About the Tutorial

This is a tutorial on Adobe RoboHelp 2017. Adobe RoboHelp is a Help Authoring Tool (HAT) that allows you to create help systems, e-learning content and knowledge bases. The latest version of RoboHelp is packed with features, which allows you to create Responsive HTML5 layouts that work on any device size.

This tutorial will help the readers in understanding the basics of the program and enable to create help files or documentation for various technical communications.

Audience

Adobe RoboHelp is used by industry professionals looking to create great technical content for their end-users. As such, it does require some knowledge of HTML and other web technologies. Some advanced features such as creation of custom dialog boxes require programming knowledge in Visual Basic, C/C++, Java or JavaScript.

However, newer versions make it easy for anyone to get started without having to write a line of code. Therefore, users of all experience levels can follow this tutorial.

Prerequisites

The reader should have proficient knowledge of navigating your way around the Windows OS (Windows 7 or later) along with good technical knowledge of the software for which the readers are going to prepare the documentation.

Adobe RoboHelp is part of the Technical Communication Suite (TCS). You can purchase a subscription to TCS, which will also give you access to tools such as FrameMaker, Captivate, Acrobat and Presenter. If you are interested only in RoboHelp, the reader should purchase a separate license, which can be either an individual license, a perpetual license as part of the Cumulative Licensing Program (CLP), perpetual license as part of the Transactional Licensing Program (TLP) or an Enterprise Term License Agreement (ETLA).

Prices and licensing options can be checked on the following link – http://www.adobe.com/products/robohelp/buying-guide.html. The reader can also download a fully functional 30-day trial version to test out the software from the following link – https://www.adobe.com/products/robohelp/download-trial/try.html#.

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# Table of Contents

About the Tutorial ......................................................................................................... i
Audience ....................................................................................................................... i
Prerequisites ................................................................................................................... i
Copyright and Disclaimer ............................................................................................ i
Table of Contents .......................................................................................................... ii

