

IRC



Basic Overview, How to Use It, What to Use it For

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What is IRC?

- Internet Relay Chat
- Multi-user chat system (client-server implementation)
- First incarnation was in 1988
- Was used to report during media blackouts during Soviet Coup Attempt of 1991 and by Kuwaitis during Iraqi Invasion
- Large number of different servers available to use

Reasons to use IRC

- Quick way to obtain technical advice, particularly from F/OSS user communities
- Form relationships with other individuals around the world based on common interest
- Virtual meeting space for projects, organizations, and groups of friends

IRC Clients

(programs to use to connect to IRC)

- mIRC – most popular IRC client, shareware, Microsoft Windows only
- KVIRC – mIRC-like IRC client, open source, Windows, Mac OSX, Linux/BSD
- gaim – also an AIM/Yahoo Chat/MSN Messenger, etc. client – open source, Windows, Mac OSX, Linux/BSD
- Java Chat embedded in websites (PJirc)
- And more!

IRC Networks

- Quakenet – Generally for finding multi-player games, most users worldwide
- EFNet, IRCNet – Other general-use large networks, historically very prominent
- Freenode – IRC network centered around Free/Open Source Software
- TWUUG – single-server IRC network hosted by Lake Taylor for TWUUG use (see TWUUG Homepage for info) – very low usage – irc.twuug.org
- 757.org – single-server IRC network run by 757 Technologies (Ethan O’Toole) – populated mostly by locals involved in the technology “scene” – irc.757.org

Nickname

- Your identity on a particular IRC server
- Chosen upon connection
- No two people can have same nickname at once
- Some networks may allow you to register your nickname with a password so only you can use it

Channels

- “Chatroom”
- Channels have name (starting with #) generally descriptive of topic, for example, #linux or #twuug
- Channel topic can further define topic of conversation in a channel
- Most clients have a utility to list all channels on the network and search for a specific channel

Ops

- Channel Operators, or “Ops”, have a @ at the beginning of their nick in the channel member listing.
- Have total control over channel – can kick, ban, change topic, as well as op and deop other users
- Bots (or automated scripts) are frequently used to monitor channels for cursing, flooding, as well as opping and deopping registered users

Key Commands

Typed at the console prompt or in any chat window

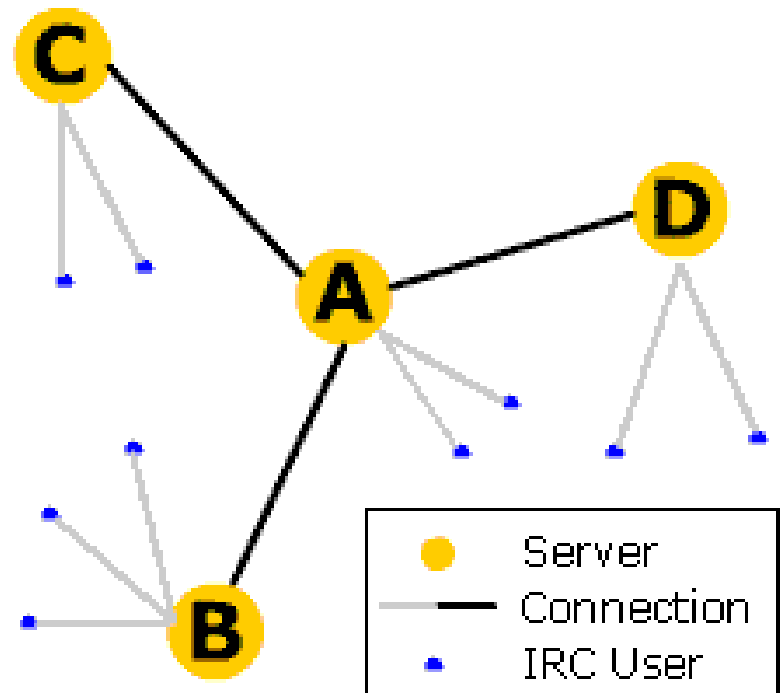
- `/join #channel` – joins `#channel`
- `/part #channel` – leave `#channel`
- `/nick NewNick` – change your nickname
- `/me waves hello` – shows “action” in channel window.
- `/whois OtherNick` – shows information about person with nickname `OtherNick` including hostname, time idle, channels, etc.
- `/msg OtherNick hello there!` - sends private message to another user
- `/query OtherNick [hello there!]` – opens up an IM-style conversation window with other user, beginning with sending message on command line, if one is given

Services

- Implemented on some, but not all, IRC networks
- Controlled via private messages
- Nickserv – registers and maintains user's nicknames by password protection
- Chanserv – registers and maintains channel ownership
- Memoserv – transfers notes between registered users

