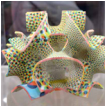



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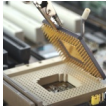
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What is a packet?

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It turns out that everything you do on the Internet involves **packets**. For example, every Web page that you receive comes as a series of packets, and every e-mail you send leaves as a series of packets. Networks that ship data around in small packets are called **packet switched networks**.

On the Internet, the network breaks an e-mail message into parts of a certain size in **bytes**. These are the packets. Each packet carries the information that will help it get to its destination -- the sender's **IP address**, the intended receiver's IP address, something that tells the network how many packets this e-mail message has been broken into and the number of this particular packet. The packets carry the data in the protocols that the Internet uses: Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP). Each packet contains part of the body of your message. A typical packet contains perhaps 1,000 or 1,500 bytes.

Each packet is then sent off to its destination by the best available route -- a route that might be taken by all the other packets in the message or by none of the other packets in the message. This makes the network more efficient. First, the network can balance the load across various pieces of equipment on a millisecond-by-millisecond basis. Second, if there is a problem with one piece of equipment in the network while a message is being transferred, packets can be routed around the problem, ensuring the delivery of the entire message.

Depending on the type of network, packets may be referred to by another name:

- frame
- block
- cell
- segment

Next, learn about the parts of packets and an example of how packets are applied.

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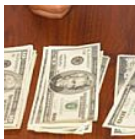
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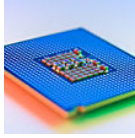
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