



## **Guidance for editing pre-defined content types and site columns**

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## **Guidance for editing pre-defined content types and site columns**

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**Applies to:** SharePoint 2010 Products and Technologies

**Summary:** This article provides guidance for situations in which you consider changing the pre-defined content types in SharePoint Products and Technologies.

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## Overview

This article presents an alternative to changing pre-defined content types in SharePoint Products and Technologies. In case you must change pre-defined content types, the article describes consequences that you should be aware of.

## SharePoint content types overview

A *content type* is a reusable collection of metadata (columns), workflow, behavior, and other settings for a category of items or documents in a SharePoint list or document library. You can use content types to manage the settings for a category of information in a centralized, reusable manner.

For more information about planning content types, see the following articles:

- Content type and workflow planning (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/cc262735.aspx>)
- SharePoint Columns, Lists, and Content Types (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ff798404.aspx>)
- Creating Content Types (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ms460224>)
- Updating Content Types (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/aa543504>)

SharePoint 2010 Products and Technologies include several pre-defined content types. You can create new content types that derive from the pre-defined content types.

You can use the *content type hub* in SharePoint Server 2010 to share content types across site collections. All of the site collections that are associated with a content type hub will consume the content types that are published via the content type hub. Changes to the published content types can be pushed from the content type hub to all of the site collections that are associated with the content type hub. For more information about content type hubs, see the article "Plan to share terminology and content types" (<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ee519603>).

## Alternatives to modifying pre-defined content types

In some situations you might want to enforce the use of the same content type across multiple web applications or across multiple farms. You can reuse a content type either by packaging the content type as a feature and stapling the feature to a site template, or by publishing the content type via a content type hub.

We recommend that you do not modify the pre-defined content types. We recommend that you create new content types and reuse the new content types instead. Use the following guidelines to create and reuse new content types:

1. Create a new content type whose parent is a pre-defined content type. Choose the pre-defined content type that best matches your requirements. For example, use the **Document** pre-defined content type as the parent for the new content type when you need to be able to associate a document with the content type.
2. Create a **ListAdded** event receiver that performs the following actions:
  - a. Adds the new content type as a default content type for all document libraries and lists.
  - b. Marks any content types that you do not want users to use as *hidden*. For example, you might want to mark the pre-defined content type that is the parent of the new content type as hidden. Hidden content types do not appear on the **New** menu.
3. Use *feature stapling* to associate the **ListAdded** event receiver with every new site that is created in the farm. For more information about feature stapling, see the article "Feature Stapling and the FeatureActivated Event" (<http://msdn.microsoft.com/en-us/library/ff382738>).

If you do not want to use an event receiver, you can add the new content type to each site collection manually and remove pre-defined content types from each site collection manually.

## Known issues with modifying pre-defined content types

If you do decide to modify the pre-defined content types, be aware of the following points:

- Do not change the files that define the features that contain the pre-defined content types and site columns. Changing these files is an unsupported scenario as defined in <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/898631>. Cumulative updates or service packs to SharePoint Products and Technologies can overwrite these files.
- Some pre-defined content types are parents of other pre-defined content types. If you modify a content type that is the parent of other content types, the changes that you make are inherited by the child content types. These changes could potentially break the expected behavior of the child content types.
- The pre-defined content types are managed at the root site of a site collection. Any changes that you make to a pre-defined content type will also apply to the content types that are used in the other sites in the site collection.
- Attributes of a content type that are defined in the content type hub are overwritten when the content type is republished. If you change an attribute that is defined in the content type hub – for example, make a pre-defined column optional instead of required – your change is overwritten when the content type is republished. However, if you change something that is not defined in the content type hub – for example, add a new column – that change is not overwritten when the content type is republished. There is no way to retrieve the customizations that are overwritten.
- The Publishing feature in SharePoint Server 2010 is built on a set of content types such as the **Page** content type. If you add site columns to the content types that are used for Publishing, the Publishing feature does not work. If you must add site columns to the pre-defined content types that are used for publishing, start with a Blank Site instead of a Publishing site, and add the publishing features later by using a feature receiver or another method.
- Do not seal pre-defined content types. Sealing a pre-defined content type can break content types that are children of the sealed content type.
- Do not mark a pre-defined site column as required. Pre-defined content types might use pre-defined site columns, and the content types might not function properly when the site column is required.

- Do not change the schema of a pre-defined content type. For example, do not change the **Title** column to be hidden. Changing the schema of a pre-defined content type can break content types that are children of the changed content type, and can result in unexpected behavior. Changing the schema of a pre-defined content type is an unsupported scenario as defined in <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/898631>.
- SharePoint Designer will throw an exception if you modify a pre-defined content type that is used in a pre-defined workflow.
- If you change a pre-defined content type that is used in a pre-defined workflow, the workflow might terminate unexpectedly.

## Conclusion

We recommend that you do not change pre-defined content types in SharePoint Products and Technologies unless there is no other alternative. We recommend that you create new content types that are based on pre-defined content types, and change the new content types instead.

