
Using the Help Manager

You can use the Help Manager to provide information to the user that describes the action, behavior, or properties of elements of your application. For example, you can create a help balloon for each menu command to describe what it does.

The Help Manager is available only in system 7.0 or later. Use the Gestalt function with the Gestalt selector gestaltHelpMgrAttr. Test the bit field indicated by the gestaltHelpMgrPresent constant in the response parameter. If the bit is set, then the Help Manager is present.

The Help Manager is initialized at startup time. The user controls whether help is enabled by choosing the **Show Balloons** or **Hide Balloons** command from the Help menu.

The Help menu is specific to each application, just as the **File** and **Edit** menus are specific to each application. The Help menu items that are defined by the Help Manager are common to all applications, but you can add your own menu items for help-related information.

When your application calls the InsertMenu procedure, the Menu Manager automatically appends the Help menu to your menus. The Help menu is automatically appended to the right of all your menus and to the left of the Application menu (and to the left of the Keyboard menu if a non-Roman script system is installed).

You can create help balloons for the menus, dialog boxes, alert boxes, or content area of windows belonging to your application. You can also override some of the default help balloons-such as the default help balloon for the title bar of a window.

You can specify the content of a help balloon using text strings, styled text, or pictures. Although you should always strive for brevity in your help messages, text strings can contain up to 255 characters. You can use up to 32 KB with styled text. The Help Manager determines the actual size of the help balloon and, for text strings, uses TextEdit to determine the word and line breaks of text.

The Help Manager automatically tracks the cursor and generates help balloons defined in standard help resources. Your application can also track the cursor and use Help Manager routines to display and remove help balloons.