

RFC Editor

FAQs

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1. **The RFC Editor was once Jon Postel; who is it today?**

The RFC Editor is no longer a single person, it is a small group of people. The [Internet Society](#), on behalf of the [IETF](#), contracts the RFC Editor function to [Association Management Solutions, LLC \(AMS\)](#). Through 2009, the home of the RFC Editor

function was the Networking Division of the [USC Information Sciences Institute \(ISI\)](#) in Marina del Rey, CA. ISI played a key role in the development of the Internet, and Jon Postel was the Director of ISI'S Networking Division for many years. For a historical account of the RFC series, see "[30 Years of RFCs](#)" and "[40 Years of RFCs](#)".

2. **Every RFC was attributed to the "Network Working Group" (before the publication of [RFC 5741](#)). What working group is that?**

This label in the heading of RFCs is historical in form and symbolic in content. Historically, "network working group" meant the set of researchers who developed the packet switching protocols for the ARPAnet, beginning in 1969. This label was maintained on RFCs as a reminder of the long and significant technical history that is recorded in the RFC series, and as a reminder that today's technical decisions, wise or not, may be with us for many years. Today, the "Network Working Group" should be interpreted as the set of users, vendors, and researchers who are working to improve and extend the Internet, in particular under the ISOC/IETF umbrella.

3. **Are all RFCs Internet standards documents?**

In a word, "**NO!**".

Many RFCs have Informational or Experimental status and do not represent any kind of standard. They contain information that may be useful or important to retain in this archival document series.

This is important to understand, because unscrupulous marketers and a careless trade press sometimes falsely suggest that every RFC represents a standard, or that all standards have equal weight. The relationship among Internet technical specifications is often complex.

4. **How can one tell where in the standards track an RFC is?**

Consult the online document "[Internet Official Protocol Standards](#)". We periodically publish a snapshot of this information as an RFC whose number is divisible by 100; the latest such RFC is [STD 1](#).

These links are also on the [RFC Database](#) page.

5. **How can I correct an error in a published RFC?**

You **cannot!** Once an RFC is published, it cannot be changed. The RFCs form an archival series. If the bug represents a change of content, a revised RFC can be written that obsoletes the one in error.

For both technical and editorial errors, the RFC Editor provides a list of errata for published RFCs. Use the [RFC Errata page](#) to look up errata by RFC number or view the complete list. Also, search results from the [RFC search engine](#) include hyperlinks to any corresponding errata entries. To report an error in an RFC, please use the form available from the RFC Errata page (see [How to Report Errata](#) for details).

6. **May I reproduce or translate an RFC?**

All RFCs may be freely reproduced and translated (unmodified). Since the publication of [RFC 5377](#) and [RFC 5378](#) in November 2008, the copyright notice and legends that appear on RFCs have been determined by the [IETF Trust Legal Provisions](#). See the [IETF Trust Copyright FAQ](#) for further information.

7. Can I be notified when a new RFC is published?

Yes. An announcement of each new RFC is sent to all members of the rfc-dist mailing list. You can subscribe and unsubscribe from this list at:

<http://mailman.rfc-editor.org/mailman/listinfo/rfc-dist>

8. I cannot retrieve the text of an RFC. Why not?

There is a [short list](#) of RFC numbers that were issued to documents that were never actually published. This explains the occasional gap between numbers. The current procedures are set up to try very hard to avoid this situation in the future; in particular, RFC numbers are never reserved, rather they are assigned at the last moment in the editorial process.

In addition, some RFCs prior to 800 existed only on paper. The RFC Editor has an ["RFC Online"](#) project to make the entire RFC series available online. However, this process has necessarily had lower priority than editing new RFCs. We are grateful for the help of volunteers in the Internet community who entered and proofed text of the missing online RFCs.

9. When I retrieve an RFC, every line ends in "^M". What gives?

See ["The End-of-Line Story"](#) for a historical account of the problem and possible solutions.

10. Can I get a hard copy of the RFCs?

The RFC Editor does not publish the repository in hard copy. There are several reasons for this. First, with over three thousand RFCs the size of a hard copy would fill several book cases. Second, given that most of the community obtains electronic versions of these documents, there is insufficient market to justify the printing costs. Finally, the RFC repository is constantly being extended. Any printed version would be quickly out of date.

