

# IDG Style Guide

Last Updated: February 1, 2002

The IDG Style Guide can help you to make style and design choices in your documentation. Not every possible instance is covered, but the guidelines presented here should help you in making a decision.

The [PDF version of the Style Guide](#) is also available. Also, you can get the Developer Quick Guides for Writing [API documentation](#), [GUI documentation](#), and the [Writer's Quick Guide for Writing GUI Documentation](#).

If you need more help, you can consult the *Microsoft Manual of Style for Technical Publications*.

If you find anything missing, incorrect, or outdated, please create a Bug at <http://bugs.nextpage.int> and assign it to IDG. Be sure to state what needs to be added or changed, and what document you are referring to.

## Conventions

Lowercase entries represent words as words (except in cases where the word must be capitalized). These entries are also always singular. For example, the entry for "above" is lowercase because it deals with using the word "above" in documentation.

On the other hand, uppercase entries deal with guidelines. These entries are also always plural. For example, the entry for Punctuation Guidelines deals with some basic rules for using punctuation in documentation.

So, the entry for makefile is lowercase and singular because it deals with using the word "makefile" in documentation. There could also be an entry for Makefiles that dealt with how to make and use makefiles to create content collections of your documentation.

As far as possible, given the above information, the appropriate style has been applied to this Guide. If you find a discrepancy, report it to the person responsible for maintaining the guide.

# Document Information and Copyright Notice

Document Name	Version	Date
IDG Style Guide	1.1	February 1, 2002

## Copyright Notice

Information in this content collection is subject to change without notice and does not represent a commitment on the part of NextPage, Inc. The software described in this document is provided under a license agreement. The software may be used or copied only in accordance with the terms of the license agreement. It is illegal to copy the software on any medium except as specifically allowed in the license agreement. No part of this manual or any other peripheral documents may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, for any purpose without the express written permission of NextPage, Inc.

NextPage, NXT, NextPage RapidApps, NextPage Application Framework, NAF, LivePublish, and Folio are trademarks or licensed trademarks of NextPage, Inc. or its subsidiaries. All other names are used for identification purposes only and may be trademarks of their respective owners.

The following companies have licensed for inclusion in this software the technology which is copyrighted by their respective companies:

Contains security software from RSA Data Security, Inc. Copyright© 1998 RSA Data Security, Inc.

XML Parser, Copyright© 1999 The Apache Software Foundation

IBM Classes for Unicode, Copyright© 1999, International Business Machines Corporation and others. All Rights Reserved.

Microsoft (R) is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corporation.

Published and printed in the USA.

Copyright© 2001 NextPage, Inc. All rights reserved.

NextPage, Inc.

3125 West Executive Park Way

Lehi, UT 84043

U.S.A.

# Acronyms

**Note:** Technically, an "acronym" is a pronounceable word, an "abbreviation" is a shortened form of a word, and an "initialism" is an abbreviation formed from the initial letters of words in a phrase, pronounced as individual letters (for example, "SDK"). In this guide, "acronym" is used to refer to all of them.

Spell out acronyms on first use in each document or topic unless the acronym is widely understood or spelling it out doesn't say anything (for example, "Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM)" doesn't help anyone. Just use "ATM").

Common acronyms that do not need to be expanded can be found in the [Common Acronyms](#) document.

Start with the spelled out version, then include the acronym in parentheses. However, in document titles you can use acronyms without spelling them out first. You should spell them out on the first use in the main text of the topic.

Plural acronyms are created by adding an "s" (no apostrophe). See [Plurals](#).

Do not use the same abbreviation for two or more terms in the same document (for example, do not use "ATM" to refer to the networking protocol and a machine where you can get money).

Do not use more than one abbreviation for the same term in the same document (for example, do not use "LN" and "LNotes"). Choose one and stick with it.

Do not apply wording that repeats the wording that has been abbreviated (for example, don't say ATM machine because the M stands for machine).

## Correct

The Lotus Notes (LN) database.

## See Also

[Capitalization Guidelines](#)

[FAQ](#)

[GUI](#)

[Acronym Finder](#): a web site that lets you type in and search for acronyms and their definitions.

## abort

Do not use "abort" except for technical documentation, where you can use it if referring to a function name, parameter name, or part of a name in an API. Use "quit" for programs and "end" for communications and network connections. Use "stop" for hardware operations. Use another appropriate word in other situations.

## Correct

To end your server connection, click **Disconnect Network Drive** on the **Tools** menu.

Quit all programs before you turn off your computer.

To stop a print job before it's finished, click Cancel.

The PHW\_CANCEL\_SRB routine is called when the minidriver should cancel a request with STATUS\_CANCELLED.

## See Also

end

quit

## above

Do not use "above" to mean earlier in a book or online document; use "previous", "preceding", "earlier", or something more specific instead. You can also use "earlier" to refer to a chapter or section heading. Do not use "above" as an adjective preceding a noun, as in "the above section".

See upper for information about directional usage.

To show a cross-reference to another Web page, use a specific HTML hyperlink. Do not make assumptions about the user's path through a site. Even if you refer to a location on the same scrollable Web page, make the reference itself a link. Do not use "above".

## Incorrect

You obtained these values in Step 2 above.

## Correct

You obtained these values in Step 2.

See "Connecting to the Network," earlier in this chapter.

## See Also

Cross References

Directional Terms

## access key

The "access key" is the underlined letter of a menu command. Use this phrase only in documentation about customizing the interface, otherwise just say "underlined letter".

## Correct

To change the access key defined for a menu item, go to the **Preferences** menu.

Type the underlined letter of a menu option to select that option when using the keyboard.

## Active Voice Uses

Active voice is the preferred voice in documentation.

### See Also

[Active Voice vs. Passive Voice](#)

[Passive Voice Uses](#)

[Voice Guidelines](#)

## Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

Active voice is preferred in documentation because our documentation focuses on providing steps for performing a task. This is inherently an "active" process.

### See Also

[Active Voice Uses](#)

[Passive Voice Uses](#)

[Voice Guidelines](#)

## affect vs. effect

"Affect" is the verb form and "effect" is the noun form.

### Correct

Late software can affect a schedule adversely.

One effect of late software is schedule slippage.

## Ampersand (&)

Do not use an ampersand (&) in place of the word "and".

## and/or

Do not use this style. Rewrite to make clear and explicit. In many cases, you can just use "or" because the meaning is understood.

### Correct

You can save the document under its current name or under a new name.

Will the new version contain information both on how to write object-oriented code and use the class libraries or just one?

## Apostrophes

See [Plurals](#).

## backup (noun), back up (verb)

Use "backup" when describing the concept or result, and "back up" when talking about the process.

### Correct:

Back up the files before you turn off the computer, and save the backup on a floppy disk.

## below

See [lower](#) for information about directional usage.

See [above](#) for information about other usage.

## Bold Uses

The word "bold" can be used as a noun, adjective, or verb.

Here are the elements that should be bolded in documentation:

- options
- field names/labels
- menu names
- menu options
- toolbar button names
- buttons
- desktop icon names

## See Also

[button](#)

[Document Conventions](#)

[Headings](#)

[menu item](#)

## Boolean

"Boolean" is always capitalized.

Boolean operators are in all caps (AND, OR).

## See Also

Logical Operators in Document Conventions

## **boot**

See start or restart.

## **box**

Use "field", not "box", except for "check box".

### **See Also**

field

check box

Check box in Dialog Box Elements

## **browser**

See Web browser.

### **See Also**

Web

## **Builder**

Do not use "Builder" to refer to the utility. Use "NextPage Application Framework Build Utilities" or "NAF Build Utilities" instead.

**Note:** This name is changing, so stay tuned.

If you need to point to the documentation for NAF Build Utilities Help, just use text directing the user to the "NextPage Application Framework Build Utilities Help file" since the content collection may not be installed on the server.

### **See Also**

Cross References

## **button**

Use "the <ButtonName> button" around the button name if needed for clarity. Keep "button" lowercase, as in "the **Cancel** button".

Bold button names, using the ButtonName tag.

Buttons may be dimmed or unavailable.

When documenting buttons that use ellipses, don't put the ellipses in the documentation. Similarly, do not include and other punctuation used along with button name. For example, do not include a ">" or "<" with the button name.

## Incorrect

Click the **Profiles >>** button.



Click **Options...**

Click the **Cancel** field.

## Correct

Click the **Profiles** button

Click **Options**.

Click the **Cancel** button.



## See Also

[Bold Uses](#)

[Command button](#) in "Dialog Box Elements"

[Unfold button](#) in "Dialog Box Elements"

[Document Conventions](#)

[OK](#)

## can vs. may

"Can": able to do something.

"May": show possibilities or an unknown result.

## See Also

[may vs. might](#)

[should](#)

[want vs. desire vs. wish](#)



## cannot

One word. Use instead of "can't".

## See Also

Contractions

## Capitalization Guidelines

Do NOT use capitalization for emphasis (this sentence is an example of how not to do it). Use italics or quotation marks instead.

Do not capitalize the spelled out form of an acronym (unless a word is a proper noun).

Use *book title capitalization* for all headings and subheadings.

Use *book title capitalization* in referencing the following interface elements: menu names, command and button names, toolbar buttons and toolbar names, dialog and window titles, tab names.

Use *sentence capitalization* for the following: field names, table headings.

Some words are always capitalized or have capitalization that is important to follow: Boolean, CD-ROM, FAQ, GUI, Internet, Net, NextPage, OK, Unix, Web, wizard (or Wizard).

## See Also

Document Conventions

File Extensions

Keyboard Keys

Readme Files

URLs

## CD-ROM

Use "CD-ROM" when referring to the computer disk. Don't spell out this acronym. Don't use "CD".

## See Also

disc

## cell phone

Use "cell phone" instead of "cellular phone" in documentation.

**Note:** You may need to distinguish between cell phones and wireless phones.

## check box

Two words.

Users "select" or "clear" check boxes (not "turn on" and "turn off", "mark" and "unmark", "check" and "uncheck", or "select" and "deselect").

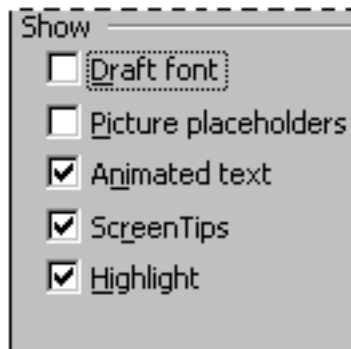
Also, use the identifier "check box", not just "box", to refer to this option, because "box" alone is ambiguous for localizers.

Check boxes can also be dimmed, unavailable, and shaded.

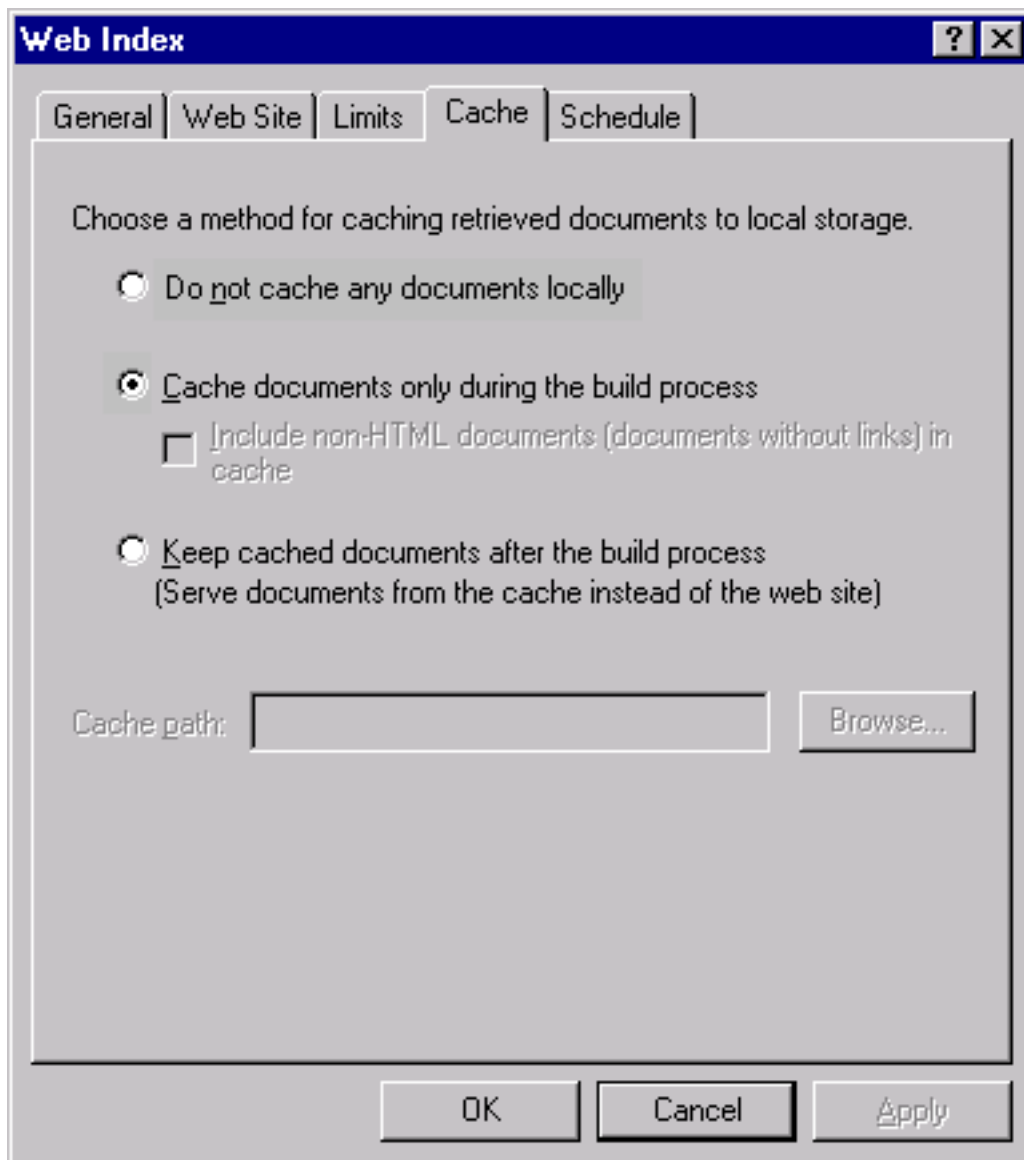
### Correct

The **Animated text**, **ScreenTips**, and **Highlight** check boxes are selected.

