madcap software

USER GUIDE

MADCAP CENTRAL

Topics Guide

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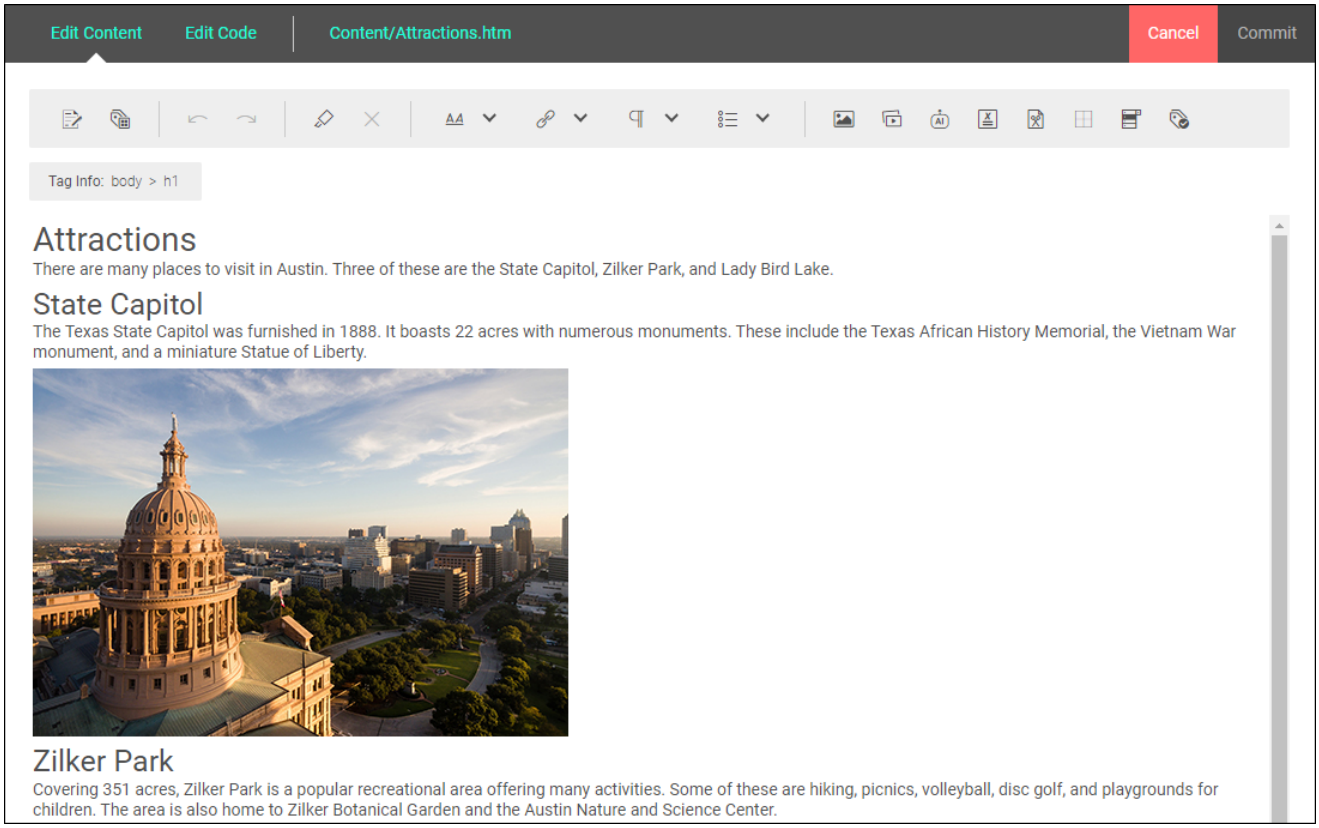
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Supported In:

A topic is a file containing information about a particular subject. Topics might be the most important part of a project. Everything else is contained within topics (e.g., cross-references, text, images) or points toward topics (e.g., tables of contents). The very reason end users open a Help system or manual is to find information, a little direction. They find that help within individual topics.



General Information

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- "Size of Topics" on page 9
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Main Activities

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CHAPTER 2

General Information for Topics

There are various pieces of general information you should know if you plan to use this feature.

