

U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida
Q& A: Metadata and Court Filings
October 2012

1) What is Metadata and How Does it Involve Filings with the Court?

Metadata is data associated with documents that can be problematic when it is unintentionally retained in a document and inadvertently revealed. When you e-file a PDF document, you may be providing more information in that document than you can see via your PDF reader software. Some redaction techniques used when e-filing are ineffective, in that the text intended to be hidden or deleted can be read via a variety of techniques. Examples of metadata include the name and type of file, the name of the author, the location of the file on your file server, the full-sized version of a cropped picture, and prior revisions of the text.

E-filers should use extra care to make sure that the PDF documents to be submitted in CM/ECF are free of any metadata (hidden data).

2) How Can I Remove Metadata From Documents Before Electronically Filing with the Court?

There are effective means of eliminating this metadata from electronic documents. Probably the simplest method is to omit the information from the original document and save the redacted version with a new name. For example, "REDACTED", then convert to PDF.

If improper redaction methods are used, data you think is hidden may actually be viewable. For example, depending on the type and version of software, previous revisions and deleted text may be able to be seen by manipulating an Adobe Acrobat file.

While the court does not endorse any specific method, commercially-available software is available to redact, not just hide, the sensitive information. In addition, some versions of Adobe Acrobat, Word and WordPerfect both contain redaction tools.

3) Where Can I Find Additional Information?

For information about removing metadata from Adobe Acrobat 9 and X, [click here](#).

For general information about the different types of Metadata, [click here](#).
