

# Connecting objects;↵Connecting objects

- 1 Select an object.
- 2 Control-drag a connection to another object.
- 3 In the Inspector panel's Connections display, select an outlet or action.
- 4 Click the Connect button.

In an object-oriented application, isolated objects have little value; they need to send messages to each other to get the work of the application done. Interface Builder gives you a way to establish connections between objects.

When you Control-drag between two objects, the Inspector panel becomes the key window. Its Connections display shows the current and potential connections for the destination object.

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If the Connect button doesn't become active when you select an outlet or action, you probably have connections locked. See <sup>a</sup>When You Don't Want to Disconnect<sup>o</sup> in this chapter.  
;ConnectionsConcepts.rtf;WhenYouDon'tWanttoDisconnect;↵

## Outlet Connections

In the previous example, the connection is made from a *controller* object to a custom object that manages the application to a text field. The controller object (ConverterController) declares several *outlets* as identifiers of destination objects as instance variables.

The example shows a connection between an object in the nib file window Instances display and an object in the interface. You can also make outlet connections between two objects in the Instances display.

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When you make a connection between objects, the first column of the Connections display shows the source object's outlets (a source<sup>o</sup> meaning the object from which a connection line is drawn).

Outlets are destination objects specified as instance variables. Actions are methods that NSControl objects (such as buttons) invoke in another object. See [aCommunicating With Other Objects: Outlets and Actions<sup>o</sup> in this chapter for more information.](#) ;ConnectionsConcepts.rtf;linkMarkernameCommunicatingWithOtherObjects:OutletsandActions;;

Chapter6, [aSubclassing,<sup>o</sup> describes connecting the outlets and actions of custom objects in the context of creating a class.](#) ;../03\_Coding/06\_Subclassing/Subclassing.rtf;;~

## Action Connections

When you make a connection by dragging a line *from* an NSControl object in the interfaceDa button, slider, text field, menu command, pop-up list, or matrixDodds are that the destination object is a *target*

and that you can complete the connection by selecting an *action* method.

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The destination object in an action connection is frequently a custom object that manages the application or a particular window (controller object).

When you make a connection from an NSControl object, the Inspector panel shows the Connections display for the destination object.

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When the user manipulates the NSControl object, such as clicking a button or moving a slider, the action message is sent to the destination object (the target).

See [aCompound Objects<sup>o</sup> in Chapter3 for descriptions of the interaction between NSControl objects and NSCell objects, and of the role NSMatrix objects play.](#) ;../03\_SettingObjectAttributes/SettingAttributesConcepts.rtf;CompoundObjects;;~

## Connections Within the Interface

Sometimes you can connect two objects on an interface. These connections can involve both outlets and

actions.

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Connections within an interface can also involve two Application Kit objects. Two examples are interconnecting text fields (so the user can tab from field to field), and connecting a menu command such as Print to an NSText object.

**Tip:** To enable printing of an NSText object, drag a connection line from the Print menu command (or other NSControl object that initiates printing) and select the **print:** action in the Connections display.

You can connect text fields and form fields so that when the user presses the Tab key, the cursor moves to another field. See <sup>a</sup>Enabling inter-field tabbing<sup>o</sup> in this chapter for information on this procedure.  
;EnablingInterfieldTabbing.rtf;↵

**Related Concept:** ;ConnectionsConcepts.rtf;linkMarkername

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