^{# $ K +} The Windows Help Style Guide

{bml ABOUT.BMP}You can easily create a help system with the features demonstrated here - this guide shows you how. This guide was created with RoboHELP®.

[#] IDH_CONTENTS

[$] Contents

^K Contents

⁺ AUTHOR

[#] [$] ^K ⁺ The Windows Help Style Guide

{bml ABOUT.BMP}You can easily create a help system with the features demonstrated here - this guide shows you how. This guide was created with RoboHELP®.

Help Basics

What is Windows Help?

-
- Windows Help is a system-wide standard for developing online help and it's installed with every copy of Windows. It consists of a Help viewer and a Help compiler for developers. Windows Help usually called WinHelp is a standalone Windows application. The WinHelp executable ((WINHELP.EXE) uses compiled Help files (.HLP) only. WinHelp applications can be linked to another Windows application or can be used standalone as information systems.

Advantages of Online Help

- Windows Help has become a very popular way of presenting reference information to a Windows user. Windows users are notorious for not using manuals: they expect to find answers to all their questions via context-sensitive help in their Windows applications. Window Help reduces the cost of goods, updates, and distribution. It adds flexibility to the product development cycle; it's faster to update than a manual. It's instantly available to the user and offers the potential of almost unlimited color graphics and multimedia capability. The library of Help topics.also allows users to quickly access the information needed.

.

[#] IDH_basics

[$] Help Basics

^K Help Basics

⁺ AUTHOR

The Windows Help Style Guide

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Fonts

In a Help system you can use different fonts to emphasize text. Windows comes with several standard fonts that are installed on every Windows system. For Help systems it is best to use standard fonts - if you use a font that isn't on the Help user's system, the result can be strange looking (difficult to read) text. Sans serif fonts are best for help systems as they tend to have a crisper display on-screen.

The Arial font was used to create this Help system. Other standard Windows 3.1 fonts that the Help compiler supports include:

TrueType:

Courier New

Σψμβολ (Symbol)

Times New Roman

Standard:

Courier

MS Sans Serif

MS Serif

Small Fonts

You can also add font characteristics such as:

bold

italic

underline

~~strikethrough~~

bold italic

~~etc.~~

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Colors

This topic shows the colors that were defined as part of the help system. You can use any of the colors available to your system just by selecting a color for the font. When the help system is compiled, the text appears in the specified color.

In most cases, the default color is black, although it can be any color. Other colors available to Windows Help are:

Blue	Cyan	Green	Magenta
Red	Yellow	(white)	Dark Blue
Dark Cyan	Dark Green	Dark Magenta	Dark Red
Dark Yellow	Dark Gray	Gray	

As you can see, some of the lighter colors don't show up well on the white background. It is helpful to keep this in mind when you are selecting the colors for your help system.

IDH_colors

$ Colors

K Colors

+ AUTHOR

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Design & Layout

This guide demonstrates some of the design schemes that you can use in a Windows Help system. This section illustrates just one way of organizing information for the user - using a hierarchical format with expandable/collapsible views. Below are graphical buttons - with associated jump text - that the user can select to see detailed information.

If you have the source code version of this guide, you can use this document as a template for your own help systems. For information on how to request your free copy of source code, select the About button (above).

Expandable/Collapsible views

{bml BKLAYOUT.BMP }   Book Layout

{bml FLLAYOUT.BMP }   Folder Layout

IDH_design

$ Design and Layout

K Layout

+ AUTHOR

 # $ K + The Windows Help Style Guide

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Book Layout

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} Overview

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} About

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} Contents

IDH_book_layout

$ Book Layout

K Layout

+ AUTHOR

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Book Layout

{bmc BOOKOPEN.BMP} Overview

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Help Basics

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Help Source Files

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} About

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} Contents

IDH_book_layout_overview

$ Book Layout Overview

The Windows Help Style Guide

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Book Layout

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} Overview

{bmc BOOKOPEN.BMP} About

     {bmc PAGE.BMP} About this Help System

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} Contents

\# IDH_book_layout_about

\$ Book Layout About

 # $ The Windows Help Style Guide

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Book Layout

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} Overview

{bmc BOOKCLOS.BMP} About

{bmc BOOKOPEN.BMP} Contents

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Fonts

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Colors

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Bullets

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Tables

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Secondary Windows

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Non-Scrolling Regions

\# IDH_book_layout_contents

$ Book Layout Contents

[#] [$] ^K ⁺ The Windows Help Style Guide

{bml ABOUT.BMP}You can easily create a help system with the features demonstrated here - this guide shows you how. This guide was created with RoboHELP®.

