

Visual Build

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Visual Build Overview

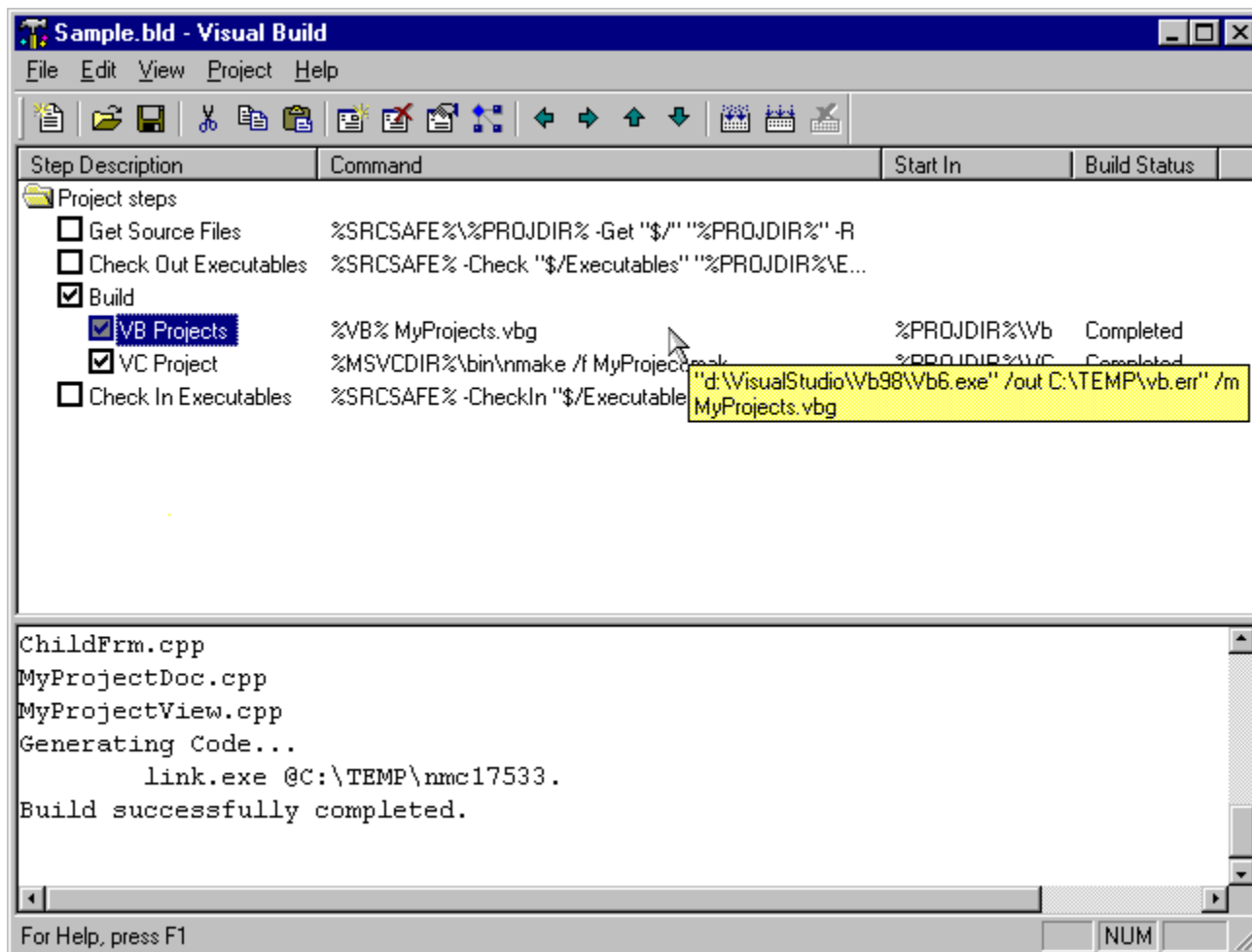
Are you a developer? Do you use Windows as your development platform? Then Visual Build is **the** way to simplify your routine development tasks and increase your productivity. Visual Build is a utility that automates such tasks as building your software application, retrieving the latest source code, registering components, and much more. It will execute all those tedious steps that must be performed over and over again, while ensuring that all steps have been successfully completed. If any step fails, Visual Build continues from the point of failure after the problem has been corrected.

