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# Anatomy of an RFC Document

## Abstract

This document walks through the structure of a typical RFC, section by section, so that an author can plan a new document and a reader can navigate an existing one. It covers the header, the front matter, the body, the references, and the authors' addresses.

## Status of This Memo

This document is not an Internet Standards Track specification; it is published for informational purposes.

This document is a product of an independent submission. It has been approved for publication by the RFC Editor, but is not a candidate for any level of Internet Standard; see Section 2 of RFC 7841.

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## 1. Introduction

An RFC is a highly structured document. Because tens of thousands of RFCs have been written over the decades, and because the Series is expected to remain legible far into the future, the structure is deliberately rigid. Readers navigate a new RFC the same way they navigated the last one.

## 2. The Header Block

The first lines of every RFC form a two-column header. The left column names the stream, the RFC number, the category, and the ISSN. The right column names the authors, their organizations, and the publication month.

The header is surrounded by blank lines and is followed by the title, centered on the page. A subtitle, if any, is set on a second centered line.

## 3. Abstract

Every RFC begins with an abstract of one or two paragraphs. The abstract stands alone: it must make sense when extracted and displayed out of context, for example in a search result or an index.

Abstracts SHOULD NOT contain references, because references are resolved in the body of the document. If an abstract must name another document, it should do so in prose rather than by citation.

## 4. Status of This Memo and Copyright Notice

After the abstract, every RFC carries a "Status of This Memo" section and a "Copyright Notice". These are boilerplate texts that depend on the stream and the category. The RFC Editor generates them automatically; authors do not write them by hand.

## 5. Table of Contents

A table of contents is required for any document longer than a few pages. Entries are generated from the numbered section headings and carry the page number on which each section begins, connected by a row of dots.

## 6. Body Sections

The body is organized into numbered sections. Section 1 is conventionally "Introduction". Subsequent sections describe the technical content. Sections may nest to three or four levels; deeper nesting is discouraged.

Within a section, text is set as indented paragraphs. Lists, definitions, tables, and figures appear inline with the surrounding text, separated by blank lines.

## 7. Security Considerations

A "Security Considerations" section is mandatory in every RFC. It may be brief, but it MUST be present. Guidance on what to write is provided in [RFC3552].

## 8. IANA Considerations

Documents that require registrations with the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) carry an "IANA Considerations" section that lists the registrations and the values requested. Informational documents with no IANA impact may state that explicitly or omit the section entirely.

## 9. References

The References section has two sub-sections: "Normative References", listing documents that an implementer must read to implement the specification, and "Informative References", listing documents that provide context.

Each reference has a tag in square brackets, a list of authors, a title, a series identifier, and a date. A URL may be included for convenience.

## 10. Authors' Addresses

The document closes with one or more author blocks. Each block names an author, their affiliation, an optional postal address, and contact information such as email or a web page.

## 11. Security Considerations

This document is informational and introduces no protocol behavior. It has no direct security considerations.

## 12. References

[RFC3552] Rescorla, E. and B. Korver, "Guidelines for Writing RFC Text on Security Considerations", BCP 72, RFC 3552, July 2003

[RFC7322] Flanagan, H. and S. Ginoza, "RFC Style Guide", RFC 7322, September 2014

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