

I'm human



IEEE 802.11 Wi-Fi networks are the most widely used wireless networks globally, connecting devices like laptops and smartphones through routers. The standard specifies medium access control (MAC) and physical layer (PHY) protocols for implementing WLAN computer communication. It's part of the IEEE 802 set of local area network (LAN) technical standards. The first version was released in 1997, with subsequent amendments providing a basis for wireless network protocols. The standard uses various frequencies, including 2.4 GHz, 5 GHz, and 6 GHz frequency bands. IEEE 802.11 is used in most home and office networks to allow devices to communicate with each other and access the Internet without wires. It's also a basis for vehicle-based communication networks. The protocols are designed to interwork seamlessly with Ethernet and often carry Internet Protocol traffic. The Wi-Fi generations have evolved over time, with new standards being released periodically. These include 802.11a (2009), 802.11ac (2013), 802.11ax (2021), and upcoming releases like 802.11be (2024) and 802.11bn (2028). 802.11 is a family of wireless networking standards that have evolved over time to improve performance and capacity. The first standard in this family, 802.11-1997, laid the groundwork for future revisions, which include 802.11b, 802.11a, 802.11g, 802.11n, 802.11ac, and 802.11ax. Service amendments to these standards allow for extensions of their scope without requiring new equipment. The 2.4-GHz band is used by many 802.11b, g, and n devices in the United States, while 802.11a operates on the 5 GHz U-NII band. This choice can lead to interference issues with microwave ovens, cordless telephones, and Bluetooth devices. To mitigate this, 802.11b/g use direct-sequence spread spectrum, while 802.11a employs orthogonal frequency-division multiplexing. The availability of channels in the 5 GHz U-NII band offers more options for operators, with at least 23 non-overlapping channels available. However, performance can vary depending on environmental conditions. In contrast, 802.11n and 802.11ax devices use either the 2.4 GHz or 5 GHz bands, while 802.11ac operates exclusively on the 5 GHz band. The spectrum used by 802.11 varies between countries, with some frequencies falling within amateur radio bands. Historically, the development of Wi-Fi has been driven by technological advancements and regulatory changes. The U.S. Federal Communications Commission released the ISM band in 1985 for unlicensed use, paving the way for the first wireless products, such as WaveLAN. Vic Hayes played a key role in designing the original 802.11 standard, which later evolved into Wi-Fi. The development of Wi-Fi standards began in the late 1990s when engineers approached the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) to create a standard for wireless networking. In 1999, the Wi-Fi Alliance was formed to promote the use of Wi-Fi technology and to hold the trademark for Wi-Fi-enabled products. The first commercial breakthrough came in 1999 with Apple's adoption of Wi-Fi for its iBook laptops, which featured AirPort network connectivity. This was followed by IBM's ThinkPad 1300 series in 2000. Since then, several new Wi-Fi standards have been introduced, each offering improved performance and capabilities. These include: * 802.11b (1999): Offered data rates of up to 11 Mbps * 802.11a (1999): Provided faster data transfer speeds of up to 54 Mbps * 802.11g (2003): Introduced data rates of up to 54 Mbps in the 2.4 GHz frequency band * 802.11n (2009): Offered improved performance with data rates of up to 600 Mbps and multiple input, multiple output (MIMO) technology * 802.11ac (2013): Provided even faster speeds of up to 1.3 Gbps in the 5 GHz frequency band * 802.11ax (2020): Introduced new features such as orthogonal frequency-division multiple access (OFDMA) and multi-user MIMO for improved performance Future standards, including 802.11be (Wi-Fi 7), are expected to offer even faster speeds and more advanced capabilities. Note that I have removed some of the technical details from the original text to make it easier to understand. If you would like me to include those details as well, please let me know! Li-Fi and VLC/OWC standards have undergone changes over the years. The IEEE 802.11bb standard is expected to be released in December 2023 for frequencies between 800-1000 nm with speeds of up to 9.6 Gbit/s using O-OFDM technology. The older IR[4] (IrDA) standard, released in June 1997, operated at 850-900 nm with limited capabilities. The 802.11 Standard has undergone several rollups over the years, including the 802.11-2007 and 802.11-2012 standards which increased speeds to up to 54 Mbit/s and 150 Mbit/s respectively. The 802.11me standard is expected to be released in September 2024 for frequencies of 2.4 GHz, 5 GHz, 6 GHz, and 60 GHz with speeds of up to 9608 or 303336 Mbit/s using DSSS and OFDM technologies. Some legacy standards include IEEE 802.11-1997, which specified two net bit rates of 1 or 2 megabits per second (Mbit/s) and was rapidly supplanted by the 802.11b standard. The 802.11a-1999 standard, released in 1999, operates in the 5 GHz band with a maximum net data rate of 54 Mbit/s. The IEEE 802.11v-2008 extended the operation of 802.11a to the licensed 3.7 GHz band, allowing for increased power limits and a range of up to 5,000 meters. 