

Re: Difference between a Command Button and a Label

Source: <http://www.tech-archive.net/Archive/Access/microsoft.public.access.forms/2006-02/msg00877.html>

- *From:* "Tom Ellison" <tellison@xxxxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Mon, 13 Feb 2006 17:36:21 -0600
-

Dear Bruce:

I didn't take that much offense at what you posted. It was informative and useful. One reason for posting a Tip here is to get feedback and to improve the Tip before it becomes published. I'd like to include some changes based on your comments, which were certainly useful and intelligent. Your tone was not as important to me as your careful expression of issues that do need attending.

It is my desire to make friends here, and even if I do see things that are inflammatory, I don't choose to reply in kind. Perhaps I will have made a friend in you by doing this, which validates my approach, and reinforces it.

I really have seen a bit of flame in this thread, which just tells me I need to expand and polish this tip before it goes any farther. Also, I need to be clear as to who is targeted by a tip. This one was meant for those just getting started in form design, not for those more accomplished. I should put a section in the Tip for more advanced use, and include what has been pointed out here, so the Tip can benefit a wider audience. Those using the simple form of the tip can then look forward to progressing to more complex methods as time goes along.

Tom Ellison

"BruceM" <bamoob@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:%23tV1HDNMGHA.3944@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Tom, thanks for your courteous reply to what I see now was a confrontational tone in my remarks. I really must apologize for that. I did intend to point out that I was familiar with using a label as a command button, as were the people from whom I borrowed the idea, so I will admit I was puzzled by what I took to be a request for acknowledgement. On another point, I have read your many informed replies to questions in this forum, and I could have assumed that you are familiar with Lebars' site. Also, I have to say that I honestly thought I was replying to somebody whose name I did not recognize, perhaps because I looked too hastily at the list of messages in my newsreader, and clicked

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the reply button without looking more closely at the message. No matter who posted, though, a courteous reply would have been more appropriate. I am familiar with your postings in this forum, and would certainly not have suggested that you do some research, because I know that you are well aware of how to search newsgroups.

As for practical matters, I hadn't thought about the zero-width text box.

It is quite curious, and rather frustrating, that Microsoft does not allow for colored command buttons. As you point out, there is certainly interest in having that functionality. It is one of many points about which they could probably do something if they cared to take notice, but the way in which thinking is stirred at Microsoft is to me an inscrutable mystery. I do not agree with the thinking that says since gray is the default it's good enough, but we all make choices. I'm sure some of mine are questionable to somebody with other priorities.

Thanks again for the kind tone of your reply.

"Tom Ellison" <tellison@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:%23%23GoiZMMGHA.2064@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Dear Bruce:

Thanks for your excellent comments.

You cannot place the focus on a label. Hence, you also cannot tab through it. You can, however, tab through a text box with a zero width (hence it is invisible without being Visible = False). The events of that text box can function just as the events of a command button would, making the action appear as though the label "has the focus" and can be "clicked" with Enter. If such functionality is essential, it's not hard to implement this. Or, you could just use a text box and inhibit any typing in it, instead of using a label. I chose the label because of simplicity.

I, too, am slightly color blind, blue-green. I tend to avoid those combinations as they may be difficult to distinguish. I've never heard of yellow-pink color blindness (which are the first colors I tend to use) but it's still a good point you make. Most of my colored labels are gray and yellow, and occasionally pink as well.

The point of a tip isn't to assert "here is something new" but to inform those unfamiliar with a possibility. That's what I'd like to convey with my brief article. Some of my friends will see this here, and may choose to post it on their web sites. It's a good thing to open it up for comment, and get other good ideas. Some of the responses here show that making colors available on a command button would be helpful. That may even stir some thinking at Microsoft.

Mr. Leban's work is, as usual, outstanding. The point is not that there

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are not alternatives. The first point is to expose the functionality of putting color options on something you can click on. Which one of many options is used to do this is not the main thrust of my suggestions. I believe my article should also make reference to such alternatives. It is certainly not the point that using a label is the only way to do this, but that there is utility in doing something like this.

