

Why Do I Get an Error Breaking Apart or Merging a Doc?

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Break apart and merge both rebuild the PDF from scratch, so a file that isn't quite standard stops them cold. Here's how to tell which kind of problem you have, and clear it.

The quickest test: if **one** doc fails and others work, the problem is that file. If **everything** fails at once, it isn't your documents — skip to *Every Doc Is Failing at Once*.

"Old PDF Version," "Password Protected," or "Corrupted"

This one error message covers a family of structural problems in the file: a PDF saved in an outdated version, fonts that were never embedded, overprint or page description errors, or security settings that block document assembly.

The same fix clears nearly all of them — reprinting rebuilds the file to current specifications and strips the restrictions along the way.

To reformat a doc that won't split or merge:

1. Open the original document on your computer.
2. Choose **File** then **Print**, and print it to a PDF — *Microsoft Print to PDF* or *Adobe PDF*.
3. Save the new file and upload that version to Pipeline.
4. Try the break apart or merge again.

If the same doc still fails after reformatting, your IT team can repair the source file — or send it to us and we'll take a look.

The Doc Is Password-Protected or Locked Down

A PDF that carries a password, or has security settings preventing changes, copying, or document assembly, can't be previewed, merged, or split. It's common with docs that came back from certain third-party e-signing platforms, which apply that protection automatically.

Remove the password and the security restrictions from the original, upload the clean version, and try again. Where a doc is locked by design, printing it to a new PDF gives you an unrestricted copy to work with.

The Doc Came From an Older Scanner

Outdated scanning software produces PDFs that look fine on your computer and fail everywhere else — old PDF versions, non-standard fonts, invalid structure. If break apart and merge errors follow a particular scanner or a

particular form, that's the pattern.

Reformatting each doc works, but updating the scanning software fixes it at the source and saves you the repeated step.

Break Apart Times Out or Takes Forever

A doc the tool struggles to read takes longer to process, and past a point Pipeline returns an error rather than leaving you waiting.

Worth knowing: processing continues in the background after that message, so your split docs may still show up a few minutes later. Give it a moment and refresh the transaction before trying again. If they don't arrive, reformat the doc using the steps above.

The Doc Is Very Large

Docs of roughly 300 pages or more run into limits in Pipeline's document tools and may fail to preview, split, merge, or rotate. The file is safe and downloads normally from the doc's [Gear] — split it outside Pipeline and upload the pieces.

The Split Line Drops Below the Page

If the separator line sits below where it should, your browser's zoom is above 100%. Press `Ctrl+0` on Windows or `Cmd+0` on a Mac to reset it, and the layout falls back into place.

Every Doc Is Failing at Once

When break apart or merge fails for documents that have always worked — across several transactions, or for several people in your office — it isn't your files. Occasionally something on our side breaks these tools for everyone at the same time, and we fix it the same day.

Do a hard refresh once things are working again — `Ctrl+Shift+R` on Windows, `Command+Shift+R` on a Mac — to clear the cached error. You can check status.paperlesspipeline.com for anything we already know about, and telling us is genuinely useful; a burst of reports is often how we find out.

The Option Isn't There at All

No error, just no [Break Apart] or [Merge Docs] to click? That's permissions rather than a fault. Agents can break apart and merge docs they uploaded themselves, up until an admin assigns those docs to the transaction or marks them Reviewed. After that, and for anything uploaded by someone else, an admin handles it — and you can email an admin straight from the transaction to ask.

Still Stuck?

If a doc still won't split or merge after reformatting, email help@paperlesspipeline.com with the transaction name, the doc names, and the original file attached. Tell us what you already tried so we can pick up from there.

Learn More

One scanned stack, many documents. Break a doc apart to split it into separate docs, pull out the pages you need, and name each one as you go.

See [Doc Break Apart](#)
