



Jon Postel  
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Revised FTP Reply Codes 1

This document describes a revised set of reply codes for the File Transfer Protocol. 2

The aim of this revision is to satisfy the goal of using reply codes to enable the command issuing process to easily determine the outcome of each command. The user protocol interpreter should be able to determine the success or failure of a command by examining the first digit of the reply code. 3

An important change in the sequencing of commands and replies which may not be obvious in the following documents concerns the establishment of the data connection. 4

In the previous FTP specifications when an actual transfer command (STOR, RETR, APPE, LIST, NLIST, MLFL) was issued the preliminary reply was sent after the data connection was established. This presented a problem for some user protocol interpreters which had difficulty monitoring two connections asynchronously. 4a

The current specification is that the preliminary reply to the actual transfer commands indicates that the file can be transferred and either the connection was previously established or an attempt is about to be made to establish the data connection. 4b

This reply code revision is a modification of the protocol in described in RFC 542, that is to say that the protocol implementation associated with socket number 21 (decimal) is the protocol specified by the combination of RFC 542 and this RFC. 5

A note of thanks to those who contributed to this work: Ken Pogran, Mark Krilanovich, Wayne Hathway, and especially Nancy

Neigus.

6

NWG/RFC# 640

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843

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19 JUN 75

## A New Schema for FTP Reply Codes

7

Replies to File Transfer Protocol commands were devised to ensure the synchronization of requests and actions in the process of file transfer, and to guarantee that the user process always knows the state of the Server. Every command must generate at least one reply, although there may be more than one; in the latter case, the multiple replies must be easily distinguished. In addition, some commands occur in sequential groups, such as USER, PASS and ACCT, or RNFR and RNT0. The replies show the existence of an intermediate state if all preceding commands have been successful. A failure at any point in the sequence necessitates the repetition of the entire sequence from the beginning.

8

Details of the command-reply sequence will be made explicit in a state diagram.

8a

An FTP reply consists of a three digit number (transmitted as three alphanumeric characters) followed by some text. The number is intended for use by automata to determine what state to enter next; the text is intended for the human user. It is intended that the three digits contain enough encoded information that the user-process (the User-PI described in RFC 542) will not need to examine the text and may either discard it or pass it on to the user, as appropriate. In particular, the text may be server-dependent, so there are likely to be varying texts for each reply code.

9

Formally, a reply is defined to contain the 3-digit code, followed by Space <SP>, followed by one line of text (where some maximum line length has been specified), and terminated by the TELNET end-of-line code. There will be cases, however, where the text is longer than a single line. In these cases the complete text must be bracketed so the User-process knows when it may stop reading the reply (i.e. stop processing input on the TELNET connection) and go do other things. This requires a special format on the first line to indicate that more than one line is coming, and another on the last line to designate it as the last.

At least one of these must contain the appropriate reply code to

NWG/RFC# 640  
Neigus

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP Reply Codes [3]

indicate the state of the transaction. To satisfy all factions  
it was decided that both the first and last line codes should be  
the same.

10

Thus the format for multi-line replies is that the first line  
will begin with the exact required reply code, followed  
immediately by a Hyphen, "-" (also known as Minus), followed  
by text. The last line will begin with the same code,  
followed immediately by Space <SP>, optionally some text, and  
TELNET <eol>.

10a

For example:

123-First line  
Second line  
234 A line beginning with numbers  
123 The last line

10a1

The user-process then simply needs to search for the second  
occurrence of the same reply code, followed by <SP> (Space),  
at the beginning of a line, and ignore all intermediary lines.  
If an intermediary line begins with a 3-digit number, the  
Server must pad the front to avoid confusion.

10b

This scheme allows standard system routines to be used for  
reply information (such as for the STAT reply), with  
"artificial" first and last lines tacked on. In the rare  
cases where these routines are able to generate three  
digits and a Space at the beginning of any line, the  
beginning of each text line should be offset by some  
neutral text, like Space.

10b1

This scheme assumes that multi-line replies may not be nested.  
We have found that, in general, nesting of replies will not  
occur, except for random system messages (called spontaneous  
replies in the previous FTP incarnations) which may interrupt  
another reply. Spontaneous replies are no longer defined;  
system messages (i.e. those not processed by the FTP server)  
will NOT carry reply codes and may occur anywhere in the  
command-reply sequence. They may be ignored by the  
User-process as they are only information for the human user.

