# Optical Character Recognition Software - FreeOCR

Using a scanner and **Optical Character Recognition** (OCR) software, it is possible to capture and convert a page of printed text into a file suitable for editing in **Microsoft Word**. The OCR software we use for scanning and converting documents is **FreeOCR**.

### Accuracy

The accuracy of conversion depends on the quality of the original, the resolution of the scan and the capabilities of your OCR software.

Files generated from scanned documents are seldom perfect. Try scanning one page of your document first to see what kind of results you get. If the results are particularly bad, you may wish to consider retyping the original instead.

### Errors may occur if:

- Text is faint or poorly produced e.g. a 3rd generation photocopy
- Text contains extra marks e.g. pencil annotations or highlighting
- Pages were scanned at an angle
- The original typeface contains similar characters e.g. the letter O and zero
- Text contains dropped capitals

> Take the time to position your pages properly in the document feeder or flatbed of the MFD. Use the positioning guides to align the edges. If possible, subdivide the original document into sections in case problems occur during the scan of a large volume of pages.
>
> Always check your results thoroughly and allow sufficient time for editing later.

## Scan a document

Before you can use the Free OCR software, you must first scan your document.

You can scan and email files to yourself or others using University MFDs.

Scanning is free! There are MFDs in or near all PC classrooms, clusters and in public areas, and also on each floor of the library.
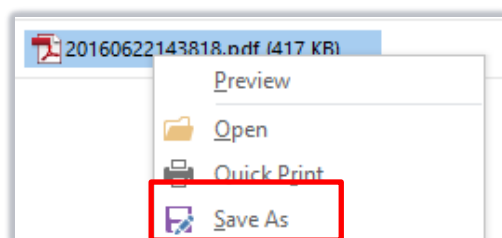
> The default settings for scanning to email are black & white, PDF, at a resolution of 300dpi (feed tray) or 200dpi (flatbed). For guidance on scanning and how to change scan settings, see our dedicated **scanning guide** available at www.abdn.ac.uk/it/student/print/guides

## Receive a scanned document

Once you have scanned your document using the **email** function on the MFD, you should receive an email in your University account containing your scan output as a file attachment. The default email subject line, unless you changed it, is *Scan from MFD*.

1. Open the email and right-click on the attachment.
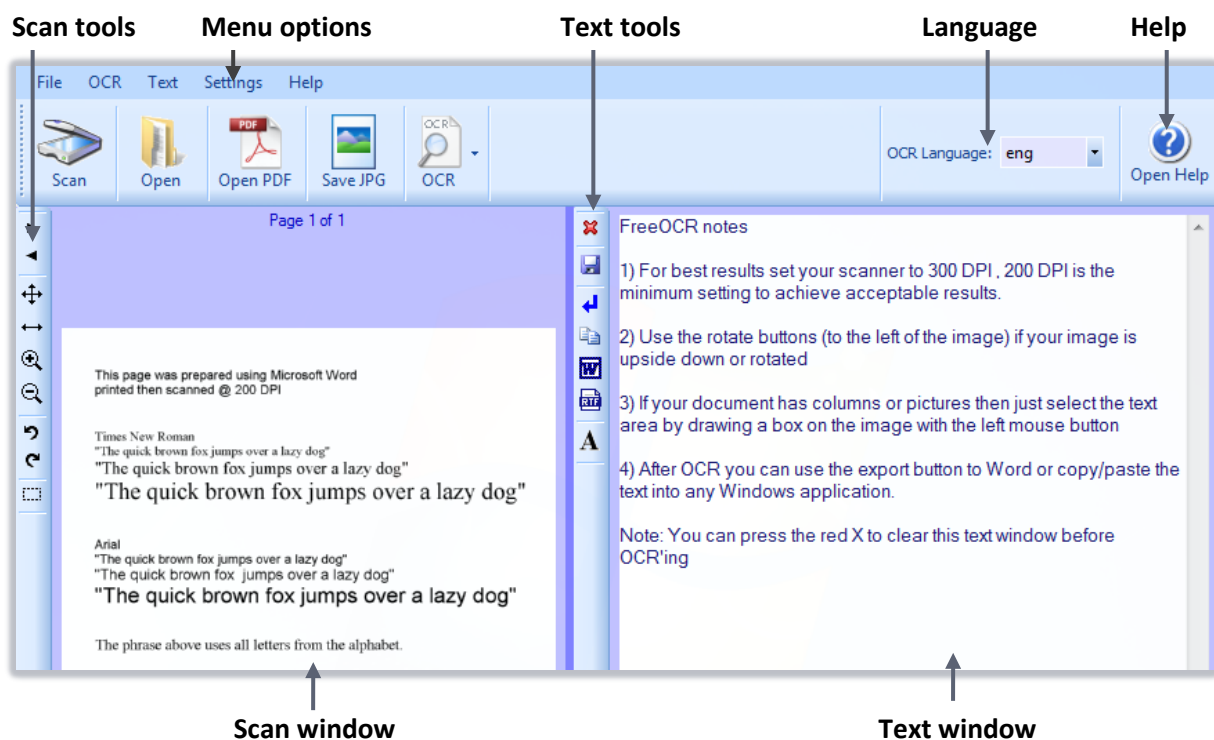2. Click **Save As**, then navigate to your **H:** drive and click **Save.**