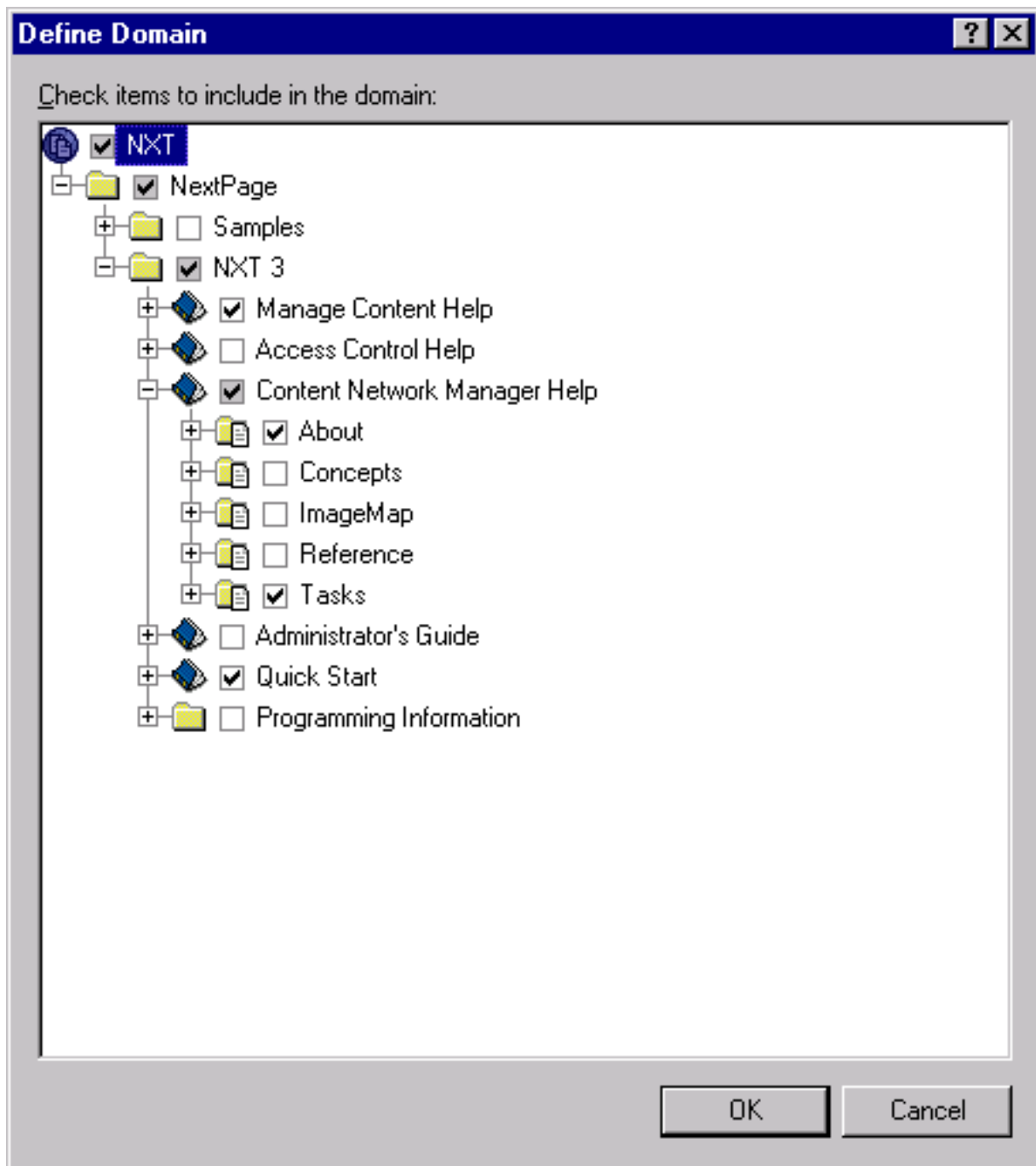
The **Draft font** and **Picture placeholders** check boxes have been cleared.



The **Include non-HTML documents (documents without links) in cache** check box is unavailable. Because it is unavailable, the check box appears dimmed.



The check boxes in the **Check items to include in the domain** area that are shaded indicate that some, but not all, of the child content is selected.



## See Also

[clear and select](#)

[Check box](#) in "Dialog Box Elements".

[Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines](#)

[Screen Terminology Guidelines](#)

## choose vs. click

Users "choose" menu items.

They "click" everything else.

### See Also

[check box](#)

[clear and select](#)

[click](#)

[Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines](#)

[menu item](#)

[mouse](#)

## clear and select

Use these terms to refer to putting a checkmark inside a check box.

Don't use "check" and "uncheck" or "mark" and "unmark".

### See Also

[check box](#)

[choose vs. click](#)

[click](#)

[Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines](#)

[dimmed](#)

## click

Use "click" rather than "choose" or "select" for everything except menu items.

Users "click" the button, not "click on" the button or "click at" the button. However, users click *in* windows and text boxes.

**Note:** It is acceptable to omit the step "Click **OK**." at the end of a task if the interface makes it clear that clicking the button is necessary to complete the procedure.

Use "double click" as a noun, and "double-click" as a verb.

If a user can set an option to use either a single click or a double click, use the default mode when documenting a feature. But do explain the various options in Help and in the user's guide.

### See Also

choose vs. click

clear and select

Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines

mouse

## **close**

Use "close" when referring to windows, documents, or dialogs.

abort

boot

end

start

quit

## **collapse**

Use with "expand" for opening or closing a tree node.

## **Colons**

Use a "colon" only when the preceding phrase is a complete sentence.

Use an initial capital for the word that follows the colon in the following situations:

- The word following the colon is a proper noun.
- A quotation follows the colon.
- The colon is used prior to an ordered or unordered list.
- The text after the colon consists of more than one sentence (when the sentences are directly related to the introductory phrase for the colon).

In all other cases, use lowercase.

Use periods instead of colons in figure or table introductions or captions.

## **See Also**

Commas

Lists

Sentence Structure Suggestions

## **command prompt**

Not "MS-DOS prompt" or "DOS prompt".

# Commas

"Commas" signal a small interruption in the sentence.

Use a comma with any of the following:

- With "which", but not with "that" clauses.

## **Correct**

This is the document that I wrote. (Meaning here is the document, and it is important to know that I wrote it).

This is the document, which I wrote. (Meaning here is a document, and oh, by the way, I wrote it).

## **Incorrect**

This is the document which I wrote.

- After most introductory phrases (the comma can sometimes be omitted with short sentences).
- To separate items in a series of three or more items. Put a comma before the conjunction when the conjunction precedes the final item.
- Between two main clauses (complete sentences) that are separated by a coordinating conjunction ("and", "or", "but", "not", "nor", "for", "so", and "yet"). Notice that "then" is not a coordinating conjunction. Add a coordinating conjunction, or use a semicolon, to connect independent clauses with "then".

## **See Also**

Colons

Sentence Structure Suggestions

that vs. which

then

## **computer**

Not "PC", "machine", or "box".

## **Contractions**

Avoid using contractions in documentation.

## **See Also**

cannot

## **cookie**

Always lowercase (unless it starts a sentence).

## **Cross References**

Generally, cross references will be to other content collections, Web sites, or topics within the current content collection. In these cases, the part that is the link is not stylized in any special way aside from the style created by the Link tag.

Use quotation marks around cross references to sections or chapters in other works when the text is not a link.

Use italics for references to entire works when the words are not a link.

## **See Also**

Builder

Document Conventions

Italics

Links

Quotation Marks

URL

## **Dashes**

Since the m-dash and n-dash do not translate well to HTML, use two dashes when you want to represent either of these typographical symbols.

Avoid using a dash to set off a parenthetical phrase (use commas or parentheses instead) or in a list where the first word is being defined (use a comma, period, or colon instead).

## **Incorrect**

The program--a new one from NextPage--is very useful.

Build--the process of making a content collection.

## **Correct**

The program, a new one from NextPage, is very useful.

Build: the process of making a content collection.

## **See Also**

Colons

Commas



Hyphens

Lists

## **data**

"Data" travels *over*, not *through*.

Never pluralize to "datum".

## **demo**

No need to spell out to "demonstration". Use "demo'd", "demoing", and "show a demo", but not "to demo".

## **desire**

See want vs. desire vs. wish.

## **desktop**

Lowercase.

## **Dialog Box Elements**

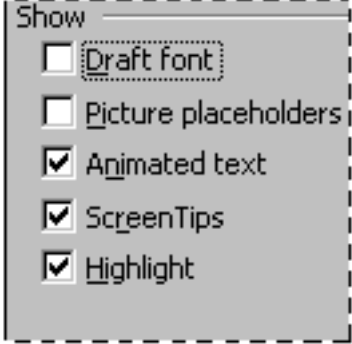


In most documentation, especially for end users, do not differentiate between elements such as drop-down lists, combo boxes, and so on. Everything is basically a field.

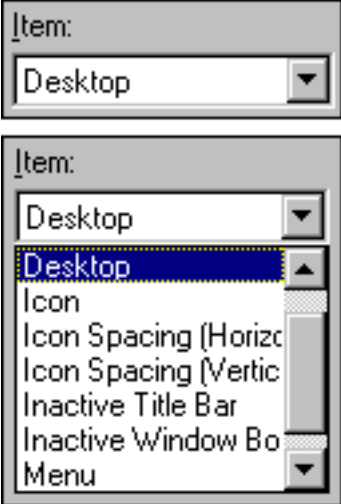
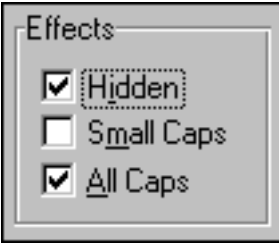


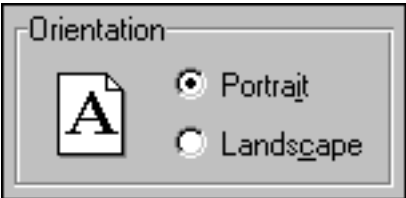
In general, do not use the name of the particular element in documentation except in reference to designing interfaces. However, use the terms "check box", "tab", or "slider" after their respective elements. Use lowercase for the name of the element ("the **Spaces** check box"). Use sentence caps for the specific field label, but follow the interface (for example, "the **Show only indexed attachments** option button").

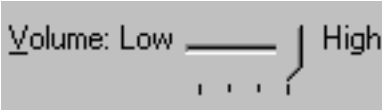
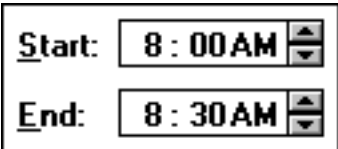
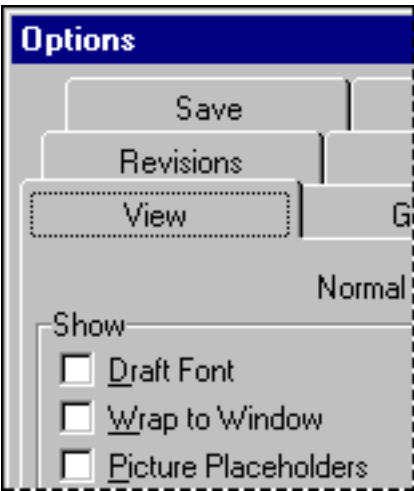

"Button" and "option button" are also okay to use if the context warrants the need to be more specific.



Use "unavailable" if an option is not able to be selected (commonly referred to as "grayed out").