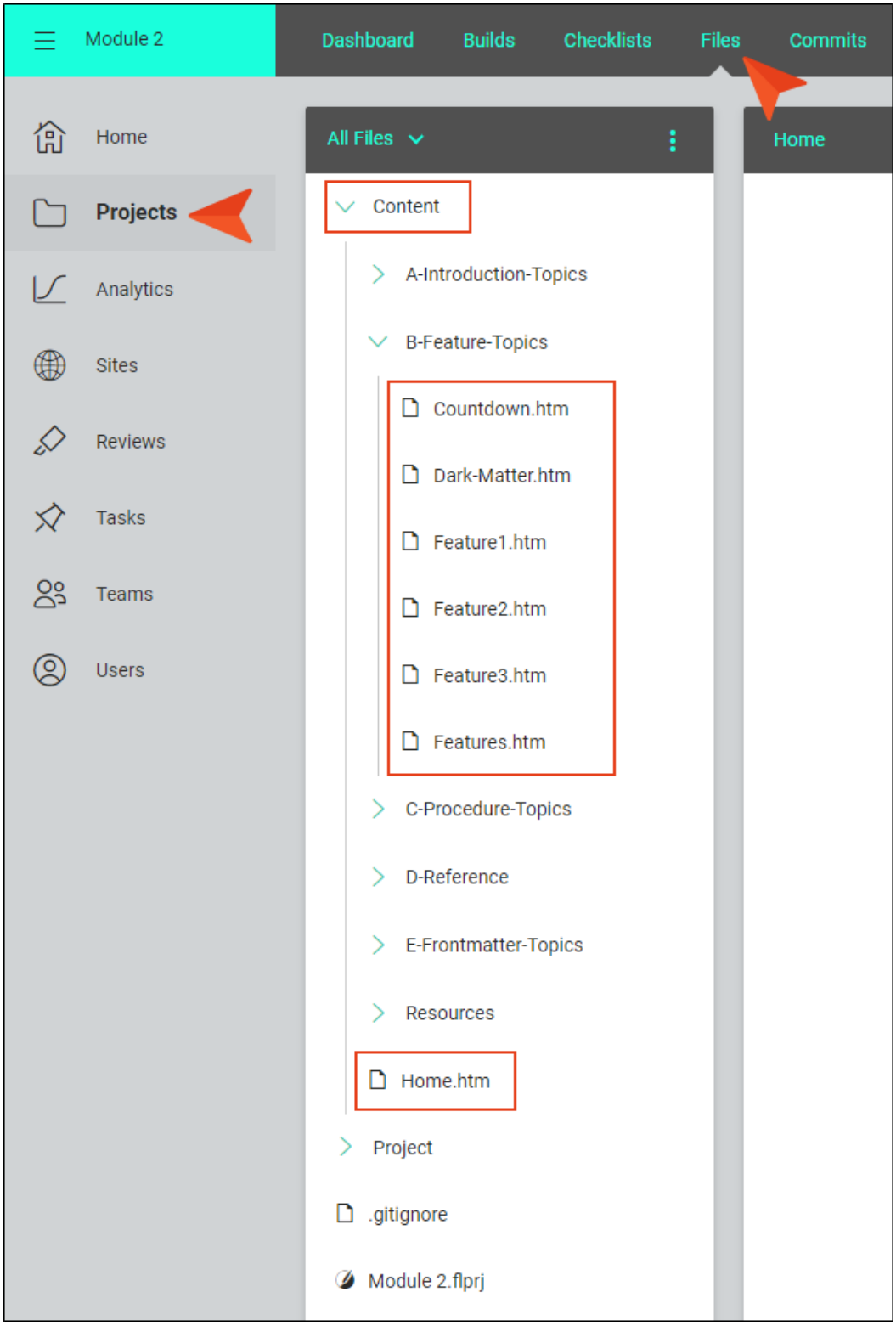
This chapter discusses the following:

Topic-Based Authoring 7
Size of Topics 9
Topic Content 10

Topic-Based Authoring

Each topic is a separate XHTML file with an .htm extension. This enables you to take advantage of topic-based authoring. In other words, rather than creating a few very long documents (as you might do when working in a program such as Adobe FrameMaker or Microsoft Word), you create many small documents and then piece those separate files together to produce various outputs.

Individual topic files are stored in the Projects > Files page, within the Content folder. Topics can be stored either at the root level or in custom folders that you create.


Module 2
Dashboard
Builds
Checklists
Files
Commits
Home
Projects
Analytics
Sites
Reviews
Tasks
Teams
Users
All Files
Home
Content
A-Introduction-Topics
B-Feature-Topics
Countdown.htm
Dark-Matter.htm
Feature1.htm
Feature2.htm
Feature3.htm
Features.htm
C-Procedure-Topics
D-Reference
E-Frontmatter-Topics
Resources
Home.htm
Project
.gitignore
Module 2.flprj

Size of Topics

It's important to keep the size of your topics in mind when you are creating and editing them.

