

Re: Battle of the Sidewalk][- error

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.astro.amateur/2004-06/1031.html>

From: John Steinberg (*seesig_at_bottom.invalid*)

Date: 06/07/04

Date: Mon, 07 Jun 2004 22:53:05 GMT

Alan French wrote:

> *I've always been curious about how the idea that top posting was "bad" got going. In following long threads, especially when folks don't bother cutting much out, it seems easier to have the response at the top – then you don't have to rummage through everything again and again and again.*

That's true, but that's because not trimming for context is also a Usenet no–no. It's lazy, sloppy, inconsiderate and creates a very messy posting where quoting attributes can take a scalpel to decipher.

> *Obviously, this seems to be a minority view.*

Judging from the number of people on s.a.a., in particular, who pop toast (as Paul charmingly describes it) it's probably not a minority view, although it is still incorrect.

There seems to be prevailing opinion that A). I'll make my own darn rules and B). This is what I do in email, ergo that's what I'll do on Usenet. Some of this behavior is no doubt the result of folks using the same program to deal with email and news.

But let me state something categorically, in email, where there often is a need to leave a "paper trail", and where the level of sophistication can be very low, top–posting is the norm, and that's fine, as in a one–to–one exchange, there are different expectations of behavior, no outside readership, and thus different rules can apply.

But here on Usenet, exchanges are not 1:1, they are open to all, and top–posting without trimming is bad form. That's not my opinion, but rather established guidelines of which reams of digital info exists. I will also note that Yahoo groups, where again top–posting without trimming prevails, are not Usenet groups.

Incidentally, many of the "rules" regarding Usenet are indeed somewhat antiquated and based upon the early years of very slow connections, but even in today's broadband or faster dial–up world, these conventions are still very useful and still very dominant, particularly in

newsgroups where the tolerance for top-posting is low to nonexistent. s.a.a. is far more tolerant of bad posting form than many/most groups, and that's a good thing. Far too much bandwidth is burned and flame wars erupt over this issue elsewhere.

In the real world, we don't see the answer to questions prior to the question, do we? Consider the following:

Answer: Top-posting

Question: What's the most annoying thing on Usenet?

The flow is wrong, and only works for those actively involved in a thread who have been following from start to finish. Not all do, and then there are issues of propagation and retention, which can render top-posting even more problematic.

Now, before I blather on any further, some links to help the old and new Usenet user alike better familiarize themselves with proper and good habits for posting.

<http://www.faqs.org/faqs/usenet/posting-rules/part1/>
<http://www.faqs.org/rfcs/rfc1855.html>
<http://www.netmeister.org/news/learn2quote2.html>

Blather continues:

There are many other links on this topic, but the authoritative sources are quite clear; top-posting and not trimming for context is poor netiquette, inconsiderate to those who read articles and pay by the minute for the privilege, wasted bandwidth, and renders many otherwise fine articles and threads very difficult to read and follow. You should only know just how AWFUL some of the top-posted and non-trimmed articles parse in my newsreaders. I often just skip them due to the eyestrain they create.

Please bear in mind that not all clients are created equally, and one should post so as to cover the widest possible audience. What you see on screen is very different than what I see, but we can make things far more useful for all if we all stick to these well-established and well-founded conventions. Just as we do frown upon binaries posted to text-only newsgroups, there are conventions and expectations about how to post and quote properly.

I will note for the record that I address this issue, on average, about once a year, and here on s.a.a., it tends to fall on totally deaf ears and blind eyes, but sometimes one just has to at least *try* to educate the user base. I hold no expectations that even one unrepentant top-posting and non-trimmer user will so much as bother to read and absorb the provided links, but where there's life there's hope.

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-John Steinberg

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...And that, my liege, is how we know the Earth to be banana-shaped.

--Sir Bedevere