# Convert a scanned document to text

## Open Free OCR software

1. From the classroom PC **Desktop**, double-click on **Common Applications**, **Utilities** folder, then **Convert scanned text (OCR).**
2. You will briefly see the **FreeOCR** start-up screen.
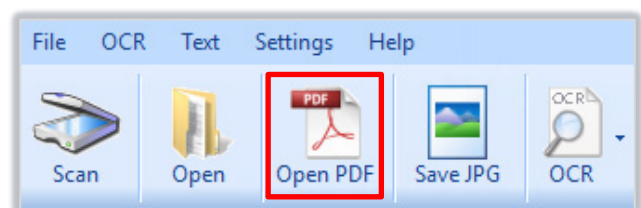3. When loading is complete, you should see the main **FreeOCR** screen.

The FreeOCR screen is split into two main sections. The scan window (which will display your scanned document) and the text window (which will display the converted text). Both contain a set of related tools to the left of each window.

**Scan tools**  **Menu options**  **Text tools**  **Language**  **Help**



**Scan window**  **Text window**

## Open your scanned document

1. From the **FreeOCR** menu, click **Open PDF.**
2. Navigate to your **H:** drive.
3. Select your scanned document and click **Open.**
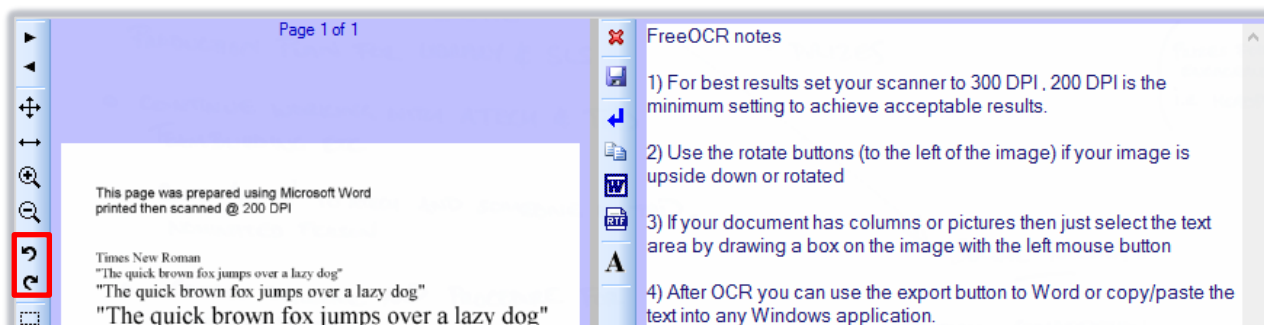4. Your document opens in the **Scan** window.



