

All You Need to Know About Capturing Screens

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**Long Beach, CA March 25-28, 2007
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What we'll cover in this session

- Recommendations on when and how to use screenshots in your user assistance
- Potential pitfalls
- The basic procedure for capturing screens
- Five golden rules for capturing screens successfully
- How screen capture tools save labor and add value
- Survey of popular screen capture tools

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When/why should I use screenshots?

- To identify the appearance and/or location of a control
- To show and explain the layout of a screen
- To demonstrate or explain a difficult technique or concept
- To show a correct selection or text entry
- To confirm the user has displayed the correct dialog box or screen (in tutorials)

Above all:

- **Only use a screenshot if it adds real value**

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Identifying the appearance and location of a control

- To zoom in or out, click the **Zoom In (+)** or **Zoom Out (-)** button next to the **Zoom** box.



Just enough for easy recognition and location of control

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Showing and explaining the layout of a screen – annotated screenshot

The Document! X Content File editor user interface is arranged as follows:

1 **Menu and Tool Bars:** Provide access to Document! X functionality. The [IDE Toolbar Reference](#) topic contains a full reference for the available menu and toolbar commands.

2 **Member Tree:** Lists the members contained in the item associated with the content file. Selecting an item on the tree will select it for editing.

3 **Content Menu:** Lists all of the available content types for the selected member. The top group in the content menu lists any available Full Page Edit views available (a Full Page Edit view is illustrated in the screen shot).

4 **Edit Area:** Is the area in which the selected content can be edited. When editing in Full Page Edit mode, the **Summary{ }**, **Remarks{ }** etc. sections indicate the editable

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Numbers clearly identify main regions of the screen

Demonstrating a concept

2 Choose Tools > Touchup Text > Find First Suspect. The first suspect word is highlighted on the page, and its original bitmap image appears in the Suspect Image window.

Suspect word as it appears in the Suspect Image window (left) and as it appears highlighted on the page (right)

Screenshot illustrates and strongly reinforces the text

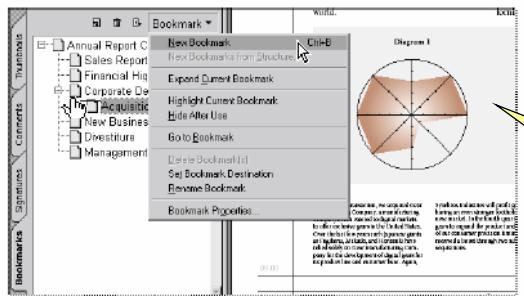
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Showing a correct selection

Creating bookmarks

Bookmarks generated from a table of contents are usually adequate to navigate through a document. There may be times, however, when you will want to add bookmarks that point to specific sections to draw the reader's attention to them.



Creating a new bookmark

Screenshot provides graphical instructions

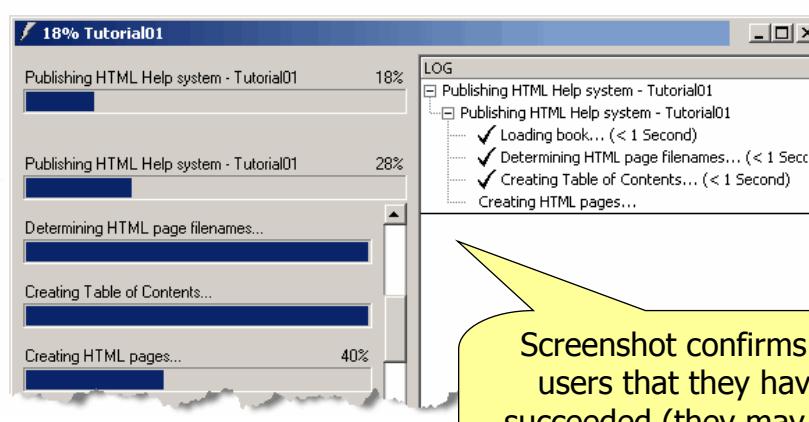
To create a new bookmark in the current document:

- 1 Click the Bookmarks tab in the navigation pane to bring the Bookmarks palette to the front.
- 2 Click the bookmark under which you want to place the new bookmark. If you don't

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Confirming the user has displayed the correct dialog box

A progress dialog will display as the Book is published to [HTML Help](#).



Screenshot confirms to users that they have succeeded (they may not have known what a progress dialog looks like)

When screenshots can cause problems...

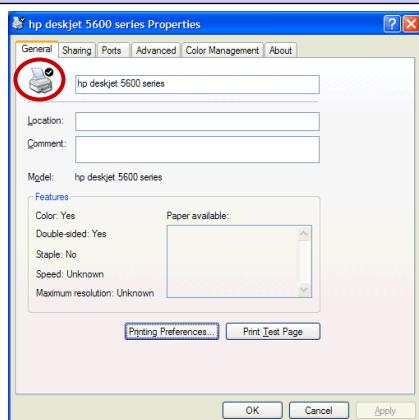
- Developers make late changes to the screens
- The screens need to be localized for many different countries

Possible solution:

