The Windows Help Application

This chapter introduces the Windows Help application and user interface. It explains the basic features of Windows Help as they appear to users. Because the Help application will display the Help files you develop, you must understand

The Windows Help User Interface

Windows Help's features from the user's perspective.

Windows Help is a standard Windows-based application that displays online Help files and is consistent with other applications that run in the Windows operating system. In addition to basic Windows skills, such as using the mouse, choosing menu commands, working with dialog boxes, using scroll bars, and so on, users must become familiar with unique elements of the Windows Help interface to use

Starting Help

Help effectively. The following sections describe those elements.

Most applications for Windows offer Help; generally, all you do to start Help is choose a command, such as Contents, from the application's Help menu. You can also press F1 at any time to start Help. Or you can use any of the other methods Windows offers for starting applications–the Run command in Program Manager

The Main Help Window

or File Manager, for example.

The main Help window appears when a user requests Help, and it stays open until the application or the user closes it. Information appears within the main Help window, which has the standard window elements: a title bar, a menu bar, a

button bar, a display area (with scrolling and nonscrolling regions), and scroll
bars (Figure 1.1).

Graphic

Main Window Attributes

The first time the user requests Help, the main window appears in its default state
on the screen. The default settings determine the size, placement, and background
color of the main window. After the Help window displays, the user can change
any of those attributes. Help authors can also define attributes for the main
window that override the predefined defaults.

Title Bar

The title bar at the top of the Help window displays the name of the Help file or
any title text that the author specifies in the [OPTIONS] or [WINDOWS] section
of the Help project file (see Chapter 16, "The Help Project File," for details). If
the author doesn't specify a title, "Windows Help" appears in the title bar (Figure
1.2).

Graphic

A Help title can have as many as 50 characters. Help centers the title in the
available title bar width; however, if the user resizes the Help window so that the
title text is wider than the window, the title is truncated from the right (Figure
1.3).

Graphic

If the user opens a version 3.0 Help file, the title appears in Help 3.0 format:
[Title string] Help - <Help filename.hlp>, as in Figure 1.4.

Graphic

Size

The initial size of the main Help window is approximately two-thirds of the total
screen width. Windows Help reserves a 2-pixel space around the Help window
borders to keep the window from jamming against the edge of the screen display.
The default size is large enough to accommodate the Help button bar without
forcing the standard buttons to wrap (Figure 1.5).

Graphic

Note

To create international versions of Windows Help, the default size of the main window varies slightly depending on the length of the foreign-language text on the standard Help buttons. This variable is stored in the WINHELP.EXE resource file.

Users can resize the Help window, like other windows, by dragging the window borders or by using the Size command on the Control menu. They can also minimize or maximize the Help window. Any changes the user makes to the size of the main Help window are saved in the [Windows Help] section of the WIN.INI file.

Note

Because Help does not define minimum limits for the size of the main window, the user can make the Help window so small that it is unusable.

Placement

When it first appears, the main window is positioned to the far right of the screen and extends the full height of the screen. Users can move the main window as they would move any other window in Windows–by dragging the title bar or by using the Move command on the Control menu. If the user moves the main window, the new position is recorded in the [Windows Help] section of the WIN.INI file.

Background Color

The default background color for the main window is the color the user defines using the Color application in the Windows Control Panel. However, the main window may appear with a custom background color if the author defines one for the Help file (Figure 1.6).

Graphic

Authoring Predefined Attributes

Depending on the type of Help file you are creating, you may want to change

Help's predefined defaults for the main window. For example, you may want to have the main Help window start up in a certain location on the screen when users request Help. Also, many types of information have different presentation requirements. Step-by-step procedures may work well in a tall, fairly narrow window. Tables of key equivalents, on the other hand, require a wider window. Other systems, like certain instructional models, require a fixed page size in which users view the information without scrolling.

Help authors can define any of the main window attributes discussed in this section:

n The window title

n The size of the window

n The location of the window

n The background color

Main window attributes are set in the [WINDOWS] section of the Help project file (see Chapter 16, "The Help Project File," for details).

The Topic Area

In most applications for Windows, the part of the window where the user interacts with the computer and performs work is called the application workspace. In Windows Help, the workspace is where information is displayed. Help information is divided into "chunks" called topics. When you open a Help file, the topic (text and graphics) appears in the workspace of the main window (Figure 1.7).

Graphic

Note

If the Windows Help application is started without opening a Help file, the "Windows Help" logo appears in the topic area, and the button bar and scroll bars do not appear.

The Nonscrolling Region

Between the button bar and the scrolling region Help authors can create a

nonscrolling region of the main Help window. The nonscrolling region is simply a portion of the window that does not scroll with the rest of the topic information; therefore, no scroll bars are necessary. If a vertical scroll bar displays in the topic, it does not extend into the nonscrolling region. The nonscrolling region is separated from the scrolling region by a hairline (Figure 1.8).

Graphic

Because the nonscrolling region is an optional region that a Help author defines when creating the topic files, it may or may not appear in the Help window. If it does appear, it can contain the same kind of information as the scrolling region.

The Scrolling Region

The part of the main window that contains the topic information is called the scrolling region. Text within the scrolling region wraps dynamically along the right edge of the window, even when the user changes the size of the window, unless the author creates nonwrapping text.

Scroll Bars

The scrolling region of the main Help window can include horizontal or vertical scoll bars. However, unlike Help version 3.0, scroll bars do not appear in the scrolling region unless they are necessary. Not displaying scroll bars gives Help authors more space in the scrolling region for Help information.

Windows Help determines whether to display scroll bars when the window is first displayed and each time the user resizes the window. If the topic information extends below the lower window border, Help displays a vertical scroll bar (Figure 1.9).