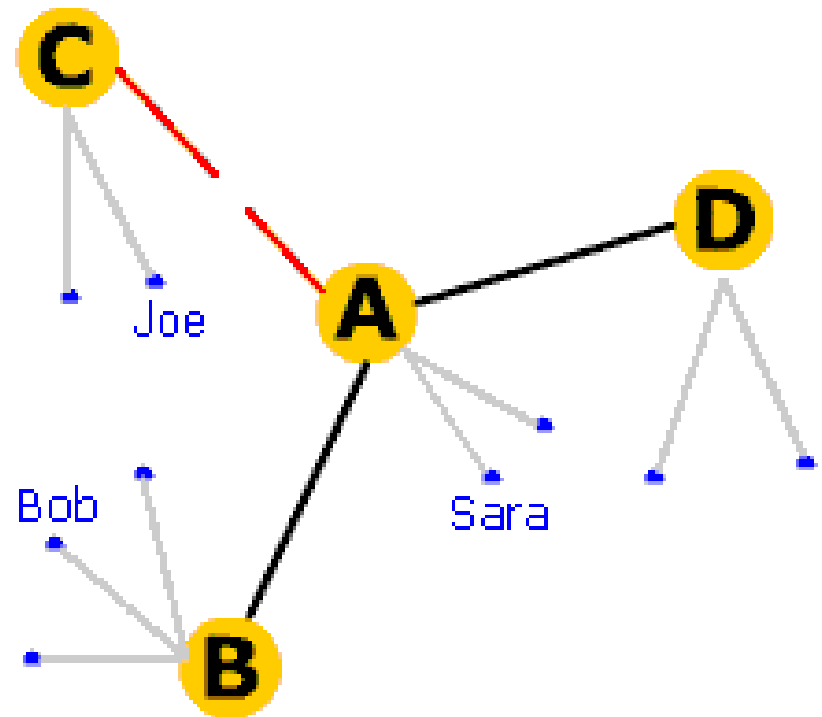
Server Linking

- Servers hosted by various organizations, usually as a service to community – can be hosted by ISP's, schools, businesses, or other org's
- On most networks, server hosts get “IRCop” privileges on their server, being able to “k-line” abusive users (ban them from the IRC network) based on IRC network policy.



Netsplits

- Netsplit overview
- Methods of abuse (nick/channel takeover)
- Anti-abuse methods (nick/channel-delay time stamping)



Security Concerns

- **People only know what you tell them!** Do not be scammed by social engineering schemes trying to get your password, credit card number, phone/address, or other sensitive information. *Be careful when using IRC for business purposes and protect trade secrets and personal information*
- Your firewall may pick up some “hack attempts” upon connecting to a server. This is normal and will not harm your computer, IRC servers usually run “open proxy monitors” to make sure you aren’t IRC’ing from a compromised internet connection.
- Most of the time, your hostname is revealed to everyone on the IRC network, so make sure you have a strong fire walling solution in place

More Security Concerns

- Some networks may provide host cloaks to hide your true hostname (show demo on freenode)
- Can be used for P2P filesharing
- Can be used for Botnet control
- Anti-virus programs sometimes view IRC traffic (ports 6660-6669 usually) as suspicious for above reason
- “DCC Requests”, usually used for file-sharing applications, should be NOT be automatically accepted under ANY circumstances, as malware can be sent through them.

Netiquette on IRC

- Follow rules and guidelines established in channel topic (or perhaps msg'd to you from a bot upon connect)
- “Lurking” or “idling” in a channel (being there without talking) is okay. Get a feel for the channel atmosphere before saying anything to avoid embarrassment
- Check with server operators before using bots to connect to their servers, and follow all other server guidelines stated in the MOTD (use /motd command) and upon connect

More Netiquette for IRC

- If you get kick/banned from a channel, it's not the end of the world! You can message the channel ops and politely ask to be let back in, or move on to other channels on IRC. Ban evasion is not a good idea and is generally frowned upon.
- IRCops typically do not get involved in channel affairs (such as kick/bans) so do NOT ask them to get involved if you get kick/banned
- Follow other established practices for internet communication. Rules are largely the same as for e-mail, message boards, or IM, but with a few deviations for IRC. (for more information, google "netiquette" and "irc netiquette")

IRC Resources on the Web

- <http://www.irchelp.org> (general-purpose IRC help site)
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IRC> (Wikipedia article)
- <http://irc.netsplit.de> (constantly monitors hundreds of networks worldwide and reports user count, channel names and sizes, and more!)

Credits

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