

# SEO



# USING



## The Ultimate Weapon For Search Engine Optimization

**Mick Moore**

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

For a couple of years now, Google has been able to crawl PDF documents, and as certain businesses were launching new products — I began to notice they were taking a non-traditional approach to Search Engine Ranking and Internet Marketing: These companies would slap together a PDF with a couple of pages of text content about the product, upload it to their web site, link to it from their home page, and in no time flat that PDF file would have the No. 1 ranking in both Google and Yahoo! for the relevant keywords. And they weren't the only company doing so. One of these companies main competitors was also launching a similar product, sourced from the same manufacturer. One thing that benefitted both companies was that the product they were launching didn't have much search history, so neither company had much competition for the relevant keywords on the internet.

More interesting still is the fact that this second company didn't know about the use of PDF's in Search Engine Optimization. They took a more traditional approach to SEO with their new product: They built out a web site with some good descriptive content, did their backlinking as you normally would, created some Press Releases, and submitted the site to the Search Engines. The problem was, they had a heck of a time getting their traditional website with the great content they developed to outrank the PDF file from the first company. Ultimately, the second company followed the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" scenario and produced their own PDF which immediately started battling the competitor's PDF for search engine supremacy.

With so many businesses — especially retailers — having access to PDFs full of product information, here are some thoughts on optimizing PDFs for search engine visibility.

1. All three major engines can crawl and index text-based PDFs. If you need proof, just do a search on each SE with [pdf] in the query. Google: white paper pdf ... Yahoo: white paper pdf ... MSN: white paper PDF
2. PDF optimization is similar to optimization for a regular content page. Try this: good use of keywords/phrases, appropriate headlines and sub-headlines, solid content that reads well to a human eye, etc. If the PDF will include images, a caption underneath each image would be a good idea, especially if the caption includes a targeted keyword/phrase. (Of course, don't overdo it. Remember my mom's advice about SEO.)

Proof: Using the search above, we find this PDF ranked prominently in all three engines. On page 9 of this PDF, there's a bold content heading (the equivalent of an H2): Awareness and Usage of the XML Button. Let's not use the exact text, but something close: Here are the SERPs for [xml button awareness]: Yahoo, Google, and MSN. In each case, you find the PDF ranked highly in the SERPs and that exact bold content heading showing prominently in the snippet.

3. The most important thing where PDFs and SEO is concerned is how the PDF is created. Don't use Photoshop to make your PDF, because when you do that, you're actually making a big image file, not a true PDF — and the spiders cannot crawl or "read" the text from that image file. The PDF should be created with a text-based program, like MS Word or Adobe Pagemaker, so that the final product is text-based and can be crawled.

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

4. Your PDF can reside anywhere on your site, but the same rule about spiders not being likely to crawl content that's too deep applies. The safest thing to do is to put it as close to the root directory as possible.

5. When publishing a PDF on your site, you should very visibly link to the PDF from the home page, or from some page that gets crawled regularly. You have to lead the crawler along so it finds the new content as quickly as possible. Don't just post the PDF and then cross your fingers that it gets crawled. (See my old post, Training the Crawlers for more.)

6. It's probably a good idea to use your main keyword phrase when naming the files, such as main\_keyword.pdf. I have done some serious investigation on what impact this has, and it would seem to be a good idea to use a keyword when naming the file as there is definitely a little boost to be had.

So that's my quick and dirty overview on PDF optimization for SEO. What do you do with PDFs, if anything? Below is my step by step process with pictures.

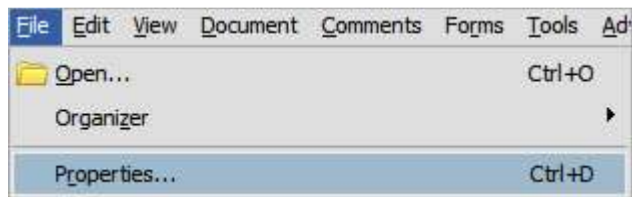
## Tutorial and Pictorial - Optimizing PDFs for Search

This quick Tutorial assumes that you have Adobe Acrobat and/or a similar authoring program for the editing of PDF Documents.

Note that you DO NOT need the publishing program originally used to create the documents e.g. InDesign. I'm using Adobe Acrobat for this Tutorial/Pictorial.

My example uses the Google Guidelines for Quality Raters PDF which is optimized for search.

