What Are All These Flare Link Options?
Who Am I?

  • Internationally recognized content creation and delivery consultant.
  • Helps create efficient, flexible content.
  • Certified – Flare, Mimic, ViziApps.
  • Helps make the complex understandable.
Welcome to Linking

» Hyperlinks
» Cross-references
» Topic and Text Popups
» Dropdowns
» Expanding
» Togglers
» Help Controls
Hyperlinks (aka Jump Links)

» Traditional link type.
» Jumps users from start topic to target topic.
» Target topic can open in the same window as the start topic or a new window or frame.
» Demo...
Hyperlinks (aka Jump Links)

» Can jump to bookmark in target topic’s body.
  • Takes users to a place in target topic body without making them read down to that place.
  • Easy to insert bookmarks in the body of a topic.
  • Flare also automatically uses headings as targets.
    – Eliminates need to insert bookmarks unless you *must* point a link inside the body of a paragraph or table.
Hyperlinks (aka Jump Links)

» But hyperlinks have two shortcomings.

  • They point to a place – a target topic or bookmark – but don’t know what that place *is*.
  • The link format isn’t useful in print; we need a page number format.

» The solution is...
Cross-references (aka xrefs)

» Functionally similar to hyperlinks but created differently.

  • Hyperlink – highlight the text to link and specify its target.
    – “For information about sandwiches, see Hoagies.”
  • Xref – leave a blank space in which the xref inserts the link text from the target.
    – “For information about sandwiches, see .” to
    – “For information about sandwiches, see Hoagies.”
Cross-references (aka xrefs)

» The xref text is part of the link and malleable, unlike the hyperlink text.

» Let’s say you type:
  • “For information about sandwiches, see Hoagie.”
  • and hyperlink “Hoagie” to the Hoagie topic.

» If you rename the Hoagie topic Sub, the link still reads:
  • “For information about sandwiches, see hoagie.”
Cross-references (aka xrefs)

» But let’s say you type:
  • “For information about sandwiches, see .”
  • and xref to the Hoagie topic.

» The result is:
  » “For information about sandwiches, see Hoagie.”

» If you rename the Hoagie topic Sub, the xref automatically changes to:
  • “For information about sandwiches, see Sub.”
Cross-references (aka xrefs)

» This eliminates a lot of maintenance if you’re linking within a project that’s in flux.

» Demo...
Cross-references (aka xrefs)

» And an xref changes from link format to page number format in print output.

• From “for info about hoagies” to “for info about hoagies, see page XX”.

• And, in Flare 11, can change its wording to “see ‘above/below’”, “see ‘next page/previous page’”, or the actual page number.
Why Use Hyperlinks or Xrefs?

» When you want to physically move users to related information.

• But this takes users away from their initial topic, which can be confusing if they want to continue reading it.
Hyperlinks or Xrefs?

» Recommendation:

• Use xrefs for links within a project, especially if you’re single sourcing to print as well as online.
• Use hyperlinks for links that go outside a project to external files or URLs.
Topic Popups

» Display the target topic but in a window that pops open *on top of* the start topic.

» A popup’s target is *itself* a topic.
  • So a topic popup can contain anything you’d put in a topic.

» Demo...
Text Popups

» Similar to topic popups except that the target is embedded *in* the topic containing the link.

» Text-only.

» Demo...
Topic and Text Popups

» Be aware that:

- The browser automatically positions a popup, so it always covers *something* in the start topic.
- A popup window's size is fixed, so you may have nearly-empty popup windows in some cases.
  - You can create multiple popup window styles in the Stylesheet Editor and control which style to use for a given popup.
Topic vs. Text Popups

» Topic popups link to a topic; multiple popups can point to the same topic.
  • If the content changes, you only have to change it in one place, the target topic.

» Text popup targets are embedded within the calling topic.
  • If the content changes, you must find and change each instance of that content – far less efficient.
Why Use Popups?

» When you want to keep users on their main topic and bring related information to them.  
  • But this may cover up the material in the main topic to which the popup is referring.

» If you include images or auto-running videos in topics but want to let the users decide whether to see them:  
  • Yes? Click the popup.  
  • No? Ignore the popup.
Dropdowns

» Similar to popups but with two differences:
  
  • The link body *always* appears below the link, so we effectively control where it displays.
  
  • The screen “stretches” to provide space for the body, so a dropdown never covers material the way a popup might.

» Demo...
Why Use Dropdowns?

» When you want to keep users on their main topic and bring related information to them.
  • Without covering the material in the main topic, like a popup can.
Expanding Links

» Like a horizontal dropdown:
  • The link body slides out to the right from the link.
  • Text-only, usually very short.

» Demo...
Why Use Expanding Links?

» When you want to keep users on their main topic and bring related information to them.
  • The text-only nature limits expanding links to things like short glossary definitions.

» Many people dislike expanding links because of how they affect the paragraph formatting when users open and close the link.
Togglers

» Like dropdowns, but togglers can have 2+ link bodies anywhere in a topic.

  • If a dropdown is a lamp switch that turns on one lamp, a toggler is a wall switch that turns on multiple lamps in multiple places.

» Demo...
Why Use Togglers?

» To let *users* control what content is displayed when a topic contains several content types.

  • Including advanced material in a topic but letting users decide whether to display it.
  • Documenting a process whose first five steps are identical but whose remaining steps vary based on some condition, and letting users decide which of the steps to display.
Help Controls

» In the Insert Menu’s Help Control group.

» Let you create a programmatically-controlled Related Topics or See Also list.
  • Insert > Shortcut Control is a MS HTML Help-only option that inserts a link from a help topic to a dialog box in an application – ignore it.
Help Controls

» You can create the lists in three ways.

  • Insert > Related Topics Control – Physically select the topics to include in the list.
  • Insert > Keyword Link – Select 1+ index entries. All topics containing these entries are automatically included in the list.
  • Insert > Concept (A-Link) – Like Keyword Link but uses keywords that do not appear in the index.

» Demo...
Why Use Help Controls?

» To create See Also lists that auto-update if you add, delete, or change topics in the list.
  • But don’t appear in printed output.
  • And requires creating index entries or concept keywords and assigning them to topics.
  • And documentation for the next author.

» So help controls are an interesting, possibly useful feature but marginal.
Summary

» There are many link options beyond the basic hyperlinks and popups that can add power to your projects.
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