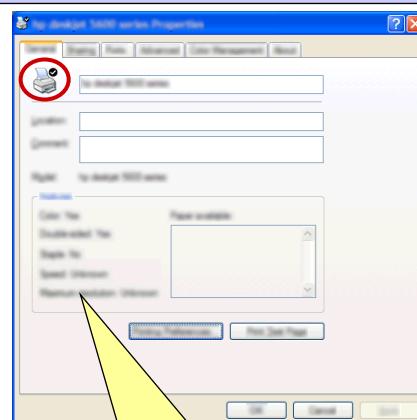
- Blur or “greek out” the text

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Example: Blurred text



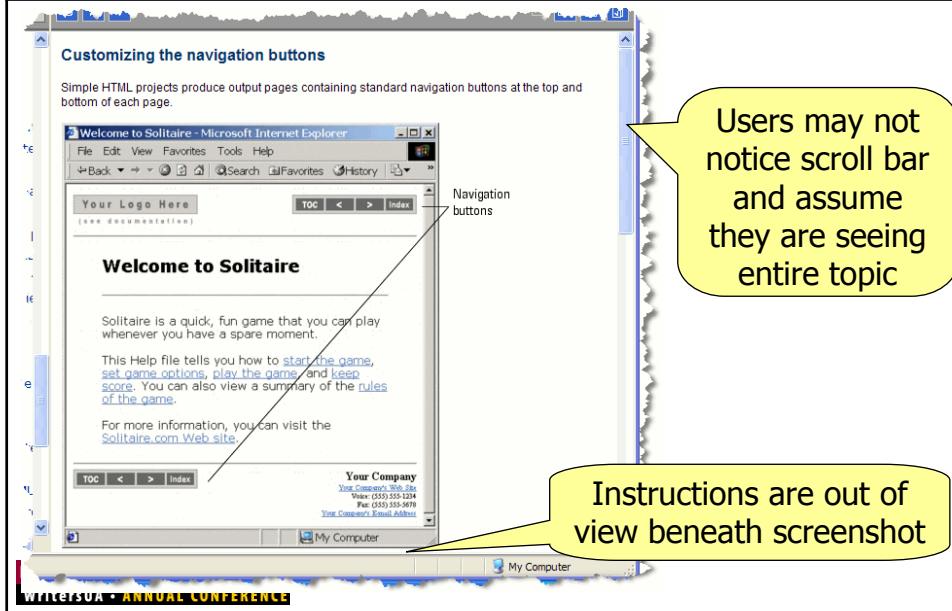
Original screen capture



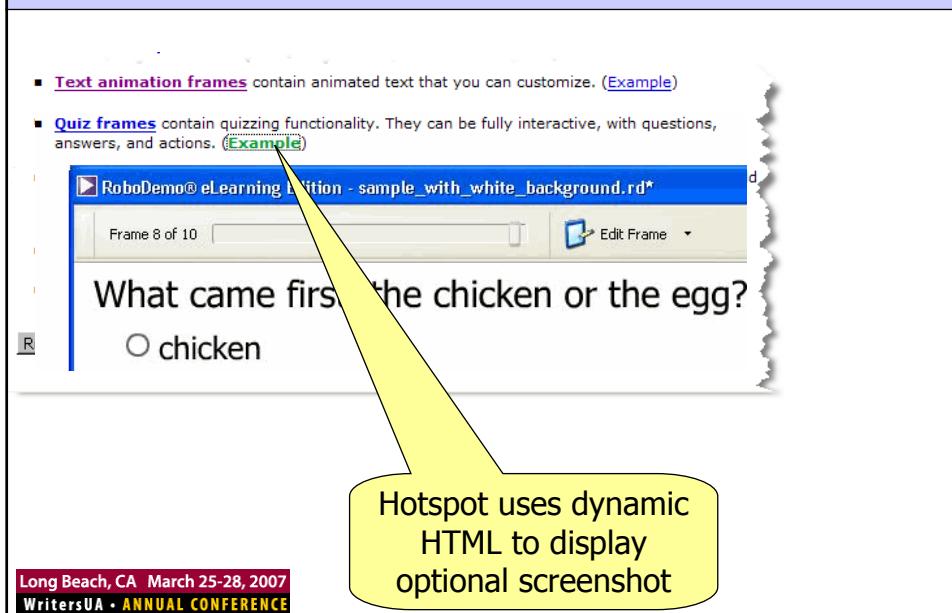
Localized text is selectively blurred – other dialog elements remain sharp

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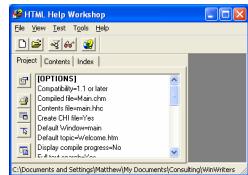
Another potential pitfall



Possible solution



The basic screen capture process (1)



- Capturing a window:
 1. Press <ALT>+<Print Screen>
 2. Paste the Clipboard contents into an image editor
 3. Optionally: resize the image (only necessary for onscreen presentation)
 4. Optionally: reduce the color depth to 256 colors
 5. Save as a file

Demo

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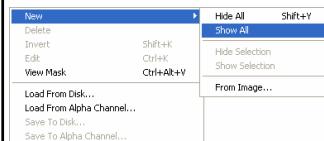
The basic screen capture process (2)



- Capturing a control or region
 1. Press <ALT>+<Print Screen>
 2. Paste the Clipboard contents into an image editor
 3. **Crop to the required region, optionally applying edge effects**
 4. Optionally: Reduce the color depth to 256 colors
 5. Save as a file

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The basic screen capture process (3)

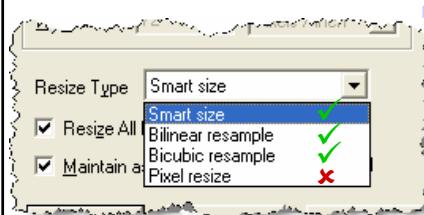


- Capturing a cascading menu
- 1. Press <Print Screen>
- 2. Paste the Clipboard contents into an image editor
- 3. Crop to the cascading menu
- 4. Carefully remove the background
- 5. Reduce the color depth to 256 colors
- 6. Save as a file
- Note that the cursor has **not** been included in any of the last three screenshots

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Resizing screenshots

- Reasons to decrease the dimensions of a screenshot
 - Reduce screen real estate consumed
 - Avoid confusion with real screen



- For best quality of resulting image:
 - Use millions of colors (24- or 32-bit) before resizing
 - Use an anti-aliasing resize method

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Resized screenshots

The image shows three side-by-side screenshots of the HTML Help Workshop application window. The top title bar for all three windows reads "HTML Help Workshop". The leftmost window is labeled "Original Image" and shows the standard Windows-style scroll bars on the right and bottom. The middle window is labeled "Smart Resize" and shows scroll bars only on the right. The rightmost window is labeled "Pixel Resize" and shows scroll bars only on the bottom. All three windows display the same "OPTIONS" panel with various settings like Compatibility, Compiled file, Contents file, Create CHI file, Default Window, and Default topic.