10c

The three digits of the reply each have a special significance.  
This is intended to allow a range of very simple to very  
sophisticated response by the user-process. The first digit  
denotes whether the response is good, bad or incomplete.  
(Referring to the state diagram) an unsophisticated user-process  
will be able to determine its next action (proceed as planned,  
redo, retrench, etc.) by simply examining this first digit. A

user-process that wants to know approximately what kind of error

NWG/RFC# 640  
Neigus

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP Reply Codes [4]

occurred (e.g. file system error, command syntax error) may examine the second digit, reserving the third digit for the finest gradation of information (e.g. RNT0 command without a preceding RNFR.)

11

There are four values for the first digit of the reply code:

11a

1yz Positive Preliminary reply

11b

The requested action is being initiated; expect another reply before proceeding with a new command. (The user-process sending another command before the completion reply would be in violation of protocol; but server-FTP processes should queue any commands that arrive while a preceding command is in progress.) This type of reply can be used to indicate that the command was accepted and the user-process may now pay attention to the data connections, for implementations where simultaneous monitoring is difficult.

11b1

2yz Positive Completion reply

11c

The requested action has been successfully completed. A new request may be initiated.

11c1

3yz Positive Intermediate reply

11d

The command has been accepted, but the requested action is being held in abeyance, pending receipt of further information. The user should send another command specifying this information. This reply is used in command sequence groups.

11d1

4yz Transient Negative Completion reply

11e

The command was not accepted and the requested action did not take place, but the error condition is temporary and the action may be requested again. The user should return to the beginning of the command sequence, if any. It is difficult to assign a meaning to "transient", particularly when two distinct sites (Server and User-processes) have to agree on the interpretation. Each reply in the 4yz category might have a slightly different time value, but the intent is that the user-process is encouraged to try again. A rule of thumb in determining if a reply fits into the 4yz or the 5yz (Permanent Negative) category is that replies are 4yz if the commands can be repeated without any change in command form or in properties of the User or

Server (e.g. the command is spelled the same with the same

NWG/RFC# 640 JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
 Neigus FTP Reply Codes [5]

arguments used; the user does not change his file access or  
 user name; the server does not put up a new  
 implementation.) 11e1

5yz Permanent Negative Completion reply 11f

The command was not accepted and the requested action did  
 not take place. The User-process is discouraged from  
 repeating the exact request (in the same sequence). Even  
 some "permanent" error conditions can be corrected, so the  
 human user may want to direct his User-process to  
 reinitiate the command sequence by direct action at some  
 point in the future (e.g. after the spelling has been  
 changed, or the user has altered his directory status.) 11f1

The following function groupings are encoded in the second  
 digit: 11g

x0z Syntax - These replies refer to syntax errors,  
 syntactically correct commands that don't fit any  
 functional category, unimplemented or superfluous  
 commands. 11g1

x1z Information - These are replies to requests for  
 information, such as status or help. 11g2

x2z Connections - Replies referring to the TELNET and  
 data connections. 11g3

x3z Authentication and accounting - Replies for the logon  
 process and accounting procedures. 11g4

x4z Unspecified as yet 11g5

x5z File system - These replies indicate the status of  
 the Server file system vis-a-vis the requested  
 transfer or other file system action. 11g6

The third digit gives a finer gradation of meaning in each of  
 the function categories, specified by the second digit. The  
 list of replies below will illustrate this. Note that the  
 text associated with each reply is suggestive, rather than  
 mandatory, and may even change according to the command with  
 which it is associated. The reply codes, on the other hand,  
 should strictly follow the specifications in the last section;  
 that is, Server implementations should not invent new codes  
 for situations that are only slightly different from the ones

described here, but rather should adapt codes already defined.

NWG/RFC# 640  
Neigus

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP Reply Codes [6]

If additional codes are found to be necessary, the details  
should be submitted to the FTP committee, through Jon Postel. 11h

A command such as TYPE or ALLO whose successful execution does not offer the user-process any new information will cause a 200 reply to be returned. If the command is not implemented by a particular Server-FTP process because it has no relevance to that computer system, for example ALLO at a TENEX site, a Positive Completion reply is still desired so that the simple User-process knows it can proceed with its course of action. A 202 reply is used in this case with, for example, the reply text: "No storage allocation necessary." If, on the other hand, the command requests a non-site-specific action and is unimplemented, the response is 502. A refinement of that is the 504 reply for a command that IS implemented, but that requests an unimplemented parameter.