The following table describes the various elements that can appear in dialog boxes:

Element Name	Definition	Usage	Example
Check box	<p>Square box that is selected or cleared to turn on or off an option. More than one check box can be selected.</p> <p>Check boxes can also be dimmed, shaded, or unavailable.</p>	<p>Select the <b>Spaces</b> check box.</p> <p>Click to clear the <b>Bookmarks</b> check box.</p> <p>Select the appropriate check boxes.</p>	
Command button (referred to as "button", if at all)	<p>Rectangular button that initiates an action.</p> <p>A command button label ending with ellipses indicates that another dialog box will appear: More information is needed before the action can be completed.</p>	<p>Click <b>Options</b>.</p> <p>Click the <b>Cancel</b> button.</p>	
Drop-down arrow	<p>Arrow associated with a drop-down list or some toolbar buttons, indicating a list the user can view by clicking the arrow.</p>	<p>Click the <b>Size</b> arrow to see more options.</p>	

<p>Drop-down list</p>	<p>Closed version of a list box with an arrow next to it. Clicking the arrow opens the list.</p>	<p>In the <b>Item</b> drop-down list, click <b>Desktop</b>.</p>	
<p>Group box</p>	<p>Frame or box that encloses a set of related options. It is a visual device only.</p>	<p>Under <b>Effects</b>, click <b>Small Caps</b>.  In the <b>Effects</b> area, click <b>Small Caps</b>.</p>	
<p>Label</p>	<p>Text attached to any option, box, command, and so on. Refer to any option, box, and so on by its label.</p>	<p>In the <b>Font</b> field, click <b>Arial</b>.</p>	
<p>List</p>	<p>Any type of box containing a list of items the user can choose. The user cannot type a selection in a list box.</p>	<p>In the <b>Wallpaper</b> field, choose the background wallpaper of your choice.</p>	
<p>Option button</p>	<p>Round button used to select one of a group of mutually exclusive options.</p>	<p>Click <b>Portrait</b>.</p>	

Slider	Indicator on a gauge that displays and sets a value from a continuous range, such as speed, brightness, or volume.	Move the <b>Volume</b> slider to the right to increase the volume.	 <p>A volume control slider with the text 'Volume: Low' on the left and 'High' on the right. A vertical line indicates the current volume level, positioned approximately three-quarters of the way from 'Low' to 'High'.</p>
Spin box	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 <b>Date</b> field, type or select the part of the date you want to change.	 <p>Two date spin boxes. The first is labeled 'Start:' and contains '8 : 00 AM'. The second is labeled 'End:' and contains '8 : 30 AM'. Both boxes have small up and down arrows on their right sides.</p>
Tab	Labeled group of options used for many similar kinds of settings.	On the <b>Tools</b> menu, click <b>Options</b> , and then click the <b>View</b> tab.	 <p>A dialog box titled 'Options' with a blue header. It contains several tabs: 'Save', 'Revisions', 'View' (which is selected and highlighted with a dashed border), and 'Normal'. Below the tabs, there is a 'Show' section with three checkboxes: 'Draft Font', 'Wrap to Window', and 'Picture Placeholders', all of which are currently unchecked.</p>
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 <b>Size</b> field, select 10 or type a new font size.  In the <b>Size</b> field, enter a font size.	 <p>A rectangular text box containing the number '10', representing a font size.</p>

Title	Title of the dialog box. It usually, but not always, matches the title of the command name.	In the Options dialog box, click the <b>View</b> tab.	
Unfold button	Command button with two "greater than" signs (>>) that enlarges a secondary window to reveal more options or information.	Click <b>Profiles</b> for more information.	

## See Also

[button](#)

[check box](#)

[Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines](#)

[dialog vs. dialog box](#)

[dimmed](#)

[drop-down list](#)

[field](#)

[group box](#)

[label](#)

[Lists](#)

[option button](#)

[shaded](#)

[slider](#)

[tab](#)

[text box](#)

[unavailable](#)

[window](#)

## Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines

"Click": Use for commands, command buttons, option buttons, and options in a list, gallery, or palette.

"Select" and "clear": Use for check boxes.

"Type or choose": Use to refer to an item (as in a list box) that the user can either type or choose in the accompanying text box.

Except for the identifiers "field", "button", "check box", and "tab", the generic name of an item within a dialog box (list, option, and so on) should not follow the item's label, especially within procedures. "Check box" in particular helps localizers differentiate this item from other option boxes.

Use bold for field labels, button labels, tab labels, and options.

### See Also

[choose vs. click](#)

[clear and select](#)

[click](#)

[close](#)

[collapse](#)

[Dialog Box Elements](#)

[drag](#)

[enter](#)

[enter vs. type](#)

[expand](#)

[mouse](#)

[Screen Terminology Guidelines](#)

## dialog versus dialog box

Use "dialog box".

Refer to the dialog box by its title when necessary, especially if the user needs to go to a new tab.

### Correct

In the Options dialog box, click the **View** tab.



## See Also

Title in "Dialog Box Elements"

Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines

## dialup (adjective), dial (verb)

Do not add "up" to the verb form.

## dimmed

Use "dimmed" or "appears dimmed" (not "grayed") to describe the *appearance* of a command or option that is unavailable.

## See Also

check box

shaded

## Directional Terms

Hyphenate directional terms when they are used as adjectives.

## See Also

left

right

upper

lower

## disc

Use this spelling when referring to a CD or CD-ROM.

In general, do not use "disc" in possessive constructions.

disc

## disk

In general, use this spelling of "disk" to refer to both hard disks and floppy disks. Do not use "diskette".

Unless necessary, use just "disk", not "hard disk", "floppy disk", or "3.5-inch disk". Do not use fractions or symbols when specifying a disk; use decimals and spell out inch.

In general, do not use "disk" in possessive constructions, such as "disk's contents" or "disk's name"; instead, use "disk contents" or "disk name".

disc

## Document Conventions

Consistent use of typographic conventions in documentation helps users locate and interpret information easily. The following guidelines present some specific typographic conventions:

Item	Convention	Example
Accessory programs	Title caps	Heap Walker Nmake Notepad
Acronyms	All uppercase (unless standardized differently)	CUA FIFO modem
Attributes	Bold; capitalization varies	<b>IfOutputPrecision</b>
Book titles	Title caps, italic. Use the BookReference tag.	See the <i>Visual Basic Custom Control Reference</i> .
Chapter titles	Title caps, in quotation marks	See Chapter 9, "Extending Forms".
Code samples, including keywords and variables within text and as separate paragraphs, and user-defined program elements within text	Monospace, using the CodeInText or CodeSample tags	<pre>#include &lt;iostream.h&gt; void main () the pointer psz</pre>
Command-line commands and options (switches)	All lowercase, bold. Use the CommandParameter or CommandOption tag.	<b>copy</b> command <b>/a</b> parameter



Commands on menus and buttons	Bold; capitalization follows interface (usually title caps). Use the MenuName, MenuOption, or ButtonName tag.	<b>Date and Time</b> <b>Apply</b> <b>New Query</b> button
Dialog box options	Bold; capitalization follows interface. Use the FieldName, OptionName, and TabName tags.	Click <b>Close all programs and log on as a different user?</b> <b>Find Entire Cells Only</b> check box
Dialog box titles	Title caps. Use the WindowTitle tag.	Protect Document dialog box Import/Export Setup dialog box
Directories	Initial caps (internal caps are acceptable for readability). Use the FileName tag.	\\Irstaxforms\Public\IRSTaxForms\Public
Extensions	Match file extension case in system (for Windows, it's okay to just use lowercase)	.mdb .doc
File names	Match file name case in system (for Windows, it's okay to use initial caps or to use internal caps to aid readability). Use the FileName tag.	My Taxes for 1995 Msacc20.ini MSAcc20.ini
Icon names	Bold; title caps	<b>Recycle Bin</b> In the Control Panel window, click <b>Add New Hardware</b> .
Key names, key combinations, and key sequences	Initial caps. Use the KeyboardKey tag.	Ctrl+Tab Shift, F7 Alt, F, O

Logical operators	All uppercase	AND XOR
Menu names	Bold; title caps. Use MenuName.	<b>Insert</b> menu
Emphasis or terms used in a different way than the reader is accustomed (if the word appears in the glossary, simply do a GlossaryLink instead)	Italic	You <i>must</i> close the window before you exit. You may think of the items in a database as <i>records</i> . This is the <i>build</i> or <i>index</i> phase.
Words used as words	Quotation marks	Do not use an ampersand to represent the word "and". Use "back up" to refer to the process of making a backup.
Placeholders (in syntax and in user input)	Use a beginning and ending angle bracket (< and >) around the placeholder	<InstallPath>\Templates\ENU directory Type <password> http://<YourServer>/NXT/gateway.dll?f=templates\$fn=<YourDefaultPage.htm>
Toolbar button names	Usually title caps (follow the interface); bold. Use ButtonName.	<b>Format Painter</b> <b>Insert Microsoft Excel Worksheet</b>
URLs	Match case; break long URLs after a forward slash, if necessary; do not hyphenate. The protocol name can be omitted when telling someone to connect. Leave off end slashes, but code into links.	http://www.microsoft.com seattle.sidewalk.com /music www.microsoft.com
Windows, named	Title caps. Use WindowTitle.	Help window

Windows, unnamed	All lowercase. Do not use WindowTitle.	document window
Values	Quotation marks	???
Constants	Use CodeInText	???

## See Also

Bold Uses

Capitalization Guidelines

Italics

New Meanings for Existing Terms

Quotation Marks

## download

One word.

## drag

Use "drag" instead of "click and drag". For beginners, use "press and hold the mouse button".

## See Also

click

mouse

## drop-down list

Use "drop-down list", not just "drop-down".

Drop-down lists may be dimmed or unavailable.

Differentiate between versions that allow users to enter text as well as select from the list in the explanation of the task, using "type or choose", or something similar.

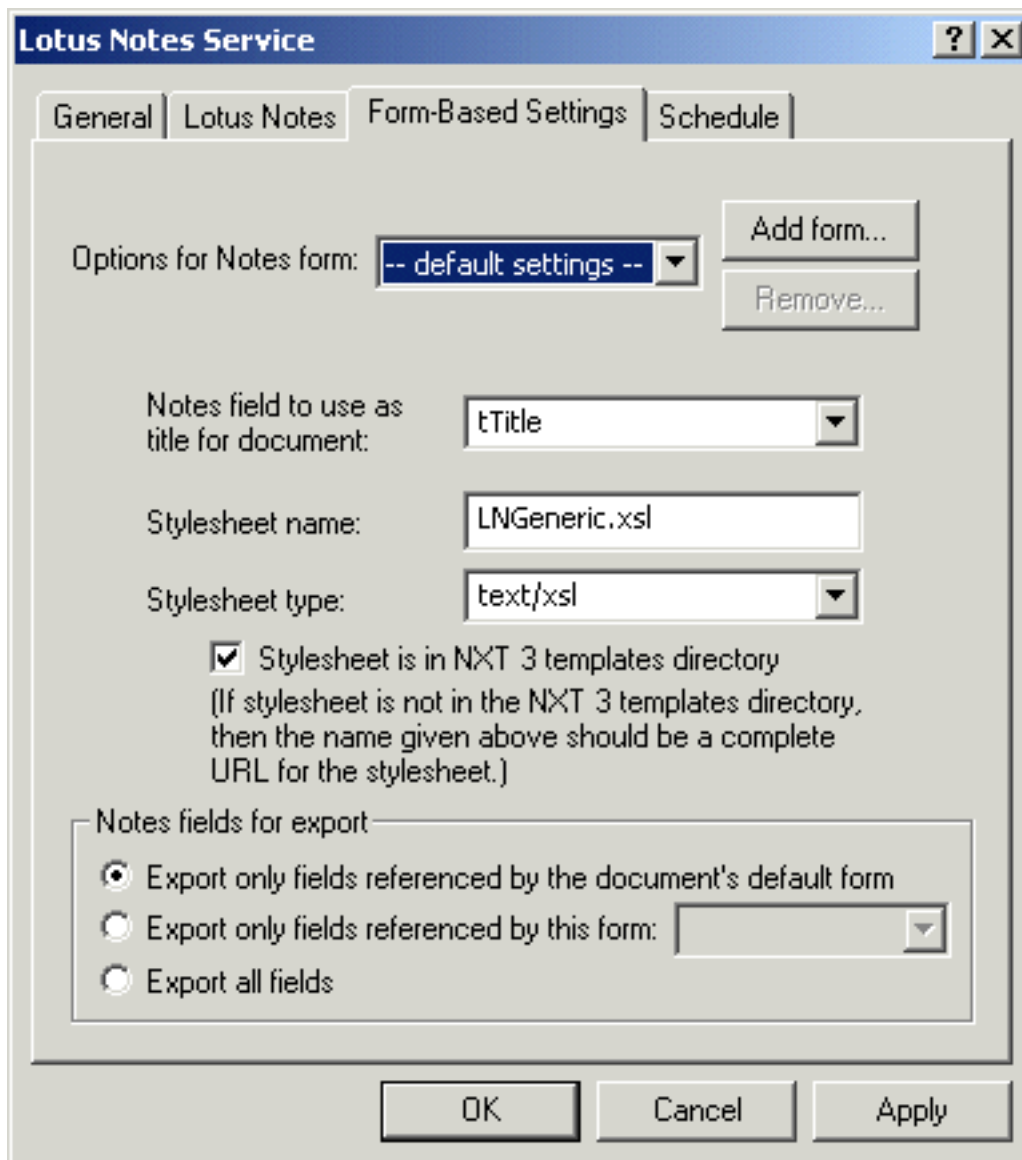
## Correct

In the **Item** drop-down list, choose **Desktop**.

