

# Sphinx-SimplePDF

Version 1.7.0

The simple PDF builder for Sphinx.

Build: 28.04.2026

Maintained by team useblocks

# Table of Contents

<b>Quickstart</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Installation</b>	<b>7</b>
• From PyPI	
• From source	
• Requirements	
• macOS installation	
• Windows installation	
• Using Sphinx-SimplePDF directives	
• ReadTheDocs configuration	
<b>Building PDF</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Configuration</b>	<b>9</b>
• simplepdf_vars	
• Config vars	
• Examples	
• Color selection	
• File references	
• SimplePDF docs	
• simplepdf_file_name	
• simplepdf_debug	
• simplepdf_use_weasyprint_api	
• simplepdf_weasyprint_flags	
• simplepdf_weasyprint_timeout	
• simplepdf_weasyprint_retries	
• simplepdf_theme	
• simplepdf_theme_options	
• simplepdf_weasyprint_filter	
<b>Directives</b>	<b>17</b>
• if-builder	
• if-include	

- pdf-include
  - Options
  - width / height
  - page
  - toolbar

## CSS voodoo 21

- Predefined css classes
  - Page breaks
  - Page Orientation
  - Table content wrap
  - Table size
  - Sphinx-Needs elements
- Customizing theme
  - config() functions

## Technical details 23

- Workflow
- DEMO project

## Examples 25

- Sphinx-Needs objects
- Sphinx-Needs tables
- Sphinx-Needs needflow

## Changelog 27

- Unreleased
- Release 1.7
- Release 1.6
- Release 1.5
- Release 1.4
- Release 1.3
- Release 1.2
- Release 1.1
- Release 1.0

## Contributing to Sphinx-SimplePDF

30

- Getting Started
  - Prerequisites
  - Setting Up the Development Environment
- Development Workflow
  - Running Tests
  - Code Quality
    - Running Pre-commit Manually
    - Running Individual Checks
  - Building Documentation
  - Building a PDF (Testing the Extension)
- Submitting Changes
  - Pull Request Process
  - Commit Messages
  - Code Style
- Reporting Issues
- Questions?
- License

## License

34

# Sphinx-SimplePDF

This Sphinx extension provides an easy way to build beautiful PDFs based on CSS rules.

It contains:

- A PDF specific, CSS based Sphinx theme: `sphinx_simplepdf`.
- A Sphinx builder, called `simplepdf`
- Directives to
  - control different structures and content for `HTML` and `PDF` builds.
  - embed PDF inside HTML views.

It is using `weasyprint` as PDF generator.

## Note

This extension is in a beta phase.

It is not bug free and documentation is also missing some minor stuff. You can help us to make it better by reporting bugs or by providing code/docs changes via a PR. The code is available on github: [useblocks/sphinx-simplepdf](https://github.com/useblocks/sphinx-simplepdf)

# Showcase

## Sphinx-SimplePDF Documentation

The PDF is based on the current HTML documentation.

[Download PDF](#)



## Sphinx-SimplePDF Demo

A PDF containing different content types to check the handling of them by Sphinx-SimplePDF.

[Download PDF](#)



## Quickstart

Install via `pip install sphinx-simplepdf`.

Then inside your Sphinx documentation folder run `make simplepdf`. Your PDF is available under `_build/simplepdf`.

Color and images can be changed by setting `simplepdf_vars` inside your `conf.py` file:

```
simplepdf_vars = {
    'primary': '#333333',
    'links': '#FF3333',
}
```

For more configuration options take a look into [Configuration](#).

For PDF/HTML specific content, use the `if-builder` directive.

```
# conf.py
extensions = ['sphinx_simplepdf']
```

```
# rst file
.. if-builder:: simplepdf

    .. toctree::

        my_files
        specific_pdf_file
```

```
.. if-builder:: html

.. toctree::

    my_files

    Other HTML specific content, which will not be part of the PDF.
```

## Installation

### From PyPI

```
pip install sphinx-simplepdf
```

### From source

```
git clone git@github.com:useblocks/sphinx-simplepdf.git
cd sphinx-simplepdf
pip install .
```

## Requirements

**Sphinx-SimplePDF** requires **Sphinx version >= 4.4.4** to properly render the Table of Content with page counts.

### macOS installation

If you are using **macOS** as operating system, the chance is high that the package **pango** gets not automatically installed when installing **Sphinx-SimplePDF**.

In this case please run also `brew install pango`.

