

Microsoft® Manual of Style

4

edition

Your everyday guide to usage, terminology, and
style for professional technical communications

Microsoft® Manual of Style

4

edition

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ISBN: 978-0-7356-4871-5



U.S.A. \$29.99
Canada \$31.99
[Recommended]

Computers/Reference

Microsoft®

**Microsoft®
Manual of Style,
Fourth Edition**

Microsoft Corporation

PUBLISHED BY
Microsoft Press
A Division of Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, Washington 98052-6399

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2011942371
ISBN: 978-0-7356-4871-5

2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 LSI 7 6 5 4 3 2

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Editorial Production: Waypoint Press
Cover: Ivan Silantiev

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Foreword

Innovations in technology require great minds. Yet how many of those innovations would be lost on those they were created for without the dedication of writers and editors who are committed to ensuring their success? At Microsoft we are privileged to work every day with brilliant engineers who build amazing products for our customers. We are equally privileged to work with teams of creative writers and editors who, as the shepherds of language and quality, build the important bridges between the promise of technology and the ability to understand its use.

If you've spent any time at all as a writer or editor at Microsoft you've most likely had the experience of attending a session in one of our usability labs watching customers attempting to use early prototypes of a product. It's often with mixed emotions that we watch customers who are unable, or only partially able, to use a new feature simply because the words on the user interface aren't easy to follow or descriptive enough. We know the words in these early prototypes were probably created hastily by an overworked engineer using nerdy language that was not intended for primetime. We experience the frustration of both the engineer and the customer. And we know that, through language, we can make the customer experience much better.

The *Microsoft Manual of Style* is the reference tool that all teams at Microsoft use to help ensure language quality. This guide lays the foundation for the language in our products and services, which, at the time of this publication, reach more than 1.7 billion people worldwide in more than 100 languages. As the sponsor of this publication I am honored to have had the experience of working with Elizabeth Whitmire during the last year as she readied this reference for public use. Elizabeth, along with Microsoft Press, other members of my team and the talented team of editors who are members of the Microsoft Editorial Board, have worked diligently to create this reference. We hope that you will find the *Microsoft Manual of Style* useful, that it will save you a lot of time, and that your own endeavors with language quality and editorial excellence are innovative and fruitful!

Suzanne Sowinska
Director of Language Services
Microsoft Corporation
2011

Introduction to the Fourth Edition

At Microsoft, the guiding principles for how we communicate the ideas and concepts behind our technologies, software, hardware, and services have remained the same over the years: consistency, clarity, and accuracy, and our desire to inspire as well as inform. However, change occurs rapidly in the world of technology, and so do the ways we talk about technology. Even expert editors need a set of vetted guidelines that keep them up to date and protect them from making the same decisions repeatedly or in isolation. This edition of the *Microsoft Manual of Style* is about standardizing, clarifying, and simplifying the creation of content by providing the latest usage guidelines that apply across the genres of technical communication—1,000 decisions you don’t have to make again.

A style guide is by nature a work in progress. Despite the evolutionary nature of a reference project like this, the time is right to make this version of the *Microsoft Manual of Style* available outside Microsoft. This edition includes guidelines for the wired and global audience, cloud computing, publication on devices, social media, search engine optimization (SEO), and the natural user interface (NUI). It also provides guidance for the many ways Microsoft writers and editors communicate about technology today, including web content, blogging, video, and more.

Gesture guidelines for the natural user interface (NUI) introduce what have been non-technical words such as *flick*, *pinch*, and *tap* into the realm of technical documentation. Terms from gaming, such as *achievement* and *badge*, make their way into the general vocabulary of technical communicators who are exploring social and interactive media. Other changes directly reflect shifts in the technology we write about. For example, the first version of the manual included abbreviation guidelines for *kilobyte* (abbreviated simply as K) and for *megabyte*, but not for *gigabyte*. In the world of cloud computing, we now include *terabyte* (TB), *petabyte* (PB), and on up to *yottabyte* (YB), or 10^{24} . Other entries reflect the way that rapid technological change has affected our everyday language. While the Third edition maintained the hyphen in *e-mail* and the status of *Web* as a proper noun in *Web site*, the ubiquity of these terms in our daily lives has accelerated the adoption of the more streamlined *email* and *website*. And of course many new terms and concepts have emerged since 2004, such as *app*, *cloud*, and *sync*, and many popular new acronyms too, such as *IM*, *PC*, *NUI*, and *SEO*.

Although this Fourth edition aims to include as many relevant neologisms as possible and to represent the most current thinking of senior editors at Microsoft about their usage, a printed manual is, by necessity, a snapshot. As always, style is a matter of convention and consensus; the guidance offered here does not describe the only

correct way to write. Discerned through research and ongoing conversation within our company, these guidelines reflect the current state of our discussions about these concepts and terms.

You may notice that examples are labeled as “Microsoft style” and “Not Microsoft style” rather than as “Correct” and “Incorrect.” We don’t presume to say that the Microsoft way is the only correct way. It’s simply the guidance that we follow in our workplace. In sharing it with others, we hope that the decisions we have made for our content professionals will help you in your own efforts to promote consistency, clarity, and accuracy.

What’s inside

- **Microsoft style and voice** This chapter highlights the shift toward a lighter, friendlier tone in Microsoft content, with succinct guidelines for writing in the Microsoft voice.
- **Content for the web** This chapter can help you decide which type of web content best suits your intended audience. It offers guidance for the creation of effective text, video, and audio for the web and includes information about optimizing your content—including blogs and wikis—for readability, search engines, and social media.
- **Content for a worldwide audience** This chapter reflects the pervasive internationalization of information in the software industry. The *Microsoft Manual of Style* now includes substantial information about writing for a global audience. “International considerations” sections throughout the manual call attention to issues of localization, global English, and machine translation.
- **Accessible content** This chapter includes the latest guidance on accessibility for content, and how to describe accessibility features in software and hardware products and services. “Accessibility considerations” sections throughout the manual call attention to these concerns.
- **The user interface (UI)** This chapter includes content for the NUI and Windows Phone UI, and features illustrations of touch and gesture guidelines. To help you write about the user interface in new ways, there are guidelines for writing content for multiple platforms and a checklist for creating UI text, and more.

- **Procedures and technical content** This chapter includes topics on document conventions, cloud computing style, and other general technical issues. It also includes new guidance about reference documentation and code examples for software developers, making the manual a more relevant resource for all content that is created for this audience—from websites, to Help, to software development kits (SDKs).
- **Practical issues of style** This chapter provides page layout guidelines and guidance for common style problems such as how to format titles and headings, lists, and numbers.
- **Acronyms and abbreviations** This list contains acronyms and abbreviations that are commonly used in the software industry and a table of abbreviations of measurements.
- **Grammar, Punctuation, Indexes and keywords** These chapters cover grammar and punctuation guidelines relevant to Microsoft style and provide resources for indexing content.
- **Usage Dictionary** This section includes individual guidance for more than 1,000 technical terms.

How to use this manual

The first part of the manual includes general topics that are organized by subject. The alphabetical usage dictionary follows with guidance about usage and spelling of general and computer-related terms. Topics provide information ranging from a simple note on the correct spelling of a term to a thorough review of what to do, why to do it, what to avoid, and what to do instead, with frequent examples.

Italic is used to call attention to words or phrases used as words rather than as a functional part of a sentence. For example: It is all right to use *sync* as an abbreviation for the verb *synchronize*. Examples of usage appear in quotation marks.

The *Microsoft Manual of Style* does not cover all terms or content issues that are specific to various Microsoft products and services. In addition, because legal guidelines change quickly and cannot be applied internationally, the *Microsoft Manual of Style* does not include content about legal issues. Information about Microsoft trademarking, including the trademark list, guidelines for usage, and licensing on a per-language basis can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/about/legal/en/us/IntellectualProperty/Default.aspx>.

Other references

The following reference materials provide guidance for issues that are not included in the *Microsoft Manual of Style*:

American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.

Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Microsoft International Style Guides (<http://www.microsoft.com/Language/en-US/StyleGuides.aspx>), Microsoft Corp.

Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/windows/desktop/aa511258.aspx>), Microsoft Corp.

Associated Press Stylebook and Briefing on Media Law, 2010 ed. Associated Press, 2010.

Glenn, Cheryl and Gray, Loretta. *Hodges Harbrace Handbook*, 16th ed. Heinle Cengage Learning, 2007.

Acknowledgments

Throughout this project, I have relied heavily on the expertise, assistance, and support of my colleagues at Microsoft. My greatest thanks belong to the Microsoft Editorial Board. This edition would not have been possible without the substantial contributions, thoughtful research, careful review, and always lively discussions of this group of exceptional and generous editors: Handan Selamoglu, Dee Teodoro, Dana Fos, Thomas Olsen, Catherine Minden, Barb Roll, Elizabeth Reese, Karen Scipi, Robin Lombard, Elaine Morrison, Gail Erickson, and Elise Morrison. Working with the Editorial Style Board has been the most rewarding aspect of this project.

Other colleagues from across Microsoft provided subject matter expertise on important topics or helped prepare this edition for print. I would particularly like to thank Lisa Andrews, Deanna Armstrong, Alex Blanton, Linda Caputo, Monica Catunda, Cheryl Channing, Carl Diltz, James Dunn, Rob Haverty, Kay Hofmeester, Rio Jansen, Erik Jensen, Steve Kaczmarek, Alma Kharrat, Kristi Lee, Jennifer Linn, Michael Mikesell, Becky Montgomery, Cathy Moya, Jyotsna Natarajan, Colin O'Neill, John Osborne, Ken Pacquer, Palle Peterson, Mike Pope, Kim Spilker, Chris Wendt, Adam Wilson, Valerie Woolley, Michael Zuberbier, and especially Kathy Phillips, for her expert advice and legal review

of the Fourth edition, and Katherine Robichaux and Suzanne Sowinska for sponsoring this project.

I owe a tremendous debt to the previous lead editors of this manual, who guided the content from an internal style sheet to an industry resource: Amanda Clark, Barb Roll, and especially Jim Purcell, who restructured the content to include conceptual chapters in the Third edition, and who carried the torch for Microsoft style for many years before my arrival.

And a special thank you goes out to the Microsoft editorial community—too many folks to name individually—who have enriched this resource with their comments, suggestions, and critiques. The engagement of this community in upholding and scrutinizing stylistic standards keeps the *Microsoft Manual of Style* relevant and accurate. I'd also like to thank the technical editors outside Microsoft who generously provided feedback about their experiences with previous editions and offered suggestions for making this content more useful to technical communicators across the industry. Thank you all for making this a better book!

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Contact the Microsoft Editorial Board

The Microsoft Editorial Board welcomes your content suggestions and feedback about the Microsoft Manual of Style at mmstyle@microsoft.com. We read all feedback, but we cannot guarantee a personal response or that all suggestions will be addressed. Your contact information will be used solely to respond to any questions you may have and will not be retained. It will not be shared with any third party, and it will not be associated with other information you may have previously shared with Microsoft.

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Content for the web

The web provides us with new ways to think about connecting with users and creating content for them. We have greater flexibility in how and what types of information we deliver to users than we did when print was the dominant medium.

Content types now include text, images, audio, video, and interactive presentations. Publishing feels instantaneous compared to print. And the web has become the foremost—and sometimes only—method for communicating with users. As a result, having a web content strategy is critical to content teams. The topics in this chapter provide high-level guidance for creating content for the web.

Make the right content choices

To make the right content choices, first ask these high-level questions:

- Who is the intended audience?
- What is the user's goal? What is the user trying to accomplish?
- What is your goal for providing the content?
- What type of content will best meet the user's needs and your objectives?
- Will a user access the content from a desktop, phone or other mobile device, a console—or all of these?
- Will the content be translated or localized? For more information, see *Chapter 3, "Content for a worldwide audience"*.
- How will the user find the content?
- How will success be measured?
- What are the budget and schedule constraints?

Your answers to these questions will help narrow your options so that you can focus on the best approaches for your user. For example, you might decide that either text or video would be appropriate for your user, but you know that your content will be localized into at least five languages, and you have a small initial budget for the project. Creating and localizing high-quality video is expensive,

/so you might choose text as the best choice to begin with and then, as you measure the text's success, you might be able to justify the larger investment in localized video.

Use the following table to help choose the type of web content to create:

If your user needs	Consider this type of content	Examples
To learn about a simple task or feature in an application	Procedural text with screen shots Short screen-capture video, with or without audio	Procedure with screen shots: <i>Remove a page break</i> Screen-capture video with audio: <i>Search or move around in a document using the navigation pane</i>
To learn about a complex task or a feature in an application	Screen-capture video, with or without audio Procedural text with screen shots Procedural text with embedded screen-capture video End-to-end scenario descriptions or conceptual topics Technical papers	Video with audio: <i>Protecting a Word document with AD RMS</i> Procedure with screen shots: <i>Add or remove text effects</i> Procedure with screen-capture video: <i>Create a theme</i> End-to-end scenarios: <i>DirectAccess Test Lab for Windows Server 2008 R2</i> <i>Network connection problems in Windows</i>
Ongoing, regular communications from you	Blog Microblog (such as Twitter) Newsletter	<i>OneNote, The Microsoft Office Blog</i> ; http://blogs.office.com/b/microsoft-onenote/ <i>Virtual PC Guy's blog</i> <i>TechNet Flash Newsletter</i>
Ongoing engagement and participation with a like-minded community	Wiki Forum	<i>TechNet wiki</i> <i>Exchange Server Forum</i> Microsoft Answers; http://answers.microsoft.com/en-us
To learn something complex that takes time and practice	Online training Technical white papers	<i>Windows Phone 7 Training Course</i> <i>Windows PowerShell Survival Guide</i>
To learn high-level concepts about technology subjects	Concept papers eBooks	An Enterprise Approach to Gov 2.0. Microsoft download center: http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/default.aspx Cloud Basics: Security in the Cloud. Microsoft download center: http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/default.aspx
Detailed information about a product or technology on an ongoing basis	Podcasts Technical white papers Technical blogs	<i>The Crabby Office Lady Podcasts</i> Microsoft SQL Azure Team Blog; http://blogs.msdn.com/b/sqlazure/
To learn tips and tricks	eBooks Microblogs (such as Twitter)	eBook: Windows 7 Tips and Tricks: http://www.microsoft.com/download/en/default.aspx Microblog: FedDidUKnow: You can easily turn your #Access database #applications into #SharePoint 2010 applications. http://bit.ly/3UaScH #gov #governance
To understand a complex or integrated feature or scenario	Interactive posters	<i>Windows Server 2008 R2 Hyper-V Component Architecture (with Service Pack 1)</i>

If your user needs	Consider this type of content	Examples
To learn complex trouble-shooting or decision making processes	Interactive flowcharts	<i>Software Update Deployment Superflow</i>

Text for the web

Users are more likely to scan online text than read it. They decide very quickly if content is relevant to them, and searching is their most common behavior. With a glance, users should be able to have a rough idea of what your content is about, so this means that every word counts: users scan titles, headings, and paragraphs to see if they want to continue reading. You need to adapt your writing style to the web to show users that your content is valuable.

