Quick and Dirty Help

Welcome to the Quick and Dirty way to build help files for Windows 3.0. With Quick and Dirty Help (QDHELP) you use any ascii editor to generate help files for Windows 3.0. The ascii file you generate is input to the QDHELP program which outputs a file in rich text format (RTF). This is the format needed by the MICROSOFT Help Compiler. What this means is that you do not need to purchase Microsoft WORD or some other word processor that generates RTF to be able to make help files for your Windows 3.0 applications. The remainder of this help file contains information on the syntax used by the QDHELP program input file along with some hints and tips on using QDHELP.

Pick a Index any Index!

Microsoft is the software company that wants you to to contribute big $$$ to Bill Gates retirement fund by purchasing thier word processing program WORD.

Quick and Dirty Help Commands

Below you will find a list of the commands found in the QDHELP system. Commands must be the first non white space characters found on a line.

Command Index

Whitespace are non printable characters found in a text file such as tab,space.   For the purposes of QDHELP the ONLY recognized whitespace characters are space and tab.

The /include command

The /include command has the following syntax

/include FILE-NAME

The include command is used to include files into a .qdh file. The file to include is the only parameter on the line following the include command. Any file name is ok. If the file can not be found and does not have a extension then the filename.qdh will be tried. If both fail an error is reported and the program terminates.

Example:

include filename.qdh

The /topic command

The /topic command has the following syntax

/topic TOPICNAME
topic commands...
/endtopic

The topic command is used in pairs with the /endtopic command to mark the begin and end of a help topic. All other commands are placed inside the /topic .. /endtopic pair. The following commands are valid inside the /topic command. /title , /keywords , /browse and /para .. /endpara More information is available on each of these commands in this help library.

The /title command

The /title command has the following syntax

/title title string

The title command is used to set the text string which will be displayed as the title of the topic during a successful keyword search.

Command Placement

This command must be placed after the /topic command but before any /para command.

The /keyword command

The /keyword command has the following syntax

/keyword keyword1[;keyword2...]

The keyword command is used to set the keywords that will find this topic in a help keyword search.   An example might look like keyword;KEYWORD;command for a topic that dealt with the keyword command!

Command Placement

This command must be placed after the /topic command but before any /para command.

The /browse command

The /browse command has the following syntax

/browse browsename,browsenum or AUTO

The browse command is used to set the browse sequence numbers used by the Windows 3.0 help window to determine what order to browse thru the help topics in.

The browsename is the name of the browse catagory that the browsenum is part of.   For example you may have one category called commands and one called examples. In this case the order of the browsenum values is only valid in reference to the browsename that number is associated with. The browsename is just any name you find suitable for your purposes.   When in help and you are viewing a topic that is in a browsename category, if the user hits the forward browse key he/she will be moved to the topic which is in the same browsename category and has the next highest number for browsenum. The reverse browse key will move to the same browsename category with the next lowest browsenum.

READ THIS... If instead of a number you put the string AUTO in the browsenum place QDHELP will automatically increment the browse count for you.   This is a GREAT feature that I use in all the help files I write.   You no longer have to number the sequences on your own. Just put AUTO in browsenum and you will browse thru the topics in the same order that you have them in the file.   If you use AUTO do NOT use any numbers for browsenum in the same browsename.   This will cause unpredictable results since the number you choose may have already been used by the AUTO command.

Command Placement

This command must be placed after the /topic command but before any /para command.

The /para command

The /para command has the following syntax

/para paragraph specific format strings
...text strings...
/endpara

The /para command is used to let the QDHELP system know that this is the start of a new paragraph. Inside of the /para command there are a number of commands that can be used to set up hyperlinks and popuplinks to other parts of the help system.

Command Placement

This command must be placed after the /topic,/title,/keyword,/browse commands.

Commands used inside /para /endpara pair.

Internal to the /para command there are a number of commands that can be used to create links to other parts of the help system these commands are listed below.

/text command
/link command
/popup command
/bitmaplink command
/bitmap command

Paragraph format strings

Here you will find a list of formatting commands that can be placed after the /para command. If the reader is familiar with the rich text format, they may find the look of these commands very similar. That is because these are RTF commands!

Paragraph Justification.

\ql left justified paragraph
\qr right justified paragraph
\qj justified paragraph
\qc centered paragraph
Paragraph Justify Examples

Paragraph Indentation

\fi000 first line of paragraph indent.
\li000 left indent.
\ri000 right indent
Paragraph Indent Examples

Paragraph Spacing

\sb000 space before paragraph.
\sa000 space after paragraph.
\sl000 space between lines.
Paragraph Spacing Examples

Paragraph Border Placement

\brdrt border on top of paragraph.
\brdrb border on bottom of paragraph.
\brdrl border on left of paragraph.
\brdrr border on right of paragraph
\box border around entire paragraph
Border Placement Examples

Paragraph Border Style

\brdrs single thick border
\brdrth thick border
\brdrsh shadow border
\brdrdb double border
Border Style Examples

Paragraph Justification Examples.

This paragraph is left justified. This is just some text so that you can see that it is left justified! It was generated with the command **/para \ql**

This paragraph is right justified. This is just some text so that you can see that it is right justified! It was generated with the command **/para \qr**

This paragraph is justified. This is just some text so that you can see that it is justified! It was generated with the command **/para \qj**

This paragraph is centered. This is just some text so that you can see that it is centered! It was generated with the command **/para \qc**

Paragraph Indentation Examples

This is a paragraph where the first line is indented. It was generated using the command **/para \fi300** where 300 is the number of twips to indent the first line.