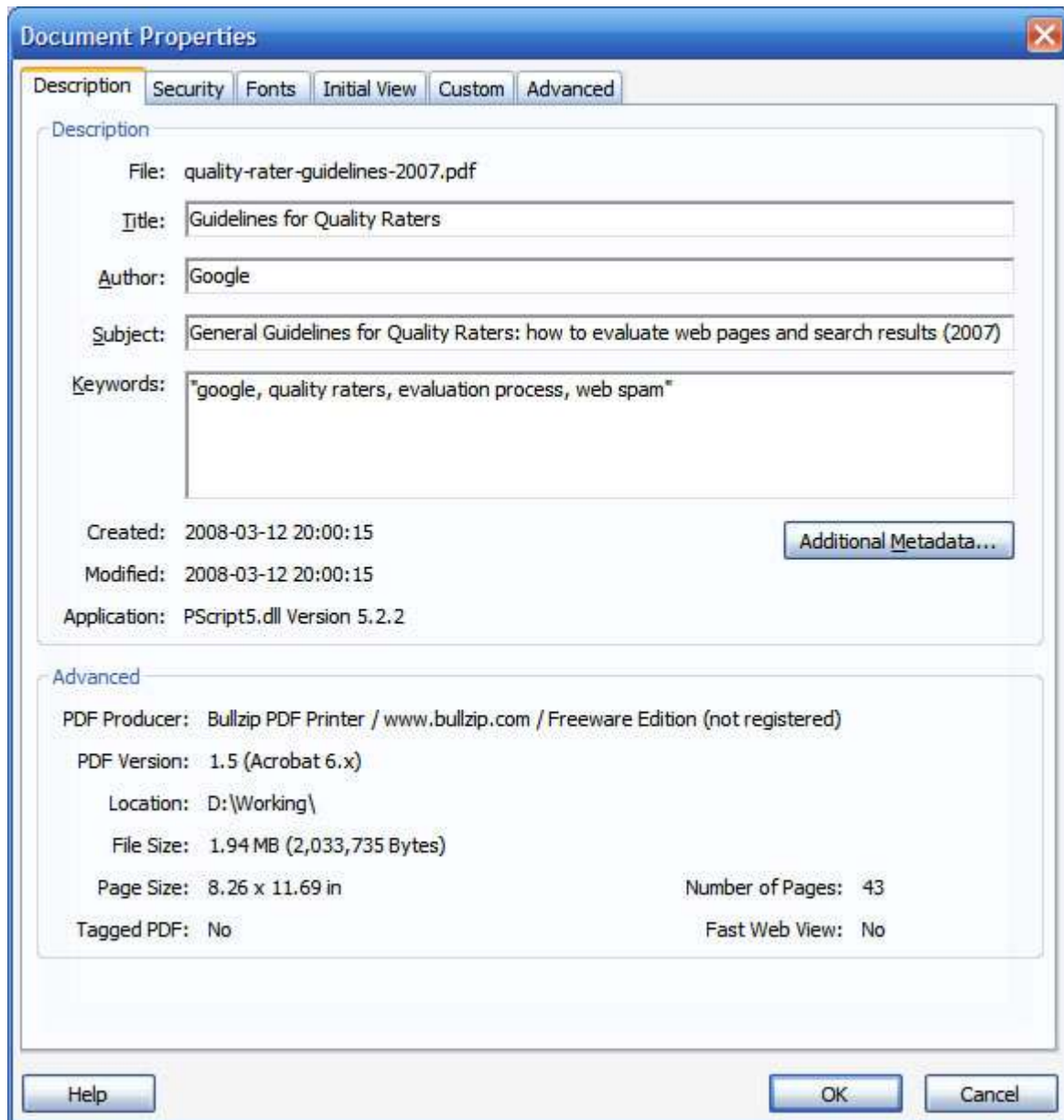
Let's get started! From Adobe Acrobat go to the File menu and select Properties.



# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

## PDF Document Properties - Description

The **Description Tab** is where most of your search optimized content resides.



1. **File:** quality-rater-guidelines-2007.pdf

File = <title> - If a Title is not present (see next), the file name is used by default. This is why it is imperative that your file names are relevant (suggest hyphens as keyword separator) and that you've crafted an optimized document title.

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

## 2. **Title:** Guidelines for Quality Raters

Title = <title> - This is the single most important element of your PDF Document Properties. This is used as the title in the SERPs. Remember, if this is not populated, the file name e.g. quality-rater-guidelines-2007.pdf is used by default.