Thanks,
Tom Ellison

"BruceM" <bamoob@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message
news:ejdbRuJMGHA.3556@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

The idea of using a label as a command button has been around for quite some time. A Google groups search should find quite a few entries on this very topic. Some go into additional detail about using the Mouse Down and Mouse Up events to simulate the look of a command button when it is clicked. Some of the postings will be mine, but I do not claim (nor have I even for one instant considered claiming) any sort of authorship, nor did the person or people from whom I borrowed the idea. You would do well, before claiming authorship or any sort of intellectual property consideration, to conduct some research. While it is true that a label will give you some formatting options not available with command buttons, there are also limitations. For one thing, a label can't be in your tab order, and label events can only be triggered by the mouse. A label does not have a Got Focus, Lost Focus, Enter, or Exit event (and maybe others, but these are the ones I can recall offhand). These may not matter, but there are certainly significant differences between the two types of control. A Google search will reveal a number of places where you can download free command button graphics that can be placed as pictures on command buttons. I also use standard graphics for custom navigation buttons, etc. I will just observe that my opinion about whether or not to use colors, graphics, etc. is not necessarily the last word.

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Sometimes there needs to be something other than gray. I would also like to comment, as a person with color deficiency in my vision (aka color blindness) that some color combinations are particularly troublesome, such as medium red or green lettering on a textured gray background, or some combinations of green and red together. A graphic on a command button will leave the (gray) edges of the button as a border. If you are troubled by that, and if you are satisfied with a label's limitations as a command button, that is certainly an option. For full command button functionality along with color options, one choice may be found on Lebens site: <http://www.lebens.com/cmdbutton.htm>

"Tom Ellison" <tellison@xxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message news:%23D7SYBJMGHA.2012@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Dear Keith:

This is a tip. You are certainly permitted to take it or not.

I understand your concern about consistency of color coding. This can be overcome by allowing the users to select colors that correspond with their preferences, and saving them in a table. The users could then standardize colors as they wish, especially if they have become accustomed to a given scheme. That's actually a nice enhancement possibility I hadn't considered before. If you like, I'll credit you in a later version of this article for inspiring that. May I quote your question:

"what happens if the users get used to one developer's colour coding and then are faced with a different set from another?"

I would think the answer is to build an array

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and store in that the selected colors for a few different label button types. If this is done when the application opens, it would take no time to assign them as each form opens and functions, resulting in those color changes.

I am not asking for a patent on an idea here, but on a modest level of authors rights as a courtesy. The only consideration I ask is with respect to duplicating what I have written, that I be given the privilege of modifying it or withdrawing it, and that I be named in credit for writing it (not owning it). I do not think those who might want it on a web site would have any problem with that. Several have done so with other articles, and always gladly credit me by name.

Tom Ellison

"Keith Wilby" <here@xxxxxxxx> wrote in message
[news:43f06600\\$1_1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:43f06600$1_1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx)

"Tom Ellison"
<tellison@xxxxxxxx>
wrote in message
news:eaptFLIMGHA.3276@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I have found that, to attract a user's attention, coloring a label is quite superior to having a command button's nicer shape. For example, in

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the header
of forms, I
place
command
buttons
colored
yellow. My
users know
these
buttons
expose
combo
boxes used
to
filter the
form, and
they change
to pale
green when
a filter is
active.
Click them
again and
the filter is
removed,
the combo
box is
made
invisible,
and it is
yellow
again. This
becomes
quickly
intuitive to
my users.
Usually
after being
shown only
once how to
use
one they
know how
to use
additional
ones
without
asking.

I
recommend

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you
carefully
consider
having a
standard set
of colors
for labels,
and use
them
instead of
command
buttons.

The buttons in my apps are the default grey and I see no reason to change them. They all have legends to identify their purpose to the end user. I once flirted with different colours but IMO you end up with a gaudy mess. Colour is also not much use if any of your users have any degree of colour blindness. And what happens if the users get used to one developer's colour coding and then are faced with a different set from another?

Tom Ellison

If anyone
would care
to post this
to a web
site, you
have my
permission,
providing
you notify
me here or
by email
and give me
the

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URL of the
web site and
an email
address
where I can
request
changes
to this
message.
You must
attribute
this to me,
please, and
give me
access to
repair or
enhance it.
You may,
of course,
remove it
from
your site
without
notice,
though I'd
prefer to
know why,
if you
please.

Why do you think that you
have some sort of copyright
over the use of
colour coding? I'm not
trying to be hostile, just
wondered.

Keith.

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