

# pdf2CAD Frequently Asked Questions

## Spotting the Difference – Vector and Raster PDF

**It's easy to tell whether your PDF file is a raster or vector format by viewing it in Adobe Acrobat.**

This is important since the two file types are converted differently. Vector PDF files are best transformed through data extraction. This is accurate and precise and involves minimal manual clean-up. Raster PDF files are traced since there is no data to extract. This is an approximation and requires operator involvement as well as manual clean-up. Visual Integrity is specialized in tools for vector conversion and will produce high-quality, accurate drawings from vector PDF input. If a raster PDF or scanned drawing is run through our software, we will turn the flat image into a tracing layer for manual work-up.

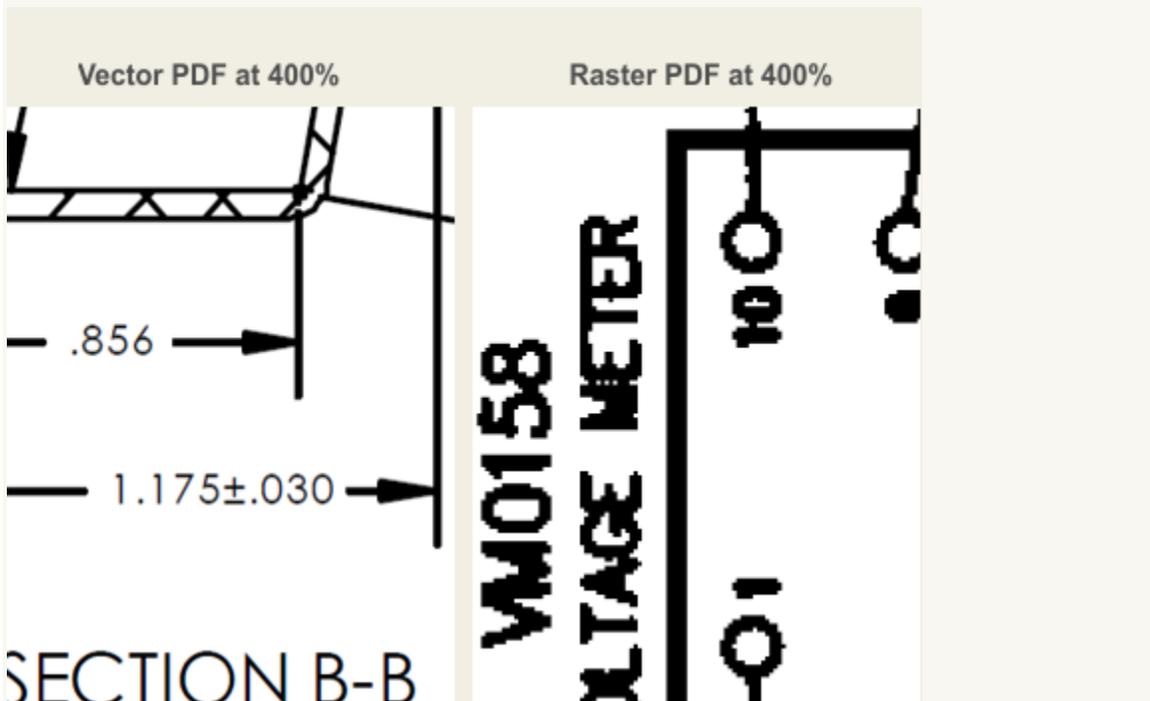
### 1. Open your PDF file with Acrobat or Acrobat Reader

Use the Magnifying Control to zoom in on a detailed section of the file. At 100-150%, it may be hard to tell the difference. Continue zooming until you are at a magnification greater than 400%.



### 2. Zoom

The section of the picture should be magnified on your screen and it should become apparent whether you have a vector or raster PDF file. The Vector PDF file will look clear and smooth at any resolution while the raster PDF will become dirtier and grainier the more it's zoomed. In the example below, the section is enlarged 400%. Sometimes, it's necessary to magnify the file more than 1000% when it's a high-res scan to determine the file type.



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## Why won't my drawing convert?

