

What is the Microsoft Help Viewer?

10/02/2025

You can use Microsoft Help Viewer to install, view, and manage local documentation installs for Microsoft products and technologies on local computers. These products include Visual Studio,

.NET, language reference, SQL Server, and Windows development. With Help Viewer, you, and any users you support, can:

Download documentation, which are also referred to as books. This is useful when you want to access documentation while working offline.

Search and find topics through the table of contents, book index, or even full-text search.

View, bookmark, and print content.

Get started

To install Help Viewer, see [Microsoft Help Viewer installation](#).

To start reading help topics in the Help Viewer rather than online, go to the **Help** menu in Visual Studio, and then choose **Set Help Preference > Launch in Help Viewer**.

Tip Another way to download content locally so you can view it when you don't have an internet connection is to download a PDF version of it. Many documentation sets on Microsoft Learn include a link at the bottom of the table of contents to download a PDF file that contains all the articles for that TOC.

Tour the Help Viewer window

You can find information in installed content by using the navigation tabs, view installed content in the topic tab or tabs, and manage content by using the **Manage Content** tab. You can also perform additional tasks by using the buttons on the toolbar and find additional

information in the lower-right corner of the window.

The following information describes the default setup for Help Viewer. You can also [customize it's layout and settings](#).

Navigation tabs

■ Expand table

Tab	Description
Contents	Displays installed content as a hierarchy (table of contents). You can specify criteria to filter the titles that appear.
Index	Displays an alphabetical list of indexed terms. You can search the index, specify criteria to filter the entries, and require that index entries either contain or start with text that you specify. You can "favorite" topics by choosing the Add to Favorites button, and the topics appear in this tab. The History section displays a list of topics that you've viewed recently.
Favorites	

Search

Provides a text box where you can search for terms anywhere in the content, including code and topic titles.

View topics

Each topic appears in its own tab, and you can open multiple topics at the same time.

Manage content

You can install, update, move, and delete content by using the **Manage Content** tab. At the top of the tab, you can use the **Installation source** control to specify whether to install books from a network location or from a disk or URI. The **Local store path** box shows where books are installed on the local computer, and you can move them to a different location by choosing the **Move** button.

The content list shows which books you can install or have already installed, whether an update is available, and how large each book is. You can install or remove one or more books by choosing the appropriate **Add** or **Remove** links and then choosing the **Update** button under the **Pending changes** pane. If updates are available for any books that you've already installed, you can refresh that content by choosing the **Click here to download now** link at the bottom

of the window. In addition, all installed books are refreshed if updates are available when you install additional books.

Keyboard shortcuts

Find the list of keyboard shortcuts in the article, "[Shortcut keys in Help Viewer](#)".

Toolbar buttons

The toolbar in the **Help Viewer** window contains the following buttons:

■ **Expand table**

Toolbar buttons	Descriptions
Show Topic in Contents	Shows the location of the topic in the Contents tab.
Add to Favorites	Adds the active topic to the Favorites tab.
Find in Topic	Highlights search text in the active topic.
Print	Prints or shows a preview of the active topic.
Viewer Options	Displays settings such as how large the text appears, how many search results to return, how many topics to show in history, and whether to check for updates online.
Manage Content	Makes the Manage Content tab active.

Small triangle on the right-hand side

Opens a list of tabs, including topic tabs and the **Manage Content** tab. You can choose a tab name to make it the active tab.

Related content

[Microsoft Help Viewer installation](#)

[Install content locally](#)

[Deploy content to others](#)

[Customize Help Viewer's layout and settings](#)

Microsoft Help Viewer installation

10/02/2025

Several products can display Help content in Microsoft Help Viewer, including Visual Studio and SQL Server.

Help Viewer is an optional installation component of Visual Studio. To install it through Visual Studio Installer, follow these steps:

Open **Visual Studio Installer** from the Start menu or, if you have Visual Studio open, you can choose **Tools > Get Tools and Features** to open Visual Studio Installer.

Choose the **Individual Components** tab, then search for help viewer, or select **Help Viewer** under the **Code tools** section.

1. Choose the **Modify** button to start the installation of Microsoft Help Viewer.

Another way to easily install Microsoft Help Viewer is through the search box:

Make sure that the **Visual Studio Installer** is not running.

Press **Ctrl+Q** and then type or enter **help viewer** in the search box.

Choose the result called **Install Help Viewer**.

In the dialog box that opens, choose the **Install** button.

Related content

[Microsoft Help Viewer](#)

[Help viewer and offline content for SQL Server](#)

Customize the help viewer

03/11/2024

You can customize the layout of the Help Viewer windows, as well as other options such as font size, maximum number of results, and whether to include English content.