This is a paragraph that entire paragraph is indented on the left. It was generated using the command **/para \li300** where 300 is the number of twips to indent the entire paragraph

This is a paragraph that entire paragraph is indented on the right. It was generated using the command **/para \ri300** where 300 is the number of twips to indent the entire paragraph

Paragraph Spacing Examples

This is a paragraph with a lot of space before it. It was generated with the command **/para \sb500** where 500 is the number of twips between the previous paragraph and this paragraph.

This is a paragraph with a lot of space after it. It was generated with the command **/para \sa500** where 500 is the number of twips between the previous paragraph and this paragraph.

This is a paragraph with alot of space between the lines. If you only have one line resize the help window to a smaller size to cause more than one line to be used. This paragraph was generated with the command **/para \sl450** where 450 is the number of twips between the lines.

Paragraph Border Placement Examples

This is a paragraph with the border placed only on top of it. It was generated with the command **/para \brdrt**

This is a paragraph with the border placed only on bottom of it. It was generated with the command **/para \brdrb**

This is a paragraph with the border placed only on the left of it. It was generated with the command **/para \brdrl**

This is a paragraph with the border placed only on right of it. It was generated with the command **/para \brdrr**

This is a paragraph with the border placed all the way around it. It was generated with the command **/para \box**

Paragraph Border Style Examples

This is a paragraph with a border of single thickness around it. It was generated with the command **/para \box\brdrs.**

This is a paragraph with a thick border around it. It was generated with the command **/para \box\brdrth.**

This is a paragraph with a shadow border around it. It was generated with the command **/para \box\brdrsh.**

This is a paragraph with a double border around it. It was generated with the command **/para \box\brdrdb.**

The /text command

The /text command has the following syntax

/text <u>text specific format strings</u> , the text

The format properties will be applied to the text found between the comma (,) and the end of the line which contains the /text command.

Text format strings

Following are strings that you can add to the /text command to cause the string printed by the text command to take on special properties. The output of these effects will depend on the font in use. Since these are really RTF commands you can put any RTF text formatting command into this position.   There are the most common.

Examples
\b = bold text
\i = italic text
\strike = strikethru text
\f000 = font number where 000 is the font of choice.
\fs000 = font size in half points where 000 is the size.
\ul = underline text
\up000 = superscript in half points where 000 is number of half points.
\dn000 = subscript in half points where 000 is number of half points.

The following are examples of different text formating commands that you can use. It is important to note that the help compiler uses certain sequences of commands to signal links,popups etc. Results of using these commands on text will be unpredictable if you use a sequence that help has defined for its own use. This should be a very rare case. Consult your help compiler manual to understand the sequences used by the help engine.

This is bold text
This is italic text
~~This is strikethrough text~~
Press here if you want to see the fonts
This is font size 50 text
This is underlined text
Regular text, This is superscript 6 half points
Regular text, Thisis subscript 6 half points

The following list correlates font name to font number.

This is Tms Rmn,	value = 000
This is Helv,	value = 002
This is Courier,	value 004
This is Helvetica,	value 011
This is Modern,	value 067
This is Roman,	value 068

The /link command

The /link command has the following syntax

/link TOPIC_NAME,link string

The TOPIC_NAME is the name of the topic that this link should transfer the user to.   The link string is the string that is printed in the help window.

The /popuplink command

The /popuplink command has the following syntax

/popuplink TOPIC_NAME,link string

The TOPIC_NAME is the name of the topic that this link should transfer the user to.   The link string is the string that is printed in the help window.

The /bitmaplink command

The /bitmaplink command has the following syntax

/bitmaplink TOPIC_NAME,filename

The TOPIC_NAME is the name of the topic that this link should transfer the user to. The filename is the name of the bitmap file where the image data will be gotten from.   This filename should NOT include any path information.   The path information about where the bitmap lives in put into the .hpj file use by the Microsoft help complier.

The /bitmap command

The /bitmap command has the following syntax

/bitmap position,filename

The position in the above command is a single character with the following meaning l=left,r=right,c=character which means treat the bitmap just like a character and put it wherever it goes in the sentence. The filename is the name of the bitmap file where the image data will be gotten from.   This filename should NOT include any path information. The path information about where the bitmap lives in put into the .hpj file use by the Microsoft help complier.

A twip is a unit used to measure output to a graphics device. A twip has a value of 1/1440 of an inch.   In other words there are 1440 twips per inch.

Running Quick and Dirty Help

The following items contain information on running quick and dirty help from the DOS command line.

The qdhelp program is invoked on the DOS command line. The following syntax is used

```
qdhelp inputfile [outputfile]
```

The outputfile is optional. If no output file name is given the output will be written to the default file out.rtf.

Hints and Tips Done

The best way to get a feel for using the QDHELP system is to look over the file QUICK.QDH. This is the file that contains the input to QDHELP which was used to generate the help file that you are currently reading.

When developing your help system.   First develop a standard look to each of your topics. This would include what the title will look like, the spacing of the paragraphs, the method you will use for subtitles, etc.   By putting in a little work up front you will be able to work most of your topics from this template.   Given an ascii editor with cut and paste (the Windows 3.0 notebook will do) you should be able to crank out your help file in a short amount of time.

To generate a blank line between 2 groups of text use the \sa300 command in the paragraph format string for the first paragraph.

To generate a list of links each on a separate line place each /link command in a separate /para /endpara pair.

Errata

Done

Below is a list of known problems and work arounds if any are known

I dont know of any way to force a line feed in the middle of standard text.   Im sure there is a way I just havent figured it out yet.   If you know of a way drop me a note.

Tab character is not allowed beyond the first non white space character in the string.   In other words you can use tab to indent at the start of the line but not in the middle of a line. (I know it's silly, I'm working on it!).   If you want to put a tab into your text use \tab this will put a tab into the text.

Bitmap files can not have a comma (,) in there file name.   This is a known bug and will be fixed in later releases

Some text Done

Done

More Text ● ●