

Understanding the 802.11 Wireless LAN MAC frame format

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In this experiment, we will capture traffic on an 802.11 network and observe the 802.11 MAC frame fields using [Wireshark](#). You will have to [download and install Wireshark](#) to run this experiment. You should do this *before* your reservation on the wireless testbed.

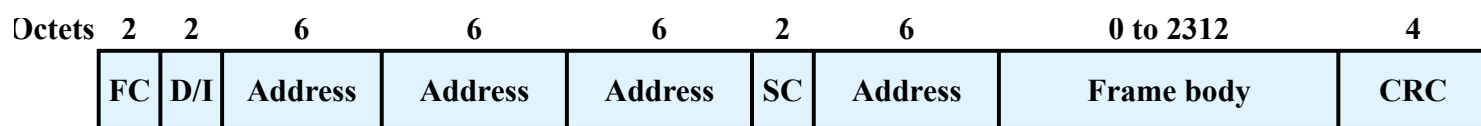
It should take about 60-120 minutes to run this experiment, but you will need to have reserved that time in advance. This experiment uses wireless resources, and you can only use wireless resources on GENI during a reservation.

To reproduce this experiment on GENI, you will need an account on the [GENI Portal](#), and you will need to have [joined a project](#). You should have already [uploaded your SSH keys to the portal](#). The project lead of the project you belong to must have [enabled wireless for the project](#). Finally, you must have reserved time on the [WITest](#) testbed, and you must run this experiment during your reserved time. (Alternatively, you can use the "outdoor" or "sb4" testbeds at [ORBIT](#), with some [modifications](#) to the instructions.)

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Background

Figure 1 shows the 802.11 MAC frame format:



FC = Frame control

D/I = Duration/connection ID

SC = Sequence control

Figure 1: IEEE 802.11 MAC frame format. Image from William Stallings "Data and Computer Communications".

The following excerpt from William Stallings "Data and Computer Communications" explains these fields:

- **Frame Control:** Indicates the type of frame (control, management, or data) and provides control information. Control information includes whether the frame is to or from a DS, fragmentation information, and privacy information.
- **Duration/Connection ID:** If used as a duration field, indicates the time (in microseconds) the channel will be allocated for successful transmission of a MAC frame. In some control frames, this field contains an association, or connection, identifier.
- **Addresses:** The number and meaning of the 48-bit address fields depend on context. The transmitter address and receiver address are the MAC addresses of stations joined to the BSS that are transmitting and receiving frames over the wireless LAN. The service set ID (SSID) identifies the wireless LAN over which a frame is transmitted. For an IBSS, the SSID is a random number generated at the time the network is formed. For a wireless LAN that is part of a larger configuration the SSID identifies the BSS over which the frame is transmitted; specifically, the SSID is the MAC-level address of the AP for this BSS (Figure 17.4). Finally the source address and destination address are the MAC addresses of stations, wireless or otherwise, that are the ultimate source and destination of this frame. The source address may be identical to

the transmitter address and the destination address may be identical to the receiver address.

- **Sequence Control:** Contains a 4-bit fragment number subfield, used for fragmentation and reassembly, and a 12-bit sequence number used to number frames sent between a given transmitter and receiver.
- **Frame Body:** Contains an MSDU or a fragment of an MSDU. The MSDU is a LLC protocol data unit or MAC control information.
- **Frame Check Sequence:** A 32-bit cyclic redundancy check.

Results

In this experiment, we identify the 802.11 frame fields from the raw hex dump of a captured packet:

	Frame Control: Data frame, from STA to DS (to AP)	Duration	Receiver address (MAC of AP)	Transmitter address (MAC of source STA)
	08 01	30 00	e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42	e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6
Destination address (MAC of dest. STA)	e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e	f0 00	aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00	
Sequence control	45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00	40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10	c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49	
	80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00	01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5		
	00 00 33 85 48 69 0a			Frame body

We also observe the acknowledgment of this frame:

Frame Control: Control frame type, ACK subtype	Duration	Receiver address (TX MAC of frame that is being acknowledged)
d4 00	00 00	e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6

as well as the second transmission of the frame (from AP to destination STA) and its acknowledgment.

