qpdf PDF page surgery

CONCEPTS

qpdf never changes how pages look. It restructures the PDF: select, merge, split, rotate, encrypt, repair.

Input PDF or --empty
↓ --pages / --rotate
Transform pages, crypto, streams
↓ write
Output PDF or --replace-input

Output is always the last plain argument. Options may come before or after the input file.

Exit code 0 is clean, 2 is an error, 3 means warnings only (output was still written).

INSPECT AND REPAIR

`qpdf --check <in.pdf>`
Check structure and stream data

`qpdf --show-npages <in.pdf>`
Print the page count

`qpdf --is-encrypted <in.pdf>`
Exit status tells if encrypted

`qpdf --requires-password <in.pdf>`
Exit status tells if a password is needed

`qpdf --show-encryption <in.pdf>`
Show encryption and permissions

`qpdf <in.pdf> <out.pdf>`
Rewrite file, often repairs damage

PAGE SELECTION

`qpdf <in.pdf> --pages . <range> -- <out.pdf>`
Keep only these pages

`qpdf --empty --pages <a.pdf> <b.pdf> -- <out.pdf>`
Merge whole files

`--pages <a.pdf> 1-3 <b.pdf> 5,z --`
Mix ranges from several files

`1-5,8,10-z`
Range: list, span, to last page

`r1 / z`
Last page

PAGE SELECTION (cont.)

`r3-r1`
Last three pages

`5-1`
Reversed range

`1-z:odd / 1-z:even`
Odd or even positions in a range

`1-z,x3-4`
Exclude pages from a range

`--pages <enc.pdf> --password=<pw> 1-z --`
Password for one input

SPLIT AND ROTATE

`qpdf --split-pages <in.pdf> <out.pdf>`
One file per page

`qpdf --split-pages=<n> <in.pdf> <out.pdf>`
Groups of n pages

`--rotate=+90:<range>`
Turn pages clockwise

`--rotate=-90:<range>`
Turn pages counterclockwise

`--rotate=180`
Set rotation on every page

`qpdf <in> --overlay <top.pdf> -- <out>`
Stamp pages over the input

ENCRYPTION

`qpdf --encrypt <user-pw> <owner-pw> 256 -- <in> <out>`
Password-protect, AES-256

`qpdf --decrypt --password=<pw> <in> <out>`
Remove encryption

Passwords on the command line show up in history and ps. Prefer --password-file.

OPTIMIZE AND EDIT

`qpdf --linearize <in.pdf> <out.pdf>`
Fast web view layout