For online output, topics are like pages on a well-designed website. They should not be too long, but should be long enough to provide useful information. There is no specific rule for determining how long to make your topics. It is mostly a matter of common sense. When you are developing a topic, ask yourself if it is something that you would find useful and easy to read.

For print-based output, topics can be strung together in the output to form larger chapters. It is recommended that you try to use relatively small topics when working in Central—usually no more than a few pages in output. Although you can certainly create a very long topic that holds all of the content for an entire chapter or manual, smaller topics allow you to take full advantage of Central's many powerful single-sourcing features. For example, with small topics, you can reuse them when generating many different outputs, all from the same project. You might want to use some topics in some outputs, but not in others. With large documents, that is very difficult, if not impossible to do.

Another reason to keep your topics (and snippets) relatively short has to do with reviews. If your file size is too large, it won't load in the Central review editor.

Topic Content

After you create a topic, you can add to it almost anything you want—text, tables, formatting, cross-references, images, multimedia, etc. It all depends on the needs of your audience. A topic can contain simple text, or it can contain a combination of many elements. A topic does not even need to contain much text at all; for example, you could simply use a topic to hold a video for online output or a few lines of text for the title page in print-based output. You are only limited by what you can do with XML.

If you are not familiar with XML, that's okay. You can use the easy editor interface to edit topics in Central, working much like you would in a program such as Microsoft Word. Central creates the XML tags behind the scenes for you.

CHAPTER 3

Main Activities for Topics

Some activities are particularly common and important when it comes to this feature.

This chapter discusses the following:

Adding Topics 12
Opening Topics 18

Adding Topics

You can add new topics to your project in Central.

Permission Required?

Editing content and project files is an activity available to users with the Author status. By default, users with Author status have the following permissions set:

-

  If this is deselected, then viewing files in a read-only mode is allowed. On the left side of the page, the Files vertical three-dot menu is not available.

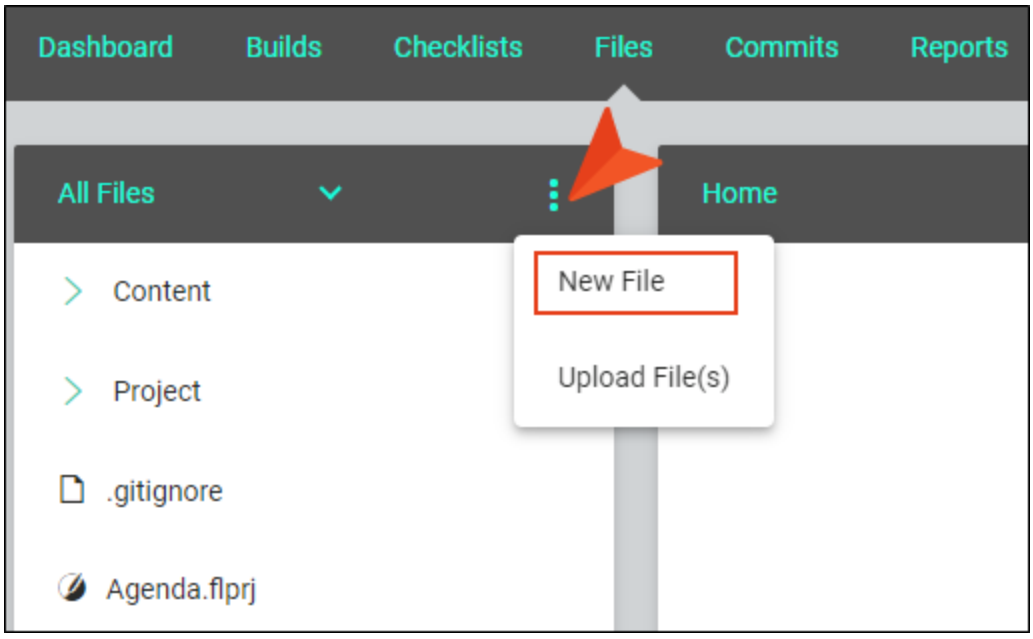
-

  If this is deselected, the XHTML in the Code view is read-only.

  Editing code is regarded as a capability for an advanced user. If not done properly, the code can become malformed quickly. Administrators can prevent users from editing the code by deselecting the Edit Code permission.

