The Word Skin Tutorial

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This tutorial is designed to demonstrate the various parts of a TW skin file and hopefully help users to understand the best way to make a skin file for TW. Skin files have the extension .skn and are located by default in C:\Program Files\The Word\Skins. Skin files can also be read from other locations on your hard drive (see this page for TW file locations). These skin files should be created and saved using Notepad (or any other text editor). Before we begin several recommendations need to be made:

1. Use a successful and full (see below) skin file as a basis to make a new skin file. This will greatly help you not to make unnecessary changes to a skin file that will only waste your time. You can download a sample skin file with all entries attached.

2. There is a very good skin editor for the library that TW uses. It is called Silverpoint SkinEditor. You can download it here. This editor allows you to see the skin as you make it. It also facilitates choosing to colors and such. It also allows you to make skins based upon existing skins in the library. The primary problem with this method is that sometimes it is difficult to know where exactly each entry in the skin is used in TW. The remainder of this tutorial will deal primarily with making a skin by altering the .skn file in a text editor. If you do use the SkinEditor (I would recommend doing so), be sure to check the skin in TW before distributing it.

3. It is best to design your skin first, then make the skin from that design. Adobe Photoshop is a fine program to use to design a skin, or if you can't afford that, Paint.net is a good substitute, or The Gimp. The point is that you want a skin designed already so that you can just pick colors from that design to insert into the skin file. This will make it MUCH easier. Another method I have found successful is to use a program that you already find attractive and copy that skin. Simply open a screenshot in your photo editor and get to work!

With that, we can begin. First open your starting skin file in your text editor. I will mark the various parts that the skin paints with a bright red color so it is easy to see. Beginning from the top, we see each entry has the name of the entry in brackets. Most of these names are self-explanatory. Those that are not so clear I will explain.

The first entry [Skin] contains the various settings for the entire skin. The "Name" indicates the name of the skin that will be displayed within TW. The file name and this setting are different; they do not necessarily have to be the same. The next 3 entries do not do anything, but leave them there just in case. The last entry under [Skin] is the TitleBarBorderSize. This controls the number of pixels of the main window border when the window is not maximized. See [Window] setting for more information.

At this point a short overview of the format of the entries is necessary. The color formats are important. The color format is: $00<6-digit hex value with the three pairs reversed in their order>. Like this: if the hex value is 46D8FB, think of this as three pairs (RGB), 46-D8-FB. So, you don't reverse the pairs themselves, but the order of the three sets. So, it would be FB-D8-46 (BGR). So, if the hex value of the color you want it FFEB00, the color entry in the skin will be $0000EBFF. Another example: hex value for color is A3C6AF, the value to be placed in the skin is $00AFC6A3. The skins also support major colors formatted like this: red = clRed, blue = clBlue, lime = clLime. If you do not want to place a color, which will make that entry transparent, enter clNone. All colors in the skin are formatted in this way.

Each entry is formatted as such:

Normal.Body=9, $00FCFBFA, $00F3F0EB, $00E8E2D9, $00F1EDE5
This entry is the body of the part to be painted. The number represents the style of painting. The styles for the "body" section are as follows:
0 = solid color
1 = vertical gradient with 2 colors
2 = horizontal gradient with 2 colors
3 = vertical glass gradient with 4 colors; each color is evenly spaced
4 = horizontal glass gradient with 4 colors; each color is evenly spaced
5 = vertical mirror gradient with 4 colors; the first two colors are evenly spaced, there is a distinct break at the midpoint, and the remaining two colors are evenly spaced; this is like two separate gradients together (see screenshot)
6 = horizontal mirror gradient with 4 colors; same as 5, but only horizontal
7 = vertical mirror gradient with 4 colors with 30% midline; same as 5 and 6 above, except the midline is at approximately 30% of the overall height
8 = horizontal mirror gradient with 4 colors with 30% midline; same as 7, only horizontal
9 = vertical mirror gradient with 4 colors with 9 pixel midline; same as 8, except the midline is only about 9 pixels from the overall height; this is the style used with the Vista themes to mimic the theme of the Vista OS
10 = horizontal mirror gradient with 4 colors with 9 pixel midline; same as 9, only horizontal

You will need to experiment with the above to achieve your desired result. The skin editor is a good place to try out the different styles.   Also, check current themes to try to understand the ways to use the different styles. If any style is used that only employs 1 or 2 colors (styles 0, 1, and 2), the last two colors in that entry will be ignored.