Make text scannable

Because users scan web content, if they find something that they like (gleaned from just a few words), they'll continue reading.

Here are some general guidelines.

- **Headings** Make headings and subheadings short and make every word count by using keywords. For details about keywords, see *Help customers find your content*.
- **TOCs** For long webpages or large content sets, use Tables of Contents (TOCs) with links to every subheading. For long pages, include "back to top" links within your content. In general, it's best to use shorter pages when you can.
- **Lists** When appropriate, use bulleted lists, which are easy to scan and more likely to be read than paragraphs of text.

Microsoft style

Use linked files when these criteria are met:

- You will use the same computer to create and display your presentation.
- Your files are larger than 100 KB.
- You plan to make changes to the source files.

Not Microsoft style

Use a linked file if you are going to use the same computer to display your presentation as the one you created it on. If your files are large, making them linked files is better. Also, you can change things in the source file later and have the changes show up in both the source and destination file.

- **Content chunks** Write your content in short, digestible paragraphs.
- **White space** White space can help users scan the page and more easily identify what they need. Ensure that you include enough white space between the content “chunks” on your page.
- **Text placement** Content that is on the first screen (“above the fold”) is more likely to be read—users are unlikely to scroll down to find more information. This means that you need to reduce word count (preferred) or increase the total number of pages (by dividing a page into shorter, separate topics). Remember that where “the fold” is depends on factors that you might not control, such as the device used to view your content and the screen resolution.

Eye chart, heat map, and usability studies have shown that most users look at specific areas on a page first, so put your most important information there. Generally, in left-to-right languages, the area in the upper-left quadrant of a page is where users look first. For example, if the most important text on your page is a button that says “Buy” or “Download,” put the button where users look first (not below the fold, on the far right, or near the bottom). Ensure that the text on the right side of the main body text can’t easily be mistaken for an advertisement.

Organize your text

A clear, well-reasoned approach to content organization can help your users locate the information that is important to them. Here are some general guidelines.

- **Use a hierarchical content structure** Put the most important content first, in the content’s title, headings, subheadings, and the first sentence of each paragraph.
- **Give the conclusion first** This is called “inverted pyramid” style—you write the key points first by using keywords, so that users will see them and know whether they want to read on.
- **See Also** For more information about keywords, see *Search Engine Optimization (SEO)* later in this chapter.
- **Use short, focused paragraphs** State your point in the first sentence of each paragraph and stick with one idea per each short paragraph.
- **Use notes and tips** Break these out of the main paragraph, which should focus on your key point.
- **Use plain language** Use simple sentences and short words. Use keywords that users use and can relate to. For example, they want to “download,” not to “experience the latest innovations.” Also avoid technical terms and jargon that users may not understand and wouldn’t search for.

Use links—lots of them

Using links to related information can help keep your content concise and scannable. The goal of a link is to help users find the information that they want, so descriptive link titles are critical.

Here are some general guidelines.

- Use the title or a description of the destination page as the link text. Don't use "click here" or "more info" or a long URL.
- Limit link text to four keywords or fewer, if possible. Short links are easier to scan.
- Link to background and related information rather than summarizing.
- If you're creating a large set of content, improve the ease of navigation by including many cross-references.
- For more information about links, see *Search Engine Optimization (SEO)*.

Video content for the web

Done well, video does a better job of showing many users what a product or service is and does and how to use it than explanatory text and still images can. For example, a screen-capture video for a program shows users exactly what to click and when to click it.

But video may not meet your accessibility goals, may require more bandwidth to view than simple text and low resolution pictures, may be expensive to produce and localize, and may not be the best medium if you're trying to teach users a long, complicated process.

Here are some general guidelines:

- Video titles should clearly indicate the content of the video.
- Keep videos short. Shorter than two minutes is a good target. For a more complex subject that requires a longer time to cover, consider creating several short segments or chapters that can be combined in a playlist. This gives the customer an opportunity to watch the segments over time or select only the ones in which they are most interested.
- Make your key points clear and memorable and foreground them the way you would written content. (See *Organize your text*.) Don't say or show more than the audience can easily take in.
- Videos should tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end. Simple narratives are best. A plot keeps viewers interested and attentive and wanting to see what happens next. For example, a good beginning to a video that teaches a task includes a brief statement of what the viewer should expect to learn by watching the video. A good ending leaves viewers wanting to try the new task or feature. A video about learning to use the mouse could conclude with, "Remember: point and click. That's all you need to master the mouse. Give it a try."

- Use the same voice that you use in your other content. The tone will likely be less formal and more conversational, but that will depend on the message that you're delivering.

For more information, see *Chapter 1, "Microsoft style and voice"*.

- The pace of the audio and video should be consistent, as should the ratio of audio to video. Don't read too fast or too slowly. Practice reading at a clear pace and enunciating all the words. At first, it might feel odd to speak that way, but it will help viewers who are watching your video for the first time (think especially of viewers who have trouble hearing or who are non-native English speakers). Rushing through seemingly simple procedures can frustrate viewers. So, too, can long, audio-only preambles to any video action. Practice timing the actions with your words.
- Timing is difficult, but can make a big difference in the quality of the videos. A pause in the audio while actions are happening on screen is better than reading ahead of the action. The audio doesn't need to explain every action that appears on screen. For example, let the visual images communicate common actions, such as clicking **OK**.
- Avoid references to earlier parts of the video, unless references are essential. Viewers should be following along, not trying to remember what they saw or heard before. They can always replay the video. If you must refer to earlier parts of the video, do so generally. For example, "Earlier, you saw how to add X to Z. Here's something else you can do with X...."
- To improve accessibility, include captions. If possible, break closed captions into one-sentence chunks so that they're easier to read.
- Because creating and localizing video can be expensive and time-consuming, try to take an "evergreen" approach to the content. If you can, avoid mentioning specific dates and product version names or showing images that will quickly date your content.
- Consider a branding element to open and close your videos, and a URL where the user can get more information at the end. These elements give your video credibility by clearly identifying the source of the content.

For more information go to Jakob Nielsen's Talking-Head Video is Boring Online at <http://www.useit.com/alertbox/video.html>.

Blogs

Blogs are a good way to provide customers with ongoing, regular communications from subject matter experts, but only if you can commit resources to keeping the blog updated and fresh. Often, bloggers start out with good intentions, but fail to keep up the pace, and their blog languishes. A stale blog creates customer dissatisfaction and can impact your credibility. An active, credible blog

invites customer comments and community promotion. Blog posts can contain text, photos, videos, and screen shots.

Here are some general guidelines:

- Blog frequently and on a regular schedule, if possible. Post as frequently as necessary to tell your story effectively, but don't distract your customers with meaningless posts. A good rule of thumb is at least one blog post a week—consider a team blog so you can share the workload.
- Identify subject areas to blog about in advance and develop a schedule. This is especially important for a team blog. This will help you establish a blogging routine and provide more structure for you and your readers. For example, you might want to introduce a subject in an initial post and advance the subject further in subsequent posts. By planning this in advance, you can quickly prepare for each post. It also lets you inform your readers in advance that the post is one in a series.
- Tone should be friendly and informal—be yourself! Apply the same common sense and guidelines to blogging that you would to any interaction or communications with customers, partners, and the press. That is, always bear in mind that what you write or say reflects you and the company. For more information, see *Chapter 1, "Microsoft style and voice"*.
- Respond promptly to customer comments. Comments and your responses can be as important as the blog post itself because it fosters an image of transparency and responsiveness, it can create meaningful dialog with important customers, and it can drive feedback to your product team.
- If you plan to archive your blog posts, you might consider adding a disclaimer to old content along these lines: "To the best of my [our] knowledge, the information in this blog post was accurate at the time of publication, but it might not be accurate now. If you're reading something here that was published a while ago, I [we] recommend that you search the web for a more recent source."
- If possible, tag each blog entry with keywords to help your readers find related entries or entries on topics of interest to them.
- Support your blog by using other social media tools, such as Twitter and Facebook, to raise awareness about it. For more information, see *Social Media Optimization (SMO)*, later in this chapter.

Community-provided content

2

Customers expect to interact with content. People still use the web as a source for receiving information, obviously, but it's now also a place to share their information and expertise and to learn from other people like them.

If appropriate, consider offering your customers a way to provide content for your site. There are different models for this, from “anybody can contribute” to “we’ve selected a few people to provide content.” Anytime you have a community-contribution content model, you must consider how you will manage the content for appropriateness, accuracy, and adherence to standards.

Wikis

Wikis are a great example of a community creating content—anyone can view wiki content and, generally, anyone can contribute or edit wiki content. In theory, the community of wiki users manages the content. In practice, most wikis also have assigned editors, content managers, or councils to ensure that the wiki content is appropriate, to encourage use of the wiki, and to arbitrate disagreements.

If you have an enthusiastic community, such as a highly engaged technical community with lots of expertise to share, consider developing a wiki. And remember, the community doesn't mean just customers outside your organization—it can include internal employees such as customer support services developers, testers, marketers, salespeople, or anyone else who has a vested interest in your wiki.

Many types of content are appropriate for a wiki, but they depend on your audience. Types of content and coverage areas that work well on wikis include the following:

- Troubleshooting and workarounds
- Tips and tricks
- Best practices
- Interoperability information
- Scenario or solution-based content
- Product evaluations
- Beta content
- White papers
- Community or wiki lists
- Learning roadmaps

A wiki might not be the best method for communicating the following:

- Information that needs to be localized
- Release notes or other information that's essential to defining how the product works (because a wiki can be modified)

Consider using a private wiki that is limited to a designated group of internal or external users for content that cannot currently be released.

With wikis, as with all web content, you need to think about the best ways to organize your content and make it discoverable. Most wikis don't have a standard TOC structure. You can, however, create your own navigation articles that act as a TOC and provide links to your articles. Consider creating multiple TOC articles that are specific to your users. For example, you might want to have a TOC article that is oriented toward a specific type of customer, such as a software developer or an accountant, and another TOC article that links to topics specific to a solution or scenario and isn't role-specific.

Consider using social media both to promote your wiki content and to encourage community contribution to your articles.

For more information, see *Social Media Optimization (SMO)*, and for more information about making wiki content discoverable, see *Search Engine Optimization (SEO)*.

There are a number of strategies you can use to encourage contribution. Use "stub topics" that are partially filled in to encourage community additions and enhancements. Start with content that encourages contribution, such as troubleshooting, or tips and tricks. Be willing to experiment with content types (with the understanding and support of your product, legal, and localization teams), and be open to changing your approach to wiki content and community contributions based on the feedback you receive from the community. For more information, see *Getting Over the Barriers to Wiki Adoption* (Alan Porter, 2010); <http://arstechnica.com/business/news/2010/02/getting-over-the-barriers-to-wiki-adoption.ars>.

Evaluate your content

By publishing content on the web, you can get immediate feedback in a variety of ways from your customers. Using customer feedback, you can change or update your content to better meet your customers' needs—and you can get this improved content to your customer much more quickly.

Some websites have built-in feedback mechanisms so that customers can rate and comment on content. For example, some content includes a feedback survey at the bottom of each page.

If your content has many customers, you might want to use tools to help with data mining and analysis of customer feedback.

A/B testing

If you can't support sophisticated customer feedback tools and analysis, you might try the A/B content testing method, which is done through controlled online experiments. In A/B testing, customers are exposed to (A) control content and (B) treated content. Comparing the two by using the metrics that make sense for your site (number of downloads, sales, page views, and so on), you can make gradual and systematic improvements to your site.

Task analysis

Task analysis—understanding what your customers need to do and how they're using your content to do it—is another way of evaluating your content. In general, the task analysis process is as follows:

- Identify the top tasks that customers need to complete by using your content.
- Have participants use your content to do the tasks.
- Use metrics to measure their success rates.

Some metrics include the following:

- Task completion rate
- Disaster rate (percentage of failed attempts)
- Time it takes to complete the task

After you have identified areas of weakness in your content based on task analysis, you can make changes and remeasure as necessary to achieve an optimal success rate. For more information, see *Customer Carewords: Top Task Management for Websites*, <http://www.customercareswords.com/task-performance-indicator.html>.

Help users find your content

How can you help ensure that your customers will find your great content? First, it's critical that your content is optimized for search. Because algorithms and keyword usage can change rapidly, it's important to understand the latest research in these areas so that you use the right approach to optimize your content for search.

Second, take advantage of the community to promote your content by using *Social Media Optimization (SMO)* and *Tags*.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

SEO is the work that you do to improve the visibility of a website or a webpage in unpaid, algorithmic search engine results. Because most customers click one of the first few search results, it's important to do all that you can to ensure that your content is returned at the top of a search engine result page.

The four main areas to focus on for SEO are keywords, links, titles, and descriptions.

Keywords

Know the words and terms that customers use (not the words and terms that you use) to search for your information, and use these words as early and as often as possible in the following places in your content:

- Titles
- Headings and subheadings
- Summaries
- Overviews
- Introductions
- Page descriptions
- Paragraph text
- Link text
- Image and table alt text

There are specific tools that you can use to learn what search terms customers use—just search for “SEO.”



