



VB/Helpmaker makes it easy to write, compile, and test Windows helpfiles.

You don't need to buy an expensive word processor or learn any cryptic footnote commands! With VB/Helpmaker, you will produce professional Windows helpfiles quickly and easily. All you need is this program and any Windows [help compiler](#).

Made for VB programmers

If you program in Visual Basic, VB/Helpmaker can analyze your program to build a starting helpfile for you! Our Auto-Generate feature can read your VB code and create [help topics](#) with references to all VB controls and menu items. You describe the controls, use the mouse to add jumps between topics, and you're done!

Not Just for VB, programmers! ([click here to continue...](#))

VB/Helpmaker Tutorial

Not Just for VB Programmers

VB/Helpmaker greatly simplifies all aspects of helpfile authoring.

Adding graphics, pop-up definitions, character formatting, color, and page layout couldn't be simpler! VB/Helpmaker will automatically create standard headers, footers, and a GLOSSARY to create the "professional" look users have come to expect.

Hooking it all together

VB/Helpmaker also writes the Windows API code to properly hook your application into the WINHELP system. A custom generated BASIC module contains everything you need to add help to your program.

This tutorial will lead you through a simple helpfile creation in less than 10 minutes.

Let's Get Started! ([click here to continue...](#))

Before you start...

You need to make sure you own a [help compiler](#) !

There are several help compilers available, and you must be sure there is one installed on your system before continuing with the tutorial.

At the time of this writing, the available compilers are HC.EXE, HC30.EXE, HC31.EXE, and HCP.EXE

The default configuration uses HC31.EXE in C:\VB\HC, (the default for VB Pro 2.0 and 3.0). If you installed all of the VB Pro files to their default directories, you can CONTINUE to the next step.

Otherwise, you will need to choose Setup | Edit HCP.PIF from the main menu before continuing.

[\(click here to continue...\)](#)

AutoGenerating helpfiles

Select File|New from the VB/Helpmaker menu, and the Begin New Helpfile dialog box should appear.

Press the top button (displayed here for reference).



Select **HEXCALC.MAK** from the VB/Helpmaker installation directory.

The next dialog box allows you to select the controls to include in your new helpfile. Accept the defaults by pressing **Continue**.

VB/Helpmaker will scan the **HEXCALC** program to generate a starting helpfile.

(click here to [continue...](#))

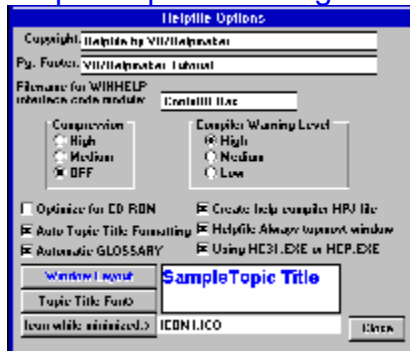
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Creating a help topic

We should set the helpfile options before compiling.

Select **Setup|Helpfile Options** from the menu bar. The following dialog should appear:

Helpfile Options Dialog Box



For the Title: field, enter "Hexcalc Help!"

Enable ☒ the Helpfile always top window option.

Press the CLOSE button and continue to the next step.

(continue...)

Adding a hypertext JUMP

Now, VB/Helpmaker has scanned the **HEXCALC** application source code and generated a helpfile framework. The "HexCalc" topic should be displayed.

Adding a JUMP

Scroll down in the "HexCalc" topic to the **--Menus--** section, and highlight the word **Boolean** with the mouse.

While the word **Boolean** is still highlighted, click the right mouse button and drag 'n drop the "arrow" that appears onto an empty area in the VB/Helpmaker main window..

(click here to continue...)

Setting the topic title

The following dialog box will appear:



Accept the default topic name of **Boolean** by pressing OK.

Enter the following text into the main textbox of the new "Boolean" topic:

The ADD, OR, and NOT menu selections perform binary operations.

Saving, Compiling, and Testing is next.

(continue...)

Compile and Test



Press the DISK icon on the button bar to save your work.



Next, press the "Computer button" to compile your helpfile. A full screen DOS window will open and your help_compiler should process the helpfile and return.

Glad you made it back!



Finally, press the "traffic light" button to **GO** ahead and test your new helpfile!

Congratulations!

You've made your first helpfile.

Advanced topics

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Advanced topics



(Adding Graphics)

No-one is satisfied with text only helpfiles anymore. Next, we need to add some graphics to give our new helpfile some pizzazz.

Move your cursor to the top of the **HexCalc** topic. Once the cursor is positioned, click the "eye" button to open the Bitmap dialog box.

Press the "Add bitmap" button and a dialog box will open. Select **HEXCALC.BMP** and press the OPEN button.

The file selection dialog box will close, and HEXCALC.BMP will appear in the listbox. The preview box will contain a representation of the bitmap.

Insert in topic

Press the button to add the bitmap at the current cursor location in the HEXCALC topic.



Compile and test



your helpfile before proceeding to the next topic.

(click here to continue...)