## 3. **Author:** Google

This can be a company name or an individual's name.

## 4. **Subject:** General Guidelines for Quality Raters: how to evaluate web pages and search results (2007)

Subject = Snippet - The Subject serves as the META Description for your PDF Document. It is the second most important element after the Title.

## 5. **Keywords:** google, quality raters, evaluation process, web spam

The Keywords dialog is here for a reason, use it effectively. I keep them brief, usually 3-5 primary keywords, no fluff.

## **PDF Document Properties - Additional Metadata**

Once you've populated the **Description** information, you can build **Additional Metadata** into your PDF Document. Click on the Additional Metadata button and you are presented with this dialog window.

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

quality-rater-guidelines-2007.pdf

Description

Document Title: Guidelines for Quality Raters

Author: Google

Author Title:

Description: General Guidelines for Quality Raters: how to evaluate web pages and search results (2007)

Description Writer:

Keywords: "google, quality raters, evaluation process, web spam"

Commas can be used to separate keywords

Copyright Status: Unknown

Copyright Notice:

Copyright Info URL:

Go To URL...

Created: 2008-03-12 12:00:15  
Modified: 2008-03-12 12:00:15  
Application: PScript5.dll Version 5.2.2  
Format: application/pdf

Powered By xmp

OK Reset

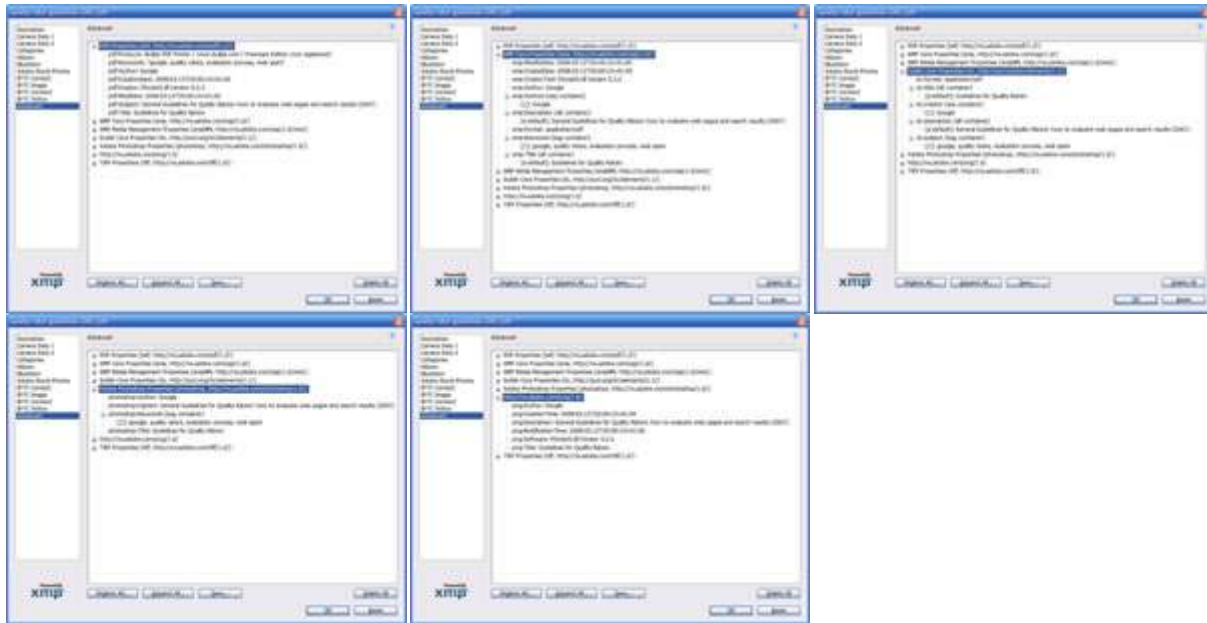
Notice how most of the information you entered in the **Description Tab** is already populated in this dialog. The **Additional Metadata** you can enter are;

1. Author Title
2. Description Writer
3. Copyright Status
4. Copyright Notice
5. Reference to your Copyright Info URL

If you look at the left menu, you'll notice an **Advanced** selection at the bottom. If you choose that, you'll see a good overview of how your PDF Document may be interpreted by crawlers. See the 5 examples below.

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

## PDF Document Properties - 5 Examples



### Just The Basics

The above covers just the basics of PDF Document Optimization for Search. Once you start to optimize PDFs on a regular basis, you find out how important they can be in the overall equation.