There are two types of PDF files – raster PDF and vector PDF. If your drawing will not convert, it is probably a scanned drawing saved as a raster PDF file. Unfortunately, there is no useful data in a raster PDF file for us to extract about the objects or text. When a drawing is scanned, it is reduced to a flat image, comparable to a snapshot or a photocopy. There's nothing you can do except trace over it manually or with tracing software (raster-to-vector software). One way or another, you need to recreate it.

**Our software is designed to convert vector PDF files.** These files are created on computers using save, export, print-to-file, etc. These vector PDF files contain a rich data set and all the information we need to accurately extract the drawing and render it in a format Visio or AutoCAD, etc can digest.

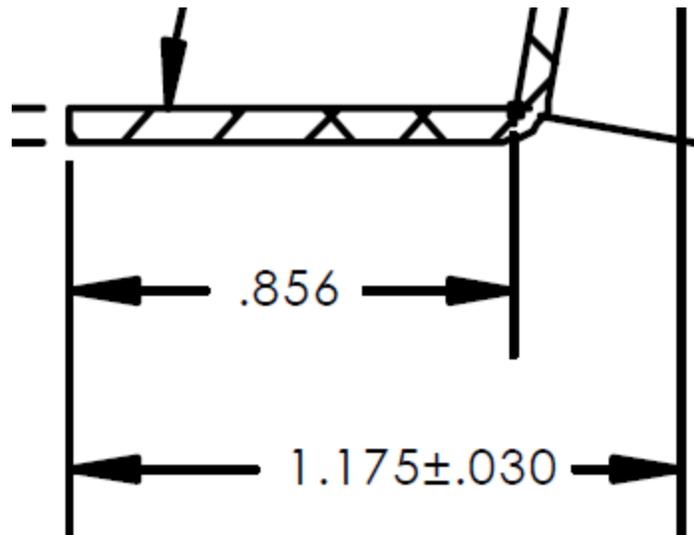
For comparison sake, here is a snip of a raster PDF file at 500% where the characteristic “jagginess” or pixelation of raster PDF files can easily be seen. Below it is a snip of a vector PDF file which is remarkably smooth and clear even though it has also been zoomed to 500%. This visual method is a very easy and accurate way to determine if your PDF file is



a raster or vector. Most people get both types of files so pdf2cad or pdf2picture may be useful for some of your files.

A raster PDF (scanned drawing) – jagged and grainy at 500% – you need raster-to-vector software to trace. We recommend [MagicTracer](#). Or you can recreate this or you'll need to manually redraw it.

A sample vector PDF file at 500% – notice how smooth the lines are and how clear the text is. This type of file is best converted with vector-to-vector software like pdf2cad and pdf2picture.



SECTION B-B

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## I tried to convert a scanned drawing and just get a blank page – where's my drawing?

Your drawing is probably scanned. This process flattens it into one bitmap raster image which removes all the information about how the drawing was created or what it even is. As a result, it can not be redrawn or exploded into objects by pdf2cad. The most we can do with scanned files, is to create a high-quality copy to be used as a tracing layer in your CAD program.

If you look in the directory where the file was saved, you'll notice that two or more files were created – a DXF and at least one TIFF or JPEG image. The DXF references the image(s) and assembles them on-screen when loaded. They must be in the same directory as the DXF file or the DXF file will look empty. This blank page effect will also occur if your CAD package does not support raster images.

If you want to try to create vector objects from a scanned drawing, you need a different class of software called "raster to vector". This is an extremely difficult thing to do well. We recommend [MagicTracer](#).

## When converting a CAD drawing, can I preserve the layers?

When a CAD drawing is saved as a PDF file, it still retains information about layers that can be extracted. When converting, pdf2cad looks at color attributes, or other definitions in the PDF file, to create layers. If the option to recognize layers is turned on, pdf2cad gathers all objects with same color and put them on one layer. If the PDF file has three colors, the resulting DXF file will have three layers. It is then easy in AutoCAD to turn off a complete layer. This setting can be found in the Options->DXF tab of PDF FLY or simply under Options in pdf2cad.