Graphic

If the topic information extends beyond the right edge of the Help window, a horizontal scroll bar appears (Figure 1.10).

Graphic

Once a horizontal scroll bar appears, it remains in the topic, even if the user scrolls to another part of the topic that does not require a horizontal scroll bar.

Scroll bars behave independently in each Help window. Therefore, scroll bars that appear in the main window do not affect secondary windows.

Help scroll bars work the same as scroll bars in other Windows-based applications with one exception: information in the main window is not updated when the user drags the scroll box. Instead, Help updates the information only after the user stops moving the scroll box and releases the mouse button. This scroll-bar behavior is consistent with Windows-based applications that display large amounts of information in the main window, such as Word for Windows. For a complete description of the scroll bar interface, see "The Mouse and the Keyboard Interfaces" section later in this chapter.

Topic Text and Graphics

The scrolling and nonscrolling regions of the main Help window can display text and graphics, as well as other multimedia elements. These elements are created in separate applications, such as word processors and paint programs, and are included in the Help file during the build process. Help merely serves as a display engine for the text and graphics you create.

By controlling the way you create text and graphics, you control the way a topic looks to your users. Text attributes–font, point size, type style, color–are determined by Help authors when they create the topic files in a rich-text format (RTF) editor such as Word for Windows. The same is true for other elements. For example, graphics can be full-size or reduced, complete or partial, full-color or monochrome (Figure 1.11).

Graphic

Topic Hot Spots

The scrolling and nonscrolling regions can include text and graphics that are "hot"–they provide links to other Help topics and to more information about the current topic.

Text hot spots are green and have either a solid or dotted underline. Graphics that are hot have no special visual cue. However, whether text or graphics, the pointer changes shape whenever it is over a hot spot (Figure 1.12).

Graphic

To choose a hot spot

1. Position the pointer on the green text or hot graphic.

The pointer changes to a hand.

2. Click the mouse button once.

Or press TAB to highlight the hot spot, and then press ENTER.

Note   Do not double-click the mouse button when you choose a hot spot because Help processes both clicks separately. Depending on the Help file, the double-click may cause unexpected behavior, choosing two hot spots or executing a macro twice, for example.

Note   Pressing SHIFT+TAB highlights the hot spots in reverse order, and CTRL+TAB highlights all the hot spots within a topic simultaneously.

If the hot spot links to another topic, that topic appears in the Help window.

If the hot spot links to more information, Help displays the information in a pop-up window on top of the Help window. To close the pop-up

Windows Help Menus

window, click anywhere or press any key.

Windows Help has four standard menus: File, Edit, Bookmark, and Help. Menu commands open Help files, assist users as they navigate through and request information from Help files, or display Help on specific tasks.

Customizing the Menu Bar

The descriptions that follow refer to the standard Help menus and commands. Except for the How To Use Help command, you cannot modify the standard Help menus or menu items. However, you can add additional menus and commands. Customizing the Help menu bar involves a number of Help macros, such as **InsertMenu**, **InsertItem**, **DeleteItem**, **EnableItem**, and others. For complete details about how to create your own custom menus and commands, see Chapter 13, "Customizing the Help File," and Chapter 15, "Help Macro Reference."

The File Menu

Commands on the File menu let you open a Help file, print a topic, set up your printer, or quit Windows Help.

Open

The Open command opens an existing Help (.HLP) file.

You can open the Help file for any application that uses Help, even if you are not using the application. For example, you can be working in Notepad and open the Help file for Program Manager to read about using group windows.

If you currently have a Help file open, Help closes that file before opening the new file.

Help uses the File Open dialog box stored in the COMMDLG.DLL file if it is available on the user's system. Otherwise, Help uses the 3.0 version of the Open dialog box.

To open a Help file

1. From the File menu in Help, choose Open.
The Open dialog box appears (Figure 1.13).

Graphic

2. If the file is on a different drive, select the drive you want from the Drives box.
3. In the Directories box, double-click the directory that contains the Help file.
Or press the UP ARROW or DOWN ARROW key to select the directory, and then press ENTER.
4. In the File Name box, double-click the name of the Help file you want to open.
Or select the file, and then choose OK.
Instead of using the File Name and Directories boxes, you can type the complete path in the File Name box, and then choose OK.

Print Topic

The Print Topic command prints the text in the topic that is currently displayed in the main Help window.

Help prints the entire topic, including graphics, but it does not print any annotations you might have made. If the topic has a nonscrolling region, it is printed at the top of the page. If the topic has an embedded window, the DLL is responsible for printing the information in the embedded window.

When a user prints a topic, Help displays a print status dialog box that contains the following information: Printing <topic title>. (Help uses the topic title text as defined in the title footnote.) If the topic does not have a name, Help displays "untitled" as the topic title. The user can continue printing or cancel the print job from this dialog box.

If you have connected to and installed a printer in Windows, Help prints to the default printer.

To print a Help topic

n   From the File menu in Help, choose Print Topic.
The Print Topic dialog box appears while Help sends the topic information to the printer (Figure 1.14).

Graphic

To cancel printing

n   Choose the Cancel button in the Printing dialog box.
Or press the ESC key.

Print Setup

The Print Setup command selects a printer for Help and changes printer setup information.

Help prints topics on the default printer. If you have installed more than one printer, you can make any of your installed printers the default printer. You can also change the default printer options. The available options in the dialog box depend on the type of printer you have connected to your computer.

