

What Are All These Flare Link Options?



Who Am I?

» Neil Perlin – Hyper/Word Services.

- 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
- » Toggilers
- » 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 Toggles?

- » 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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