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On RFC Streams Headers and Boilerplates  
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Abstract

RFC documents contain a number of fixed elements such as the title page header, standard boilerplates and a standard acknowledgement section. This document describes them and introduces some updates to reflect current usage and requirements of RFC publication. In particular, this updated structure is intended to communicate clearly the source of RFC creation and review.

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RFC Streams, Headers, Boilerplates

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## 1. Introduction

RFCs published before this document (e.g. the one immediately prior to this one [[RFCXXXX-1](#)]) (??? or is it prior to approval of this document?) contained a number of elements that were there for historical, practical, and legal reasons. They also contained boilerplate material to clearly indicate the status of the document and possibly contained "Notes" to indicate how the document interacts with IETF standard track documents.

As the RFC Series has evolved over the years, there has been increasing concern over appropriate labelling of the publications to make clear the status of each RFC and the status of the work it describes. Chiefly, there is a requirement that RFCs published as part of the IETF's review process not be easily confused with RFCs that may have had a very different review and approval process. Various adjustments have been made over the years, including evolving text of "Notes" included in the published RFC.

With the definition of the different RFC streams [[RFC4844](#)] it is appropriate to formalize the definition of the various pieces of standard RFC boilerplate and introduce some adjustments to ensure better clarity of expression of document status, aligned with the review and approval processes defined for each stream.

This memo identifies and describes the common elements of RFC boilerplate structure, and provides a comprehensive approach to updating and using those elements to communicate, with clarity, RFC document and content status. Most of the historical structure information is collected from [[RFC2223](#)].

## 2. RFC Streams and Internet Standards

Users of RFCs should be aware that while all Internet standards-related documents are published as RFCs, not all RFCs are Internet

standards-related documents.

The IETF is responsible for maintaining the Internet Standards Process, which includes the requirements for developing, reviewing and approving Standards Track and BCP RFCs. These, and any other standards-related documents (Informational or Experimental) are reviewed by appropriate IETF bodies and published as part of the IETF Stream.

Documents published in streams other than the IETF Stream are not reviewed by the IETF for such things as security, congestion control, or inappropriate interaction with deployed protocols. They have also

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not been subject to IESG approval, including an IETF-wide last call. Therefore, the IETF disclaims, for any of the non-IETF Stream documents, any knowledge of the fitness of those RFCs for any purpose.

Refer to [\[RFC2026\]](#) and [\[RFC4844\]](#) and their succession for current detail of IETF process and RFCs streams.

### [3.](#) RFC Structural Elements

#### [3.1.](#) The title page header

An RFC title page header can be described as follows:

```
-----
<document source>                                <author name>
Request for Comments: <RFC number>                <author affiliation>
[<subseries ID> <subseries number>]    [more author info as appropriate]
[<RFC relation>:<RFC number[s]>]
Category: <category>
ISSN: [TBD]                                         <month year>
-----
```

For example, a sample earlier RFC header is as follows:

-----  
Network Working Group

T. Dierks

-----

The right column contains author name and affiliation information as well as RFC publication date. Conventions and restrictions for these elements are described in RFC style norms and some individual stream definitions.

This memo is primarily concerned with the information in left column:

<document source> This describes the area where the work originates. Historically, all RFCs were labeled Network Working Group. "Network Working Group" refers to the original version of today's IETF when people from the original set of Arpanet sites and whomever else was interested -- the meetings were open -- got

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together to discuss, design and document proposed protocols.' [Steve Crocker, private communication]. Here, we obsolete the term "Network Working Group" in order to indicate the originating stream.

The <document source> is the name of the RFC stream, as defined in [[RFC4844](#)] and its successors. At the time of this publication, the streams, and therefore the possible entries are:

- \* IETF Stream
- \* IAB Stream
- \* IRTF Stream
- \* Independent Stream

Request for Comments: <RFC number> This indicates the RFC number, assigned by the RFC Editor upon publication of the document. This element is unchanged.

<subseries ID> <subseries number> Some document categories are also

labeled as a subseries of RFCs. These elements appear as appropriate for such categories, indicating the subseries and the documents number within that series. Currently, there are subseries for BCPs, STDs and FYIs. These subseries numbers may appear in several RFCs. For example, when a new RFC updates an old one, the same subseries number is used. Also, several RFCs may be assigned the same subseries number: a single STD, for example, may be composed of several RFCs, each of which will bear the same STD number. This element is unchanged.

[<RFC relation>:<RFC number[s]>] Some relations between RFCs in the series are explicitly noted in the RFC header. For example, a new RFC may update one or more earlier RFCs. Current relationships are "Updates" and "Obsoletes". This document introduces the new relation "Clarifies" which can be used when a new RFC updates a previous RFC without making any normative changes.

Category: <category> This indicates the RFC document category of the publication. These are defined in [[RFC2026](#)]. Currently, this is always one of: Standards Track, Best Current Practice, Experimental, Informational, or Historic. This element is unchanged.