### Windows installation

**Sphinx-SimplePDF** is based on WeasyPrint, which is not so easy to get installed on Windows.

Please follow their instructions about [how to install WeasyPrint on Windows](#).

## Using Sphinx-SimplePDF directives

Sphinx-SimplePDF can be called directly after the installation.

However, if you want to use the included directives, like `if-builder`, you need to add Sphinx-SimplePDF to the list of extensions in your `conf.py` file:

```
extensions = [  
    'sphinx_simplepdf',  
    # additional extensions  
]
```

## ReadTheDocs configuration

**Sphinx-SimplePDF** can be also used on [Read The Docs \(RTD\)](#) to generate your PDF. As it is not supported by RTD by default, you need to create a `.readthedocs.yaml` configuration file on the root level of your project.

You can take the one from **Sphinx-SimplePDF** as a good example:

```
# .readthedocs.yaml  
# Read the Docs configuration file  
# See https://docs.readthedocs.io/en/stable/config-file/v2.html for  
# details  
# Required  
version: 2  
# Set the version of Python and other tools you might need  
build:  
  os: ubuntu-lts-latest  
  apt_packages:  
    - default-jre # This seems to be ignored  
  tools:  
    python: "3.12"  
  # We can only define the content of the final deployment, if we do  
  # the complete build on our own.apt_packages:  
  # So we need to handle package installation, build start and  
  # copying the right files for deployment.  
  commands:  
    - pip install .  
    - pip install -r demo/doc-requirements.txt  
    - sphinx-build -M simplepdf demo demo/_build # Use a different  
    build-folder for a really clean build  
    - pip install -r docs/doc-requirements.txt  
    - sphinx-build -M simplepdf docs docs/_build2 # Use a different  
    build-folder for a really clean build  
    - cp demo/_build/simplepdf/Sphinx-SimplePDF-DEMO.pdf docs/
```

```
_static/Sphinx-SimplePDF-DEMO.pdf
- cp docs/_build2/simplepdf/Sphinx-SimplePDF.pdf docs/_static/
Sphinx-SimplePDF.pdf
- sphinx-build -M html docs docs/_build
# HTML latest, because it needs the built PDF files
- mkdir -p _readthedocs/html/
- cp -r docs/_build/html/* _readthedocs/html/
```

## Building PDF

Inside your `docs` folder, run:

```
make simplepdf
```

or for more control:

```
sphinx-build -M simplepdf . _build
```

## Configuration

### simplepdf\_vars

**Sphinx-SimplePDF** provides the config variable `simplepdf_vars`, which must be a dictionary. The key is used as identifier inside scss-files and the value must be a css/scss compatible string.

#### Example conf.py

```
simplepdf_vars = {
    'primary': '#FA2323',
    'secondary': '#379683',
    'cover': '#ffffff',
    'white': '#ffffff',
    'links': 'FA2323',
    'cover-bg': 'url(cover-bg.jpg) no-repeat center',
    'cover-overlay': 'rgba(250, 35, 35, 0.5)',
    'top-left-content': 'counter(page)',
    'bottom-center-content': '"Custom footer content"',
}
```

---

These values are used then inside the scss files, which define the PDF layout.

## Config vars

**primary:**

Primary color

**primary\_opaque:**

Primary color with opaqueness. Example

```
rgba(150, 26, 26, .5)
```

**secondary:**

Secondary color

**cover:**

Text color on the cover

**white:**

A color representing white

**links:**

Color for links

**cover-bg:**

Cover background image. Can be a single color or even an image path.

**cover-overlay:**

RGB based color overlay for the cover-image. Example:

```
rgba(250, 35, 35, 0.5)
```

**top-left-content:**

Text or css function to display on pdf output. Example:

```
counter(page)
```

**top-center-content:**

Text or css function to display on pdf output.

#### **top-right-content:**

Text or css function to display on pdf output.

#### **bottom-left-content:**

Text or css function to display on pdf output.

#### **bottom-center-content:**

Text or css function to display on pdf output.

#### **bottom-right-content:**

Text or css function to display on pdf output.

All variables are defined inside `sphinx_simplepdf/themes/simplepdf_theme/static/styles/sources/_variables.scss`.

#### **Hint**

If a content-string shall be set, please make sure to use extra “ around the string. Example: `'bottom-center-content': “Custom footer content”`.

## Examples

The values from the configuration are taken as they are and injected into `scss` files, which are used to generate the css files. So each value or command, which is supported by `scss`, can be set.