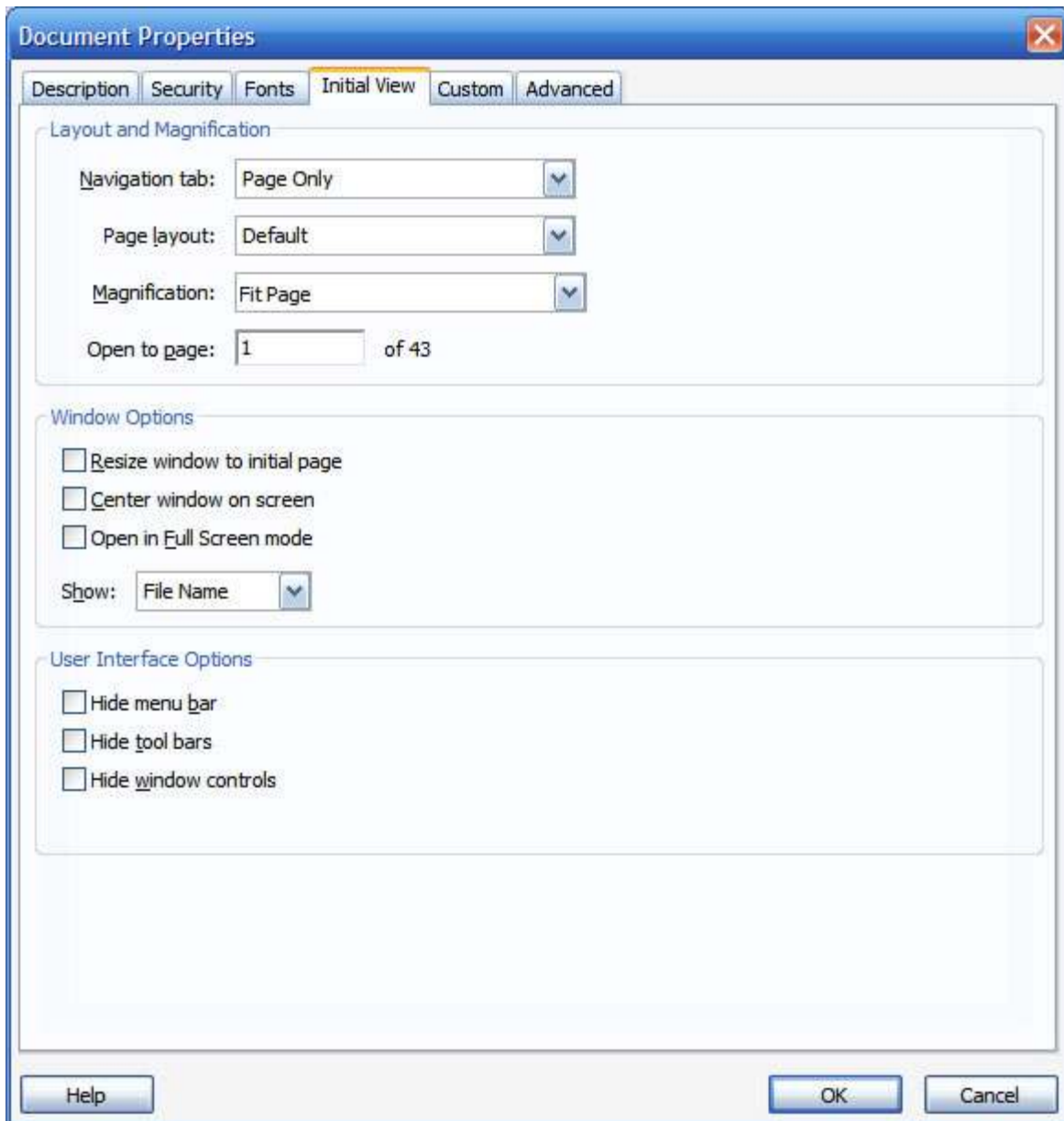
There are a variety of strategies that can be utilized when working with a library of PDF Documents, the above is first and foremost with ALL documents, not just PDFs. This applies to [Word](#), [Excel](#), [PowerPoint](#), and/or any publishing software.

While we're in the Document Properties dialog, we might as well optimize the document for our visitors viewing pleasure.

### PDF Document Properties - Initial View

These are the default settings for the Document's Initial View, what the visitor sees when they open the PDF from a link. In many instances, this is really not the best setting as the user ends up with a document that is not optimized for viewing.

