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# NSHelpManager Class Reference

User Experience: Help Technologies





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# NSHelpManager Class Reference

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<b>Inherits from</b>	NSObject
<b>Conforms to</b>	NSObject (NSObject)
<b>Framework</b>	/System/Library/Frameworks/AppKit.framework
<b>Availability</b>	Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.
<b>Companion guide</b>	Online Help
<b>Declared in</b>	NSHelpManager.h

## Overview

The `NSHelpManager` class provides an approach to displaying online help. An application contains one `NSHelpManager` object.

## Tasks

### Getting the Help Manager

+ [sharedHelpManager](#) (page 7)

Returns the shared `NSHelpManager` (page 5) instance, creating it if it does not already exist.

### Displaying Help

- [findString:inBook:](#) (page 8)

Performs a search for the specified string in the specified book.

- [openHelpAnchor:inBook:](#) (page 8)

Finds and displays the text at the given anchor location in the given book.

### Dynamically Adding Help Books

- [registerBooksInBundle:](#) (page 9)

Registers one or more help books in the given bundle.

## Configuring Context-Sensitive Help

- + [isContextHelpModeActive](#) (page 6)  
Indicates whether context-sensitive help mode is active.
- + [setContextHelpModeActive:](#) (page 6)  
Specifies whether context-sensitive help mode is active.
- [setContextHelp:forObject:](#) (page 10)  
Associates help content with an object.
- [removeContextHelpForObject:](#) (page 9)  
Removes the association between an object and its context-sensitive help.

## Displaying Context-Sensitive Help

- [contextHelpForObject:](#) (page 7)  
Returns context-sensitive help for an object.
- [showContextHelpForObject:locationHint:](#) (page 10)  
Displays the context-sensitive help for a given object at or near the point on the screen specified by a given point.

## Class Methods

### isContextHelpModeActive

Indicates whether context-sensitive help mode is active.

+ (BOOL)isContextHelpModeActive

#### Return Value

YES when the application is in context-sensitive help mode, NO otherwise.

#### Discussion

In context-sensitive help mode, when a user clicks a user interface item, help for that item is displayed in a small window just below the cursor.

#### Availability

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

#### See Also

+ [setContextHelpModeActive:](#) (page 6)

#### Declared In

NSHelpManager.h

### setContextHelpModeActive:

Specifies whether context-sensitive help mode is active.

```
+ (void)setContextHelpModeActive:(BOOL)contextHelpActive
```

**Parameters**

*contextHelpActive*

YES turns on context-sensitive help, NO turns it off.

**Discussion**

You never send this message directly; instead, the `NSApplication` method `activateContextHelpMode:` activates context-sensitive help mode, and the first mouse click after displaying the context-sensitive help window deactivates it.

When the application enters context-sensitive help mode, the help manager posts an [NSContextHelpModeDidActivateNotification](#) (page 11) to the default notification center. When the application returns to normal operation, the help manager posts an [NSContextHelpModeDidDeactivateNotification](#) (page 11).

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**See Also**

+ [isContextHelpModeActive](#) (page 6)

**Declared In**

`NSHelpManager.h`

## sharedHelpManager

Returns the shared [NSHelpManager](#) (page 5) instance, creating it if it does not already exist.

```
+ (NSHelpManager *)sharedHelpManager
```

**Return Value**

Shared help manager.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**Declared In**

`NSHelpManager.h`

## Instance Methods

### contextHelpForObject:

Returns context-sensitive help for an object.

```
- (NSAttributedString *)contextHelpForObject:(id)object
```

**Parameters**

*object*

Object for which context-sensitive help is sought.

**Return Value**

Context-sensitive help content.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**See Also**

- [setContextHelp:forObject:](#) (page 10)
- [showContextHelpForObject:locationHint:](#) (page 10)

**Declared In**

NSHelpManager.h

**findString:inBook:**

Performs a search for the specified string in the specified book.

```
- (void)findString:(NSString *)query inBook:(NSString *)book
```

**Parameters**

*query*

String to search for.

*book*

Localized help book to search. When `nil`, all installed help books are searched.

**Discussion**

To search for a string in your bundle's localized help book, you could use code similar to the following:

```
NSString *locBookName = [[NSBundle mainBundle] objectForKey:@"CFBundleHelpBookName"];
[[NSHelpManager sharedHelpManager] findString:@"Hello" inBook:locBookName];
```

This is a wrapper for `AHRegisterHelpBook` (which is called only once to register the help book specified in the application's main bundle) and `AHSearch`.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.3 and later.