Item:  
Desktop

Item:  
Desktop  
Desktop  
Icon  
Icon Spacing (Horiz  
Icon Spacing (Vertic  
Inactive Title Bar  
Inactive Window Bo  
Menu

Type or choose a value for **Notes** field to use as title for document.



## See Also

[choose vs. click](#)

[Drop-down list](#) in "Dialog Box Elements"

## effect

See [affect vs. effect](#).

## eg.

Don't use.

Use "for example" instead.

## **either/or**

Do not use. Fill out the construction.

### **Correct**

You can either close the document or quit the program.

## **end**

Use "end" to refer to communications and network connections.

### **See Also**

[abort](#)

[close](#)

[quit](#)

## **email**

Use "email", not "e-mail" or "E-mail".

## **Emphasis Guidelines**

See [document conventions](#) for a list of common components of documentation and the emphasis convention used.

See [bold](#), [italics](#), [quotation marks](#), and [capitalization](#) for the specific type of emphasis.

## **ensure vs. insure**

"Ensure" means "to make certain" or "guarantee". Do not confuse with "insure", which refers to insurance, or "assure", which implies giving positive information.

## **enter**

Use "enter" only when referring to the keyboard key that a user should press. Do not use to mean that the user should type something into a field or area.

### **See Also**

[enter vs. type](#)

[Keyboard Keys](#)

## **enter vs. type**

Do not use "enter" as a synonym for "type".

Use "type", not "type in". If a user can either type an option or select one in a list (in a combo box, for example), use a combination of words such as "type or select".

### **Incorrect**

Enter your answer in the **Answer** field.

Type in your answer in the **Answer** field.

### **Correct**

Press Enter after you type your name.

Type your answer in the **Answer** field.

In the **Font** field, type or select the font you want to use.

### **etc.**

Do not use.

Use "and so forth" instead.

## **expand**

Use with "collapse" for opening or closing a tree node.

## **FAQ**

Can spell out this acronym if you want, but it is not usually necessary.

If pronounced "fack", precede with *a*, when pronounced as letters, use *an*.

## **See Also**

Acronyms

Plurals

## **fax**

Use "fax" instead of "facsimile".

## **field**

Use "field" instead of "box" when referring to an interface element.

Put "field" (or "list", "check box", "tab", and so forth) after the name of the object.

## **See Also**

button

check box

Dialog Box Elements

Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines

Document Conventions

group box

menu item

option button

slider

spin box

tab

## **File Extensions**

When used on the end of a file name, match the case used in the operating system.

When used in general when talking about a file type, use all caps and no period.

### **Correct**

executive.ini

DLL files

The XSL is in your Templates directory.

## **file name**

Two words.

## **frame vs. pane vs. area**

Use "area" to refer to a "frame" or "pane" unless you are specifically talking about the creation of a frameset and frame pages.

## **functionality**

Only use this word occasionally. Better to say "its functions" or "its features".

## **Graphics**

When used in text to explain a concept, graphics should be described in detail in the text (assume that the user cannot see the graphic). Don't expect the graphic to speak for itself. Graphics are meant to supplement the text, not to replace it.



## grayed

See [dimmed](#).

## group box

Two words, lowercase. A "group box" is a standard control used to group a set of options in a dialog box. For example, page ranges are grouped in the **Page range** group box in the Print dialog box in Word.

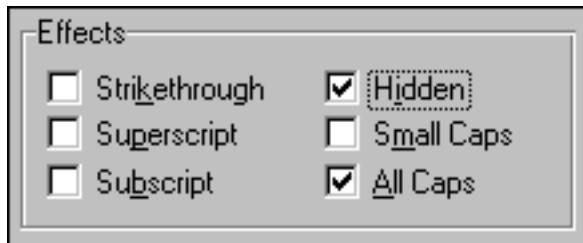
A group box may be [dimmed](#) or [unavailable](#).

The term is acceptable in programmer documentation. Avoid in end-user documentation. To save space, it's generally unnecessary to include the name of the group box in procedures unless options with the same label appear in more than one group box. If necessary for clarity, you can use either "under <Group box label>", or "in the <Group box label> area".

### Correct

Under **Effects**, click the **Hidden** check box.

In the **Effects** area, click the **Small Caps** check box.



### See Also

[Group box](#) in "Dialog Box Elements"

## GUI

All caps. Plural is "GUIs".

### See Also

[Acronyms](#)

[Plurals](#)

## handheld

One word.

# Headings

Titles should be discernable out of context (from a search results list).

Don't refer to the heading in the first sentence (don't make the heading part of the first sentence).

Avoid making single subheadings (in other words, you should normally have two or more subheadings under a heading).

The hierarchy of headings, from most important to least, is as follows:

- Title
- HeadingNoTOC
- SecondHeadingNoTOC
- EmphasisBoldItalic
- EmphasisItalic
- BodyText and no additional styling on the heading

Headings for tasks and examples must start with a gerund (a gerund ends in "ing"). All other headings may not begin with a gerund. For example: Adding a Content Collection to a Site.

Examples headings start with a gerund and end with the word "Example". For example: Creating a Site from Scratch Example.

Screenshot headings start with the name of the window or dialog box, followed by "Properties" if it is a properties dialog box, then a comma and the name of the tab followed by the word "Tab", and finally the word "Screenshot". For example, "Create New User Screenshot" or "Lotus Notes Service Properties, Forms Tab Screenshot".

## high tech

No hyphen.

## homepage

One word.

## hotspot

One word. It is used to refer to the part of an imagemap or screenshot that is clickable. But, avoid using in end user documentation.

## Hyphens

Avoid hyphenating nouns: email, homepage, etc. are correct.

Hyphenate adjectives.

Avoid hyphenating between a short prefix and a word, even with adjectives. Examples of short prefixes are "un" and "non".

## **icon**

Use only to describe a graphic representation of an object that a user can select and open, such as a drive, disk, folder, document, or program.

When referring to a program icon, use bold for the icon name: "Click the **Word** icon." Within programs, do not use "icon" for graphical dialog box options or options that appear on ribbons, toolbars, toolboxes, or other areas of a window.

In general, use the most descriptive term available, such as "button", "field", "check box", "tool", and so on. If an option has no visual properties except its graphic nature, use "symbol", as in "warning symbol."

## **i.e.**

Do not use.

Use "in other words" or "that is" instead.

Never use IE to refer to Internet Explorer, always spell out the product name.

## **imagemap**

Do not use to refer to a graphic, unless specifically talking about the HTML process of tagging an image for clickable regions. See [screenshot vs. screengrab](#).

## **in order to vs. to**

Use "to" instead of "in order to".

### **Incorrect**

Select the option in order to sound a bell

### **Correct**

Select the option to sound a bell

## **indexsheet**

One word.

## **insure**

See [ensure vs. insure](#).

## Internet

Capitalized unless referring to generic network of connected networks. Precede with "the" unless it's being used as a modifier.

## irregardless

Don't use "irregardless", irregardless of your intentions. It is redundant. Simply use "regardless".

## Italics

Italicize book titles (unless also a link) and cross-references. Use quotation marks instead if it's a shorter work, like an article in a magazine or chapter of a book. Use the BookReference tag.

Italicize foreign words, and use any appropriate accents or diacritics.

Use italics for emphasis and for terms used in an unconventional way.

## Correct

*Site Design Help*

"Tasks" in *Site Design Help*

## JPEG, JPG

Graphics formats. Both extensions are correct. JPG is more common for Windows-based machines.

Officially, JPEG is used as the acronym for either the group that created the standard, or the standard itself.

## Keyboard Keys

Initial cap the key name, with no additional styling. Use the KeyboardKey tag to mark the key name. If documenting key combinations or sequences, tag each individual key rather than the included plus sign (+) or comma (,).

Users "press" a key, they don't "hit" a key.

## Key combinations

Use a plus sign (+) between keys, with no spaces around the plus sign: SHIFT+ALT+F1.

## Key Sequences

Use commas (,), followed by spaces to indicate that the user should press and release a sequence of keys: ALT, F, D means press and release ALT, then F, and then D.

## keyword

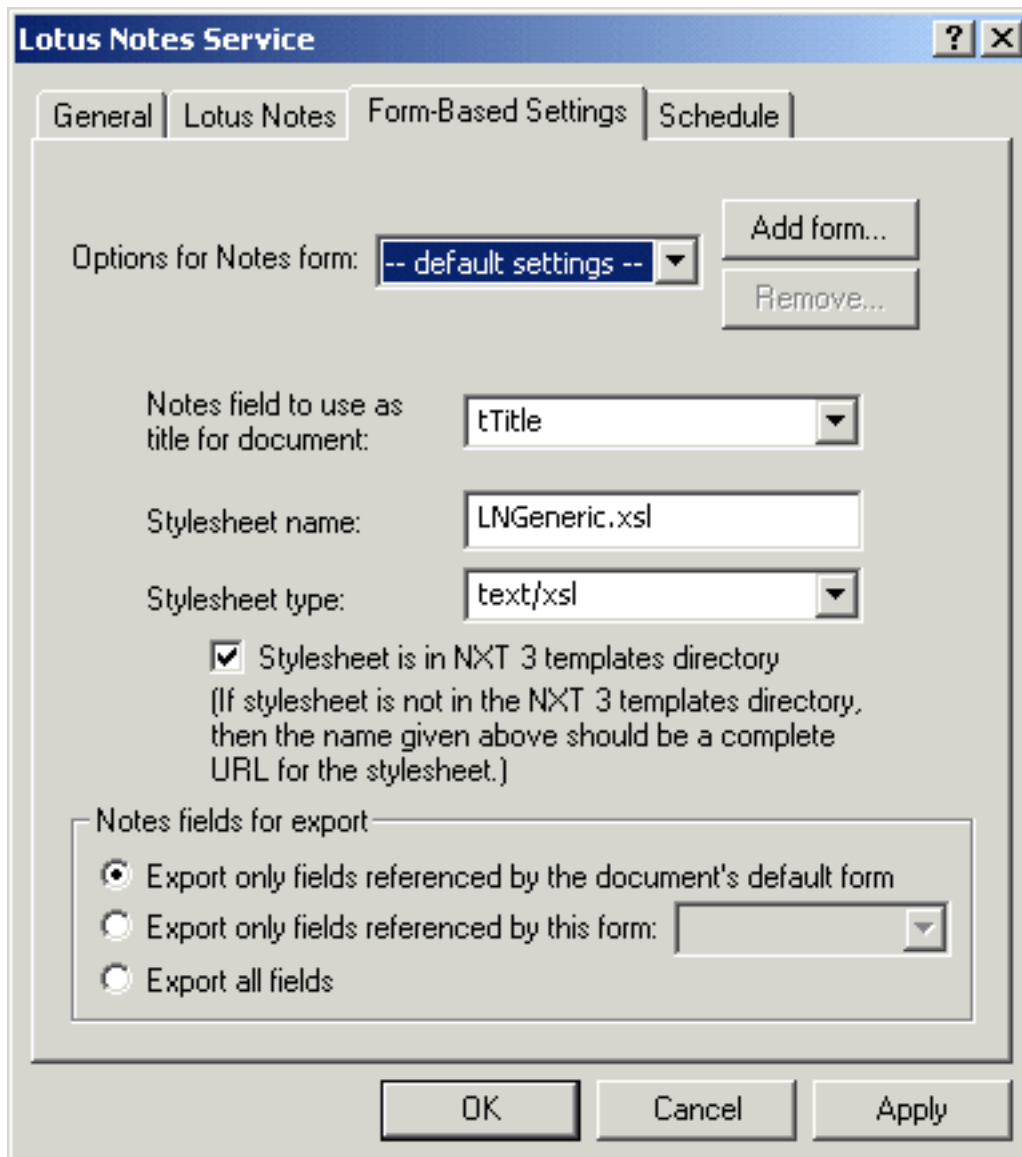
One word.

## label

Do not refer to "label" in documentation. Do not use "caption" either. Simply refer to the label as the name of a field, button, check box, and so on.

## Correct

The **Stylesheet name** field.