Help uses the Print Setup dialog box stored in the COMMDLG.DLL file if it is available on the user's system. Otherwise, Help uses the 3.0 version of the Print Setup dialog box. When using the version 3.0 dialog box, Help retains the version 3.1 menu command and Print Setup dialog box title rather than Printer Setup.

To set up a printer or change printer options

1. From the File menu in Help, choose Print Setup.
The Print Setup dialog box appears (Figure 1.15).

Graphic

2. Select the options you want for this printer.
The options will vary depending on your installed printer.
3. If available, choose the Options button to select more options for the printer, and then choose OK when you have finished selecting options.
4. Choose OK.

Exit

The Exit command quits Windows Help.

When closing, Windows Help saves any annotations or bookmarks you have created.

To exit Help

◻ From the File menu in Help, choose Exit.
The Help window closes.

The Edit Menu

Commands on the Edit menu affect the text in the Help file, letting you copy a topic into a text editor or add notes to a Help topic.

Copy

The Copy command copies some or all of the text in a Help topic to the Clipboard. From the Clipboard, users can paste the text into another application or document. In this way, your Help system can provide examples and other information that the users might want to copy for themselves.

Choosing the Copy command places the text of the current Help topic in the Copy dialog box. (This command does not copy graphics.) Line breaks are inserted at the end of each line, unless the topic was authored as nonwrapping.

In the Copy dialog box, you can select a portion of the topic text that you want to copy to the Clipboard, or you can copy the entire topic to the Clipboard by not selecting anything. If you make a selection in the Copy dialog box, only the selected text is copied to the Clipboard.

Once displayed, the Copy dialog box can be moved and resized. Changes to the dialog box size or location are recorded in the [Windows Help] section of the WIN.INI file.

To copy text in the current Help topic to the Clipboard

1. From the Edit menu in Help, choose Copy.
The Copy dialog box appears (Figure 1.16).

Graphic

2. To copy all the text to the Clipboard, choose the Copy button.
Or select the text you want to copy to the Clipboard, and then choose the Copy button.
You can paste the text in the Clipboard into a Help annotation or into a document from another application.

You can also copy the entire contents of a Help topic directly to the Clipboard without displaying the Copy dialog box.

To copy the entire topic directly to the Clipboard

n Press CTRL+INS.

Annotate

The Annotate command attaches a note to the currently displayed topic. This feature lets users add their own comments to the information you provide in the Help file.

In the Annotate dialog box, you can type the annotation you want to add to the Help topic, edit an existing annotation, delete an annotation, copy all or part of an annotation to the Clipboard, or paste the contents of the Clipboard into the annotation window.

When you save an annotation, Help places a paper-clip icon to the left of the topic title to remind you that you have added text to this topic. Clicking the paper-clip icon opens the Annotate dialog box so that you can see the annotation.

Copy and Paste buttons are included in the Annotate dialog box so that users can select a portion of the text to copy to the Clipboard. Or they can copy the entire annotation to the Clipboard by not selecting anything. If they make a selection, only the selected text is copied to the Clipboard. The Paste button allows users to place information in the Clipboard and then paste it into the Annotate edit box

and save it with a topic. In this way, users can enhance their annotations with information from different sources. For example, a user might copy one Help topic to the Clipboard and then go to a different topic and paste the copied topic into an annotation to have the information from both topics accessible from one topic. The Paste button becomes active only when there is something in the Clipboard that might be pasted into the Annotate edit box.

Annotations are saved in a file with an .ANN extension. The annotation filename is based on the root name of the Help file and the annotation extension. For example, annotations to File Manager Help would be stored in the WINFILE.ANN file. Help stores annotation files in the user's Windows directory. Annotations in the current Help file remain in effect between Windows Help sessions.

Once displayed, the Annotation dialog box can be moved and resized. Changes to the dialog box size or location are recorded in the [Windows Help] section of the WIN.INI file.

To add an annotation to the current Help topic

1. From the Edit menu in Help, choose Annotate.
The Annotate dialog box appears (Figure 1.17).

Graphic

2. Type the text you want to add.
If you make a mistake, press BACKSPACE to erase any unwanted characters, and then continue typing.
Text wraps automatically in the edit box, but you can end a line before it wraps by pressing ENTER.
3. When you have finished creating the annotation, choose the Save button.
A paper-clip icon appears in the topic title, indicating that you have made an annotation (Figure 1.18).

Graphic

To view an annotation

1. Go to the topic where you made the annotation.
2. Click the paper-clip icon.
Or press TAB to highlight the paper-clip icon, and then press ENTER.
3. When you have finished reading the annotation, choose the Cancel

button.

To remove an annotation

1. Go to the topic where you made the annotation you want to delete.
2. Click the paper-clip icon.
Or press TAB to highlight the paper-clip icon, and then press ENTER.
3. Choose the Delete button.

You can also copy text from an annotation and paste it into another annotation or into another document. Likewise, you can paste text from other documents into annotations.

To copy an annotation

1. Go to the topic where you made the annotation you want to copy.
2. Click the paper-clip icon.
Or press TAB to highlight the paper-clip icon, and then press ENTER.
3. To copy the entire annotation to the Clipboard, choose the Copy button or press CTRL+INS.
Or select the text in the annotation that you want to copy to the Clipboard, and then choose the Copy button.
4. To close the Annotate dialog box, choose the Save button.

To paste an annotation

1. Copy to the Clipboard the text that you want to paste into the annotation.
2. Go to the topic where you want to paste the annotation.
3. Click the paper-clip icon.
Or press TAB to highlight the paper-clip icon, and then press ENTER.
4. To paste the contents of the Clipboard at the beginning of the topic, choose the Paste button or press SHIFT+INS.
Or place the insertion point where you want to insert the new text, and then choose the Paste button.
5. To save the changes and close the Annotate dialog box, choose the Save button.