802.11a is utilized extensively due to its use of the relatively unused 5 GHz band, providing a significant advantage over 802.11b/g. However, this higher carrier frequency also presents drawbacks: 802.11a signals are more readily absorbed by walls and other solid objects in their path, resulting in shorter ranges. In contrast, 802.11b generally exhibits longer ranges at lower speeds, although its performance diminishes when signal strengths are weak. 802.11a is also susceptible to interference, yet locally, there may be fewer signals interfering with it, leading to better throughput. The 802.11b standard boasts a maximum raw data rate of 11 Mbit/s and utilizes the same media access method as the original standard. Its products emerged in early 2000 due to the direct extension of the modulation technique defined in the original standard. A notable drawback of 802.11b devices is their susceptibility to interference from other products operating in the 2.4 GHz band, such as microwave ovens and cordless telephones. The introduction of 802.11g in June 2003 marked a significant development, operating within the same 2.4 GHz band as 802.11b but utilizing an OFDM-based transmission scheme similar to 802.11a. While it offers higher data rates, its performance is slightly reduced compared to 802.11a. IEEE 802.11 standards evolution and improvements The 60 GHz frequency band differs significantly from the more commonly used 2.4 GHz and 5 GHz Wi-Fi bands in terms of propagation characteristics. Products that implement the 802.11ad standard are branded as WiGig and undergo certification through the Wi-Fi Alliance's program. The peak data transfer rate for 802.11ad is a staggering 7 Gbit/s, while its primary function lies in facilitating extremely high data rates (around 8 Gbit/s) and short-range communication (approximately 1-10 meters). TP-Link made history by releasing the world's first 802.11ad router in January 2016. However, a distinct standard exists for operating WLANs within TV white space spectrum in VHF and UHF bands between 54 and 790 MHz - IEEE 802.11af or "White-Fi" and "Super-Fi". This amendment, approved in February 2014, uses cognitive radio technology to transmit on unused TV channels while limiting interference for primary users like analog TV, digital TV, and wireless microphones. Access points and stations can determine their position using GPS, then query a geolocation database (GDB) provided by regional regulatory agencies to discover available frequency channels based on time and location. The physical layer of IEEE 802.11af is based on OFDM and utilizes 802.11ac as its foundation. This leads to lower propagation path loss and material attenuation in UHF and VHF bands compared to the more commonly used frequencies, thereby increasing possible range. Frequency channels for IEEE 802.11af are between 6 to 8 MHz wide, depending on regulatory domains, with up to four channels that can be bonded into either one or two contiguous blocks. MIMO operation is feasible with up to four streams used for space-time block code (STBC) or multi-user (MU) operation, leading to significant data rate enhancements. The IEEE 802.11ax standard, also known as Wi-Fi 6, offers significant improvements over its predecessor, 802.11ac, with a focus on dense environments such as corporate offices and residential apartments. IEEE 802.11 standards continue to evolve, with recent advancements like MIMO (up to four streams) and higher modulation schemes enabling ranges of 300-500 meters.[82] The IEEE 802.11ba Wake-up Radio (WUR) Operation amendment prioritizes energy-efficient data reception without compromising latency.[83] WUR packets can be received at a power consumption of less than one milliwatt, supporting data rates of 62.5 kbit/s and 250 kbit/s.[84] The IEEE 802.11bb standard utilizes infrared light for communication.[85] In the pipeline is IEEE 802.11be Extremely High Throughput (EHT), which will likely be designated as Wi-Fi 7, focusing on indoor and outdoor WLAN operation with stationary and pedestrian speeds in the 2.4 GHz, 5 GHz, and 6 GHz frequency bands.