

Creating Forms in Acrobat

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Forms that are clean and well-designed in Microsoft Word make the best fillable forms in Acrobat. Keep these tips in mind:

- Make ample space for fillable fields. What works in Word may not work in Acrobat, especially if the field has to be drawn and placed by hand.
- Delete multi-line underscoring; leave space instead to draw a large text box in Acrobat.
- Avoid tables. Acrobat doesn't recognize the individual cells as separate fields. Convert tables to text. (Table Tools > Layout > Convert to Text (under Data) Try Tabs first. If you don't like the formatting results, Undo, and then try Paragraph marks.
- Use the underscore – tab method to create “blanks” in forms when designing in Word. Acrobat will better recognize each underscore as it's own separate field if the “blanks” you are creating are separated by tabs or spacing.
- When you're ready, use the Acrobat Forms Wizard: Forms > Create New Forms.

These tips are illustrated below.

Tip 1 - Make Ample Space

Make ample space for fillable fields. What works in Word may not work in Acrobat, especially if the field has to be drawn and placed by hand.

BEFORE:

Do all of the former firms listed above meet all three parts of the definition of a Predecessor Firm? If no, please explain. Yes No

AFTER:

Do all of the former firms listed above meet all three parts of the definition of a Predecessor Firm? If no, please explain. Yes No

In the “before” example, the Yes and No checkboxes are crowded against the sentence that precedes them. In the “after” example, the Yes and No checkboxes are moved down a line, leaving more room to draw a radio button field in Acrobat.

Tip 2 - Delete Multi-Line Underscoring

BEFORE:

1. I wish to file an Advance Request for Exemption for the 2011 Plan Year at this time for the following reason (state reason why you cannot file regular Request for Exemption this coming January):

AFTER:

1. I wish to file an Advance Request for Exemption for the 2011 Plan Year at this time for the following reason (state reason why you cannot file regular Request for Exemption this coming January):

(With the underscoring gone, use Acrobat to draw a large Text Box here)

Tip 3 - Convert Tables to Text

THIS WON'T WORK:

Acrobat doesn't recognize the individual cells in tables as separate fields.

Former Firm	Year Estab./Ended	No. Lawyers	Location

THIS WON'T WORK:

Acrobat ignores the column headings and reads the continuous underscore as one long text field on each line.

Former Firm	Year Estab./Ended	No. Lawyers	Location
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

THIS WILL:

In this case, the underscoring is separated by tabs. Acrobat correctly reads and interprets each underscore as a separate field.

Former Firm	Year Estab./Ended	No. Lawyers	Location
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

If you have a table in Word, convert it to text. (Table Tools > Layout > Convert to Text (under Data) Try Tabs first. If you don't like the formatting results, Undo, and then try Paragraph marks.