

# VisualSP Classic FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

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Applies to: **VisualSP Classic**,

What exactly is the VisualSP Help System?

Our Help System provides in-context, on-demand help to SharePoint end users. It provides task based video tutorials, documents and screenshots to help users when they need it most. In addition, it has the capability to accept in-house created content or content from the web and display them in-context as well.

- Will the in-context videos, help documents and screenshots be accessible at every site in SharePoint?

Yes. The solution is deployed as a SharePoint Farm Feature. Once deployed, all the help content will be available in-context and on-demand throughout your SharePoint environment. However, if you prefer, you can also manage the content at the Web Application or Site Collection level.

- Can I create a Walkthrough Help item with the on-prem version of VisualSP?

Not with the on-prem version by itself. There is an option to install our on-line product, which allows you to create walkthroughs, in an on-prem environment but it requires that there be no security restrictions for where content can reside. In other words, if your organization's security restrictions require that all content reside within your on-prem environment, then you wouldn't be able to include our Walkthrough builder because that content is stored in the cloud.

- Can I copy a link to a Help item?

Not as easily as you can with our on-line product. You would need to edit the Help item and copy the location of the Help item artifact (either a video, document, or screenshot) from there. The link would open the Help item artifact, but it wouldn't be in context.

- Can we buy just the video content without the VisualSP Help System?

Yes, you can buy the 105 video tutorials package without purchasing the system.

- How long are the videos and how much space will they take?

The end user level videos that ship as part of the Help System are each 2 mins or less in duration. The total footprint of the whole solution (including the videos, documents and screenshots) is about 500 MB total in your SharePoint Farm.

- How easy is it for our company to add custom content so that it can be presented to our users?

A SharePoint administrator can modify and customize the product in minutes. All content is SharePoint list driven. After the purchase, one of our engineers will guide you through the install and setup process. This person will also train your SharePoint administrator on how to customize the content.

- How can I buy the VisualSP Help System?

Fill out the form on this page to get in contact with us and get the process started.

- Is the VisualSP Help System available for SharePoint 2010, 2013, 2016, and 2019 as well?

Yes! Our Help System is available for SharePoint 2010, 2013, 2016, & 2019! Our customers who purchase the maintenance plan receive the most current version with all of the content for that version.

- If I buy the VisualSP Help System for on-premises and then we migrate to a later version, do I have to buy the other product as well?

Absolutely not! As long as you have a maintenance plan with us, you will get a free upgrade to the VisualSP Help System matching your SharePoint on-premises version.

- Can we get custom videos produced to plug into the Help System?

Yes, we can produce a custom 10-pack for you (additional cost) and plug it directly into your Help System when we deliver the product.

- How long has your company been in business. Who are your current customers?

Rehmani Consulting, Inc. (dba: VisualSP) has been in business since 2005 serving our corporate customers. Feel free to browse through the list of our customers and testimonials.

- Does the product alter authentication from claims-based to classic?

The product does not make any configuration changes to the environment, ever. Installing the solution is the equivalent of using the AddSPSolution and Install-SPSolution cmdlets – it just uses the API instead and then activates the appropriate features as determined by the settings in the installer.

- Is VisualSP a full trust solution?

Yes.

- Are Host Named Site Collections (HNSC) supported?

Yes, HNSC is supported by the product.

- How do I know which version of VisualSP Help System I have?

See: How to check for the installed version – on-prem

- How do you upgrade the Help System when upgrading SharePoint (ex: from SharePoint 2010 to SharePoint 2013)?

If the current version is no longer needed, it is advised to uninstall it entirely from the farm and delete the VisualSP Farm Hub site first. Then install it fresh into the new SharePoint on-prem installation. License keys are version specific so please request a new license key by emailing [support@visualsp.com](mailto:support@visualsp.com).

- What does the VisualSP feature receiver do?

There are actually several feature receivers, basically one for each feature that is activated:

- 1) `SharePointVideos.VisualStudioCentralAdmin`: On activation, the feature receiver for this feature provisions the `AnalyticsTimerJob` which is responsible for parsing the data in the VisualSP staging database and moving it to the VisualSP data warehouse database. Additionally, if there's already either of the two databases in place then the code will also ensure that the version is up to date. Lastly, it ensures that the VisualSP diagnostics logging options are available within Central Administration. On deactivation, it removes the timer job. The VisualSP menu elements are declaratively deployed via the feature definition.
- 2) `SharePointVideos.VisualStudioStapler`: On activation, if no license key has been set then it ensures that a valid trial key is present. The feature also declaratively staples the consumer feature to the global site template so that it can be automatically be enabled when a new site collection is provisioned.
- 3) `SharePointVideos.VisualStudioHelpProvider`: On activation, the feature receiver for this feature provisions the hidden list which contains the help items and adds the authenticated users group to the visitors group if the site is the farm hub. The feature also declaratively adds the custom action elements for the management page ribbon as well as the site settings page menu items.
- 4) `SharePointVideos.VisualStudioHelpConsumer`: On activation, the feature receiver for this feature simply validates licensing conditions and makes no changes. If, for example, you only have an Express license and attempt to activate the feature on a site that does not have the provider feature already enabled then it will throw an appropriate exception. On deactivation, the code does some cleanup by removing the `.webpart` file that is deployed to the web part gallery. The feature also declaratively adds the `VisualSPWebPart.webpart` file, the site settings menu elements, and registers the delegate control which is responsible for dynamically displaying the ribbon tab and inline help.