Note Video and audio files are non-textual content, so search engines can't find them on their own. Add a text description near the asset, and add an alternative text description, if possible.

Links

In addition to including keywords in link text, you should link liberally to other content. If you have many incoming and outgoing links that use your keywords, you'll help improve your position in search results. The highest value is given to incoming links that match your keywords and which are from pages that also use your keywords.

Each page on your site should include some type of “share this” feature so that readers can easily link to your content from their content. This will take advantage of social media technologies and help increase the number of well-formed inbound links to your content. For more information, see *Social Media Optimization (SMO)*.

Ensure that your links are not circular (that is, don’t link back to the same content), because search engines discount these links (and it can be a lousy experience for your customers).

Fix any broken links that occur in your content—if a search engine can’t search your content because of a broken link, your ranking will be lower.

Titles

Titles are used by search engines to determine ranking and are then used as the page’s heading (anchor text) in the search engine’s results page. Use the following guidelines for titles:

- Use no more than 10 to 12 words, or about 65 characters.
- Use the most important keywords early in the title.
- Unless brand names must appear first in the title or unless the page is mostly about the brand, important keywords should precede brand names.
- The title should be specific and include what is unique about the content.

Descriptions

The page description appears in search results as a short paragraph between the title and the body of your content. It’s important that you provide this text because if you don’t, the search engine will decide what text to present. Use the following guidelines for descriptions:

- Include keywords in the description and put them as close as possible to the beginning of the description.
- A description should be no more than 160 to 170 characters.
- Write from specific to general.
- Use active words that clearly state what the page is about and that compel customers to access your content (without sounding like a sales pitch).
- Descriptions should be grammatically correct complete sentences.
- Avoid superfluous words. Don’t begin with stock phrases, such as “This article discusses” or “In this technical article, we will”
- For white papers and other long articles, indicate the length of the document.

Tags

“Tags” are keywords and terms chosen by the content’s creator or by other users of the item (depending on the system) to classify the content. Tags are a kind of metadata that helps customers find the content by browsing or searching. Tags are often specific to the systems in which the content is published. That is, tags are useful within a specific wiki, but do not necessarily increase discoverability from external search engines.

As with keywords, use tags that customers would use, not just the tags that you would use.

Many blogging and wiki systems allow authors to add free-form tags to a post, placing the post into categories. For example, a post might display that it has been tagged with “Windows” and “operating system.” Each of these tags is usually a link leading to an index page that lists all of the posts associated with that tag. The blog or wiki might have a sidebar listing all the tags in use, with each tag leading to an index page. In many systems, the font size of the tag title will be bigger or smaller, depending on the popularity (measured by customer use) of the tag. This gives customers a visual indicator of what content on the blog or wiki is most popular.

Social Media Optimization (SMO)

You can use social media like Twitter, Facebook, forums, newsgroups, and YouTube to promote your content and identify content needs. It’s another strategy—complementary to *Search Engine Optimization (SEO)*—for making people aware of your content and increasing the amount of traffic to your site.

Social media evolves rapidly, so the approaches that you take to optimize your content today might need to be different six months from now. Because of this rapidly changing environment, the following information is limited to high-level approaches; there are resources available online for detailed information.

There are four main ways to approach SMO:

- Understand the social media “community of influencers” that might have developed in your area of expertise. Engage with them to promote your content, and use social media tools yourself.
- Collaborate with a partner team, such as your organization’s marketing team, to promote your content.
- Monitor social media sites for common customer problems and use this data to identify gaps in your content. For example, in addition to responding to a forum or newsgroup post, you might need to add or correct content in your portfolio.
- Use social media technologies, such as bookmarking, blogging, RSS feeds, and other sharing technologies, to improve SEO by increasing the number of well-formed inbound links to your content.

To understand your community of influencers, you can use various listening and monitoring tools, known as “listening platforms.” Listening platforms not only monitor and track what is being said

about you, they also offer insight to help shape your strategy, giving you knowledge about sentiment, influence analysis, community, and engagement.

With social media, as with blogging, you need to have the resources to post and monitor frequently (once a week is a reasonable target) and respond to customer feedback promptly (a 24-hour to 48-hour response time is a good goal).

International considerations for web content

As with printed content, it's important to partner early with your localization team to share content plans and to understand the implications of your web-content strategy.

Certain types of web content, including video, are expensive to localize and this may affect your content choices. For more information about creating content for a global audience, see *Chapter 3, "Content for a worldwide audience"*.

Accessibility considerations for web content

There are certain accessibility standards that you must follow when you create content for the web. As you develop your web content strategy, partner early with your accessibility contact to share content plans, to understand accessibility implications, and to ensure that you understand the accessibility standards that you need to follow. For more information, see *Chapter 4, "Accessible content"*.

Legal considerations for web content

Any content created for the web—including blogs, wikis, Facebook and Twitter posts, and videos—must follow your corporate legal guidelines.

The user interface

In the last decade, the types of electronic devices that a person can interact with have proliferated. In addition to computers, many people now have smartphones and game consoles, and they're interacting with them by using their voices, fingers, hands, and even their whole bodies.

The term used for these new types of interfaces is *natural user interface (NUI)*. The natural user interface is designed and programmed to enable a user to interact more naturally with a computer or program through gestures and speech instead of an input device such as a keyboard, mouse, or game controller. For example, a user can give a command or select an option by touching the screen with a finger or hand. With a device that has a camera or sensor, a user can perform a gesture with an arm, a foot, or even the entire body to interact with a character on the screen. With a device that has a microphone, a user can say a command, clap, or whistle to cause a program to react in a logical or expected manner. Additional interactions can include holding up something for the program to digitize and show on the screen, and then working with that item through an avatar. Programs can also read facial features to recognize a user, read lips, and even reply to a user's voice. Natural user interface technology can also enable a program to determine the location of a user and to react to that location.

As natural user interfaces develop, writing and editing content for the interface will undoubtedly generate the need for a new style and new terminology. This version of the *Microsoft Manual of Style* introduces the first wave of this new style and terminology with the intent to set some groundwork for future guidelines.

Windows user interface

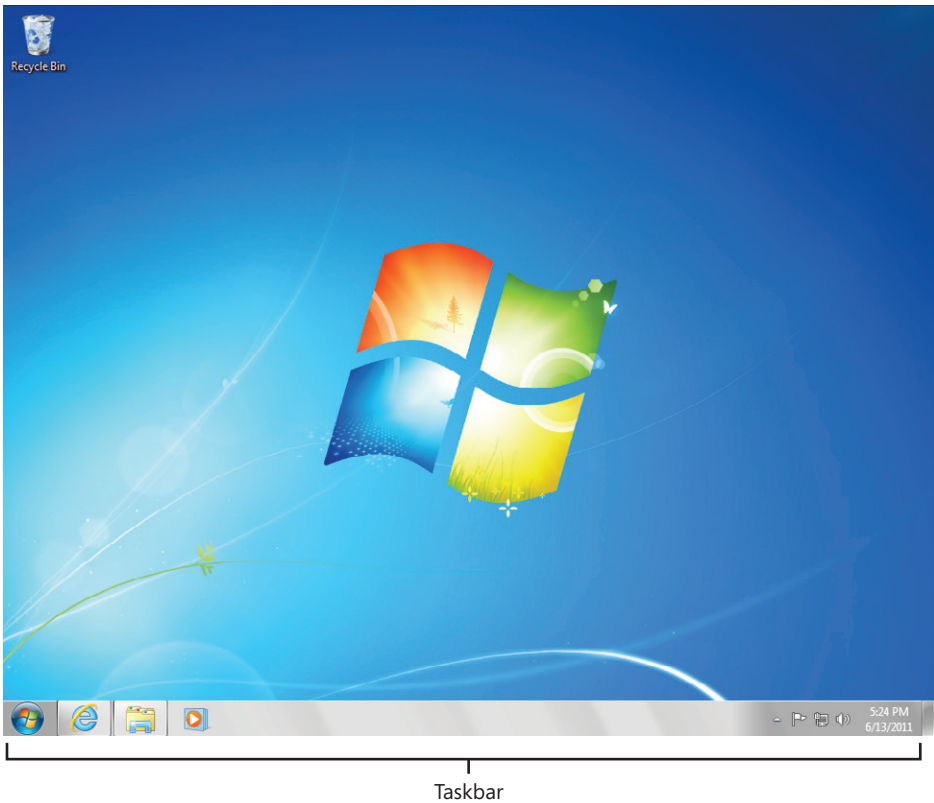
The following illustrations show a Windows desktop, the desktop access points, an open window, a browser window, and a webpage, with the various elements that appear on them called out.

Elements that appear in more than one illustration are not necessarily called out on each illustration. For example, the scroll bar and the Close button appear in all windows, so they are only called out in the illustration of an open window.

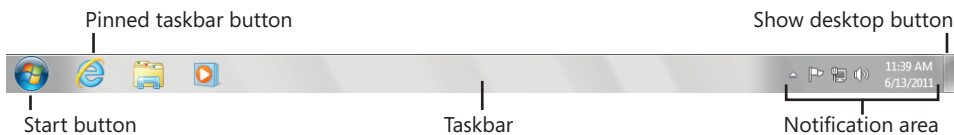
For the names of dialog box elements, see *Dialog boxes*. For the names of items on a ribbon, menu, or toolbar, see those topics. For more information, also see *User interface formatting*, and the names of individual items.

Windows desktop

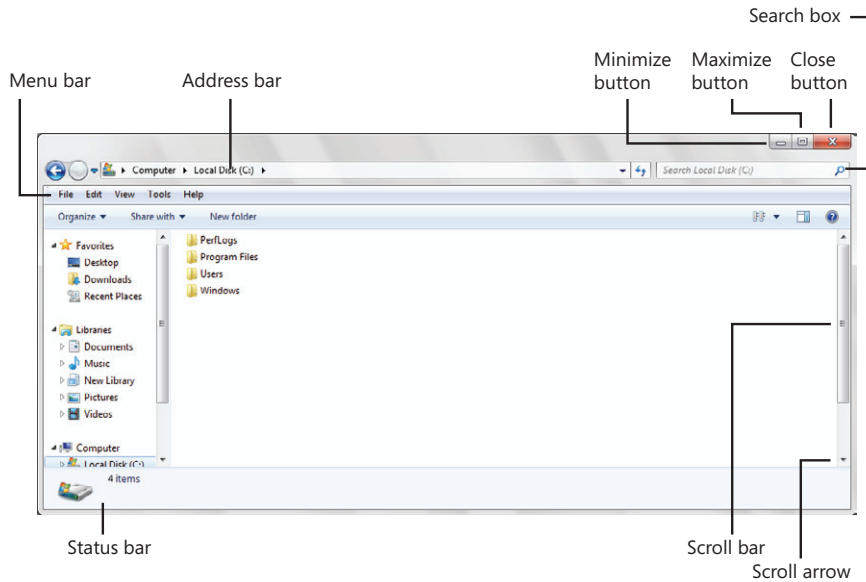
5



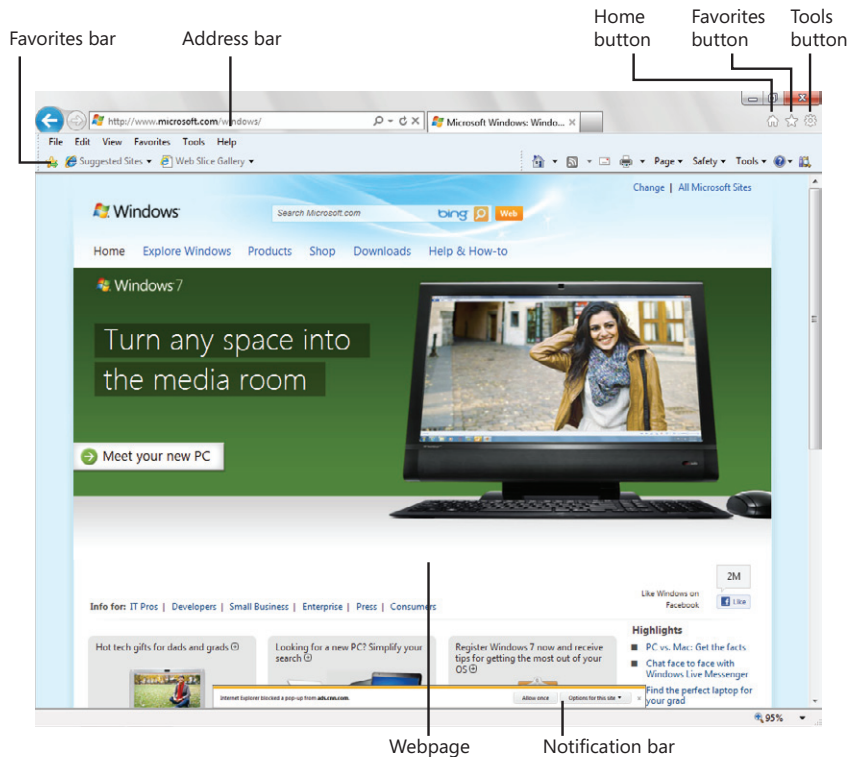
Desktop access points



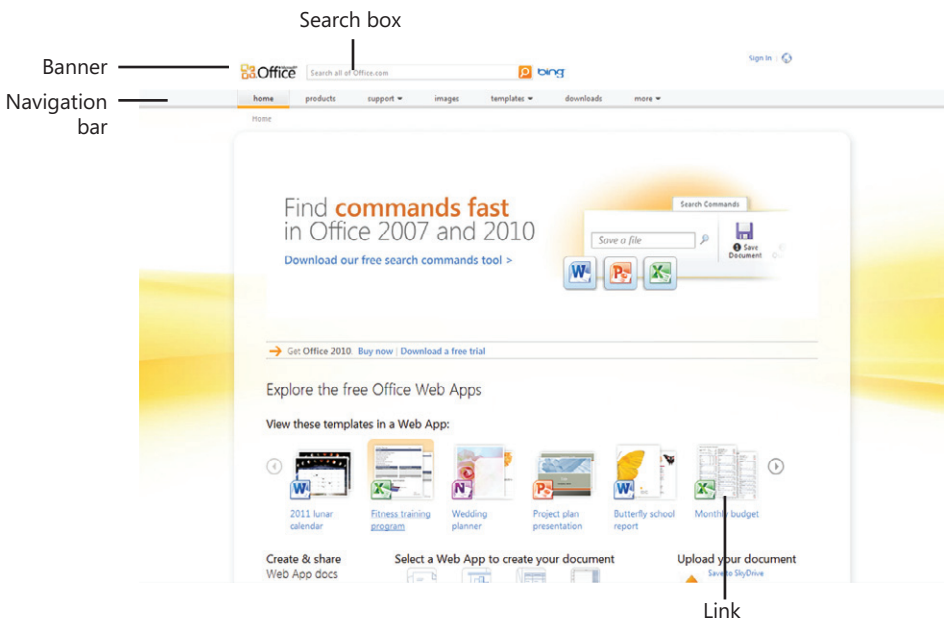
Open window



Browser



Webpage



5

Windows Phone user interface

The following illustrations show Windows Phone screens and the various elements that appear on them.