Visual Build features include:

- **Supports Windows 95, Windows 98, and Windows NT:** Integrates with the Windows shell. Supports drag and drop for opening projects and for moving data around in and between Visual Build instances.
- **Microsoft Visual Studio Support:** Visual Build keyboard shortcuts are similar to Visual Studio and it comes pre-configured with support macros for Visual Studio tools (Visual Basic, SourceSafe, NMAKE, etc.).
- **Extremely Flexible:** Can invoke any application, batch file, or operating system command that returns an exit code (supports calling of applications that don't return an exit code, but cannot determine their success or failure).
- **Powerful & Extensible:** Easily handles complex development scenarios. Macro replacement feature allows generic programming of project steps.
- **Easy to Use:** Uses an intuitive Windows interface to define and build your project. Tooltips are used extensively to simplify debugging and increase productivity.
- **Automated Invocation:** Can be started from the command-line, from a batch file, or from another instance of Visual Build, allowing projects to be chained together. When used in conjunction with the AT service or the System Agent, it can be used to perform scheduled builds.

Getting Started

Visual Build starts with a new, empty project. Visual Build is an SDI app (only one file can be open at a time), but multiple instances of Visual Build can be started. Visual Build projects are stored in files with a .bld extension.



The main Visual Build window shows the steps in your project in the top half of the splitter and the output from a build in the bottom half. To get started, insert the [steps](#) and [macros](#) that make up your project. The checkbox in front of each step determines if the step will be included in a build; click the checkbox to toggle its state (all steps below it that are indented from it are also toggled). For Command, Start In, and Output File columns containing macros, holding the mouse over that field will show the value with all macros expanded. The description of a step will be shown in a tooltip when the mouse is held over the Step Name column.

There are three ways to build a project:

- **Build** executes all steps with a checkmark that have not been completed.
- **Rebuild** performs all steps with a checkmark regardless of their completion status.
- **Rebuild Selected** performs all selected steps.

During the build, all operations are disabled except Stop Build. The step window shows which step is being processed, and the output of the steps is shown in the output window. If any step fails, the build stops and the failed step is highlighted. This allows you to fix whatever caused the step to fail and continue from the failure. The step build status is not saved with the project file; it is reset each time you open a project.

Step Properties Dialog

The Step Properties dialog is used to add new steps to a project or modify existing steps. It is accessed from the Properties button on the toolbar or the Properties item on the View menu.

Name: Required.

Command: Specifies the process to invoke. It can contain the executable name plus any parameters that should be passed to it (optional; empty steps are ignored).

Start In: The path that will be the starting directory for the process (optional). Some applications, such as NMAKE, require this parameter to work correctly.

Browse: This button can be used for the Command, Start In, and Output File fields. It displays a dialog to browse for the selected file or folder.

Macros: The Macros button can also be used with the Command, Start In, and Output File fields to add macros to the field. A list of all defined macros is displayed and double-clicking the macro inserts it into the field at the current caret position. Macro names can also be entered manually. A macro is indicated by placing a percent sign (%) on each side of the macro name (i.e., %DOSCMD%). If the macro takes parameters, enter them in parentheses after the macro, separating the values with commas [i.e., %ATTRIB(-r, *.bat)%]. A literal percent sign can be entered in a field by entering two percent signs (%%). When the mouse cursor is held over one of these fields, all macro values expanded and shown in a tooltip. This is the actual string that will be used when building the step. Note: calling macros with parameters in another macro's parameter is not supported.

Description: A comment describing the step (optional).

Read Output From: Selects where to read the step's output from. Most processes write their output to standard output. Some (such as the Microsoft Visual Basic compiler) write their output to a file. If 'A File' is selected, an Output File to read from must be entered, and Visual Build can delete this file before building the step if desired.

Window: By default, the process window is hidden when building, but you can choose to show it with this field. This may be necessary for applications that might display a dialog box or to view applications that cannot write their output to standard output or a file.

Ignore Failure: Visual Build determines the success of the process by examining the exit code of the process. A zero (0) exit code is considered successful, and any other code is a failure. Normally a build stops if any step fails. This behavior can be overridden by checking the Ignore Failure field, causing the build to continue even if the step returns a non-zero exit code.

