

Help for ircle

This is ircle, a Macintosh-based, windowed user interface to the Internet Relay Chat (IRC) network.

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0. Brief Overview on IRC

(If you know IRC, skip this section)

IRC is a multi-user online chatting system. It allows users to talk to other users all around the world via the Internet. This is done by connecting a client program (such as this one) to a server. You need a connection to any network connected to the Internet and running TCP/IP, and the MacTCP network driver. You have to find out your preferred server (usually the nearest) and enter this into the Preferences dialog. The port number used by IRC servers is usually 6667.

On IRC, users are identified by nicknames of their own choice. Nicknames may be at most 9 characters long. The nickname is set via preferences or the NICK command (s.b.) If you choose a nickname already in use, you have to set a different nick. Some users have registered their nicknames with the NickServ database. If you get a message from NickServ that your nick is in use, please choose another. Communication on IRC is done via Channels and Private Messages. Channels have names starting with # and usually up to 12 characters long. You can see a list of the channels currently in use via the /LIST command. As soon as you join a channel with the /JOIN command, everything you type is sent to that channel and seen by all other users on that channel. You will see what the others type, respectively.

1. ircle Basics and Windows

ircle has a user interface similar to the traditional text-oriented IRC clients. If you know IRC, you will find it familiar. At the bottom of the screen is the input line in an own small window which also carries a line of status information. Everything you type will appear in the input line. When you press Return, the line gets sent to the current channel or, if it contains a command, that command is processed. A line is considered command if it starts with a '/' (slash). You can change this character with the /cmdchar command. See Section 2 on commands.

You connect to the server via Open connection in the File menu. When the connection to the server is established, the main message window will appear. This window has your nickname in the title bar. As soon as you join a channel, a channel window will appear with the channel name as its title. All communication done in that channel will appear in that window. If you close this window, you leave the channel.

Querying a user (s.b.) will open a user window. All private messages from and to that user will appear in this window.

You can switch between windows using the mouse or Command-, (comma) key. The destination of text that you type is always determined by the frontmost window, i.e. the text goes to the channel or user whose name is the frontmost window's title.

The number of windows open at a time is limited only by your computer's memory and your capability of listening at many sources at a time :-)

All messages not coming from or related to a channel or queried user will appear in the main message window. That can include long lists from certain commands. You can skip these by pressing Command-. (dot).

2. IRC Commands and ircle Menus

Traditionally, IRC is controlled by typing commands. A line starting with a slash is considered a command. ircle has implemented this behaviour instead of a mouse-driven environment for simplicity and user-interface compatibility to other IRC clients. Certain frequently used commands can be reached via menus. These, however, do just paste the commands into the input line and thus are shortcuts for typing the commands.

The File menu has items for opening a connection, closing the topmost window (this will leave a channel), loading commands from a file, saving the current state (s.b.), setting Preferences, opening/closing a logfile and the Quit command.

The Edit menu has the Copy and Paste items. Text in a window can be selected and copied, then

pasted into the input line.

The Commands menus contain selected IRC commands. They get just pasted into the input line and are shortcut for convenience.

The Shortcuts menu provides a means for user-defined shortcuts. They can be defined in a dialog box and called via Command-0 through 9. Note that new settings work only after closing the definitions dialog.

The Font menu lets you set your preferred font and size. This will affect the currently active window and all new windows opened afterwards. It also gets stored in the Set file.

The Windows menu contains the titles of the active windows for fast selection.

Preferences settings and Set files

Preferences settings are stored in a Set file (formerly called Preferences file). You can start ircle with particular settings by double-clicking on the Set file. This file contains some special commands. You can view and edit this file like a text file; in particular, you can write commands into it, which will be executed on startup.

The settings in the Preferences dialog are:

Server: The server you want to connect to. This has to be a numeric IP address or a full host.domain name.

Port: Usually 6667, when in doubt check with your server administrator.

Nickname: The nickname you want to start with.

Mail address: You should specify your login name or mail address on a fully qualified (with domain) machine.

Real name: Your real name (or whatever evil thing you want to look like your real name)

Notifications: when messages appear in an inactive window, or in any window while ircle is running in the background, you will get alerted by a sound and/or blinking menu bar item, as you can select by checking these boxes.

If you choose Save Set from the File menu, your settings will be saved into a file. This includes all windows you have open, so on next startup you will join these channels.

Description of IRC Commands

The following commands are currently available: (x) = untested.

