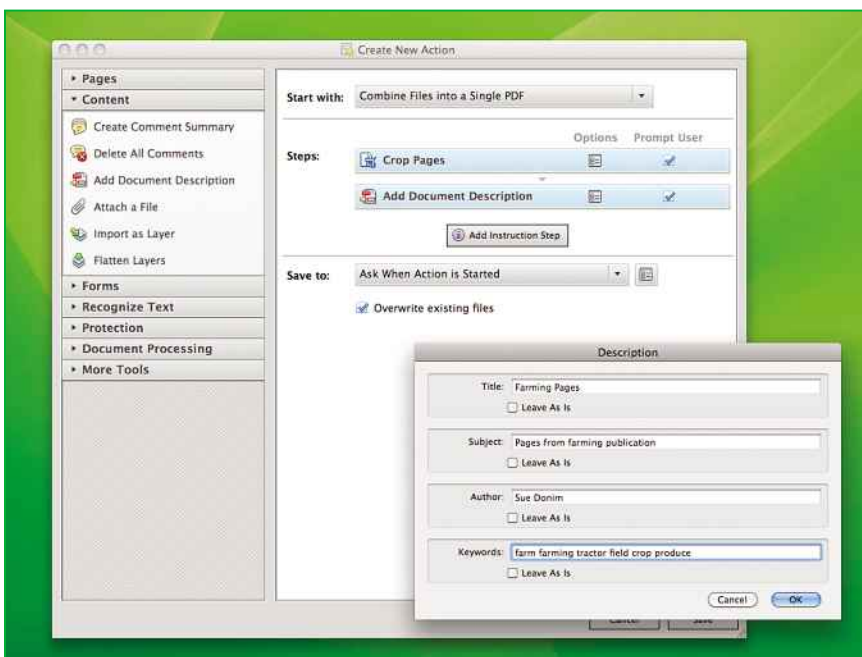
## 3. Trim those margins

In the Set Page Boxes window, alter the page margins to remove the crop mark areas around the edges of each page. An easy way to do this is to enter the distance between the TrimBox and CropBox in the Margin Controls fields. Clearly, you'll need to know this measurement in advance, as the dialog doesn't preview any pages at this stage. Click OK.



## 4. Prompt for measurements each time

Back in the Create New Action window, put a tick under the Prompt User column next to Crop Pages to force the Action to open the Set Page Boxes window at this point (this means that you can change the trim as required).



## 5. Add Document Description

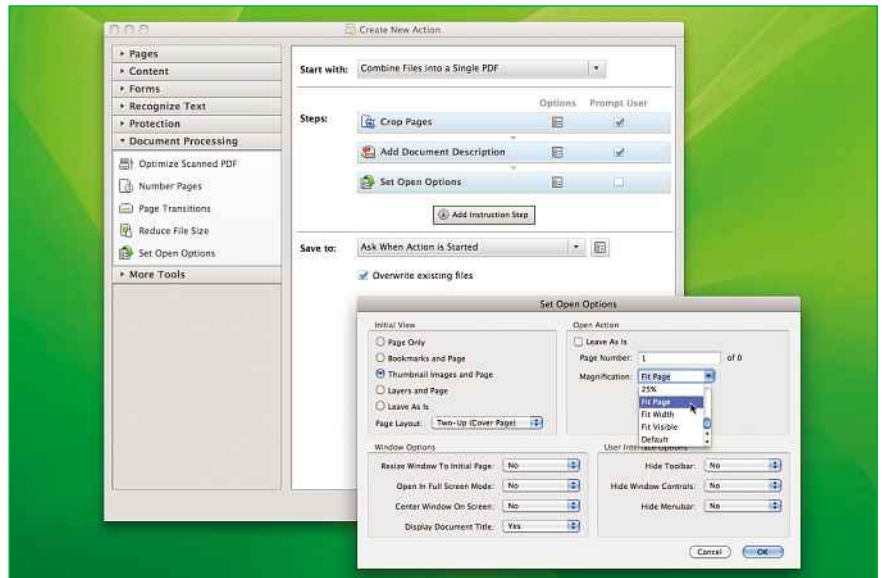
Click on Content in the left-hand panel and choose Add Document Description to add it to your workflow. Tick Prompt User again. If you want, click on the Options button to customise the PDF Description.