The Bookmark Menu

Commands on the Bookmark menu create and remove bookmarks placed at specific Help topics. The Bookmark menu initially contains one command: Define. As users define bookmarks, they are added to the menu until a total of nine appear. Help then adds a More command to give the user access to the additional bookmarks.

Define

The Define command places a bookmark in the Help file at the current topic or removes a bookmark from a topic. Just as you can place bookmarks in a book to mark specific references, you can place bookmarks at Help topics you use frequently. When you place a bookmark at a topic, you can get that topic quickly from Help's Bookmark menu.

In the Bookmark Define dialog box, you can type the name you want to assign to the bookmark, edit the suggested name, or delete a bookmark. When you define a bookmark, Help suggests the topic title as the bookmark name. You can use the default name or type your own name in the edit box. If the topic does not have a title, you must type your own bookmark name for it. When you save the bookmark, Help adds the bookmark name to the Bookmark menu and records the topic title and the user's location within the topic for future reference. The Delete button in the dialog box lets you remove any bookmark that appears in the bookmark list box.

After you define a bookmark, you can choose the bookmark name from the Bookmark menu to move directly to the topic.

Help saves all user-defined bookmarks in the WINHELP.BMK file. Bookmarks are saved to a global file to make it easy for users to return to any marked location in any Help file. Help stores WINHELP.BMK in the user's Windows directory. Bookmarks remain in effect between Windows Help sessions.

Bookmarks may or may not be compatible across different versions of a product. For example, if a user upgrades the Windows Help application from version 3.0 to version 3.1, all defined bookmarks will remain valid. However, if a user upgrades the Help file that uses the bookmarks, the bookmarks may become invalid. If the new Help file has many changes–added and removed topics–the bookmarks will go to the wrong places. Therefore, it is best to remove a user's .BMK file when your setup program installs a new version of the Help file.

To place a bookmark at the current topic

1. From the Bookmark menu in Help, choose Define.

The Bookmark Define dialog box appears (Figure 1.19).

Graphic

2. Type the name you want to give to the bookmark in the Bookmark Name box, and then choose OK.

Or just choose OK to use the topic title as the bookmark name.

The bookmark name now appears on the Bookmark menu in Help (Figure 1.20).

Graphic

To remove a bookmark

1. From the Bookmark menu in Help, choose Define.
2. Select the bookmark you want to remove.

Or type the bookmark name in the edit box.

3. Choose the Delete button.

The bookmark name is removed from the bookmark list box and from the Bookmark menu.

Bookmark Names

After a user defines a bookmark, its name appears on the Bookmark menu so that the user can go directly to the bookmarked topic. The first nine bookmarks are listed on the Bookmark menu in the order that they are created. The number appearing to the left of the item name provides the keyboard access.

To go to a bookmarked topic

n From the Bookmark menu, choose the name of the bookmarked topic you want to view.

Underlined numbers precede the first nine bookmark names. You can press the corresponding number key to go quickly to a marked topic.

More

The More command appears as the last item on the Bookmark menu when you have defined more than nine bookmarks.

Choosing More displays the Bookmark dialog box, which contains a list of all the bookmarks you have defined in the current Help file. Help selects the first item in the bookmark list when the dialog box opens.

To choose from the complete list of bookmarked topics

1. From the Bookmark menu in Help, choose More.
The Bookmark dialog box appears (Figure 1.21).

Graphic

2. In the Go To Bookmark box, double-click the name of the bookmarked topic you want to view.
Or select the bookmark name, and then choose OK.

The Help Menu

Commands on the Help menu display the How To Use Help file for Windows Help, place Help windows on top of other application windows, and identify the Help application.

How To Use Help

The How To Use Help command displays the Contents screen of the Help file for Windows Help (WINHELP.HLP). This file provides instructions on how to use the Windows Help application and Help topics.

If the user opens Help as a stand-alone application, choosing this command displays the How To Use Help file in a second Help window. This second Help window remains open until the user closes it or until the user closes the first instance of Help (if there are no other instances of the Help window open).

In Windows Help version 3.1, Help authors can create their own How To Use Help file instead of using the default file by using the **SetHelpOnFile** macro in the [CONFIG] section of the Help project file. Replacing the standard file is important if you want the instructional file to reflect the particular features of your application's Help system.

Note

Use the **SetHelpOnFile** macro to specify a custom How To Use Help file, the **DeleteItem** macro to remove the standard How To Use Help item, and the **InsertItem** macro to place the new menu item on the Help menu. See Chapter 15, "Help Macro Reference," for information about each of these macros and Chapter 16, "The Help Project File," for information about how to use them in the [CONFIG] section of the Help project file.

To learn how to use the Help application

n   From the Help menu, choose How To Use Help.
Help displays the Contents topic of the standard file or of a custom How To Use Help file if one has been authored (Figure 1.22).

Graphic

Always On Top

The Always On Top command causes all Help windows to appear on top of other application windows on the screen. If you minimize a window that is on top, its icon also appears on top of other windows.

Note

Other applications that use the topmost attribute, such as Windows Task List, may compete with Help for the top position. In that case, the Help window may appear beneath another window.

When you first ask for Help, the Help window appears on top of other windows on the screen. If you click inside another window, the Help window goes behind and the window you clicked appears on top.

You can choose to keep the Help window on top of other windows even when switching to other application windows. This can be especially useful if you are using Help to follow a step-by-step procedure in your application.

Note
This command is available only with Windows version 3.1.