- What type of control is used to add the Help tab and the inline help to the SharePoint pages?

When the `SharePointVideos.VisualStudio.HelpConsumer` is activated, it registers a delegate control which determines the context of the request and gathers relevant help items from the various provider lists (the local provider if present, the web application provider if present, and finally, the farm hub provider if present). It then dynamically creates the necessary custom action XML for the Help tab and registers the tab accordingly. Likewise it does the same for the inline help and registers appropriate scripts. Significant caching and context checks are in place to try and avoid doing work that is not applicable to the context. Use of monitored scopes is also employed for performance monitoring.

- Are Custom Actions being used for the Help tab?

Yes. The custom actions are created dynamically so they don't actually get stored in the database. We build the necessary XML and register the Help tab with the ribbon in context so nothing is committed back. The actual tab items will vary based on the user due to permission trimming so we have to reevaluate for each user hitting a particular page – caching is in place so that we do the trimming after getting the core items from the cache so we're not hitting all three potential hubs for VisualSP on every request.

- What is a user action element, where is this component displayed and how is it implemented?

If you're deploying the .wsp solution file (so you've seen the screen to pick your web applications in the installer) then this isn't relevant. A custom user action though is basically an object that gets added to the `Microsoft.SharePoint.SPSite` object representing the site collection. This object contains information about where a particular script should be loaded. The user doesn't actually see anything as a result of this – the script is simply added to the page so that our app can be loaded. But again, this won't apply to you as you would instead be using a custom Feature that can be activated at the site collection level to get our script added to the page.

- Is the Master Page modified in any way?

We in no way touch or edit any existing files whether they exist on the file system or the content database – this includes the master page. By leveraging the delegate control, we can register our control to the page within the `AdditionalPageHead` placeholder control. If your master page removes that control, then our stuff breaks, but it's standard practice to not remove this as SharePoint itself leverages this same placeholder numerous items.

- Can the VisualSP web part feature be deactivated?

Not directly – if you deactivate the consumer feature then it will remove the web part but you'll also lose the functionality of the product along with it. That said, there's nothing stopping you from simply removing the .webpart file from the gallery. Please keep in mind that reactivating the feature will add it back.

- Can you supply a Sole Source letter for VisualSP Help System?

Yes. We are the only supplier of the VisualSP Help system. We can certainly provide a letter certifying that we are the sole source supplier.

- Do users see help items that point to or describe functionality that they don't have access to?

The help system understands and can respect SharePoint permissions. Each help item can be configured to show based on the permissions of the user. Check out this article that describes this process in detail.

- I cannot un-select the Central Admin site collection on the dialog box to select the web App to install the solution on. I don't want this solution installed on the Central Admin web app, how do I un-select this?

In order for the product to work, Central Admin has to be selected. Having said that, the Help tab does not show up at Central Admin. It just needs to be deployed there so it can be deployed throughout the farm. There is no affect on Central Admin.

- What is the install process and components of the Installation Wizard?

For on-prem it depends on whether you target a single site collection or the whole farm. If the whole farm then a .wsp is deployed which would trigger an IIS reset and a safe controls entry being added to the web.config. If it's targeting just one site collection then it adds a custom user action element to the site collection – so no IIS reset or web.config changes are required.

- Does the un-install process completely remove all files, features and configuration?

Yes.

- Does the un-install process require an iisreset?

Yes. When we tell SharePoint to retract the solution it will trigger an app pool recycle and web.config update.

- Is a backup of the web.config file made prior to it being changed for the install and un-install?

SharePoint makes backups of the web.config but we don't control this process and it is completely out of our hands.

- VisualSP doesn't seem to be working as expected. What troubleshooting steps can I take before I submit a support ticket?

If VisualSP obviously isn't working, open the Developer tools (F12) on your browser and look for any errors in the Console tab. Often the errors you see won't be associated with our product, however it could be helpful for our support team to see the error messages generated by the browser. You can filter out everything but errors, copy it into a text file and email it to support@visualsp.com.

- Is Analytics data being gathered even if we are not licensed for it? If so, does that mean that if we upgrade the subscription level we will be able to see Analytics on past usage of VisualSP?

Yes. Analytics data is collected regardless of subscription level, but it's not exposed through the application unless you are licensed for Enterprise. If you upgrade later you will be able to see all your historical data.

- Are there any URLs we should white-list on our firewall?

Yes. To prevent your firewall from blocking calls to our content server, please white-list <https://visualsponline.azurewebsites.net/>

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