## 6. Set Open Options

Under the Document Processing section in the left-hand panel, click on Set Open Options. Click on the Options button for this Step to show the Set Open Options dialog.

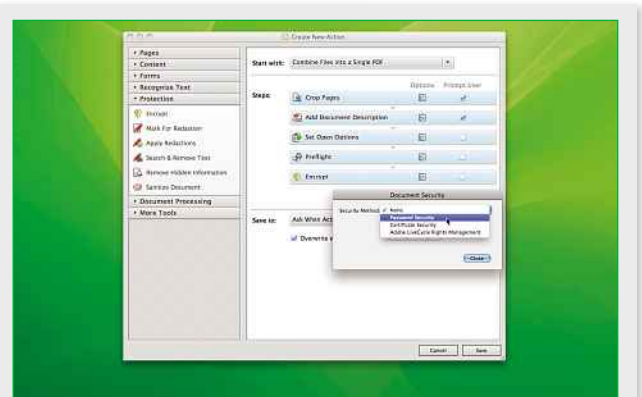
Choose how you want the PDF to appear when someone first opens it. For complete control, choose Yes or No for the Window Options rather than just accepting Leave As Is. Finally, click OK.



## 7. Run a Preflight fixup

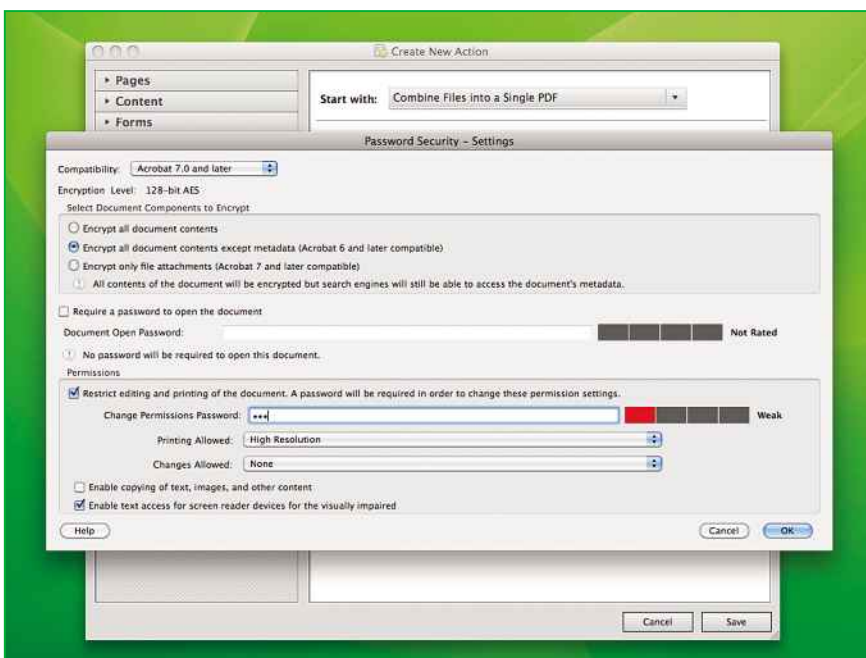
Under More Tools in the left-hand panel, choose Preflight and click on its Options button. We're not so much interested in preflighting as the fixups for carrying out multiple changes.

At the top of the Preflight dialog, choose the 'Downsample image resolution to 150 ppi' preflight check. This will convert all high-res images in the PDF to average resolution. If you require harsher compression, create your own preflight fixup. Click Save.



## 8. Protect the PDF

Let's make sure people can't extract content illegally from the online PDF or make malicious edits to it. Under Protection in the left-hand panel, choose Encrypt and click on the Options button. In the Security Method drop-down menu at the top of the Document Security window, choose Password Security to open the Password Security Settings dialog box.



## 9. Restrict editing

Choose an Acrobat version compatibility option at the top of the window, and then tick the 'Restrict editing and printing...' option under Permissions. Allow printing but disallow changes, and type in a basic password. Ignore the password rating bar: you'll want to change the password each time you run the Action, so you may as well pick something foolishly basic here because it will just get changed anyway. Click OK and confirm the password.