How to Add a Topic

1. Open a project, and select the **Files** tab at the top.
2. From the left side of the page, click ⋮, and select **New File**.



> NOTE Alternatively, you can bring an external file into your project by selecting Upload File(s).

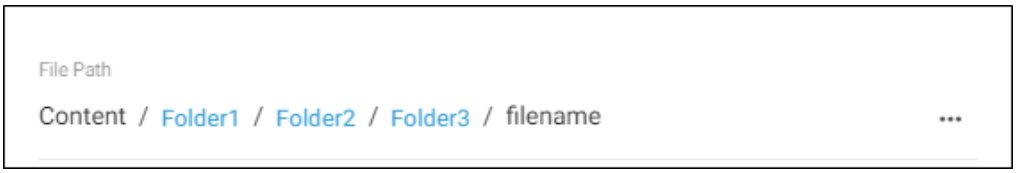
3. In the Add File dialog, click the **File Type** drop-down, and select **Topic**.

4. In the **File Path** field, enter a path and a name for the new file.

> NOTE Alternatively, click ••• to select a location for the file in the project, and **Accept** the file path. Then in the **File Path** field, enter a name for the file.

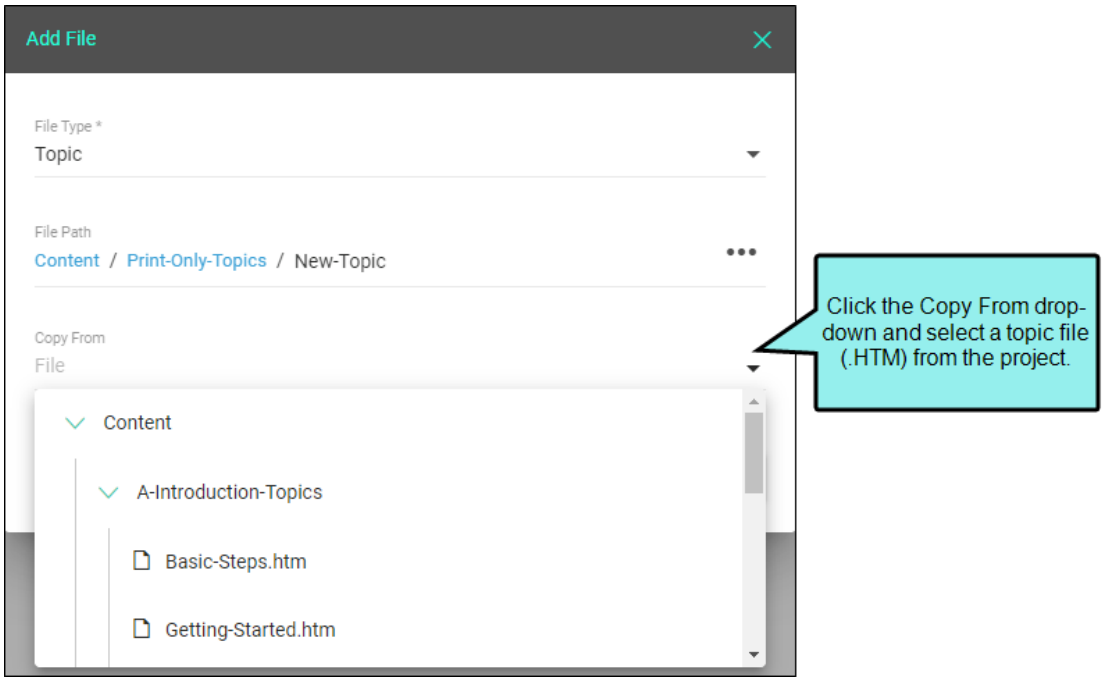
NOTE You might notice the File Path displays black or blue lettering. The blue items are folders, and you can click the item to jump to that folder.

For example, in the Add File dialog, a file path contains several folders (indicated by blue lettering) before the filename.