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

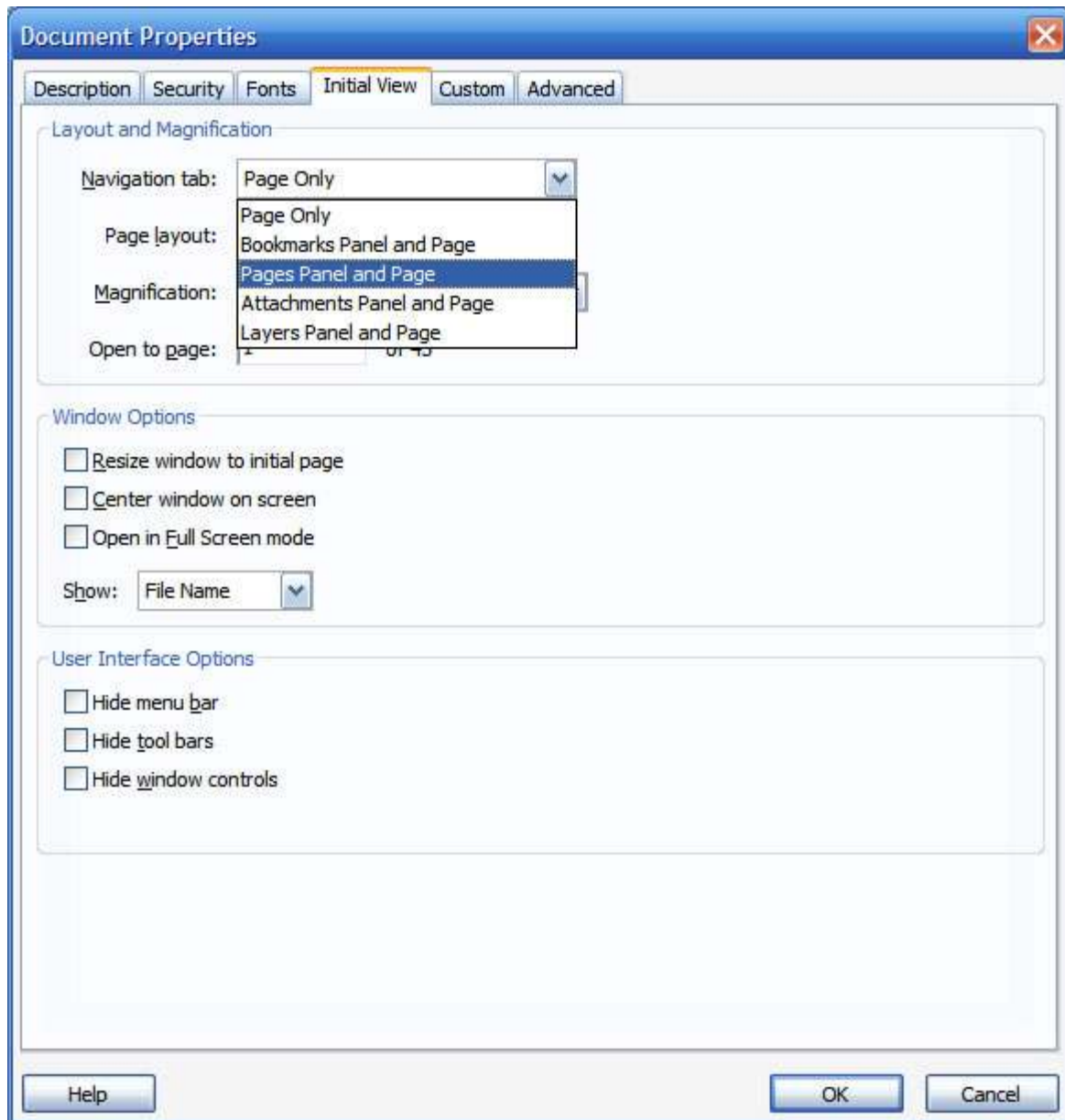


## PDF Document Properties - Initial View - Optimized for Viewing

Most of the time we're working with multi-page PDF Documents. If there are too many pages and the document can be broken down into logical mini-documents, we may suggest that. It's like taking really long web pages and breaking them down into *groups of highly targeted pages*.

I like using the *Pages Panel and Page as Initial View*.