Original Image

Smart Resize

Pixel Resize

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Selecting an image file format

- BMP
 - Windows bitmap
 - Millions of colors
 - No compression
- JPG
 - Format designed for digital photos
 - Millions of colors
 - Lossy compression
- GIF
 - CompuServe Graphics Interchange format
 - 256 colors
 - Lossless compression
- **PNG**
 - Portable Networks Graphics
 - Millions of colors
 - Lossless compression

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Five golden rules of screen capture...

Rule 1: Color depth matters

- The color depth of your screen at capture time determines the color depth of screenshot
- Set your screen to its normal color depth – example: HighColor 16-bit (65,000 colors)
- Optional: During or after the capture, reduce the screenshot's color depth to 8-bit (256 colors)

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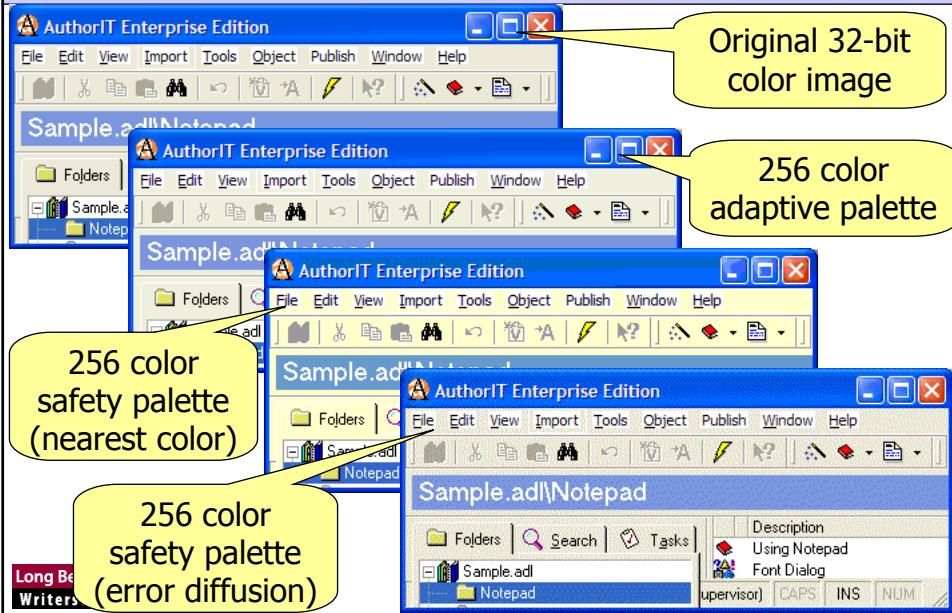
Five golden rules of screen capture

Rule 2: Use an adaptive (optimized) palette, unless your users have 256-color displays

- 256 colors are normally more than enough to represent a screen accurately
- Using the Netscape (safety) palette may result in dithering or color inaccuracies

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Example: Effect of using different palettes



Five golden rules of screen capture (continued)

Rule 3: Screen resolution **doesn't** matter

- You are capturing pixels
- The number of pixels that make up a screen element does not alter when you change the screen resolution

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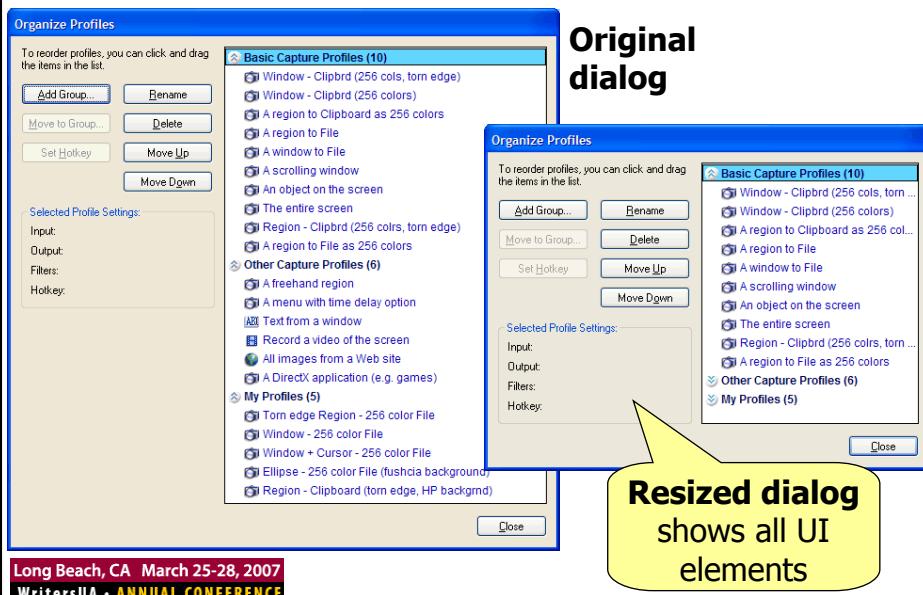
Five golden rules of screen capture

