
Subject: Re: Calling Help Files

Posted by [rivers](#) on Sat, 17 Jan 1998 08:00:00 GMT

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In article <01bd2281\$29a2c2a0\$256af781@kat37t.ia.kp.dlr.de>, "Kerstin Voigt" <voigt@dlr.de> writes:

> Hi,

>

> does anybody know, how I can call a self created help file from within IDL

> 5.0?

> They have the standard Microsoft *.hlp-format (PC environment).

If you have a standard Microsoft .hlp file then it is very easy to call it from within IDL. Do it as follows:

```
IDL> spawn, "start my_help_file.hlp"
```

This may look strange, so let me explain how it works. The "start" command means that your help will run as a separate process, so the IDL "spawn" command will return immediately. The fact that you are "starting" a file, rather than a program, takes advantage of the Windows file type/application association feature. When you "start" a .hlp file it automatically runs whatever application is associated with .hlp files. If your Windows system is configured correctly this will work fine.

Of course, this also works for other file types, for example "http".

The following IDL command will start your default browser (e.g. Netscape or Internet Explorer, depending upon how you have set things up on your system) and display RSI's home page:

```
IDL> spawn, "start http://www.rsinc.com"
```

The nice thing about this is that it will start your browser if it is not already running, but if it is already running it will simply display this new URL. I find this a very convenient way to display help information, e.g.

```
IDL> spawn, "start http://www.mysite.edu/IDL/my_help_file#my_topic"
```

Note that some Windows systems I have seen do not have a default browser correctly configured. Internet Explorer offers an option to let you make it your default browser. If you select this it will configure things correctly. If you want to use Netscape, and it is not configured correctly, go into the NT Explorer View/Folder Options/File Types menu and select "URL Hypertext Transfer Protocol". Select Edit/Open/Edit, set "Application to use ..." to be the full path to Netscape, select "Use DDE" and "DDE Message"="%1" Application=Netscape, Topic=WWW_OpenURL.

Cheers,

Mark

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