

Network Working Group  
Request for Comments: 3184  
BCP: 54  
Category: Best Current Practice

S. Harris  
Merit Network  
October 2001

## IETF Guidelines for Conduct

### Status of this Memo

This document specifies an Internet Best Current Practices for the Internet Community, and requests discussion and suggestions for improvements. Distribution of this memo is unlimited.

### Copyright Notice

Copyright (C) The Internet Society (2001). All Rights Reserved.

### 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.

### 1. Introduction

The work of the IETF relies on cooperation among a broad cultural diversity of peoples, ideas, and communication styles. The Guidelines for Conduct inform our interaction as we work together to develop multiple, interoperable technologies for the Internet. All IETF participants aim to abide by these Guidelines as we build consensus in person, at IETF meetings, and in e-mail. If conflicts arise, we resolve them according to the procedures outlined in BCP 25.[1]

### 2. Principles of Conduct

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

IETF participants come from diverse origins and backgrounds and are equipped with multiple capabilities and ideals. Regardless of these individual differences, participants treat their colleagues with respect as persons--especially when it is difficult to agree with them. Seeing from another's point of view is often revealing, even when it fails to be compelling.

English is the de facto language of the IETF, but it is not the native language of many IETF participants. Native English speakers attempt to speak clearly and a bit slowly and to limit the use of slang in order to accommodate the needs of all listeners.

2. IETF participants develop and test ideas impartially, without finding fault with the colleague proposing the idea.

We dispute ideas by using reasoned argument, rather than through intimidation or ad hominem attack. Or, said in a somewhat more IETF-like way:

"Reduce the heat and increase the light"

3. IETF participants think globally, devising solutions that meet the needs of diverse technical and operational environments.

The goal of the IETF is to maintain and enhance a working, viable, scalable, global Internet, and the problems we encounter are genuinely very difficult. We understand that "scaling is the ultimate problem" and that many ideas quite workable in the small 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. We follow the intellectual property guidelines outlined in BCP 9.[2]

4. Individuals who attend Working Group meetings are prepared to contribute to the ongoing work of the group.

IETF participants who attend Working Group meetings read the relevant Internet-Drafts, RFCs, and e-mail archives beforehand, in order to familiarize themselves with the technology under discussion. This may represent a challenge for newcomers, as e-mail archives can be difficult to locate and search, and it may not be easy to trace the history of longstanding Working Group debates. With that in mind, newcomers who attend Working Group meetings are encouraged to observe and absorb whatever material they can, but should not interfere with the ongoing process of the group. Working Group meetings run on a very limited time schedule, and are not intended for the education of individuals. The work of the group will continue on the mailing list, and many questions would be better expressed on the list in the months that follow.

### 3. Security Considerations

IETF participants review each Internet protocol for security concerns, and these concerns are incorporated in the description of each protocol.

### 4. Acknowledgements

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.

### 5. References

- [1] Bradner, S., "IETF Working Group Guidelines and Procedures", BCP 25, RFC 2418, September 1998.
- [2] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", BCP 9, RFC 2026, October 1996.

### 6. Author's Address

Susan Harris  
Merit Network, Inc.  
4251 Plymouth Rd., Suite 2000  
Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2785

EMail: [srh@merit.edu](mailto:srh@merit.edu)  
Phone: (734) 936-2100

## 7. Full Copyright Statement

Copyright (C) The Internet Society (2001). All Rights Reserved.

This document and translations of it may be copied and furnished to others, and derivative works that comment on or otherwise explain it or assist in its implementation may be prepared, copied, published and distributed, in whole or in part, without restriction of any kind, provided that the above copyright notice and this paragraph are included on all such copies and derivative works. However, this document itself may not be modified in any way, such as by removing the copyright notice or references to the Internet Society or other Internet organizations, except as needed for the purpose of developing Internet standards in which case the procedures for copyrights defined in the Internet Standards process must be followed, or as required to translate it into languages other than English.

The limited permissions granted above are perpetual and will not be revoked by the Internet Society or its successors or assigns.

This document and the information contained herein is provided on an "AS IS" basis and THE INTERNET SOCIETY AND THE INTERNET ENGINEERING TASK FORCE DISCLAIMS ALL WARRANTIES, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO ANY WARRANTY THAT THE USE OF THE INFORMATION HEREIN WILL NOT INFRINGE ANY RIGHTS OR ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

## Acknowledgement

Funding for the RFC Editor function is currently provided by the Internet Society.