## Color selection

```
simplepdf_vars = {
  'primary': '#FA2323',
  'cover-overlay': 'rgba(250, 35, 35, 0.5)',
}
```

## File references

```
simplepdf_vars = {  
    'cover-bg': 'url(cover-bg.jpg) no-repeat center'  
}
```

The file path must be relative to the Sphinx `_static` folder. So in the above example the image is stored under `/_static/cover-bg.jpg`.

## SimplePDF docs

This is `simplepdf_vars` as it is used inside the **Sphinx-SimplePDF** `conf.py` file:

```
simplepdf_vars = {"cover-overlay": "rgba(150, 26, 26, 0.7)", "cover-  
bg": "url(cover-bg.jpg) no-repeat center"}  
  
# use this to force using the weasyprint python API instead of  
building via the binary
```

## simplepdf\_file\_name

Added in version 1.5.

File name of the resulting PDF file in the `simplepdf` build folder. If not set, the project name is used.

File name and extension can be set. But it should not be used to manipulate the output path.

Example:

```
simplepdf_file_name = "my_cool.pdf"
```

Default: project name

## simplepdf\_debug

A boolean value. If set to `True`, **Sphinx-SimplePDF** will add some debug information at the end of the PDF.

This contains data about the used Python Environment and the Sphinx project. It is mainly used if any problems occur and extra information is needed.

```
simplepdf_debug = True
```

You can see an example in our [PDF Demo](#) at the end of the file.

### Warning

The debug output contains absolute file paths and maybe other critical information. Do not use for official PDF releases.

## simplepdf\_use\_weasyprint\_api

Added in version 1.6.

This forces simplepdf to use the weasyprint `python API` instead of calling the binary via subprocess.

```
simplepdf_use_weasyprint_api = True
```

### Warning

Other variables like `simplepdf_weasyprint_flags` will not work when using the API.

## simplepdf\_weasyprint\_flags

Added in version 1.5.

List of flags to pass to **weasyprint** subprocess. This may be helpful in debugging the pdf creation

```
simplepdf_weasyprint_flags = ['-v']
```

### Warning

The flags should only pass switches to **weasyprint**, input and output file names are appended by **Sphinx-SimplePDF**

## simplepdf\_weasyprint\_timeout

Added in version 1.5.

In rare cases **weasyprint** seems to run into infinite loops during processing of the input file. To avoid blocking CI jobs a timeout can be configured. The build is aborted with a `subprocess.TimeoutExpired` exception.

```
simplepdf_weasyprint_timeout = 300
```

## simplepdf\_weasyprint\_retries

Added in version 1.6.

In rare cases **weasyprint** seems to run into infinite loops during processing of the input file. In case a `subprocess.TimeoutExpired` exception occurred and retries are configured **weasyprint** is started again.

```
simplepdf_weasyprint_retries = 1
```

## simplepdf\_theme

Added in version 1.5.

Name of the theme to use for PDF output. This overrides the default theme `simplepdf_theme`. The value must match both the Sphinx theme name and the importable Python module name.

```
simplepdf_theme = "my_custom_pdf_theme"
```

The theme module must define a `get_scss_sources_path()` function that returns the path to its SCSS sources directory. This is how the builder locates the SCSS files to compile into CSS for the PDF. Prefer returning an absolute path based on `__file__` so behavior does not depend on Sphinx's working directory.

### Minimal example:

```
from os import path

def get_scss_sources_path():
    """Return the absolute path to the SCSS sources directory."""
    return path.join(path.abspath(path.dirname(__file__)), "static",
                    "styles", "sources")
```

The SCSS sources directory should contain a `main.scss` file as the entry point. You can use the bundled `simplepdf_theme` as a reference for the expected directory structure and SCSS files.

### Note

If the theme module cannot be imported or does not define `get_scss_sources_path()`, the builder falls back to the bundled `simplepdf_theme` SCSS sources and emits a warning.

## simplepdf\_theme\_options

Added in version 1.5.

Additional options for the theme. The default theme `simplepdf_theme` inherits all options from the **Sphinx Basic Theme**.

`simplepdf_theme` options:

**nocover:**

Do not display cover pages (front and back cover)

## simplepdf\_weasyprint\_filter

Added in version 1.6.

If **weasyprint** is used as executable the output contains warnings and errors from **weasyprint**. To reduce output noise the output can be filtered by a list of regular expressions given in this configuration option.

```
simplepdf_weasyprint_filter = ["WARNING: Ignored"]
```

To suppress all output, the quiet flag `-q` should be used.