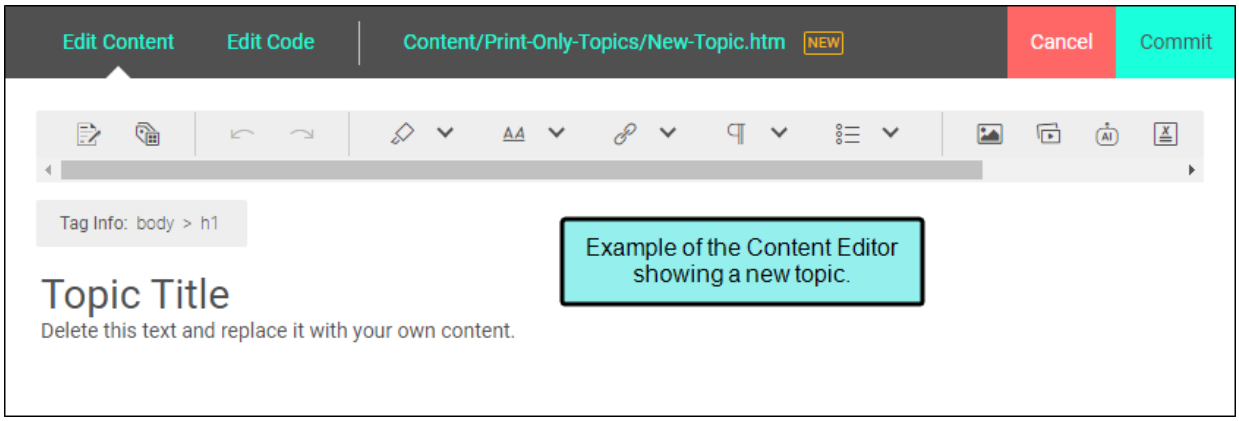


If the "Folder1" item is clicked, you know longer see the subfolders.

5. (Optional) In the Add File dialog, from the **Copy From** drop-down, you can select an existing topic file to use. This copies all the content from the existing file to the new file, providing a base of information to start with for your file. If you choose not to select a file here, the new file will be based on factory content.



6. Click **Add**. A new file is created and opens in the Content Editor.



7. Click **Commit**. (Or click **Cancel**, to back out of the process.)
8. In the Create New Commit dialog, verify the new file path, and enter a **Commit Message**.
9. Click **Commit**. The new conditions file is added to the project.

Opening Topics

After you create topics, they are stored in the Content folder of the Projects > Files page. You can open a topic whenever you need to view or edit it.

How to Open a Topic

1. Open a project, and select the **Files** tab at the top.
2. From the left side of the page, expand the Content folder (and any subfolders if necessary).
3. Locate the topic and click it. The topic opens to the right in the Content Editor.
4. (Optional) if you have the appropriate "Create/Edit Files" permission and need to make changes to the topic, click **Edit** in the upper-right.

CHAPTER 4

Other Activities for Topics

In addition to the main activities, there are some other tasks you might perform regarding this feature.

This chapter discusses the following:

Editing the Code for Topics 20

Renaming Topics 22

Deleting Topics 25

Editing the Code for Topics

Although Central provides you with a user interface to work on topics (i.e., the Content Editor), you can get behind the scenes to see and edit the code for the topic.

Permission Required?

Editing content and project files is an activity available to users with the Author status. By default, users with Author status have the following permissions set:

-

  If this is deselected, then viewing files in a read-only mode is allowed. On the left side of the page, the Files vertical three-dot menu is not available.

