Relationship tables

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Relationship tables, or reltables, allow us to describe topic relationships that are not sequential or hierarchical. To do so, you create a table. Each row of the table describes a collection of related topics. The reltable is created in its own topic. You must then include that topic in the map file.

The relationships described in the reltable used when you generate output to create a collection of related topics links. By default, each topic with reltable entries gets a Related Topics section at the end of the topic output.

The relationships you capture in the reltable are *not* typically shown when you are authoring topics.

Video: *Overview of DITA relationship table (reltable)*

Start simple with reltables. They can get very complex.

Reltables are preferred over related links or xrefs because of the following factors:

- The topicrefs in the reltable are evaluated against the current map file. If you point to a file that is not included in the map file, that link is not generated in the output. This prevents the broken link problem that can occur with related links and xrefs.
- reltables are easier to maintain then embedded related links. Each row in a reltable can contain multiple topics and captures their interrelationships. So, if you have eight related topics, you can create a single row in a reltable that lists those eight topics, or you can create eight slightly different related-links lists in your eight topics. If you need to remove one topic from the list, the reltable change is done once rather than eight times in the files.