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Notable CBOR Tags

Abstract

The Concise Binary Object Representation (CBOR, RFC 8949) is a data format whose design goals include the possibility of extremely small code size, fairly small message size, and extensibility without the need for version negotiation.

In CBOR, one point of extensibility is the definition of CBOR tags. RFC 8949's original edition, RFC 7049, defined a basic set of tags as well as a registry that can be used to contribute additional tag definitions [[IANA.cbor-tags](https://iana.org/cbor-tags)]. Since RFC 7049 was published, some 80 tag definitions have been added to that registry.

The present document provides a roadmap to a large subset of these tag definitions. Where applicable, it points to a IETF standards or standard development document that specifies the tag. Where no such document exists, the intention is to collect specification information from the sources of the registrations. After some more development, the present document is intended to be useful as a reference document for the IANA registrations of the CBOR tags the definitions of which have been collected.

Note to Readers

This is an individual submission to the CBOR working group of the IETF, <https://datatracker.ietf.org/wg/cbor/about/>. Discussion currently takes places on the github repository <https://github.com/cabo/notable-tags>. If the CBOR WG believes this is a useful document, discussion is likely to move to the CBOR WG mailing list and a github repository at the CBOR WG github organization, <https://github.com/cbor-wg>.

The current version is true work in progress; some of the sections haven't been filled in yet, and in particular, permission has not been obtained from tag definition authors to copy over their text.

Status of This Memo

This Internet-Draft is submitted in full conformance with the provisions of BCP 78 and BCP 79.

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Table of Contents

1. [Introduction](#)
 - 1.1. [Terminology](#)
2. [RFC 7049 \(original CBOR specification\)](#)
 - 2.1. [Tags Related to Those Defined in RFC 7049](#)
 - 2.2. [Tags from RFC 7049 not listed in RFC 8949](#)
3. [Security](#)
 - 3.1. [RFC 8152 \(COSE\)](#)
 - 3.2. [RFC 8392 \(CWT\)](#)
4. [CBOR-based Representation Formats](#)
 - 4.1. [YANG-CBOR](#)
5. [Protocols](#)
 - 5.1. [DOTS](#)
 - 5.2. [RAINS](#)
6. [Datatypes](#)
 - 6.1. [Advanced arithmetic](#)
 - 6.2. [Variants of undefined](#)

- [6.3. Typed and Homogeneous Arrays](#)
- [7. Domain-Specific](#)
 - [7.1. Extended Time Formats](#)
- [8. Platform-oriented](#)
 - [8.1. Perl](#)
 - [8.2. JSON](#)
 - [8.3. Weird text encodings](#)
- [9. Application-specific](#)
- [10. Implementation aids](#)
 - [10.1. Invalid Tag](#)
- [11. IANA Considerations](#)
- [12. Security Considerations](#)
- [13. References](#)
 - [13.1. Normative References](#)
 - [13.2. Informative References](#)
- [Acknowledgements](#)
- [Contributors](#)
- [Author's Address](#)

1. Introduction

(TO DO, expand on text from abstract here; move references here and neuter them in the abstract as per [Section 4.3](#) of [[RFC7322](#)].)

The selection of the tags presented here is somewhat arbitrary; considerations such as how wide the scope and area of application of a tag definition is combine with an assessment how "ready to use" the tag definition is (i.e., is the tag specification in a state where it can be used).

This document can only be a snapshot of a subset of the current registrations. The most up to date set of registrations is always available in the registry "[CBOR Tags](#)" [[IANA.cbor-tags](#)].

1.1. Terminology

The definitions of [[RFC8949](#)] apply. The term "byte" is used in its now customary sense as a synonym for "octet". Where bit arithmetic is explained, this document uses the notation familiar from the programming language C ([[C](#)], including C++14's `0bnnn` binary literals [[Cplusplus20](#)]), except that superscript notation (example for two to the power of 64: 2^{64}) denotes exponentiation; in the plain text version of this document, superscript notation is rendered in paragraph text by C-incompatible surrogate notation as seen in this example. Ranges expressed using `..` are inclusive of the limits given. Type names such as "int", "bigint" or "decfrac" are taken from [Appendix D](#) of [[RFC8610](#)], the Concise Data Definition Language (CDDL).