Start screen and Tiles



For a general audience, use **Start**, rather than *Start screen* or *Home screen* to describe this screen.

For a developer audience, if necessary, you can use *Start screen*.

Use *Tile* to refer to objects on **Start** that the user can move around, such as the Phone Tile and the Calendar Tile. Tiles are shortcuts to apps or other content. Always capitalize *Tile*.

Use *Live Tile* to refer to a Tile that updates automatically and shows content updates on **Start**.

In procedures, use the name of the Tile, such as **Messaging**, to refer to the Tile.

Refer to the arrow in a circle on the Windows Phone user interface generically as *the arrow*.

Microsoft style for Windows Phone

On **Start**, tap **Messaging**

You can pin Tiles to **Start**.

Other screen elements



In general, use the name of an icon and its image instead of the word *icon* in procedures.

Refer to the text at the top of a screen as the *screen title* or *application title*.

Don't use the terms *Pivot control* and *Application Bar* for a general audience. Both terms can be used in documentation for developers.

Microsoft style for Windows Phone

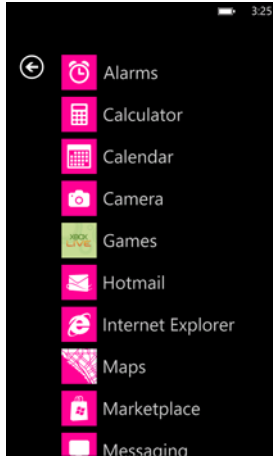
In Maps, tap **More** , and then tap **Show traffic**.

Tap the check box next to each email that you want to delete, and then tap **Delete**.

The Pivot control provides a quick way to manage views of large sets of data within an application. (Developer audience)

The Application Bar is a set of one to four buttons that can be displayed along the bottom of the phone's screen. (Developer audience)

App list

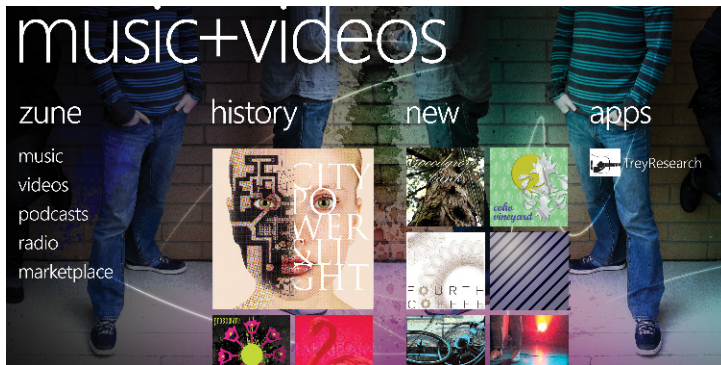


The App list shows apps installed on Windows Phone. When referring to the App list, capitalize *App*. Do not use *Application list*.

Microsoft style for Windows Phone

On **Start**, flick left to the **App** list.

Hub



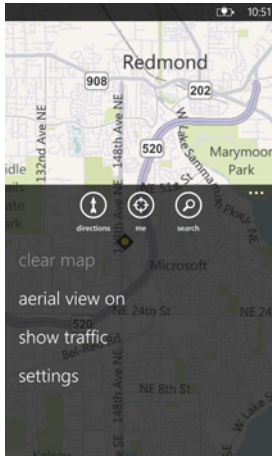
Don't refer to a *Hub* unless absolutely necessary. Instead, in procedures, use the name of the Hub, such as "In Marketplace..." or "In Pictures..." to refer to the front page of a Hub for a user action. If you do refer to a Hub, capitalize *Hub*.

Microsoft style for Windows Phone

In **Pictures**, find a picture, and tap to open it.

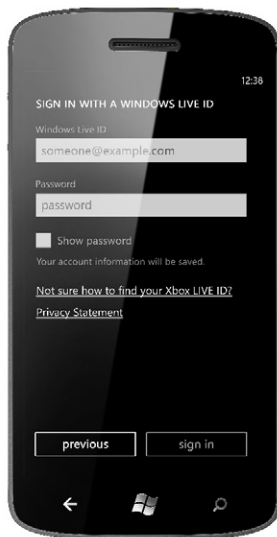
The Pictures Hub is where you go to see all the pictures on your phone and the latest pictures your friends have posted to Windows Live.

Menu



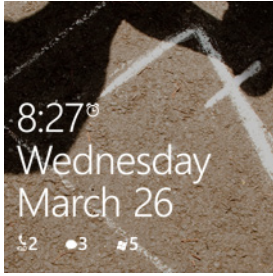
Use *menu* to refer to a context-specific menu that appears when the user taps the **More** icon.

Dialog box



Dialog box elements include text boxes, check boxes, and buttons.

Lock screen



The lock screen appears when the phone is turned on. Refer to the lock screen by name or generically as *your phone's screen*.

Microsoft style for Windows Phone

To unlock your phone, turn it on, and then flick your finger upward on your phone's screen until you can see the keypad for entering your password.

If you haven't checked your phone for a while, you can get a lot of information from the lock screen, including how many new text messages, missed calls, emails, and voicemails you've received.

Keyboard

q	w	e	r	t	y	u	i	o	p
a	s	d	f	g	h	j	k	l	
↑	z	x	c	v	b	n	m	↵	
&123	@	.com	space	.	←				

Refer to keyboard elements as *keys*. Examples are the *Enter key* and the *Shift key*.

Use *type* to refer to using alphanumeric keys; use *tap* to refer to functional keys.

Microsoft style for Windows Phone

Tap the message box, and then type your message.

Type your password, and then tap **Enter**.

User interface elements

User interface elements enable users to interact with programs, applications, and with pages and services on websites. These elements, which include controls and commands, can be presented to the user in various graphical forms, such as in ribbons, menus, toolbars, dialog boxes, property sheets, or web forms. Or they can be individual elements such as hyperlinks or download buttons on webpages.

User interface terminology

In content for software developers, buttons and other dialog box elements are called *controls*, especially in discussions about creating them. Do not use *control* in content for a general audience.



Note In some hardware products, buttons, switches, and so on are called controls because they give the user control over various actions. For example, users use joystick controls to move around the screen in games. This usage is all right as long as the meaning is clear.

5

User interface syntax

The following terms are most commonly used to describe how users interact with controls and commands:

- *Click*: Use for commands, command buttons, option buttons, and options in a list, gallery, or palette.
- *Select* and *clear*: Use for check boxes.
- *Remove the check mark*: Use for checked and unchecked commands.
- *Type or select*: Use to refer to an item (as in a combo box) that the user can either type or select in the accompanying text box. You can use *enter* instead if there is no possibility of confusion.

Except for the identifiers *box*, *list*, *check box*, and *tab*, the generic name of a control (*button*, *option*, and so on) should not follow the label of a control, especially within procedures.

Use bold formatting for dialog box titles, labels, and options. Do not use bold formatting for the title of a webpage. Instead, insert a hyperlink if appropriate or use regular type. For more information, see *dialog boxes*, *Document conventions* (Chapter 6), *Procedures* (Chapter 6), *User interface formatting*, *Windows user interface*.

The following example shows typical procedure wording for dialog box controls and webpage controls.

Microsoft style (for dialog boxes)

To view bookmarks

1. On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**, and then click the **View** tab.
2. Select the **Bookmarks** check box.

Microsoft style (for webpages)

To create a free website

1. Go to <http://officelive.com>.
2. On the Office Live Small Business sign-up page, click **Create a free website**. A sign-up page appears.

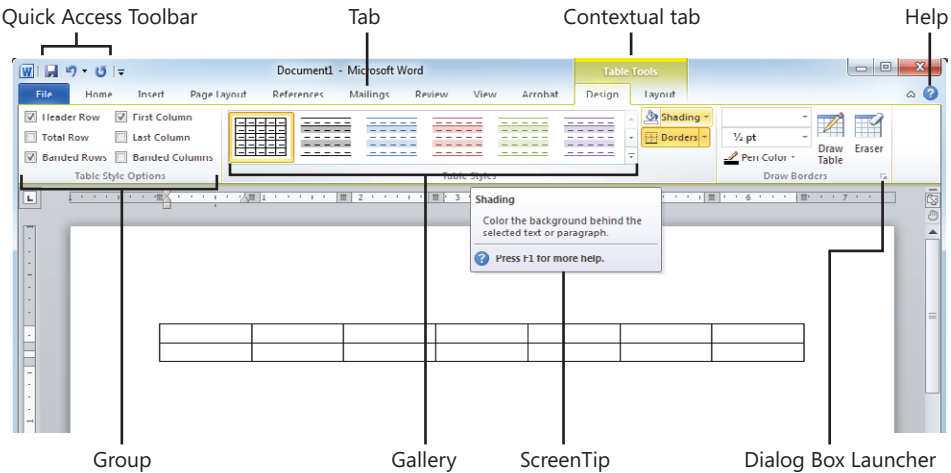
5 Ribbons, menus, and toolbars

Ribbons, menus, and toolbars are three methods that programs can use to show users what commands are available in those programs.



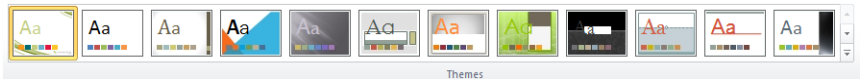

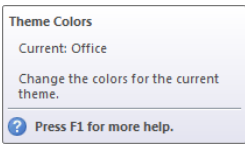

Ribbons


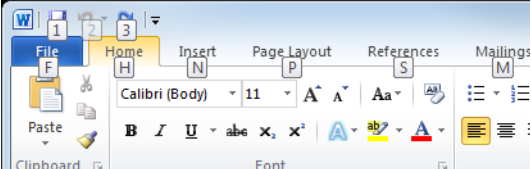
The ribbon is a rectangular area that fits across the top of an application window. It was introduced as a component of the Microsoft Office Fluent user interface in Office 2007.

The ribbon is composed of several tabs, each of which represents a subset of program functionality. The tabs contain related commands that are organized, grouped, and labeled.



The ribbon has several elements. They are listed and described in the following table, using examples from Microsoft Word.

Element	Description
Tools	Context-sensitive tabs that appear on the ribbon under certain circumstances. For example, if you select an image in a document, the Picture Tools tab appears on the ribbon. If you select or are working in a table, the Table Tools tab appears on the ribbon. The tools tab disappears when the user clicks away from the selected item.
tab	A rectangular region on a ribbon that represents a subset of the program's functionality. In the following example, the Home tab is open. 
group	A rectangular region on a tab that contains a set of related controls and commands. The following example shows the Paragraph group on the Home tab. 
gallery	A rectangular window or menu that presents an array or grid of visual choices to a user. For example, when a user clicks an image in a document and then clicks the Picture Tools tab, the Picture Styles gallery becomes available. 
mini toolbar	A set of controls that appears in context when an object is selected. A user can use these controls to perform actions upon the object. For example, when a user selects text, the formatting mini toolbar automatically appears above the text.  <p>As the mouse pointer moves closer to the mini toolbar, the toolbar becomes more visible. As the mouse pointer moves away from it, the toolbar fades away or disappears altogether.</p>
ScreenTip	A ScreenTip is a small window that displays descriptive text when a mouse pointer rests on a command or control. A ScreenTip may include a link to a Help topic. 
Quick Access Toolbar	A collection of icons, located on a program's title bar, that provides shortcuts to commonly used commands. Users can add icons to this toolbar or remove them. 

Element	Description
Dialog Box Launcher	<p>A specific icon that is used within a group to launch a related dialog box. It is located in the lower-right corner of a group.</p>  <p>Dialog Box Launcher</p>
KeyTips	<p>Small keyboard tips that indicate what key to press to access program functionality. The user must press the Alt key to see the KeyTips and then press the indicated number or letter to run the associated command. In the following example, pressing the number 1 saves a Word document.</p> 

Ribbon terminology

In Office 2007, *Ribbon* is capitalized. In Office 2010, *ribbon* is lowercase. Use *on* the ribbon, not *in* the ribbon.

Microsoft style

On the ribbon, click the appropriate tab or group to display the command that you want to add to the Quick Access Toolbar.

Not Microsoft style

Some tabs display in the ribbon only when they are relevant to the task at hand, such as when formatting a table or an image.

Do not use the possessive form of *ribbon*.

Microsoft style

One of the benefits of using the ribbon is its clear visual layout.

Not Microsoft style

One of the ribbon's benefits is its clear visual layout.

Spell out Quick Access Toolbar. Do not abbreviate it to QAT.

Microsoft style

You can add or remove commands from the Quick Access Toolbar.

Not Microsoft style

You can add or remove commands from the Quick Access Toolbar (QAT).

You can add or remove commands from the QAT.

To refer to tools, use the following format: Under **x** on the **y** tab, in the **z** group, click **zz**.

Microsoft style

Under **Table Tools**, on the **Layout** tab, in the **Data** group, click **Repeat Header Rows**.

Not Microsoft style

Click the **Layout** tab under **Table Tools**, and then in the **Data** group, click **Repeat Header Rows**.

To refer to the Dialog Box Launcher, use the following format: On the **x** tab, in the **y** group, click the **z** Dialog Box Launcher.

