

What packing a document saves

A PDF is mostly dictionaries — the catalogue, the page tree, every page, every font, every annotation — and a dictionary is not a stream, so each one is written out in full and none of them is compressed.

Object streams gather them into streams that are compressed together, and the table stating where every object lives becomes a stream too. The document a reader sees is the same one either way.

The document weighed here holds 24 pages of text, each with a heading of its own.

The same document, weighed twice

Spelled out	22 810 bytes
Packed	18 459 bytes
Saved	4 351 bytes

Packing this document saved 19 per cent of it. What it saves goes up with the number of pages, because a page costs a handful of dictionaries and dictionaries are what packing compresses.

This very file is packed, so a reader that opened it has read one of the two documents being weighed.