Customizing window layout

You can customize the window layout of the Help Viewer. To restore the Help Viewer window to its default layout, open the **Viewer Options** dialog box, and then choose the **Reset** button.

Docking tabs

The Help Viewer supports standard docking functionality. By default, all tabs in the Help Viewer are docked, but you can move them, resize them, dock them in other locations, and "float" them so that they appear as independent child windows.

Opening a topic in a new tab

Choose the topic in any navigation tab, and then press **Ctrl+Enter**.

Minimize a navigation tab

Create more space for viewing topics by choosing the pin icon for the navigation tabs. When these tabs are minimized, only their labels appear on the closest edge of the window. To restore the tabs, choose the label of any tab, and then choose the pin icon again.

Changing settings in Viewer Options

You open the **Viewer Options** dialog box by choosing the **Viewer Options** button on the toolbar.

■ Expand table

To perform this task: Take this step:

Change the size of the font in which text appears. Choose a size in the **Text Size** list.

Change the maximum number of search results that appear in the **Maximum Search Results** list. Choose a value in the

To perform this task: Take this step:

Search tab

Change the maximum number of history entries that appear in the **Maximum History entries saved** list. Choose a value in the

Favorites window

Include or exclude English content. Select or clear the **Include English content in all navigation tabs**

when you view content for a non-English version of a product. **and F1 requests** check box. **Caution:** This feature also controls

whether you can download English content in the **Manage Content**

tab.

Related content

- [Microsoft Help Viewer](#)

Install and manage local content

03/11/2024

By using the Microsoft Help Viewer, you can add, remove, update, and move the Help content that is installed on your computer to fit your software development needs.

To manage content on your local computer, you must log on with an account that has administrator permissions. In addition, you might not be able to manage local content if you work in an enterprise environment, because system administrators might make those decisions for your organization. For more information, see the [Help Viewer administrator guide](#).

Change the content installation source

By default, Help Viewer installs content by using a Microsoft online service as the source. You generally shouldn't change your content source unless you work in an enterprise environment for which a system administrator has already installed content in another location.

To change the content installation source

On the **Manage Content** tab, choose the **Disk** option button.

Perform one of the following steps:

- Enter the path of an *.msha* file or the URL of a service endpoint.

- Choose the Browse (...) button to navigate to an *.msha* file.

- In the list, choose the entry that was used most recently.

Download and install content locally

If you download and install content on your local computer, you can view topics when you don't have an internet connection.

To download and install content

Choose the **Manage Content** tab.

In the content list, choose the **Add** link next to the book or books that you want to download and install.

The book is added to the **Pending changes** list, and the estimated size of the book or books that you specified appears below that list. Because some books share topics, the total download size of multiple books might be smaller than the result of adding together the sizes of every book that you specified.

1. Choose the **Update** button.

The book or books that you specified are installed along with any updates for books that you already have on your computer. Installation times vary, but you can view the progress in the status

bar.

Remove local content

You can save disk space by removing unwanted content from your computer.

■ Note

To remove content

Choose the **Manage Content** tab.

In the content list, choose the **Remove** link next to the book or books that you want to remove.

The book is added to the **Pending changes** list.

1. Choose the **Update** button.

The book or books that you specified are removed from your computer.

Update local content

The status bar indicates when updates to your installed content are available.

To update local content

In the lower-right corner of the status bar, choose the **Click here to download now** link.

Update times can vary, but you can view the update progress in the status bar.

Move local content

You can save disk space by moving installed content from your local computer to a network share or to another partition on your local computer.

To move content, you must log on with an account that has administrative permissions.

To move local content

1. On the **Manage Content** tab, choose the **Move** button under **Local Store Path**.

The **Move Content** dialog box opens.

1. In the **To** text box, enter a different location for the content, and then choose the **OK**

button.

1. Choose the **Close** button when the content has been moved.

Related content

[Microsoft Help Viewer](#)

[Override Help Viewer defaults](#)

Deploy and manage local Help installations for network environments

06/25/2025

You can use Microsoft Help Viewer to install, view, and manage local documentation installs for Microsoft products and technologies on local computers. These technologies include Visual

Studio, .NET, language reference, SQL Server, and Windows development.

In this article, you learn to use the Help Viewer to deploy and manage local Help installations for network environments with or without internet access. Local help content is configured on a per machine basis. By default, users must have administrator rights to update their local Help

installation.

If your network environment allows clients to access the internet, you can use the **Help Content Manager** executable to deploy local Help content from the internet. For more

information about *HlpCtntMgr.exe* command line syntax, see [Command-line arguments for the Help Content Manager](#).

For information about creating content, creating an intranet service endpoint, and similar types of activities, see the [Help Viewer SDK](#).