Note: Under Windows 95 & 98, the operating system is unable to retrieve the exit code for OS commands (i.e., DIR, COPY, etc.) or batch files, so Visual Build will think the step succeeded even if it didn't. Also, some applications do not return an exit code; Visual Build can still invoke them but cannot determine success or failure of the step.

Macros Dialog

The Macros dialog is used to manage Visual Build macros. It is accessed from the Macros button on the toolbar or the Macros item on the Project menu.

There are four (4) types of macros, with one tab for each type. Project macros are stored in the project file. Global macros are stored in the registry and exist for all projects. System macros are the Windows environment variables plus some predefined Visual Build macros; they are read-only. Override macros are global macros that exist only for a single Visual Build session. They are assigned by passing them on the command line to Visual Build or by adding them to the Override tab. If the same macro exists for more than one type of macro, the order of precedence (from highest to lowest) is:

- Override
- Project
- Global
- System (Environment variables take precedence over predefined Visual Build macros)

Macros can be copied and pasted from one tab to another and from one Visual Build instance to another.

Macro Properties Dialog

The Macro Properties dialog is used to add new macros or modify existing macros. Macros replace a particular string in the project with another string. Using macros, you can:

- Create a project that can build different projects.
- Specify options for commands.
- Make your project generic.

Name: Required.

Parameters: (Optional) Specifies parameters that can be passed to the macro. Parameters are separated by commas.

Value: The value to replace a reference to this macro with. If the macro has parameters, each parameter must be used at least once in the macro value. Macros can contain other macros to any level of nesting (although a macro cannot reference itself). To reference a macro, place a percent sign (%) sign around the macro name (i.e., %DEVSTUDIODIR%). If other macros are referenced, a tooltip shows the expanded macro value when the mouse cursor is held over it.

Description: A comment describing the purpose of the macro (optional).

You can define your own macros, use existing environment variables, or use predefined Visual Build macros.

Macros can be used in a step's Command, Start-In, and Output File fields.

Insert Macro Dialog

Displays a list of all defined macros to simplify inserting into the current field. If a macro takes parameters, those parameters are shown in parentheses after the name. When the mouse cursor is held over a macro, its value is shown in a tooltip. Click OK to insert the selected macro; Visual Build automatically adds the necessary percent sign (%) characters around the macro when inserting.

Predefined Macros

Visual Build comes built in with the following predefined **system macros**. Windows NT also defines some of these macros as environment variables, which will take precedence over Visual Build's definition, and you can override these values by defining your own project or global macros:

- **DOSCMD:** Executes an operating system command (i.e., DIR, COPY, ECHO, etc.). Under Windows NT, this executes CMD.EXE; under Windows 95 and 98, it executes COMMAND.COM.
- **WINDIR:** The Windows directory.
- **WINSYSDIR:** The Windows System directory.
- **COMPUTERNAME:** The current computer name.
- **USERNAME:** The logged on user's username.
- **VISBUILD:** The path to the current instance of Visual Build.
- **VISBUILDDIR:** The path and filename of the current instance of Visual Build.
- **PROJDIR:** The path to the open Visual Build project file.
- **PROJFILE:** The path and filename of the open project file.
- **DATE:** Inserts the current date and time.

Visual Build also creates the following **global** macros when running for the first time. Some of these will need to be modified to point to the actual location on your computer, and they can be deleted if not needed as well:

- **DEVSTUDIODIR:** The base directory for Microsoft Visual Studio.
- **SRCSAFE:** The command to invoke Microsoft Visual SourceSafe from the command-line.
- **SSFLAGS:** Default command-line flags when running SourceSafe.
- **SSDB:** Set the location of the SourceSafe server for command-line invocation.
- **VB:** The command to start Microsoft Visual Basic from the command-line to build a project. Note: Visual Basic writes its output to a file instead of standard output.
- **ATTRIB:** Changes file attributes.
- **ECHOW:** Write text to a file (overwriting the file if it exists).
- **ECHOA:** Write text to a file (appending to the file if it exists).
- **REGSVR:** Register a COM/ActiveX server (dll, exe or ocx).
- **REGEDIT:** Import a registry file into the registry.

