

IRC Chat or How to Get a Word in Edgewise

One of my favorite things to do on Monday and Thursday nights, is to join fellow pop uppers on the IRC (Internet Relay Chat) channel #pop-up-trailers, operated on the [DALnet IRC](#) network for a real-time chat about camping and other topics of interest to us. The #pop-up-trailers chat room was originally geared to readers of the alt.rv.pop-up-trailers newsgroup, where I became involved, but now, many readers of the Pop Up Times message board join in. You should try it some night, you might find that you enjoy it. You're not forced to 'talk' if you don't want to, especially the first time, but you'll find that it's easy and fun! Most meetings, there is a moderator, or channel operator, who will try to keep things moving and greet new arrivals, and will help a newbie on their first time out. Initially you might be confused by several conversations at once, or delays in answers by those with slower connections, but hang in there, you'll soon get the knack.

Many people have reported problem with connecting to IRC for the first time. I thought that I would put together a short set of instructions, with no extras, to guide the first time user into signing on and making it to their initial chat. There is no charge from DALnet to use their service. The time, equipment, and software are all donated for the use of the internet community. So, let's get started. Full documentation for Newbies can be found <http://help.dal.net/docs/newbie.html>.

In order to talk on IRC, you need a client software program (a program on your computer) to talk with the server, which then distributes your words over the IRC network. There are many clients available, for different operating systems, and you can obtain a list at <http://www.dal.net/software/index.php3> or you can use the free java client provided by DALnet. Most of the Windows users on #pop-up-trailers use mIRC (B below) so I will give directions for that as well as the java client (A below) provided by DALnet.

Probably the most misunderstood part of DALnet IRC is the nickname. You do not have to register your nickname, however, that is the only way to protect your identity from session to session, and to keep someone else from posing as you. The catch is, your nickname will expire after 30 days, unless there is activity. The registered nickname is one of the first things that causes trouble for most users. They initially try to sign on, for example, with 'Bob'. If the server was unable to identify you from an identification (Ident) process running on the server, you will receive an automatic challenge, saying you must respond with the appropriate password in 60 seconds or your nickname will be automatically changed. The command is pretty long and it takes several seconds to understand and by that time, you are now known as Guest99874. If you have registered, respond appropriately, if not type `/nick newnickname`. If that doesn't work and the server changes your nickname for you, don't despair, complete the remainder of the sign on and come into the chat room. Someone there will help you change your name if you want to something more personal.

A: DALnet Java Client:

1. Connect with your ISP and navigate with your browser to <http://www.dal.net>
2. You will see some information about DALnet, which you should read. On the right side of the screen, you will see a box with GuestXXXXXX and then 2 more boxes for a login and password. Type your desired handle over the GuestXXXXXX entry and click **GO**. If the Nickname is registered to someone, the focus will drop down to the login box. In that case go through the process again, or simply accept the Guest login displayed and hit **GO**. The first time through this process, the Java client will be downloaded and installed on your machine. You must answer yes to the download and you must have Java enabled in your browser for this to work.
3. Type the following command **EXACTLY**

/join #pop-up-trailers

That's it! You are now chatting with your friends from alt.rv.pop-up-trailers and Pop Up Times. You simply type in the box at the bottom. A carriage return sends your text to the world. The Java client requires that you have knowledge of basic DALnet commands. mIRC below, almost everything may be done by a mouse click.

Chatting on DALNET

B. mIRC Client: (Shareware, 30 day free trial, \$20 to register)

1. Download the software from <http://www.mirc.com>
2. Run the installation program and install it on your machine. The defaults work fine. There are just a few fields to configure and a detailed explanation can be found at <http://www.mirc.com/install.html>. Connect to your ISP as you do normally. Start the mIRC program by using **Start, Programs, mIRC, mIRC32**. You will see an About box. Close this box by clicking the X in the upper right. The default start up box should appear. If not, click **File, Options**. Fill in your name, email address and your desired nickname. Fill in the alternate if desired. I also selected a server close to me for the first try at connection. Press **Connect to IRC Server**. If you missed this and clicked OK, follow step 3 below, otherwise go on to step 4.
3. To sign on: click File; Connect or use the icon (a lightning bolt) on the menu bar.
4. A whole slew of messages and information about your connection will quickly scroll through the screen. This is the point where you will be challenged for a password if you've chosen a nickname of a registered user or the ident process failed. mIRC will open a window and display a list of channels. At some point you may want to add #pop-up-trailers to this list, but first type **EXACTLY**

#pop-up-trailers

then hit the **Join** button.

5. That's it. This process looks more complicated, but mIRC is really more friendly to the user and hides much of the syntax and command line requirements of the Java client and is much easier to use. See a list below of some of the common commands. mIRC will retain all of the settings for your next visit except for the name of the room.

Basic IRC Commands

All commands in IRC start with /, are case sensitive, and require an exact syntax. The additional info in [] may be used but is not required. mIRC has functions and menu selections which take care of most of this for you, but here are a few of the basic commands:

/join #channel

This command joins you with other chatters in a virtual room. All rooms start with #. #Pop-Up-trailers is not the same as #pop-up-trailers. So be exact.

/me laughs out loud

Replace the italics text with your own. This will show up on the screen as "popaPete laughs out loud" and is meant as a comment and the user is not expecting a response from anyone. This will be in purple text on the default mIRC color scheme.

/quit [message]

The IRC quit message. Must have the /.

/part #channel [some message]

Leave the channel you're in but stay connected to DALnet.

/list [*help*]

Will list all of the channels with *help* contained in their titles.

/help command

Displays help on a command.

/away message

Displays your message indicating that you are away and not paying attention. **/away** with no message tells everyone you are back.

/nick nickname

Changes your nickname to whatever you like. If your nickname is in use or registered, try adding some extra numbers or letters to it.

/whois nickname

This will display information about *nickname* including your Real Name you used to sign on with. Everyone should issue this command on their own nickname at least once, just to be aware of what information is available to others.

Additional Information

You can customize mIRC to suit your likes. Change the color scheme, add macro commands etc. You may change the color of the text for your text as it appears on your screen, but not on the screens of others. This option is controlled by the setup of the channel. For some reason, a color change of your text sent to others has been turned off in #pop-up-trailers. If you want to send text with emphasis, you may use control sequences surrounding your text. 'hello ^beveryone^b here' would show on the screen as: hello **everyone** here . (^b meaning to use the ctrl + b key at the same time). ^u underlines text.

If someone posts a URL of a web site in the chat room, you may right click on the URL and your browser will open and you will be taken to that site.

Conclusion

I earlier promised you no extras, and then I've gone and included much more information than you really need to join the chat. Just remember that mIRC is mostly point and click interface which hides most of the command language stuff. There's much more information available online. Start with the DALnet home page or simply do a search on IRC. Anyway, I hope you'll join the #pop-up-trailers chats on Monday and Thursday nights!

popaPete

www.popapete.com