Normal.Borders=0, clWhite, clSilver, clNone, clNone
This entry sets the border for the part that is to be painted. There are three styles for borders:
0 = rectangle border; regular square border
1 = rounded rectangle border; rectangle border with a 1-pixel rounding at the corners
2 = double-rounded rectangle border; rectangle border with a 2-pixel rounding at the corners

The colors for the .Borders setting are four in this order:
1st = outside top left
2nd = outside bottom right
3rd = inside top left
4th = inside bottom left

Unlike the colors for the .Body setting, none of these colors are ignored at any time. So, if you do not want an inside border, you must set the last 2 colors to clNone.

Normal.TextColor=clNone
This setting simply sets the color of any text for this item in the skin. The colors follow the same format as all other colors. There is only one color and style.

The [Dock] entry is the background for all of the toolbar and menu areas. This is probably one of the most important parts of the skin because this part is seen more than almost any other part of the skin. By making the toolbar and menubar settings transparent, this [Dock] setting shows through, making a nice effect. This effect is used very often in the skins that ship with TW. See below.
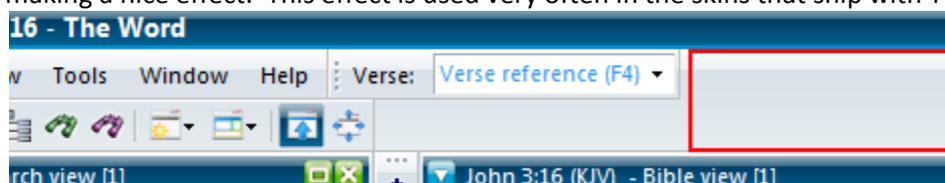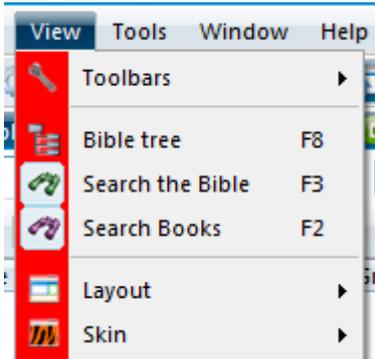
The [DockablePanel] is easiest to see with the screenshot below.
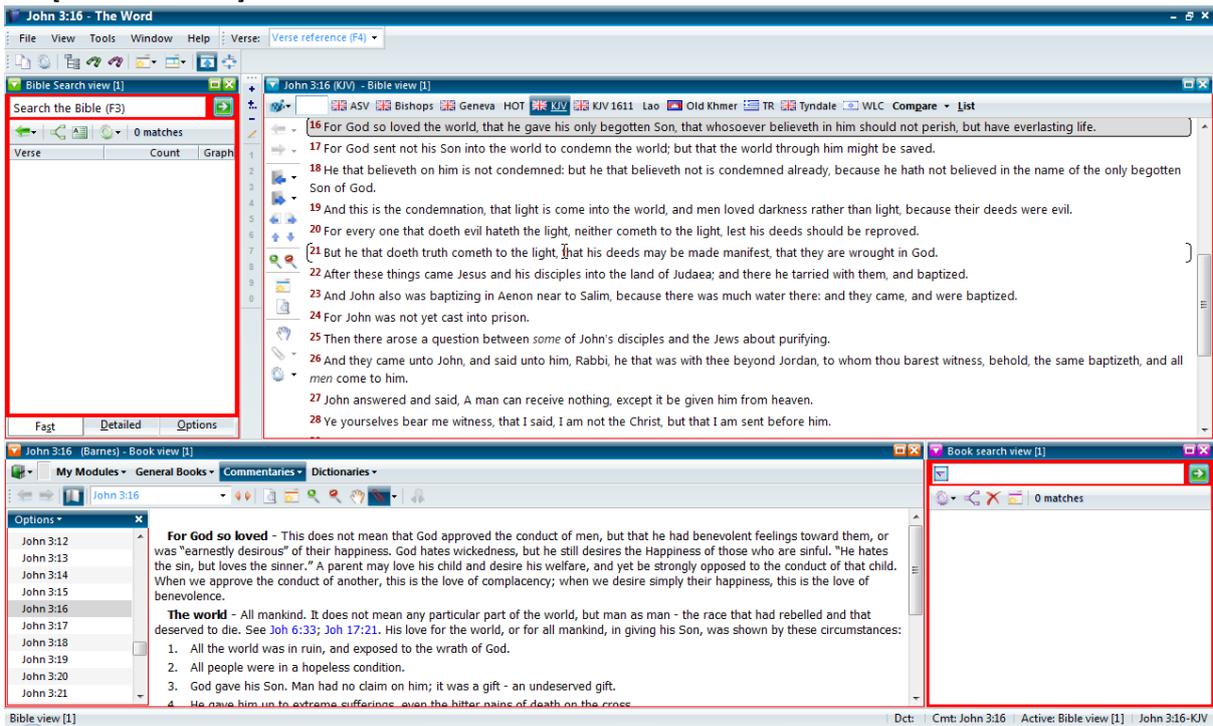
The [DockablePanelTitleBar] is the titlebar for each separate view. This is only seen if the "Caption Color" is set to "No colors and border". See below.
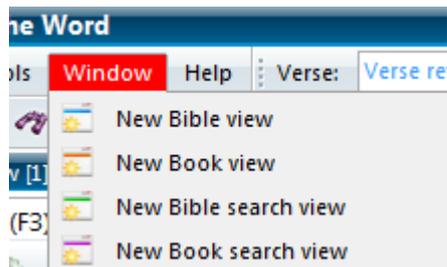

