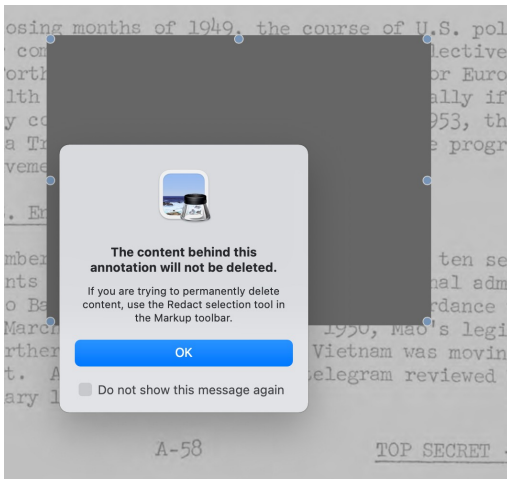


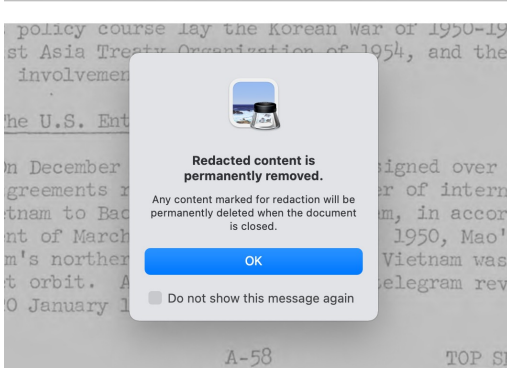
make a fresh one—you can turn to several apps to snip secret, legally prohibited, embarrassing, or proprietary text out of a PDF before sending it on its way.

How to redact in macOS Preview

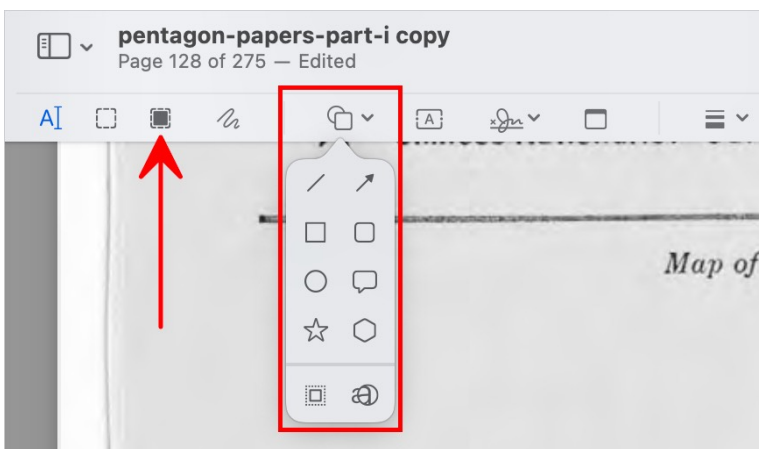


Preview warns if you try to draw over text, since that doesn't actually remove it from a PDF (top). Instead, use the Redact tool, which also explains itself.

Apple added a redaction tool and redaction-related warnings in Preview for macOS Big Sur in 2020. You'll notice this whenever you select certain tools in Preview's Markup toolbar. Display that editing toolbar by choosing View > Show Markup Toolbar or clicking the Markup icon at the right-hand side of the standard toolbar, just to the left of the Search field.



Click any item in the Shapes menu, including a line of the thickness in the sixth or seventh heaviest options, and Preview prompts you with a warning: "The content behind this annotation will not be deleted." It advises you to use the new Redact selection tool.



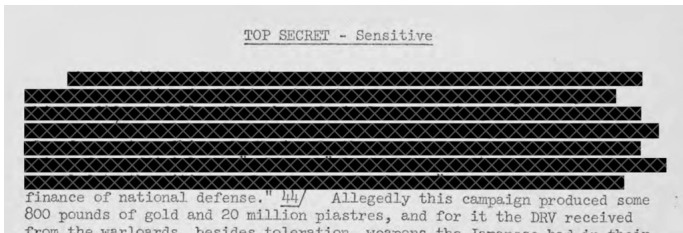
Most of the tools in Shapes (outlined in a red rectangle) will provoke a redaction warning, as they don't remove text; select the Redact tool (marked with a red arrow) instead.

Select that tool and you receive a different alert: "Redacted content is permanently removed." Apple further explains: "Any content marked for redaction will be permanently deleted when the document is closed." (With

both those warnings, you can check a box so you never see them again, too.)

Drag with the Redact selection tool across the text, and a black bar with an X'd pattern appears. Save, and that text can't be recovered from that version of the file, although you can use File > Revert To to select a previous version before redaction or pull a copy out of a Time Machine backup.