Microsoft style

On the **Home** tab, in the **Font** group, click the **Font** Dialog Box Launcher.

Not Microsoft style

Click the **Home** tab, and click the **Font** Dialog Box Launcher in the **Font** group.

On the **Home** tab, in the **Font** group, click the **Font** box down-arrow.

When writing procedures that involve the ribbon, use the following format:

- On the **x** tab, in the **y** group, click **z**.
- On the **x** tab, in the **y** group, click **z**, and then click **zz**.

Microsoft style

On the **Review** tab, in the **Comments** group, click **New Comment**.

On the **Home** tab, in the **Font** group, click the arrow next to the **Text Highlight Color** icon, and then click the color that you want.

Not Microsoft style

Click the **Review** tab, and then click **New Comment** in the **Comments** group.

On the **Review** tab, under **Comments**, click **New**.

Menus

A menu is a group of the main commands of a program arranged by category such as *File*, *Edit*, *Format*, *View*, and *Help*. Menus are usually displayed on a menu bar typically located near the top of a window.

Menus contain commands. Do not refer to a menu command as a *choice* or an *option*. Also do not refer to a menu command as a *menu item*, except in content for software developers about the user interface.

To describe user interaction with menus and menu commands, use *click*. Do not use *choose*, *select* or *pick*. If you must refer to the user action of opening a menu, use *click*. To open a submenu, the

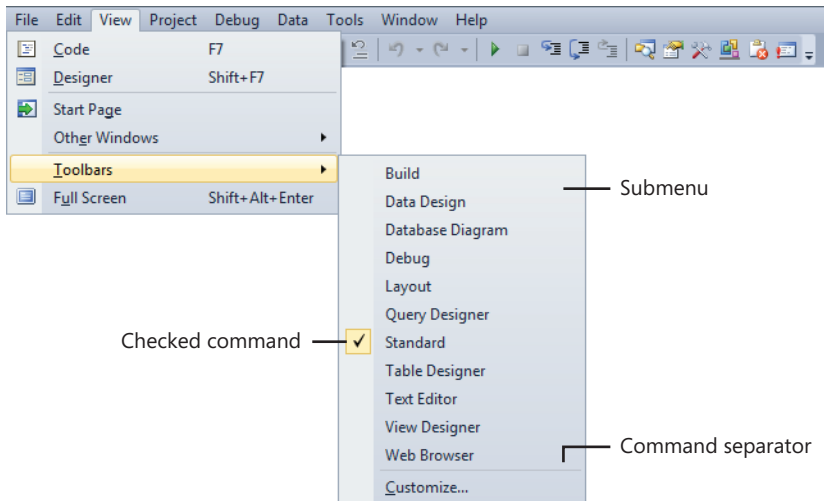
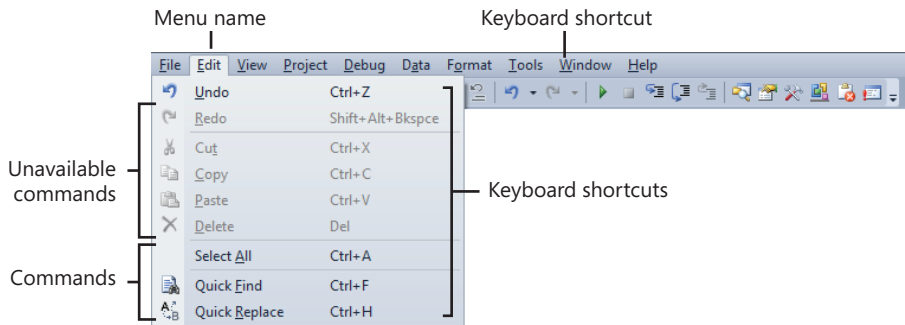
user *points to* a command on the main menu, which causes the submenu to open, and then *clicks* the appropriate command.

Microsoft style

On the **File** menu, click **Open**.

On the **View** menu, point to **Sort by**, and then click **Date**.

The following illustration shows elements of menus. In most content, you should not have to refer to user interface elements by their technical names. The usual practice, here as elsewhere in the user interface, is to refer to elements by their labels.



Menu terminology

When referring to a specific menu, use lowercase for the word *menu*, as in “the **Edit** menu.”

In general, refer to unavailable commands as *unavailable*, not as *dimmed*, *disabled*, or *grayed* unless you are describing their appearance. In that case, use *dimmed*, but not *grayed* or *disabled*. In content for a technical audience, it is all right to refer to unavailable commands as *disabled*.

Microsoft style

There are several unavailable commands on the **Edit** menu.

If the **Paste** command is unavailable, first select the text that you want to paste, and then click **Cut** or **Copy**.

The **Paste** command appears dimmed because it is unavailable.

A disabled control is unavailable to the user. (In content for software developers.)

Not Microsoft style

There are several dimmed commands on the **Edit** menu.

If the **Paste** command is disabled, first select the text that you want to paste, and then choose **Cut** or **Copy**.

The **Paste** command appears grayed because it is unavailable.

In general, mention the name of the menu the first time that you refer to a particular command. However, if the location of the command is clear from the immediate context, you do not have to mention the menu name. An example is a topic about the **Edit** menu.

Microsoft style

If the **Paste** command on the **Edit** menu is unavailable, first select the text that you want to paste, and then click **Cut** or **Copy**. You now should be able to click **Paste** to insert the text in its new location.

Kinds of menus

In content for a general audience, do not qualify the term *menu* with the adjectives *cascading*, *drop-down*, *pull-down*, *pop-up*, *shortcut*, or *submenu* unless the way that the menu works needs to be emphasized as a feature of the product. *Shortcut menu* is all right to use, although in most cases, you can avoid it. Do not use any of these terms as verbs.

Microsoft style

Click the **File** menu.

When you click the right mouse button, a shortcut menu appears.

Not Microsoft style

Drop down the **File** menu.

When you click the right mouse button, a shortcut menu pops up.

In content for software developers about the user interface, you might need to detail specific kinds of menus.

Style of menu names and commands

Always surround menu names with the words *the* and *menu* both in text and in procedures.

Microsoft style

On the **File** menu, click **Open**.

Not Microsoft style

On **File**, click **Open**.

From **File**, click **Open**.

In procedures, do not surround command names with the words *the* and *command*. In text, you can use “the ... command” for clarity.

Microsoft style

On the **File** menu, click **Open**.

Not Microsoft style

On the **File** menu, click the **Open** command.

Do not use the possessive form of menu and command names.

Microsoft style

The **Open** command on the **File** menu opens the file.

Not Microsoft style

The **File** menu’s **Open** command opens the file.

Follow the user interface for capitalization and use bold formatting both in text and procedures. Do not capitalize the identifier, such as *menu* or *command*.

Microsoft style

On the **Options** menu, click **Keep Help on Top**.

Not Microsoft style

On the **Options** menu, click **Keep Help On Top**.

Toolbars

A toolbar is a grouping of commands optimized for efficient access. Unlike a menu, which contains a comprehensive list of commands, a toolbar contains the most frequently used commands. Most toolbars are customizable, enabling users to add or remove toolbars, change their size and location, and even change their contents. Some toolbars are called *bars*. An example is the Command bar in Internet Explorer. Always follow the user interface.

Toolbars contain buttons. A toolbar button can have a submenu, which is indicated by an arrow next to it. A toolbar button with a submenu is called a *menu button* if the user can click either the button or the arrow to open the submenu, and it is called a *split button* if clicking the button carries out the command, but clicking the arrow opens the submenu. Do not refer to a toolbar button as a *choice* or an *option*. Also do not refer to a toolbar button as a *toolbar item* or a *toolbar control* except in content for software developers about the user interface.

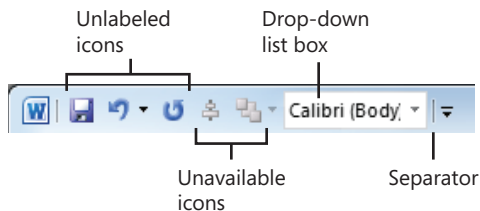
To describe user interaction with toolbars and toolbar buttons, use *click* for toolbar buttons and submenu commands, and *click*, *type*, or *enter* for submenu commands that require users to provide information. Do not use *choose*, *select*, or *pick*.

Microsoft style

To read mail in Internet Explorer, click **Read mail** on the Command bar.

On the Command bar, click **Tools**, and then click **Internet options**.

The following illustration shows an example of a toolbar. In most content, you should not have to refer to user interface elements by their technical names. The usual practice, here as elsewhere in the user interface, is to refer to elements by their labels.



Toolbar Terminology

When referring to a specific toolbar, use lowercase for the word *toolbar*, unless the word *Toolbar* appears in uppercase in the user interface, as is the case with the Quick Access Toolbar in programs that use a ribbon, such as Word 2010. *Toolbar* is one word.

If there is only one toolbar, refer to it as the *toolbar*. If there are multiple toolbars, refer to them by name, followed by the word *toolbar*.

Refer to the main toolbar that is on by default and contains buttons for basic tasks, such as opening and printing a file, as the **Standard toolbar**, unless it is named in the user interface, as is the case with the Quick Access Toolbar.

Refer to named toolbar buttons by their user-interface names. Refer to unnamed toolbar buttons by their tooltip labels. Use the exact label text, including its capitalization, but do not include the shortcut key, the explanation, or the ellipsis for buttons that have them.

Refer to toolbar menu buttons and split buttons by their labels and the word *menu*. Use the exact label text, including its capitalization.

Microsoft style

On the Quick Access Toolbar, click **New**.

On the Quick Access Toolbar, click the arrow next to the **Font color** menu, and then click the color that you want.

On the Command bar, click **Feeds**.

On the Command bar, click the **Print** menu, and then click **Print Preview**.

Not Microsoft style

On the Quick Access Toolbar, click **New (Ctrl+N)**.

On the Quick Access Toolbar, click the arrow next to **Font color**, and then click the color that you want.

On the Command bar, click the **No feeds detected on this page** button.

On the Command bar, click the **Print** menu, and then click **Print Preview....**

In general, refer to unavailable commands and options as *unavailable*, not as *dimmed*, *disabled*, or *grayed*, unless you are describing their appearance. In that case, use *dimmed*, but not *grayed* or *disabled*. In content for a technical audience, it is all right to refer to unavailable commands as *disabled*.

Microsoft style

There are several unavailable buttons on the Quick Access Toolbar.

When Word first opens, the **Can't Undo** and **Can't Repeat** buttons are dimmed because they are not available until there is something to undo or repeat.

In Microsoft Visual Basic .NET, the **Stop Debugging** button is disabled when a program is not in the process of being debugged. (In content for software developers.)

Not Microsoft style

There are several dimmed buttons on the Quick Access Toolbar.

When Word first opens, the **Can't Undo** and **Can't Repeat** buttons are disabled.

In Microsoft Visual Basic .NET, the **Stop Debugging** button is grayed when a program is not in the process of being debugged.

Kinds of toolbars

In content for a general audience, do not qualify the term *toolbar menu button* or *toolbar split button* with the adjective *cascading*, *drop-down*, *pull-down*, *pop-up*, or *submenu* unless the way that the menu works needs to be emphasized as a feature of the product. *Shortcut menu* is all right to use, although in most cases, you can avoid it. Do not use any of these terms as verbs.

Microsoft style

On the **Windows Help and Support** toolbar, click the **Options** menu.

On the **Options** menu, point to **Text Size**, and then click **Largest**.

Not Microsoft style

On the **Windows Help and Support** toolbar, open the **Options** pull-down menu.

On the **Options** menu, point to **Text Size**, and then click **Largest** on the submenu.

In content for software developers about the user interface, you might need to detail specific kinds of toolbars.

Style of toolbar names and buttons

In general, do not use the words *the* and *button* with toolbar buttons.

Microsoft style

To start a new document, click **New** on the Quick Access Toolbar.

Not Microsoft style

To start a new document, click the **New** button on the Quick Access Toolbar.

In general, do use *the* and *menu* with toolbar menu buttons and split buttons, but do not use the word *button*.

Microsoft style

To change Internet options, click the **Tools** menu on the Command bar, and then click **Internet Options**.

Not Microsoft style

To change Internet options, click **Tools** on the Command bar, and then click the **Internet Options** button.

To describe removing a check mark from a menu command, use *click to remove the check mark*. Do not use *clear*.

Microsoft style

To remove the **Desktop** toolbar from the taskbar, right-click the taskbar, and then click **Desktop** to remove the check mark.

Not Microsoft style

To remove the **Desktop** toolbar, right-click the taskbar, and then click **Desktop** to clear the check mark.

Do not use the possessive form of toolbars and toolbar buttons.

Microsoft style

To read mail, click **Read Mail** on the Command bar.

Not Microsoft style

You can read mail by clicking the Command bar's **Read Mail** button.

Follow the interface for capitalization and use bold formatting for toolbar names and buttons. Do not capitalize the identifier, such as toolbar or button.

Microsoft style

In Windows Help and Support, click **Help and Support home** on the toolbar.

Not Microsoft style

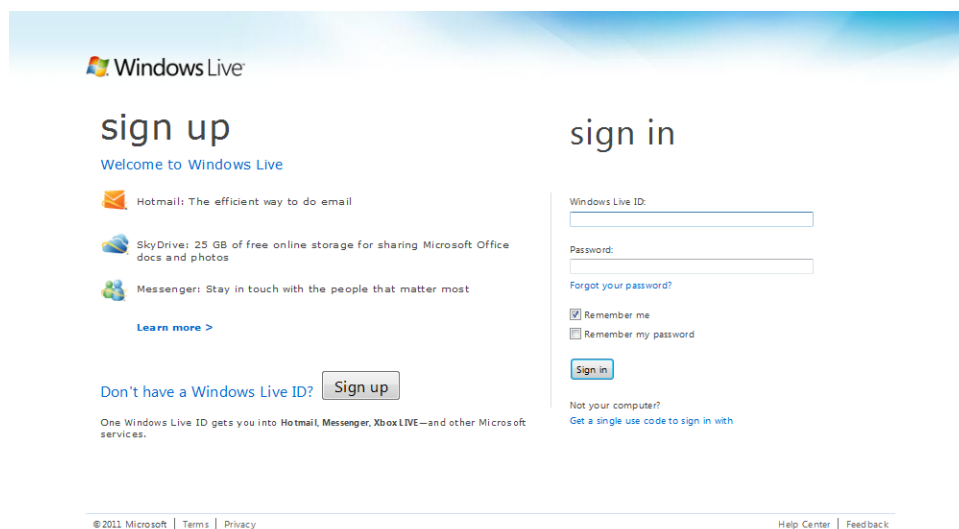
In Windows Help and Support, click the **Help And Support Home** button on the toolbar.