The [Gutter] is the area at the left of the menus, where checks would appear. See below.

The [MenuBar] is the area of the regular menu. If this area is left with clNone as the color, the background [DockablePanel] shows through. Study a skin to see this effect. See below.
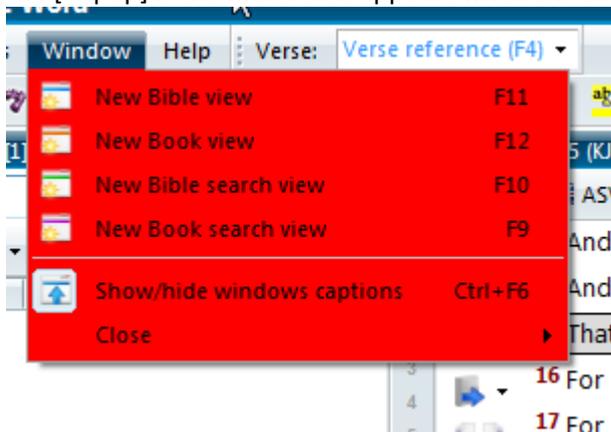

The [OpenToolbarItem] is a setting *only* for the **pressed** menu item in the main program menu. See below.
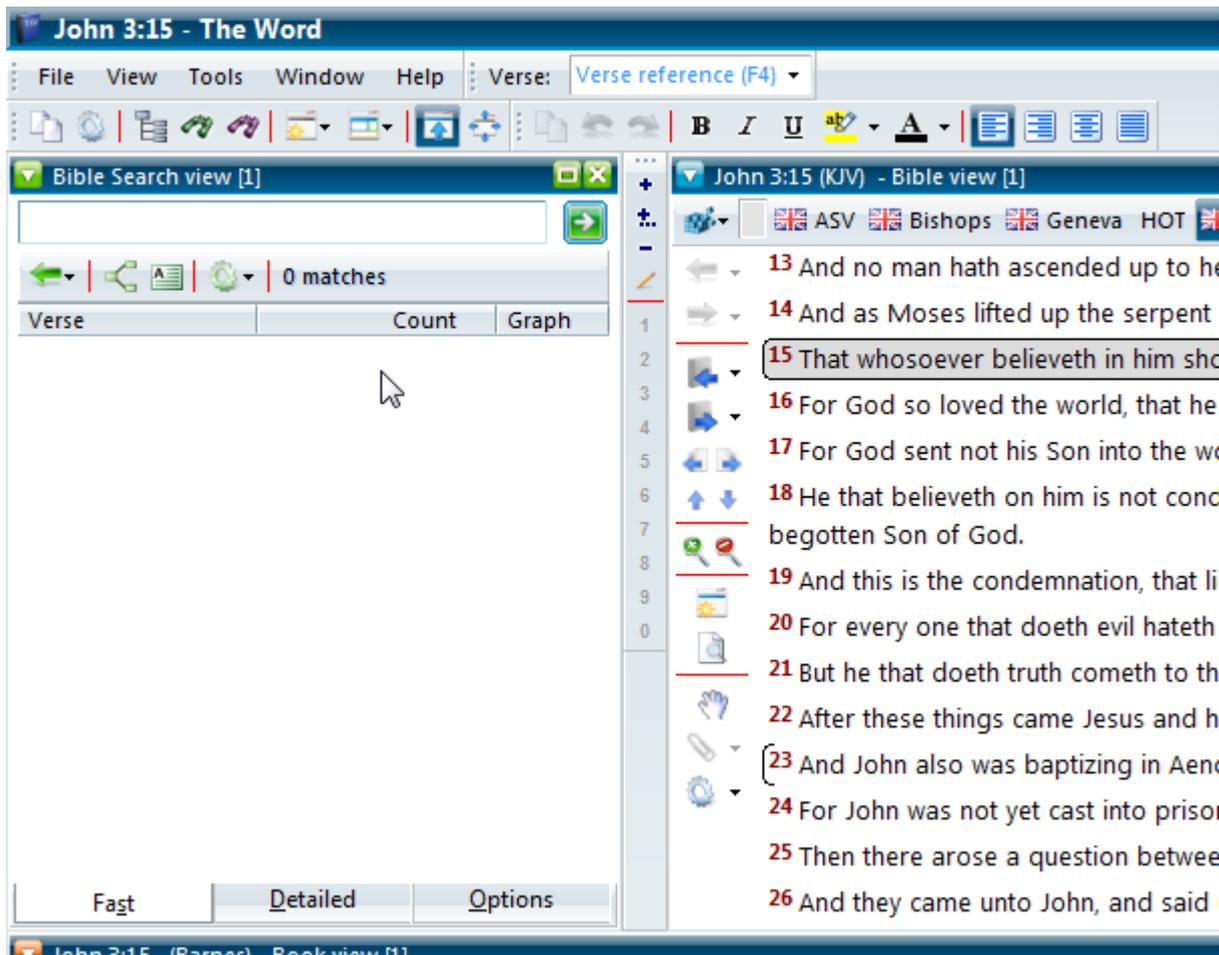
The [Panel] is similar to [DockablePanel]. See below.
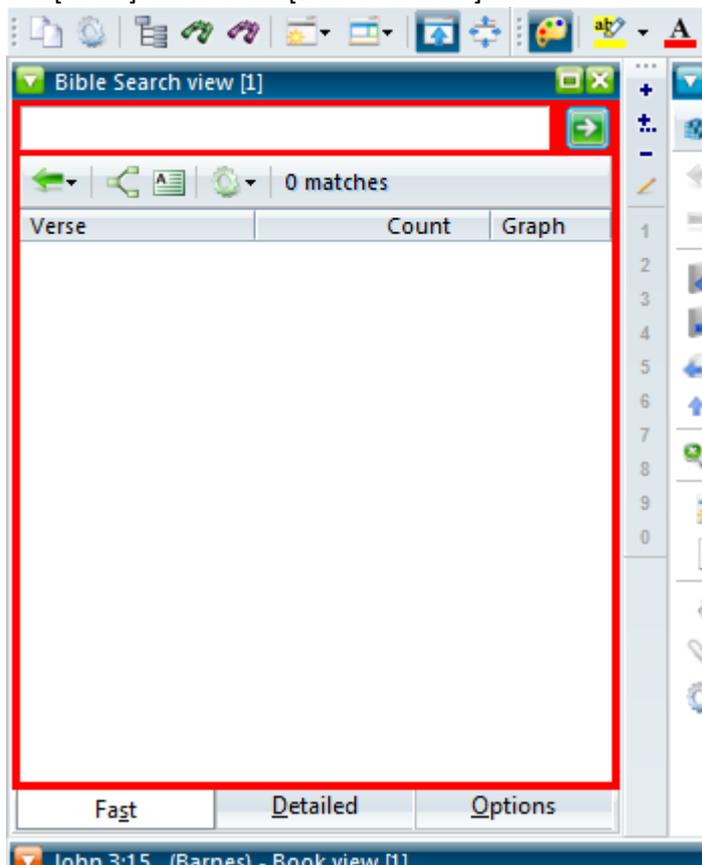
The [Popup] is the menu that appears when a menu item or toolbar item is pressed. See below.