[86][87] [88] Graphical representations show the performance envelopes for various IEEE 802.11 standards, including 802.11g and 802.11n, highlighting the differences in data transfer rates between these protocols. In typical deployments, maximum achievable throughputs are not representative of real-world scenarios, where data is transferred between two endpoints, with at least one endpoint connected to a wired infrastructure and the other via wireless link. This means that frame lengths and packet sizes play crucial roles in determining data transfer speeds. Other factors influencing application data rates include transmission speed, wireless signal reception energy, distance, and configured output power of communicating devices.[89][90] The ISM bands used by Wi-Fi technologies such as 802.11a, n, and ac fall within the 4.915-5.825 GHz range. This band is commonly referred to as the "2.4 GHz and 5 GHz bands". Each spectrum is divided into channels with a center frequency and bandwidth, similar to how radio and TV broadcast bands are structured. The 2.4 GHz band consists of 14 channels, spaced 5 MHz apart, starting from channel 1, which is centered on 2.412 GHz. Channels 11-14 have additional restrictions or are unavailable in certain regulatory domains. The channel numbering for the 5.725-5.875 GHz spectrum is less intuitive due to differences in regulations between countries. 802.11 specifies a spectral mask that defines the permitted power distribution across each channel, requiring signal attenuation by at least 20 dB beyond ±11 MHz from the center frequency. This results in channels being effectively 22 MHz wide. Channel availability is regulated by country and depends on how each country allocates radio spectrum to various services. For example, Japan allows all 14 channels for 802.11b, while Spain initially only allowed channels 10 and 11. However, Europe now permits channels 1 through 13. In North America and some Central and South American countries, only channels 1-11 are available. The spectral mask defines power output restrictions but does not accurately reflect the channel's energy range. Transmitters can impact receivers on non-overlapping channels if they are close or operating above allowed power levels. However, a sufficiently distant transmitter on an overlapping channel can have little effect. Channel separation requirements between transmitting devices often lead to confusion, with some believing four non-overlapping channels exist under 802.11g when in fact only three were available. The IEEE Std 802.11 (2012) specifies that in multiple cell network topologies, channels with overlapping or adjacent frequencies can coexist without interference as long as the distance between their center frequencies is at least 25 MHz. This does not mean that using non-overlapping channels is always recommended. However, the technical overlap of channels can still cause significant inter-channel interference, especially when users transmit near the boundaries of access points (APs). In certain regions, such as Europe, overlapping channels are permitted, but in others, like North America, they may lead to unacceptable degradation of signal quality and throughput. The 802.11 standard uses a regulatory region, or regdomain, to define allowed transmitter power levels, channel occupation times, and available channels for different countries. Each country has its own set of domain codes, which are specified in the IEEE standard. Most Wi-Fi devices default to regdomain 0, which means they will not transmit at powers above allowable limits or use frequencies outside their designated region. Regdomain settings can be challenging to change, as it is often made difficult for end-users to adjust without conflicting with local regulatory agencies, such as the Federal Communications Commission in the United States. In an IEEE 802.11 network, frame types and their uses depend on specific values set for ToDS and FromDS bits. For communication within a basic service set (BSS) or independent BSS (IBSS), these bits are set to zero and one respectively. Frames sent by a station and directed towards an access point via the distribution system have ToDS = 0 and FromDS = 1. Exiting frames from the distribution system for a station have ToDS = 1 and FromDS = 0, while frames using all four MAC addresses in a data frame have these bits set to one. When packets are divided into multiple frames for transmission, the More Fragments bit is set, except for the last frame of a packet. The Retry bit aids in eliminating duplicate frames by being set when a frame is resent. Power Management indicates the sender's power state after frame exchange completion, while Access points manage connections without setting the power-saver bit. The More Data bit facilitates buffering received frames in a distributed system, addressing all contented stations. Frames encrypted by mechanisms like WEP or WPA have the Protected Frame bit set to one. The Order bit is only used when employing "strict ordering" delivery