

# Native Documents PDFs Or Images Which Production Format

This guide examines the three families of production formats: native, searchable PDF, and image-plus-load-file. It details what each format preserves or destroys, and how to choose the appropriate format within a disclosure protocol, addressing redaction and technical limitations.

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PRODUCTION FORMAT S · A GUIDE FOR UK LAWYERS Native Documents, PDFs or Images: Which Production Format? What Each Format Preserves, What Each Destroys, and How to Choose in the Protocol COMPUTER FORENSICS LAB

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§ 7's warning. Image-plus-load-file (TIFF/PDF images with extracted text and agreed metadata fields)

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§ HOW A SPECIALIST LABORATORY CAN ASSIST Working with Computer Forensics Lab Speak to a forensic examiner, not a salesperson. INSTRUCT THE LAB NEW ENQUIRIES EMAIL - DISCOVERY

# Questions and answers

## Is there a single best production format?

Per class, yes; universally, no: native where interiors may matter (which is more classes than intuition suggests), images where redaction or confidentiality forces fixity, fields and hashes travelling regardless: §3's hybrid is what competent protocols actually say. The one universally wrong answer is the undecided default.

## The other side wants everything as PDFs "for convenience". Should we agree?

For correspondence-grade classes, often harmless; for interior-bearing classes, it is an evidence concession dressed as logistics: Example 1 is what "convenience" can cost. Agree a per-class table instead: PDFs where interiors cannot matter, natives where they can, and the route back for surprises: convenience and evidence both survive.

## How do we cite a native spreadsheet in a bundle or judgment?

By identifier and internal reference: document ID plus sheet and cell: with key extracts rendered to fixed pages for the bundle while the native remains the evidence: §10's engineering point. Courts handle this daily; the failure mode is not citing it at all on difficulty but nobody agreeing the convention until the bundle deadline.

## We received images and the text layer seems poor. Whose problem is that?

Practically yours until challenged: your searches inherit their OCR: so the guide 86 response runs: score what arrived, re-OCR their images yourself where it pays, and put quality questions per §11 where the production falls short of the protocol. The protocol drafted with guide 86's paragraph makes this a compliance issue rather than a philosophical one.

## Do we have to produce hidden sheets, tracked changes and speaker notes?

If the document is disclosable, its non-visible content is part of it: producing a version with the interior stripped is producing a different document: Example 2's principle. Privileged or irrelevant-and-confidential interior content is handled by redaction with the content version flagged: not by silent flattening.

## The producing party says the native no longer exists. Now what?

Test it, then route around it: preservation duties make "not retained" a serious statement (when did it exist, what happened, per the spoliation disciplines): while the §8 lattice rebuilds the interior from counterpart copies, platform versions, transmissions and upstream systems: Example 2's rebuild. The absence becomes its own chapter; the content usually turns up anyway. cflab. uk · e-discovery. uk ©2026 Computer Forensics Lab Ltd · cflab. uk · e-discovery. uk · info@cflab. uk · +44 (0)20 7164 6915 Page 15 of 17

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