1. RoboHelp – Overview ............................................................................................... 1
2. RoboHelp – New Features ....................................................................................... 2
3. RoboHelp – Server ................................................................................................... 3
4. RoboHelp – Workspace Overview .......................................................................... 4
5. RoboHelp – Working with Tabs ............................................................................. 7
7. RoboHelp – Environments ..................................................................................... 13
8. RoboHelp – Keyboard Shortcuts .......................................................................... 14
9. RoboHelp – General Settings .............................................................................. 16
10. RoboHelp – Overview of Projects ...................................................................... 18
    Project Files ............................................................................................................. 18
11. RoboHelp – Creating & Managing Projects ....................................................... 20
12. RoboHelp – Opening a Project ............................................................................ 23
13. RoboHelp – Configuring Project Settings ........................................................... 25
14. RoboHelp – Defining a Chapter Layout ............................................................... 26
15. RoboHelp – Managing Project Files .................................................................... 27
16. RoboHelp – Managing Project Folders ................................................................. 31
17. RoboHelp – Multilingual Authoring ................................................................... 33
18. RoboHelp – Importing PDF Files ........................................................................ 35
19. RoboHelp – Importing & Linking MS Word Docs ............................................ 38
20. RoboHelp – Converting Word Styles ................................................................... 42
21. RoboHelp – Importing DITA Map & XML Files ............................................ 44
    Importing DITA Map Files ..................................................................................... 44
    Importing XML files .............................................................................................. 46
22. RoboHelp – Importing WinHelp Files .................................................................47
   HTML Limitations with HLP Files ...................................................................47
23. RoboHelp – Version Control .........................................................................49
24. RoboHelp – Working with Reports .................................................................51
25. RoboHelp – Generating & Customizing Reports ............................................52
26. RoboHelp – Creating, Saving & Opening Topics ..........................................54
27. RoboHelp – Authoring Topics in XHTML ....................................................57
28. RoboHelp – Creating & Working on Master Pages .......................................58
29. RoboHelp – Managing Topics ........................................................................61
30. RoboHelp – Spell Check, Find & Replace .....................................................63
31. RoboHelp – Ensuring W3C compliance ..........................................................66
32. RoboHelp – Editing .......................................................................................67
33. RoboHelp – Formatting Characters ................................................................69
34. RoboHelp – Formatting Paragraphs ...............................................................71
35. RoboHelp – Borders, Backgrounds & Sounds ..............................................72
36. RoboHelp – Working with Tables ..................................................................75
37. RoboHelp – Working with Lists .....................................................................77
38. RoboHelp – Creating & Editing Variables ....................................................79
39. RoboHelp – Media Rules & Attributes in Styles ............................................81
40. RoboHelp – Managing Style Sheets ..............................................................83
41. RoboHelp – Styling for Style Sheets ..............................................................85
42. RoboHelp – Creating Table Styles ..................................................................87
43. RoboHelp – Creating List Styles ....................................................................89
44. RoboHelp – Creating HTML Styles ..............................................................91
45. RoboHelp – Editing Styles in CSS ...............................................................93
46. RoboHelp – Creating & Printing ToC ...........................................................95
47. RoboHelp – Editing ToCs ...............................................................................97
48. RoboHelp – Managing ToCs ..........................................................................99
49. RoboHelp – Working With Multiple ToCs ................................................................. 101
50. RoboHelp – Creating Indexes & Keywords ................................................................. 102
51. RoboHelp – Editing Index Keywords ........................................................................ 104
52. RoboHelp – Managing Indexes .................................................................................. 106
53. RoboHelp – Automatic Indexing ............................................................................... 107
54. RoboHelp – Creating Multiple Indexes ...................................................................... 110
55. RoboHelp – Customizing, Adding ToC & Index Controls ........................................... 111
56. RoboHelp – Glossaries .............................................................................................. 113
   Glossary Hotspots ........................................................................................................ 115
57. RoboHelp – Creating Text Links for Navigation ......................................................... 116
58. RoboHelp – Creating & Editing Bookmarks ............................................................... 117
59. RoboHelp – Linking Images & Multimedia ................................................................. 118
60. RoboHelp – Linking External Sources ...................................................................... 119
61. RoboHelp – Maintaining & Repairing Links .............................................................. 120
62. RoboHelp – Link Controls ......................................................................................... 121
63. RoboHelp – Working With Text-Only Pop-Ups .......................................................... 125
64. RoboHelp – Create & Edit Browse Sequences ............................................................ 126
65. RoboHelp – Output Search ....................................................................................... 128
66. RoboHelp – Optimize & Configure Search ............................................................... 131
67. RoboHelp – External Content Search ....................................................................... 133
68. RoboHelp – Working With Images ........................................................................... 134
69. RoboHelp – Import Adobe Captivate Demos ............................................................. 137
70. RoboHelp – Adding & Removing Multimedia ............................................................. 138
71. RoboHelp – Adding DHTML Effects ........................................................................ 140
72. RoboHelp – DHTML Triggers & Targets .................................................................. 142
73. RoboHelp – Marquees ............................................................................................... 144
74. RoboHelp – HTML Comments ............................................................................... 145
75. RoboHelp – Working With iFrames ........................................................................... 146
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Conditional Text</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Context-Sensitive Help</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Managing Map IDs</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Dynamic Editing of CST</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Developer Information</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – What’s This Help</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Single-Source Layouts</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Generate DUCC</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Generate Output for MS SharePoint</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Multiscreen Layouts</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – MS HTML, JavaHelp &amp; Oracle Help Layouts</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – EPUB &amp; Kindle Book Outputs</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Review &amp; Collaboration</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Managing Shared Resources</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – ActiveX Controls</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – Forms &amp; Frames</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RoboHelp – HTML Help Controls</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adobe RoboHelp is a popular Help Authoring Tool (HAT) from Adobe. It is used by industry professionals to deliver engaging help content, e-learning resources, organizational policies and knowledge base articles to a wide audience irrespective of device form factor. The latest version of RoboHelp (2017 release) helps you to easily create next-gen Responsive HTML5 layouts, which enable seamless navigation and rich interactivity.

RoboHelp was first created by Gen Kiyooka and released by Blue Sky Software in 1992. Blue Sky Software was acquired by Macromedia, which was subsequently acquired by Adobe in 2005. Adobe RoboHelp 2017 is versioned as 13.0 although technically it is version 21 taking into account the previous versions released under Macromedia.