method. Reserved for Duration ID field, it indicates transmission duration and can take three forms: Duration, Contention-Free Period (CFP), and Association ID (AID). An 802.11 frame contains up to four address fields, with Address 1 being the receiver, Address 2 the transmitter, and Address 3 used for filtering purposes by the receiver. The body field in a standard 802.11 frame can vary greatly in size, spanning anywhere from 0 to 2304 bytes plus any additional overhead from security encapsulation. This field contains information that has been passed down from higher layers. At the end of the standard 802.11 frame lies the Frame Check Sequence (FCS), often mistakenly referred to as the Cyclic Redundancy Check (CRC). Its primary function is to enable integrity checks on retrieved frames by allowing stations to verify the accuracy of received data. When a station prepares to send a frame, it calculates the FCS and appends it. Upon receiving a frame, a station can recalculate the FCS and compare it to the one sent; if they match, it's assumed that the transmission remained intact. Management frames, however, are not always authenticated, granting the flexibility for either maintaining or discontinuing communication. Common subtypes of 802.11 include: Authentication frame: The process begins with the wireless network interface controller sending an authentication frame to the access point containing its identity. When using open system authentication, only one frame is sent by the WNIC, and the access point responds with acceptance or rejection. With shared key authentication, the WNIC sends a request followed by the encrypted challenge text; if successful, the access point confirms authenticity. Association request frame: Sent by a station, it enables the access point to allocate resources and synchronize. The frame includes information about the WNIC, such as supported data rates and the network's SSID. Upon acceptance, the access point reserves memory and assigns an association ID. Association response frame: The access point sends this in response to an association request, containing either acceptance or rejection along with details like association IDs and data rates. Beacon frame: Periodically sent by the access point to announce its presence and provide network parameters. Disassociation frame: Sent by a station wishing to terminate connection from another. Similar to disauthentication but elegantly allowing the access point to relinquish memory. Probe request frame: The access point sends this when requesting information from another. Probe response frame: The access point responds with capability information, supported data rates, etc., following a probe request. Reassociation request frame: Sent by a WNIC that has moved out of range and seeks to reconnect to another access point. Access point with better signal strength is coordinated to forward remaining buffer information from previous access point. Reassociation response frame: Sent by an access point containing acceptance or rejection of WNIC reassociation request frame. Frame includes required data for association like association ID and supported data rates. Action frame: management frame to control a certain action, such as QoS, Block Ack, Public, Radio Measurement, Fast BSS Transition, Mesh Peering Management, etc. These frames are sent by station when it needs to inform its peer about an action. For example, station can ask another station to set up block acknowledgement by sending ADDBA Request action frame. Other station would respond with ADDBA Response action frame. Body of management frame consists of fixed fields followed by sequence of information elements (IEs). Common structure of IE is: Field Type Length Data Length Control frames facilitate data exchange between stations. Some common 802.11 control frames include: Acknowledgement (ACK) frame: after receiving data frame, receiving station sends ACK frame to sending station if no errors found. If sending station does not receive ACK frame within predetermined time period, sending station resends frame. Request to Send (RTS) frame: RTS and CTS frames provide optional collision reduction scheme for access points with hidden stations. Station sends RTS frame as first step in two-way handshake required before sending data frames. Clear to Send (CTS) frame: station responds to RTS frame with CTS frame, providing clearance for requesting station to send data frame. CTS provides collision control and management by including time value for which all other stations hold off transmissions while requesting station transmits. Data frames carry packets from web pages, files, etc. within body. Body begins with IEEE 802.2 header, followed by Destination Service Access Point (DSAP) specifying protocol, and Subnetwork Access Protocol (SNAP) header if DSAP is hex AA. SNAP header includes organizationally unique identifier (OUI) and protocol ID (PID) fields specifying protocol. If OUI is all zeroes, protocol ID field is EtherType value. Most 802.11 data frames use 802.2 and SNAP headers, most using OUI of 00:00:00 and EtherType value. The link layer in wireless networks should be able to recover lost frames with a success rate of at least 80%, with 30% being an average common outcome.