

Introducing Visual Basic 5.0

This document contains information on using online Help and resources for learning or getting additional help with Visual Basic.

Note If you are using the Control Creation Edition of Visual Basic, some of the material covered in this document may not be applicable. With the full editions of Visual Basic you have the ability to create applications, ActiveX documents, and other types of components. Although some of the terminology may relate to application specific objects such as forms, in most cases the underlying concepts also apply to ActiveX control creation.

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Welcome to Visual Basic

Welcome to Microsoft Visual Basic, the fastest and easiest way to create applications for Microsoft Windows. Whether you are an experienced professional or brand new to Windows programming, Visual Basic provides you with a complete set of tools to simplify rapid application development.

So what is Visual Basic? The "Visual" part refers to the method used to create the graphical user interface (GUI). Rather than writing numerous lines of code to describe the appearance and location of interface elements, you simply drag and drop prebuilt objects into place on screen. If you've ever used a drawing program such as Paint, you already have most of the skills necessary to create an effective user interface.

The "Basic" part refers to the BASIC (Beginners All-Purpose Symbolic Instruction Code) language, a language used by more programmers than any other language in the history of computing. Visual Basic has evolved from the original BASIC language and now contains several hundred statements, functions, and keywords, many of which relate directly to the Windows GUI. Beginners can create useful applications by learning just a few of the keywords, yet the power of the language allows professionals to accomplish anything that can be accomplished using any other Windows programming language.

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The Visual Basic programming language is not unique to Visual Basic. The Visual Basic programming system, Applications Edition included in Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Access, and many other Windows applications uses the same language. The Visual Basic programming system, Scripting Edition (VBScript) for Internet programming is a subset of the Visual Basic language. The investment you make in learning Visual Basic will carry over to these other areas.

Whether your goal is to create a small utility for yourself or your work group, a large enterprise-wide system, or even distributed applications spanning the globe via the Internet, Visual Basic has the tools you need.

- Data access features allow you to create databases and front-end applications for most popular database formats, including Microsoft SQL Server and other enterprise-level databases.
- ActiveX technologies allow you to use the functionality provided by other applications, such as Microsoft Word word processor, Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, and other Windows applications. You can even automate applications and objects created using the Professional or Enterprise editions of Visual Basic.
- Internet capabilities make it easy to provide access to documents and applications across the Internet from within your application.
- Your finished application is a true .exe file that uses a run-time dynamic-link library (DLL) that you can freely distribute.

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Visual Basic Editions

Visual Basic is available in three versions, each geared to meet a specific set of development requirements.

- The Visual Basic Learning edition allows programmers to easily create powerful applications for Microsoft Windows 95 and Windows NT. It includes all intrinsic controls, plus grid, tab, and data-bound controls. Documentation provided with this edition includes *Learn VB Now* (a multimedia CD-ROM title), a printed *Programmer's Guide*, online Help, plus Visual Basic Books Online.
- The Professional edition provides computer professionals with a full-featured set of tools for developing solutions for others. It includes all the features of the Learning edition, plus additional ActiveX controls, including Internet controls, and the Crystal Report Writer. Documentation provided with the Professional edition includes the Programmer's Guide, online Help, the *Component Tools Guide* and the *Crystal Reports for Visual Basic User's Manual*.
- The Enterprise edition allows professionals to create robust distributed applications in a team setting. It includes all the features of the Professional edition, plus the Automation Manager, Component Manager, database management tools, the Microsoft Visual SourceSafe project-oriented version

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control system, and more. Printed documentation provided with the Enterprise edition includes all Professional edition pieces, plus the *Building Client/Server Applications with Visual Basic* book and the *SourceSafe User's Guide*.

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Getting Assistance While You Work

The online documentation system references nearly all aspects of Visual Basic. It includes:

- Online Help, containing extensive information on the Visual Basic programming environment and language.
- Visual Basic Online Links, providing pointers to sources of Visual Basic information on the World Wide Web.