RoboHelp has evolved from being just a HAT to a versatile tool, which can help you create eBooks and even web sites. RoboHelp can output to a variety of help formats using the following Single Source Layouts (SSls) –

- Responsive HTML5
- eBook
- Microsoft HTML Help
- JavaHelp
- Oracle Help
- Eclipse Help
- Adobe AIR Help
- Standard Word and PDF documentation

One of the biggest challenges faced in content delivery is ensuring that the intended audience is able to view it. RoboHelp allows content creators to create native apps for Android and iOS without the need for any extra software.

With a plethora of new features in the latest release, Adobe RoboHelp remains the industry standard HAT for creating engaging help, e-learning and technical content which addresses the varied needs of the target audience in a dynamic way. It is easy to use – both by seasoned authors as well as by novices.
The 2017 release of RoboHelp packs in many new features. These include –

- Next-generation HTML5 layouts
- Auto-complete
- Thumbnail support
- Favorites in Responsive HTML5 layouts
- Baggage file folder import
- Variable views

Let us understand them in detail.

**Next-generation HTML5 layouts**

The 2017 release of RoboHelp promises to help you create visually engaging borderless HTML5 layouts. These layouts offer a superior search and navigation experience and are preloaded with many features like topic sliders, show/hide widgets, etc. The responsive design enables the content to scale well across screens of different sizes.

**Auto-complete**

Now you can get predictive search results in the search field of the responsive HTML5 output after typing the first few characters. The results appear instantaneously and are contextual without the user having to enter the full search string. The results are ranked based on the frequency of the keyword in the content.

**Thumbnail support**

You can now publish thumbnails of images, which can reduce page loading times, saving bandwidth, while also being mobile friendly. If needed, the user can simply load the larger image by clicking on the thumbnail. It is possible to maintain a standard thumbnail size in order to maintain consistency throughout the content.

**Favorites in Responsive HTML5 layouts**

It is now possible to mark topics as favorites and add custom links with the new Indigo themed Responsive HTML5 layout.

**Baggage File Folder Import**

You can now add multiple baggage files stored in a folder in a single click by adding the folder to the project thereby making it easy to import folders containing support information.

**Variable views**

You can now easily toggle between the variable name and its value by a keyboard shortcut or from the context menu. You can toggle a single variable or all variables to view content exactly as your audience would view it.
Adobe RoboHelp Server is a server based help solution. You can upload your help content on a server, which can then provide real-time end user feedback. It can log data on the queries, which is asked by the users. RoboHelp Server can graphically show how users are navigating around the help system.

You can use an authoring tool to author the content, which can include multiple projects and upload the entire project onto the RoboHelp Server. The RoboHelp Server includes automatic project merging, which allows authors to work on different projects at different schedules and publish all of them to the same server. Authors can also publish projects written in various languages on the same server.

The RoboHelp Server can also interface with database servers such as Oracle or MS SQL Server and generate reports and logs. The response to the user query is relayed back via an Apache HTTP Server.

(Image Source: Adobe RoboHelp 2017 documentation)
The typical RoboHelp workspace comprises of elements called **Pods**, **Panes**, **Bars** and **Windows**. Let us have a look at some of the components of the workspace.

**Quick Access Toolbar**

The Quick Access Toolbar provides access to frequently used commands. It can be customized to access the commands you access the most.

The default commands include: Save All, Copy, Paste, Undo, and Redo.
Tabs

Tabs are logical groups of commands put together. A tab contains commands of related functionality. Tabs are contextual and change depending on the type of content and formatting.

Document Pane

The document pane generally comprises of three rows of tabs as shown in the following screenshot.

These tabs are explained below.

- The first row is the **Tabbed Document Pane**. Each tab comprises of one project. You can work on multiple projects at once and copy paste assets between these projects.

- The second row is the **Design and HTML View Panes**. For any given document, you can toggle between the design you are working on and the HTML code of your design. You can edit the HTML for even finer control. The HTML code is auto-generated as you keep working on the design.