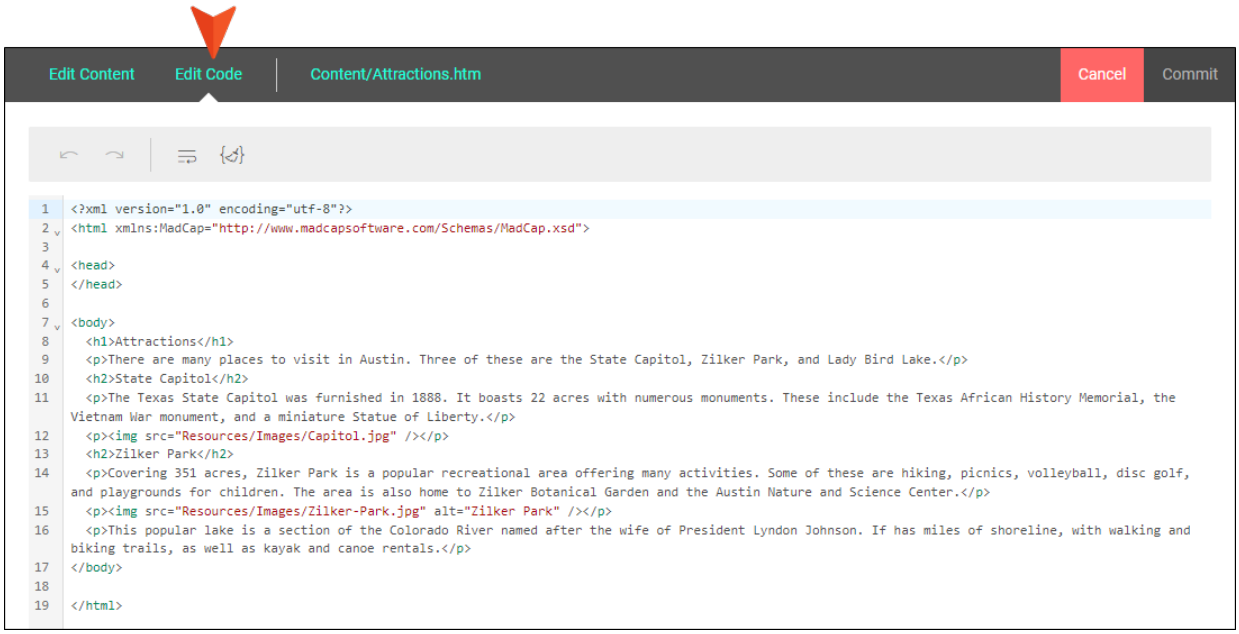
-

  If this is deselected, the XHTML in the Code view is read-only.

  Editing code is regarded as a capability for an advanced user. If not done properly, the code can become malformed quickly. Administrators can prevent users from editing the code by deselecting the Edit Code permission.

How to Edit the Code for a Topic

1. Open the topic.
2. In the upper-right click **Edit**.
3. At the top select the **Edit Code** tab.



Renaming Topics

You can rename a topic file in your project.

> **WARNING** If you want to rename a topic in Central it is better to do the renaming before the topic is linked to other files in the project. Otherwise, renaming a topic can result in broken links. If you end up with broken links, try:
>
> - Re-adding the links manually in Central (if you have a only a few applied).
> - Pulling the changes down to Flare, and performing a global find and replace to update the broken links in the code.

Permission Required?

Editing content and project files is an activity available to users with the Author status. By default, users with Author status have the following permissions set:

-

  If this is deselected, then viewing files in a read-only mode is allowed. On the left side of the page, the Files vertical three-dot menu is not available.

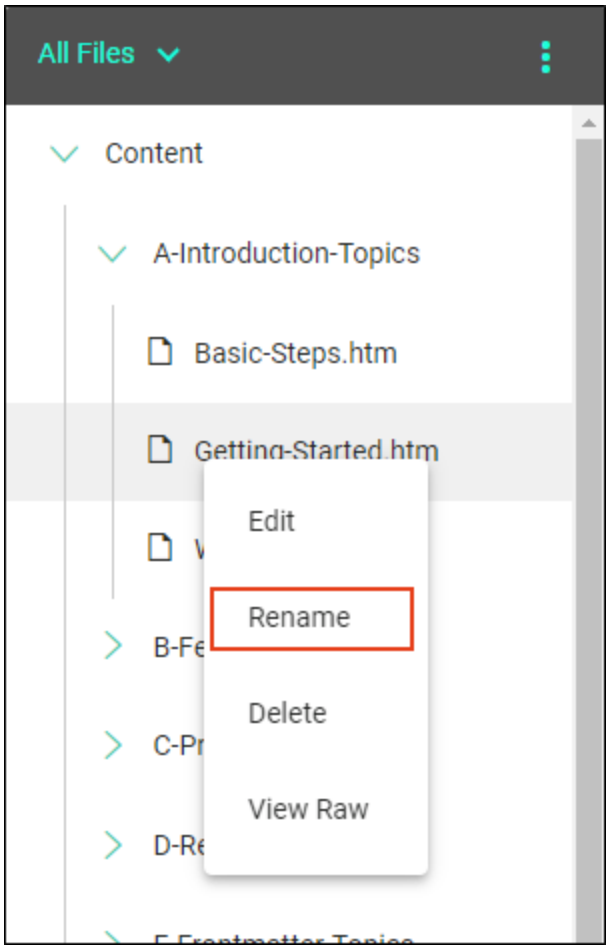
-

  If this is deselected, the XHTML in the Code view is read-only.

  Editing code is regarded as a capability for an advanced user. If not done properly, the code can become malformed quickly. Administrators can prevent users from editing the code by deselecting the Edit Code permission.