If you do not have internet access in your network environment, Help Viewer can deploy local Help content from the intranet or a network share. You can also disable Visual Studio IDE Help options by using [registry key overrides](#) for functionality such as:

online versus offline help

content installation at first launch of the IDE

specifying an intranet content service

managing content

Deploy local Help content from the internet

You can use **Help Content Manager** (*HlpCtntMgr.exe*) to deploy local Help content from the internet to client computers. Use the following syntax:

Windows Command Prompt

```
\\%ProgramFiles(x86)%\Microsoft Help  
Viewer\v2.3\HlpCtntmgr.exe /operation \  
  
<*name*> /catalogname \<*catalog name*> /locale \<*locale*>
```

For more information about *HlpCtntMgr.exe* command line syntax, see [Command-line arguments for the Help Content Manager](#).

Requirements:

Client computers must have access to the internet.

Users must have administrator rights to update, add, or remove the local Help content after it has been installed.

Caveats:

- The default source for Help will still be online.

Example

The following example installs English content for Visual Studio to a client computer.

To install English content from the internet

Choose **Start** and then choose **Run**.

Type the following:

Press **Enter**.

Deploy pre-installed local Help content on client computers

You can install a set of content from online to one computer, and then copy that installed set of content to other computers.

Requirements:

The computer you install the set of content to must have access to the internet.

Users must have administrator rights to update, add, or remove the local Help content after it has been installed.

Caveats:

- The default source for Help will still be online.

Create the content set

Before you can create the base content set, you must first uninstall all local Visual Studio content on the target computer.

To uninstall local help

In the Help Viewer, choose the **Manage Content** tab.

Navigate to the Visual Studio document set.

Choose **Remove** next to each sub-item.

Choose **Update** to uninstall.

Browse to

%ProgramData%\Microsoft\HelpLibrary2\Catalogs\VisualStudio15 and verify that the folder only contains the file *catalogType.xml*.

Once you have removed all previously installed local Visual Studio Help content, you are ready to download the base content set.

To download the content

In the Help Viewer, choose the **Manage Content** tab.

Under **Recommended Documentation** or **Available Documentation**, navigate to the documentation sets you want to download and then choose **Add**.

Choose **Update**.

Next, you need to package the content so it can be deployed to client computers.

To package the content

Create a folder to copy the content to for later deployment. For example: *C:\VSHelp*.

Open *cmd.exe* with Administrator permissions.

Navigate to the folder you created in step 1.

Type the following:

For example:

Deploy the content

1. Create a network share and copy the help content to that location.

For example, copy the content in *C:\VSHelp* to *\\myserver\VSHelp*.

1. Create a *.bat* file to contain the deployment script for the help content. Since the client could possibly have a read lock on any of the files being deleted as part of the push, you should have the client shut down prior to pushing updates. For example:

Windows Command Prompt

REM - copy pre-ripped content to ProgramData

Xcopy %~dp0HelpLibrary2

%SYSTEMDRIVE%\ProgramData\Microsoft\HelpLibrary2\ /y

/e /k /o

if ERRORLEVEL 1 ECHO *** ERROR COPYING Help Library files
to ProgramData (%ERRORLEVEL%)

1. Run the *.bat* file on the local machines that you want to install the Help content on.

Related content

[Command-line arguments for the Help Content Manager](#)

[Override Help Viewer defaults](#)

Command-line arguments for the Help Content Manager

03/11/2024

You can specify how to deploy and manage local Help content by using command-line arguments for Help Content Manager (*HlpCtntMgr.exe*). You must run scripts for this

command-line tool with administrator permissions, and you can't run these scripts as a service. You can perform the following tasks by using this tool:

Add or update local Help content from a disk or the cloud.

Remove local Help content.

Move the local Help content store.

Add, update, remove, or move local Help content silently.

Syntax:

Windows Command Prompt

```
HlpCtntmgr.exe /operation Value /catalogname CatalogName  
/locale Locale /sourceuri InstallationPoint
```

For example:

Windows Command Prompt

```
hlpctntmgr.exe /operation install /catalogname VisualStudio15  
/locale en-us  
  
/sourceuri d:\productDocumentation\HelpContentSetup.msha
```

Switches and arguments

The following table defines the switches and arguments that you can use for the command-line tool for Help Content Manager:

■ **Expand table**

Switch	Required?	Arguments
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/operation Yes - **Install**--Adds books from the specified installation source to the local

content store.

This switch requires the /booklist argument, the /sourceURI argument, or both. If you don't specify the /sourceURI argument, the default Visual Studio URI is used as the installation source. If you don't specify the

/booklist argument, all books on the /sourceUri are installed.

Uninstall--Removes the books that you specify from the local content store.

This switch requires the /booklist argument or the /sourceURI argument. If you specify the /sourceURI argument, all books are removed, and the

/booklist argument is ignored.