To make the Help window stay on top

n From the Help menu, choose Always On Top.
A checkmark appears next to the command, and a 2-pixel drop shadow appears around the window border to indicate that the Help window is on top (Figure 1.23)

Graphic

To return Help to normal window behavior

n From the Help menu, choose Always On Top again.
Note
If the Always On Top command is not checked, a secondary window that has been defined as an on-top window may remain on top. The main Help window can be made on top only by choosing this command.

About Help

The About Help command displays a dialog box that identifies the Windows Help application. It includes the Help application name, the Help icon, the version number, and the Microsoft Help copyright notice. In addition, the dialog box lists information about the user and the user's hardware configuration.

Using the **COPYRIGHT** option in the Help project file, you can provide a custom copyright notice or other message about your application's Help file. For details, see Chapter 16, "The Help Project File."

Help uses the About Help dialog box stored in the SHELL.DLL file if it is available on the user's system. Otherwise, Help uses the 3.0 version of the About Help dialog box.

To see information about Windows Help

n From the Help menu, choose About Help.
The About Help dialog box appears (Figure 1.24).

The Windows Help Button Bar

Graphic

Windows Help has four standard buttons: Contents, Search, Back, and History. The buttons appear in the button bar, just below the menu bar in the Help window. The standard buttons function as navigation controls, helping users access the information in the Help file (Figure 1.25).

Graphic

To choose a Help button

n   Click the button you want.
Or press the underlined letter in the button name.

The Help button bar in version 3.1 is different from the version 3.0 button bar in two ways: the Browse buttons (<< and >>) have changed from standard buttons to optional buttons, and the buttons have changed from graphical buttons to text-only buttons. The latter change was necessary because:

n   Text-only buttons are half as large as graphical buttons, so more information fits in the Help window.

n   Text-only buttons reduce the size of the Help application (WINHELP.EXE), giving you more space for your Help file.

n   Text-only buttons simplify the process of adding custom buttons to the interface and of translating the existing buttons into foreign languages for international markets of your application and Help.

The Help button bar behaves the same as a standard menu bar: buttons wrap if the window becomes too narrow to fit all the buttons horizontally. The buttons continue to wrap until they are all stacked vertically. If the buttons still do not fit in the window, Windows Help reduces the size of the buttons and truncates the button text, if necessary.

Customizing the Button Bar

The descriptions that follow refer to the standard Help buttons. You cannot remove the standard Help buttons. However, you can change the function of the standard buttons or add additional buttons to the button bar. Help authors can create up to 16 additional buttons for a total of 22 buttons (including Browse buttons).

Custom buttons can have as many as 29 characters, after which Help truncates the button name. Help determines the size of all the buttons based on the longest name and the default button size (determined by the longest standard button name–Contents). So if you assign long button names to custom buttons, the size of all the buttons in the button bar will increase.

Customizing the Help button bar involves a number of Help macros, such as **ChangeButtonBinding** to modify the standard buttons, **CreateButton**, **DestroyButton**, **EnableButton**, and others to create and modify custom buttons. For complete details about how to create your own custom buttons, see Chapter 13, "Customizing the Help File."

The Contents Button

The Contents button is the first, or leftmost, button in the Help button bar. Choosing the Contents button displays the topic designated by the Help author as the Help Contents (usually the top-level topic in a Help file). If the author does not specify a contents topic by using the **Contents=** entry in the [OPTIONS] section of the Help project file, Windows Help displays the first physical topic in the Help file (the first topic in the first .RTF file listed in the [FILES] section of the Help project file).

The purpose of the Contents button in Windows Help version 3.1 is to create a consistent navigation point within a single Help file and across all Windows-based applications that use Help. When using hypertext systems, users often feel lost and need a way to reorient themselves in this abstract "hyperspace." The Contents button gives users an easy way to return to a familiar starting place.

Note

When displaying a version 3.0 Help file, Help uses the **Index=** entry as the Contents topic.

All applications included with Windows version 3.1, such as Program Manager,

File Manager, Write, and so on, have a Contents command on the Help menu. Choosing the Contents command from an application's Help menu is the same as choosing the Contents button in the Help button bar.

To see the Contents topic of the current Help file

n   Choose the Contents button.

The Search Button

Windows Help lets users search for Help information by keyword, which is similar to searching through a book index. The purpose of the Search button in Windows Help version 3.1 is to create a consistent way to create an online index for Help files. Book indexes have proven to be very effective ways for people to look up information. In an electronic document, such as a Help file, users also need an easy way to find specific information. The Search button gives users the electronic equivalent of a book index.

Users search for information by looking up the keywords an author has defined for the Help topics. For example, a user might look up all the topics that have the keyword "save" associated with them. Those topics should provide information about saving different kinds of items, such as files and documents (Figure 1.26).

Graphic

The Search dialog box has an edit field, two list boxes, and three command buttons:

n   The edit box is used to type a keyword for the search. As the user types in the edit field, the keyword list scrolls automatically to match the user's entry or the closest letter to that entry. For example, typing the letter S scrolls the keyword list to the first keyword beginning with S. The keyword highlight moves forward in the list box whenever it has a match closer to what the user is typing. If a user performs a search and goes to the topic, the previous search keyword will be entered automatically in the edit box.

n   The top list box contains all the keywords in the Help file. Six keywords show in the list box at one time. Clicking a keyword in the list box enters it in the edit box. Double-clicking an entry selects the keyword and performs the search.

n The Show Topics button performs the search using the keyword in the edit box. A user can press ENTER after selecting a keyword.

n The lower list box shows all the topics found by the search. Approximately seven entries will fit in the list box. If more topics are found, the user can scroll to see more topics. Clicking a topic selects it. Double-clicking a topic title displays that topic (same as selecting the topic and choosing Go To).

n The Go To button displays the topic the user has selected in the Topics Found list box and closes the Search dialog box. After a user chooses Show Topics, the user can press ENTER again to go to the topic. This double-return action in the dialog box allows for quick searches. Or, users can search quickly by typing a keyword and pressing ENTER twice to go to the first topic displayed in the Topics Found list.

n The Cancel button dismisses the dialog box. (The Cancel button changes to Close if the user has already performed a search.)