Run my experiment

In this experiment, I used the WITest wireless testbed. To reserve time on this testbed, log in to <https://witestlab.poly.edu> by clicking on the user icon in the top right corner and then choosing "Log in with GENI". Click on "Testbed" and "Make a reservation", then click on the grid squares corresponding to the date/time you want. For more information, see the [WITest reservation tutorial](#).

At your reserved time, SSH into the WITest console (`witestlab.poly.edu`) using your GENI Wireless username and keys associated with that account.

(Alternatively, you can use the "outdoor" or "sb4" testbeds at [ORBIT](#), with some [modifications](#) to the instructions.)

Prepare the testbed

First, load the `wifi-experiment.ndz` disk image onto four testbed nodes: node16, node17, node18, and node19. From the WITest console, run:

```
omf-5.4 load -i wifi-experiment.ndz -t  
omf.witest.node16,omf.witest.node17,omf.witest.node18,omf.witest.node  
19
```

(Note that the command above is all one line, and there are no spaces between the commas and resource names.)

When this process finishes successfully, turn the nodes on with

```
omf tell -a on -t  
omf.witest.node16,omf.witest.node17,omf.witest.node18,omf.witest.node  
19
```

Wait a few minutes for the nodes to boot. Then, open four terminals. In each, SSH into the WITest console (with your GENI wireless username and keys), and from there, into each of the nodes (with username "root").

Set up the access point

One node is designated to act as the wireless access point. I used node17 for this. On the terminal of this node, run

```
ifconfig wlan0 up
```

to make sure the wireless interface is up. Then, bring up an access point on channel 11 with

```
create_ap -c 11 -n wlan0 witestlab-exp
```

and leave this running.

Set up STA connectivity

Two of the nodes are designated as wireless station devices. (I used node16 and node19 for this.) On these, you will need to connect to the wireless network and set up an IP address.

First, run

```
ifconfig wlan0 up
```

to bring up the wireless interface.

Then, connect to the wireless access point with ESSID "witestlab" that is operating on channel 11:

```
iwconfig wlan0 essid witestlab-exp channel 11
```

To verify that you are connected, use

```
iwconfig wlan0
```

The output of this command should look something like this:

```
wlan0 IEEE 802.11abgn ESSID:"witestlab-exp"  
      Mode:Managed Frequency:2.462 GHz Access Point:  
E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42  
      Bit Rate=18 Mb/s Tx-Power=20 dBm  
      Retry long limit:7 RTS thr:off Fragment thr:off  
      Encryption key:off  
      Power Management:off  
      Link Quality=70/70 Signal level=-32 dBm  
      Rx invalid nwid:0 Rx invalid crypt:0 Rx invalid frag:0  
      Tx excessive retries:0 Invalid misc:7 Missed beacon:0
```

Make a note of the MAC address of the access point, which is also the BSSID. Here, it is E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42.

Finally, set an IP address on the wireless interface with

```
ifconfig wlan0 192.168.0.X
```

where "X" is the node number (e.g. 16 on node16, etc.). Verify that they can reach one another over the wireless network, e.g. on node16 run

```
ping -c 1 192.168.0.19
```

Also use

```
ifconfig wlan0
```

to find out and make a note of the MAC address of each wireless interface.

Set up monitoring

Next, we will set up the fourth node (I used node18 for this) to monitor 802.11 network and capture frames that are transmitted on the air. We will use the [Aircrack](#) software platform for this.

