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IETF Guidelines for Conduct

Abstract

This document provides a set of guidelines for personal interaction in the Internet Engineering Task Force. The guidelines recognize the diversity of IETF participants, emphasize the value of mutual respect, and stress the broad applicability of our work.

This document is an updated version of the guidelines for conduct originally published in RFC 3184.

Status of This Memo

This memo documents an Internet Best Current Practice.

This document is a product of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). It represents the consensus of the IETF community. It has received public review and has been approved for publication by the Internet Engineering Steering Group (IESG). Further information on BCPs is available in Section 2 of RFC 5741.

Information about the current status of this document, any errata, and how to provide feedback on it may be obtained at <http://www.rfc-editor.org/info/rfc7154>.

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1. Introduction

The work of the IETF relies on cooperation among a diverse range of people with different ideas and communication styles. The IETF strives, through these guidelines for conduct, to create and maintain an environment in which every person is treated with dignity, decency, and respect. People who participate in the IETF are expected to behave in a professional manner as we work together to develop interoperable technologies for the Internet. We aim to abide by these guidelines as we build consensus in person and through email discussions. If conflicts arise, they are resolved according to the procedures outlined in RFC 2026 [RFC2026].

This document obsoletes RFC 3184 [RFC3184], as it is an updated version of the guidelines for conduct.

2. Guidelines for Conduct

1. IETF participants extend respect and courtesy to their colleagues at all times.

IETF participants come from diverse origins and backgrounds; there can be different expectations or assumptions. Regardless of these individual differences, participants treat their colleagues with respect as persons especially when it is difficult to agree with them: treat other participants as you would like to be treated.

English is the de facto language of the IETF. However, it is not the native language of many IETF participants. All participants, particularly those with English as a first language, attempt to accommodate the needs of other participants by communicating clearly, including speaking slowly and limiting the use of slang. When faced with English that is difficult to understand, IETF participants make a sincere effort to understand each other and engage in conversation to clarify what was meant.

2. IETF participants have impersonal discussions.

We dispute ideas by using reasoned argument rather than through intimidation or personal attack. Try to provide data and facts for your standpoints so the rest of the participants who are sitting on the sidelines watching the discussion can form an opinion. The discussion is easier when the response to a simple question is a polite answer [SQPA].

3. IETF participants devise solutions for the global Internet that meet the needs of diverse technical and operational environments.

The mission of the IETF is to produce high-quality, relevant technical and engineering documents that influence the way people design, use, and manage the Internet in such a way as to make the Internet work better. The IETF puts its emphasis on technical competence, rough consensus, and individual participation, and it needs to be open to competent input from any source. We understand that "scaling is the ultimate problem" and that many ideas that are quite workable on a small scale fail this crucial test.

IETF participants use their best engineering judgment to find the best solution for the whole Internet, not just the best solution for any particular network, technology, vendor, or user. While we all have ideas that may stand improvement from time to time, no one shall ever knowingly contribute advice or text that would make a standard technically inferior.

4. Individuals are prepared to contribute to the ongoing work of the group.

We follow the intellectual property guidelines outlined in BCP 79 [RFC3979]. IETF participants read the relevant Internet-Drafts, RFCs, and email archives in order to familiarize themselves with the technology under discussion. Working Group sessions run on a very limited time schedule, and sometimes participants have to limit their questions. The work of the group will continue on the mailing list, and questions can be asked and answered on the mailing list. It can be a challenge to participate in a Working Group without knowing the history of longstanding Working Group debates. Information about a Working Group including its charter and milestones is available on the IETF datatracker site [TRACK] or from the Working Group Chair.

3. Security Considerations

The IETF guidelines for conduct do not directly affect the security of the Internet. However, it is to be noted that there is an expectation that no one shall ever knowingly contribute advice or text that may adversely affect the security of the Internet without describing all known or foreseen risks and threats to potential implementers and users that they are aware of.

4. Acknowledgements

Most of the text in this document is based on RFC 3184, which was written by Susan Harris. The editor would like to acknowledge that this document would not exist without her contribution. Mike O'Dell wrote the first draft of the Guidelines for Conduct, and many of his thoughts, statements, and observations are included in this version. Many useful editorial comments were supplied by Dave Crocker. Members of the POISSON Working Group provided many significant additions to the text.

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5. References

5.1. Informative References

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- [SQPA] Perlman, R., "Miss Manners meets the IETF", March 2002, <<http://www.ietf.org/proceedings/53/slides/plenary-3/index.html>>
- [TRACK] "The IETF Datatracker Tool", Web Application: <<https://datatracker.ietf.org/wg>>, Version 5.0.2.

Appendix A. Reporting Transgressions of the Guidelines

An individual can report transgressions of the guidelines for conduct to the IETF Chair or the IESG.

Appendix B. Consequences of Transgressing the Guidelines

This document does not discuss measures that can be taken against a participant transgressing the guidelines for conduct.

RFC 2418 [RFC2418] describes a measure where a Working Group Chair has the authority to refuse to grant the floor to any individual who is unprepared or otherwise covering inappropriate material, or who, in the opinion of the Chair, is disrupting the Working Group process.

RFC 3683 [RFC3683] describes "posting rights" action to remove the posting rights of an individual. RFC 3934 [RFC3934] describes a measure through which a Working Group Chair can suspend posting privileges of a disruptive individual for a short period of time.

Appendix C. Changes from RFC 3184

- o Added text about the IETF striving to create an environment in which every person is treated with dignity, decency, and respect.
- o Added text about contributing advice or text that may affect the security of the Internet.
- o The recommendation that newcomers should not interfere with the ongoing process in Section 2 was removed as it can be read as discouraging newcomers from participating in discussions.
- o The text about the goal of the IETF was replaced with text about the mission statement and what the IETF puts its emphasis on.
- o The text about "think globally" was removed as the meaning was not clear.
- o The text about English as a first language was clarified.
- o The guideline about impersonal discussions was reworded as a positive statement.

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