The ISSN number is the International Standard Serial Number[IS03297]. Once such number has been assigned to the RFC series this element will appear here.

### [3.2.](#) The Status of this Memo

The "Status of This Memo" describes the category of the RFC, including the distribution statement. This text is included irrespective of the source stream of the RFC.

Going forward, the "Status of This Memo" will start with a single line describing the status. It will also include a statement describing the the stream-specific review of the material (which is stream-dependent). This is an important component of status, insofar as it clarifies the breadth and depth of review, and gives the reader

an understanding of how to consider its content.

The first paragraph of the Status of this Memo section contains a single line. It depends on the category of the document.

This memo is an Internet Standards Track document.

This memo documents a Best Current Practice

This memo is not an Internet Standard Track specification, it is published for Informational purposes.

The second paragraph contains the current text [[RFC2223](#)] describing categories is as follows:

Standards Track: "This document specifies an Internet standards track protocol for the Internet community, and requests discussion and suggestions for improvements. Please refer to the current edition of the "Internet Official Protocol Standards" (STD 1) for the standardization state and status of this protocol. Distribution of this memo is unlimited."

Best Current Practice: "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."

Experimental: "This memo defines an Experimental Protocol for the Internet community. This memo does not specify an Internet standard of any kind. Discussion and suggestions for improvement are requested. Distribution of this memo is unlimited."

Informational: "This memo provides information for the Internet community. This memo does not specify an Internet standard of any kind. Distribution of this memo is unlimited."

The third paragraph of the "Status of This Memo" will now include a paragraph describing the type of review and exposure the document has received. This is defined on a per-stream basis. Going forward, these paragraphs will be defined as part of RFC stream definition.

Initial paragraphs for the existing streams are:

IETF Stream: "This document is a product of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). Per the IETF's specification process, this document represents a consensus of the IETF community. It has received public review and has been approved for publication by the IESG."

IAB Stream: "This document is a product of the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), and represents information that the IAB has deemed valuable to provide for permanent record. This document has been approved for publication by the IAB and is therefore not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard, see section [Section 2](#) of RFCXXXX."

IRTF Stream: "This document is a product of the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF). The IRTF publishes the results of Internet-related research and development activities. These results might not be suitable for deployment. This document has been approved for publication by the IRSG and is therefore not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard, see section [Section 2](#) of RFCXXXX."

In addition a sentence indicating the consensus base within the IRTF may be added: "This RFC represents the consensus of the <insert\_name> Research Group of the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF)." or alternatively "This RFC represents the individual opinion(s) of one or more members of the <insert\_name> Research Group of the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF)".

Independent Stream: "This document is a contribution to the RFC Series, independently of any other RFC stream. The RFC Editor has chosen to publish this document at its discretion and makes no statement about its value for implementation or deployment. It is therefore not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard, see section [Section 2](#) of RFCXXXX."



Exceptionally, a review and publication process may prescribe additional notes that will appear as labelled notes after the "Status of This Memo".

While this has been a common feature of recent RFCs, it is the goal of this exercise to make the overall RFC structure adequately clear to remove the need for such notes, or at least make their usage truly exceptional.

#### 4. Security considerations

This document tries to clarify the descriptions of the status of an RFC. Misunderstanding the status of a memo could cause interoperability problems, hence security and stability problems.

#### 5. IANA considerations

None.

#### 6. RFC Editor Considerations

[To Be Removed before publication]

The documents has two sections, including this one that need to be removed after publication.

ISSN: [TBD] is where the International Standards Serial Number will need to be appear once assigned.

The number "XXXX" is to be replaced with RFC number of this memo.

The Reference RFCXXXX-1 is to be replaced with the details of the RFC published prior to this publication.

#### 7. References

##### 7.1. Normative References

[RFC2026] Bradner, S., "The Internet Standards Process -- Revision 3", [BCP 9](#), [RFC 2026](#), October 1996.

[RFC2223] Postel, J. and J. Reynolds, "Instructions to RFC Authors",

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[RFC 2223](#), October 1997.

[RFC4844] Daigle, L. and Internet Architecture Board, "The RFC Series and RFC Editor", [RFC 4844](#), July 2007.

## [7.2.](#) Informative References

[IS03297] Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, Information and documentation, Subcommittee SC 9, Identification and description., "Information and documentation - International standard serial number (ISSN)", 09 2007.

[RFCXXX-1] Blaaa Fooo, "[The RFC previous to this one]", --- 2007.

[RFC2629] Rose, M., "Writing I-Ds and RFCs using XML", [RFC 2629](#), June 1999.

[RFC3978] Bradner, S., "IETF Rights in Contributions", [BCP 78](#), [RFC 3978](#), March 2005.

## [Appendix A.](#) Acknowledgements

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This document was produced using the xml2rfc tool [[RFC2629](#)].

## [Appendix B.](#) Document Editing Details

[To Be Removed before publication]

This section will contain a discription of the changes between the various versions of this document.

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