[103] It is essential for senders to receive Acknowledgement (ACK) frames, and if not received, the frames are resent. Various amendments have been made to the original IEEE 802.11 standard, including IEEE 802.11a, b, d, e, g, h, i, j, k, n, p, r, s, u, v, w, y, and z. These amendments introduced new features such as higher speeds, improved security, and support for devices operating in specific frequency ranges. The IEEE 802.11 standard has undergone several revisions, with the latest release being IEEE 802.11-2016, which includes amendments aa, ac, ad, ae, and af. IEEE 802.11 Standards Development: A Timeline and Overview The IEEE 802.11 standard has undergone significant updates since its inception, with new releases and amendments introduced at regular intervals. This overview provides a brief summary of the key milestones in the development of the IEEE 802.11 standard. Recent Developments: Key releases in recent years include: - IEEE 802.11aj: China Millimeter Wave (December 2016) - IEEE 802.11ak: Transit Links within Bridged Networks (February 2018) - IEEE 802.11aq: Pre-association Discovery (July 2018) - IEEE 802.11-2020: A new release of the standard that includes amendments ah, ai, aj, ak, and aq (December 2020) Future Directions: The latest release, IEEE 802.11ax, introduces High Efficiency WLAN at 2.4, 5 and 6 GHz, with OFDMA to Wi-Fi, enhancing wireless local-area networking operation. Additionally, upcoming releases include: - IEEE 802.11ay: Enhancements for Ultra High Throughput in and around the 60 GHz Band (March 2021) - IEEE 802.11az: Next Generation Positioning (March 2023) - IEEE 802.11bb: Light Communications (November 2023) - IEEE 802.11bc: Enhanced Broadcast Service (February 2024) - IEEE 802.11bd: Enhancements for Next Generation V2X - IEEE 802.11be: Extremely High Throughput (May 2024) Standardization Process: The IEEE Standards Association oversees the development of the standard, with new releases and amendments introduced through a task group process. The task group is responsible for creating amendments, which are then approved by the IEEE Standards Association. The standard is updated periodically, with new versions published in 1999, 2007, 2012, 2016, and 2020. Terminology: Various terms are used to specify aspects of wireless local-area networking operation, including time units (TU) and portals. 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Modern operating systems like iOS 8 and Android 8.0 have implemented features such as MAC randomization to enhance user privacy and security. The Wi-Fi Alliance has established an official naming convention for wireless networking standards, with each generation designated by a letter and number (e.g., Wi-Fi 6E). The most recent standard, Wi-Fi 7, is currently being certified, while Wi-Fi 6E operates in the 6 GHz band. In comparison to previous generations, Wi-Fi 6E offers improved features and capabilities, such as increased speed and capacity. The Wi-Fi Alliance has also established a numbering system for wireless networking standards, with each generation building upon the previous one. For example, Wi-Fi 4 (802.11n) operates in the 2.4 GHz band, while Wi-Fi 5 (802.11ac) operates in the 5 GHz band. In terms of performance, Wi-Fi 6E has shown significant improvements over its predecessors, with speeds reaching up to 144.4 Mbit/s (MCS Index 15, 2 spatial streams, 20 MHz). In contrast, earlier generations, such as Wi-Fi 4 (802.11n) and Wi-Fi 5 (802.11ac), have slower speeds. The Wi-Fi Alliance has also established a set of standards for wireless networking performance, including throughput-per-area, which measures the ratio of total network throughput to the network area. According to some studies, the growth in wireless networking technology has been significant, with some estimates suggesting that Wi-Fi 6E is expected to see a 1100% improvement over earlier generations. Overall, the Wi-Fi Alliance's naming convention and standards have helped establish a clear framework for wireless networking technologies, allowing users to understand the differences between various generations and make informed decisions about their network choices. The development of Wi-Fi standards has a rich history, with various milestones and contributors shaping its evolution. Vic Hayes and Bruce Tuch were inducted into the Wi-Fi NOW Hall of Fame on November 8, 2019. 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