Folder Layout

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Overview
{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} About
{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Contents

[#] IDH_folder_layout

[$] Folder Layout

^K Layout

⁺ AUTHOR

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Folder Layout

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Overview

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Help Basics

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Help Source Files

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} About

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Contents

IDH_folder_layout_overview

$ Folder Layout Overview

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Folder Layout

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Overview

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} About

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} About this Help System

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Contents

[#] IDH_folder_layout_about

[$] Folder Layout About

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Folder Layout

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Overview

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} About

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Contents

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Fonts

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Colors

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Bullets

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Tables

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Secondary Windows

    {bmc PAGE.BMP} Non-Scrolling Regions

IDH_folder_layout_contents

$ Folder Layout Contents

[#] [$] Help Basics

What is Windows Help?

When Microsoft developed Windows they saw the need for a system-wide standard for developing online help. The result was Windows Help. It consists of a Help viewer that is installed with every copy of Windows and a Help compiler (for developers) which follows a strict set of construction rules.

- Windows Help (also known as WinHelp) is a standalone Windows application.
- The WinHelp (WINHELP.EXE) executable file uses compiled Help files (.HLP).
- WinHelp is included with every copy of Windows 3.
- WinHelp applications can be linked to another application or can stand alone for information delivery.

Advantages of Online Help

Windows Help has become one of the most (if not the most) popular ways of presenting reference information to a Windows user. Some of the reasons for this include:

- Reduces cost of goods, updates, and distribution.
- Adds flexibility to the product development cycle by avoiding delays required by printing.
- Eliminates unmanageable full-shelf manual sets for complex products.
- Is always available versus manuals that disappear or are not provided to all users at a site.
- Offers the potential of almost unlimited color graphics and multimedia capability.
- Provides efficient means of access to the library of Help topics.
- Integrates the process of using the product and learning about the product.

[#] IDH_basics_noscrol

[$] Help Basics Text

[#] [$] Help Source Files

A Windows help system is comprised of the following files:

{bmc SOURCE.BMP}

[#] IDH_source_files_noscrol

[$] Help Source Files Text

[#] [$] Fonts

In a Help system you can use different fonts to emphasize text. Windows comes with several standard fonts that are installed on every Windows system. For Help systems it is best to use standard fonts - if you use a font that isn't on the Help user's system, the result can be strange looking (difficult to read) text. Sans serif fonts are best for help systems as they tend to have a crisper display on-screen.

The Arial font was used to create this Help system. Other standard Windows 3.1 fonts that the Help compiler supports include:

TrueType:

Courier New

Σψμβολ (Symbol)

Times New Roman

Standard:

Courier

MS Sans Serif

MS Serif

Small Fonts

You can also add font characteristics such as:

bold

italic

underline

~~strikethrough~~

bold italic

~~*etc.*~~

[#] IDH_fonts_noscrol

[$] Fonts Text

[#] [$] Colors

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In most cases, the default color is black, although it can be any color. Other colors available to Windows Help are:

Blue	Cyan	Green	Magenta
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Dark Cyan	Dark Green	Dark Magenta	Dark Red
Dark Yellow	Dark Gray	Gray	

As you can see, some of the lighter colors don't show up well on the white background. It is helpful to keep this in mind when you are selecting the colors for your help system.

[#] IDH_colors_noscrol

[$] Colors Text

ᵗ ˢ Bullets

Bullets are a common type of formatting in printed documentation. Most often used to set a list apart from the surrounding text, they can add a distinctive look to your work. The Windows Help compiler recognizes some types of bullets, but not all. After choosing your bullet, you may want to do a quick compile and check to verify the bullet shows in Help.

There are two ways to incorporate bullets into your help systems:

• Place a bullet character, such as a symbol, into the text.

OR

{bmc BULLET.BMP}   Create a bitmap, and place it in the Help system as a character. This approach allows you to create custom bullets.

You can use any type of bullet (or bitmap):

{bmc DIAMOND.BMP}   such as a diamond

OR

{bmc SQUARE.BMP}   a square

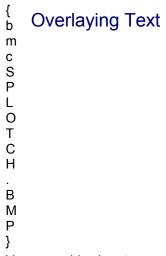# IDH_bullets_noscrol

$ Bullets Text

[#] [$] Tables

You can create several types of special effects in your help system using tables. One example is the Contents topic of this help system - a table was used so that different spacing (above) could be used for the icons and the text.

An important consideration when using tables is that the text wrap is determined by the table width, not the Help Viewer. In normal text, the Viewer automatically wraps the text when you resize the window - this doesn't happen if you use tables. Therefore, tables are best used for small bits of text.

