

FINDING HELP IN WINDOWS & WINDOWS PROGRAMS

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HELP IS EVERYWHERE

Windows and Windows programs actually have a tremendous amount of help and assistance built into the software. Unfortunately, most users don't know where to look, or don't know how access this help. A good analogy would be a man who drowned, even though six people threw him life jackets. You may ask "Why did he drown if he had all those life jackets?" The unfortunate fact is that he didn't know what a life jacket was, nor how to use it.

How often have you needed help in a Windows programs and didn't know where to look? It just so happens that Windows has lots of places that provide you with help. In the distant past, most software programs came with lots of books, manuals and other printed material. However, in those days, the cost of the software was much higher and could easily absorb the cost of these manuals. In present times, the software industry has gotten extremely competitive, and cannot afford to print elaborate manuals and include them with the product. But, a tremendous amount of help is readily available to you, if you know where to look.

Actually, the subject of help should actually be broken up into two distinct categories. There is the type of help you need when you're working in a program and something specific comes up that you are not familiar with, and need assistance. The other type of help is when you need real beginners information on how to learn and use the basic program features.

GETTING HELP WHILE WORKING IN A PROGRAM

Listed below are 3 methods for obtaining help and information instantly..

1. The universal key in Windows to obtain help is F1. In almost any situation, whether it be in a specific program or just on the plain Windows desktop, using this key will generally bring up a help screen in which you can navigate and probably get answers to the question at hand.
2. The second most important way to get help is to use the help menu on the program in which you are working. While not every window program has a menu at the top of its operating window, the majority of Windows programs do have this listing. Clicking on "HELP" will generally bring up a list of various options. A very common option is an item which is labeled "index." Clicking on this will bring up a bunch of choices for you to select alphabetically or by topic. You can click the help area you are looking for, or generally type in the subject in the field which is presented, to have the program show you what is offered.
3. A third, and largely overlooked methods of obtaining information, is by right-clicking on the item in question. The protocol of right-clicking to obtain information and other features is becoming more and more widespread in Windows and Windows programs.

The three methods presented above can provide you with a tremendous amount of assistance while working at your computer. While these methods do not replace the need to use manuals, they offer the user the opportunity to obtain help very rapidly via a few simple mouse clicks.

The best way to learn more about this, and understand the protocols, is just to try it. So, start clicking away and see what comes up.

PRINTED DOCUMENTATION

Typically, programs come with a very short printed document which includes just about enough information to help you install the program. Today, most installation disks are CD's (or DVD's), and of course, optical disks have lots of space where other material in addition to the program itself can be stored. Sometimes, the complete manual for the program is on the CD and the installation process for the software actually sets up an icon where you can click and have the manual brought up. Some

manufacturers however, just put the manual on the CD and never let you know that it's there. Of course, if you're conversant with exploring the contents of the CD by using Windows Explorer or another file manager, you can take a quick look at the listing of files and generally locating the manual is fairly easy. Once you have the manual located, it will more than likely be in a PDF file, and you can read it on your machine, or print it out using your printer if you so desire. If you feel that you are going to have many reasons to continually use the manual, it probably pays to print it out.

One thing you should be aware of however, is that manuals can often be several hundred pages, and can take a considerable amount of time, paper, and ink to print out. Also, the cost of printing the manual can be substantial if there is lots of color used on the pages. Printing out of a manual can run anywhere from five cents to 20 cents a page, using your own printer, depending upon the complexity and use of color on the pages. Very often, for major programs where there are third party books available, it makes more sense to purchase a ready-made 3rd party manual which will probably have even more information than the manual on disk. This is true mostly of those programs which are very widely used such as Microsoft Word, Corel WordPerfect, Photoshop, and similar programs.

Generally, when the manual is on the program's CD, it is often in a format called PDF, which stands for "portable document format." This format requires Adobe Acrobat reader to view it on your computer. Most computers these days have Adobe Acrobat reader already installed, as it is a very widely used program. And, if you double-click on a file that has a PDF extension, it will automatically launch Acrobat Reader and the document in question will be available for you to read, print, or whatever you would like to do. Adobe Acrobat reader is part of the Adobe program called "Acrobat". This program has become universally used for creating documents which can be distributed widely, and easily read on any computer. The reader portion of the program has been made available by Adobe as a free utility.

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I hope the material presented here will assist you in using your computer in more and better ways. To me, the secret to getting a any job done was never that one had to know everything about everything associated with the task. But, knowing where to look for answers to the things that you aren't familiar with, is the real key to success.

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