11h1

11i

200 Command okay 11i1

500 Syntax error, command unrecognized  
[This may include errors such as command line too long.] 11i2

501 Syntax error in parameters or arguments 11i3

202 Command not implemented, superfluous at this site. 11i4

502 Command not implemented 11i5

503 Bad sequence of commands 11i6

504 Command not implemented for that parameter 11i7

11j

110 Restart marker reply.

In this case the text is exact and not left to the particular implementation; it must read:

MARK yyyy = mmmm

where yyyy is User-process data stream marker, and mmmm is Server's equivalent marker. (note the spaces between the markers and "=".)

11j1

211 System status, or system help reply 11j2

212 Directory status 11j3

213 File status 11j4

214 Help message (on how to use the server or the meaning of a particular non-standard command. This reply is useful only to the human user.) 11j5

11k

120 Service ready in nnn minutes 11k1

220 Service ready for new user 11k2

221 Service closing TELNET connection (logged off if appropriate) 11k3

421 Service not available, closing TELNET connection.

[This may be a reply to any command if the service

knows it must shut down.] 11k4

NWG/RFC# 640  
Neigus

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP Reply Codes [7]

125	Data connection already open; transfer starting	11k5
225	Data connection open; no transfer in progress	11k6
425	Can't open data connection	11k7
226	Closing data connection; requested file action successful (for example, file transfer or file abort.)	11k8
426	Connection trouble, closed; transfer aborted.	11k9
227	Entering [passive, active] mode	11k10
		11l
230	User logged on, proceed	11l1
530	Not logged in	11l2
331	User name okay, need password	11l3
332	Need account for login	11l4
532	Need account for storing files	11l5
		11m
150	File status okay; about to open data connection.	11m1
250	Requested file action okay, completed.	11m2
350	Requested file action pending further information	11m3
450	Requested file action not taken: file unavailable (e.g. file not found, no access)	11m4
550	Requested action not taken: file unavailable (e.g. file busy)	11m5
451	Requested action aborted: local error in processing	11m6
452	Requested action not taken: insufficient storage space in system	11m7
552	Requested file action aborted: exceeded storage allocation (for current directory or dataset)	11m8
553	Requested action not taken: file name not allowed	11m9
354	Start mail input; end with <CR><LF>.<CR><LF>	11m10

## Command-Reply Sequences 12

In this section, the command-reply sequence is presented. Each command is listed with its possible replies; command groups are listed together. Preliminary replies are listed first (with their succeeding replies under them), then positive and negative completion, and finally intermediary replies with the remaining commands from the sequence following. This listing forms the basis for the state diagrams, which will be presented separately. 13

ICP	13a
120	13a1
220	13a1a
220	13a2



421	13a3
NWG/RFC# 640	JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843
Neigus	FTP Reply Codes [8]
Logon	13b
USER	13b1
230	13b1a
530	13b1b
500, 501, 421	13b1c
331, 332	13b1d
PASS	13b2
230	13b2a
202	13b2b
530	13b2c
500, 501, 503, 421	13b2d
332	13b2e
ACCT	13b3
230	13b3a
202	13b3b
530	13b3c
500, 501, 503, 421	13b3d
Logoff	13c
QUIT	13c1
221	13c1a
500	13c1b
REIN	13c2
120	13c2a
220	13c2a1
220	13c2b
421	13c2c
500, 502	13c2d
Transfer parameters	13d
SOCK	13d1
200	13d1a
500, 501, 421, 530	13d1b
PASV	13d2
227	13d2a
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13d2b
ACTV	13d3
227	13d3a
202	13d3b
500, 501, 421, 530	13d3c
BYTE, MODE, TYPE, STRU	13d4
200	13d4a

500, 501, 504, 421, 530

13d4b

NWG/RFC# 640  
Neigus

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP Reply Codes [9]

File action commands

13e

ALLO	13e1
200	13e1a
202	13e1b
500, 501, 504, 421, 530	13e1c
REST	13e2
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13e2a
350	13e2b
STOR	13e3
125, 150	13e3a
(110)	13e3a1
226, 250	13e3a2
425, 426, 451, 552	13e3a3
532, 450, 452, 553	13e3b
500, 501, 421, 530	13e3c
RETR	13e4
125, 150	13e4a
(110)	13e4a1
226, 250	13e4a2
425, 426, 451	13e4a3
450, 550	13e4b
500, 501, 421, 530	13e4c
LIST, NLST	13e5
125, 150	13e5a
226, 250	13e5a1
425, 426, 451	13e5a2
450	13e5b
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13e5c
APPE	13e6
125, 150	13e6a
(110)	13e6a1
226, 250	13e6a2
425, 426, 451, 552	13e6a3
532, 450, 550, 452, 553	13e6b
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13e6c
MLFL	13e7
125, 150	13e7a
226, 250	13e7a1
425, 426, 451, 552	13e7a2
532, 450, 550, 452, 553	13e7b
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13e7c
RNFR	13e8
450, 550	13e8a
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13e8b
350	13e8c
RNTO	13e9
250	13e9a

