

[OT] Top Posting

Source: <http://www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/sci.crypt/2004-06/1151.html>

From: Guy Macon (<http://www.guymacon.com>)

Date: 06/18/04

Date: Fri, 18 Jun 2004 05:09:03 -0700

>Austin Lesea <austin@xilinx.com> wrote, in part:

>

>>I do not think that there is an approved way of responding in this

>>group, is there?

Here is how **not** to do it:

"I'll see you at Linda's wedding."

"Well, see ya soon."

"Congratulations!"

"Ten thousand a year."

"How much?"

"Got a really big raise this time."

"Sorry to hear it. How's the job?"

"She's not feeling well. Flu, I think."

"Same as ever. How's yours?"

"How's your wife?"

"They painted her purple. They should call her the Prune Fart now."

"Good. Did you hear what Martin and Sheila did to the Sea Breeze?"

"Good, and you?"

"Bill! How the heck are you?"

Here is further information:

Why is Bottom-posting better than Top-posting

Adapted from <http://fmf.fwn.rug.nl/~anton/topposting.html>

By Anton Smit and H.W. de Haan

Definitions:

Top-posting: Writing the message above the original text, when one replies to an email or a post in a newsgroup.

Bottom-posting: The opposite of top-posting. Now the new message is placed below the original text.

As Usenet-readers, we are often annoyed by people who keep top-posting. This is considered as not good 'Net etiquette'. The majority of Usenet-users prefer bottom-posting. Below you can find our arguments why bottom-posting is better than top-posting.

In addition to bottom-posting, it is customary to leave out non-relevant parts of the message with regard to the reply, and to put the reply directly beneath the quoted relevant parts.

[1] Because it is proper Usenet Etiquette. Check out the following URL: <http://www.faqs.org/rfcs/rfc1855.html> .

It is a little outdated but still has a lot of valid points.

Let us quote something from this site:

"If you are sending a reply to a message or a posting be sure you summarize the original at the top of the message, or include just enough text of the original to give a context. This will make sure readers understand when they start to read your response. Since NetNews, especially, is proliferated by distributing the postings from one host to another, it is possible to see a response to a message before seeing the original. Giving context helps everyone. But do not include the entire original!"

[2] We use a good news reader like Forte Agent. Good newsreaders like Agent put the signature by default at the end of the post, which is the Usenet convention. Microsoft Outlook Express however has some serious bugs. Let us quote someone we know:

"The day Microsoft makes something that doesn't suck is probably the day they start making vacuum cleaners." –Ernst Jan Plugge

We are programmers ourselves, and we know it is very easy to implement to put a signature at the end of the post instead of putting it directly above the post you are replying to and can not change the position. Forte Agent has as a feature that reply to a post it will remove the signature (recognizable by '--- ', note the extra space) and everything below it, so it will remove

a part of the original message. This is good Usenet practice so Agent is not faulty. Outlook Express on the other hand is faulty, check this bugreport regarding the Usenet signature delimiter.
http://www.okinfoweb.com/moe/bugs/bugs_047.htm

If you want to try Agent, you can get it at <http://www.forteinc.com/>

[3] Top-posting makes posts incomprehensible. Firstly: In normal conversations, one does not answer to something that has not yet been said. So it is unclear to reply to the top, whilst the original message is at the bottom. Secondly: In western society a book is normally read from top to bottom. Top-posting forces one to stray from this convention: Reading some at the top, skipping to the bottom to read the question, and going back to the top to continue. This annoyance increases even more than linear with the number of top-posts in the message. If someone replies to a thread and you forgot what the thread was all about, or that thread was incomplete for some reasons, it will be quite tiresome to rapidly understand what the thread was all about, due to bad posting and irrelevant text which has not been removed.

[4] To prevent hideously long posts with a minimal account of new text, it is good Usenet practice to remove the non-relevant parts and optionally summarize the relevant parts of the original post, with regard to one's reply. Top-posting inevitably leads to long posts, because most top-posters leave the original message intact. All these long posts not only clutter up discussions, but they also clutter up the server space.

[5] Top-posting makes it hard for bottom-posters to reply to the relevant parts: it is not possible to answer within the original message. Bottom-posting does not make top-posting any harder.

[6] Some people will argue that quoting looks bad due to line wrapping. This can simply be dealt with by dropping Outlook Express as a start, and using only linewidths of 65 – 70 characters. Otherwise one has to do it manually, and that can be tiresome.

[7] A reason given by stubborn top-posters: they don't like to scroll to read the new message. We like to disagree here, because we always have to scroll down to see the original message and after that to scroll back up, just to see to what they are replying to. As a result you have to scroll twice as much when reading a top-poster's message. As a counterargument they say (believe us they do): "You can check the previous message in the discussion". This is even more tiresome than scrolling and with the unreliable nature of Usenet (and even email is inevitably unreliable), the previous message in the discussion can be simply unavailable.

[8] Some newsgroups have strict conventions concerning posting in their charter. As an example we can tell you that in most Dutch

sci.crypt: [OT] Top Posting

newsgroups, you will be warned, killfiled or maybe even flamed, if you fail to follow Usenet conventions or if you do not quote according to the quoting guidelines. In general: it is better to practice the guidelines, if one does not want to get flamed in a newsgroup one just subscribed to.

We can conclude that there are no good reasons we know of for top-posting. The most top-posts originate from the minimal work people spend on making posts. We think that one should be proud of one's post, that is it contains relevant content, well-formed sentences and no irrelevant 'b*llsh*t', before uploading to your newsserver. If the majority of the group will adhere to this convention, the group will be nicer, tidier and easier to read.

As a final remark we want to bring non-quoting into mind. This means that the original content of an email or Usenet post is completely removed. It makes it very hard for a reader to find out to what and whom one is replying. This phenomenon can be partly attributed to wrong settings of news- and email-clients, and partly to people who want to start with clean replies.