Rule 4: Minimize the size of windows and dialogs before you capture them

- If possible, reduce the size of a window or dialog as much as you can without:
 - losing vital information
 - making it unrecognizable to the user

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Example: Resized window



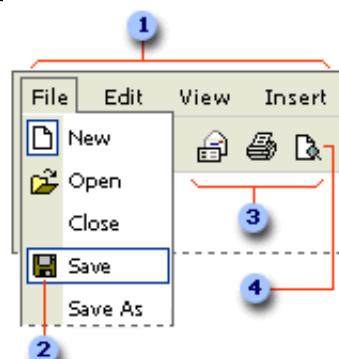
Five golden rules of screen capture (continued)

Rule 5: Capture only as much of the screen as the user needs to see

- Always aim to minimize the dimensions of the screen capture
- Exclude screen clutter that will distract the user from the main focus

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Example: Cropping to the main focus



- ① Menu bar
- ② Menu command
- ③ Toolbar
- ④ Button

- Dashed line indicates cropping
- Cropped screenshot shows all key elements of menu bar and toolbar

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What I look for in a screen capture tool: Minimum requirements

- Option to include the cursor (or easily add it post-capture)
- Support for capturing windows, objects, cascading menus, and rectangular regions (with precision)
- Automatic reduction of color depth using a specific palette
- Automatic addition of border or edge effects
- Automatic default to a specified file format when saving file



What I look for in a screen capture tool: Nice to have

1. Option to save capture to a file without user intervention
2. Ability to capture individual buttons
3. Option to convert to a specified image resolution automatically
4. Ability to capture non-rectangular regions such as ellipses and polygons
5. Ability to capture scrolling windows
6. Built-in image editing

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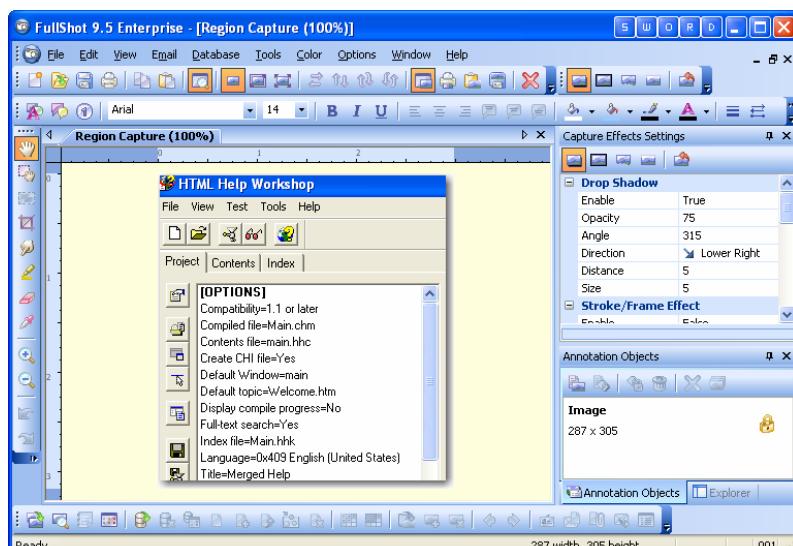
Screen capture tools

Let's look at:

- **FullShot** – Inbit
- **MadCap Capture** – Madcap Software
- **Paint Shop Pro** – Corel
- **RoboScreenCapture** – Adobe
(Bundled with Adobe RoboHelp)
- **SnagIt** – TechSmith
- **TNT Screen Capture** – EC Software

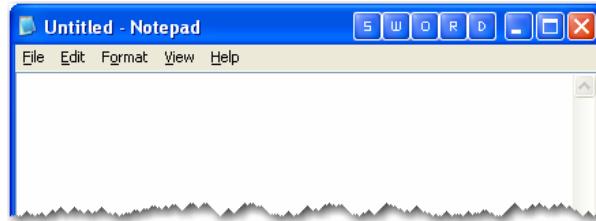
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FullShot (Enterprise Edition)



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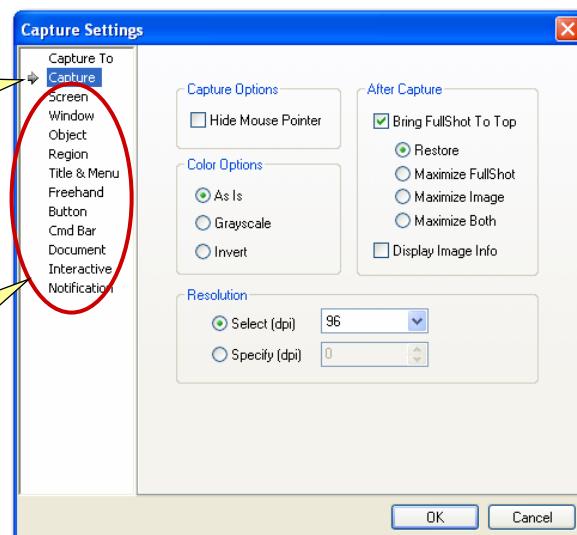
FullShot's capture method



- Capture buttons automatically added to active window
- Each button activates a different capture type (Window, Region, etc.)
- Hotkeys can be used as an alternative

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FullShot's Capture Settings dialog



General settings effecting all captures

Type-specific settings

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FullShot summary

For:

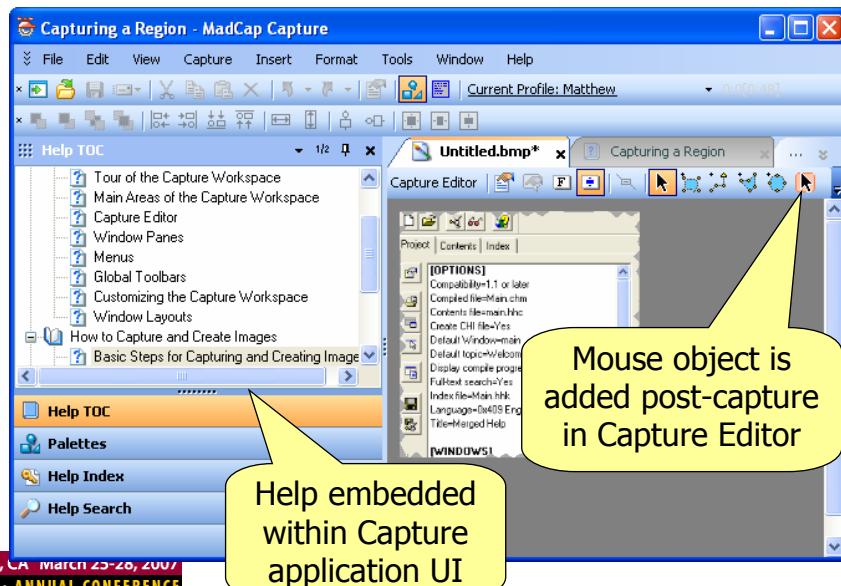
- ease of capture
(using title bar buttons)
- wide range of capture shapes and effects
- supports concurrent editing of multiple screen captures

Against:

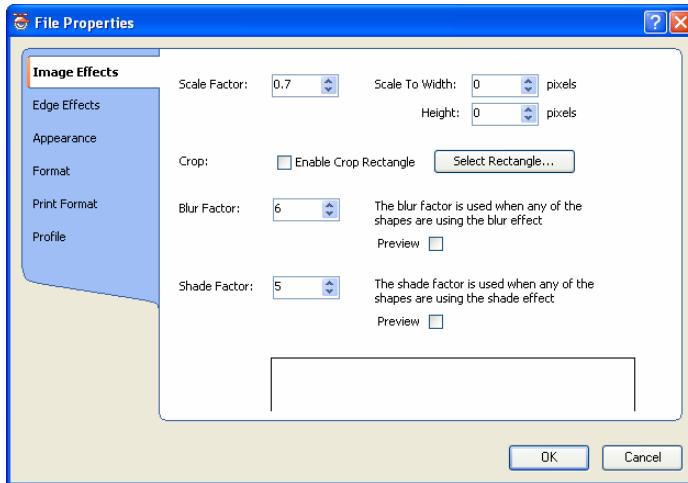
- can't save capture settings as named profiles
- no magnified view of the pointer area for precise selection of capture regions
- no support for capturing buttons in the Standard Edition

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MadCap Capture



MadCap Capture File Properties dialog



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MadCap Capture summary

■ **For:**

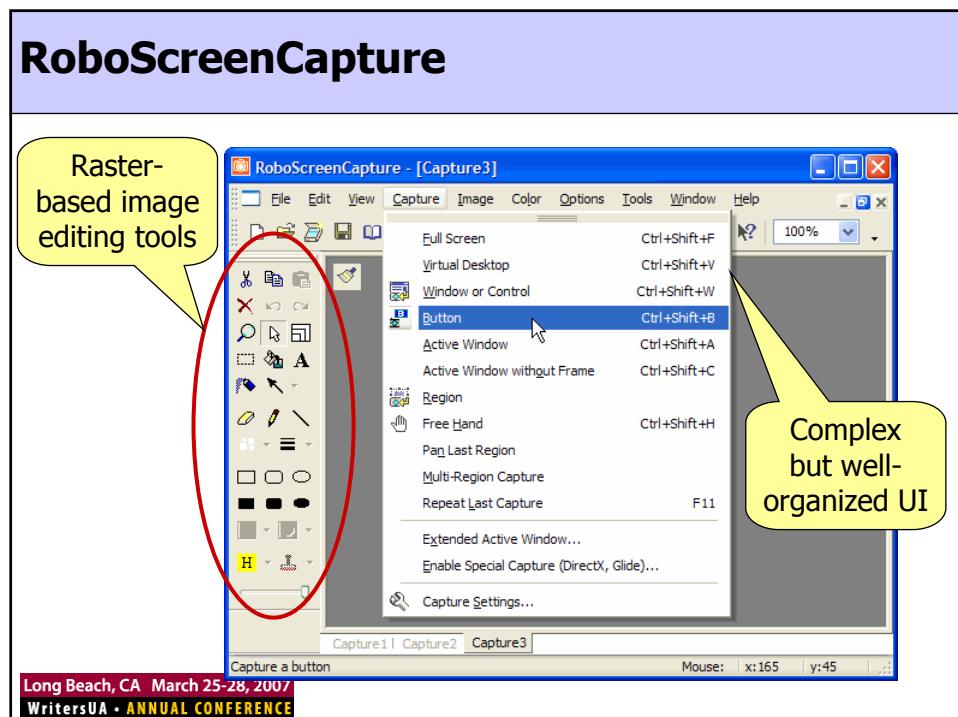
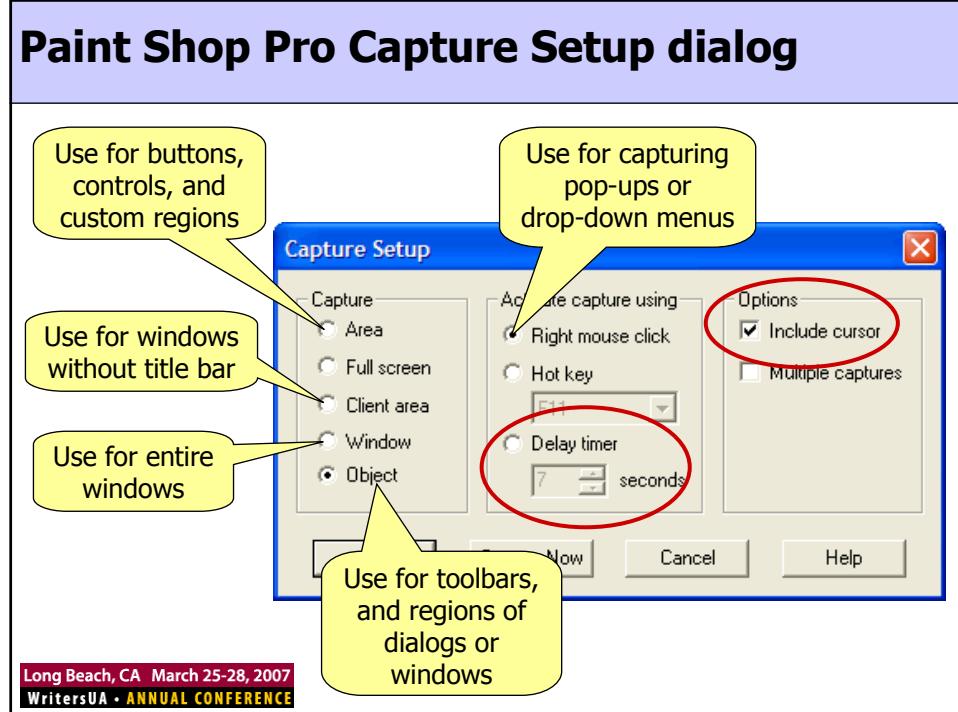
- saves coordinates of Region capture so that it can be recaptured in the future
- great support for saving capture settings as Profiles
- added callouts and objects saved in vector format