Note: All the Microsoft Visual Studio command-line tools, such as NMAKE, MIDL, and RC, can also be invoked from Visual Build even though macros are not defined for them. These macros above are pre-configured for use with Visual Studio 6.0, but they will work with Visual Studio 5.0 as well (the paths may need to be changed).

Options Dialog

The Options dialog is used to modify global Visual Build settings. It is accessed from the Options item on the View menu:

- **General:** Determines whether a project file is automatically saved before building, and whether the previously opened project is opened the next time Visual Build is started.
- **Display:** Sets properties on the Step window, and turns tooltips on or off.
- **Columns:** Determines which columns are displayed in the step window. The mouse can also be used to resize, show and hide columns.
- **Logging:** Turns logging on and off. Visual Build always logs build output to the output window, but file logging can also be enabled to provide a permanent log of build activity.

Tooltip Features

Visual Build uses tooltips extensively to aid in creating and debugging steps and macros. Tooltips are displayed when the mouse cursor is held over a field for a couple seconds.

- **Step Window:** The step description (if there is one) is shown when the mouse is over the Step Name column. If the Command, Start In, or Output File column contains macros, the value with all macros expanded is shown.
- **Macros Dialog:** If the macro has parameters, its parameters are shown in a tooltip when the mouse is held over the Name column. If the macro column references other macros, the expanded value is shown in a tooltip.
- **Macro Properties Dialog:** If the macro references other macros, the expanded values are displayed in a tooltip over the Value field.
- **Insert Macro Dialog:** The macro value (without nested macros expanded) and its description are displayed in a tooltip when the mouse is held over a macro in the list.

Drag & Drop Support

Visual Build supports drag and drop in the following ways:

- Select one or more steps in a project and drag and drop them to move or copy within a project. By default, the steps are moved; to copy the selected steps, hold down the Ctrl key before dropping. The steps are inserted *after* the step they are dropped onto.
- Select one or more steps in a project and drag and drop them to another instance of Visual Build or another application. By default, the steps are copied; to move the selected steps, hold down the Shift key before dropping. When dropping on other applications, the step indentation and descriptions only are pasted.
- Create step descriptions in a text editor such as NotePad, select the text, and drag and drop it onto Visual Build. A step is created for each line in the selection, with a indent for each tab.
- Cut, copy, and paste of steps within a project and between instances of Visual Build is also supported via the Edit menu commands. The steps are inserted *after* the currently selected step.

Explorer Interface

Visual Build integrates with the Windows Explorer:

- Drag a Visual Build project file from the Windows Explorer and drop it on a Visual Build window to open the project.
- Double-click a file with a .bld extension from Windows Explorer to open it in Visual Build.
- To create a new Visual Build project from Explorer, click File|New|Visual Build Project from the menu, or right-click and choose New|Visual Build Project.

Hints & Tips

- Wrap step command filenames and parameters in double quotes (") if they contain spaces so that they are evaluated as a single value.
- Any internal or external OS command can be called using the DOSCMD system macro. This includes COPY, XCOPY, MKDIR, RMDIR, MOVE, ATTRIB, FIND, DEL, DIR, ECHO, FORMAT, SYS, etc.
- Using the DOSCMD macro will allow most commands to operate under both Windows 95/98 and NT without change, unless OS-specific commands are used.
- A project step can invoke another instance of Visual Build for complex chaining capabilities (use the VISBUILD system macro). For example, you could create a master project and a generic child project, and call the child project multiple times, passing different override macros each time (see command-line options).
- Group your project steps by different indentation levels to improve organization. Clicking the checkbox for a step quickly checks or unchecks all subordinate steps as well. Clicking the folder icon of the top level 'Project steps' item checks or unchecks all steps in the project.

Command-line Invocation

Visual Build can be started from the command-line. It supports the following syntax:

VisBuild[.exe] [/a] [/s] [MACRO=VALUE ...] [/b] [ProjectFile.bld]

/a – specifies that all steps should be built (normally only the checked steps are processed).

/s – indicates silent mode (does not prompt for input if an error occurs).

MACRO=VALUE – defines or overrides one or more macro values.

/b – tells Visual Build to open and build the specified project. If the build succeeds, Visual Build exits with a 0 code; if the build fails, a non-zero exit code is returned to the operating system.

