

Why Won't My Doc Preview Correctly?

Last Modified on 09/04/2026 11:09 am EDT

Blank pages, blurry text, missing signatures, scrambled letters — a preview that looks wrong almost always points at the PDF itself, not at your account or your browser.

Whatever the preview shows, **your document is fine**. Previews are generated separately from the file you uploaded. Click the doc's name, then [Open Doc], and you'll see the original — and it downloads and emails correctly too.

The Preview Is Blank or Missing Content

This is the most common preview problem, and it comes from the PDF's own structure: an outdated PDF version, fonts that were never embedded (or were embedded more than once under the same name), page description or overprint errors, or security settings that block changes.

To rebuild the file:

1. Open the 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, then upload that version to Pipeline.

Reprinting rebuilds the file cleanly and clears the problem for most docs. If the same blank form keeps arriving broken from wherever it's generated, the source template needs repairing — your IT team or the form's provider can do that.

Signatures or Filled-In Data Don't Show

A filled or signed PDF that previews empty is the same story: unembedded fonts, an unverified signature, or a structural error in the file. Reprinting it to a new PDF and re-uploading resolves it in most cases.

Docs signed through a third-party e-signing platform are worth checking separately — some apply security settings automatically, and a locked PDF can't be previewed at all until those are removed.

The Preview Looks Blurry

Blurry previews usually mean an old PDF version — 1.3 or 1.4, formats that are decades old and that Pipeline's preview generator can't render sharply. The stored file is unaffected; [Open Doc] shows it at full quality.

Reprint the doc to a new PDF and re-upload it to get a clean preview. If it came from a scanner, updating the scanning software fixes it at the source.

The Text Is Jumbled or Scrambled

Scrambled letters mean the PDF uses non-standard fonts that weren't embedded in the file, so nothing reading it can reliably reproduce the text.

Three ways out, in the order worth trying:

- **Reprint it to a new PDF** and upload that version.
- **Print and re-scan the doc.** A scanner produces images of the pages rather than fonts, which sidesteps the problem entirely.
- **Send us the original.** Email it to help@paperlesspipeline.com — we may be able to add support for the font.

The Page Turns Black or Inverts Its Colors

Swapped foreground and background colors, a page gone entirely black, signatures missing from a random subset of pages — these come from corrupted PDFs, usually produced by outdated scanning software. Because rotating, merging, and breaking apart all regenerate the file, the damage tends to surface right after one of those.

Reprint the doc to a new PDF and re-upload it. If it happens repeatedly with docs from the same scanner, that scanner's software is producing invalid PDFs and is worth replacing.

While you're working through it, leave **[Delete original doc]** and **[Delete Docs After Merge]** unchecked. That way you can confirm the result looks right before the source file goes anywhere.

An Older Doc Has No Preview at All

Some documents added before 2021 don't have previews, following a glitch that affected previews of that era. It's a known limitation, not something wrong with your account.

The files themselves are intact and complete: click **[Open Doc]** to view, download, or email any of them, and they're included in downloads and monthly backups as normal. Anything uploaded or merged onto those transactions since then previews the usual way.

The Preview Takes Too Long to Appear

Pipeline rebuilds a doc's preview after it's uploaded, rotated, merged, or broken apart. That normally takes a second or two, and up to about 30 seconds for a heavier file.

Consistently longer than 30 seconds is worth reporting — send us the transaction and doc name. Very large, high-resolution scans are the usual culprit: a 90MB scan has to be decoded page by page before anything appears. Scanning at 150–200 PPI keeps files light enough to open quickly.

Nothing Happens When You Click the Doc Name

Start with a hard refresh — `Ctrl+Shift+R` on Windows, `Command+Shift+R` on a Mac — and make sure your browser is up to date. If it's still not opening after that, send us the transaction and doc name so we can look at the specific file.

Still Stuck?

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

Learn More

Click a doc's name and it opens right there on the page — read it, page through it, and keep working without downloading a thing.

See [Doc Preview](#)