POPUP definitions



(Popup dictionary button)

One frequent hassle of writing helpfiles is keeping the user informed when a new "buzzword" or technical information phrase is encountered. VB/Helpmaker attempts to lessen this burden by maintaining a "dictionary" of definitions.


The first occurrence each dictionary entry is automatically tied to a pop-up window that will display the definition.

To see how this works, highlight the words **memory register** in the "HexCalc" topic and then press the Dictionary button .

The "Helpfile Dictionary" dialog will appear.

Press ENTER to add the word to the dictionary list, then enter the following definition:

A place to store temporary results.

Press  to return to the "HexCalc" topic, then recompile and test {bmc TUTOR4.BMP}




your changes!


Adding keyword search capability is next.

(continue...)

Keyword searching

MostWindows users frequently use the  button to find topics of interest. You can easily add this Search capability to your helpfile by entering the appropriate keywords for each topic in the "Keywords" field of the topic information dialog.



Press the  button to open the topic information dialog. Enter your keywords in the **keywords** text box, one word or phrase per line.

Add the following phrases to the keywords information of the **HEXCALC** topic

Top; Contents; Main Window

Our last subject in this tutorial describes linking your new helpfile to your source code. Thanks for staying with this so far!

(continue...)

Adding HELP

We have finished our helpfile, and we now need to link it to HEXCALC.EXE. Since HEXCALC.EXE is a Visual Basic Program, VB/Helpmaker has done most of the work for us!

VB/Helpmaker (PRO EDITION) automatically generates a BASIC module called "**ContxtID.BAS**". This module contains everything necessary to add HEXCALC.HLP to your program.

Open the HEXCALC.MAK example program in the Visual Basic design environment. You will now add your new helpfile to HEXCALC.EXE in three easy steps...

First step:

Add **ContxtID.BAS** to your project.

Select "File|Add File..." from the Visual Basic main menu. When the OPEN FILE dialog appears, add the file CONTXTID.BAS to your project.

Second Step:

Open Hexcalc and add the line **SetAppHelp Me.hWnd** to HEXCALC's Form_Load event.

Third Step:

Add the line: **QuitHelp** to HEXCALC's Form_Unload event.

Save and Run HEXCALC within the VB environment.
Press 'F1' to see your new helpfile.

(Other things to try...)

More on ContxtID.bas

Here's a complete list of functions generated in "ContxtID.BAS" (Professional Edition ONLY). Try adding them to your program to customize your help support.

- o **SetAppHelp()** 'Called in the main Form_Load event to register your program with WINHELP.EXE
- o **HelpWindowSize(x,y,dx,dy)** ' Position help window in a screen independent manner
- o **QuitHelp()** 'Deregisters your program with WINHELP.EXE. Should be called in your main Form_Unload event
- o **SearchHelp()** 'Brings up the windows help KEYWORD SEARCH dialog box
- o **ShowHelpTopic(Topicnum)** 'Brings up context sensitive help based on any of the following CONTEXT IDs

Thanks for staying with us through this tutorial!

Glossary

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

H

HC.EXE

HC30.EXE

HC31.EXE

HCP.EXE

help compiler

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S

setup HCP.PIF

HC.EXE

The help compiler usually shipped with Borland products.

Usually found in the same directory as the Compiler and linker executable files.

HC30.EXE

The Windows 3.0 help compiler shipped with Microsoft Products. For 'C' environments, this file is usually found in the xxx\BIN\ subdirectory with the compiler and linker *.EXE files.

For Visual Basic (professional version only), this file is usually located in the \VB\HC\ subdirectory.

HC31.EXE

The Windows 3.1 help compiler shipped with newer Microsoft Products. For 'C' environments, this file is usually found in the xxx\BIN\ subdirectory with the compiler and linker *.EXE files.

For Visual Basic (professional version only), this file is usually located in the \VB\HC\ subdirectory.

HCP.EXE

As far as I know, this file can only be acquired through Microsoft technical support services. It is basically the same as HC31.EXE, except it can utilize the extra memory available through the DPMI interface to DOS sessions running under Windows.

This file is sometimes necessary for compiling VERY large helpfiles. You probably already know where this file is located if you have it!

setup HCP.PIF

Select SETUP from VB/Helpmaker's main menu, then select the EDIT HCP.PIF menu option.

This will start the Windows PIF editor, where you can enter the location of your help compiler.

Remember to SAVE the edited PIF file before exiting the PIF editor.

help compiler

A DOS application that compiles Rich Text Format files into Windows helpfiles. A help compiler supplied with most Windows programming languages. The notable exception to this rule is the "Standard Edition" of Microsoft Visual Basic. The "Professional Edition" of Visual Basic does include a help compiler.

help topics

A Windows helpfile is basically as set of information pages linked together by hypertext jumps. Each page of information is also known as a "help topic".

hypertext jumps

Green, underlined words or phrases in a help topic generally indicate a hypertext link (or jump) to another topic. A single click of the mouse over one of these areas causes another related help topic to be displayed.