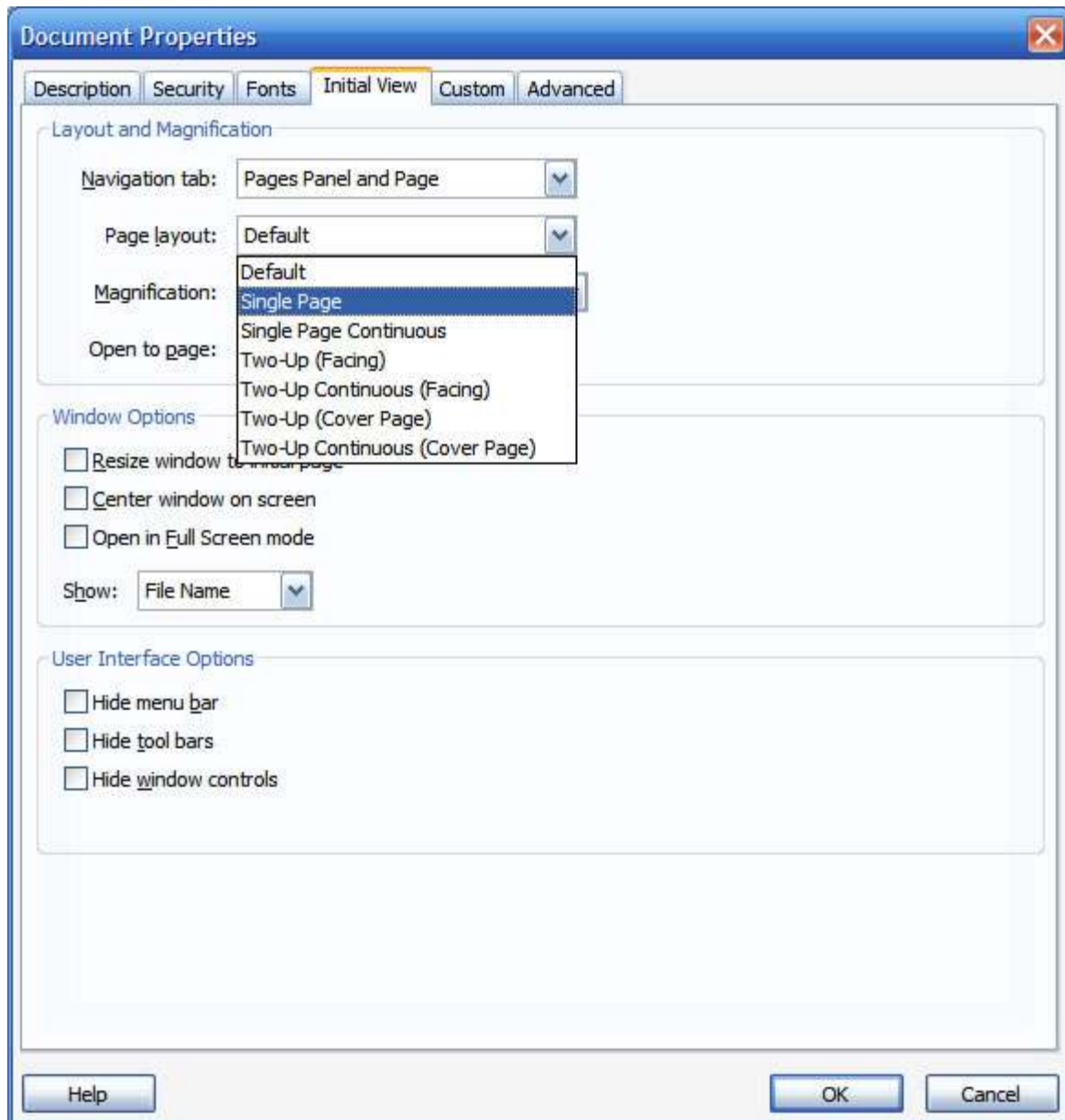
# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF



## PDF Document Properties - Initial View - Single Page

I assume that most users have a viewport that may not display two-up pages large enough to read on initial open. In fact, I've had to make adjustments myself when opening PDFs that are configured using the two-up options. I suggest the *Single Page Initial View*.