The screenshot shows the "Lotus Notes Service" dialog box with the "Form-Based Settings" tab selected. The dialog has four tabs: "General", "Lotus Notes", "Form-Based Settings", and "Schedule".

Options for Notes form: -- default settings -- (dropdown menu) [Add form...] [Remove...]

Notes field to use as title for document: tTitle (dropdown menu)

Stylesheet name: LNGeneric.xml (text field)

Stylesheet type: text/xml (dropdown menu)

Stylesheet is in NXT 3 templates directory  
(If stylesheet is not in the NXT 3 templates directory, then the name given above should be a complete URL for the stylesheet.)

Notes fields for export

Export only fields referenced by the document's default form

Export only fields referenced by this form: (dropdown menu)

Export all fields

[OK] [Cancel] [Apply]

## See Also

field

Label in "Dialog Box Elements"

## left

Use "left" instead of "left-hand" when referring to a location. Can also use "leftmost", "upper left", "lower left", and so forth.

Hyphenate the term when used as an adjective, as in "upper-left corner of the page".

## Links

Links are important for online information.

Never create a link around "click here" or similar words. Put the link on meaningful words.

In a step, you should generally link to the Reference topic instead of the Concept topic.

Put Concept links either in the beginning paragraph (the explanation of the steps), in a note, or in the See Also section. Put other links in the See Also list as well, even those that appear elsewhere on the page (this makes them easier to find).

## Lists

Avoid making a list that only has one item.

Use a bulleted list to set apart items when the sequence is not important. If order is important or if you need to refer to a specific list item, use a numbered list. Use the parameter list for definitions or in reference topics.

Make the list items parallel in sentence structure and part of speech.

Capitalize the first word of each item in the list, and either end each item with a period or no punctuation. Use a period if at least one of the list items is a complete sentence.

Arrange lists in a meaningful way. As a last resort, arrange alphabetically. If the arrangement is not obvious, include an explanation.

Do not use a list to complete a sentence. The phrase that introduces a list must be a complete sentence. This aids translation and makes the meaning more obvious.

For the interface, a list should be referred to as a field.

## See Also

List in "Dialog Box Elements"

## **log on, log off**

Use "log on" or "log off" as verbs, and "logon" or "logoff" as adjectives.

Don't use "to" with it (for example, "log onto").

## **login**

The account used to log on.

## **look and feel**

Do not use in documentation.

## **lower**

Use "lower" instead of "below" when referring to a location. Can also use "lowest", "lower right", "lower left", and so forth.

Hyphenate the term when used as an adjective, as in "lower-left corner of the page".

## **makefile**

One word.

## **may vs. might**

Use "may" to denote permission, use "might" to denote possibility. Usually, you will use "might" instead of "may" in documentation.

## **See Also**

can vs. may

should

want vs. desire vs. wish

## **Measurements**

For computer capacity, use "GB", "KB", and "MB" (no need to spell out the acronyms).

For speed, use "KBps" for "kilobytes per second" and "Kbps" for "kilobits per second" (you may need to spell out the acronym depending on your audience).

Other than these, avoid using measurements unnecessarily in documentation.

Use numerals for all measurements, even if the number is under 10 or the unit of measure is spelled out or not. Measurements include distance, temperature, volume, size, weight, points, and picas, but generally not units of time.

Abbreviations of units of measure are the same whether the number is one or more (1 in., 2 in.).

When units of measure are not abbreviated, use the singular unit for quantities of one or less, except for with zero, which takes the plural form (0 inches).

Abbreviations of measurements appear without periods, except for the abbreviation for "inch", which always takes a period.

Insert a space between the number and the unit.

## **media**

"media": the press.

"mass media": any means of communication.

"medium": physical material to store data. "Media" is the plural form.

## **menubar**

One word.

## **menu item**

Use "command" instead of "menu item", "option", or "choice" if you must specify the menu item as some thing.

Use "click" to refer the process of navigating and selecting menu items.

## **Correct**

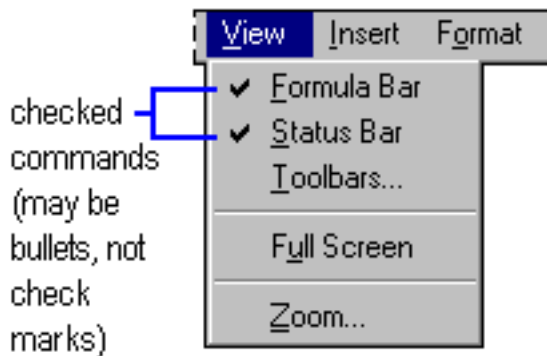
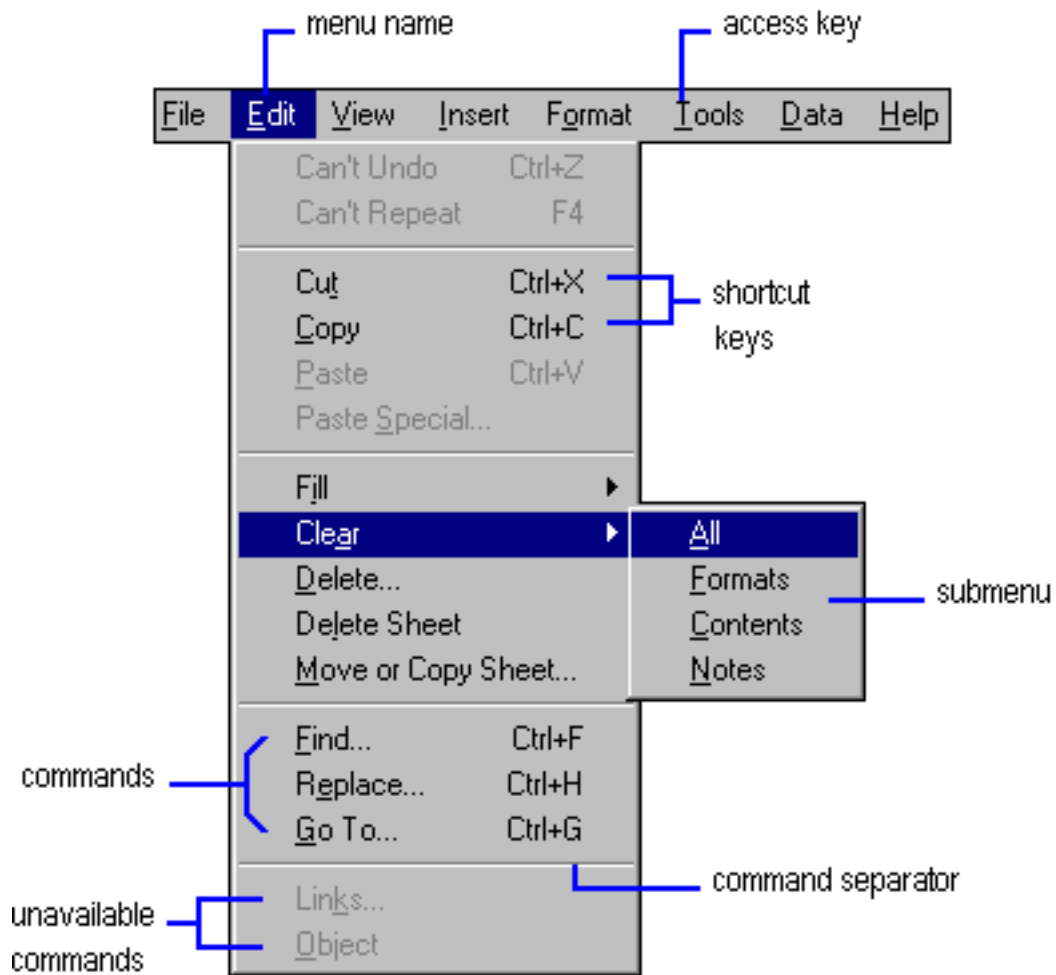
On the **Edit** menu, click **Copy**.

On the **Edit** menu, point to **Options**, and then click **General**.

The following graphic shows some menus and terminology.



## Menu with commands



Users click menus, click commands on the menu, select dialog box options, and click command buttons in dialog boxes.

Don't use the possessive form of menu or command names.

## **message**

Use "message" instead of "alert", "error message", "message box", or "prompts" ("error message" is okay in technical documentation when describing types of messages).

## **meta tag**

Two words.

## **metadata**

One word.

## **monitor**

Use "screen" instead of "monitor".

## **mouse**

Plural is "mice".

Use "pointer" instead of "mouse cursor".

In general use "point to" instead of "move the mouse pointer to".

If documenting mouse and keyboard, describe the mouse method first, then another method if appropriate.

Use "mouseclick", "mousepad", "mouseover", etc. and pluralize the second half of the compound (for example, "mousepads" is correct and "micepads" is not).

## **See Also**

[click](#)

## **n**

Conventionally, a lowercase italic *n* refers to a generic use of a number. You can use *n* when the value of a number is arbitrary or immaterial.

Contrast with *x*

## **Net**

Although we prefer "Internet", this is an acceptable shortening. Capitalize unless referring to a generic internet.

## network

Do not use as a verb.

A computer is "*on* a network". Computers are "linked" or "connected" (not "networked").

## New Meanings for Existing Terms

Use italics when using a term in a way that is different from the conventional usage.

## Non-Breaking Spaces

Use a non-breaking space between NXT and the version number: NXT 3.

This doesn't always work right in Epic, but when it does, you can press Ctrl+Space to achieve the desired effect. Otherwise, you can either use the text entity called "space" that does this, or use the "platform" entity if you are specifically talking about a version of the NXT platform.

## Notes

The title of a note should always be "Note". Use the NoteTitle tag.

Notes (including cautions, important notes, tips, and warnings, as well as general notes) call the user's attention to information of special importance or information that can't otherwise be suitably presented in the main text.

Use notes sparingly so that they remain effective attention-getters. One per help topic is best. If two are adjoining, combine into one. Use no more than two adjacent notes.

## Nouns

Avoid stacking nouns (long noun strings). Break up noun strings into no more than 3, or possibly 4, nouns, if possible.

## Numbers

Spell out numbers zero through nine (unless used with a unit of measure). Numbers 10 and above are written numerically except if one starts a sentence or it appears side-by-side with another number (spell out one of the two).

Hyphenate compound numbers like "twenty-one".

Do not use numeric and spelled out form of the same number (for example, "five (5) screws" would be incorrect usage).

## **OK**

Use all caps for button name.

Use "okay" otherwise.

Don't use "the" and "button" around "OK" in a step.

## **on**

Use "on" with the following elements:

- Desktop
- Disk
- Hardware platform
- Interface
- Menu
- Network
- Screen
- Taskbar
- Toolbar

## **online, offline**

One word each.

## **onscreen**

One word.

## **option button**

Use "option button" instead of "radio button"

You do not have to use "option button" after the label name.

Option buttons can be dimmed or unavailable.

## **See Also**

Option button in "Dialog Box Elements"

## Passive Voice Uses

Use passive voice to emphasize the object being acted upon or to deflect criticism from the reader (for example, "You should not have pushed that button" may be too harsh. Instead, you could use, "That button should not be pushed").

Passive is also appropriate when it is clear that the system performs an action or when an action occurs that the user cannot control.

### See Also

[Active Voice Uses](#)

[Active Voice vs. Passive Voice](#)

[Voice Guidelines](#)

## PDA

Avoid this. Use "handheld" or "palm pc".

## Phone Numbers

Begin with the plus sign (+) then the country code, use parentheses for the area code, and do not use hyphens or other punctuation elsewhere in the phone number.

An exception to the use of the plus sign (+) is toll free numbers that only work in the U.S.: you would simply write it as (800) 769 4733).

### Correct

+1 (801) 768 7834

## plaintext

One word.

## platform

Lowercase, one word.

## plug-in

Always hyphenated.

## Plurals

The standards for making words plural are as follows:

- acronyms: use the acronym + s
- single letter: letter + ' + s
- number: number + s
- 

Do not use "(s)" after a word to indicate plural possibilities. Use either the plural form or "one or more".

## See Also

[Acronyms](#)

## pop-up

Hyphenated. Do not use as a noun and avoid using as a verb (that leaves adjective usage).

Used to refer to the result of a user mousing over something and having some text appear in a "hover balloon". Different than ToolTips (which would just show one or two words about a button or command).

## Possessives

Do not use the possessive form for acronyms or for inanimate objects.

## power

Use "turn on" or "turn off" rather than "power up" or "power down" or "shut down".

## Prepositions

It is okay to end a sentence with a preposition to prevent awkward constructions.

Avoid stacking prepositions.

## pull-down

One word.

## Punctuation Guidelines

When using quotation marks, you should usually leave commas and periods inside the closing quotation mark unless the quotation marks are being used to show an exact phrase that a user must type.

Avoid using dashes in documentation.

### See Also

Apostrophes

Colons

Commas

Hyphens

## Quick Guides

See Writing Guides.

## quit

Use "quit" when referring to programs.

### See Also

abort

close

end

## Quotation Marks

Not "quote marks" or "quotes".

