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Orientation Topic Type

Orientation topics, also known as *navigation pages*, *jump pages*, or *roadmaps*, serve a dual purpose: they provide a brief introduction to the key concepts, processes, or tasks contained in a main section. In a compiled Help file (a .chm or .hxs file), main sections appear as *book nodes* in the TOC, and they provide links to the subtopics contained in the node. The orientation topic can also include links to reference topics, other types of related topics, and external resources.

Only first-level and second-level book nodes (exclusive of the top-most node) should be orientation topics. Avoid using orientation topics for lower-level nodes, even if they have child topics. In addition, avoid using other forms of navigation pages, such as a table with a list of links, for lower-level nodes. Use the "See Also" subsection in lower-level topics to link to closely related topics in the same node and to related topics outside the node.

Topic Templates

For a representative example of an orientation topic, see the topic template for your product.

- For XNA-based products, use ..\private\ue\build\xslt\examples\groupjump.xml for reference topics or a stripped down version of ..\private\ue\build\xslt\examples\overview.xml.
- For the Xbox 360 and DirectX SDKs, there is a tool for automatically creating these pages for *reference* topics: Jumppage.exe. Jumppage.exe is located in Source Depot in **\xenon\main\ue\tools\exe**. The latest version of a template for orientation topics for *other* types of content is located in Source Depot in **\xenon\main\ue\ueteam\specs\xml\examples**.

Guidelines for Node Organization

There can be no hard and fast rules for organizing nodes on a jump page, given the complex and varied types of documentation that we present to the user. However, there are guidelines that can be applied to a majority of orientation topics:

All Topics

- **Limit list size** - Wherever possible, there should be a maximum of 7-10 nodes listed on a page.
- **Break up long, flat lists** - There are two basic methods for accomplishing this:
  - Determine whether the technology associated with the orientation page should be separated into two or more subject areas, each with its own orientation page.
  - Create high-level nodes (buckets) into which nodes can be organized. For example, you may be able to organize 12 nodes into 3 or 4 high-level nodes.

Reference Topics

- **Arrange in alphabetical order** - As with other types of reference material (encyclopedias, dictionaries, glossaries, and so forth), there is no hierarchy of importance attached to reference topics.

Conceptual Topics

- **Arrange the nodes according to some organizing principle** - For example, beginning to advanced, most recent to deprecated, prerequisite to optional, or even alphabetical if that is the most logical arrangement.
- **State the principle to the reader.** This need only be a brief sentence in the introductory paragraph of the orientation page, but it will be invaluable in orienting the reader to the subject. Or it can be as elaborate as prefacing the other nodes with a "Road Map" or "Getting Started" node. (Does not apply to alphabetical order.)

Related Topics

Topic Types (all)
Topic Templates

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