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Routers on a network send messages in pieces depending on the size limit set by the network. Routers can only transfer pieces of these messages directly to routers directly connected to themselves. They send messages to other parts of the router by writing the recipient’s IP address, their own IP address, and then by giving it to a router directly connected to them that is closest to the recipient. Each subsequent router that receives this message writes down its own address before passing it on.

If a message is addressed to a nonexistent router, it is discarded and an error message is sent back to the sender. Likewise, if the sender receives an incomplete message, it is discarded and an error message is sent back to the receiver.