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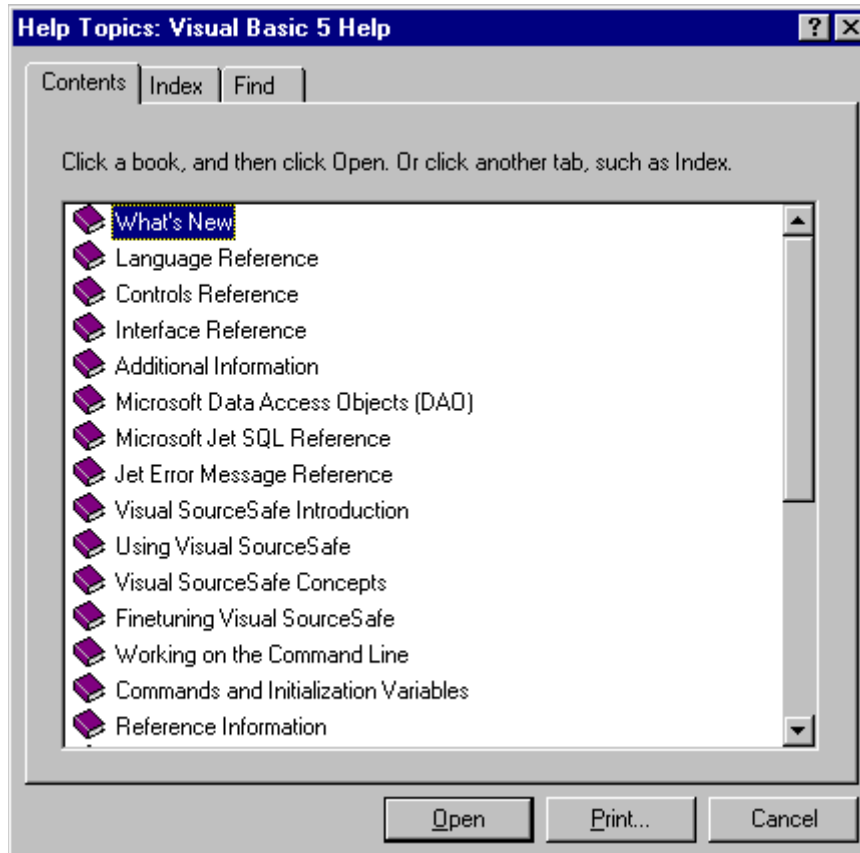
Online Help

You can access Help by choosing the Microsoft Visual Basic Help Topics command from the Help menu, or by searching for specific topics with the Search Reference Index... command. Context-sensitive Help is not supported in the Control Creation Edition.

Help Contents

For information on Help topics, choose Microsoft Visual Basic Help Topics from the Help menu or press F1 and click the Contents button. You can use the Contents tab (Figure 1.2) to get quick access to key reference topics.

Figure 1.2 The Contents tab

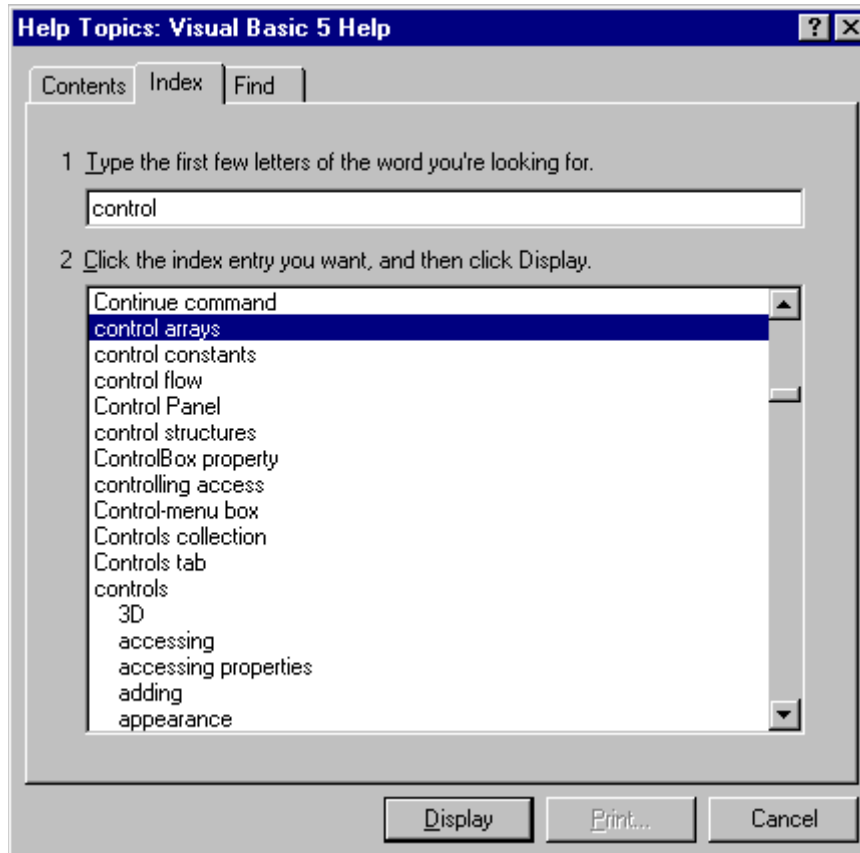


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Help Search

The fastest way to find a particular topic in Help is to use the Index tab in the Help dialog box (Figure 1.3). To display the Help dialog box, you can either choose Search Reference Index... from the Help menu or click the Help Topics button on any Help topic screen.