Move--Moves the local store to the path that you specify. The default local store path is set as a directory under *%ProgramData%*

This switch requires the /locationPath and /catalogName arguments. Error messages will be logged in the event log if you specify a path that isn't valid or if the drive doesn't contain enough free space to hold the content.

Refresh--Updates topics that have changed since they were installed or most recently updated.

This switch requires the /sourceURI argument.

/catalogName Yes Specifies the name of the content catalog. For Visual Studio 2017 and

Visual Studio 2019, this is VisualStudio15.

/locale No Specifies the product locale that's used to view and manage content for the current instance of the Help viewer. For example, you specify EN-US for English-United States.

If you don't specify a locale, the locale of the operating system is used. If that locale can't be determined, EN-US is used.

If you specify a locale that isn't valid, an error message is logged in the event log.

/e No Elevates the Help Content Manager to Administrative privileges if the

current user has administrative credentials.

/sourceURI No Specifies the URL from which content is installed (Service API) or the path to the content installation file (.msha). The URL can point to the Product Group (top-level node) or to the Product Books (leaf-level node) in a Visual Studio 2010 style endpoint. You don't need to include a slash (/) at the end of the URL. If you do include a trailing slash, it will be handled

appropriately.

An error message is logged in the event log if you specify a file that isn't found, isn't valid, or isn't accessible or if a connection to the internet isn't available or is interrupted while content is being managed.

Switch Required? Arguments

/vendor No Specifies the vendor for the product content that will be removed (for

example, Microsoft). The default argument for this switch is Microsoft.
/productName No Specifies the product name for the books that will be removed. The

product name is identified in the *helpcontentsetup.msha* or *books.html* files that shipped with the content. You can remove books from only one product at a time. To remove books from multiple products, you must perform multiple installations.

/booklist No Specifies the names of the books to be managed, separated by spaces.

Values must match the book names as listed on the installation media.

If you don't specify this argument, all recommended books for the specified product in the /sourceURI are installed.

If the name of a book contains one or more spaces, surround it with double quotes (") so that the list is delimited appropriately.

Error messages will be logged if you specify a /sourceURI that isn't valid or isn't reachable.

/skuld No Specifies the stock keeping unit (SKU) of the product from the installation source, and filters books that the /SourceURI switch identifies.

/membership No - **Minimum**-- Installs a minimum set of Help content based on the SKU

that you specify by using the /skuld switch. The mapping between the SKU and the content set is exposed in the Service API.

Recommended—Installs a set of recommended books for the SKU that you specify by using the /skuld argument. The Installation source is the service API or .MSHA.

Full-- Installs the entire set of books for the SKU that you specify by using the /skuld argument. The Installation source is the service API or .MSHA.

/locationpath No Specifies the default folder for local Help content. You must use this switch only to install or move content. If you specify this switch, you must also specify the /silent switch.

/silent No Installs or removes Help content without prompting the user or displaying any UI, including the icon in the status notification area. Output is logged to a file in the %Temp% directory. **Important:** To install content silently, you must use digitally signed .cab files, not .mshc files.

/launchingApp No Defines the application and catalog context when the
Help viewer is

launched without the parent application. The arguments for this
switch are

CompanyName, *ProductName*, and *VersionNumber* (for example,

/launchingApp Microsoft,VisualStudio,16.0).

This is required for installing content with the /silent parameter.

Switch

Required?

Arguments

/wait
Seconds

No

Pauses
install,
uninstall,
and
refresh
operations.

If an
operation
is
already
in
progress

for the
catalog,
the
process

will
wait

up to
the

given
number
of
seconds

to
continue.

Use 0
to wait
indefinitely.

Lists
the
switches
and

their
descriptions

for the
command-line
tool

for
Help

Content
Manager.

/?

No

Exit codes

When you run the command-line tool for the Help Content Manager in silent mode, it returns the following exit codes:

Success = 0,

FailureToElevate = 100

InvalidCmdArgs = 101,

FailOnFetchingOnlineContent = 110,

FailOnFetchingContentFromDisk = 120,

FailOnFetchingInstalledBooks = 130,

NoBooksToUninstall = 200,

NoBooksToInstall = 300,

FailOnUninstall = 400,

FailOnInstall = 500,

FailOnMove = 600,

FailOnUpdate = 700,

FailOnRefresh = 800,

Cancelled = 900,

Others = 999,

ContentManagementDisabled = 1200,

OnlineHelpPreferenceDisabled = 1201

UpdateAlreadyRunning = 1300 - (Signals that the update didn't run because another was in progress.)

See also

[Help Viewer administrator guide](#)

[Override Help Viewer defaults](#)

[Microsoft Help Viewer](#)

Override Help Viewer defaults

03/11/2024

You can change the default behavior of Microsoft Help Viewer and help-related features in the Visual Studio IDE.

