Internet Protocol (IP)

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Internet Protocol (IP) is the principal set (or communications protocol) of digital message formats and rules for exchanging messages between computers across a single network or a series of interconnected networks, using the Internet Protocol Suite (often referred to as TCP/IP). Messages are exchanged as datagrams, also known as data packets or just packets.

IP is the primary protocol in the Internet Layer of the Internet Protocol Suite, which is a set of communications protocols consisting of four abstraction layers: link layer (lowest), Internet layer, transport layer and application layer (highest).

The main purpose and task of IP is the delivery of datagrams from the source host (source computer) to the destination host (receiving computer) based on their addresses. To achieve this, IP includes methods and structures for putting tags (address information, which is part of metadata) within datagrams.

The process of putting these tags on datagrams is called encapsulation.

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