Use around sections or chapters of a longer work, or around shorter works when doing a cross-reference.

When using quotation marks, you should usually leave commas and periods inside the closing quotation mark unless the quotation marks are being used to show an exact phrase that a user must type.

### See Also

## Punctuation Guidelines

### **radio button**

See option button.

### **Readme Files**

Typed as "Readme", with the initial letter capitalized and as one word.

### **read-only**

Adjective, hyphenated.

### **refresh**

Use "refresh" to refer to updating a Web page. Avoid using in documentation to describe the action of an image being restored on the screen or data being updated; instead, use "redraw" or "update". To refer to the Refresh command, use language such as: "To update the screen, click **Refresh**."

### **restart**

Use "restart" instead of "reboot".

### **See Also**

Start

### **right**

Use "right" instead of "right-hand" when referring to a location. You can also use "rightmost", "upper right", "lower right", and so forth.

Hyphenate the term when used as an adjective, as in "upper-right corner of the page".

### **screenshot vs. screengrab**

Use "screenshot". One word.

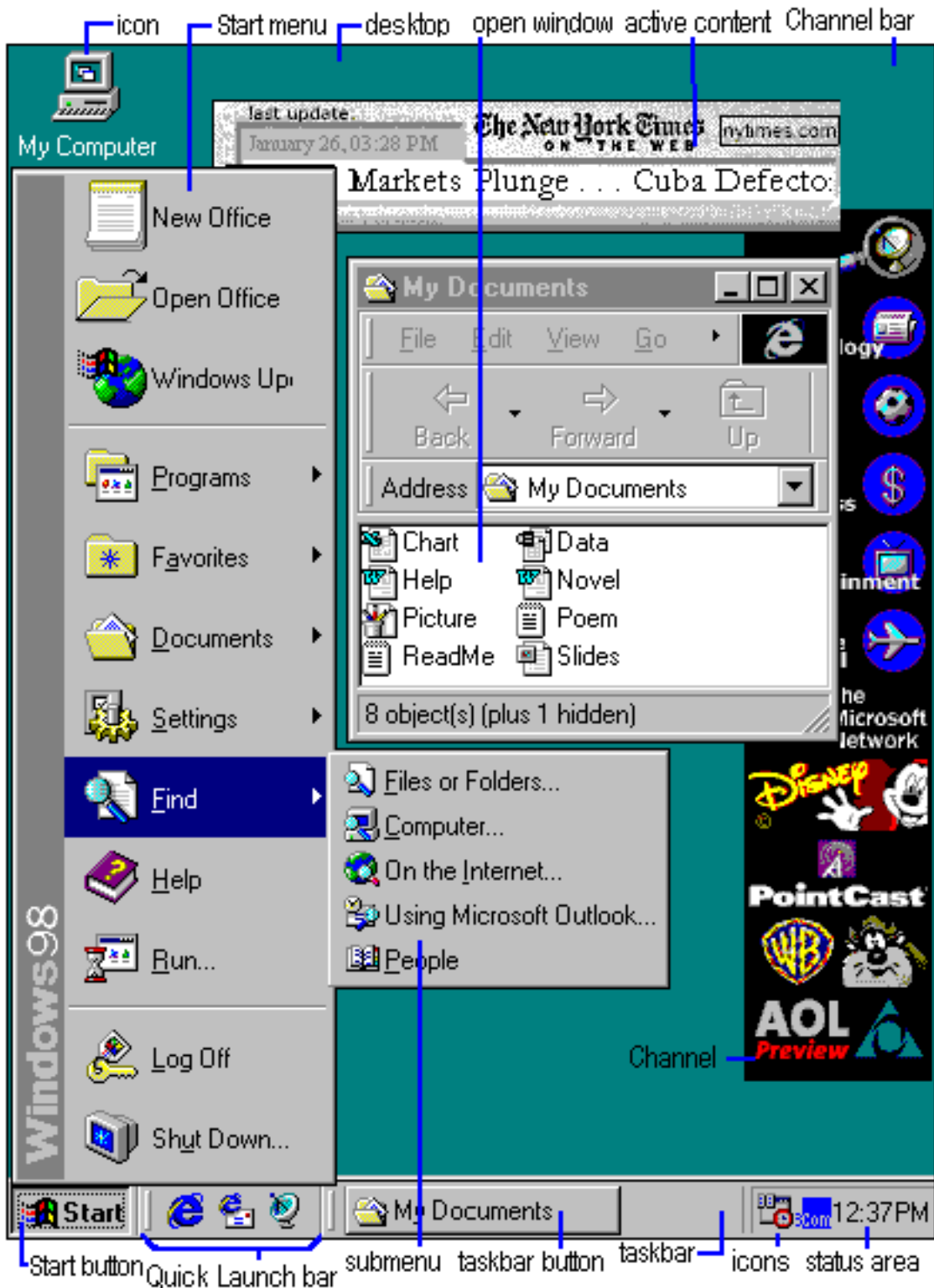
Create them within the context of the book file for the project (if you do it outside, you'll have a big headache to deal with).



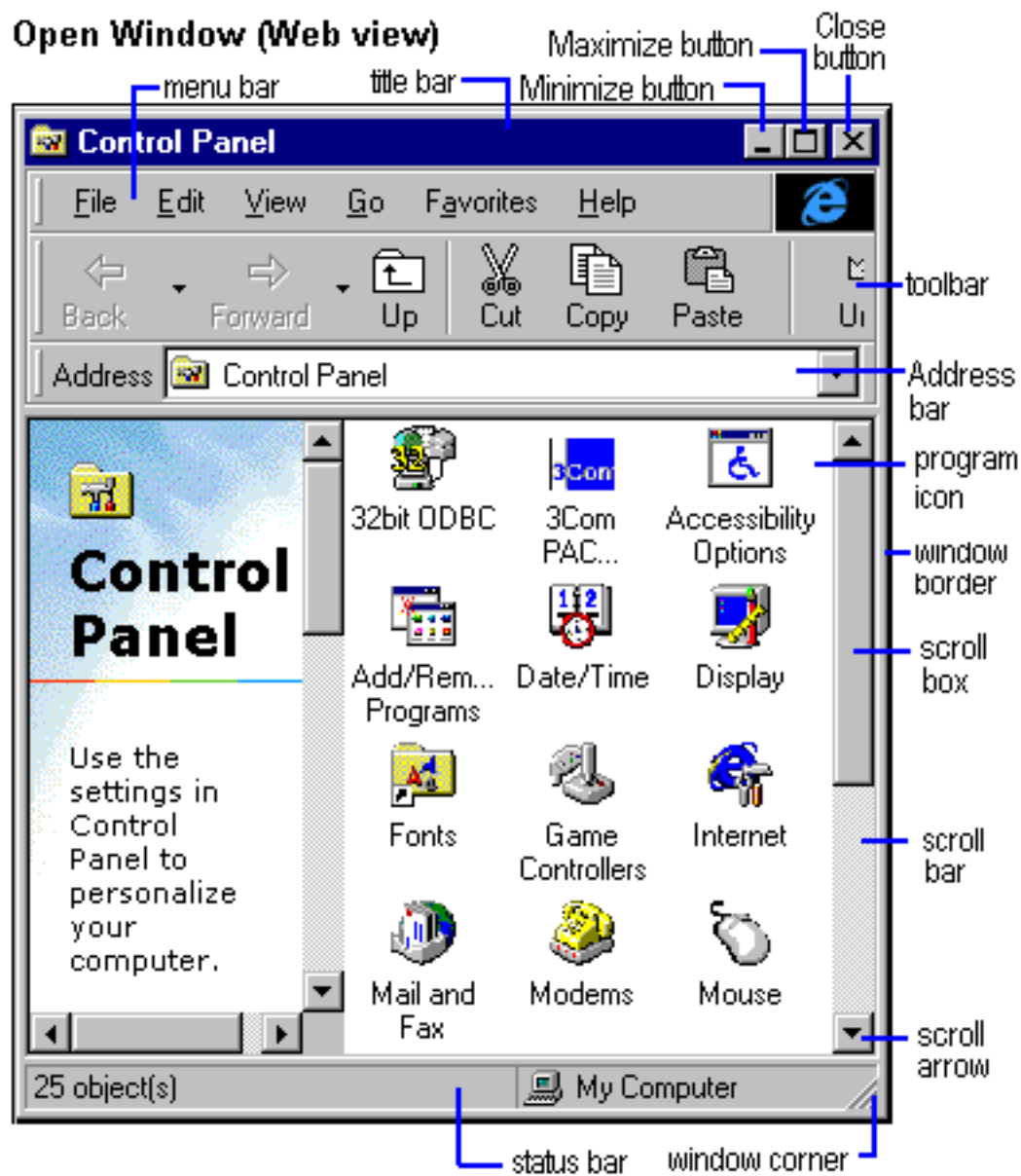
# Screen Terminology Guidelines

The following graphics show various screen elements and the terminology that you should use to describe them.

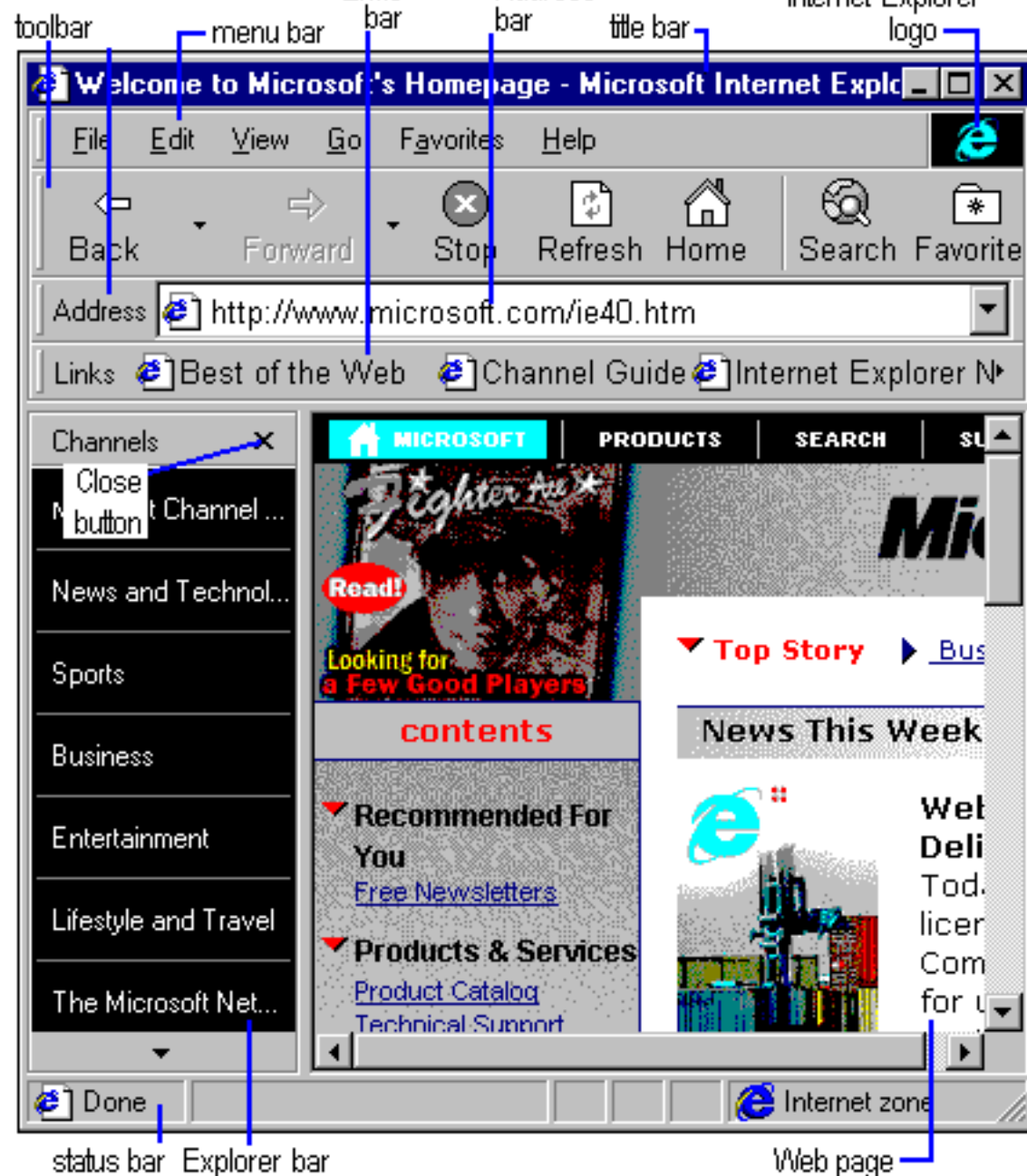
# Windows 98 desktop



## Open Window (Web view)



**Browser**



## Web Page

The image shows a screenshot of the Microsoft website from 1998. The page features a navigation bar at the top with links for MICROSOFT, PRODUCTS, SEARCH, SUPPORT, and SHOP. A large banner for Microsoft Office 98 Macintosh Edition is prominently displayed on the left, with the text "Celebrating the Difference" and a "Read!" button. The main content area includes a "News This Week" section with a photo of Bill Gates and Al Gore, and a "Top News For Today" section with a headline about Gates and Gingrich. Annotations with blue arrows point to various elements: "buttons" points to the navigation bar, "banner" points to the Office 98 banner, and "links" points to the "Top Story", "Business", and "Development" links.

