

In the context of the sources, the term "operator" can refer to two distinct roles: **IRC Operators**, who manage the network, and **Channel Operators**, who manage specific chat forums.

IRC Operators

An IRC operator is a member of a special class of users authorized to perform general maintenance and administrative functions on the network. While their powers are considered "dangerous," they are necessary to maintain order.

Privileges and Powers

- **Network Maintenance:** They can disconnect and reconnect servers using the SQUIT and CONNECT commands.
- **Client Removal:** They have the controversial power to forcefully remove a user from the network by closing the connection between a client and a server via the KILL command.
- **Administrative Control:** They can force a server to re-read its configuration file (REHASH), shut down a server (DIE), or restart it (RESTART).
- **Broadcasting:** They are the only users allowed to use the PRIVMSG command to send messages to all users matching a specific host or server mask.
- **Information Access:** If a TRACE command is issued by an operator, the server may provide more detailed reports, including all users connected to it.

How to Become an IRC Operator

A normal user can obtain operator privileges by using the **OPER command**. This requires a valid combination of a **name and password**. If successful, the user receives an RPL_YOUREOPER numeric reply, and their user mode is updated with the 'o' (global operator) or 'O' (local operator) flag.

Channel Operators

A channel operator (also known as a "chop" or "chanop") is a privileged member who is considered to "own" a specific channel. They are identified by a '@' symbol next to their nickname in command replies.

Privileges and Powers

Only channel operators are permitted to perform the following actions:

- **INVITE:** Invite a client to an "invite-only" channel.
- **KICK:** Forcefully eject a client from the channel.
- **MODE:** Change the channel's properties and manipulate the privileges of other members.
- **TOPIC:** Change the channel topic if the channel is set to mode +t.
- **Speak in Moderated Channels:** Send messages to a channel when the moderated flag (+m) is set.

How to Become a Channel Operator

There are several ways a user can be granted channel operator status:

- **Channel Creation:** The user who first joins a standard channel (prefixes '&', '#', or '+') automatically becomes a channel operator. In "safe channels" (prefix '!'), the user who requests the creation becomes the **Channel Creator** and is endowed with operator status.
- **Promotion by Another Operator:** An existing channel operator can grant the status to another member using the **MODE command** with the **+o flag**.
- **Server Reop Mechanism:** On "safe channels" (prefix '!'), if a channel has been without any operators for longer than a specified "reop delay," the server may automatically and randomly grant operator status to some of the remaining members to ensure the channel remains manageable.