The [Separator] is the line between different items on the toolbars. See below.

As far as I know the [Splitter] is not used in TW.

The [StatusBar] is pretty self-explanatory. It is the bar across the bottom of TW's main window.

The [StatusBarGrip] is not currently used in TW.

The [TabBackground] is not used in TW.

The [Toolbar] is pretty self-explanatory. These items are only the normal mode, not pressed, checked, etc. If the colors are left a clNone, the [Dock] colors will be seen. This does not include the menubar. See below.

The [ToolbarGrip] is the grip the moves the toolbar. The skin takes the first two colors of the .Body setting and uses it at the main color and shadow color of the toolbar grip. Zoom into the screenshot to see an example, the first color is clRed; the second is clLime. Obviously, the .Border and .TextColor settings are not used.
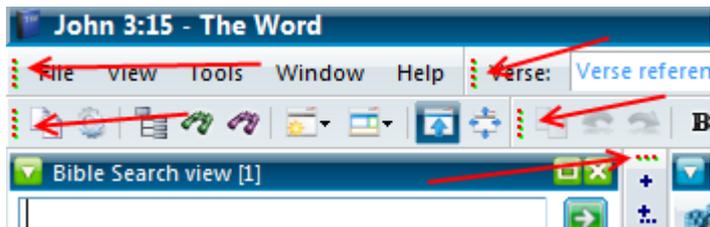
The [Window] setting is the painting for the main TW window. The .Body colors paint the main window, behind all the windows of TW. It is best to make this something that matches the skin because it is only seen when views are closed, moved, or resized. The .Border setting paints the main window's border when it is not maximized. The thickness of this border is determined by the TitleBarBorderSize at the top of the skin file. Inside and outside borders function the same as in other .Border settings. These .Border settings only function if "Use skinned window border" is checked at View->Skin. Look closely at the window border in the screenshot below.
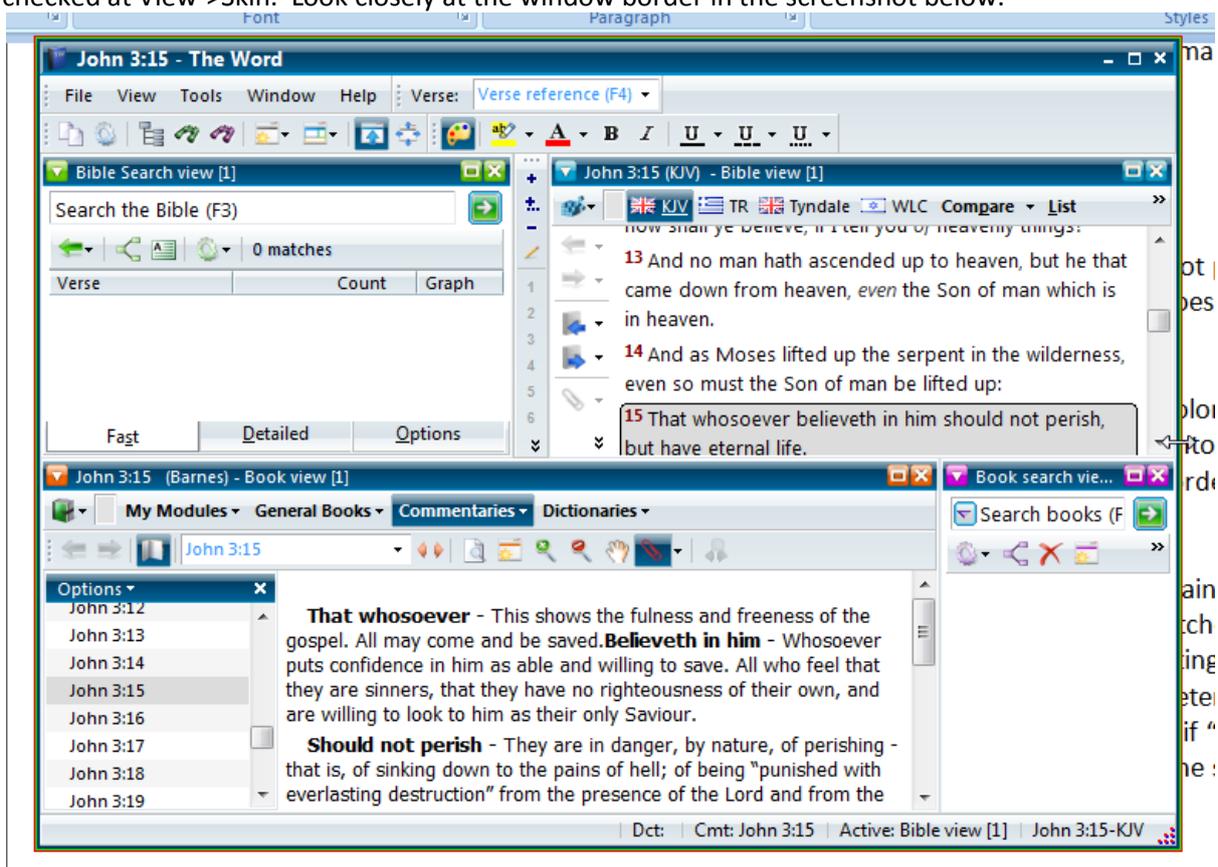
The [WindowTitlebar] is the titlebar for the main TW window. Again, the "Use skinned window border" must be checked for this to be enabled. This setting can be used to really enhance the overall continuity of your skin. See below.

