

# Adobe AIR Help

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 [grainge.org/pages/authoring/air/air.htm](http://grainge.org/pages/authoring/air/air.htm)

## What is Adobe AIR?

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It is a development tool that is used to create many cross platform browser independent applications. What Adobe have done is use this tool to create help as an application. The help gets installed in Program Files and requires the AIR Runtime to be installed.

You can learn more about Adobe AIR as a development tool [here](#).

## Why introduce this new format?

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Platform and browser independence is the short answer.

- The locally installed version runs in its own browser on Windows, Mac and Linux and looks and works exactly the same way on all three platforms. This is a huge benefit for many software developers.  
[Click here](#) to download the AIR runtime for your operating system. Note that on Linux the AIR Runtime is no longer supported after Version 2.6. AIR Help will still run on Linux using Version 2.6.
- There is also a browser based version that is supported in Internet Explorer, Firefox or Safari although there will be some appearance differences in those browsers. The functionality is different too, more about that later. This format is provided for when the help must be server based.

## Locally installed AIR help

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The .AIR file that RoboHelp generates is not what the user accesses when they view the help. The .AIR file is an installer that installs an application that is the help. The help is opened by running the exe file that the .AIR file installs. In the same way that AIR is used to produce applications, RoboHelp uses it to create the help as an application.

## Key Features

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- Users can add comments to the help topics.
- They can be notified an updated version of the help is available.
- Authors can include RSS feeds. Users can add their own.
- Favourites can be defined.
- Different templates offer different features such as search results showing context.
- Comments can be moderated and skins can be edited.

## Browser Based AIR Help

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To meet the needs of web applications and avoid the logistics of installing help locally for large numbers of users, a browser based version of AIR help is available. Essentially it is webhelp with an AIR theme and skin.

## What is different?

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- Commenting is not available.
- Favourites are not available.
- The appearance may vary according to the browser used.

## Comments

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One of the key features of AIR Help is that users can record comments on topics and they can share these with other users. Locally installed AIR help was originally designed with two distinct groups in mind, users and reviewers and commenting had to be set up in specific ways for each group. As I had hoped, this distinction was removed in RoboHelp 9 and the setting up comments is easier and moderation has been introduced. See the RoboHelp 9 AIR page for information.

## Sorting Comments

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When a user makes a comment, the date of the comment, the user name and the topic are automatically recorded and can be used for sorting the comments.

## Comment Moderation

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RoboHelp 9 introduced moderation of comments. Moderation is controlled by the use of a password. If RoboHelp Server is used then moderators can be authenticated through their logon.

## AutoUpdating

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This feature is only applicable to locally installed AIR help as browser based AIR help will be updated by the author or a system administrator.

When the author generates the help, they can set it to check a specified location for an updated version.

This creates some practical issues.

1. The user has to have admin rights to install the update. Not all users will have admin rights.
2. The specified location has to be accessible to the user and not blocked by a corporate firewall.

## What if users do not have admin rights?

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Their system administrator will need to install the update.

## What if a firewall prevents access?

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If you have users who will be behind a firewall, the only solution is to generate a special AIR file for them where the specified location is behind their firewall.

If your application is one that is sold to numerous organisations who all operate behind their own firewalls, you may need to consider using browser based AIR help installed behind their firewalls. This is a design limitation and what is needed is the ability for system administrators to specify the update location during installation.

## Donations

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If you find the information and tutorials on my site save you time figuring it out for yourself and help improve what you produce, please consider making a [small donation](#).

## Topic Revisions

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Revisions