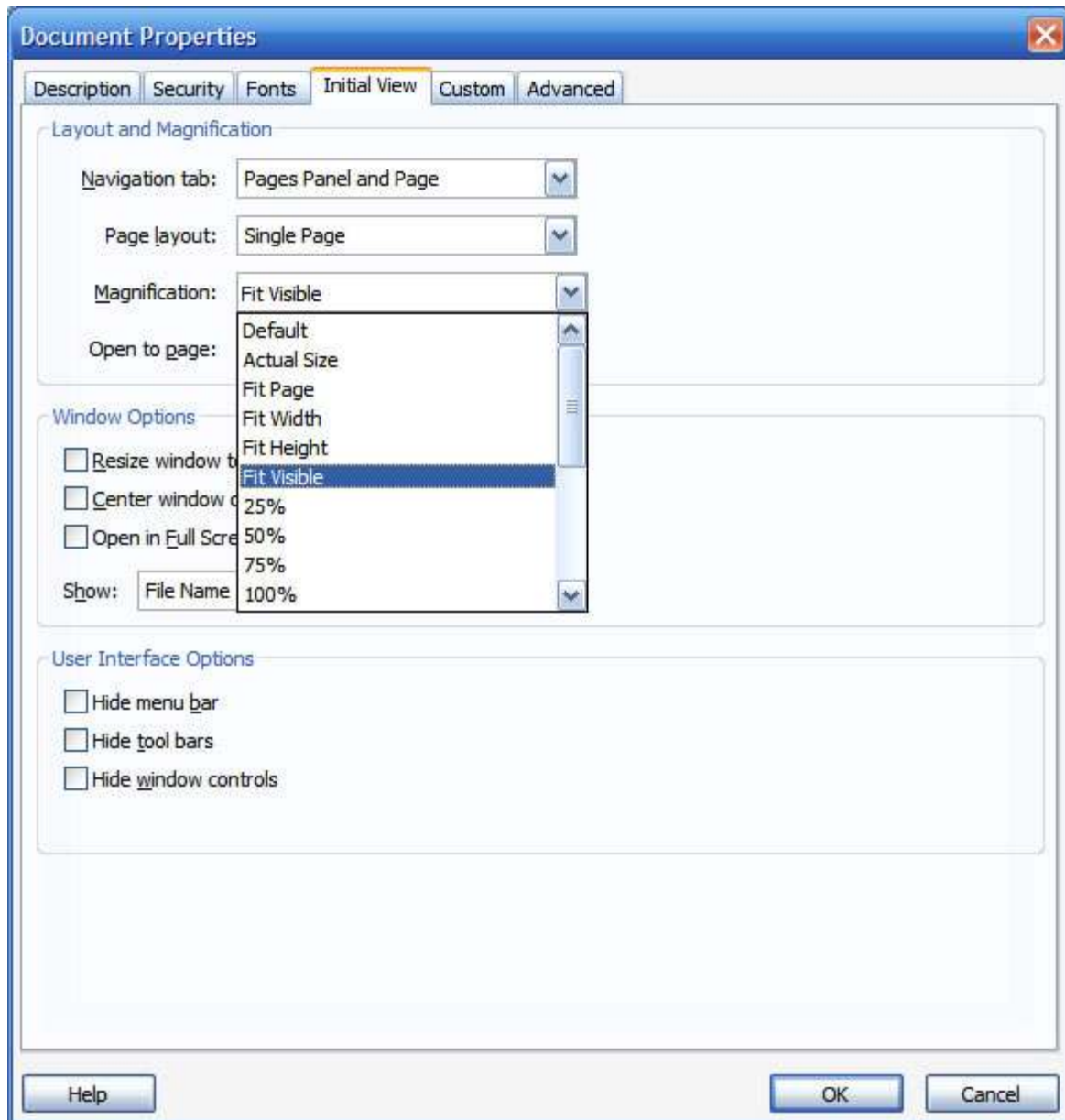
# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF



## PDF Document Properties - Initial View - Fit Visible

I like fluidness in layout. Using any of the Fit options provide a fluid experience for the viewer. I prefer using the *Fit Visible* as most users have their browser viewports set to a comfortable width and height that allows them to read most content without changing the size of their viewport.