## Directives

### Warning

To use the directives, your `conf.py` file must contain Sphinx-SimplePDF in the extension list:

```
extensions = [  
    'sphinx_simplepdf',  
    # additional extensions  
]
```

## if-builder

`if-builder` can be used to define builder specific content.

The content of the directive gets added to the documentation only, if the provided directive argument matches the chosen builder name. The argument is case-insensitive.

### Example

```
.. if-builder:: simplepdf  
  
    .. toctree::  
  
        my_files  
        specific_pdf_file  
  
.. if-builder:: html  
  
    .. toctree::  
  
        my_files  
  
    Other HTML specific content, which will not be part of the PDF.
```

```
# Call examples  
make simplepdf  
sphinx-build -M html . _build
```

### Warning

`if-builder` may not be taken into account, if a Sphinx incremental build is performed. Be sure to always use a clean first build, after a builder switch.

**Note**

Why not using the `.. only::` directive?

The `only` directive works differently and does not support for instance `toctree` and other mechanisms for controlling the documentation structure.

## if-include

`if-include` can be used to include files only when the specified builder is used. This is the same as using a `include` nested in a `if-builder` statement. You can list multiple files and use different builders.

```
.. if-builder:: simplepdf
    .. include:: ./path/to/my/file.xy
    .. include:: ./path/to/my/other/file.xy
```

is the same as

```
.. if-include:: simplepdf
    ./path/to/my/file.xy
    ./path/to/my/other/file.xy
```

**Warning**

in some cases content meant for html only builds will get included in the PDF if you build the html documentation and do not delete the build files.

Always make sure to use `make clean` or similar to delete build files before building the PDF.

The following chapter should only be visible in the PDF version of this documentation

## pdf-include

Includes a PDF file inside the HTML code. The browser decides mostly, what kind of PDF-viewer.

```
.. pdf-include:: _static/SimplePDF_test.pdf
```

### Options

For more options of how to configure the PDF viewer, take a look into the documentation of [sphinxcontrib-pdfembed](#)

### width / height

Provide a number and unit for width/height.

Examples: `:width: 50%`, `height: 800px`.

Defaults:

```
:width: 100%
```

```
:height: 400px.
```

```
.. pdf-include:: _static/SimplePDF_test.pdf
   :width: 40%
   :height: 200px
```

### page

Specify the page to show when PDF gets loaded.

Default: *None*

If not given the browser decides what page to open (normally page 1) and may also reuse the last seen page number.

```
.. pdf-include:: _static/SimplePDF_test.pdf
   :page: 2
```

## toolbar

If set to `0`, the toolbar is hidden in most browsers (seems not to work on Firefox).

Default: `1`

```
.. pdf-include:: _static/SimplePDF_test.pdf
   :toolbar: 0
```

## I

## CSS voodoo

The PDF layout is configured via CSS files and their definitions.

You can use some Sphinx mechanism to set specific CSS class inside the rst, so that you can control the output a little bit.

## Predefined css classes

### Page breaks

Some Sphinx directives allow to use the option `:class:`.

If this is set to `break`, then a page break will be introduced in front of the element.

#### Example:

```
.. csv-table:: CSV Table
   :file: example.csv
   :class: break
```

## Page Orientation

The default orientation is portrait. To change the page orientation for a page, you can add the css class `ssp-landscape` to

- directives supporting the option `:class:`
- or by using the `.. rst-class::` directive in the document with classes as arguments
- or by using the `.. container::` directive with the options for the used classes

**Examples:**

```

.. rst-class:: break_before, ssp-landscape, break_after

.. csv-table:: CSV Table
   :file: example.csv

.. or as alternative

.. container:: break_before ssp-landscape

**Landscape page orientation**

.. csv-table:: CSV Table
   :file: /_static/example.csv
   :header-rows: 2

```

If the default page orientation is changed to landscape, you can use `ssp-portrait` to change to portrait.

## Table content wrap

By default table content is wrapped at whitespaces. If you have table content that can not be wrapped due to size limitations, the table is drawn out of the margins. This behaviour can be changed by using the css class `ssp-table-wrap`. This allows the table to break the content anywhere.

This requires a fixed table layout, so you have to set the `widths` options (or e.g. `colwidths` option in needtable) to get good results.

This option is by default added to all `Sphinx-Needs` elements or could be explicitly set by applying the `ssp-table-wrap` as `style` option to `Sphinx-Needs` directives.