ProjectFile.bld – indicates the Visual Build project to open

Visual Build Menus

File Menu

New	Creates a new Visual Build <u>project</u> .
Open	Opens an existing project. Visual Build project files have a .bld extension.
Save	Saves the current project.
Save As	Saves the current project to a specified filename.
Recent File	Opens a recently opened project.
Exit	Exits Visual Build.

Edit Menu

<u>Insert</u>	Adds a step to the project. The step is inserted after the selected step.
Delete	Deletes the selected steps from the project.
<u>Cut</u>	Cuts the selection and moves it to the clipboard.
Copy	Copies the selection to the clipboard.
Paste	Pastes data from the clipboard into the project.
Select All	Selects all steps in the project.
Word Wrap	Toggles word wrap of the output window.
Find	Finds the specified text in the output window.

View Menu

Step	Activates the step window to allow editing of steps and viewing of expanded macro values.
Output	Activates the output window to view output of steps that have been built.
Split	Adjusts the splitter window position
<u>Options</u>	Configures global application options.
<u>Properties</u>	Allows editing of a step's properties.

Project Menu

<u>Build</u>	Builds all uncompleted, checked steps of the project.
Rebuild	Rebuilds all checked steps of the project regardless of completion status.
Rebuild Selected	Rebuilds all selected steps regardless of completion status.
Stop	Stops the current build.
Include in Build	Toggles inclusion of the selected step and all subordinates steps in a build.
Move Up	Moves the selected steps up in the project.
Move Down	Moves the selected steps down in the project.
Indent	Indents the selected steps.

Unindent	Unindents the selected steps.
<u>Macros</u>	Activates the Macros dialog for adding and editing macros.
Help Menu	
Contents	Offers an index of topics on which to get help.
<u>License</u>	Shows the Visual Build license agreement.
<u>Ordering</u>	Displays Visual Build ordering information.
<u>Keyboard Map</u>	Shows the key mappings available for Visual Build commands.
About	Displays the version number of this application.

Keyboard Map

F1	Activates the help system
Shift+F10	Activates a popup menu for the current window
Ctrl+N	Creates a new Visual Build project
Ctrl+O	Opens an existing project
Ctrl+S	Saves the current project
Alt+F4	Exits Visual Build
Ins	Inserts a step into the project
Del	Deletes the selected steps from the project
F2	Edits the selected step description in the step window
Enter	Displays the Step Properties dialog for the selected step
Spacebar	Toggles inclusion of the selected steps in the build
Tab	Indent the selected steps
Shift+Tab	Unindent the selected steps
Ctrl+X	Cut
Ctrl+C	Copy
Ctrl+V	Paste
Ctrl+F	Find
Ctrl+M	Displays the Macros dialog
F6	Toggles between the step and output window
F7	Builds the uncompleted, checked steps
Shift+F7	Rebuilds all checked steps
Ctrl+F7	Rebuilds all selected steps
Ctrl+Break	Stops the build

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Visual Build Support

To check whether you have the most recent version of Visual Build, please check the Kinook Software home page at <http://www.kinook.com>.

Technical support is available at no charge as described below. The best way to report problems is by sending e-mail to support@kinook.com on the Internet, or send postal mail to Kinook Software, P.O. Box 25455, Colorado Springs, CO 80936.

When reporting problems, please include the following information:

1. Is the problem reproducible? If so, how?
2. What version of Windows are you running? For example, Windows 95, Windows NT 4.0 Service Pack 3, etc.
3. What version of Visual Build are you running? Select About Visual Build from the Visual Build Help menu. Include the entire version line in your problem report.
4. If a dialog box with an error message was displayed, please include the full text of the dialog box, including the text in the title bar.

Note: You can press F1 at any time while Visual Build is active for context sensitive help.

System Requirements

Visual Build requires Windows 95, Windows 98, or Windows NT 4.0 or later.

Visual Build also requires version 4.70 or later of the Windows Common Control library. This library is part of Windows 98, Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 and later, and is also available as a separate download from the Microsoft web site at <ftp://ftp.microsoft.com/Softlib/MSLFILES/40comupd.exe>.

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All orders are subject to the [Visual Build License Agreement](#). The registered version does not display the about dialog on startup and does not limit the number of steps in a project.

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