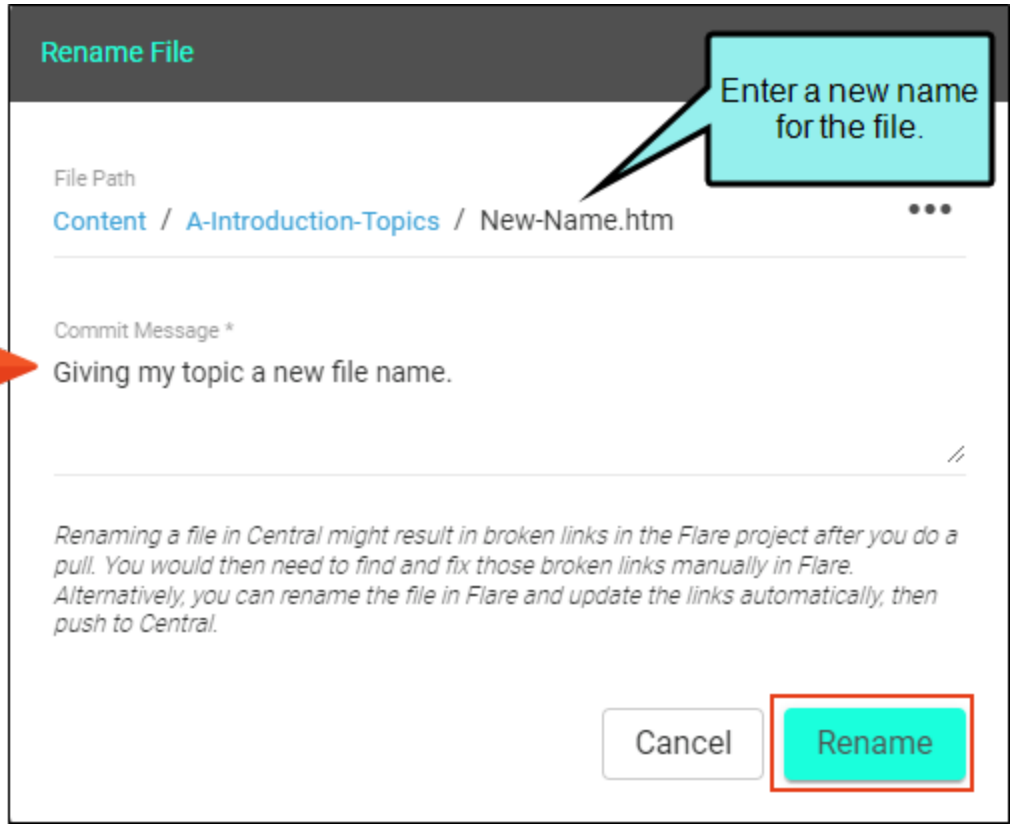
How to Rename a Topic

1. Open a project, and select the **Files** tab at the top.
2. From the left side of the page, navigate to the topic you want to rename. Right-click the topic, and from the menu select **Rename**.



3. In the Rename File dialog, enter a new name for the file, enter a **Commit Message**, and select **Rename**.

   You can optionally click ••• to select a location for the file in the project.



Deleting Topics

If necessary, you can delete a topic file from your project.

> **WARNING** Use caution when deleting files. If it has been previously linked to other files, deleting it can result in broken links.

Permission Required?

Editing content and project files is an activity available to users with the Author status. By default, users with Author status have the following permissions set:

- ☑ Create/Edit Files

  If this is deselected, then viewing files in a read-only mode is allowed. On the left side of the page, the Files vertical three-dot menu is not available.