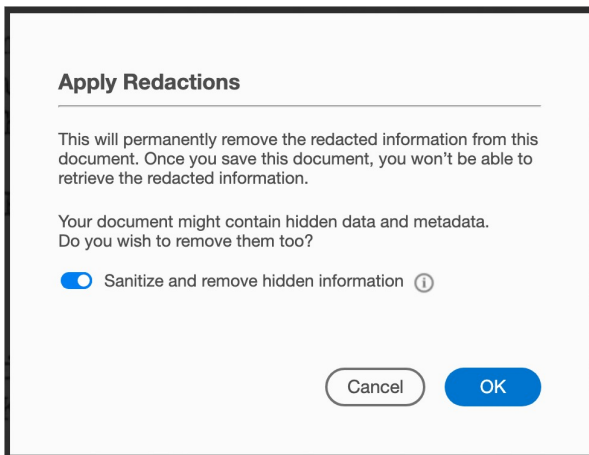
Apple added more powerful PDF tools with macOS Sonoma, including intelligent form detection and enhanced AutoFill, so Preview may be all you need for PDF editing.



Redaction in Preview uses a distinctive pattern. It's permanent when you save the file.

How to redact in Adobe Acrobat

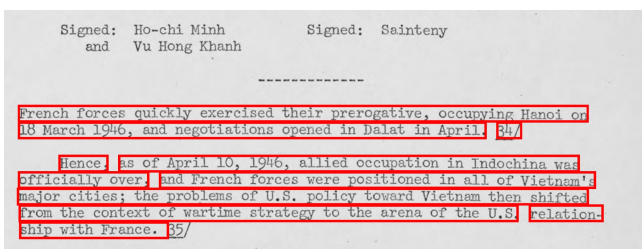
Adobe Acrobat Pro (part of a Creative Cloud subscription) also offers a redaction tool, available via Edit > Redact Text & Images. Adobe warns you about how the feature works when you first select it.



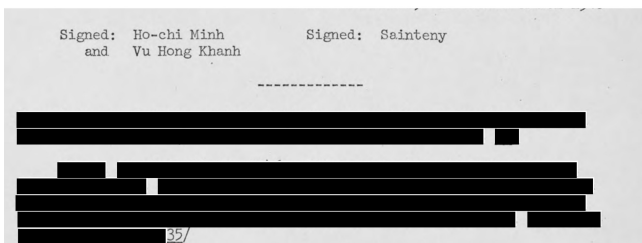
Acrobat lets you know that text will be permanently removed, and offers a sanitization option, too.

With the tool selected, you can drag over both text and images, which Acrobat marks up with a red outline to indicate it will be completely removed when the file is saved. Acrobat provides a new file name with the word "Redacted" inserted when you next manually save the file to prevent overwriting your original.

Acrobat also includes a "sanitize" feature, which removes a variety of hidden metadata, such as the document's author, which is often pre-filled with the name of the person using the computer or app; invisible but searchable text layers that are created when a document is imported as a set of images, and the text is algorithmically identified; and any text that runs off a page or is entirely off in the margins and can't be selected.



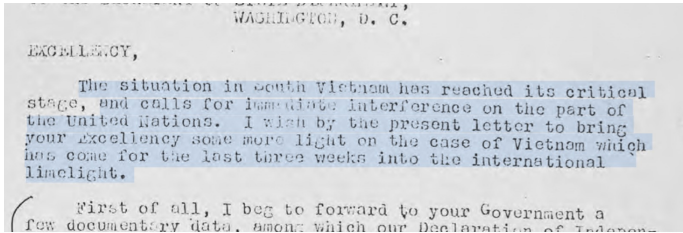
Top: Acrobat shows the text selection for redaction before the file is saved. Bottom: The saved file now shows black bars (with no hidden text).



Sanitization is automatically selected when you apply redaction, though you can flip a switch to disable it. You separately sanitize without redacting any visible text by clicking Sanitize Document.

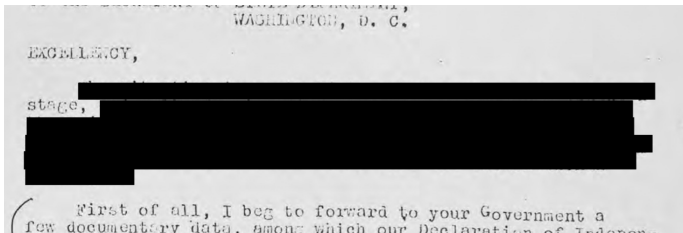
Redact with PDFPen and PDFPen Pro

Smile's PDFPen and PDFPen Pro feature redaction, too. You can either select text via Tools > Select Text or a region via Tools > Select Rectangle Tool and then apply Format > Redact Text – Block. The resulting image has been scrubbed.



PDFPen has you select the text or a region using a standard tool first, and then apply redaction through a menu option.

Both versions also offer Format > Redact Text – Erase, which removes the text leaving areas of white behind instead of black. This may be preferable in documents with a white background.



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Glenn Fleishman's most recent books include Take Control of iOS and iPadOS Privacy and Security, Take Control of Calendar and Reminders, and Take Control of Securing Your Mac. In his spare time, he writes about printing and type history. He's a senior contributor to Macworld, where he writes Mac 911.