Why use a master document?

A master document (.odm) is a container that joins separate text documents (.odt) into one larger document and unifies the formatting, table of contents (TOC), bibliography, index, and other material. Master documents are typically used for producing long documents such as a book, a thesis, or a long report. A master document is especially useful in these situations:

- When the file size or number of pages is quite large; writing, reviewing, and editing may be easier when done on subsets of the full document.
- When different people are writing different chapters or other parts of the full document.
- When files will be published as stand-alone documents as well as becoming part of a larger document. The chapters of this *Writer Guide* are an example of this usage.
- When subdocuments are used in more than one final document.

You can use several methods to create master documents. Each method has its advantages and disadvantages. Which method you choose depends on what you are trying to accomplish. The different methods are described in this chapter, along with suggestions on when to use each one.

> ### ⓘ Tip
>
> A master document is not always the best method to use in any of the situations given above. You may find that using one big file, or an ordinary document (.odt) containing sections linked to other files, may do the job just as well. For more about using sections to combine files, see Chapter 6, Formatting Pages: Advanced.

Using the master document Navigator

In Writer, the Navigator has two forms: one is used in ordinary text documents and the other in master documents.

In an ordinary text document, the Navigator displays lists of the graphics, tables, index entries, hyperlinks, references, and other items in the document, as shown on the left in Figure 365.
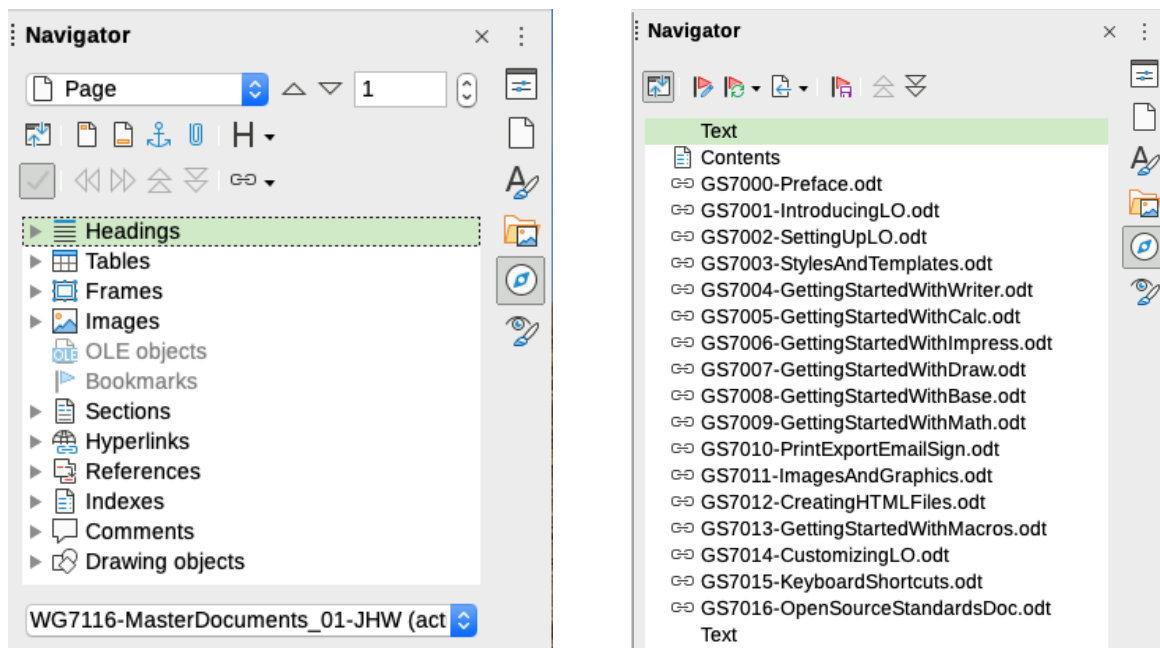

Figure 365: The Navigator for a text document (left) and for a master document (right)