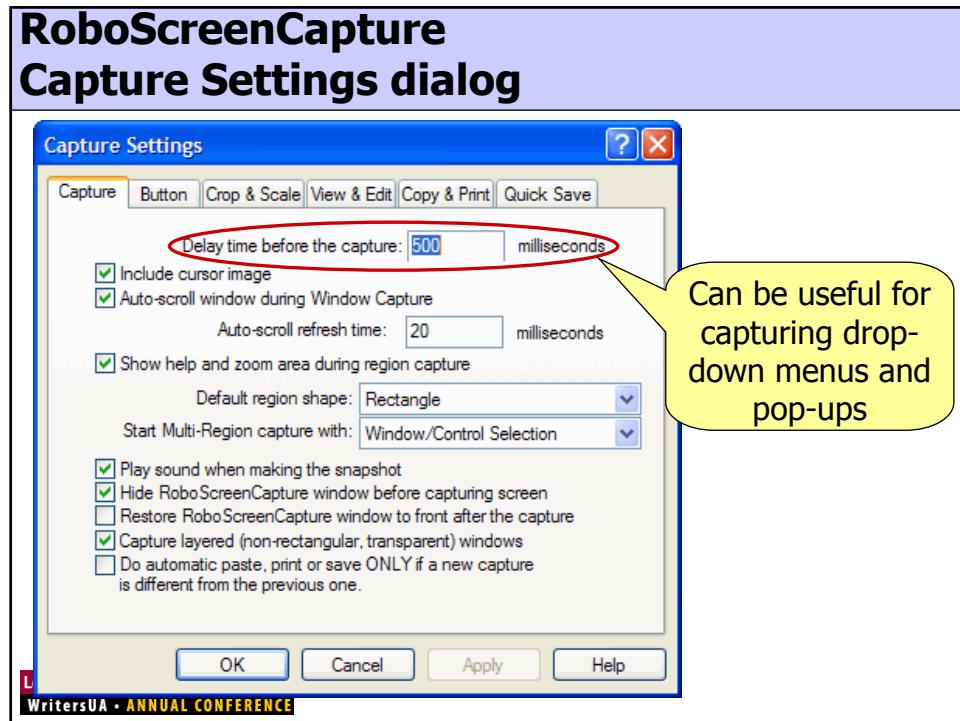
■ **Against:**

- most capture types require MadCap Capture window to be opened first
- no magnified view of the pointer area for precise selection of capture regions
- Fairly complex UI