532, 553	13e9b
NWG/RFC# 640	JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843
Neigus	FTP Reply Codes [10]

500, 501, 502, 503, 421, 530	13e9c
DELE	13e10
250	13e10a
450, 550	13e10b
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13e10c
ABOR	13e11
225, 226	13e11a
500, 501, 502, 421	13e11b
MAIL	13e12
354	13e12a
250	13e12a1
451, 552	13e12a2
450, 550, 452, 553	13e12b
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13e12c
Informational commands	13f
STAT	13f1
211, 212, 213	13f1a
450	13f1b
500, 501, 502, 421, 530	13f1c
HELP	13f2
211, 214	13f2a
500, 501, 502, 421	13f2b
Miscellaneous commands	13g
SITE	13g1
200	13g1a
202	13g1b
500, 501, 530	13g1c
NOOP	13g2
200	13g2a

NWG/RFC# 640

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843

Jon Postel

19 JUN 75

## FTP State Diagrams

14

Here we present state diagrams for a very simple minded FTP implementation. Only the first digit of the reply codes is used. There is one state diagram for each group of FTP commands or command sequences.

15

The command groupings were determined by constructing a model for each command then collecting together the commands with structurally identical models.

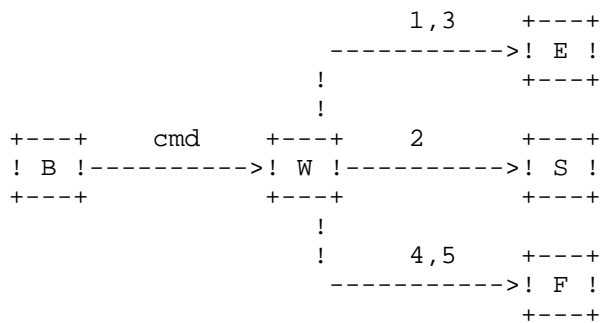
16

For each command or command sequence there are three possible outcomes: success (S), failure (F), and error (E). In the state diagrams below we use the symbol B for "begin", and the symbol W for "wait for reply".

17

We first present the diagram that represents the largest group of FTP commands:

18



18a

This diagram models the commands:

18b

ABOR, ACTV, ALLO, BYTE, DELE, HELP, MODE, NOOP, PASV, QUIT,

SITE, SOCK, STAT, STRU, TYPE.

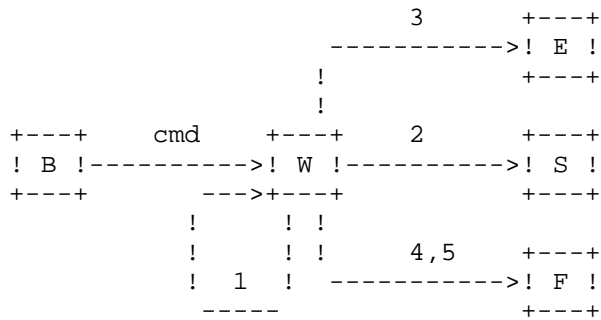
18b1

NWG/RFC# 640  
Postel

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP State Diagrams [12]

The other large group of commands is represented by a very similar diagram:

19



19a

This diagram models the commands:

19b

APPE, (ICP), LIST, MLFL, NLST, REIN, RETR, STOR.

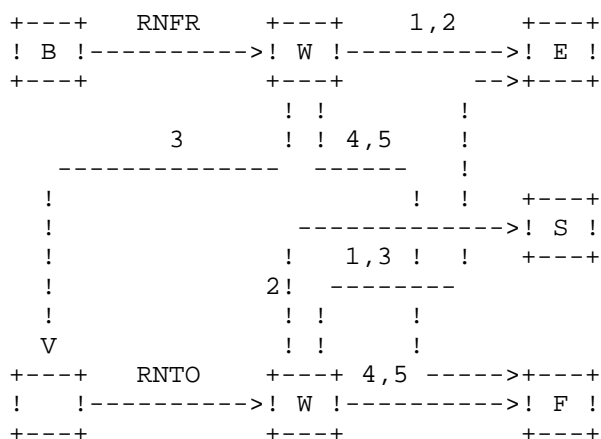
19b1

Note that this second model could also be used to represent the first group of commands, the only difference being that in the first group the 100 series replies are unexpected and therefore treated as error, while the second group expects (some may require) 100 series replies.