Help Content Manager is a tool that you can use to deploy and manage local Help Viewer content. To change Help Viewer behavior, you can override default settings of the Help Content Manager executable program, HlpCtntMgr.exe.

There are different ways to set Help Content Manager options:

Create a [.pkgdef file to set registry key values](#).

Set options directly in the registry.

Use a .pkgdef file to change Help Viewer behavior

A .pkgdef file stores configuration information that Help Viewer uses. You can use a .pkgdef file to adjust the registry key values that the following table lists:

■ **Expand table**

Registry key value Type Data Description

NewContentAndUpdateService string <service endpoint URL> Define a unique service

endpoint

UseOnlineHelp dword 0 to specify local Help, 1 to Define online or offline

specify online Help Help default

OnlineBaseUrl string <service endpoint URL> Define a unique F1

endpoint

OnlineHelpPreferenceDisabled dword 0 to enable or 1 to disable online
Disable online Help

Help preference option preference option

DisableManageContent dword 0 to enable or 1 to disable the Disable the
Manage

Manage Content tab in Help **Content** tab Viewer

DisableFirstRunHelpSelection dword 0 to enable or 1 to disable help
Disable installation of

features that are configured the content at first launch of first time
that Visual Studio starts Visual Studio

To set registry key values in a .pkgdef file, follow these steps:

Create a new file, and give it the extension *.pkgdef*.

Add the following text to the file's first line:

On separate lines, add any of the registry key values that the previous
table describes. For

instance, you might add this line to configure the value:

Copy the file to the *CommonExtensions* folder of your installation of
Visual Studio. For instance:

- If you use the Community edition of Visual Studio 2017, add the .pkgdef file to this folder:

C:\Program Files (x86)\Microsoft Visual

Studio\2017\Community\Common7\IDE\CommonExtensions

- If you use the Community edition of Visual Studio 2022, add the .pkgdef file to this folder:

C:\Program Files\Microsoft Visual

Studio\2022\Community\Common7\IDE\CommonExtensions

1. At a developer command prompt, run this command:

Example .pkgdef file contents

pkgdef

```
[$RootKey$\Help]
"NewContentAndUpdateService"="https://some.service.endpoint"
"UseOnlineHelp"=dword:00000001
"OnlineBaseUrl"="https://some.service.endpoint"
"OnlineHelpPreferenceDisabled"=dword:00000000
"DisableManageContent"=dword:00000000
"DisableFirstRunHelpSelection"=dword:00000001
```

Use Registry Editor to change Help Viewer behavior

You can control the following types of behavior by setting registry key values in the Registry Editor.

■ Expand table

Task Registry Key Value Data

Override HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Wow6432Node
BITSPriority **foreground**, **high**, **normal**,
BITS job (on a 64-bit machine)\Microsoft\Help\v2.3 or **low**
priority

Point to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\SOFTWARE\Microsoft\Help\
LocationPath *ContentStoreNetworkShare*

local v2.3\Catalogs\VisualStudio15 content

store on network share

Related content

[Help Viewer administrator guide](#)

[Command-line arguments for the Help Content Manager](#)

[Microsoft Help Viewer](#)

Find articles in the Help Viewer

06/25/2025

You use the table of contents (TOC), index, and search to find articles in the Help Viewer. This article describes the features of the Help Viewer that can help you find articles more quickly.

For historical reasons, articles in Help Viewer are referred to as *Help topics* or just *topics*.

Filter the Table of Contents

You can filter the TOC to narrow the scope of topics that appear in the **Contents** tab. Titles appear in the list only if they contain the root of the term that you specify. For example, if you specify "troubleshooting" as a filter, only titles that contain "troubleshoot" or "troubleshooting" appear. Nodes whose titles don't contain the term are collapsed to a single node with an ellipsis (...).

Choose the **Contents** tab.

In the **Filter Contents** text box, enter a term.

Synchronize a topic with the TOC

If you have opened a topic using the index or full-text search features, you can determine where this topic is in the TOC by synchronizing the TOC with the topic window.

View a topic.

Click the **Show Topic in Contents** button on the toolbar, or press **Ctrl+S**. The **Contents** tab opens and displays the topic's location in the TOC.

Find topics by using the Help Viewer index

The index contains a list of keywords that are associated with topics in the installed content.

Each topic might have more than one keyword associated with it, and each keyword might be

associated with more than one topic. Use this index in the same way as you would use an index in a book.

To find a topic by using the index

On the **Index** tab, perform either of the following tasks:

- Specify the keyword to search for in the text box. For example, specify "update" to find topics with keywords such as "update," "updated," and "updating."