Users can move the Search dialog box if they want. Changes to the dialog box location are recorded in the [Windows Help] section of the WIN.INI file.

All applications included with Windows version 3.1, such as Program Manager, File Manager, Write, and so on, have a Search For Help On command on the Help menu. Choosing the Search For Help On command from an application's Help menu is the same as choosing the Search button in the Help button bar.

To search for a Help topic by keyword

1. Choose the Search button.
The Search dialog box appears (Figure 1.27).

Graphic

If the user has performed a search during this session, the previous keyword is displayed in the edit box.
2. Type a keyword, or select one from the keyword list.
You can use your keyboard to move quickly to different parts of the list. The list scrolls to those keywords that most closely match what you are typing in the text box.
3. Choose the Show Topics button.

A list of topics associated with that keyword appears in the lower list box, as in Figure 1.28.

Graphic

4. Select the topic you want, and then choose the Go To button to jump to the selected topic.

Or double-click the topic you want.

The Back Button

The Back button has the same functionality as in Help version 3.0: it keeps track of every topic users look at from the time they open Help until they close it and stores these topics in a "back" list. Choosing the Back button displays the topic that was previously displayed in the Help window (Help goes back one item in the back list). Choosing Back repetitively causes Help to back up one screen at a time along the path the user has followed.

In other words, Back lets users go back to topics they have already viewed, in the order they viewed them, without forcing them to remember anything about the topic or how they got there. Back simply retraces the steps the user has taken. So, in one sense, Back is like a screen recorder and playback mechanism combined into a single button.

Back functions in the current file as well as across files, so if a user opens or jumps to a different file, backing up reopens an inactive file to display a previously viewed topic. However, the Back list is cleared when the user closes Help. If there is no previous topic to view, the Back button is dimmed.

To go back to the previous topic

n   Choose the Back button.

To back up to a previously viewed topic

n   Choose the Back button repeatedly until you return to the topic you want to see.

The History Button

Choosing the History button displays a window that shows the topics (a maximum of 40) you have viewed during the current session. You can select any

topic from the list to view it again (Figure 1.29).

Graphic

The purpose of the History button is to give users a visual representation of the topics that they have viewed during a session and let them return easily to any of those topics. Because the space that users navigate in hypertext systems is abstract and nonlinear, they often suffer from disorientation. As users move through the information, however, they create a linear path. The history list records this linear movement and lets users visualize the path they have taken through the information and return quickly to a particular place. In this sense, History is similar to Back in that they both are "backtracking" devices. But because the History window presents this path visually and stays open while users interact with it, History offers advantages to the browsing user.

Windows Help uses the following guidelines to build the history list:

- The topic title of the topic displayed in the Help window when the user chooses the History button appears first in the history list.
- The second item in the history list is selected when the user chooses the History button so that the user can just press ENTER to return to the previous topic. This gives History the same functionality as Back.
- Each entry in the history list occupies one line. If the topic title does not fit in the History window, it is truncated rather than wrapped.
- The history list records the user's location within a topic as well as the topic title, even though only the title appears in the list. When users choose an item from the history list, Help returns them to the exact place in the topic where they were when they left it (scrolled half-way down, for example).
- The history list records only topics that are displayed in the main Help window. Topics displayed in secondary windows or pop-up windows do not appear in the history list.
- The history list records only jump-type movements in Help. Hot-spot events such as launching an application or a tutorial are not recorded. Movements caused by using the Back button or requesting How To Use Help are recorded, however.
- Help does not remove duplicate entries from the history list. If a user views a topic several times, each instance appears in the history list.

- ◻ Help maintains the history list across Help files. If the user chooses an interfile jump, the history list prefixes the root name of the Help file before the topic title.

When a user chooses a topic from the history list, the History window does not close, but it loses the focus. To switch back to the History window, the user can click inside the window, choose the History button, or press ALT+F6. To cancel the History window without choosing a topic, the user can choose the Close command from the Control menu or press ALT+F4. If the user minimizes the main Help window, the History window closes, and restoring the Help window does not restore the History window. The user must choose the History button again to restore the History window.

The default size of the History window is approximately one-third the height and width of the screen. The default position is centered. Once displayed, the History window can be moved and resized. If the user changes the size or location of the History window, it will retain those changes the next time it appears. Changes to the window's size or location are recorded in the [Windows Help] section of the WIN.INI file.

To use the History button to return to a topic

1. Choose the History button.
The History window appears (Figure 1.30).

Graphic

2. Double-click the topic to which you want to return.
Or select the topic and press ENTER.
If necessary, use the scroll bar to see more topics.

Browse Buttons

The Browse buttons, which were standard in Help version 3.0, are now optional in version 3.1. Even though they are optional buttons, they can be considered as standard buttons because they are a feature of the Windows Help application. The Browse buttons have been made optional because Microsoft feels that this functionality can often be better presented in the context of the topic information rather than as part of the Help application. It is up to each individual author to decide whether to include the standard Browse buttons or create a unique, custom browsing feature in their Help system.