11. Can I get a copy of the RFCs on CD-ROM?

The RFC Editor does not publish CD-ROM copies of the RFC repository. As expressed above, these would become quickly out of date. For this reason, users are encouraged to consult the RFC Editor website for the most current version of any standard. In the past we have given permission for several commercial ventures to market RFC CDs, but we are not aware that any of these ventures still exist. Users may, of course, create their own CD-ROMs.

12. How do I get an RFC published?

See [the RFC publication process](#).

13. **Once my document has been sent to the IESG for review, or approved by the IESG for publication, how do I know the RFC Editor has it in their queue?**

Please look at the [RFC Editor Queue](#)

14. **How long does it take for a document to become an RFC?**

Typical time to publish is 1-2 months, but the actual time varies greatly from one RFC to another. Publication may be held up for a variety of reasons, including IESG approval, inconsistencies or omissions that show up in editing, or normative references to other documents that must be published earlier or simultaneously. (For current information on documents linked by normative references, see the [cluster page](#).) Authors should also be aware that the RFC Queue may be congested right before meetings of the IETF.

15. **What can I do to expedite the RFC publication process?**

Read all the instructions carefully. Make sure your document is formatted properly. See [the RFC publication process](#) and [the RFC Style Guide](#).

16. **I just realized my document has typos, or my address or affiliation has changed, what do I do?**

If your document is in the [RFC Editor Queue](#), please go ahead and send the changes to the [RFC Editor](#) at any time.

17. **What style guide does the RFC Editor use?**

See the [RFC Style Guide](#). Also, we generally follow two sources for style advice: "The Elements of Style" by Strunk & White (4th Ed., 2000) and "A Pocket Style Manual" by Diana Hacker (4th Ed., 2004).

18. **How should references to RFCs be listed?**

A handy file of reference text for RFCs is available here: <ftp://ftp.rfc-editor.org/in-notes/rfc-ref.txt>. We prefer representative reference tags (such as [RFC2119]) over numeric reference tags (such as [1]).

19. **Will I have a chance to look over my document before it becomes an RFC?**

Yes, during AUTH48 state. See [Publication Process](#).

20. **One of the authors is no longer available; how do we move forward?**

We recommend one of the following paths forward:

1. The author can be removed as an author and moved to the Acknowledgements section.
2. The author can be removed as an author and moved to a Contributors section.

[IESG Statement on AUTH48 State.](#))

Option 3 is typically used in instances where the missing author made significant contributions to the document, so the other authors are not feel comfortable removing the individual from the author list.

21. After an Internet-Draft from a working group is approved for publication as an RFC, how are the WG chairs and Area Directors involved in the publication process?

The WG chairs and Area Directors are CC'ed on every message sent from the RFC Editor to the authors during the course of the publication process, so they have the option of giving input at any time. Specifically, Area Director approval is requested when any changes that are beyond editorial are introduced into the document. A reply from WG chairs may be sought for issues that affect more than one document from their WG or for decisions about whether the WG needs to review changes. The Document Shepherd (when not one of the WG chairs) is also CC'ed on each message from the RFC Editor during the publication process. After the RFC is published, the authors as well as the WG chairs and Area Directors receive the notification message if [errata](#) are reported for that RFC.

22. What if I want to include diagrams in an RFC that cannot be rendered in ASCII?

After an RFC has been published, there is an option of posting a PDF with images; it contains the exact text of the RFC with diagrams added. This file is an option for authors and is produced by the authors.

Examples of RFCs that have used this option are [RFC 4128](#), [RFC 4137](#), [RFC 4601](#), [RFC 5059](#), [RFC 5317](#), and [RFC 5598](#). Note that each RFC has a PDF file available, which is a PDF file of the straight text. The optional PDF is listed as "PDF with images".

23. How can I submit an April 1st RFC?

April 1st submissions are the only RFCs-to-be that do not need to be published as Internet-Drafts. These entries should be sent directly to the [RFC Editor](#). We appreciate receiving all entries at least 2 weeks prior to April 1st so that the RFC Editor team has time to review all of the documents and prepare those that we decide to publish.

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