

## Task elements

Task elements are found only in the task information type. The task elements are listed here in the order that you may use them when writing a task.

### **<prereq> prerequisite**

Use the <prereq> element to specify anything that the user needs to know or do before starting the task. This information may include actions that need to be completed first or a list of equipment that the user will need to complete the task.

If you are referring the user to another section, put the reference links needed for the prerequisite in the related-links section rather than into the prerequisite paragraph.

### **<context> context**

Use the <context> element to identify the purpose or goal of the task, as well as to indicate to the users what they will gain by completing the task. While the context information may contain some basic conceptual information, it should not replace or recreate a related concept topic.

### **<steps> steps**

Use the <steps> element to create a numbered list of all the steps that the user must follow to complete the task. The <steps> element is the container for all of the individual <step> elements that your task contains. If your task only has one step or if the steps do not need to be performed in order, use a <steps-unordered> element instead.

### **<step> step**

Use the <step> element to develop each step that the user must follow to complete the task. Each <step> element must be in the <steps> container and must begin with a <cmd> element. Each <step> in a <steps> list will be rendered as a numbered step. Each <step> in a <steps-unordered> list will be rendered as an unnumbered step.

### **<cmd> command**

Use the <cmd> element to describe the action the user needs to take in a <step> element. The description should be written in the imperative (Press the button), and it should be no more than one sentence. The <cmd> element must be the first element in the <step> element.

### **<info> information**

Use the <info> element to add information needed to complete a step beyond the instruction in the <cmd> element. The description should be brief and should not contain conceptual information.

#### **<note> note**

Use the <note> element to call attention to a particular point in the <info> element. <note> can be designated as caution, warning, or note, depending on the attribute you select for the element.

#### **<stepxmp> step example**

Use the <stepxmp> element to illustrate what a step might look like. The example may include a few words, a paragraph, a figure, a table, or other information to illustrate the task.

#### **<stepresult> step result**

Use the <stepresult> element to explain the expected outcome of a step, such as a dialog box opening or a progress indicator appearing. Step results assure users that they are on track but should not be used for every step.

#### **<substeps> substeps**

Use the <substeps> element to break a step down into a series of actions. This element is a container for the individual <substep> elements. If you need to use <substeps>, consider making a new task instead so that the steps are not embedded in another task. Use <substeps> only when necessary.

#### **<substep> substep**

Use the <substep> element to develop each substep that a user must follow to complete the step. The <substep> element has the same structure as the <step> element, but it cannot contain another level of <substeps>, <choice>, or <choice-table> elements.

#### **<choices> choices**

Use the <choices> element to create a list of options that the user may select to complete the task. The <choices> element is a container for the individual <choice> elements.

#### **<choice> choice**

Use the <choice> element to develop each option that the user can select. The <choice> element must be in a <choices> container. The <choice> items are typically rendered as a bulleted list.

### **<choicetable> choice table**

Use the <choicetable> element to create a table of options that the user may select to complete the task. The <choicetable> element is a container for the individual <choice> elements.

### **<chhead> choice head**

Use the <chhead> element to override the default headings in a choice table. The <chhead> element is used in the <choicetable> container. It contains the <choptionhd> and <chdeschd> elements.

### **<choptionhd> choice option head**

Use the <choptionhd> element to change the heading on the list of options in the first column of a choice table. The <choptionhd> element is used in the <chhead> container. The default value of <choptionhd> is “Options.”

### **<chdeschd> choice description head**

Use the <chdeschd> element to change the heading on the list of descriptions in the second column of a choice table. The <chdeschd> element is used in the <chhead> container. The default value of <chdeschd> is “Description.”

### **<chrow> choice row**

Use the <chrow> element to create a row in a choice table. The <chrow> element is used in the <choicetable> container. The <chrow> element contains the <choption> and <chdesc> elements.

### **<choption> choice option**

Use the <choption> element to describe an option that the user can choose in order to accomplish the step. One <choption> element can be used in each <chrow> element.

### **<chdesc> choice description**

Use the <chdesc> element to provide a description for the option in the corresponding <choption> element. The description explains why the user would choose that option or the result of making that choice. One <chdesc> element can be used in each <chrow> element.

**<result> result**

Use the <result> element to describe the expected outcome of the entire task. The <result> element should include a final description using figures, tables, or audio-visual cues that show the users that they have successfully completed the task. The <result> element is used after the <steps> container.

**<postreq> postrequisite**

Use the <postreq> element to specify anything that the user needs to know or do after completing the task. This information may include actions that need to be completed before the user can see the expected results, such as rebooting the computer, or information that the user needs to read or cross-reference to verify the completion of the task. The <postreq> element is often supported by links to the next task or tasks in the related-links section.