Webpage controls, dialog boxes, and property sheets

Here are some specifics on webpage controls, dialog boxes, and property sheets.

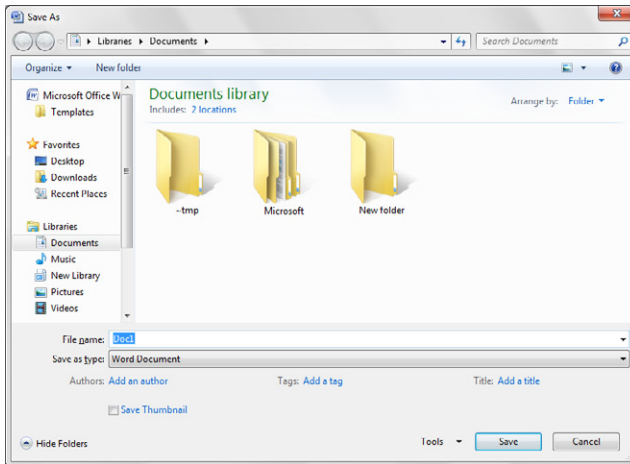
Webpage controls

Webpages contain such controls as hyperlinks, text boxes, and download buttons. A typical webpage with controls looks as follows.



Dialog boxes

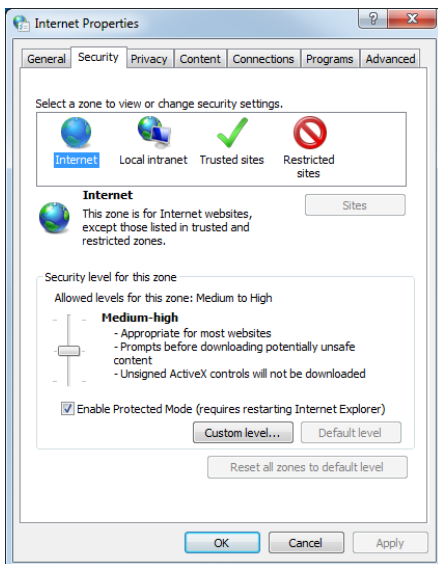
Dialog boxes contain such controls as command buttons and list boxes through which users can carry out a particular command or task. For example, in the **Save As** dialog box, the user must indicate in which folder and under what name the document should be saved. A typical dialog box looks as follows.



5

Property sheets

A *property sheet* is a dialog box that displays information about an object (the object's properties). For example, the **Internet Properties** property sheet shows information about Internet security settings. Property sheets contain such controls as check boxes and sliders. A typical property sheet looks as follows.




In general, avoid using *dialog box* or *property sheet* as a descriptor. If you cannot avoid a descriptor, use *dialog box* for both property sheets and dialog boxes unless your project style sheet provides different guidance. The distinction may be important for a technical audience, but do not distinguish in content for a general audience. For more information, also see *dialog boxes*, *Document conventions* (Chapter 6), *User interface text*.

Backstage view

Although the term *Backstage view* does not appear in the user interface, writers use it to refer to the page that a user sees upon clicking the **File** tab of any Microsoft Office 2010 program. The Backstage view, which is part of the Microsoft Office Fluent user interface, exposes information and metadata about the currently active document, lists recently opened documents and network places, and provides a variety of user options, such as opening, saving, printing, and versioning.

5

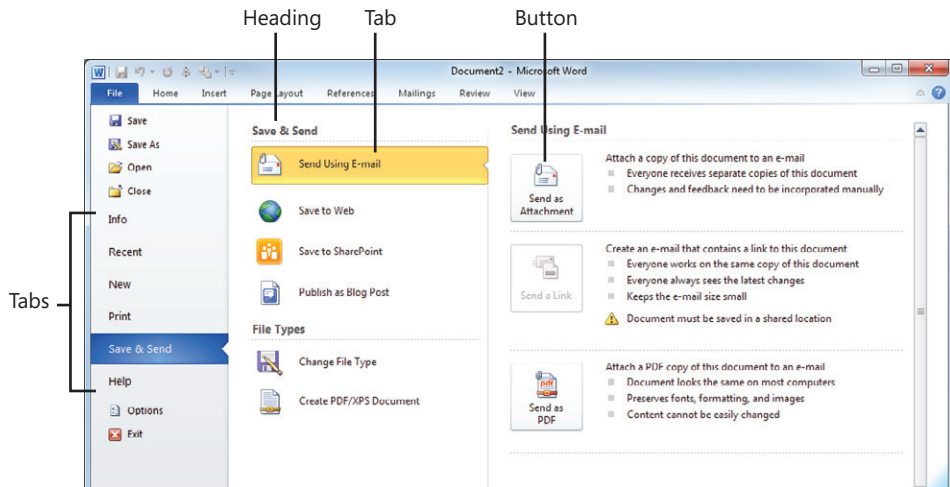


Note The File tab replaces the Microsoft Office Button  and the File menu that appeared in earlier versions of Office.

How to refer to Backstage view

Use the following guidelines to refer to Backstage view.

- On first mention, precede *Backstage* + *descriptor* with *Microsoft Office*, and use the appropriate trademark symbols for printed content. The descriptor that follows *Backstage* is usually *view*.
Example: Microsoft® Office Backstage® view
- On subsequent mentions, you may omit *Microsoft Office* but you may not omit the descriptor. The only exception to this rule is if space is limited.
- Always capitalize *Backstage*.
- Always follow *Backstage* with a descriptor to explain what it is and what it works with. In most cases, the descriptor is the word *view*. Use *Backstage* only as an adjective; do not use *Backstage* as a noun, verb, or an adverb.
- In printed material, apply the trademark on first mention. Because it is trademarked, *Backstage* is not localized. However, the word *view* can be localized.
- It is acceptable, but not required, to precede *Backstage view* with the definite article *the*.
- In procedures, treat items in the Backstage view, such as tab names, headings, and button labels in accordance with the *Microsoft Manual of Style* guidelines.
- The items on the side of the Backstage view, such as Info, Recent, New, and Print, are called tabs.



- Do not refer to the Backstage view as “the outspace.”
- Do not refer to sections of the Backstage view as slabs, billboards, hero buttons, forms, panes, or windows except in content for software developers (if these terms appear in code samples or in content that documents these controls).
- Do not refer to the Backstage view as new.
- Do not apply a version number to the Backstage view.

Microsoft style

The Backstage view is where you manage your documents and related data about them.

Click the **File** tab. The Microsoft Office Backstage view appears.

After you create your document, go to the Backstage view to print it.

Not Microsoft style

After you create your document, go Backstage to print it.

The Office Backstage lets you inspect your document before you share it with others.

Clicking the **File** tab opens the Backstage.

The Office 2010 Backstage view lets you open previous versions of the active document.

Control Panel

With Control Panel, users can configure system-level features and perform related tasks. Examples of system-level feature configuration include hardware and software setup and configuration, security, system maintenance, and user account management.

The term *Control Panel* refers to the entire Windows Control Panel feature. Individual control panels are referred to as *control panel items*. A control panel item is considered *top-level* when it is directly accessible from the control panel home page or a category page.

The *control panel home page* is the main entry point for all control panel items. It lists the items by their category, along with the most common tasks. It is displayed when users click **Control Panel** on the **Start** menu.

A *control panel category page* lists the items within a single category, along with the most common tasks. It is displayed when users click a category name on the home page.

Control Panel contains icons that represent different control panel items. Do not use *applets*, *programs*, *tools*, or *control panels* to refer to either the icons or the items. Use bold formatting for the names of the icons and items.

If you must identify Control Panel by a category, use *the Control Panel application* in content for a technical audience, or *the Control Panel program* in content for a general audience. For a mixed audience, use *program*.

When documenting an alternate path to control panel items, use "To open <name of item>", and use bold formatting for the name of the item.

When referring to Control Panel itself, use regular type except when you are referring to the command on the **Start** menu. In that case, use bold formatting.

In documentation for a technical audience, refer to *control panel home page* and *control panel category page*, without capitalizing any of the words. A preceding definite article is optional.

When referring to a control panel item's hub page, use "main <control panel item name> page".

Do not use *the* when referring to Control Panel.

Microsoft style

In Control Panel, click **Network and Internet**, and then click **Internet Options**.

To open **Internet Options**, click **Start**, click **Control Panel**, and then click **Network and Internet**.



For more information about Control Panel, see the *Control Panels* section of the *Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines* on MSDN.

Messages

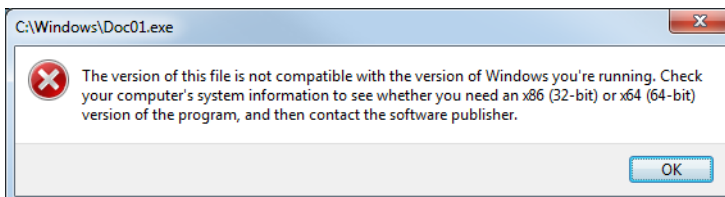
When explaining a message, include the situation in which the message occurs, the message text, and what the user should do to continue. Do not use special formatting (such as monospace or bold) or title capitalization to set off messages from surrounding text unless specified in your product style guide. Instead, set the text off on a separate line or enclose it in quotation marks, as appropriate.

Programs use four types of messages:

- Errors
- Warnings
- Confirmations
- Notifications

Errors

An *error message* alerts a user about a problem that has already occurred. Error messages can be presented by using modal dialog boxes, in-place messages, notifications, or balloons.



When referring to errors, follow these guidelines:

- In content for a general audience, refer to errors as *messages*, not *alerts*, *error messages*, *message boxes*, or *prompts*.
- For acceptable uses of alert, see *alert*.
- *Error message* is all right to use in content for a technical audience to describe messages that indicate an error condition. It is also all right if you must follow the user interface.
- Refer to errors by their main instruction. Use the exact text, including its capitalization. If the main instruction is long or detailed, summarize it.

Microsoft style

If you receive a “There is no CD disc in the drive” message, insert a new CD disc in the drive and try again.

If you receive Windows Update error 80072ee7 while checking for updates, you might need to change or remove static IP addresses for the Windows Update service.

International considerations

For machine-translated content, do not embed error message text that forms a completed sentence inside the sentence that makes a statement about the error message. Instead, structure the sentence so that the error message text is set off on a separate line or rewrite the sentence so that the error message text becomes a grammatical part of the sentence in which it is embedded.

For example, consider the following sentence:

If you receive a “There is no CD disc” in the drive message, insert a new CD disc in the drive and try again.

To make this sentence better for machine translation, restructure this sentence as follows:

*If you receive the following message, insert a new CD disc in the drive and try again:
“There is no CD disc in the drive.”*

or

If you receive a message that states that there is no CD in the drive, insert a new CD disc in the drive and try again.

Set error messages that are not completed sentences off on a separate line if you can. If you cannot, enclose the error-message text in quotation marks to mark the text as one unit.

For example, the following sentence may cause mistranslation:

If you receive Windows Update error 80072ee7 while checking for updates, you might need to change or remove static IP addresses for the Windows Update service.

For better machine translation, restructure this sentence as follows:

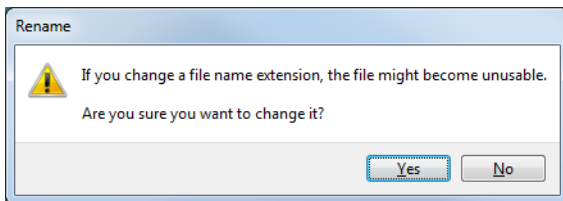
If you receive the following Windows Update error while checking for updates, you might need to change or remove static IP addresses for the Windows Update service: 80072ee7

or

If you receive “Windows Update error 80072ee7” while checking for updates, you might need to change or remove static IP addresses for the Windows Update service.

Warnings

A *warning message* is a modal dialog box, in-place message, notification, or balloon that alerts the user of a condition that might cause a problem in the future.



When referring to warnings, follow these guidelines:

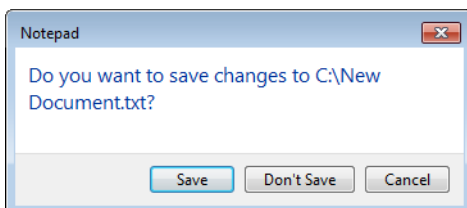
- In content for a general audience, refer to warnings as *messages*, not *alerts*, *warning messages*, *message boxes*, or *prompts*.
- *Warning message* is all right to use in content for a technical audience to describe messages that indicate an error condition. It is also all right to use if you must follow the user interface. However, do not use *warning* without the word *message*.
- Refer to the warning message by its main instruction, which may be a question. Use the exact text, including its capitalization. If the text is long or detailed, summarize it.

Microsoft style

If you receive the “This file has been modified outside of the source editor. Do you want to reload it?” message, click Yes.

Confirmations

A *confirmation* is a modal dialog box that asks if the user wants to proceed with an action.

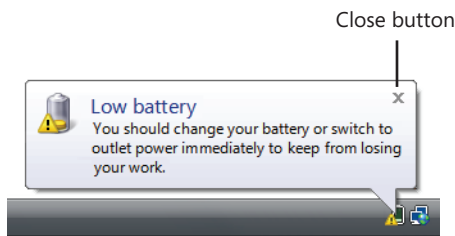


When referring to confirmations, follow these guidelines:

- Refer to confirmations as *messages*, not *alerts*, *warning messages*, *message boxes*, or *prompts*.
- Refer to the confirmation by its main instruction, which may be a question. Use the exact text, including its capitalization. If the text is long or detailed, summarize it.