* = operator command, untested and opers should know them anyway :-)

/admin nick
 server Shows administrative info
/away message Marks you as being away (no message = not away)
/bye message Displays message and quits IRC
/broadcast message Sends a message to all of your windows
/channel channel Join a channel
/cmdchar c Changes the command-prefix (default /) to the given character
/connect * Connect two servers
/cping nick Shows response time for nick
/ctcp target command Issues a CTCP command. Do /ctcp target clientinfo for more info.
/date display date/time (x)
/dcc command nick Issues a DCC command (explained below).
/die * Shut down a server
/exit message =/bye
/hash * Reconfigure a server
/host (x)
/ignore pattern ignore messages from nick!user@host (may contain wildcards)
 +pattern ignore and give the ignored a notice
 -pattern removes a pattern from the ignore list
/info gives info about server
/invite nick channel invites nick to channel
/join channel =/channel
/kick channel nick kicks nick from channel
/kill nick * kicks nick out of IRC
/leave channel leave a channel
/links show server connections

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/list                list channels
  -min n             list only channels with minimum of n users
  -max n             ... maximum of n users
  -public           list only public channels
  -private          ... private channels
  -local            ... local channels
  -global           ... global channels
  -topic            ... channels with topic
/users              display statistics
/me action          sends an action description
/mode channel par  set channel mode
  +p               private channel
  +s               secret channel
  +i               invite-only channel
  +m               moderated channel
  +n               no messages from outside channel
  +t               only channel op may set topic
  +l n            channel may hold at most n users
  +v nick         let nick speak on moderated channel
  +b nick         ban nick
  +k key          set channel password
  +o nick         nick becomes channel op
  -x              removes flag x, where x is one of the above
/mode nick par     set user mode
  +i              invisible user
  +s              receive server notices
  +w              receive wallops
/motd              show message-of-the-day
/msg nick message  Sends a private message
/names channel     List users on channel
/nick newnick     Change your nickname
/note              (x)
/notice            (almost) like /msg
/notify nick       Adds nick to notification list (show each signon/off)
  -nick           removes nick from notification list
/oper              become operator *
/part channel      =/leave
/query nick        open window for private messages to nick
/quit message     =/bye
/rehash            * Reconfigure a server
/restart           * Restart a server
/server srvadr     Switch to a different server
/show x y          Suppress (y=OFF) or allow (y=ON) displaying of certain messages
                  x is one of: join,part,quit,topic,invite,nick,mode,kick,names, or all.
/signoff message  =/bye
/squit            * Remove a link between servers
/stats             * Statistical info
/summon user@host Invites user@host to IRC (host must be running a server)
/time             =/date
/topic channel text Set a channel topic
/trace            (x)
/type             Type a text file to the current channel
/users            (x)
/version           Show server version
/wallops message  Message to all operators (deprecated)
/who channel      List people on channel
/whois nick       Give information about user
/whowas nick      Give information about user having gone

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Valid commands for /dcc are:

chat - requests CHAT connection for nick or answers such a request

send - send a file; tsend - send a text file
get - receive a file (to be answered to a SEND request); tget - receive a text file
list - list all DCC connections.

3. Hints & Advice

More information on IRC commands can be found in the 'ircle Users manual' and 'IRC Advice' files and probably in the help files for the IRCII client (but note that IRCII has a number of commands for programmability that ircle has not).

When selecting a non-proportional font keep in mind that IRC was originally designed for text terminals and some commands and messages assume a fixed-size screen. That may make output look strange in some situations.

This client uses the ISO Latin-1 8-bit character set and converts Macintosh special characters to this code. Some characters can not be converted and will be mapped to nonsensical characters. This also holds for DCC tsend/tget which are text-mode versions of send/get. The conversion table are those also used by Peter Lewis' FTPd.

New users should check the file 'IRC Advice'.

4. General notes, Copyright Notice

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Some parts of this program written by Peter N. Lewis, (C) 1992.

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System requirements: any Mac with System version greater 6.0 and the MacTCP driver.

This client is to fit version 2.7 and 2.8 servers. All commands and features obsoleted by 2.7 are taken out (as should be all obsolete servers by now). This client is fully compatible with the RFC1459 standard for IRC.

I have still not testes all commands and special cases; there may still be some bugs, feel free to report them to me (or the alt.irc newsgroup).

I called this ircle with a German -le suffix and spelled uncapitalized because it is rather small, and I did not put too much work into it. There are certainly IRC clients with much more functionality around, but this is runs in Mac windows, and after all, it seems to work.

Have fun!