Now begins the section of the skin in which various colors are used depending on the user's input. They are summarized as follows:

Normal.Body – the way the item looks without any user interaction
Normal.Borders
Normal.TextColor
Disabled.Body – the way the item looks when it is disabled
Disabled.Borders

Disabled.TextColor

HotTrack.Body – the way the item looks when it is moused-over, or hovered over with the mouse

HotTrack.Borders

HotTrack.TextColor

Pushed.Body – the way the item looks when the user presses the item

Pushed.Borders

Pushed.TextColor

Checked.Body – the way the item looks when the user checks the item

Checked.Borders

Checked.TextColor

CheckedAndHotTrack.Body – the way the item looks when the user hovers over an already checked item

CheckedAndHotTrack.Borders

CheckedAndHotTrack.TextColor

Obviously the .Borders and .TextColor follow accordingly. These entries follow the patterns of those above.

The [MenuBarItem] refers to the items on the menu bar. See screenshot.

The [MenuItem] refers to each item within the menu popup. This also refers to the checks within the menus. See screenshot.
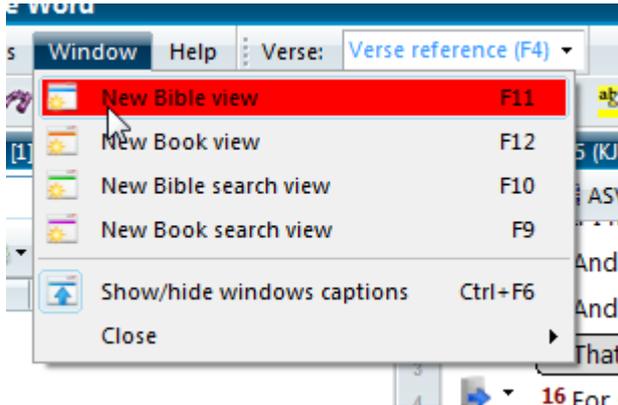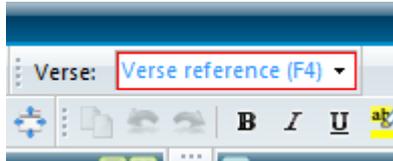

The [ToolbarItem] refers to the individual items on the toolbars. This is distinct from the [Toolbar] setting in that this paints *only* the individual buttons, not the entire toolbar. See below.
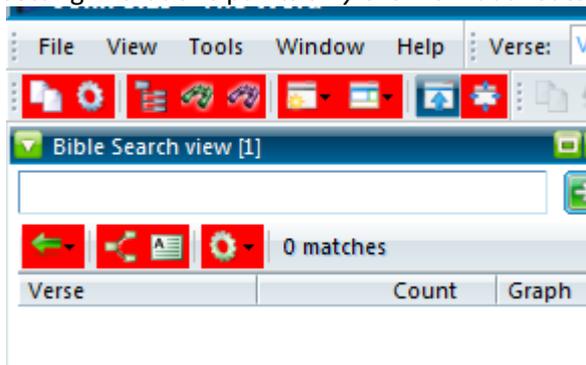
The [Button] refers to OK buttons and such. These are not currently painted in TW.
The [CheckBox] is pretty obvious.
The [EditButton] is shown below.
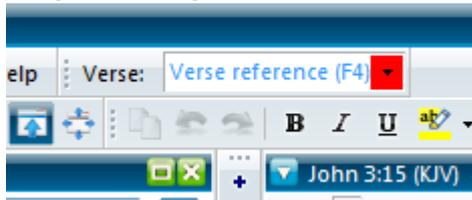

The [EditFrame] is shown below.