Notifications

A *notification* informs a user of events that are unrelated to the current user activity, by briefly displaying a balloon from an icon in the notification area. The notification could result from a user action or significant system event, or could offer potentially useful information from Windows or an application.



When referring to notifications, follow these guidelines:

- Refer to a notification as a *notification*, not as a *message*, a *balloon*, or an *alert*.
- Refer to a notification by its main instruction. Use the exact text, including its capitalization. If the main instruction is long or detailed, summarize it.
- Refer to the notification area as the *notification area*, not the *system tray*.

Microsoft style

The **Offline Files** icon in the notification area intermittently displays the “You are working offline. You are no longer connected to Server” notification.


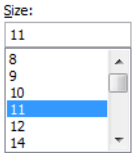


For information about how to write messages, see the *Messages* section of the *Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines* on MSDN.

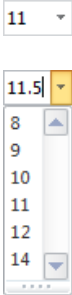
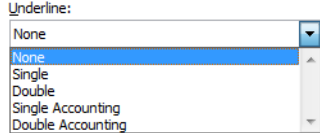
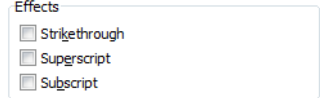

Other user interface elements

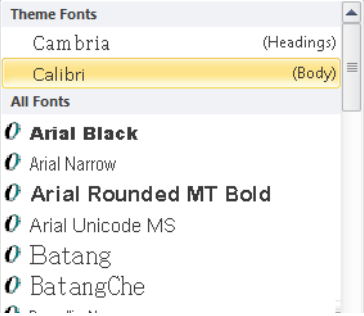
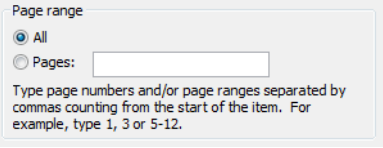
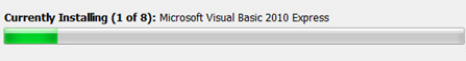

In most content, especially for a general audience, do not differentiate between drop-down combo boxes, list boxes, and text boxes. Refer to such a control by its label, and use a descriptor only if necessary for clarity. If you must use a descriptor, use *list* or *box*. Do use the term *check box*, however.

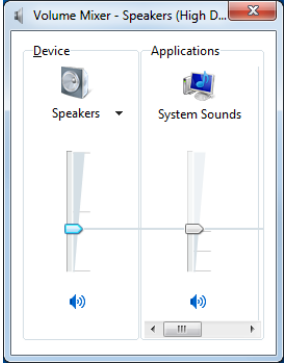

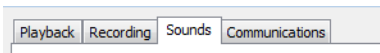
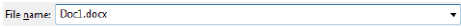


The following table describes the various controls that can appear in dialog boxes and on webpages. Unless otherwise noted, avoid using the control name except in a discussion about

designing a user interface. Use lowercase for the name of the control (“the **Spaces** check box”). In general, use sentence-style capitalization for the specific descriptor.

Control name	Definition	Usage	Example
Check box*	Square box that is selected or cleared to turn on or off an option. More than one check box can be selected.	Select the Spaces check box. Click to clear the Bookmarks check box. Under Show , select the Draft font check box. Note Always include <i>check box</i> with the label name.	
Combo box	Text box with a list box attached. The list is always visible. Because users can either type or select their choice, you can use <i>enter</i> to describe the action. Follow your project style sheet.	In the Font box, type or select the font you want to use. or In the File Name box, enter a file name.	
Command button	Rectangular button that initiates an action. A command button label ending with ellipses indicates that another dialog box will appear. More information is needed before the action can be completed.	Click Options .	
Command link	Command links enable users to make a choice among a set of mutually exclusive, related choices. Insert a hyperlink for the link text. If the user must click the link, refer to the text without using <i>link</i> or <i>hyperlink</i> . If the user must make a selection, refer to the links as <i>options</i> .	Click Browse the Internet now. or Click one of the following options:	
Drop-down arrow	Arrow associated with a drop-down combo or list box or some toolbar buttons, indicating a list the user can view by clicking the arrow.	Click the Size arrow to see more options.	

Control name	Definition	Usage	Example
Drop-down combo box	Closed version of a combo box with an arrow next to it. Clicking the arrow opens the list.	In the Size box, type or select a point size.	
Drop-down list box	Closed version of a list box with an arrow next to it. Clicking the arrow opens the list. Depending on the type of list, use either <i>list</i> or <i>box</i> , whichever is clearer.	In the Item list, click Desktop .	
Group box	Frame or box that encloses a set of related options. In some programs, a group box can be indicated by a single line that unifies the options below it. The group box is a visual device only. If necessary for clarity, you can use either <i>under</i> followed by the label or <i>in the <name of group> area</i> .	Click Small Caps . or Under Effects , click SmallCaps . or In the Effects area, click Small Caps .	
Label (do not use <i>caption</i>)	Text attached to any option, box, command, and so on. Refer to any option, box, and so on by its label.	In the Font list, click Arial .	
Links	Links enable a user to go to another page, window, or Help topic; display a definition; initiate a command, or select an option. Insert a hyperlink for the link text, and then refer to the text without using the word <i>link</i> or <i>hyperlink</i> .	Click Check for updates .	

Control name	Definition	Usage	Example
List box	<p>Any type of box containing a list of items the user can select. The user cannot type a selection in a list box.</p> <p>Depending on the type of list, use either <i>list</i> or <i>box</i>, whichever is clearer.</p>	In the Wallpaper list, click the background wallpaper of your choice.	
List view	List views enable users to view and interact with a collection of data objects, using either single selection or multiple selection. Refer to a list view as a <i>list</i> .	In the Picture library list, click Forest Flowers .	
Option button (do not use <i>radio button</i> except in developer content.)	Round button used to select one of a group of mutually exclusive options.	Click Portrait .	
Progress bar	Progress bars enable users to follow the progress of a lengthy operation.	While the Memory Diagnostics Tool runs, you see a progress bar that indicates the status of the test.	
Progressive disclosure controls	<p>Progressive disclosure controls enable users to show or hide additional information including data, options, or commands.</p> <p>Refer to individual controls by name. You can also use the name and a symbol in parentheses or an image.</p>	<p>To expand or collapse the folder, click the plus sign (+) or the minus sign (-) next to the folder name.</p> <p>or</p> <p>Click the chevron to expand your current network profile.</p>	

Control name	Definition	Usage	Example
Slider* (also called <i>trackbar control</i> in some developer content)	Indicator on a gauge that displays and sets a value from a continuous range, such as speed, brightness, or volume.	Move the slider to the right to increase the volume.	
Spin box (do not use <i>spinner</i> or other labels)	Text box with up and down arrows that the user clicks to move through a set of fixed values. The user can also type a valid value in the box.	In the Date box, type or select the part of the date that you want to change.	
Tab* (also called <i>tabbed page</i> in technical documentation)	Labeled group of options used for many similar kinds of settings.	On the Tools menu, click Options , and then click the View tab. Note Always include <i>tab</i> with the label name.	
Text box	Rectangular box in which the user can type text. If the box already contains text, the user can select that default text or delete it and type new text.	In the Size box, select 10 or type a new font size. In the Size box, enter a font size. Note You can use <i>enter</i> if there is no chance of confusion.	
Title (do not use <i>caption</i>)	Title of the dialog box. It usually, but not always, matches the title of the command name. Refer to the dialog box by its title when necessary, especially if the user needs to go to a new tab.	In the Options dialog box, click the View tab.	
Unfold button	Command button with two "greater than" signs (>>) that enlarges a secondary window to reveal more options or information.	Click Profiles for more information.	

* *Check box*, *tab*, and *slider* are the only terms in this table that should typically be used in end-user documentation

For the names and functions of some other controls not included in this list, see the *Controls* section of the *Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines* on MSDN.

Unnamed buttons

If you refer to an unnamed button that appears in the interface, use the name of the tooltip, and then insert a bitmap showing the button, if possible. For more information, see *dialog boxes*, *Document conventions* (Chapter 6), *User interface text*.

Microsoft style

Click the **Minimize** button .

If you need help, click the Microsoft Word **Help** button .

If you cannot use inline graphics, use the name only.

Microsoft style

Click the **Minimize** button.

Modes of interaction

This section describes modes of interacting with the user interface.

Gesture

Use *gesture* to refer to a motion that the user can make to interact with hardware such as a touchpad, or a software program such as a game.

An *air gesture* can be a movement made by any part of a user's body to give an instruction to the program via a sensor or camera, or a pose that the user makes in front of a sensor or camera to which an avatar will react.

A *contact gesture* can be a motion made with a user's finger or hand directly on a screen or surface. If such a gesture is made above the screen or surface, it is an air gesture.

It is all right to use title capitalization for gesture names. Consult your project style sheet for the appropriate capitalization for your content. However, do not capitalize a gesture when it is used as a verb.

Microsoft style

The Help Me gesture displays the Help screen.

Draw a question mark to get help.

To speed through the intersection, perform the Boost gesture by quickly raising both arms above your head.

Now boost through the intersection.

Not Microsoft style

The help me gesture displays the Help screen.

Perform the boost gesture by quickly raising both arms above your head.

Now Boost through the intersection.

For more information about referring to gestures, see the following:

- drag
- flick
- hover over
- pan
- pinch
- pointer
- pointing device
- scroll
- stretch
- swipe
- tap
- turn
- vibration

Speech

Users of a natural user interface with speech recognition functionality can interact with a program by using voice commands. A voice command is a structured verbal input from the user that a program will respond to.

Enclose voice commands in quotation marks. Use punctuation at the end of the command or sentence that includes a command, but punctuation preceding or within the command is not necessary unless needed to avoid ambiguity. Always capitalize the first word in a voice command.

Microsoft style

To call Sean, say "Call Sean Bentley mobile."

"Find local pizza."

"Open Marketplace."

If you want your cub to roll on the ground, just say "Roll over."

Not Microsoft style

To call Sean, say “Call: Sean Bentley, mobile.”

Mouse terminology

This topic includes the following sections:

- How to refer to the mouse.
- How to refer to mouse pointers.
- Which verbs to use to refer to mouse actions.
- How to document mouse procedures.

How to refer to the mouse

If you need to refer to more than one mouse, use *mouse devices* if you can. Otherwise, use *mice*.

In general, use *mouse button* to indicate the left mouse button. Use *left mouse button* only to teach beginning skills or in a discussion of more than one mouse button when not referring to *the left mouse button* would create ambiguity.

Use *right mouse button*, not other terms such as *mouse button 2* or *secondary mouse button*. Regardless of accuracy, users understand this term and users who reprogram their buttons make the mental shift.

When more than one mouse button is used within a procedure, identify only the least commonly used button.

Microsoft style

With the right mouse button, double-click the icon.

Click the **Badges** tab, and then use the right mouse button to double-click the badge that you want to edit.

Use *wheel button* to refer to the third or middle button on the mouse. Users rotate the wheel itself, and they click the wheel button.


How to refer to mouse pointers

Refer to the mouse pointer as *the pointer*. Use *cursor* only in content for a technical audience.

For pointers that have activity indicators, use *busy pointer* for the pointer that consists of only an activity indicator and *working in background pointer* for the combination pointer and activity indicator.

It is best to use a graphic to describe the various ways the mouse pointer can appear on the screen. If that is not possible, use descriptive labels for mouse pointers. However, do not use a graphic or a descriptive label as a synonym for *pointer*.

Microsoft style

When the pointer becomes a , drag the pointer to move the split line.

When the pointer becomes a double-headed arrow, drag the pointer to move the split line.

Not Microsoft style

When the pointer becomes a double-headed arrow, drag the double-headed arrow to move the split line.

Which verbs to use to refer to mouse actions

In general, use *point to*, not *move the mouse pointer to*. Use the latter only in teaching beginning skills.

Microsoft style

Point to the window border.

Use *click*, not *click on*.

Microsoft style

Using the mouse, click the **Minimize** button.

Click the image to select it.

Use *click* with a file, command, or option name, as in “Click **OK**,” but use *in* to refer to clicking in a general area within a window or dialog box.

Microsoft style

To see the **Control** menu, right-click anywhere in the window.

Click in the window to make it active.

Not Microsoft style

To see the **Control** menu, right-click the window.

Click the **Styles** box.

Always hyphenate *double-click* and *right-click* as verbs.

Microsoft style

Double-click the **Word** icon.

Right-click to see the shortcut menu.

Use *right-click* to mean click with the right mouse button.

Microsoft style

Right-click the selected text, and then click Copy.

- Use *press and hold the mouse button* only to teach beginning skills.
- Use *drag*, not *click and drag*. Use *press and drag* only to teach beginning skills. The *drag* action includes holding down a button while moving the mouse and then releasing the button.
- Use *drag*, not *drag-and-drop*, for the action of moving a document or folder. It is all right to use *drag-and-drop* as an adjective, as in “moving the folder is a drag-and-drop operation.” It is also all right to use *drop* by itself if *drag* is not precise enough. For more information, see *drag*, *drag-and-drop*.

Microsoft style

Drag the folder to the desktop.

Drop your files here.

Use *rotate*, not *roll*, to refer to rotating the wheel button.

Microsoft style

Rotate the wheel button forward to scroll up in the document.

How to document mouse procedures

Be consistent in the way that you list mouse procedures. For example, always list the mouse method before listing the keyboard method if you document both.

Do not combine keyboard and mouse actions as if they were keyboard shortcuts.

Microsoft style

Hold down Shift while clicking the right mouse button.

Not Microsoft style

Shift+click the right mouse button.

Key names

In general, spell key names as they appear in the following list, whether the name appears in text or in a procedure. Capitalize as indicated.



Note This list applies to Microsoft and PC-type keyboards unless otherwise noted. Differences with the Mac keyboard are noted.

Microsoft style

Alt

arrow keys (not *direction keys*, *directional keys*, or *movement keys*)

Backspace

Break

Caps Lock

Clear

Command (the Mac keyboard only. Use the bitmap to show this key whenever possible, because the key is not named on the keyboard.)

Control (the Mac keyboard only. Does not always map to the Ctrl key on the PC keyboard. Use correctly.)