- The third row shows the **Document Area Selectors**. These help you to jump to various sections of the document such as Paragraphs, Headings and Hyperlinks.
Pods

Pods are panes that you can dock anywhere in the workspace to get access to all features, which are logically grouped. For example, the Project Manager pod shows all the components of the project. Pods can be grouped together or can be free floating on the workspace.

You can also make them auto-hide or move them to a different monitor.
5. RoboHelp – Working with Tabs

RoboHelp makes it easy to locate and identify commands associated with a particular function by organizing them into tabs. The tabs are organized in a ribbon similar to the Microsoft Office suite of programs.

The ribbon comprises several tabs, which include –

- File
- Project
- Edit
- Insert
- Review
- Collaborate
- Output
- Tools

Let us understand each of these in detail.

File

Create new projects, open, save the existing project, view recent projects and change program settings.
Project
Create, import, edit, and delete project components such as topics, snippets, tags, and variables. You can save the currently unsaved changes across the project.

Edit
Creating and editing stylesheets, text formatting and content tagging.

Insert
Insert objects such as tables, images, Adobe Captivate content and snippets.

Review
Track changes, accept and reject changes in a document review.

Collaborate
Share project resources across users and enable version control.
Output
Create, search, setup, generate, view and open RoboHelp outputs.

Tools
You can create and view reports. RoboHelp ships with a number of scripts, which you can use to perform certain commands. Select and execute scripts from the Scripts list in this tab.

A pod is a floating or docked window of the workflow or associated functions organized in a logical manner. To open a pod, go to the Project tab, then in the Open section, click on the Pods icon to reveal a list of pods. Select a pod from the list. You can either dock the pod or keep it floating on your desktop. You can also auto-hide the pod or open it as a tabbed document.

RoboHelp includes many types of pods. Some of them include –

- Starter Pod
- Project Manager Pod
- Output Setup Pod

Let us discuss each of these in detail.

**Starter Pod**

The Starter Pod usually appears as a tabbed document but just like any other pod, you can make it float or even dock it. It usually the starting point in the RoboHelp workflow.

The Starter Pod comprises of four sections, which are –

- **Recent Projects** – Shows a list of recently opened projects.
- **Create** – Lets you choose the type of help file you want to create.
- **Import** – Import content from Microsoft Word, Adobe FrameMaker, Adobe PDF files, HTML or other supported formats.
- **Resources** – Contains links to help resources, seminars and knowledge base articles to help you get the most out of RoboHelp.
**Project Manager Pod**

The Project Manager pod contains all the various folders in which you store and edit your project files. The Project Manager pod has default folders for each content type.

For example, all images in the project are stored under the Images folder, videos and sounds are stored under the Multimedia folder, etc.

The Project Manager Pod also contains the **Baggage Files** folder, which contains the indirectly linked files that are part of the project. The baggage files might include –PDF files, PowerPoint presentations, etc. Double-clicking on files within the Baggage Files folder opens the file in its associated application.

**Output Setup Pod**

The Output Setup Pod helps you to view and modify the output of the content based on the targeted device. It contains a hierarchical organization of the different output components such as the Window, Master Pages, Skins, Device Profiles, Screen Layouts, etc.
Right-click on any container to change its properties.

For example – If you want to alter the dimensions of the **MS_HTML** output window, right-click on the MS_HTML container in the Windows folder and select how you want the window to be displayed on the screen.
The arrangement of workspace elements such as windows, pods and other elements is called an environment. Environments can be customized as desired by the user. There can be specific arrangements of windows and pods, which can be saved as an environment.

Environments can then be recalled by selecting the environment from the Workspace menu on the upper right hand corner of the window. Environments are saved in an `.rhs` file, which can be exchanged with other authors.

**Creating and saving an environment**

Arrange all the pods in the workspace. Click on the dropdown arrow next to the Workspace in the upper right hand corner of the RoboHelp window. Click on Save... and select a location and name for the workspace.

![Workspace menu](image)

**Loading a Saved Environment**

Click on the dropdown arrow next to the Workspace in the upper right hand corner of the RoboHelp window and select Load...

Browse to the file location of the `.rhs` file and click on Open to load the environment.

**Deleting an Environment**

To delete an environment, navigate to the location on the disk, where the `.rhs` file was stored and simply delete the `.rhs` file pertaining to that environment.
End of ebook preview

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