By choosing the filter button near the top of the tab, you can display either all entries that contain the text that you specify or only those entries that start with the text that you specify.

- Scroll through the index, and choose a keyword.

If the keyword that you specify is associated with only one topic, it appears. Otherwise, a list of all topics that are associated with that keyword appears.

Use the Search feature to find articles

You can use the full-text search feature of Microsoft Help Viewer to locate all topics that

contain a particular word. You can also refine and customize your search by using wildcard expressions, logical operators, and advanced search operators.

To perform a full-text search

Use one of these methods to open the Help Viewer **Search** tab:

In the **Help Viewer** window, select the **Search** tab.

On the keyboard, select **Ctrl+E**.

In the search box, enter the word that you want to find.

In the search query, specify any logical or advanced search operators that you'd like to apply to the search. To search all available help, don't use operators.

Select the **Enter** key.

A search returns a maximum of 200 hits, by default, and displays them in the search results area. Version information for each result may appear, depending on the content.

1. To view a topic, select its title from the results list.

Full-text search tips

You can create more targeted searches that return only those topics that interest you, if you understand how syntax affects your query. The syntax includes special characters, reserved words, and filters. This section provides tips, procedures, and detailed syntax information to help you better craft your queries.

General guidelines

The following table includes some basic rules and guidelines for developing search queries in help.

■ **Expand table**

Syntax	Description
Case sensitivity	Searches aren't case-sensitive. Develop your search criteria by using uppercase or lowercase characters. For example, "OLE" and "ole" return the same results. You can't search only for individual letters (a-z) or numbers (0-9). If you try to search for certain reserved words, such as "and," "from," and "with," they're ignored. For more information, see Words ignored in searches later in this article.
Character combinations	Search queries are evaluated from left to right.
Evaluation order	

Search syntax

You might enter a search string that includes multiple words, such as "word1 word2." That string is equivalent to typing "word1 AND word2." Searches that use the AND operator return

only topics that contain all the individual words in the search string.

Filters

You can further restrict search results by using advanced search operators. Help includes three categories that you can use to filter results of a full-text search: Title, Code, and Keyword.

Ranking of search results

The search algorithm applies certain criteria to help rank search results higher or lower in the results list. In general:

Content that includes search words in the title is ranked higher than content that doesn't.

Content that includes search words in close proximity is ranked higher than content that doesn't.

Content that contains a higher density of the search words is ranked higher than content that has a lower density of the search words.

Words ignored in searches (stop words)

Commonly occurring words or numbers, which are sometimes called stop words, are automatically ignored during a full-text search. For example, if you search for the phrase "pass through," search results display topics that contain the word "pass" but not "through."

Logical and advanced operators in search expressions

You can use logical operators and advanced search operators to refine your search of the Help content in **Help Viewer**.

Logical operators

Logical operators specify how multiple search terms should be combined in a search query. The following table shows the logical operators AND, OR, NOT and NEAR.

■ Expand table

To search for	Use	Example	Result
Both terms in the same article	AND	dib AND palette	Topics that contain both "dib" and "palette".
Either term in an article	OR	raster OR vector	Topics that contain either "raster" or "vector".
First term without the second term in the same article	NOT	"operating system" NOT DOS	Topics that contain "operating system" but not "DOS".

Both terms, close together in an article	NEAR	user NEAR kernel	Topics that contain "user" within close proximity of "kernel".
--	------	------------------------	--

Advanced operators

Advanced search operators refine your search for content by specifying where in an article to look for the search term. The following table describes the four available advanced search operators.

■ Expand table

To search for	Use	Example	Result
A term in the title of the article	title:	title:binaryreader	Topics that contain "binaryreader" in their titles.

A term in a code example	code:	code:readdouble	Topics that contain "readdouble" in a code example.
To search for	Use	Example	Result
A term in an example of a specific programming language	code:vb:	code:vb:string	Topics that contain "string" in a Visual Basic code example.
An article that is associated with a specific index keyword	keyword:	keyword:readbyte	Topics that are associated with the "readbyte" index keyword.

Programming languages for code examples

You can use the operator to find content about any of several programming languages.

To return examples for a specific programming language, use one of the following programming language values:

■ **Expand table**

Programming Language	Search operator syntax
Visual Basic	code:vb code:visualbasic
C#	code:c# code:csharp
C++	code:cpp code:c++ code:cplusplus
F#	code:f# code:fsharp
JavaScript	code:javascript code:js
XAML	code:xaml

The code: operator only finds content that is marked up with a programming language label, as opposed to content that is generically marked up as code.

Related content

[Shortcut keys in the Help Viewer](#)

[Microsoft Help Viewer](#)

Accessibility features of the Help Viewer

03/11/2024

Microsoft is committed to making its products and services easy for everyone to use. Several features help make Microsoft Help Viewer accessible for people with a wide range of abilities.