2. RFC 7049 (original CBOR specification)

[[RFC7049](#)] defines a number of tags that are listed here for convenience only.

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description	Section of RFC 7049
0	UTF-8 string	Standard date/time string	2.4.1
1	multiple	Epoch-based date/time	2.4.1
2	byte string	Positive bignum	2.4.2
3	byte string	Negative bignum	2.4.2
4	array	Decimal fraction	2.4.3
5	array	Bigfloat	2.4.3
21	multiple	Expected conversion to base64url encoding	2.4.4.2
22	multiple	Expected conversion to base64 encoding	2.4.4.2
23	multiple	Expected conversion to base16 encoding	2.4.4.2
24	byte string	Encoded CBOR data item	2.4.4.1
32	UTF-8 string	URI	2.4.4.3
33	UTF-8 string	base64url	2.4.4.3
34	UTF-8 string	base64	2.4.4.3
35	UTF-8 string	Regular expression	2.4.4.3
36	UTF-8 string	MIME message	2.4.4.3
55799	multiple	Self-describe CBOR	2.4.5

Table 1: Tag numbers defined in RFC 7049

2.1. Tags Related to Those Defined in RFC 7049

Separately registered tags that are directly related to the tags predefined in RFC 7049 include:

*Tag 63, registered by this document, is a parallel to tag 24, with the single difference that its byte string tag content carries a CBOR Sequence [[RFC8742](#)] instead of a single CBOR data item.

*Tag 257, registered by Peter Occil with a specification in <http://peteroupc.github.io/CBOR/binarymime.html>, is a parallel to tag 36, except that the tag content is a byte string, which therefore can also carry binary MIME messages as per [\[RFC2045\]](#).

2.2. Tags from RFC 7049 not listed in RFC 8949

[Section G.3](#) of [\[RFC8949\]](#) states:

Tag 35 is not defined by this document; the registration based on the definition in RFC 7049 remains in place.

The reason for this exclusion is that the definition of Tag 35 in [Section 2.4.4.3](#) of [\[RFC7049\]](#), leaves too much open to ensure interoperability:

Tag 35 is for regular expressions in Perl Compatible Regular Expressions (PCRE) / JavaScript syntax [\[ECMA262\]](#).

Not only are two partially incompatible specifications given for the semantics, JavaScript regular expressions have also developed significantly within the decade since JavaScript 5.1 (which was referenced by [\[RFC7049\]](#)), making it less reliable to assume that a producing application will manage to stay within that 2011 subset.

Nonetheless, the registration is in place, so it is available for applications that simply want to mark a text string as being a regular expression roughly of the PCRE/Javascript flavor families.

3. Security

A number of CBOR tags are defined in security specifications that make use of CBOR.

3.1. RFC 8152 (COSE)

[\[RFC8152\]](#) defines CBOR Object Signing and Encryption (COSE). A revision is in process that splits this specification into the data structure definitions [\[I-D.ietf-cose-rfc8152bis-struct\]](#), which will define another tag for COSE standalone counter signature, and the algorithms employed [\[I-D.ietf-cose-rfc8152bis-algs\]](#).

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description
16	COSE_Encrypt0	COSE Single Recipient Encrypted Data Object
17	COSE_Mac0	COSE Mac w/o Recipients Object
18	COSE_Sign1	COSE Single Signer Data Object
96	COSE_Encrypt	COSE Encrypted Data Object

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description
97	COSE_Mac	COSE MACed Data Object
98	COSE_Sign	COSE Signed Data Object

Table 2: Tag numbers defined in RFC 8152, COSE

3.2. RFC 8392 (CWT)

[[RFC8392](#)] defines the CBOR Web Token (CWT), making use of COSE to define a CBOR variant of the JOSE Web Token (JWT), [[RFC7519](#)], a standardized security token that has found use in the area of web applications, but is not technically limited to those.