Browse buttons can be included as part of the standard Windows Help button bar by adding the **BrowseButtons** macro to the [CONFIG] section of the Help project file. For more information about adding the Browse buttons, see Chapter 15, "Help Macro Reference," and Chapter 16, "The Help Project File." The procedure for creating browse sequences within the topic files has not changed from version 3.0 to 3.1. See Chapter 6, "Creating Topics," for the authoring information.

If the author includes the Browse buttons in the Help file, or if Help opens a version 3.0 Help file, the Browse buttons are displayed to the right of the four standard buttons (Figure 1.31).

Graphic

Note

When displayed in Windows Help version 3.1, version 3.0 files use the 3.1 text-only buttons rather than the graphical buttons seen in version 3.0.

To browse to the previous topic in a browse sequence

n   Choose the Browse << button.

To browse to the next topic in a browse sequence

Customizing the Help Application

n   Choose the Browse >> button.

When working with Help files, you might want to alter the look and behavior of Windows Help. You can customize Help by:

n   Creating a program item to start Help and a specific Help file.

n   Starting Help from MS-DOS.

n   Changing the standard Help icon to a custom icon.

n   Changing Help's default color scheme.

The following sections explain how to customize the way Windows Help looks and works.

Creating a Program Item for Your Help File

While you are creating your own Help file, you may want to have a more customized setup for starting Help. The best thing to do is to create one or more program items in a Program Manager group that will start Help and, if you want, a specific Help file.

To create a program item for the Help application

1. In Program Manager, open the group where you want to add the Help item.
2. Press and hold down the ALT key while double-clicking a blank area of the group window.

The Program Item Properties dialog box appears.

3. Fill in the Program Item Properties dialog box as necessary, and then choose the OK button.

For help with the Program Item Properties dialog box, choose the Help button in the dialog box.

You can specify any of the command-line options for starting Help in the Command-Line box. See the next section for details.

Starting Help from the MS-DOS Command Line

You can start Windows Help directly from the command line in MS-DOS, or you can use command-line options within Windows to start Help using a program item or using the Run command in Program Manager.

To start Help without opening a Help file, type:

    c:\windows\winhelp

To start Help and open a specific Help file, add the Help file name after Help:

    c:\windows\winhelp myhelp.hlp

If the Help file is located on a network server, specify the network path to the file:

    l:\\server\share\help\winhelp myfile.hlp

Use the **-n** option followed by a *context ID number* to start Help and display a topic with a context ID that you have defined in the [MAP] section of the Help project file:

    c:\windows\winhelp -n 801 pifedit.hlp

Use the **-i** option followed by a *context string* to start Help and display a topic with the context string identifier that you have assigned using the pound footnote (#):

    c:\windows\winhelp -i cg_how_pm progman.hlp

Changing the Standard Help Icon

The standard Windows Help icon is a yellow question mark. You can replace this icon with a custom icon; use any .ICO icon file that you create with Windows Imagedit or another icon program.

To change the Help icon

1. Open the group in Program Manager that contains the Help program item and select the Help icon.
2. From the File menu, choose Properties.
3. In the Program Item Properties dialog box, choose the Change Icon button.
4. If more than one icon is available in the Current Icon area, scroll through the icons by clicking the scroll arrows or by using the LEFT and RIGHT ARROW keys.

If you would like more icons to choose from, you can scroll through all the available Program Manager icons. Or you can use the Browse button to select an icon from a directory on your hard disk or floppy drive, if you have other icons to choose from.

5. When the icon you want to use is selected, choose OK.
6. In the Program Item Properties dialog box, choose OK.

Changing Help's Default Color Scheme

Because Windows Help is a standard Windows-based application, users can modify its default appearance the same way they modify the look of Windows–by using the Control Panel Colors setting to change their screen colors. Control Panel lets users change the color of the standard Help window elements: title bar,

menu bar, button bar, scroll bars, window background, window text, and window border. In addition to these standard window elements, Help has two special elements: hot-spot text and the Help startup screen. By default, text hot spots in Help are green and the startup screen is blue. Windows Help provides custom WIN.INI entries that users can use to modify these two visual elements of Help.

Note

Generally, applications should not change any of the WIN.INI settings described in this section because they are global settings designed for end users. They are not provided so that an application's setup program can edit the WIN.INI file and insert or update these settings during installation of their product. If an application wants to change the way hot spots appear in Help, it should use the authoring procedures described in Chapter 8, "Creating Links and Hot Spots."

Changing Hot-Spot Colors

If users want to change the way hot spots appear in Help, they can edit the Windows WIN.INI file and specify custom hot-spot colors. Help supports the following WIN.INI entries:

[Windows Help]
JumpColor=*(RRR, GGG, BBB)*
PopUpColor=*(RRR, GGG, BBB)*
MacroColor=*(RRR, GGG, BBB)*
IFJumpColor=*(RRR, GGG, BBB)*
IFPopUpColor=*(RRR, GGG, BBB)*

RRR, GGG, and BBB represent the red, green, and blue (RGB) components of the hot-spot color. These color values can be a number from 0 to 255. The meaning of each entry is explained in the following table.

Command	Defines the color for	Default color
JumpColor	Jump hot spots	Green
IFJumpColor	Interfile jump hot spots	Same as **JumpColor**

PopUpColor	Pop-up hot spots	Same as **JumpColor**
IFPopUpColor	Interfile pop-up hot spots	Same as **JumpColor**
MacroColor	Macro hot spots	Same as **JumpColor**

To change the color of Help hot spots

1. Open the WIN.INI file in Notepad or some other text editor.
2. Go to the [Windows Help] section.
3. Type one or more of the hot-spot color entries.
Note   You can specify just the **JumpColor** entry to change the color of both jump and pop-up hot spots.
4. Save the WIN.INI file and exit the text editor.
5. Restart Windows to have your changes take effect.
When you open Help again, your hot-spot colors will be set to the colors you specified.

