

The Basics of Using IRC

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Introduction

- IRC is Internet Relay Chat
 - Real-time chat between users and groups on the Internet
- Channels allow for group discussion of a topic
 - Software
 - Current events
 - Ideas
- Private messages allow for individual user<->user communication

IRC – Software

- Clients are available for all platforms
 - Linux: HexChat (GUI), irssi (CLI)
 - Windows: HexChat, mIRC
 - OS X: Colloquy, Textual
 - Android: AndChat, AndroIRC
 - iOS: Colloquy, LimeChat
- Server side: InspIRCd, ngIRCd, Anope, Atheme
 - Large networks use their own daemons

IRC – Commands

- Commands start with a slash (/)
- Everything else is treated as a message to the currently active user/channel

<code>/server [-ssl] host [[+]port]</code>	Connect to server (optionally using SSL)
<code>/join #channel [key]</code>	Join a channel (with optional key)
<code>/msg user message</code>	Send message to user
<code>/whois user</code>	Perform a “whois” lookup of user
<code>/nick new_nick</code>	Change your nickname to new_nick
<code>/quit [reason]</code>	Disconnect from server

IRC – Connecting

- `/server [-ssl] host [[+]port]`
 - Connects to port 6667 (unsecured) by default
 - SSL uses port 6697
 - Some servers offer additional ports to bypass firewall restrictions (eg 6665, 6666, and 7000)
- Common servers:
 - `chat.freenode.org` (IPv4, IPv6, SSL)
 - `irc.oftc.net` (IPv4, IPv6, SSL)
 - Others such as EFNet, Undernet, and QuakeNet

IRC – Channels

- Allow for communities to discuss a certain topic
- Freenode has lots of channels:

#ubuntu	#debian	#archlinux	#gentoo	
#python	#haskell	#ruby	#php	#bash
#nginx	#mysql	#wordpress	#node.js	
#linux	#docker	#openstack	#puppet	#git
#ubuntu-us-md	#ubuntu-server	#reddit-sysadmin		

IRC – Moderator Actions

- Each channel has its own moderation team
 - Keeps the channel on topic
 - Kicks out those breaking the rules (eg spammers)
- Channel operators can use additional commands

<code>/topic new_topic</code>	Change channel topic to new_topic
<code>/mode [+_]mode</code>	Add/Remove channel modes
<code>/op [#channel] user</code>	Give operator status to user
<code>/halfop user</code>	Give half-operator status to user
<code>/voice user</code>	Give voice status to user
<code>/kick user</code>	Kick user out of the channel
<code>/ban user</code>	Ban user from joining the channel

Abuse

- IRC Botnets
 - Private channels can act as a C&C center for hacked computers
 - IRC Network Admins can close these channels
- Spammers
 - Channel operators can kick/ban these users
- Privacy Concerns
 - IP address can potentially be exposed in /whois
 - Some networks offer cloaks, masks, or virtual hosts to hide your IP address

Advanced Usage

- IRC Bots
 - “Friendly” IRC bots can be used to assist those in the channel
 - Offer channel logging, linking to wiki articles or other sites
- IRC Bouncers
 - An intermediary between you and the server
 - You → Bouncer → Freenode
 - Bouncers are always online, usually with a static IP
 - Allow multiple connections to use the same nick
 - Laptop, Workstation, and Phone