

# WRPlive

## Introduction

Docfx is a powerful tool but easy to use for most regular use cases, once you understand the basic concepts.

Docfx can be used as a static site generator, but the real value of the tool is in bringing together static documentation pages and .NET API documentation. Docfx supports both C# and VB projects (although currently the output of tool is limited to C# syntax), and relies on the long-established [XML comment syntax](#) for C# (and [similarly for VB](#)). For example, the following C# code:

```
/// <summary>
/// Calculates the age of a person on a certain date based on the supplied date of birth.
Takes account of Leap years,
/// using the convention that someone born on 29th February in a Leap year is not legally one
year older until 1st March
/// of a non-leap year.
/// </summary>
/// <param name="dateOfBirth">Individual's date of birth.</param>
/// <param name="date">Date at which to evaluate age at.</param>
/// <returns>Age of the individual in years (as an integer).</returns>
/// <remarks>This code is not guaranteed to be correct for non-UK locales, as some countries
have skipped certain dates
/// within living memory.</remarks>
public static int AgeAt(this DateOnly dateOfBirth, DateOnly date)
{
    int age = date.Year - dateOfBirth.Year;

    return dateOfBirth > date.AddYears(-age) ? --age : age;
}
```

can be used to generate output like this:



Static documentation pages are prepared using [Markdown](#) (slightly enhanced to support specific features). Markdown content can also be injected into the generated API documentation using a feature called 'Overwrites'.

Once the API documentation has been parsed from the source code, it is compiled along with the Markdown content into a set of HTML pages which can be published on a website. It is also possible to compile the final output into one or more PDFs for offline use.

Docfx is a command-line tool that can be invoked directly, or as a .NET Core CLI tool using the `dotnet` command, but it can also be invoked from source code using the `Docset.Build` method in the `Docfx` namespace. It is configured using a JSON configuration file, [docfx.json](#) which has sections for different parts of the build process.

# Consuming .NET projects

The most common use case for processing .NET projects is to specify one or more .csproj files in the `docfx.json` file:

```
{
  "metadata": [
    {
      "src": [
        {
          "files": [
            "src/MyProject.Abc/*.csproj",
            "src/MyProject.Xyz/*.csproj"
          ],
          "src": "path/to/csprojs"
        }
      ],
      "dest": "api"
    }
  ],
  //...
}
```

Although Docfx can build a documentation website in one step, it's helpful to understand the separate steps the tool uses to generate its output.

The first step is called the **metadata** step and can be completed using the following command line:

```
docfx metadata path/to/docfx.json
```

This command reads all the source files specified by the projects listed in `docfx.json` and searches for XML documentation entries. Note that this step does not use `.xml` compiler output but rather uses the [Roslyn compiler](#) to navigate the supplied codebase. The output of this step is a set of YAML files that are stored in the `dest` folder specified in `docfx.json`.

Here's an example of the (partial) output from the above code example:

```
### YamlMime:ManagedReference
items:
- uid: MyProject.Extensions.DateOnlyExtensions.AgeAt(System.DateOnly,System.DateOnly)
  commentId: M:MyProject.Extensions.DateOnlyExtensions.AgeAt(System.DateOnly,System.DateOnly)
  id: AgeAt(System.DateOnly,System.DateOnly)
  isExtensionMethod: true
  parent: MyProject.Extensions.DateOnlyExtensions
  langs:
  - csharp
```

```
- vb
name: AgeAt(DateOnly, DateOnly)
nameWithType: DateOnlyExtensions.AgeAt(DateOnly, DateOnly)
fullName: MyProject.Extensions.DateOnlyExtensions.AgeAt(System.DateOnly, System.DateOnly)
type: Method
source:
  remote:
    path: src/MyProject/Extensions/DateOnlyExtensions.cs
    branch: main
    repo: https://github.com/MyUser/MyProject.git
  id: AgeAt
  path: ../../MyProject/src/MyProject/Extensions/DateOnlyExtensions.cs
  startLine: 63
assemblies:
- MyProject.Common
namespace: MyProject.Extensions
summary: >-
  Calculates the age of a person on a certain date based on the supplied date of birth. Takes
  account of leap years, using the convention that someone born on 29th February in a leap year is
  not legally one year older until 1st March of a non-leap year.
```

For the most part, it isn't important to know too much about the output of the `metadata` step, except where you want to make reference to entities from your Markdown content. When doing so, you need to reference the relevant `uid` from the YAML file. However, as you can see, the `uid` is the same as the full signature of the entity or method including the namespace.

It's also worth knowing that the `metadata` step generates `toc.yml`, a table-of-contents file for the input source code, grouped by .NET namespace. This is the only auto-generated table-of-contents file; all other `toc.yml` must be manually created/edited.

### NOTE

In addition to using `.csproj` files for input, it is also possible to generate the intermediate YAML output from compiled `.dll` (or `.exe`) and `.xml` files. See [.NET API Docs](#) for further details.

## Documentation Build Process

The next step is called the ***build*** step and can be completed using the following command line:

```
docfx build path/to/docfx.json
```

(You can append `--serve` to this step and Docfx will start a local web server so you can preview the final output.)

Internally, there are many parts to this step, but in short, Docfx does the following during the `build` step:

- resolve all cross-references
- convert the YAML content from the `metadata` step into a structured data format, for passing onto the template engine
- convert all Markdown content into HTML
- apply templates and themes

Conversion of Markdown to HTML is achieved using the [Markdig](#) CommonMark-compliant Markdown processor.

Template and theme processing is the one part of Docfx that is not coded in C#; instead the [Jint JavaScript interpreter](#) is used to run a set of JavaScript scripts; this approach allows an extra level of customisation of the build process as Docfx provides a way to override the default scripts using the template section of the `docfx.json` file:

```
{
  "build": {
    //...
    "output": "_site",
    "template": [
      "default",
      "modern",
      "templates/mytemplate"
    ]
  }
}
```

In this example, Docfx first searches the `templates\mytemplate` folder, then the `modern` folder, then `default` folder for each `.css` or `.js` file. Note that `default` and `modern` templates are included with Docfx and included in the Docfx installation packaged alongside the Docfx executable.

(The embedded templates can be exported using the command

```
docfx template export default -o path/for/exported_templates
```

where `default` is the name of the template being exported. The command `docfx template list` can be used to list the embedded templates within Docfx.)