Overriding Author-Defined Hot-Spot Colors

As Chapter 8 explains, Help authors can also change the color of hot-spot text. These author-defined colors may cause problems for some users (those with gas plasma VGA screens, for example), making it difficult or even impossible to read the hot-spot text. If the Help file contains an author-defined color for hot spots, the above entries will have no effect. To override an author-defined hot-spot color, users can type the following entry in the WIN.INI file:

[Windows Help]
Colors=*NONE*

If Help finds this entry in the WIN.INI file, it uses the system default colors for

foreground and background colors, regardless of how the Help file was authored.

Chapter 8, "Creating Links and Hot Spots," explains how Help authors can change the default appearance of hot spots.

Changing Help's Startup Screen Colors

When you start the Windows Help application without opening a Help file, Help displays a startup logo that identifies itself. If users want to change the starting and ending colors used in the Help logo screen, they can edit the WIN.INI file. Help supports the following WIN.INI entries:

[Windows Help]
LogoStart=*(RRR, GGG, BBB)*
LogoEnd=*(RRR, GGG, BBB)*

As with the hot-spot entries, you specify the RGB color you want for the logo screen color on the right side of the equal sign (a number from 0 to 255). The meaning of each entry is explained in the following table.

Command	Defines the color for	Default color
LogoStart	Windows Help startup logo screen	Blue
LogoEnd	Windows Help ending logo screen	Blue

The Mouse and the Keyboard Interfaces

You can use the mouse or the keyboard to work with Help, or you can use a combination of the two. The following sections provide details about both interfaces.

Mouse Interface

Windows Help uses the standard mouse interface for common actions: choosing commands, moving or resizing the Help window, choosing buttons, interacting with dialog boxes, scrolling information, and choosing hot spots. There are, however, some of anomalies in the mouse interface.

The first involves choosing hot spots. In many Windows-based applications, the user must double-click the mouse to execute an action. This is true in Help also. To choose a topic from the History window, you can double-click the topic. But this is not true with hot spots. Choosing a hot spot requires only one mouse click. Using a double-click to choose a hot spot may result in a double action. For example, double-clicking a jump may cause Help to execute an action in the two topics: the one containing the jump and the one that is displayed as a result of the jump.

The second difference involves scrolling. In many application windows and list boxes, the information in the window or list box is updated as the user moves the scroll box. In the main Help window, information is not updated when the user moves the scroll box. Instead, the information is updated only when the user finishes moving the scroll box and releases the mouse button.

Scrolling with the Mouse

Use the following techniques to scroll text within the Help window.

To scroll	Do This
Up or down one line	Click the up or down scroll arrow on the vertical scroll bar.
Right or left one line	Click the right or left scroll arrow on the horizontal scroll bar.
Up or down one window	Click the vertical scroll bar above or below the scroll box.

Right or left one window	Click the horizontal scroll bar to the right or left of the scroll box.

Continuously	Point to one of the scroll arrows, and hold down the mouse button until the information you want comes into view.
To a particular place in the topic	Drag the scroll box to the position you want.

Keyboard Interface

As in other Windows-based applications, Help provides keyboard equivalents for most mouse actions. The following tables describe the keys you can use in Help.

Help Access Keys

Use the following keys to get Help from the application.

To	Press
Start Help and display the Contents for the application. If the Help window is already open, pressing F1 displays the Contents for the How To Use Help topics. If the application provides context-sensitive Help (such as Program Manager and File Manager), pressing F1 displays a Help topic on the selected command or dialog box option. This feature is available only if the application supports it. It is available in all of the applications included with Windows.	F1
Change to Help mode so you can choose the command, click the screen region, or press the key or key combination on which you want Help. This feature is available only in certain applications (such as Microsoft	SHIFT+F1

Help Button Keys

Use the following key equivalents for the Help buttons.

To	Press
Display the Help Contents for the application	C
Display the Search dialog box, which lists all the search keywords for the application	S
Go back to the last topic you viewed	B
Display the History window, which lists the last 40 topics you have viewed	T
Display the next topic in a browse sequence (Optional Browse >> button)	period (**.**)
Display the previous topic in a browse sequence (Optional Browse << button)	comma (**,**)

Help Window Keys

Use the following keys while working in Help.

To	Press
Select a hot spot. Pressing TAB repeatedly moves you clockwise to other hot spots in the topic.	TAB
Select a hot spot. Pressing SHIFT+TAB repeatedly moves you counterclockwise to other hot spots in the topic.	SHIFT+TAB
Select all the hot spots in a topic.	CTRL+TAB
Copy the entire contents of the current Help topic directly to the Clipboard without displaying the Copy dialog box. Or copy an entire annotation or a portion of it to the Clipboard.	CTRL+INS
Paste the contents of the Clipboard into the Annotation dialog box.	SHIFT+INS
Switch between the main Help window and the History window.	ALT+F6
Close the Help window.	ALT+F4

Help Movement Keys

Use the following keys to scroll text within the scrolling region of the Help window.

To scroll	Press
Up one line	UP ARROW
Down one line	DOWN ARROW
Right one character	RIGHT ARROW
Left one character	LEFT ARROW
To the leftmost position	HOME
To the rightmost position	END
To the first line in the scrolling region of the topic	CTRL+HOME

To the last line in the scrolling region of the topic   CTRL+END

Up one window   PAGE UP

Down one window   PAGE DOWN

To the beginning of the topic   CTRL+PAGE UP

To the end of the topic   CTRL+PAGE DOWN