

Real-Time Text and Real Time Text Taskforce FAQ

What is real-time text?

Real-time text is a technique that allows users to see text as it is typed into a text interface. It differs from Internet instant messaging (IM) and mobile texting (SMS) in that the characters appear in near real-time as they are typed, not as a block of text after it is written. Real-time text is communication using text that is the closest to voice communication.

What can real-time text be used for?

Real-time text can be used on its own to enable conversations using text. It can also be used where voice is impractical (such as in noisy environments or meetings), or as an adjunct to voice and video conversations to transfer text information with the audio or video feed. Real-time transcription of a video or audio conference is an example. Real-time text is part of a concept called “Total Conversation” which provides bi-directional real-time exchange of video, text and voice between users in two or more locations.

Why is real-time text important to the deaf and hard of hearing community?

In addition to its many applications for fully hearing people, real-time text is important as an alternative to voice communications for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. It allows a more natural, bi-directional flow of text-based conversation to take place compared with the “type-enter-wait-read-response-reply” technology of IM and SMS.

What is the technology behind real-time text?

At the core of the framework for real-time text over Internet Protocol (IP) networks is the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) and the real-time text transport standard, as currently described in IETF [RFC 4103](#).

This framework is designed to be compatible with voice over IP (VoIP) and streaming video environments. It also builds upon, and is compatible with, the high-level user requirements of deaf, hard of hearing, and speech-impaired users, as described in [RFC 3351](#).

[RFC 5194](#) describes the defined framework for implementation of all required functions based on the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) and the Real-Time Transport Protocol (RTP). This document also describes the essential requirements for real-time text-over-IP and the interworking between text-over-IP and existing text telephony on the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN) and other networks.

What is the Real-Time Text Taskforce?

The Real-Time Text Taskforce (R3TF) is an open forum for engineers, motivated individuals, experts, companies and organisations that wish to help test, implement, and advance the widespread adoption of the real-time text framework. One of the purposes of the R3TF is to promote the interoperability of real time text implementations to the greatest extent feasible, in order to avoid fragmentation caused by incompatible protocols. The R3TF will help facilitate the development of interworking test beds that will allow implementers to test how well their solutions comply with the specification.

In addition, the R3TF will also distribute information on the technology, its user requirements, and implementation and act as an educator on related issues.

More information on the R3TF is available at <http://www.realtimetext.org>.

While real-time text has been documented within the IETF processes, the R3TF is an independent group, not affiliated to the IETF.

How can I participate in the Real-Time Text Taskforce?

The R3TF web site is at <http://www.realtimetext.org/>. It uses a text based forum and a Wiki to provide a central point where people can contribute to the development of real-time text. By each adding our expertise and knowledge, we and real-time text can grow.

Participants can use the web site to:

- read and contribute to forum discussions on issues and solutions
- identify needed reports, research, testing, tools, and data
- work with partners on implementation and interoperability testing
- contribute to the listings of tools, projects, specifications, and other resources maintained by the Taskforce
- add to the body of information on the website and wiki pages
- share documents and presentations

What is the relationship between the Internet Society and the Real-Time Text Taskforce?

ISOC's "Enabling Access" initiative aims to address some of the fundamental impediments to Internet growth and usability. One aspect of the initiative focuses on advancing the development of technologies, business cases, and policy environments for improving the use and experience of the Internet by people with disabilities. As part of this effort, ISOC is serving as an “incubator” of the R3TF, by providing coordination assistance, technical expertise, and implementation support for the Taskforce.