**MICROSOFT** | **PRODUCTS** | **SEARCH** | **SUPPORT** | **SHOP** — buttons

Microsoft  
**Office 98**  
Macintosh Edition  
Read!  
Celebrating the Difference

**Microsoft** — banner

▼ **Top Story** ▶ [Business](#) ▶ [Development](#) — links

**contents**

▼ Recommended For You  
[Profile Center](#)


▶ Products & Services

▶ Business Solutions

▶ Developer & Partner Resources

▶ Personal Computing

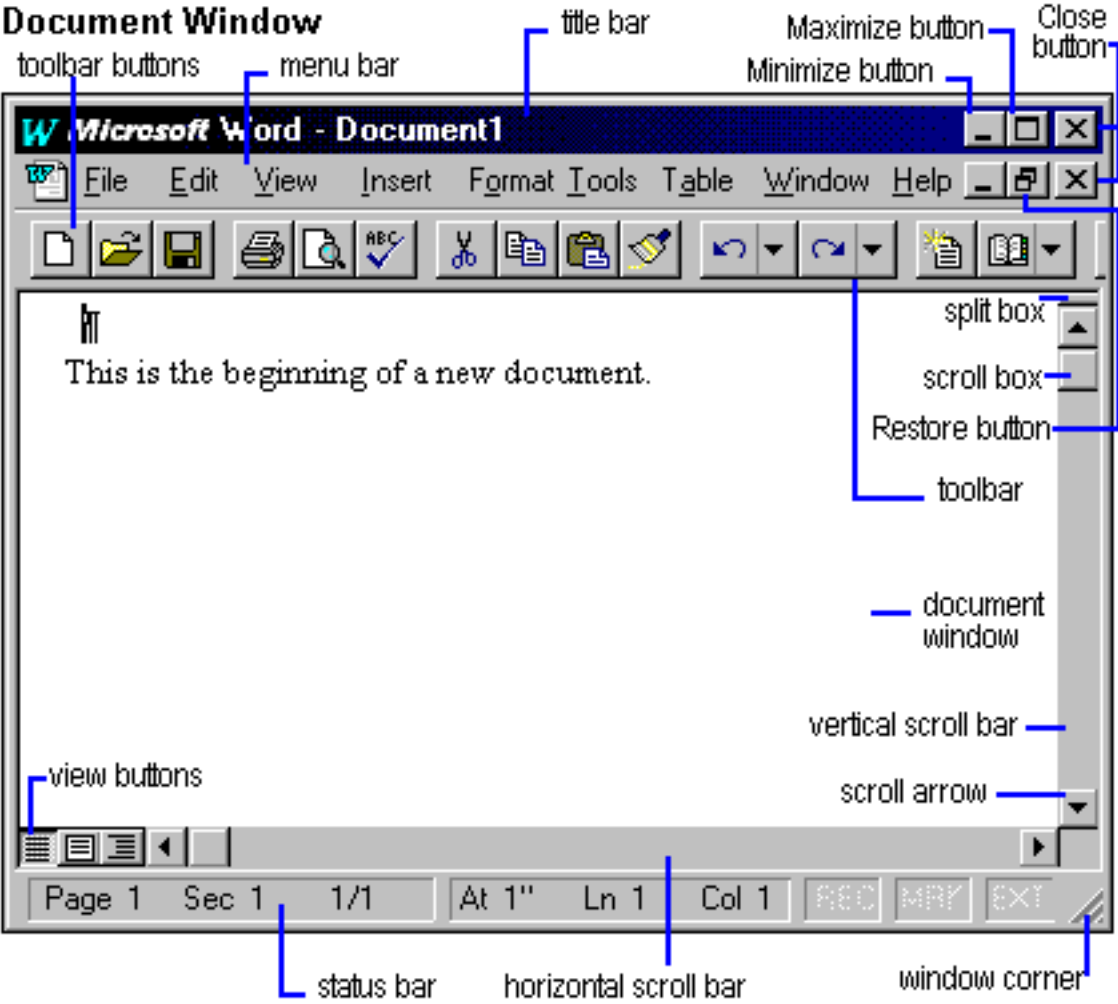
**News This Week**

 **What's Hot, What's a 1998 Executive O**  
Experts in key industries tell us what they expect software applications development this year.

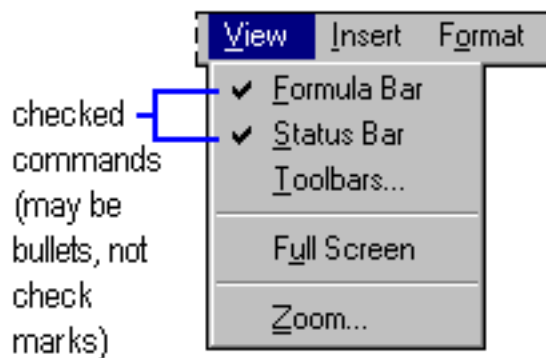
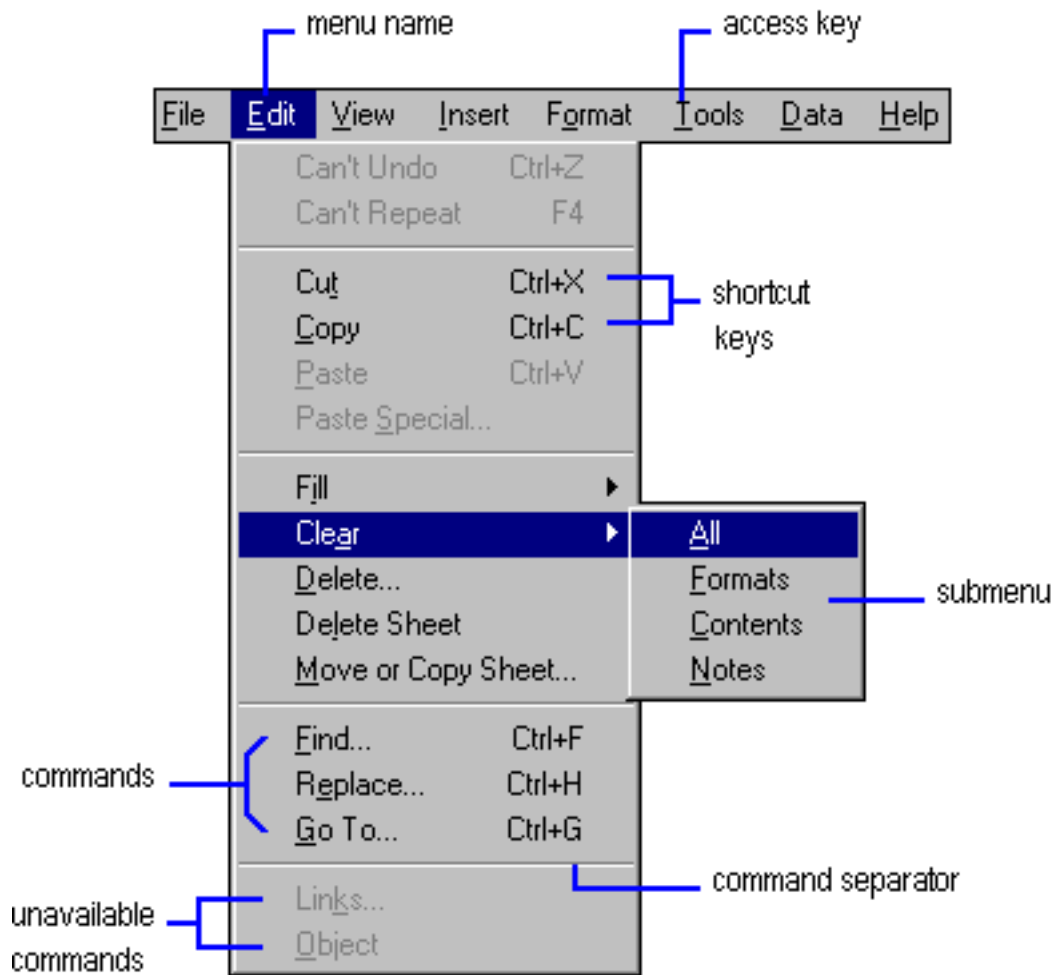
**Top News For Today**

