

IRC cheatsheet

Specific IRC clients may offer different commands than stated, or just a subset. Options vary as well, only some basic options are shown. Some commands require operator status. In GUI clients some command may only be run via (pop-up) menus.

/HELP <command> will show you some specifics for your IRC client.

Basic channel commands

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| AWAY [<away message>] | Leave a message explaining that you are not currently paying attention to IRC. Not shown unless you are approached by name. Using AWAY without parameters removes away status. |
| IGNORE [<nickname>] | removes output from specific people off your screen. |
| JOIN <channel> | sets your current channel, (same as CHANNEL.) |
| LEAVE <channel> | leaves a channel, (same as PART.) |
| NICK [<nickname>] | Changes your nickname. |
| NOTIFY [[-]<nickname>] | displays your notify list or adds someone to it, the system warns you if anyone on the list logs in. |
| QUIT [<reason>] | Exits your IRC session. You can also use BYE, SIGNOFF and EXIT. |

Basic conversation commands

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| DESCRIBE <nickname><action description> | like ME, but allows to ascribe the action to someone else. |
| INVITE <nickname> | sends an invitation to join you to another user. |
| ME <action description> | sends anything about you to a channel or QUERY. |
| MSG <nickname><text> | sends a private message, (similar to PRIVMSG.) |
| NOTICE <nickname><text> | (mainly for bots) like MSG, but does not elicit an automatic response. |
| QUERY <nickname> | starts a private conversation, /QUERY without parameters ends the private conversation. |

A few other basic commands

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| HELP [<command>] | Shows help on the given command. Note: This is not installed for all clients. |
| KICK <nickname> | gets rid of someone on a channel (operator only) |

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| LIST | lists channels, number of users, topic |
| NAMES | shows the nicknames of the users on each channel |
| TOPIC [<channel>] <topic for channel> | changes the topic of the channel |
| WHO [<name> [<o>]] | Shows list of users (o for info on IRC operator only.) |
| WHOIS [<server>] <nicknames> | Shows information about someone. |
| WHOWAS <nickname> | Shows information about who used the given nickname last. |

Channel and user modes

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| MODE <channel> <nickname> [[+ -]<mode chars> [<parameters>]] | changes channel or user mode |
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These following commands tends to differ between clients.

| Mode Char | Effects on channels |
|------------------|--|
| b <person> | ban somebody, <person> in "nick!user@host" form |
| i | channel is invite-only |
| k | set channel password |
| l <number> | channel is limited, <number> users allowed max |
| m | channel is moderated, (only chanops can talk) |
| n | external MSGs to channel are not allowed |
| o <nick> | makes a channel operator |
| p | channel is private |
| s | channel is secret |
| t | topic limited, only chanops may change it |
| v | give/take ability to speak on a moderated channel |
| Mode Char | Effects on nicknames |
| i | makes yourself invisible to anybody that does not know the exact spelling of your nickname |
| o | IRC operator status, can only be set by certain operators |
| s | receive server notices |
| w | user receives wallops (mostly system related messages from operators.) |

General

Commands are not case sensitive, and can be abbreviated to their first letters. The usual “/irchelp” character is a slash '/'. This is assumed throughout this cheatsheet.

IRC is not a secure way of communication. Even private messages can be overheard.

Newbie

Some popular GUI IRC clients: MSWindows – mIRC, Linux – Xchat, Mac OSX – Xchat Azure; irssi is a terminal client for linux and OSX; if you want more choice: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Relay_Chat#Clients.

Server connections are handled differently by clients, follow your client's manual or an online example.

If you want to practise with IRC, connect to server *UnderNet*, channel *#beginner* (<http://www.ircbeginner.com/> for more info.) If you want to try something without annoying anyone, join your very own non-existing channel: */JOIN #myveryownspecialchannelname* .

Common message: anything that does not begin with '/' is a message to either:

- your current channel, or
- the person(s) you are QUERYing.

Examples of commands:

/HELP IGNORE */JOIN #Twilight_Zone*
/ME opens up the fridge. */MSG Nap,Sorg This message for both Nap and Sorg.*
/AWAY getting myself a drink. */QUIT lunch time.*
(Newbie help commands, try: */HELP INTRO* or */HELP NEWUSER*)

Operators have special powers, e.g., to kick you from the channel if you lack manners. Some commands are operator only. In user lists, operators stand out, e.g., they have an '@' before the name, or a different colour dot, or some other subtle difference. Some users are *bots*, a piece of programming, some you can send information requests, some act as operator (giving you voice on joining, kicking you out because you send a copied/pasted multi-line text, banning you for doing so again, ...)

Refrain from using text embellishments – like bold, underline, and colours – unless others in a channel use these. Not all clients display them anyway. How to? Consult your manual.

If you create your own channel and want it to persist, ask the local administration bot for help: */MSG <botname> help* . Some well known bot names: NickServ, ChanServ, MemoServ.

Literature: <http://www.irchelp.org/irchelp/ircprimer.html>, <http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1459>,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_Relay_Chat,
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparison_of_Internet_Relay_Chat_clients.
I thank members of tkkrnlab.nl for useful comments.
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