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description
61	CBOR Web Token (CWT)	CBOR Web Token (CWT)

Table 3: Tag number defined for RFC 8392 CBOR Web Token (CWT)

4. CBOR-based Representation Formats

Representation formats can be built on top of CBOR.

4.1. YANG-CBOR

YANG [[RFC7950](#)] is a data modeling language originally designed in the context of the Network Configuration Protocol (NETCONF) [[RFC6241](#)], now widely used for modeling management and configuration information. [[RFC7950](#)] defines an XML-based representation format, and [[RFC7951](#)] defines a JSON-based [[RFC8259](#)] representation format for YANG.

YANG-CBOR [[I-D.ietf-core-yang-cbor](#)] is a representation format for YANG data in CBOR.

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description	Section of YANG-CBOR
43	byte string	YANG bits datatype	6.7
44	unsigned integer	YANG enumeration datatype	6.6
45	unsigned integer or text string	YANG identityref datatype	6.10
46	unsigned integer or text string or array	YANG instance-identifier datatype	6.13
47	unsigned integer	YANG Schema Item identifier (sid)	3.2

Table 4: Tag number defined for YANG-CBOR

5. Protocols

Protocols may want to allocate CBOR tag numbers to identify specific protocol elements.

5.1. DOTS

DDoS Open Threat Signaling (DOTS) defines tag number 271 for the DOTS signal channel object in [\[RFC8782\]](#).

5.2. RAINS

As an example for how experimental protocols can make use of CBOR tag definitions, the RAINS (Another Internet Naming Service) Protocol Specification defines tag number 15309736 for a RAINS Message [\[I-D.trammell-rains-protocol\]](#). (The seemingly random tag number was chosen so that, when represented as an encoded CBOR tag argument, it contains the Unicode character " " (U+96E8) in UTF-8, which represents rain in a number of languages.)

6. Datatypes

6.1. Advanced arithmetic

A number of tags have been registered for arithmetic representations beyond those built into CBOR and defined by tags in [\[RFC7049\]](#). These are all documented under <http://peteroupc.github.io/CBOR/>; the last pathname component is given in [Table 5](#).

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description	Reference
30	array	Rational number	rational.html
264	array	Decimal fraction with arbitrary exponent	bigfrac.html
265	array	Bigfloat with arbitrary exponent	bigfrac.html
268	array	Extended decimal fraction	extended.html
269	array	Extended bigfloat	extended.html
270	array	Extended rational number	extended.html

Table 5: Tags for advanced arithmetic

CBOR's basic generic data model ([Section 2](#) of [\[RFC8949\]](#)) has a number system with limited-range integers (major types 0 and 1: $-2^{64}..2^{64}-1$) and floating point numbers that cover binary16, binary32, and binary64 (including non-finites) from [\[IEEE754\]](#). With the tags defined with [\[RFC7049\]](#), the extended generic data model ([Section 2.1](#) of [\[RFC8949\]](#)) adds unlimited-range integers (tag numbers 2 and 3, "bigint" in CDDL) as well as floating point values

using the bases 2 (tag number 5, "bigfloat") and 10 (tag number 4, "decfrac").

This pre-defined number system has a number of limitations that are addressed in three of the tags discussed here:

*Tag number 30 allows the representation of rational numbers as a ratio of two integers: a numerator (usually written as the top part of a fraction), and a denominator (the bottom part), where both integers can be limited-range basic and unlimited-range integers. The mathematical value of a rational number is the numerator divided by the denominator. This tag can express all numbers that the extended generic data model of [\[RFC7049\]](#) can express, except for non-finites [\[IEEE754\]](#); it also can express rational numbers that cannot be expressed with denominators that are a power of 2 or a power of 10.