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RoboScreenCapture summary

■ **For:**

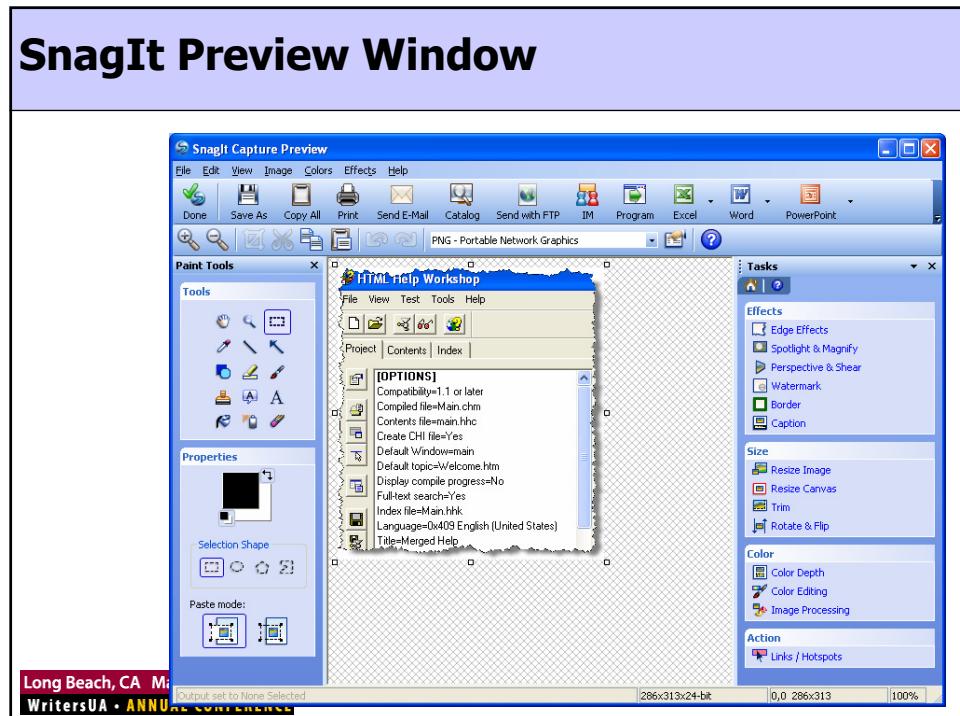
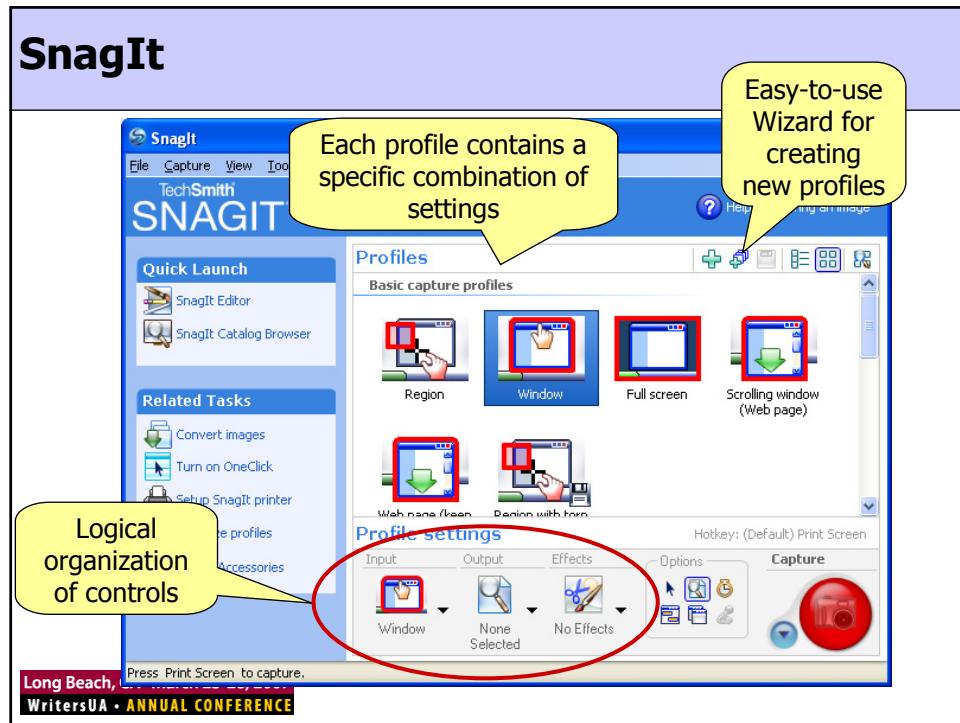
- wide range of capture options including capture of individual buttons and repeat last capture
- high level of control over color depth, resolution, and compression
- precise selection of capture region using arrow keys

■ **Against:**

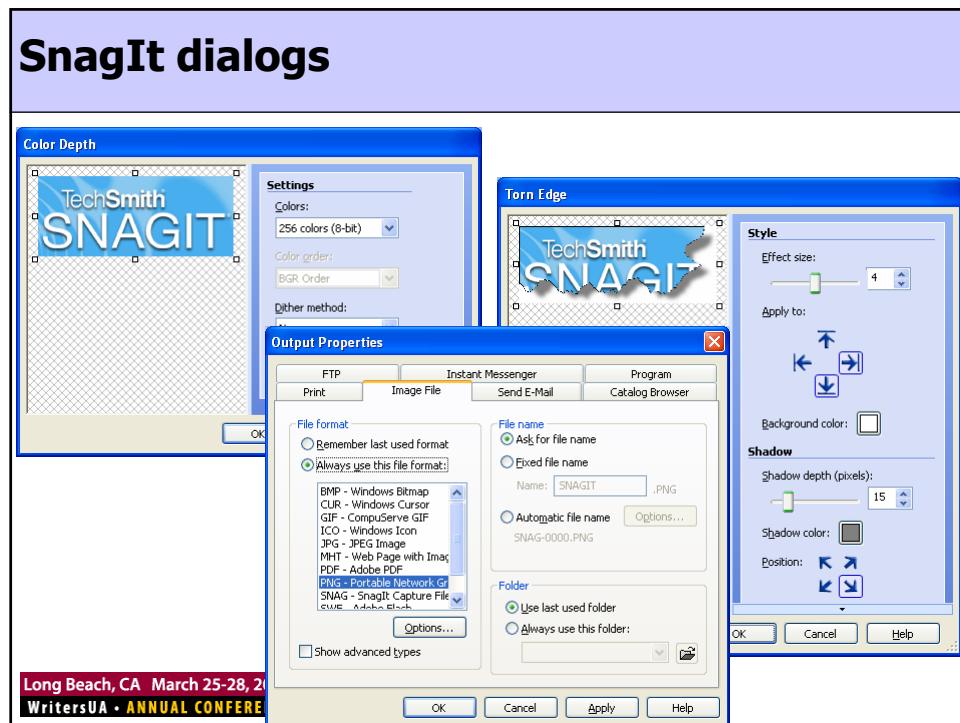
- no support for special edge effects
- can't save capture settings as named profiles
- no support for true freehand region

