

Intro to IRC (Activity)

Title	Intro to IRC (Internet Relay Chat)
Overview	Learners will gain a basic understanding of IRC (Internet Relay Chat) as well as the role that IRC plays in open source software development. Participants will learn about IRC etiquette and explore the interactions that occur between members of an open source community.
Prerequisites	None.
Learning Objectives	After successfully completing this activity, the learner should be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Describe the importance of IRC as it relates to open source software development.2. Connect to an IRC server and join a channel.3. Participate in a brief interaction on an IRC channel.
Process Skills Practiced	

Background

IRC (Internet Relay Chat) is an essential tool used by open source software developers. It allows members of the community, or those interested in becoming involved in the community, to communicate 24/7, regardless of their geographic location. IRC is much like Instant Messaging with a group.

Bear in mind that 'talking' is not always a requirement. You will learn a great deal by 'listening', especially in the beginning. When you join a channel, it is not necessary to identify yourself or to say hi, you can simply 'lurk'. Feel free to ask questions, and note that it is not necessary to ask first if you can ask a question.

IRC resources:

- [IRC Help: tutorials and more](#)
- <http://teachingopensource.org/index.php/IRC>
- [A list of IRC commands](#)
- [More complete list of IRC Commands](#)

Directions

Throughout this activity you will be asked to answer questions, make observations, and may wish to take notes. These should be posted to your wiki page.

Part 1 – Walk through of IRC Conversation

Download this sample [IRC Conversation](#)

This conversation is part of a meeting being run with a meetbot. A [meetbot](#) is a type of "bot" (or program that simulates a human activity) that works in IRC channels to help take notes for a meeting. Note the dark green entries in the conversation that begin with a hashmark. These are meetbot commands.

- The first line of the conversation shows "darci" starting the meeting.
- "totally" is the name of the meetbot.
- The #topics command sets the topic of the conversation and is one of several commands.

As you review the conversation, you should:

1. Pay attention to the interactions that occur between community members.
2. Ignore the technical terms.
3. Accept that the content may be beyond your understanding at this point, your first step in being productively lost.
4. Answer the following questions on your wiki page:
 - How do people interact?
 - What is the pattern of communication? Is it linear or branched? Formal or informal? One-to-many, one-to-one or a mix?
 - Are there any terms that seem to have special meaning?
 - Can you make any other observations?
5. Now look at the [results of the meetbot](#). This shows you how each meetbot command is formatted into a legible page that summarizes the meeting. Some additional formatting may be needed, but it certainly provides a great starting point. Here's a link to the final version of the [meeting notes](#).
 - Bonus question: Why didn't Heidi and Darci's actions get picked up by the meetbot?

Part 2 – Install and Start an IRC Client

There are many IRC clients to choose from, below is a brief list of suggestions:

1. Windows and Linux: Hexchat (<https://hexchat.github.io/>) or Pidgin (<https://pidgin.im/>)
2. Mac OS X: Colloquy (<http://colloquy.info/>)
3. Firefox add-on: ChatZilla (<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/chatzilla/>) is a multi-platform add-on that will work on Windows, Linux and Mac OS X.

For example, if you have Firefox running, follow these steps to add ChatZilla.

1. Click Tools from the main menu and then choose Add-ons. The Get Add-ons tab should be selected on the left. If you don't see the main menu, click the menu button in the upper, right corner, and select Add-ons.
2. Scroll down and click the See more add-ons ! button.
3. Type ChatZilla in the search box found in the upper, right corner.

4. Hover over the ChatZilla add-on and then click the Add to Firefox button to the right of the ChatZilla add-on. Note that ChatZilla is available in a number of languages, so be sure to select the appropriate one.
5. Restart Firefox.

Note that there are some locations or situations where the IRC port is blocked. In such cases you may want to use a web-based client:

1. Kiwiirc, supports the freenode server and you can access the foss2serve channel from here.
- <https://kiwiirc.com/client/irc.freenode.net/>
2. Mibbit, allows you to connect to a variety of servers. - <http://www.mibbit.com/>

Part 3 – Join and Observe Channel Discussion

The GNOME Accessibility Team (<https://wiki.gnome.org/Accessibility>) utilizes a fairly active channel. You should observe the #a11y channel for 24 hours and no, you do not need to be physically present for this length of time! You can join the channel and let the IRC client record the communications that occur.

1. Connect to the server via the command: `/server irc.gnome.org`
2. Join the a11y channel via the command: `/join #a11y` (note that 1 is the number one, not the letter L)
3. Summarize your observations on your wiki page.
 - Pay particular attention to the ways that the communication in this channel differs from the sample dialog you examined in Part 1

Part 4 – (Optional - Make your own channel and experiment)

Sometimes the best way to figure out what's possible is just to play around and know you're not going to step on anyone's toes. In IRC you can create a channel by typing

```
/j o i n #channel name
```

(and you can make "channelname" whatever made up thing that you want!).

A variant of that is that if you type

```
/j o i n #yournick
```

and no one has created the channel #yournick on that IRC server then a new channel called #yournick will be created and you'll automatically have Ops privileges. This is a fun way to experiment with Ops privs!

Next, try one of the most useful commands (for almost any system, anywhere): help

- Remember to precede it with the `/`, as that's what tells the client that it's a command, not text to be sent.

- Invite another student to the your channel and try some of the commands that you can only do with Ops privileges
- Record the commands you tried and what they did (in your own words) on your wiki page.