20

The remaining diagrams model command sequences, perhaps the simplest of these is the rename sequence:

21



NWG/RFC# 640  
Postel

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP State Diagrams [13]

A very similar diagram models the Mail command:

22

```

+----+ MAIL +----+ 1,2 +----+
! B !----->! W !----->! E !
+----+ +----+ -->+----+
      ! !      !
      3      ! ! 4,5      !
      -----      -----      !
!           ! ! +----+
!           ----->! S !
!           ! 1,3 ! ! +----+
!           2! -----
!           ! !      !
V           ! !      !
+----+ text +----+ 4,5 ----->+----+
! !----->! W !----->! F !
+----+ +----+ +----+

```

22a

Note that the "text" here is a series of lines sent from the user to the server with no response expected until the last line is sent, recall that the last line must consist only of a

single period.

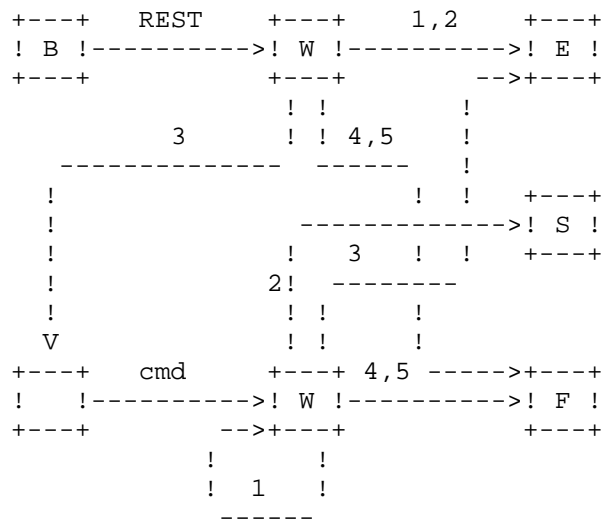
22b

NWG/RFC# 640  
Postel

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP State Diagrams [14]

The next diagram is a simple model of the Restart command:

23



23a

Where "cmd" is APPE, STOR, RETR, or MLFL.

23a1

We note that the above three models are similar, in fact the Mail diagram and the Rename diagram are structurally identical. The Restart differs from the other two only in the treatment of 100

series replies at the second stage.

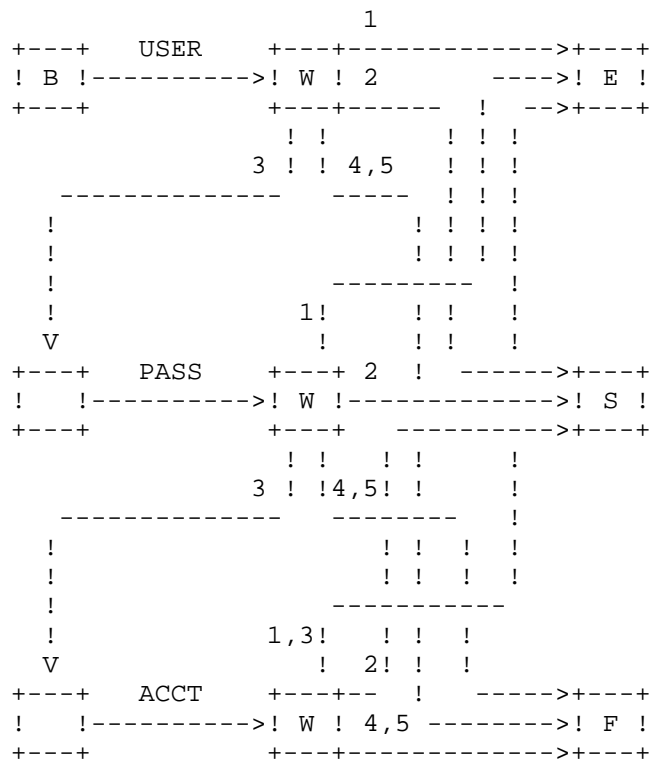
24

NWG/RFC# 640  
Postel

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP State Diagrams [15]

The most complicated diagram is for the Logon sequence:

25





NWG/RFC# 640  
Postel

JBP NJN 5-JUN-74 16:07 30843  
FTP State Diagrams [16]

Finally we present a generalized diagram that could be used to  
model the command and reply interchange:

26