Keyboard access

You can access all Help Viewer features by using the keyboard. For instance:

To open the **Search** tab, select **Ctrl+E** on your keyboard.

To display a print preview of the current topic, select **Ctrl+F2**.

To add the current topic to the **Favorites** tab, select **Ctrl+D**.

For more information about keyboard shortcuts, see [Shortcut keys \(Help Viewer\)](#).

Font size

You can modify the font size in which topic text appears in the document window.

Use Viewer Options

To use the **Viewer Options** dialog to make the text larger or smaller, follow these steps:

Use one of these options to open the **Viewer Options** dialog:

From a keyboard, select **Ctrl+O**.

In the **Help Viewer** toolbar, select the **Viewer Options** button.

In the **Text Size** box, select the font size that you'd like to use, and then select **OK**. If you use a keyboard:

Use the **Tab** key to shift the focus in the **Viewer Options** dialog.

Use the **Up arrow key** and the **Down arrow key** to select a font size.

Set the zoom level

You can also zoom in and out to adjust the text size in the document window:

To increase the zoom level by 10 percent, select **Ctrl+Shift+Plus sign**.

To decrease the zoom level by 10 percent, select **Ctrl+Minus sign**.

To set the zoom level to 100 percent, select **Ctrl+0**.

Window size

You can change the size of the Help Viewer window. If you have access to a mouse, you can also change the width of the navigation and document windows.

Resize the Help Viewer window

With a mouse:

Point to any corner or edge of the Help Viewer window.

Use the primary mouse button to drag the corner or edge to resize the window.

From a keyboard:

Select **Alt+Tab** until Help Viewer is the active window.

Select **Alt+Space+S**.


Use the arrow keys to resize the Help Viewer window.

Select **Enter**.

Resize the navigation and document windows

With a mouse:

Point to the divider between the two windows.

When the pointer becomes a , use the primary mouse button to drag the divider to the right or left.

Help Viewer position

You can reposition the Help Viewer window.

With a mouse, drag the title bar to a different position.

From a keyboard:

Select **Alt+Tab** until Help Viewer is the active window.

Select **Alt+Space+M**.

Use the arrow keys to move the Help Viewer window to a different position.

Select **Enter**.

Related content

[Microsoft Help Viewer](#)

[Shortcut Keys \(Help Viewer\)](#)

Shortcut keys in Microsoft Help Viewer

03/11/2024

You can navigate in the **Microsoft Help Viewer** by using the shortcut keys in the following table:

■ Expand table

Area	Keystroke	Action
------	-----------	--------

General Application	Space	Use instead of Enter anywhere except in edit fields. Open Help
General Application	F1	about current UI element. Toggle between full-screen view and regular view.
General Application	F11	
Toolbar	Backspace -OR- Alt+Left Arrow	Display the previous page.
Toolbar	Alt+Right Arrow	Display the next page. Display the Help Reviewer
Toolbar	Alt+Home	home page.

Toolbar

Ctrl+S

Highlight
the
current
topic
in
the
table
of
contents
(on
the

Contents

tab).
Add
the
current
topic

Toolbar

Ctrl+D

to
the
Favorites

tab.

Toolbar	Ctrl+F	<p>Display the Find bar in the topic area so that you can search for text within the current topic. Print the current page. Display a print preview of the current page. Display the Viewer Options dialog box.</p>
Toolbar	Ctrl+P	
Toolbar	Ctrl+F2	
Toolbar	Ctrl+O	

Toolbar	Ctrl+Shift+M	Display the Manage Contents
	Alt+C	tab. Display the Contents
Navigators	-OR- Ctrl+Shift+C	tab. Display the Contents
Navigators	Alt+I	tab. Display the Index

Area -OR-	Keystroke	Action
Ctrl+Shift+I		
	Alt+F	Display the Favorites
Navigators	-OR- Ctrl+Shift+F	tab. Display the Favorites
Navigators	Alt+S	tab. Display the Search
	-OR- Ctrl	tab.
	+ E -OR- Ctrl+Shift+S	

Navigators	Alt+M -OR- Ctrl+Shift+M	Display the Manage Content tab. Display the shortcut menu for the current UI element.
Topic	Shortcut Menu key OR Shift+F10	
Topic	Up Arrow	Scroll toward the start of the document one line at a time. Scroll toward the end of the document one line at a time.
Topic	Down Arrow	

Topic

**Page
Up**

Scroll
toward
the
start
of
the
document
one
screen
at
a
time.

Topic

**Page
Down**

Scroll
toward
the
end
of
the
document
one
screen
at
a
time.

Topic

Home

Move
to
the
start
of
the
document.