Table Tricks

In the example below, the text overlays a graphic. This was accomplished by using a table with a narrow left column (too small for the graphic):

{
b   Overlaying Text
m
c
S
P
L
O
T
C
H
.
B
M
P
}

You can add colors to create a table-like effect by inserting a pre-built bitmap into the help system:

{bmc TABLE.SHG}

[#] IDH_tables_noscrol

[$] Tables Text

Secondary Windows

By default your help text displays in the "main" window. You can add "secondary" windows that display in addition to your main window. Either type of window can be positioned anywhere on the screen, and you can set the windows to be "on top" - covering all other open windows. A window is just a place where information is displayed - when you tell the help system to display a topic, you can also tell it which window is to contain the text. (Note that secondary windows are different than popups - see the samples, below.)

{bmc WINSECND.BMP}   {bmc WINPOPUP.BMP}

IDH_secondary_windows_noscrol

$ Secondary Windows Text

Non-Scrolling Regions

In most topics in this Help System, the area at the top is separate from the rest - if you scroll the text, this upper section does not move. This is a non-scrolling region.

Some rules for non-scrolling regions:

- non-scrolling regions are generally used for the topic title
- they must always come before any scrolling regions

To define a non-scrolling region, you just format the paragraph as "keep with next."

{bmc NONSCROL.BMP}

The Windows Help Style Guide

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Bullets

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<superscript>#</superscript> IDH_tables

<superscript>$</superscript> Tables

<superscript>K</superscript> Tables

<superscript>+</superscript> AUTHOR

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{bmc WINSECND.BMP}   {bmc WINPOPUP.BMP}

\# IDH_secondary_windows

$ Secondary Windows

K Secondary Windows

+ AUTHOR

^{# \$} Display in Secondary Window

You can display text using the main window, a secondary window, or a popup.

Secondary windows are movable and sizable, allowing you to place them anywhere on the screen.

They also have other typical features of windows, such as the:

- control box
- minimize button
- maximize button
- restore button

If the text is long enough, when you display it in a secondary window, you will see scroll bars. Note that the non-scrolling region at the top stays static (does not scroll with the text in the client area of the window).

[#] Window_Info_Secondary

^{\$} Using Secondary Windows

Display in Popup

You can display text using the main window, a secondary window, or a popup.

Popup windows are not movable or sizable - the size and placement are determined by the Windows Help Viewer.

Popup windows do not support the use of non-scrolling regions.

Window_Info_Popup

$ Using Popup Windows

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Non-Scrolling Regions

In most topics in this Help System, the area at the top is separate from the rest - if you scroll the text, this upper section does not move. This is a non-scrolling region.

Some rules for non-scrolling regions:

- non-scrolling regions are generally used for the topic title
- they must always come before any scrolling regions

To define a non-scrolling region, you just format the paragraph as "keep with next."

{bmc NONSCROL.BMP}

IDH_non_scrolling

$ Non-Scrolling Regions

K Non-Scrolling Regions

+ AUTHOR

**$** **Non-Scrolling Region**

This is an example of a topic with a non-scrolling region.

The title ("Non-Scrolling Region") was formatted as "keep with next" so that it would display in the non-scrolling region of the secondary window.

When you use the scroll button to scroll text up or down, the non-scrolling region stays static.

You can add also use non-scrolling regions to add color to your help system. You do this by defining the non-scrolling region of each window to have a different color, as in this help system.

Note that popup windows so not have the non-scrolling capability. If you use a popup to display a topic that has a "keep with next" paragraph format, only that paragraph will display (you lose everything after the non-scrolling region).

Non_Scrolling_Region

$ Non-Scrolling Region

[#] [$] ^K ⁺ The Windows Help Style Guide

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Macros

You can use macros to tailor the behavior of your help system. For example, you could include a bitmap of a Close button that, when selected, executes the macro **CloseWindow**.

To see a list of available macros in each category, select the folder or the category name. Then, to see the macro definition, select the macro name in the list.

Macros are available for the following types of tasks:

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Menu Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Button Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Navigation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Conditional Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Dialog Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Window Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Miscellaneous

[#] IDH_macros

[$] Macros

^K Macros

⁺ AUTHOR

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Macros are available for the following types of tasks:

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Menu Manipulation

> Menu manipulation macros enable you to add, delete, change, disable, and enable WinHelp menus and menu items.
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} AppendItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} ChangeItemBinding
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} CheckItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} DeleteItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} DisableItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} EnableItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} ExtAbleItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} ExtInsertItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} ExtInsertMenu
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} FloatingMenu
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} InsertItem
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} InsertMenu
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} ResetMenu
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} UncheckItem

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Button Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Navigation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Conditional Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Dialog Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Window Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Miscellaneous

For further information on WinHelp macros, refer to the *WinHelp Macro Authoring Guide* - for contact information, choose the About button.