Figure 1.3 The Index tab



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□ To search Help

- 1 From the **Help** menu, choose **Search Reference Index**, or click the **Help Topics** button from any Help topic window.
- 2 In the **Search** dialog box, type a word, or select one from the list by scrolling up or down. Press ENTER or choose **Display** to display a list of topics related to the word you specified.
- 3 Select a topic name, and then press ENTER or choose **Display** to view the topic.

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Running Code Examples from Help

Many of the language topics in Help contain code examples that you can run from Visual Basic. The following procedures show you how to copy and run a code example from Help.

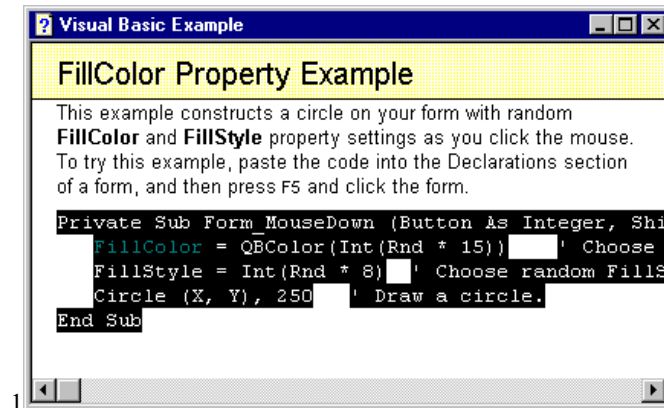
Note The following procedure is for code examples that do not contain public declarations.

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To copy a code example from Help

- 4 Create a new form by choosing **Add Form** from the **Project** menu, or use an existing form. (For more information on creating and using forms, see "Developing An Application in Visual Basic.")
- 5 Choose **Search Reference Index** from the **Help** menu.
- 6 In Help, search for *graphics*, and go to the topic called "FillColor Property."
- 7 In the **FillColor Property** topic, click the **Example** jump, located in the nonscrolling region near the top of the window. (A *jump* is a word that you can click to go to another topic. Jumps are underlined and the jump text is green.)
- 8 Select the subroutine portion of the example. Note that the first "Sub" marks the beginning of the procedure and the last "End Sub" marks the end of the procedure, as shown in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4 Selecting the procedure portion of the example



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- 9 Right-click the selected text and select **Copy** from the context menu. The text is copied onto the Clipboard.
- 10 Return to the form you created and double-click the form to display the **Code** window.
- 11 Place the insertion point below any existing code in the **Code** window.
- 12 From the **Edit** menu, choose **Paste**. The example now appears in the **Code** window.
- 13 From the **Run** menu, choose **Start**, or press F5.
- 14 Click the form to run the example code.

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Note Some code examples require you to draw controls on the form. For more information on drawing controls, see "Forms, Controls, and Menus."

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Visual Basic Online Links

If you have a modem or other means of access, additional information about Visual Basic is available on the World Wide Web.

Microsoft Web Site

The Microsoft World Wide Web site contains several areas of interest to Visual Basic programmers. The Visual Basic home page is located at <http://www.microsoft.com/vbasic/>. Information available at this site includes:

- The Visual Basic Knowledge Base, containing "how-to" articles about Visual Basic, reports on known bugs and bug fixes, and other informational topics.
- The Visual Basic Software Library, containing updates to program files, help updates, drivers, and other Visual Basic related files.
- Visual Basic Frequently Asked Questions, containing answers to the questions most frequently asked of Product Support Services.

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To access the Microsoft Visual Basic Web site

15 Choose **Microsoft on the Web** from the **Help** menu.

16 Select the appropriate option from the submenus.

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Note You must have a Web browser installed and you must be connected to the Internet for these options to work. Some of the content on the Microsoft Web site is optimized for Microsoft Internet Explorer and may not be fully visible to less advanced browsers. You can download the latest version of Internet Explorer from the Web site.

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Other Online Resources

Forums for Visual Basic programmers are also available on the Microsoft Network, CompuServe, and America Online. These forums typically contain libraries of sample applications and ActiveX controls, as well as discussion groups for obtaining peer support. For details on connecting to these services, see Obtaining Technical Support under the Visual Basic Help menu.

Tell Us What You Think

Microsoft is committed to providing the best possible products to our customers. With each new version, Visual Basic has evolved in order to meet the changing needs of Windows programmers.

We're always interested in hearing from our customers. If you have any suggestions or comments regarding improvements or features that you would like to see in future

versions of Visual Basic, let us know. You can send your suggestions via e-mail to vbwish@microsoft.com, by entering them on the Feedback Web page (<http://www.microsoft.com/vbasic/vbinfo/vbfeed.htm>), or by calling (206) 936-WISH.