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SnagIt summary

■ **For:**

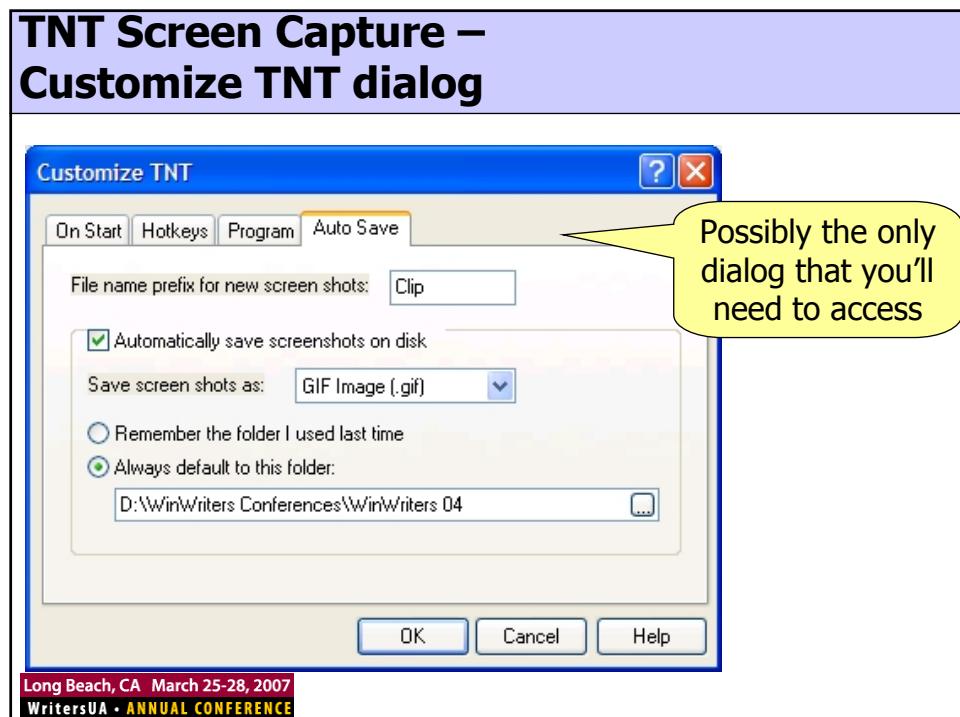
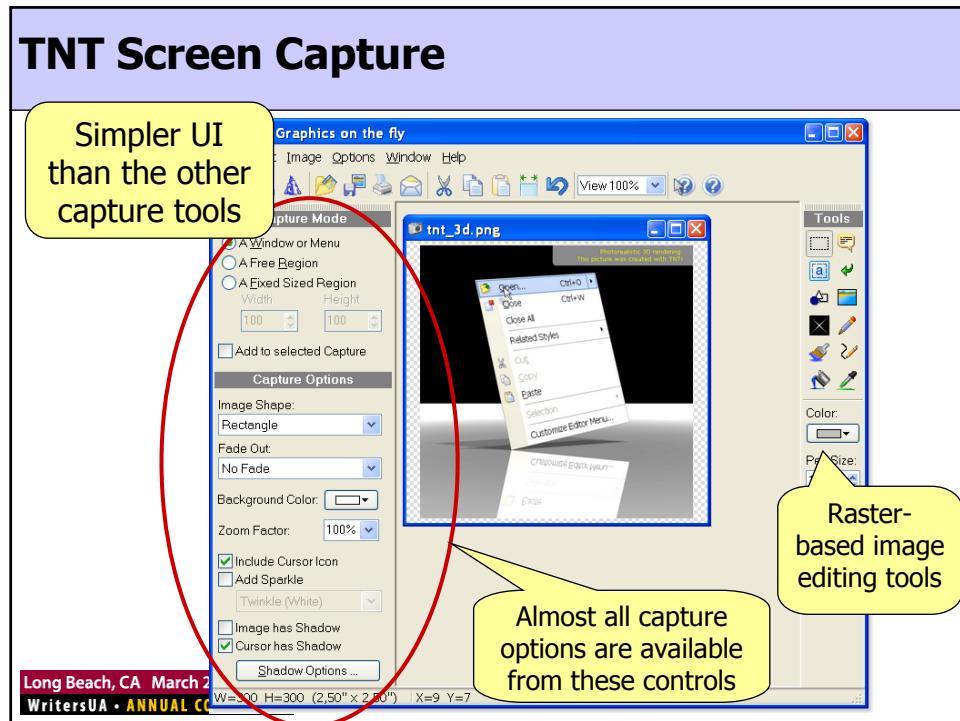
- exceptionally well-designed interface and workflow
- comprehensive options for capturing, standardizing, and adding effects to images
- bundled tools include powerful vector-based image editor and file management utility

■ **Against:**

- may offer more features than required by some user assistance specialists
- rather lame capture sound effect

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TNT Screen Capture summary

- **For:**

- ease of use
- wide range of capture shapes and effects
- precise selection of capture region
- online Help that uses Training Card functionality to operate as a wizard

- **Against:**

- no support for choosing a specific color palette
- no support for capturing individual buttons
- can't capture multiple cascading menus in a single operation

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Further reading

- Review of Screen Capture Tools
(Matthew Ellison)
<http://www.winwriters.com/articles/capturetools/>
- http://desktoppub.about.com/od/screencaptures/Screen_Captures.htm
- Guide for academic textbooks
 - screen captures
(Prentice Hall)
http://www.prenhall.com/author_guide/general/screen.html
- The Web-Safe Color Dilemma
(Lynda Weinman)
<http://www.lynda.com/hex.html>

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Questions?

Please complete your evaluation
forms – thank you

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