For example, the rational number 1/3 is encoded:

```
d8 1e      ---- Tag 30
      82      ---- Array length 2
          01      ---- 1
          03      ---- 3
```

Many programming languages have built-in support for rational numbers or support for them is included in their standard libraries; tag number 30 is a way for these platforms to interchange these rational numbers in CBOR.

*Tag numbers 4 and 5 are limited in the range of the (base 10 or base 2) exponents by the limited-range integers in the basic generic data model. Tag numbers 264 and 265 are exactly equivalent to 4 and 5, respectively, but also allow unlimited-range integers as exponents. While applications for floating point numbers with exponents outside the CBOR basic integer range are limited, tags 264 and 265 allow unlimited roundtripping with other formats that allow very large or very small exponents, such as those JSON [\[RFC8259\]](#) can provide if the limitations of I-JSON [\[RFC7493\]](#) do not apply.

The tag numbers 268..270 extend these tags further by providing a way to express non-finites within a tag with this number. This does not increase the expressiveness of the data model (the non-finites can already be expressed using major type 7 floating point numbers), but does allow both finite and non-finite values to carry the same tag. In most applications, a choice that includes some of the three tags 30, 264, 265 for finite values and major type 7 floating point

values for non-finites (as well as possibly other parts of the CBOR number system) will be the preferred solution.

This document suggests using the CDDL typenames defined in [Figure 1](#) for the three most useful tag numbers in this section.

```
rational = #6.30([numerator: integer, denominator: integer .ne 0])
rational_of<N,D> = #6.30([numerator: N, denominator: D])
; the value 1/3 can be notated as rational_of<1, 3>
```

```
extended_decfrac = #6.264([e10: integer, m: integer])
extended_bigfloat = #6.265([e2: integer, m: integer])
```

Figure 1: CDDL for extended arithmetic tags

6.2. Variants of undefined

<https://github.com/svaarala/cbor-specs/blob/master/cbor-absent-tag.rst> defines tag 31 to be applied to the CBOR value Undefined (0xf7), slightly modifying its semantics to stand for an absent value in a CBOR Array.

(TO DO: Obtain permission to copy the definitions here.)

6.3. Typed and Homogeneous Arrays

[[RFC8746](#)] defines tags for various kinds of arrays. A summary is reproduced in [Table 6](#).

Tag	Data Item	Semantics
64	byte string	uint8 Typed Array
65	byte string	uint16, big endian, Typed Array
66	byte string	uint32, big endian, Typed Array
67	byte string	uint64, big endian, Typed Array
68	byte string	uint8 Typed Array, clamped arithmetic
69	byte string	uint16, little endian, Typed Array
70	byte string	uint32, little endian, Typed Array
71	byte string	uint64, little endian, Typed Array
72	byte string	sint8 Typed Array
73	byte string	sint16, big endian, Typed Array
74	byte string	sint32, big endian, Typed Array
75	byte string	sint64, big endian, Typed Array
76	byte string	(reserved)
77	byte string	sint16, little endian, Typed Array
78	byte string	sint32, little endian, Typed Array
79	byte string	sint64, little endian, Typed Array
80	byte string	IEEE 754 binary16, big endian, Typed Array

Tag	Data Item	Semantics
81	byte string	IEEE 754 binary32, big endian, Typed Array
82	byte string	IEEE 754 binary64, big endian, Typed Array
83	byte string	IEEE 754 binary128, big endian, Typed Array
84	byte string	IEEE 754 binary16, little endian, Typed Array
85	byte string	IEEE 754 binary32, little endian, Typed Array
86	byte string	IEEE 754 binary64, little endian, Typed Array
87	byte string	IEEE 754 binary128, little endian, Typed Array
40	array of two arrays*	Multi-dimensional Array, row-major order
1040	array of two arrays*	Multi-dimensional Array, column-major order
41	array	Homogeneous Array

Table 6: Tag numbers defined for Arrays

7. Domain-Specific

(TO DO: Obtain permission to copy the definitions here; explain how tags 52 and 54 essentially obsolete 260/261.)