Ctrl

Del (the Mac keyboard only. Use to refer to the forward delete key.)

Delete (Use to refer to the back delete key on the Mac keyboard.)

Down Arrow (Use the definite article *the* and *key* with the arrow keys except in key combinations or key sequences. Always spell out. Do not use graphical arrows.)

End

Enter (On the Mac, use only when functionality requires it.)

Esc (Always use Esc, not Escape, especially on the Mac.)

F1 - F12

Help (the Mac keyboard only. Always use “the HELP key” to avoid confusion with the **Help** button.)

Home

Insert

Left Arrow (Use the definite article *the* and *key* with the arrow keys except in key combinations or key sequences.)

Num Lock

Option (the Mac keyboard only)

Page Down

Page Up

Pause

Print Screen

Reset

Return (the Mac keyboard only)

Right Arrow (Use the definite article *the* and *key* with the arrow keys except in key combinations or key sequences.)

Scroll Lock

Select

Shift

Spacebar (Precede with the definite article *the* except in procedures, key combinations, or key sequences.)

Tab (Use the definite article *the* and *key* except in key combinations or key sequences.)

Up Arrow (Use the definite article *the* and *key* with the arrow keys except in key combinations or key sequences.)

Windows logo key

Spell key names that do not appear in this list as they appear on the keyboard. Use title capitalization.

When telling a user to press a letter key, capitalize the letter. When telling a user to type a letter key, use lowercase for the letter and use bold formatting, unless an uppercase letter is required.

Microsoft style

Press **Y**.

Type **y**.



Note Format punctuation according to intended use. If the user must type the punctuation, use bold formatting. If not, use regular type.

On first mention, you can use the definite article *the* and *key* with the key name if necessary for clarity. For example, use "the F1 key." On subsequent mention, refer to the key only by its name. For example, use "press F1."

For the arrow keys and the Tab key, list only the key name in key combinations without the definite article *the* and *key*.

Microsoft style

To move the insertion point, use the Left Arrow key.

To extend the selection, press Shift+Arrow.

Special character names

Because special character names could be confused with an action (such as +) or be difficult to see, always spell out the following special character names: Plus Sign, Minus Sign, Hyphen, Period, and Comma.

Microsoft style

Shift+Plus Sign

Press Alt, Hyphen, C

Press Comma

Press Command+Period

Type an em dash

Press the Plus Sign (+)

Not Microsoft style

Shift+ +

Shift+ -

Press +.

It is all right to add the symbol in parentheses after the special character to avoid confusion, as in *Plus Sign* (+). This is probably not necessary for commonly used symbols such as *Period* (.).

Names of keyboard “quick access” keys

Terms in current or recent use are listed in the following table. See the specific topics for more details.

Keyboard “quick access” keys

Name	Alternative name	Definition	Audience
Accelerator key		Now obsolete in all uses.	Do not use.
Access key	Keyboard shortcut	Keyboard sequence corresponding to underlined letter on a menu name or command.	Use with a technical audience only. If a term is necessary in documentation for a general audience, use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> .
Application key		Key that opens a shortcut menu containing commands related to a selection in a program. Equivalent to right-clicking the selection.	All
Back key		Key that performs the same action as the Back button in a browser.	All
Forward key		Key that performs the same action as the Forward button in a browser.	All

Name	Alternative name	Definition	Audience
Hot key		Key that activates a TSR (memory-resident program).	Obsolete. Use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> .
Quick key			Do not use.
Shortcut key	Keyboard shortcut	Key that corresponds to a command name on a menu, such as Ctrl+Z.	Use with a technical audience only. If a term is necessary in documentation for a general audience, use <i>keyboard shortcut</i> .
Speed key			Do not use.
Start key		Key that opens the Windows Start menu.	All.

Keyboard shortcuts

In most situations, it should be sufficient to refer to a *key combination* or *key sequence* by the keys that make it up. To specify a key combination, use the plus sign between the keys to be pressed. To specify a key sequence, use commas and spaces to indicate the sequence in which the keys must be pressed.

Microsoft style

To undo the last action, press Ctrl+Z.

To open a file, press Alt, F, O.

To show a key combination that includes punctuation that requires use of the Shift key, such as the question mark, add Shift to the combination and give the name or symbol of the shifted key. Using the name of the unshifted key, such as 4 rather than \$, could be confusing to users or even wrong. For example, the ? and / characters are not always shifted keys on every keyboard. However, do spell out the names of the plus and minus signs, hyphen, period, and comma.

Microsoft style

Ctrl+Shift+?

Ctrl+Shift+*

Ctrl+Shift+Comma

Not Microsoft style

Ctrl+Shift+/?

Ctrl+?/?

Ctrl+Shift+8

Ctrl+*/

If you must use a term to describe a keyboard shortcut, use *keyboard shortcut*. In content for software developers or in content that pertains to customizing the user interface, a more specific term such as *key combination* or *key sequence* may be needed.

Content for multiple platforms

With the proliferation in new technologies, writers and editors face new challenges in creating content that is appropriate for devices as diverse as computers, phones, TVs, and game consoles. When you create content that will be published on different devices, you must decide what terminology to use and how to write for screens of various sizes.

Before you start writing content or user interface text that will appear on different devices, consult with designers, developers, and localizers on your project to establish the guiding principles that will be used to govern the design, user flows, and user interface text. Ensure that everyone is working from the same frame of reference. Examples of guiding design principles include the following:

- There will be virtually no differences among the user interfaces of various devices.
- There will be some differences in the user interfaces to ensure that the user isn't confused about where to perform actions.
- There will be a number of differences in the user interface to accommodate the various devices.

After the design principles have been established, consider the following guidelines when writing the content:

- Be as specific as possible when referring to the device being used. For example, if you're talking about a phone, and only a phone, use *phone*. Don't use *device*, especially if you are writing content for a general audience.
- If your content refers to more than one device, such as a phone and a computer, *device* is most likely the appropriate term.
- Decide how you will document device-specific user interactions when the user interface or user action varies across devices. For example, you might use a table, as in the following example.

To spin 180 degrees

On this device	Do this
Xbox	Press Y .
PC	Click Spin .
Phone	Tap Y .

For more information about documenting alternative procedures, see *Chapter 6, "Procedures and technical content."*

User interface (UI) text appears on UI surfaces such as dialog boxes, property sheets, buttons, and wizards. User interface text is as important to the overall design of a product or service as its functionality is. UI text is the most direct means that you have of communicating with your users. Therefore, your text must be clear and helpful. And although UI text must be short, it must still follow the same voice and tone guidelines as any other content. In addition, if your content will be localized, the text must allow for text expansion, which can be as high as 30 percent for some languages. That's the challenge that UI text poses—maintaining clarity and a consistent voice, while working within the unique constraints of the user interface.

This topic contains a brief list of guidelines and a checklist to help you develop great UI text. For more detailed information about writing UI text, see the extended discussion of UI text on the User Interface Text page of the *Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines* on MSDN (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa511258.aspx>).

If you only do six things

1. Start writing UI text early, because UI text problems often reveal product or service design problems.
2. Think like a customer and ensure that you understand the entire workflow process:
 - How do customers get to this surface?
 - What is the essential information that they need to accomplish the task on this surface?
 - Where are they going from here?
3. Design your text for scanning. For more information, see the Layout page of the *Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines* on MSDN.
4. Be concise, eliminate redundant text, and don't over-communicate. Too much text discourages reading.
5. Provide links to Help content for more detailed information only when necessary. Don't rely on Help to solve a design problem.
6. Use a consistent voice and consistent terminology across the product or service. For more information, see *Chapter 1, "Microsoft style and voice."*

High-level UI text checklist

- Is the text that describes the flow to and from the given UI surface logical? For more information, see the *Windows User Experience Interaction Guidelines* on MSDN.
- Is the point of the UI surface clear?
- Did you provide enough information for users to make a smart decision? Can they scan the text and still be successful?
- Did you use plain, straightforward words that your audience will understand?
- Did you use terms consistently? Is the voice consistent? For more information, see *Chapter 1, "Microsoft style and voice."*
- Could you use fewer words while still ensuring that the customer will succeed?
- Is the UI text easy to localize? Will the text still work with the visual design if the text were to be 30 percent longer after translation?
- Does the text inspire users' confidence that they can complete the task at hand?

User interface formatting

Consistent text formatting helps users locate and interpret information easily. Nowhere is this more important than in helping users navigate program user interfaces. For user interface elements, follow the capitalization and bold formatting guidelines in the following sections. For formatting conventions of elements that are not part of the user interface, see *Document conventions* (Chapter 6).

Capitalization

Use the following capitalization guidelines for user interface elements:

- For menu names, command names, command button names, dialog box titles, and tab names, follow the capitalization of the user interface. If the user interface is inconsistent, use title capitalization.
- For dialog box and page elements, follow the capitalization of the user interface. Current style calls for these items to use sentence-style capitalization. If the interface is inconsistent, use sentence-style capitalization.
- For functional elements that do not have a label in the user interface, such as toolbars (the **Standard** toolbar) and toolbar buttons (the **Insert Table** button), use title capitalization. However, do not capitalize the element type such as toolbar, button, menu, scroll bar, and icon.
- For labels in the interface that are all lowercase or all uppercase, title capitalization is recommended.

Always consult your project style sheet for terms that require specific capitalization or for terms that are traditionally all uppercase or all lowercase.

Bold formatting

In general, use bold formatting for user interface elements, both in procedures and in other text in instructional content. An exception is in content designed to generate interest, such as presales materials or overview content on the web, or if following this guidance would make content unreadable, it is all right not to use bold formatting for UI elements. When in doubt, consult your project style sheet.

Microsoft style

The Word 2010 ribbon has such tabs as the **Home** tab, the **Insert** tab, and the **Page Layout** tab.

On the **Home** tab, in the **Clipboard** group, click **Copy**.

Do not use bold formatting for feature names unless the user must click the feature name.

For more information, see *Controls; Document conventions* (Chapter 6); *Ribbons, menus, and toolbars; Procedures* (Chapter 6).

Microsoft style

When the Track Changes feature is turned on, you can view all changes that you make in a document.

On the **Review** tab, in the **Tracking** group, click **Track Changes**.

With Remote Desktop Connection, you can connect to your work computer from your home computer.

To open Remote Desktop Connection, click **Start**, point to **All Programs**, click **Accessories**, and then click **Remote Desktop Connection**.

Not Microsoft style

When the **Track Changes** feature is turned on, you can view all of the changes that you make in a document.

With **Remote Desktop Connection**, you can connect to your work computer from your home computer.

To open **Remote Desktop Connection**, click **Start**, point to **All Programs**, click **Accessories**, and then click **Remote Desktop Connection**.

Use the following bold formatting guidelines for user interface elements. For some elements, special capitalization guidance is also mentioned.

Element	Convention	Example
Button names	Bold.	On the Standard toolbar, click Toolbox . On the Debug toolbar, click Immediate .
Commands on menus, toolbars, and ribbons	Bold.	On the View menu, point to Other Windows , and then click Solution Explorer . On the Outlining toolbar, select the level that you want in the Outline Level box. On the Review tab, in the Comments group, click New Comment .
Dialog box options	Bold.	In the Find and Replace dialog box, type the text that you want Word to search for in the Find what box. Click the More button to display more options. If All is not selected in the Search box, click the arrow next to the Search box, and then click All . Click the Replace tab, and then type the text that you want Word to replace in the Replace with box. Click to select the Match case and Find whole words only check boxes.
Dialog box titles	Bold.	You can also set a document's password in the Protect Document dialog box. You can add text entries in the AutoCorrect dialog box.
File names (system-defined)	Bold in procedures if the user must click the file name or type the name as shown. Capitalization follows that of the user interface unless the name is all uppercase or all lowercase. If the name of the file is all uppercase or all lowercase, use title capitalization.	Double-click the Scanpst.exe file to open the Inbox Repair Tool. The SignedManagedObject.cer file The Iexplore.exe file (IEXPLORE in UI) The Acwzmain.mdb file (ACWZMAIN.mdb in UI)
Folder and directory names (system-defined)	Bold in procedures if the user must click the folder or directory name or type the name as shown. Capitalization follows that of the user interface unless the name is all uppercase or all lowercase. If the name of the folder or directory is all uppercase or all lowercase, use title capitalization, unless the folder or directory name is named in part or wholly after an acronym. Then, keep the acronym part of the name in uppercase letters.	Click the Music folder. The Microsoft shared folder (microsoft shared in UI) The Errorrep folder (ERRORREP in the UI) The PCHealth folder (PCHEALTH in the UI) The OEM folder
Icon names	Usually bold. Treatment may vary, so always consult your project style sheet.	Drag the file to the Recycle Bin . In Control Panel, click Add New Hardware .
List names	Bold.	In the Wallpaper list, click...
Menu names	Bold.	Debug menu Favorites menu

Element	Convention	Example
Panes, named	Usually bold only when clicking a command. Treatment may vary, so always consult your project style sheet.	If you don't see the navigation pane on the left side of an open window, click Organize , point to Layout , and then click Navigation pane to display it. When the Navigation Pane is open, you can close it to increase your workspace.
Panes, unnamed or generic use	Sentence capitalization.	The navigation pane The annotation pane
Tab names	Bold.	Click the View tab.
Toolbar names	Usually bold. Treatment may vary, so always consult your project style sheet.	On the Data Designer toolbar, click Relationship . On the Text To Speech toolbar, click the command that you want to use.
Views, named	Bold only when clicking a command.	Switch to Design view by right-clicking the form, and then clicking Design View .
Views, unnamed	Sentence capitalization.	In outline view In chart view
Windows, named	Usually bold. Treatment may vary, so always consult your project style sheet.	Copy and paste the code from the Immediate window into the Code window. Double-click the table to open the Database Properties window.
Windows, unnamed	Sentence capitalization.	In the document window
Wizard names	Bold only if clicked.	On the Create tab, in the Forms group, click More Forms , and then click Form Wizard . The Form Wizard can create a variety of results depending on the options that you select
Wizard page names	Bold.	On the Identify Fact and Dimension Tables page, the fact and dimension tables identified by the wizard are displayed.