**Declared In**

NSHelpManager.h

**openHelpAnchor:inBook:**

Finds and displays the text at the given anchor location in the given book.

```
- (void)openHelpAnchor:(NSString *)anchor inBook:(NSString *)book
```

**Parameters**

*anchor*

Location of the desired text.

*book*

Help book containing the anchor. When `nil`, all installed help books are searched.

**Discussion**

To open an anchor in your bundle's localized help book, you could use code similar to the following:

```
NSString *locBookName = [[NSBundle mainBundle] objectForKey:@"CFBundleHelpBookName"];
[[NSHelpManager sharedHelpManager] openHelpAnchor:@"anchor1" inBook:locBookName];
```

This method is a wrapper for `AHRegisterHelpBook` (which is called only once to register the help book specified in the application's main bundle) and `AHLookupAnchor`.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.3 and later.

**Declared In**

`NSHelpManager.h`

**registerBooksInBundle:**

Registers one or more help books in the given bundle.

```
- (BOOL)registerBooksInBundle:(NSBundle *)bundle
```

**Parameters**

*bundle*

The bundle for additional help books. Books in the main bundle are automatically registered.

**Return Value**

YES if registration is successful, NO if the bundle doesn't contain any help books or if registration fails.

**Discussion**

You use `registerBooksInBundle:` to register help books in, for example, a plug-in bundle. The `Info.plist` in the bundle should contain a help book directory path, which specifies one or more folders containing help books.

The main bundle is automatically registered by `openHelpAnchor:inBook:` (page 8) and `findString:inBook:` (page 8).

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.6 and later.

**Declared In**

`NSHelpManager.h`

**removeContextHelpForObject:**

Removes the association between an object and its context-sensitive help.

```
- (void)removeContextHelpForObject:(id)object
```

**Parameters**

*object*

Object to disassociate from its help content.

**Discussion**

If *object* does not have context-sensitive help associated with it, this method does nothing.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**See Also**

- [setContextHelp:forObject:](#) (page 10)

**Declared In**

NSHelpManager.h

**setContextHelp:forObject:**

Associates help content with an object.

```
- (void)setContextHelp:(NSAttributedString *)help forObject:(id)object
```

**Parameters**

*help*

Help content to associate with *object*.

*object*

Object to associate with *help*.

**Discussion**

When the application enters context-sensitive help mode, if *object* is clicked, *help* appears in the context-sensitive help window.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**See Also**

- [removeContextHelpForObject:](#) (page 9)

**Declared In**

NSHelpManager.h

**showContextHelpForObject:locationHint:**

Displays the context-sensitive help for a given object at or near the point on the screen specified by a given point.

```
- (BOOL)showContextHelpForObject:(id)object locationHint:(NSPoint)point
```

**Parameters**

*object*

Object for which context-sensitive help is sought.

*point*

Screen location at which to display the help content; it's usually under the cursor.

**Return Value**

YES when help content is successfully displayed. NO if help content is not displayed (for example, when there is no context-sensitive help associated with *object*).

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**See Also**

- [contextHelpForObject:](#) (page 7)

**Declared In**

NSHelpManager.h

## Notifications

### **NSContextHelpModeDidActivateNotification**

Posted when the application enters context-sensitive help mode. This typically happens when the user holds down the Help key.

The notification object is the help manager. This notification does not contain a *userInfo* dictionary.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**Declared In**

NSHelpManager.h

### **NSContextHelpModeDidDeactivateNotification**

Posted when the application exits context-sensitive help mode. This happens when the user clicks the mouse button while the cursor is anywhere on the screen after displaying a context-sensitive help topic.

The notification object is the help manager. This notification does not contain a *userInfo* dictionary.

**Availability**

Available in Mac OS X v10.0 and later.

**Declared In**

NSHelpManager.h



# Document Revision History

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This table describes the changes to *NSHelpManager Class Reference*.

Date	Notes
2009-06-21	Updated for Mac OS X v10.6. Added <code>registerBooksInBundle:</code> method which can be used to add help books in plug-in bundles.
2009-02-04	Removed all references to using Interface Builder.
2007-03-24	Made editorial improvements.
2006-05-23	First publication of this content as a separate document.

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