

About the Internet: Using Newsgroups

What is a newsgroup?

People who share a common interest can create a newsgroup on the Internet. A newsgroup is like a bulletin board:

- You can post messages for other people to read.
- You can respond to the messages that other people have posted.
- You can send a private e-mail to someone who has posted a message.
- You can also post picture, graphic, audio, and video files for others to see and download.

Example:

John is planning a trip from California to New York. He wants to know about interesting things to see along the way. He posts a question to the newsgroup called `rec.outdoors.national-parks` asking for suggestions from the other members of the group. Others who read this newsgroup respond to John's message with their suggestions.

Newsgroups on the Internet

Newsgroups on the Internet are usually accessed by using a newsreader program such as Outlook Express. Lately, some companies have made it possible to access Usenet from the Web. In addition, some companies have created separate Usenet-like newsgroups that are served entirely from the Web. You can access newsgroups on the Internet in three ways:

- Through Usenet – a network of newsgroups on the Internet that are accessed from a news server using a newsreader.
 - Through Google Groups – a selection of Usenet newsgroups that have been converted so they can be accessed from Google's Web server using a Web browser.
 - Through Web newsgroups – newsgroups sponsored by Web sites such as MSN.com or Yahoo.com that are accessed with a Web browser.
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Newsgroup names

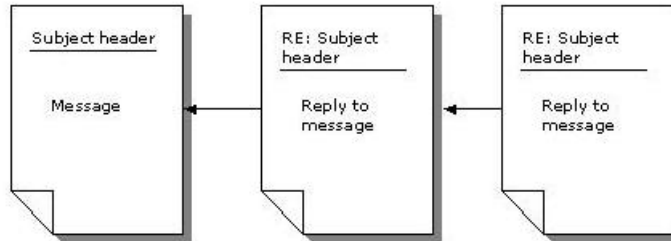
Usenet Newsgroups use a naming scheme that begins with a general subject and then becomes more and more specific about the particular subject that a group discusses.

Example:

The group `rec.outdoors.national-parks` discusses recreation that is outdoors in national parks. The group `rec.games.chess.analysis`, on the other hand, discusses recreation that has to do with the game of chess in the area of analysis.

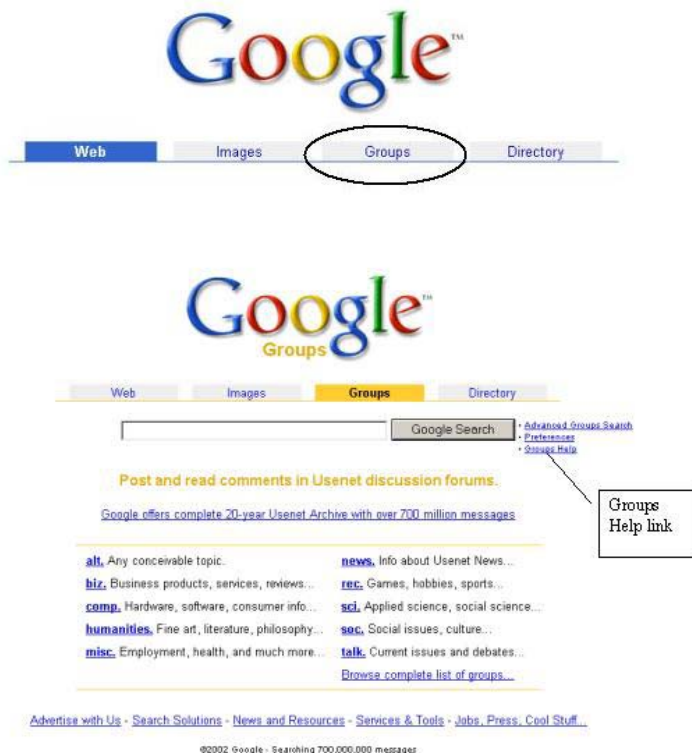
How newsgroups work

You send a message to a newsgroup the same way that you send an e-mail to a single individual. When others respond to your message, the news server connects these responses to your message to form a message thread.



Accessing a newsgroup using Google Groups

Google (www.google.com) provides access to Usenet through its search engine site. To access Google Groups, click the Groups tab on the home page. When the Google Groups page appears, you can browse for a specific group or use Google Search to search for posts from all the groups that match your keywords. To learn more about how to use this service, click the Groups Help link.



Understanding a newsgroup's home page

When you open a newsgroup's home page, you will see the messages listed in chronological order with the most recent message listed first. If a message is part of a message thread, you will see how many other people have responded to the message. To read the message, click the Thread Subject. To read the responses to the message, click the names of the other people who contributed to the discussion in the directory tree in the right-hand pane.

The screenshot shows the Google Groups interface for the newsgroup 'rec.outdoors.national-parks'. At the top, there's a Google search bar and navigation links like 'Advanced Groups Search', 'Preferences', and 'Groups Help'. Below the search bar, the group name is displayed. A link 'Post a new message to rec.outdoors.national-parks' is visible. The main content area is a table of threads, sorted by date (most recent first). Each row shows the date, thread subject, and the most recent poster. Annotations with boxes and arrows point to specific parts of the interface:

- A box labeled 'Newsgroup name' points to the group name 'rec.outdoors.national-parks'.
- A box labeled 'Subject header' points to the 'Thread Subject' column header.
- A box labeled 'Number of responses to this post' points to the number of articles in parentheses next to a thread subject (e.g., '(62 articles)').

Below the thread list, there's a section for a specific message (Message 3 in thread). It shows the message header (From, Subject, Newsgroups, Date) and the message body. The message body contains a reply from 'yumor' to 'Bob', discussing a trip report and a name calling contest.

Using a Newsgroup

To participate in a Usenet newsgroup, follow the steps below.

1. Go to the Google Groups site.
2. Find a newsgroup that is devoted to a subject you are interested in.
3. Go to your selected group's site.
4. Read posted messages and respond if you wish (Note: you might have to join the group in order to do this).
5. Post a message to the group.

**Newsgroup
locations on the
Web**

Below are some of the main newsgroup locations on the Web.

Google Groups (<http://www.google.com>)

- Contains many newsgroups from Usenet.
- Saves posted messages for 20 years.
- Can post messages to these newsgroups without having to use a newsreader.
- Can search the saved messages from all the newsgroups by keyword.

MSN Groups (<http://communities.msn.com/home>)

- Has more features than Usenet newsgroups.
- Deletes old posted messages after awhile.
- Allows you to start your own newsgroup if you have a Hotmail account.
- Can search for newsgroups by subject.

Yahoo Groups (<http://www.yahoo.com>)

- Similar to MSN Groups.