I am not aware of any place in which [ListItem] is used in TW.

The [ProgressBar] is the setting for the progress bars used especially in the search views in TW. In the following screenshot, I painted the Normal.Body setting with clRed, which is the progress bar's background, and the HotTrack.Body setting with clLime, which is the actually progress bar itself. The text settings change the percentage text color at the center of the progress bar. The other settings under the .Body section are not used. However, all the settings for text of the progress bar are used. See below.
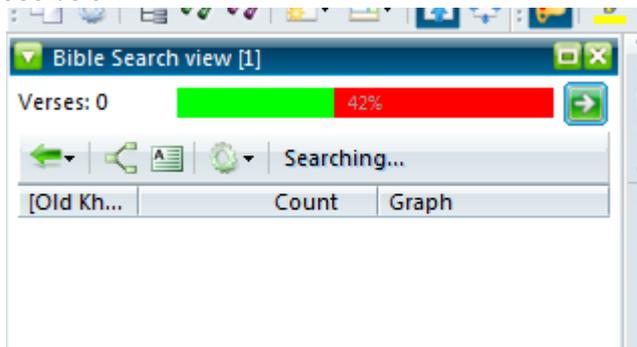
The [RadioButton] is the round buttons used in Windows extensively. Some radio buttons and check boxes in TW are painted with the skin and some are painted with Windows. Explore to find the difference.

The [Tab] refers to the tabs on the Bible Search View. These are pretty tricky to figure out. You will need to experiment. See below.
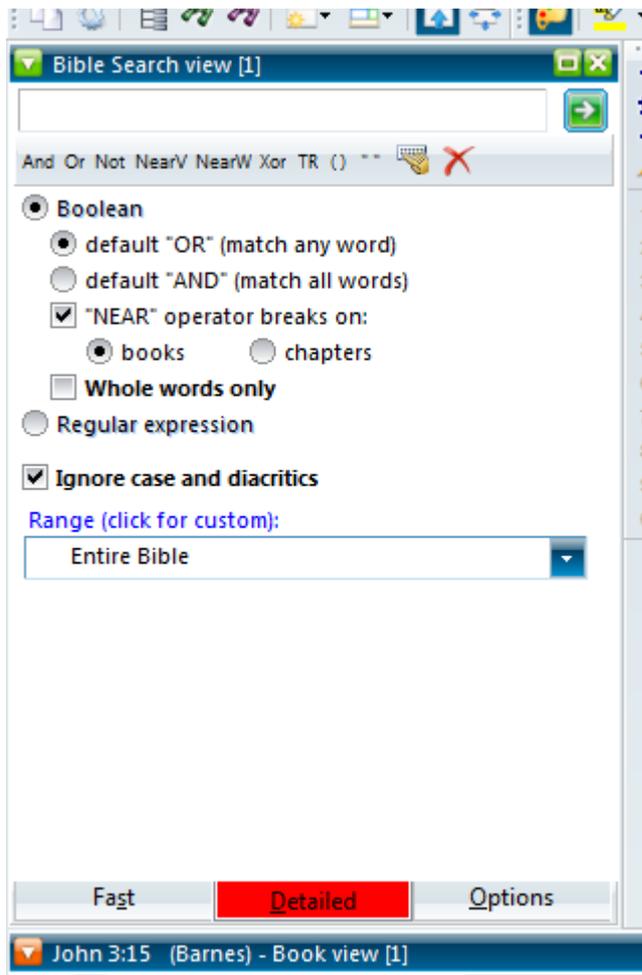
The [TrackBar] is not used in TW, nor is the [TrackBarButton]

This completes all parts of a TW skin file. Experimentation is the key to making a great skin. I look forward to seeing the skins that you have made!