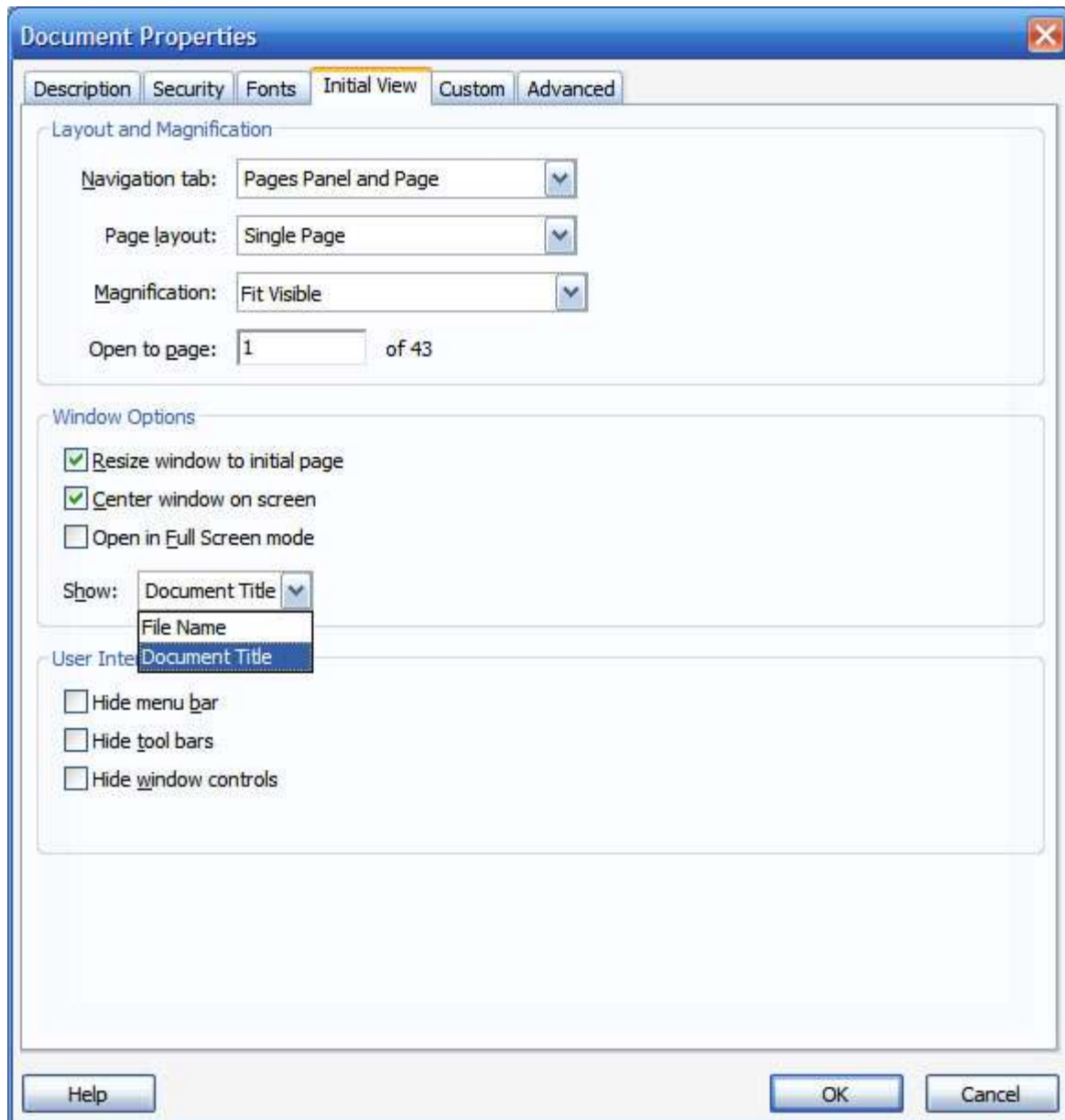
# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF



## PDF Document Properties - Initial View - Window Options

I'll choose the Resize window to initial page and Center window on screen options. Be sure to choose the **Show: Document Title** option.

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF



## SEO for PDF Summary

That's it for optimizing PDF Document Properties. This article discusses just one aspect of SEO for PDFs. The actual document itself can also be optimized for search. Use PDFs to your advantage. Think about taking larger multi-page PDFs and breaking them down to their least common denominator then offer them up as a group of PDFs from within an HTML Document that is well formed and semantically structured.

Review the first page of your PDF Document and make sure that it best represents the content of your PDF. In many instances, this may be a Table of Contents which usually isn't the most optimal page to have as the first page, not from a search perspective. That is why using the Document Properties to their full extent is imperative when Optimizing PDFs for Search.

## SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION USING A PDF

If you can, I'd suggest making an introduction page for the PDF that contains a **Heading** and an **Abstract** of the document. Use an Inverted Pyramid Writing approach when constructing the Abstract and I typically suggest a target of 140 to 160 characters per paragraph.