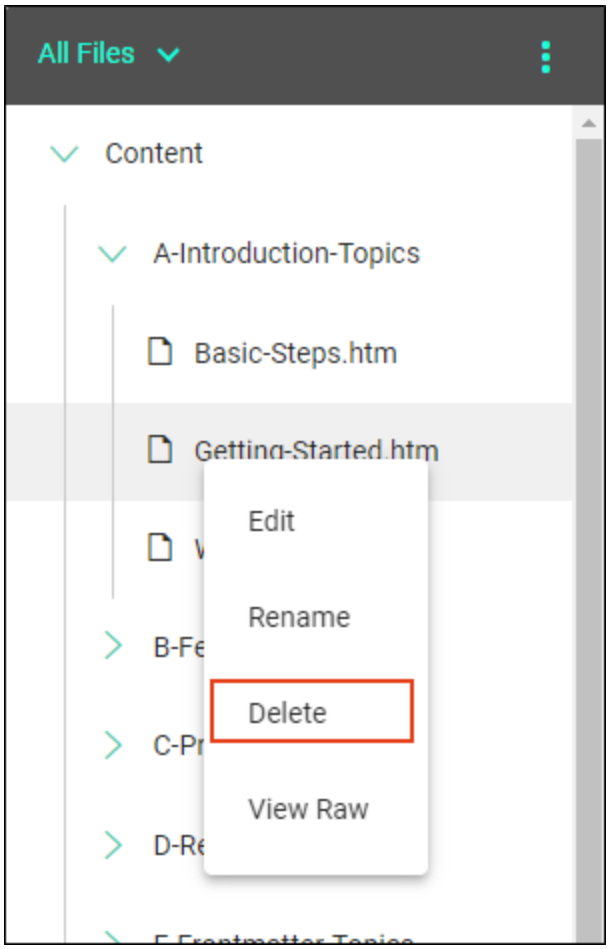
- ☑ Edit Code

  If this is deselected, the XHTML in the Code view is read-only.

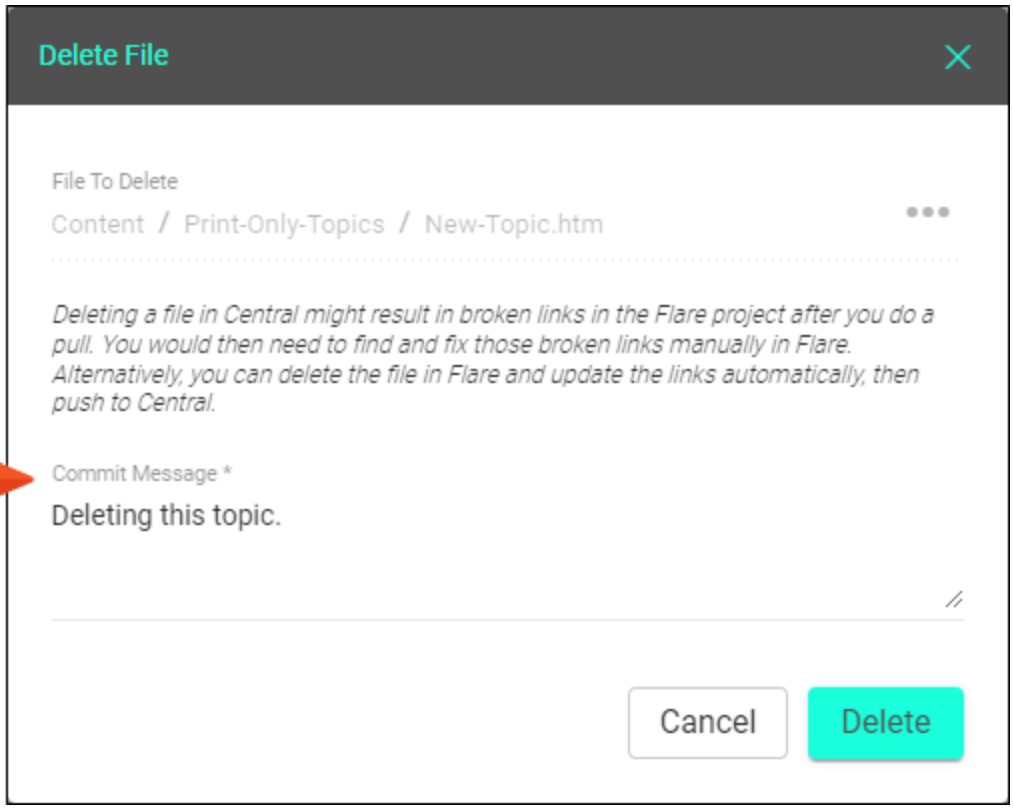
  Editing code is regarded as a capability for an advanced user. If not done properly, the code can become malformed quickly. Administrators can prevent users from editing the code by deselecting the Edit Code permission.

How to Delete a Topic

1. Open a project, and select the **Files** tab at the top.
2. From the left side of the page, navigate to the topic you want to rename. Right-click the topic, and from the menu select **Delete**.



3. In the Delete File dialog, enter a **Commit Message**, and select **Delete**.



PDFs

The following PDFs are available for download from the online Help.

AI Assist Guide

Analytics Guide

Authoring Guide

Branding Guide

Building Output Guide

Checklists Guide

Conditions Guide

Getting Started Guide

Images and Multimedia Guide

License Management and Purchasing Guide

Links Guide

Projects Guide

Reports Guide

Reviews Guide

Security Whitepaper

Sites Guide

Snippets Guide

Source Control Guide

Targets Guide

Tasks Guide

Topics Guide

Translation Guide

Users and Teams Guide

Variables Guide

What's New Guide

Widgets Guide