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description	Reference	Author
37	byte string	Binary UUID (Section 4.1.2 of [RFC4122])	https://github.com/lucas-clemente/cbor-specs/blob/master/uuid.md	Lucas Clemente
38	array	Language-tagged string	http://peteroupc.github.io/CBOR/langtags.html	Peter Occil
257	byte string	Binary MIME message	http://peteroupc.github.io/CBOR/binarymime.html	Peter Occil
260	byte string	Network Address (IPv4 or IPv6 or MAC Address)	http://www.employees.org/~ravir/cbor-network.txt	Ravi Raju
261	map	Network Address Prefix (IPv4 or IPv6 Address + Mask Length)	https://github.com/toravir/CBOR-Tag-Specs/blob/master/networkPrefix.md	Ravi Raju
263	byte string	Hexadecimal string	https://github.com/toravir/CBOR-Tag-Specs/blob/master/hexadecimal.md	Ravi Raju

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description	Reference	Author
			Specs/blob/master/hexString.md	
266	text string	Internationalized resource identifier (IRI)	https://peteroupc.github.io/CBOR/iri.html	Peter Occil
267	text string	Internationalized resource identifier reference (IRI reference)	https://peteroupc.github.io/CBOR/iri.html	Peter Occil

Table 7

7.1. Extended Time Formats

Additional tag definitions have been provided for date and time values.

Tag	Data Item	Semantics	Reference
100	integer	date in number of days since epoch	[RFC8943]
1004	text string	RFC 3339 full-date string	[RFC8943]
1001	map	extended time	[I-D.ietf-cbor-time-tag]
1002	map	duration	[I-D.ietf-cbor-time-tag]
1003	map	period	[I-D.ietf-cbor-time-tag]

Table 8: Tag numbers for date and time

Note that tags 100 and 1004 are for calendar dates that are not anchored to a specific time zone; they are meant to specify calendar dates as perceived by humans, e.g. for use in personal identification documents. Converting such a calendar date into a specific point in time needs the addition of a time-of-day (for which a CBOR tag is outstanding) and timezone information (also outstanding). Alternatively, a calendar date plus timezone information can be converted into a time period (range of time values given by the starting and the ending time); note that these time periods are not always exactly 24 h (86400 s) long.

[[RFC8943](#)] does not suggest CDDL [[RFC8610](#)] type names for the two tags. We suggest copying the definitions in [Figure 2](#) into application-specific CDDL as needed.

```
caldate = #6.100(int) ; calendar date as a number of days from 1970-01-01
tcaldate = #6.1004(tstr) ; calendar date as an RFC 3339 full-date string
```

Figure 2: CDDL for calendar date tags (RFC8943)

Tag 1001 extends tag 1 by additional information (such as picosecond resolution) and allows the use of Decimal and Bigfloat numbers for the time.

8. Platform-oriented

8.1. Perl

(These are actually not as Perl-specific as the title of this section suggests. See also the penultimate paragraph of [Section 3.4](#) of [\[RFC8949\]](#).)

These are all documented under <http://cbor.schmorp.de/>; the last pathname component is given in [Table 9](#).

(TO DO: Obtain permission to copy the definitions here.)

Tag	Data Item	Semantics	Reference
256	multiple	mark value as having string references	stringref
25	unsigned integer	reference the nth previously seen string	stringref
26	array	Serialised Perl object with classname and constructor arguments	perl-object
27	array	Serialised language-independent object with type name and constructor arguments	generic-object
28	multiple	mark value as (potentially) shared	value-sharing
29	unsigned integer	reference nth marked value	value-sharing
22098	multiple	hint that indicates an additional level of indirection	indirection

Table 9: Tag numbers that aid the Perl platform

8.2. JSON

(TO DO: Obtain permission to copy the definitions here.)

Tag number 262 has been registered to identify byte strings that carry embedded JSON text (<https://github.com/toravir/CBOR-Tag-Specs/blob/master/embeddedJSON.md>).

