

# PDF HACKS™

*100 Industrial-Strength Tips & Tools*



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HACK

#4

## Speed Up Acrobat Startup

Move the plug-ins you don't need out of your way.

Both Adobe Acrobat and Reader implement several standard features as modular application *plug-ins*. These plug-ins are loaded when Acrobat starts up. You can speed up Acrobat startup and clean up its menus by telling Acrobat to load only the features you desire.

One simple technique is to hold down the Shift key when launching Acrobat; this prevents all plug-ins from loading. A longer-term solution is to move unwanted plug-ins to another, inert directory where the startup loader won't find them. Another solution is to [create plug-in profiles \[Hack #5\]](#) that are switched using a batch file gateway. This latter solution becomes really useful when combined with [context menu hacks \[Hack #6\]](#).



Keep in mind that omitting plug-ins will alter how some PDFs interact with you. If a PDF seems to be malfunctioning, try viewing it with the full complement of Adobe's stock plug-ins installed.

### Unplugging Plug-Ins

Acrobat (or Reader) loads its plug-ins only once, when the application starts. On Windows, it scans a specific directory and tries to interface with specific files, recursing into subdirectories as it goes. This directory is named *plug\_ins* and it usually lives someplace such as:

```
C:\Program Files\Adobe\Acrobat 6.0\Acrobat\plug_ins\
```

or:

```
C:\Program Files\Adobe\Acrobat 6.0\Reader\plug_ins\
```

On Windows, plug-in files are named *\*.api*, but they are really [DLLs \[Hack #97\]](#).

On the Macintosh, plug-ins are stored inside the Acrobat package. Control-click (or right-click, if you have a two-button mouse) the icon for Acrobat, and choose Show Package Contents from the menu. A window with a folder named *Contents* will appear. Inside that folder is another folder called *Plug-ins*, which contains the Macintosh version of the same plug-ins. These have names like *Checkers.acroplugin*.

Create a directory called *plug\_ins.unplugged* in the same directory or folder where *plug\_ins* (or *Plug-ins*) lives so that they are siblings. To prevent a plug-in from being loaded, simply move it from *plug\_ins* to *plug\_ins.unplugged*. When a plug-in is located in a subdirectory, such as *preflight*, move the entire subdirectory.

“But how can I tell which plug-in files do what?” Read on, friend.

## Which Plug-Ins Do What?

Acrobat and Reader Versions 5 and 6 describe your installed Adobe plug-ins in the Help → About Adobe Plug-Ins dialog (Acrobat → About Adobe Plug-Ins on the Mac). Human-readable plug-in names are on the left side, as shown in Figure 1-5. Click one of these and the right side gives you the plug-in filename, a basic description, and the plug-in's dependencies. It is a good read, as it provides a straightforward laundry list of Acrobat's features.

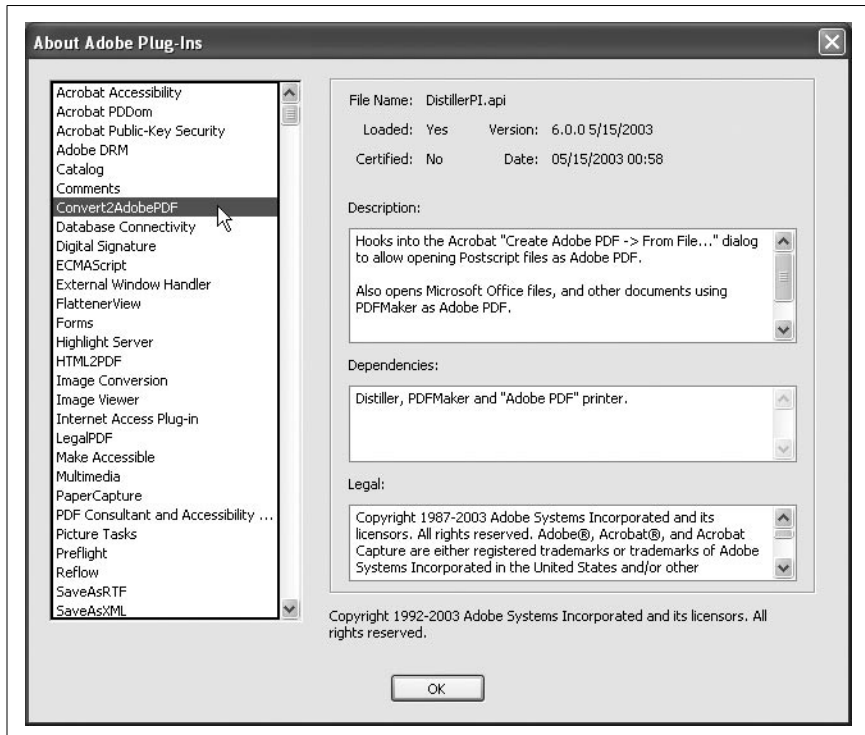


Figure 1-5. About Adobe Plug-Ins explaining Acrobat's stock plug-ins

Go through this list and write down the filenames of plug-ins you don't need. Close Acrobat and use your file manager to move these files (or directories) from *plug\_ins* into *plug\_ins.unplugged*. Open Acrobat and test the new configuration.

Examples of Acrobat 5 plug-ins that I rarely use include Accessibility Checker, Catalog, Database Connectivity, Highlight Server, Infusium, Movie Player, MSAAs, Reflow, SaveAsRTF, Spelling, and Web-Hosted Service. Plug-ins I would never omit include Comments, Forms, ECMAScript (a.k.a. JavaScript), and Weblink.