<superscript>#</superscript> IDH_macros_menu

<superscript>$</superscript> Menu Manipulation Macros

<superscript>#</superscript> <superscript>$</superscript> The Windows Help Style Guide

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Macros are available for the following types of tasks:

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Menu Manipulation

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Button Manipulation

> Button manipulation macros allow you to add, delete, change the function of, enable, or disable buttons on the WinHelp button bar.
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} BrowseButtons
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} ChangeButtonBinding
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} CreateButton
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} DestroyButton
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} DisableButton
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} EnableButton

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Navigation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Conditional Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Dialog Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Window Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Miscellaneous

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<superscript>#</superscript> IDH_macros_button

<superscript>$</superscript> Button Manipulation Macros

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{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Menu Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Button Manipulation

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Navigation

> Navigation macros enable you to control the sequence in which topics are displayed.
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Back
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Contents
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} GoToMark
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} JumpContents
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} JumpContext
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} JumpHash
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} JumpHelpOn
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} JumpId
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} JumpKeyword
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Next
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} PopupContext
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} PopupHash
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} PopupId
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Prev

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Conditional Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Dialog Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Window Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Miscellaneous

For further information on WinHelp macros, refer to the *WinHelp Macro Authoring Guide* - for contact information, choose the About button.

IDH_macros_navigation

$ Navigation Macros

**$** The Windows Help Style Guide

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Macros are available for the following types of tasks:

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{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Button Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Navigation

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Conditional Control

> Conditional control macros allow you to set and delete text markers, and execute other macros based
> on the existence (or nonexistence) of a specific text marker.
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} DeleteMark
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} IfThen
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} IfThenElse
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} IsMark
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Not
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} SaveMark

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Dialog Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Window Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Miscellaneous

For further information on WinHelp macros, refer to the *WinHelp Macro Authoring Guide* - for contact
information, choose the About button.

IDH_macros_control

$ Conditional Control Macros

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Macros are available for the following types of tasks:

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Menu Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Button Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Navigation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Conditional Control

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Dialog Control

      The dialog control macros allow you to display WinHelp dialog boxes in response to the user's input.

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} About

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} Annotate

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} BookmarkDefine

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} BookmarkMore

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} CopyDialog

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} FileOpen

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} History

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} PrinterSetup

      {bmc PAGE.BMP} Search

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Window Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Miscellaneous

For further information on WinHelp macros, refer to the *WinHelp Macro Authoring Guide* - for contact information, choose the About button.

IDH_macros_dialog

$ Dialog Control Macros

<superscript>#</superscript> <superscript>$</superscript> The Windows Help Style Guide

{bml ABOUT.BMP}You can easily create a help system with the features demonstrated here - this guide shows you how. This guide was created with RoboHELP®.

Macros

You can use macros to tailor the behavior of your help system. For example, you could include a bitmap of a Close button that, when selected, executes the macro CloseWindow.

To see a list of available macros in each category, select the folder or the category name. Then, to see the macro definition, select the macro name in the list.

Macros are available for the following types of tasks:

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Menu Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Button Manipulation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Navigation

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Conditional Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Dialog Control

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Window Control

> The window control macros allow you to move, size, and change the state of WinHelp windows.
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} CloseWindow
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} FocusWindow
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} HelpOn
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} HelpOnTop
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} PositionWindow

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Miscellaneous

For further information on WinHelp macros, refer to the *WinHelp Macro Authoring Guide* - for contact information, choose the About button.

<superscript>#</superscript> IDH_macros_window

<superscript>$</superscript> Window Control Macros

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{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Dialog Control

{bmc FOLDCLOS.BMP} Window Control

{bmc FOLDOPEN.BMP} Miscellaneous

> Macros are available for such tasks as copying and printing help topics, executing programs, and exiting WinHelp.
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} AddAccelerator
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Command
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} CopyTopic
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} ExecProgram
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Exit
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} Print
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} RegisterRoutine
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} RemoveAccelerator
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} SetContents
>
> {bmc PAGE.BMP} SetHelpOnFile

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[#] IDH_macros_misc

[$] Miscellaneous Macros

[#] [$] ^K ⁺ The Windows Help Style Guide

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Help Source Files

A Windows help system is comprised of the following files:

{bmc SOURCE.BMP}

[#] IDH_source_files

[$] Help Source Files

^K Help Source Files

⁺ AUTHOR