Tag number 275 can be used to identify maps that contain keys that are all of type Text String, as they would occur in JSON (<https://github.com/ecorm/cbor-tag-text-key-map>).

8.3. Weird text encodings

(TO DO: Obtain permission to copy the definitions here.)

Some variants of UTF-8 are in use in specific areas of application. Tags have been registered to be able to carry around strings in these variants in case they are not also valid UTF-8 and can therefore not be represented as a CBOR text string (<https://github.com/svaarala/cbor-specs/blob/master/cbor-nonutf8-string-tags.rst>).

Tag Number	Data Item	Semantics
272	byte string	Non-UTF-8 CESU-8 string
273	byte string	Non-UTF-8 WTF-8 string
274	byte string	Non-UTF-8 MUTF-8 string

Table 10: Tag numbers for UTF-8 variants

9. Application-specific

(TO DO: Obtain permission to copy the definitions here.)

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description	Reference	Author
39	multiple	Identifier	[https://github.com/lucas-clemente/cbor-specs/blob/master/id.md]	Lucas Clemente
42	byte string	IPLD content identifier	[https://github.com/ipld/cid-cbor/]	Volker Mische
103	array	Geographic Coordinates	[https://github.com/allthingstalk/cbor/blob/master/CBOR-Tag103-Geographic-Coordinates.md]	Danilo Vidovic
104	multiple	Geographic Coordinate Reference System WKT or EPSG number	[I-D.clarke-cbor-crs]	
120	multiple	Internet of Things Data Point	[https://github.com/allthingstalk/]	Danilo Vidovic

Tag number	Tag content	Short Description	Reference	Author
			cbor/blob/master/CBOR-Tag120-Internet-of-Things-Data-Points.md	
258	array	Mathematical finite set	[https://github.com/input-output-hk/cbor-sets-spec/blob/master/CBOR_SETS.md]	Alfredo Di Napoli
259	map	Map datatype with key-value operations (e.g. <code>.get()</code> / <code>.set()</code> / <code>.delete()</code>)	[https://github.com/shanewholloway/js-cbor-codec/blob/master/docs/CBOR-259-spec--explicit-maps.md]	Shane Holloway

Table 11

10. Implementation aids

10.1. Invalid Tag

The present document registers tag numbers 65535, 4294967295, and 18446744073709551615 (16-bit 0xffff, 32-bit 0xffffffff, and 64-bit 0xffffffffffffffff) as Invalid Tags, tags that are always invalid, independent of the tag content provided. The purpose of these tag number registrations is to enable the tag numbers to be reserved for internal use by implementations to note the absence of a tag on a data item where a tag could also be expected with that data item as tag content.

The Invalid Tags are not intended to ever occur in interchanged CBOR data items. Generic CBOR decoder implementations are encouraged to raise an error if an Invalid Tag occurs in a CBOR data item even if there is no validity checking implemented otherwise.

11. IANA Considerations

In the registry "[CBOR Tags](#)" [[IANA.cbor-tags](#)], IANA has allocated the first to third tag in [Table 12](#) from the FCFS space, with the present document as the specification reference. IANA has allocated the fourth tag from the Specification Required space, with the present document as the specification reference.

Tag	Data Item	Semantics	Reference
65535	(none valid)	always invalid	draft-bormann-cbor-notable-tags, Section 10.1
4294967295	(none valid)	always invalid	draft-bormann-cbor-notable-tags, Section 10.1
18446744073709551615	(none valid)	always invalid	draft-bormann-cbor-notable-tags, Section 10.1
63	byte string	Encoded CBOR Sequence [RFC8742]	draft-bormann-cbor-notable-tags, Section 2.1

Table 12: Values for Tags

12. Security Considerations

The security considerations of [[RFC8949](#)] apply; the tags discussed here may also have specific security considerations that are mentioned in their specific sections above.

13. References

13.1. Normative References

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