**Example:**

```

.. list-table::
   :widths: 10,80
   :class: ssp-table-wrap

```

## Table size

`ssp-tinier` and `ssp-tiny` can be set for a table to reduce the font-size and the internal padding of rows and columns. Together with **Page Orientation** huge tables can be presented inside a PDF.

**Example:**

```
.. container:: break_before ssp-landscape
    .. csv-table:: CSV Table
       :file: /_static/example.csv
       :class: ssp-tiny
```

Take a look into our [Demo PDF](#) for some examples of how tables could look like.

## Sphinx-Needs elements

This works also for most Sphinx-Needs elements.

### Example:

```
.. spec:: Specification Example
   :id: SPEC_001
   :style: break
```

or for `needtable`:

```
.. needtable::
   :filter: 'sphinx' in tags
   :class: break
```

## Customizing theme

### config() functions

Inside `scss` files you can use `config(name, default)` to get access to the values from `simplepdf_vars`.

The **default** value is used, if the **name** can not be found inside `simplepdf_vars`, which is the normal case, as `simplepdf_vars` is an empty dictionary by default.

## Technical details

The sphinx-simplepdf registers the following stuff:

A sphinx builder, called `simplepdf`. Code inside `/builders/simplepdf.py`.

A sphinx theme, called `sphinx-simplepdf`. Files under `/themes/sphinx_simplepdf`.

During package installation, builder and theme get registered for Sphinx. This is done via the `entry_points` mechanism.

```
[project.entry-points."sphinx.html_themes"]
simplepdf_theme = "sphinx_simplepdf.themes.simplepdf_theme"

[project.entry-points."sphinx.builders"]
```

## Workflow

1. User calls `make simplepdf`.
2. `simplepdf` builder overwrites theme to use `sphinx-simplepdf`.
3. Builder generates `main.css` from `main.scss` files. Injects also config-vars from `simplepdf_vars`.
4. Builder starts a **SingleFileHTML** based build.
5. Sphinx creates one single `index.html`.
6. Builder manipulates created `index.html`:
  - Fixes toc-tree links
7. Builder starts **weasyprint** with `index.html` as input
8. Done, PDF file exists under `_build/simplepdf`.

## DEMO project

The DEMO project is stored under `/demo/` and provides a common way for all developers and users to test everything on a common base.

It can be built by the following steps:

- `git clone git@github.com:useblocks/sphinx-simplepdf.git`
- `cd sphinx-simplepdf`
- `pip install .`
- `cd demo`

- `pip install -r doc-requirements.txt`
- `sphinx-build -a -E -b simplepdf . _build/`

## Examples

This page contains different, often complex elements, which are used to check their appearance in a PDF build.

### Sphinx-Needs objects


Requirement: **Sphinx-Needs Theme extension support** **REQ\_001**

status: done

tags: sphinx, extension

links incoming: **SPEC\_001**

The `Sphinx-Needs Theme` for PDF shall support all possible Sphinx extensions an their outcome.

SPEC_001	Specification Example	Specification
status: open tags: sphinx, example		links outgoing: <a href="#">REQ_001</a>
A specification example with an image.		
		
layout: complete		style: green_border, break

## Sphinx-Needs tables

ID	Title	Status	Tags
REQ_001	Sphinx-Needs Theme extension support	done	sphinx; extension
SPEC_001	Specification Example	open	sphinx; example

## Sphinx-Needs needflow

Using `plantuml` to render image.

## Changelog

### Unreleased

- **Bugfix** [#134] Improve support for external theme packages by using a `get_scss_sources_path()` convention.
  - If needed, theme warnings can be suppressed via `suppress_warnings = ["simplepdf.theme"]`.

### Release 1.7

released:

02.12.2025

- **Bugfix:** Replace deprecated `pkg_resources` with `importlib.metadata` for Python 3.12+ compatibility.
- **Bugfix** [#116] Prettify breaks HTML formatting.
- **Bugfix** [#82] TOC Tree Fix and Page Break Handling for document handling.
- **Bugfix** [#70] Added config option to build PDFs retries times if weasyprint binary fails to build.

- **Bugfix** [#66] Remove 'display: inline-block' from inline code blocks.
- **Enhancement** [#40] Added config option to filter warnings from weasyprint.
- **Enhancement** [#8] Latex equations rendered in demo.
- **Enhancement:** Add support for section and figure numbers.
- **Enhancement:** Add duplicate headline fix for toctree.
- **Enhancement:** Add duplicate check to toctree\_fix function.

