**Asterisk Channels**

**What is a Channel?**

A channel is a connection which brings in a call to the Asterisk PBX. A channel could be a connection to an ordinary telephone handset or an ordinary telephone line, or to a logical call (like an Internet phone call). Asterisk makes no distinction between "[FXO](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/FXO)" and "[FXS](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/FXS)" style channels (that is, it doesn't distinguish between telephone lines and telephones). Every call is placed or received on a distinct channel.

**Channel Types**

Asterisk provides the following channel types in the standard distribution:

* [**Agent**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+agent+channels): ACD Agent channel
* [**Console**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+console+channels): Linux console client driver for sound cards (using OSS or ALSA)
* [**H.323**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+H323+channels): An older VOIP protocol
* [**IAX**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+IAX+channels) and [**IAX2**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+IAX+channels): Inter-Asterisk Exchange protocol, Asterisk's own VOIP protocol
* [**MulticastRTP**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+MulticastRTP+channels): Broadcast audio outside the context of a call (new in Asterisk 1.8)
* [**Local**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+local+channels): Loopback into another context
* [**MGCP**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+MGCP+channels): Media Gateway Control Protocol, another VOIP protocol
* [**mISDN**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+mISDN+channels): mISDN channel
* [**Modem**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+Modem+channels): Confusingly, this is for connecting ISDN lines, not for use with modems. Deprecated.
* **Asterisk NBS channels**: using Network Broadcast Sound
* [**phone**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+phone+channels): Linux Telephony channel
* [**SIP**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+SIP+channels): Session Initiation Protocol, the most common VOIP protocol
* [**Skinny**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+channel+skinny): A driver for Cisco Skinny Client Control Protocol (a VOIP protocol)
* [**Gtalk**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+Gtalk+channels): Google Talk Channel driver. To be replaced by Asterisk Jingle channels
* **Asterisk VOFR channels**: voice over frame relay [Adtran](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/adtran" \o "adtran) style
* [**VPB**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+vpb+channels): For connecting ordinary telephone and telephone lines using Voicetronix cards
* [**Zap**](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+ZAP+channels): For connecting ordinary telephones and telephone lines using Digium cards. Also for [TDMoE](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/Asterisk+TDMoE" \o "Asterisk TDMoE) and for [zaptelBRI](http://www.voip-info.org/wiki/view/zaptelBRI" \o "zaptelBRI)