Topic

End

Move
to
the
end
of
the
document.

Topic	Ctrl+F	Find search text on this page. Refresh the current page.
Topic	F5	
Area	Keystroke	Action
Topic	Ctrl+P	Print the current page. Display a print preview of the current page. Display the Properties
Topic	Ctrl+F2	
Topic	F4	dialog box for the current page.

Topic	Ctrl+T	Open another content tab in the foreground. Open a link on
Topic	Ctrl+Click	a new tab in the foreground. Switch among tabs
Topic	Ctrl+Tab	from left to right. Switch among tabs
Topic	Ctrl+Shift+Tab	from right to left. Close
Topic	Ctrl+W	the current tab.

		Switch to a specific tab where <i>Number</i>
Topic	Ctrl+<i>Number</i>	is between 1 and 9 and indicates which tab in sequence. Close other content tabs. Increase zoom by 10%. Decrease zoom by 10%.
Topic	Ctrl+Alt+F4	Close other content tabs.
Topic	Ctrl+Shift+Plus Sign	Increase zoom by 10%.
Topic	Ctrl+Minus Sign	Decrease zoom by 10%.
Topic	Ctrl+0 (zero)	Change zoom to 100%.
Index	Tab	Shift focus from keyword entry to keyword list.

Index

Ctrl+K

Switch between showing entries that contain the keyword that you specify and entries that start with the keyword that you specify.

Favorites

Ctrl+Shift+Del

Clear your browsing history.

Favorites

Del

Delete the specified item.

Favorites

Ctrl+N

Create a folder within **Favorites**.

Favorites

F2

Rename the specified favorite or folder.

Contents & Index & Search	Ctrl+D	Add the specified topic to the Favorites tab.
Contents & Index & Search & Favorites	Ctrl+P	Print the specified topic.
Contents & Index & Search & Favorites	Ctrl+F2	Display a print preview of the specified topic.

Area	Keystroke	Action
Contents & Index & Search & Favorites	Ctrl+Click	Open the topic in a new tab. Clear the search text box.
Search	Esc	

Viewer
Options

Alt+T

Change
focus
to
the
**Text
Size**

Viewer
Options

Alt+S

list.
Change
focus
to
the
**Maximum
Search
Results**

Viewer
Options

Alt+H

list.
Change
focus
to
the
**Maximum
History
entries
saved**

list.

Viewer
Options

Alt+E

Select
or
clear
the
**Include
English
content
in
all
navigation
tabs
and
F1
requests**

check
box
if
it
is
enabled.

Viewer
Options

Alt+O

Select
or
clear
the
**Go
online
to
check
for
content
updates**

check
box.
Change
focus
to
the
next
item.

Find

Enter

Find

Shift+Enter

Change
focus
to
the
previous
item.

Find

Esc

Hides
the
Find

text
box.
Open
the
Error

Status
bar

Alt+E

dialog
box
if
the
status
bar
shows
that
an
error
has
occurred.

Status
bar

Alt+U

Download
content
if
the
status
bar
shows
that
updates
are
available

Window management

■ Expand table

Keystroke	Action
Ctrl+L	Reset the Help Viewer layout to the default layout, and close all topic tabs. The first keystroke gives focus to the Tab Selection menu. The next keystroke gives focus to the top menu item, and subsequent keystrokes give focus to the menu items in sequence from top to bottom. When a menu item has focus, the Enter key makes that item the active tab.
Ctrl+Tab	

Ctrl+Shift+Tab

**Alt+I, Alt+S, Alt+C,
Alt+F, Alt+M**

Manage content

■ **Expand table**

Keystroke

Alt+D

The first keystroke gives focus to the **Tab Selection** menu. The next keystroke gives focus to the bottom menu item, and subsequent keystrokes give focus to the menu items in sequence from bottom to top. When a menu item has focus, the **Enter** key makes that item the active tab. These shortcut keys don't work when the navigation and content-management tabs are undocked.

Action

Change the installation source to disk.

Alt+O

Change the
installation
source to online.

Tab

Change focus to
the **Local store
path** text box.

Tab

Change focus to
the **Move**
button.

Alt+V

Open the **Move
Content** dialog
box.

Ctrl+Alt+F

Change focus to
the **Filter
Documentation**
text box.

Tab

Change focus to
the
documentation
list.

Up Arrow and **Down
Arrow**

Scroll through
the
documentation
list.

Space

Add an item to
the **Pending
changes** list.

Tab

Change focus to
the **Pending
changes** list.

Up Arrow and **Down
Arrow**

Scroll through
the **Pending
changes** list.

Space

Remove an item
from the
**Pending
changes** list.

Alt+T

Apply all
pending
changes.

See also

[Accessibility features of the Help Viewer](#)