▼ **Gates and Gingrich Chat About Technology**

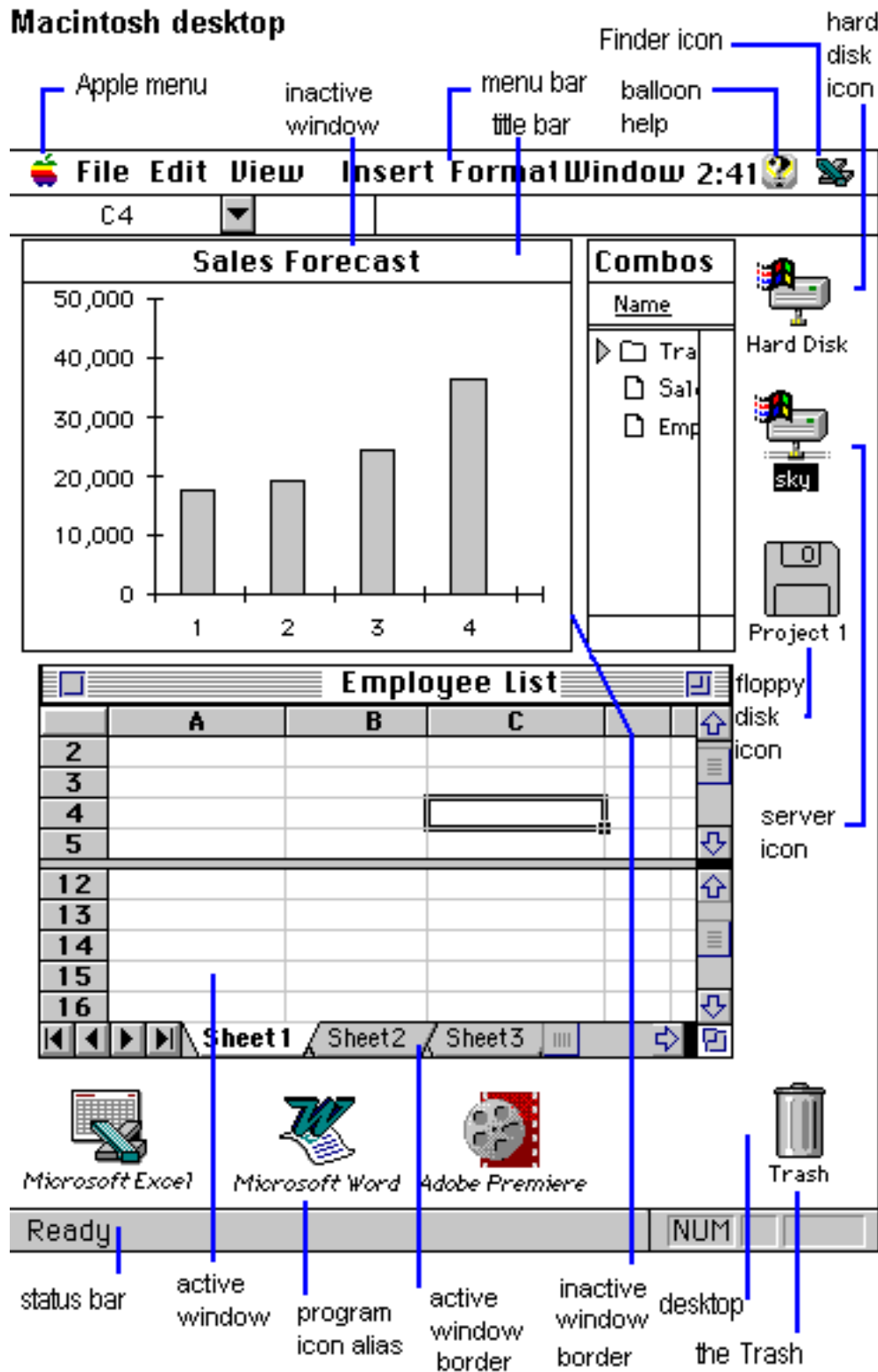
**Document Window**



## Menu with commands

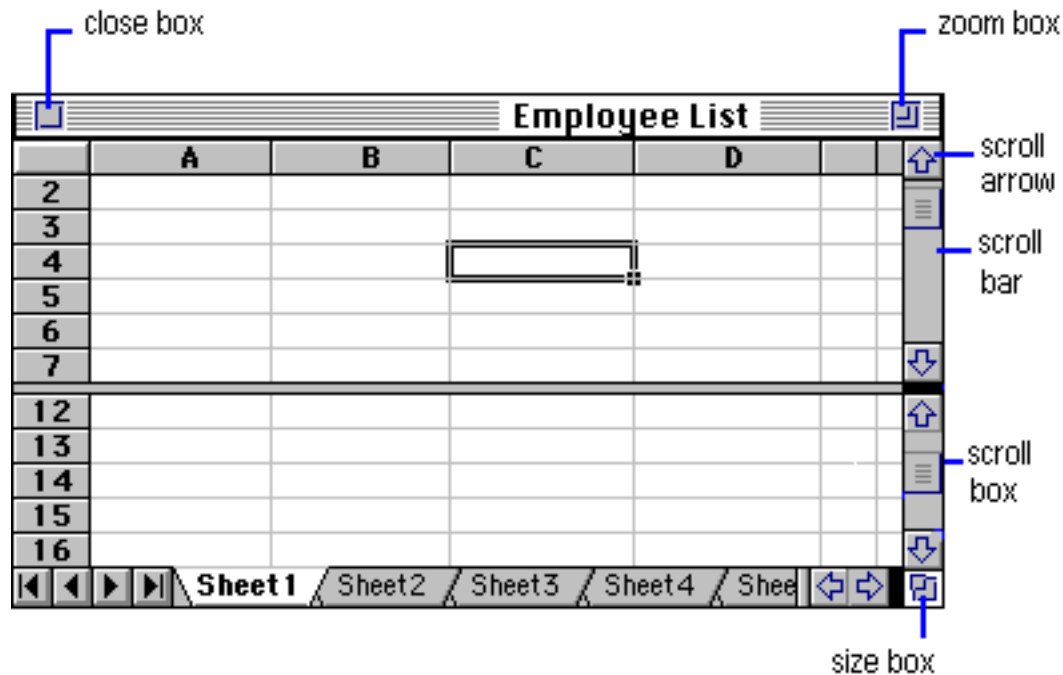


# Macintosh desktop





## Macintosh document window



## See Also

[Dialog Box Elements](#)

[Dialog Box Syntax Guidelines](#)

[Document Conventions](#)

## Sentence Structure Suggestions

Keep sentence structures simple. Avoid creating sentences that contain more than one or two clauses.

## Sexist Language No-No's

Do not use "he/she".

Use "he or she", "you", or rewrite to not include the pronoun.

Avoid gender-specific terminology in general, like "police man" or "councilman" (try "police officer" or "council member").

## Shaded

Use "shaded" for mixture of settings check boxes.

### See Also

[check box](#)

[dimmed](#)

## should

You should avoid using "should" in documentation because it can be ambiguous.

Instead, change your sentence in one of the following ways:

- Make the sentence imperative. For example, "Quit all programs and shut down the computer."
- Use "must" to tell users that they are required to perform some action.
- Use a phrase such as "we recommend" or "NextPage recommends" or "it is recommended".
- Rephrase the sentence to recommend some action or condition.

### See Also

[may vs. might](#)

## site map

Two words.

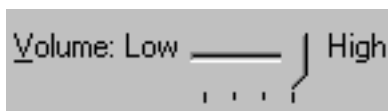
## slider

A slider is an interface control that a user can drag left or right, or up or down to increase or decrease a field value.

A slider may be [dimmed](#) or [unavailable](#).

### Correct

Move the **Volume** slider to the right to increase the volume.



## See Also

[Slider](#) in "Dialog Box Elements"

## spin box

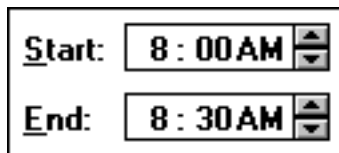
A "spin box" is an interface control that lets users increment or decrement a field's value.

You should not use "spin box" in documentation. It is merely a [field](#).

A spin box may be [dimmed](#) or [unavailable](#).

## Correct

In the **Start** field, type or select the time you want.



The image shows a dialog box with two rows. The first row is labeled 'Start:' and contains a text field with '8 : 00 AM' and a spin box with up and down arrows. The second row is labeled 'End:' and contains a text field with '8 : 30 AM' and a spin box with up and down arrows.

## See Also

[Spin box](#) in "Dialog Box Elements"

## stand-alone

Hyphenated.

## start

Use "start" instead of "launch" or "boot".

## See Also

[restart](#)

## Steps

Keep steps in tasks short. Usually, a task should only have around 7 or fewer steps. If it is longer, consider breaking the task into several sub-tasks.

For tasks that include instructions for navigating through more than one tab on a dialog box, create a headings for each tab section and restart numbering.

An example of this can be found in [DOCS Open](#). Please note that the links do not work as this file has merely been copied to a directory that this style guide can easily reference.

## style sheet

Development has traditionally used two words, so we have also used two words in our documentation so that it matches.

However, we would prefer it to be one word to match the rest of the industry. We are working on getting this changed.

## submenu

Describes the secondary menu that appears when the user selects a command that includes a small arrow on the right. Avoid in end-user documentation if possible, for example, by referring only to what appears on the screen. The term is acceptable in programmer documentation.

## sync

Not "synch" or "synk" or "sink".

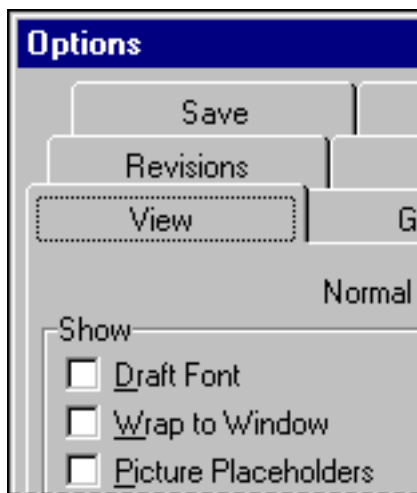
## tab

Do not use as a verb. Because multiple uses can be ambiguous, especially for localization, use the noun "tab" alone to refer only to a tab in a dialog box. For other uses, clarify the meaning with a descriptor: the Tab key, a tab stop, or a tab mark on the ruler.

Always use "the <TabName> tab" when describing this interface element. And bold the tab name.

### Correct

On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**, and then click the **View** tab.



## See Also

[Tab](#) in "Dialog Box Elements"

## Tables

Place a table as close as possible to the principle reference to it.

A table usually has column headings (use the `TableHeading` tag) and may or may not have a title. Introduce tables with a sentence ending with a period. If a table is titled, an introductory sentence does not have to immediately precede the table.

If the table is titled, use title caps for the title. That is, do not capitalize articles (a, an, the), prepositions of four or fewer letters, or coordinate conjunctions. Capitalize only the first word of each column heading, the first word of each column entry, and proper nouns.

**Note:** You can use lowercase for the first word in column entries if capitalization might cause confusion: for example, a column of keywords that must be lowercase.

End each entry with a period if all entries are complete sentences or are a mixture of fragments and sentences. An exception is when all entries are short imperative sentences (only a few words); these entries do not need a period. If all entries are fragments, do not end them with periods.

## table of contents

Do not use "Table of Contents" as the heading for the list of contents at the beginning of a document or file; use just "Contents" instead. It is correct to refer generically to the table of contents, however.

## text box

Use "field" to refer to the area where the user can type text. It is acceptable to use "area" if the text box uses multiple lines.

You can use the term "text box" in documentation about creating HTML forms.

A text box may be dimmed or unavailable.

### Correct

In the **Size** field, enter a font size.



### See Also

field

Text box in "Dialog Box Elements"

## that vs. which

In general, if you use "which", you need to precede it with a comma. "That" is not preceded by a comma.

Specifically, "which" introduces a nonrestrictive clause. Because it is nonrestrictive, it is secondary to the meaning of the main clause. For example:

- The computers, which have two monitors, are for developers.
- The computers that have two monitors are for developers.

In the first sentence, the computers are for developers and all have two monitors. In the second sentence, some computers have two monitors and some do not. Only the ones with two are for the developers.

### See Also

Commas

## **third-party**

Hyphenated.

## **Time Guidelines**

Use "a.m." or "p.m.", with a space between the time and the "a.m." or "p.m." designation.

## **then**

Use "and then" rather than just "then".

Use "then" with a semicolon or another coordinating conjunction.

## **toolbar**

One word, lowercase.

## **toward**

"Toward", not "towards".

## **Translation Issues**

To make translation easier, follow these guidelines:

- Eliminate guesswork for translators.
- Present information in ways other than alphabetical (since the order will no longer be alphabetical when translated).
- Allow room for expansion (in tables, etc.). Generally, you should expect up to 25% expansion.
- Use humor sparingly, if at all.
- Avoid culture-specific terminology, slang, American jargon, idioms because they make translation difficult.

The Jargon Dictionary

Dictionary of Regional American English

American Business Language Dictionary

- Avoid ambiguous words: because, compromise, regular, alternate, quite, eventually, while, so, may, once.
- Limit sentences, especially steps, to one instruction.
- Write in active voice.
- Be consistent with terminology.
- Avoid using Latin terms (e.g., etc., and others).
- Use direct sentences written in Subject-Verb-Object order.

## unavailable

Use "unavailable" if an option is not usable because it appears dimmed.

Use "make unavailable" instead of "disable".

## Unix

Initial capped.

## upper

Use "upper" instead of "above" when referring to a location. Can also use "uppermost", "upper right", "upper left", and so forth.

Hyphenate the term when used as an adjective, as in "upper-left corner of the page".

## URLs

Just create the link, no additional styling is needed. However, you should use **BoldLink** for links to Field explanations in the Reference section.

However, if you use **BoldLink**, the link will not change to the *visited* color after a user clicks on it. To get around this, you can use the regular Link tag and put the `FieldName` tag inside that.

Match the case of the site style for path names.

You do not need to put "http://" in front. However, if the protocol is not "http", then you must include it (for example, "https", "ftp").

Break long URLs after a punctuation mark, and don't add in a hyphen.



## **user**

Avoid using "end user" in documentation. Just use "user".

## **user name**

Two words.

## **utilize**

Do not use. Use "use" or another appropriate synonym instead.

## **Version Numbers**

The word "version" is written in lowercase, and there is a space before and after the version numbers. They are written in the form <Major Version>.<Release Version>-<Modification Version>, with the release and modification versions being optional. For example:

`NXT 3 version 3.2`

Updates to documentation add a hyphen and ordinal number to show successive updates to a version. For example, 3.2-1 and 3.2-2.

## **See Also**

"Revisions" in the IDG Process Document

## **versus and vs.**

In headings, use the abbreviation "vs.", all lowercase. In text, spell out as "versus".

## **via**

"Via" implies a geographic context. Avoid using "via" as a synonym for "by", "through", or "by means of". Use the most specific term instead.

## **Voice Guidelines**

Avoid passive voice. Use active voice, especially in notes or tasks where the reader must do something.

Active Voice Uses

Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

Passive Voice Uses

## **want vs. desire vs. wish**

Use "want" instead of "desire" or "wish".

### **See Also**

can vs. may

may vs. might

should

## **Web**

Capitalize when used as noun, lowercase when used as adjective.

### **Correct**

the Web

a webmaster

a Web browser (because the noun is "Web browser" and not just "browser")

a Web site (or possibly "a web site", depending on if you are differentiating between a "brick and mortar site" and a "web site")

## **Web browser**

Use "Web browser" instead of "browser" alone or "Internet browser".

### **See Also**

Web

## **whether vs. whether or not**

Use "whether" when users can make a choice between options.

Use "whether or not" if only a binary choice is given.

### **Correct**

Select whether you want rain, snow, or ice.

Decide whether or not you want to create a backup.

## **wildcard**

One word.

On first use in each topic, say "wildcard character", and then use "wildcard" after that.

## **window**

Title cap window names.

Refer to the window by its title when necessary.

### **See Also**

Title in "Dialog Box Elements"

## **wish**

See want vs. desire vs. wish.

## **wizard**

Always use lowercase for the generic term "wizard". Capitalize "Wizard" if it is part of a feature name that appears in the interface.

## **Writing Guides**

This style guide provides all the guidelines that you need to create a quality document. However, since this document is quite large, and since you are not required to commit all

the rules to memory, you can use the one-page Quick Guides for Writing to refresh your memory on several of the more useful and oft-used guidelines.

The writing guides are as follows:

- [Developer Quick Guide for Writing API documentation](#)
- [Developer Quick Guide for Writing GUI documentation](#)
- [Writer's Quick Guide for Writing GUI Documentation](#)

## **X**

A lowercase italic *x* is used as a placeholder number or variable. Do not use it to refer to a generic unspecified number; use *n* instead.

## **yo-yo**

Do not use to refer to users.

However, you are welcome to play with one on your break.

## **zero**

Plural is "zeros", not "zeroes".

In measurements, when the unit of measurement is not abbreviated, "zero" takes the plural, as in "0 megabytes".

## **See Also**

[Measurements](#)

[Numbers](#)