Click the **Maximise** button at the top right to view the software full screen.

## Prepare your scanned document

Use the **Rotate** buttons in the **Scan tools** area to turn your scan + or – 90°, if you require.
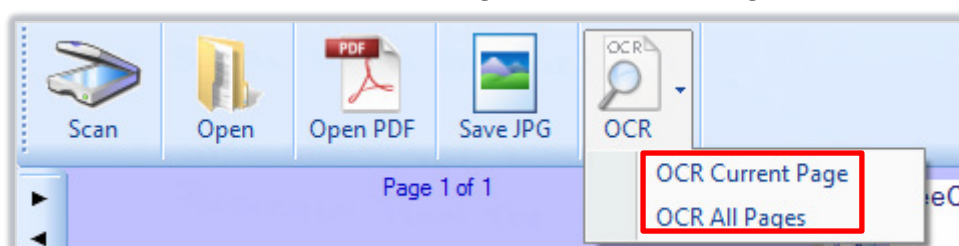


> You can also use the **Scan tools** area to zoom in or out, move between pages, and fit your scanned document to the window.
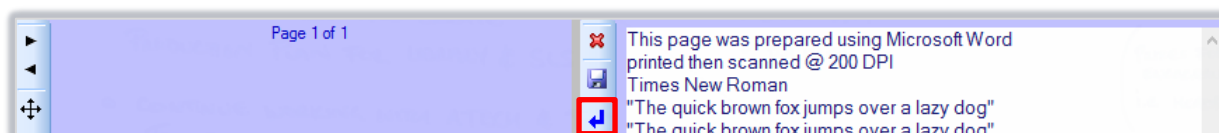
## Convert to text

For the best results, click and drag a selection box around the text area you wish to convert using the left mouse button. This is especially important if your document contains headers, footers, columns, or pictures. These can result in the inclusion of meaningless symbols in the converted text, so it's best not to include them in your scan if possible.

1. Click on the **red cross** in the **Text tools** area to clear the **Text** window.
2. Click and drag a box around the text area you want to convert (hold down **Shift** for multiple selections).
3. From the **FreeOCR** menu area, click **OCR** to start the text conversion.
4. You have the choice to select **OCR All Pages** or **OCR Current Page.**



5. The converted text will appear in the **Text** window.
6. Click on the **Remove Line Breaks** icon in the **Text tools** area.



> Hold down the **Shift** key as you click and drag around multiple text areas in your document to add to the selection.
>
> Use the **Next** and **Previous** arrows in the **Scan tools** area to move through multiple pages.

## Work with converted text

After **OCR**, you can export your converted text to the Clipboard, to Word, or as a .txt or .rtf file. We recommend that you export the text to **Word** and then use Word's **Spelling & Grammar** tool to review your document.

## Export converted text to Word

1. Click on the **Export to Word** button from the **Text tools** area.
2. The text will open in a new Word document.
3. From Word's **Review** tab, **Proofing** group, click **Spelling & Grammar.**
4. As the spelling and grammar checker identifies possible errors, decide whether you need to ignore them or make changes in the document.
5. Format and edit your text as appropriate.
6. Remember to save your document! On the **File** tab, click **Save** and navigate to your **H:** drive.

> You are not limited to the suggestions made by the spelling and grammar checker. You can make your own changes in the document as the check takes place (e.g. adding line breaks); just click Resume when you are ready to continue.

# Copyright

When scanning text from books, research papers, journals, etc., please ensure you do not breach copyright. Further information is available in the Library Guide QC Gen 008: Introduction to Copyright.

# Further information and help

- Log a call with the IT Service Desk at https://myit.abdn.ac.uk
- More information for on scanning for alternative-formats, advanced tools for proof-reading, having your text read aloud, is available at the Assistive Technology website www.abdn.ac.uk/assistivetechnology