## Release 1.6

released:

20.01.2023

- **Bugfix** [#60] Fix TOC hrefs for sections that use file title anchors.
- **Enhancement** [#62] Added config option to build PDFs with the weasyprint Python API instead of the binary.

## Release 1.5

released:

26.10.2022

- **Enhancement:** `nocover` option for `simplepdf_theme_options`.
- **Enhancement:** New config options to directly configure the weasyprint build.
- **Enhancement:** New config option `simplepdf_file_name` allows to specify the output file name.
- **Enhancement:** Provides `pdf-include` directive to embed PDF files in HTML views.

## Release 1.4

released:

22.09.2022

- **Enhancement:** Adds `simplepdf_debug` option, to collect and print some environment specific details.
- **Enhancement:** Adds *demo* PDF to test various layout & style elements.
- **Enhancement:** Replace not-open fonts with open-source fonts.
- **Enhancement:** All fonts are provided by this package. No pre-installed fonts are needed.
- **Enhancement:** [#19] Simple PDF customization with header and bottom page content
- **Enhancement:** Add class wrapper to switch paper orientation, e.g. for large tables
- **Enhancement:** Tables font-size and padding can be reduced by using `ssp-tinier` or `ssp-tiny`.
- **Bugfix:** [#34] handling word wrap in tables
- **Bugfix:** Image handling is done much better.
- **Bugfix:** Font location fixes -> No fonts warnings anymore.
- **Bugfix:** `html_theme_options` gets overwritten to suppress Sphinx warnings.
- **Bugfix:** HTML file operations are using hard-coded *utf-8* de/encoding.

## Release 1.3

released:

25.08.2022

- **Improvement:** file-path in `url()` css configs are now relative to the Sphinx `_static` folder.
- **Improvement:** Toctree is working and page numbers are added.
- **Improvement:** Introducing `if-builder` to control content based on builder.

## Release 1.2

released:

19.08.2022

- **Improvement:** Overwriting some `html_config` vars, which are not supported by `simplepdf` during a PDF build.

## Release 1.1

released:

19.08.2022

- **Bugfix:** Adds missing `scss` files to installation package.
- **Bugfix:** Better cover image handling.

## Release 1.0

released:

18.08.2022

# Contributing to Sphinx-SimplePDF

Thank you for your interest in contributing to Sphinx-SimplePDF! This document provides guidelines and instructions for contributing.

## Getting Started

### Prerequisites

- Python 3.10 or higher

- `uv` package manager

### Note

**Note for macOS users:** We recommend using the devcontainer for building and testing, as WeasyPrint has additional system dependencies that are easier to manage in a containerized environment.

## Setting Up the Development Environment

1. Clone the repository:

```
git clone https://github.com/useblocks/sphinx-simplepdf.git
cd sphinx-simplepdf
```

2. Install dependencies using `uv`:

```
uv sync --group dev
```

3. Install pre-commit hooks:

```
uv run pre-commit install
```

## Development Workflow

### Running Tests

```
uv run pytest
```

For parallel test execution:

```
uv run pytest -n auto
```

## Code Quality

This project uses several tools to maintain code quality:

- **Ruff** - Linting and formatting
- **mypy** - Static type checking
- **pre-commit** - Automated checks before commits

### Running Pre-commit Manually

```
uv run pre-commit run --all-files
```

### Running Individual Checks

```
# Linting  
uv run ruff check .  
  
# Formatting  
uv run ruff format .  
  
# Type checking  
uv run mypy .
```

## Building Documentation

```
uv sync --extra docs  
cd docs  
make html
```

## Building a PDF (Testing the Extension)

```
cd docs  
make simplepdf
```

The generated PDF will be in `docs/_build/simplepdf/`.

## Submitting Changes

### Pull Request Process

1. Fork the repository and create a new branch from `main`
2. Make your changes
3. Ensure all tests pass and pre-commit checks succeed
4. Submit a pull request to the `main` branch

### Commit Messages

Write clear and descriptive commit messages that explain what changes were made and why.

### Code Style

- Follow the existing code style in the project
- Maximum line length is 120 characters
- Use type hints where appropriate
- Keep changes focused and avoid unrelated modifications

## Reporting Issues

When reporting issues, please include:

- A clear description of the problem
- Steps to reproduce the issue
- Expected vs actual behavior
- Python version and OS information
- Any relevant error messages or logs

## Questions?

If you have questions, feel free to open an issue on the [GitHub repository](#).

## License

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