First, make sure the wireless interface is *down*:

```
ifconfig wlan0 down
```

Wait a few seconds, then set up a "monitor" interface called "mon0" with

```
airmon-ng start wlan0
```

and then run (replacing the bold part as required):

```
airodump-ng -c 11 --bssid E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42 --output-format pcap -w wlan
```

to begin capturing traffic on that interface. (Note that this all one command, to run on one line.) Here,

- `-c 11` says to capture on channel 11,
- `--bssid E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42` is the BSSID of the wireless access point that we want to capture (see `iwconfig wlan0` output in previous section. Use the BSSID of *your* network that you observed, which may be different from mine),
- `--output-format pcap -w wlan-capture` specifies the format to capture in, and a prefix to use for the output file name,
- `mon0` is the interface that we will listen on.

Leave that running.

Send traffic over the network

Now, we will send some traffic over the network.

(I used node19 as my server and node16 as my client, but you can make substitutions as necessary if you are using other nodes.)

On node19, run the `netcat` application to receive incoming traffic (here, on port 4444):

```
netcat -l 4444
```

On node16, connect to that `netcat` instance by specifying the IP address of node19, and the port on which you are running the `netcat` server:

```
netcat 192.168.0.19 4444
```

Now, send a few characters in each direction and make sure you see it mirrored on the other end. (You should see some activity in the monitoring window, too, as some packets are captured.) Then use Ctrl+C to stop the `netcat` processes and also the `airodump-ng` traffic capture.

On the monitoring node, use `ls` to verify that there is a new capture file. The capture file should have the prefix "wlan-capture", followed by a number that is incremented each time you repeat this process, e.g. "wlan-capture-01.cap".

Here's a video of this part of the experiment:

Capturing 802.11 traffic with aironmon



Analyze captures

Next, we will analyze our packet capture using [Wireshark](#). Wireshark is a free network protocol analyzer that is available for Windows, Mac, and Linux operating systems. [Download Wireshark](#) and install it on your own PC or laptop.

You'll need to transfer the capture file from the testbed to your laptop.

On the monitor node, use `ls` to identify the name of the capture file you want to transfer. You will use `scp` to transfer it.

Assuming the file is "wlan-capture-01.cap", on your laptop, run

```
scp -o "StrictHostKeyChecking no" -o "ProxyCommand ssh -i /PATH/TO/KEY
```

(but substitute your own username where it says `GENI-WIRELESS-USERNAME`, and the path to your own key where it says `/PATH/TO/KEY`). Note that this is all one command, on one line.

Note: In general, the syntax of `scp` is

```
scp [OPTIONS] source destination
```

Here,

- The [OPTIONS], which in this case allow you to "hop" through to the node via the testbed console, are:

```
-o "StrictHostKeyChecking no" -o "ProxyCommand ssh -i /PATH/TO/KEY GENI
```

- The source file is (possibly with a different file name or node name):

```
root@node18:/root/wlan-capture-01.cap
```

- The destination is `.`, the bash shortcut that indicates "put the file here, in my current working directory":

```
.
```

After this file is transferred to your laptop, you can open it in Wireshark. Once you have it open, make some changes to the way it is displayed:

- In the menu, choose "View" > "Name Resolution" and make sure all are *un*-checked.
- Also under "View", turn off "Colorize Packet List".

Near the top of the Wireshark display, there is a line where you can enter a display filter. Enter the filter

```
wlan.bssid == E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42 or wlan.ra == E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42 or wlan
```

where the last two MAC addresses are the MAC addresses of your two wireless stations (here, `e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e` and `e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6`) and the first two are the MAC address of your access point.

Then hit "Enter" or "Return" to filter your capture to the frames of interest:

- those with the value `E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42` in the "BSSID" frame field, or
- those with either `E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42` (the MAC address of the AP), `e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e` or `e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6` (the MAC address of one of the two wireless stations) in the "Receiver Address" frame field.

The filter bar should turn green if your syntax is correct:

The screenshot shows the Wireshark network protocol analyzer interface. The top menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Go, Capture, Analyze, Statistics, Telephony, Wireless, Tools, and Help. Below the menu is a toolbar with various icons for file operations, navigation, and analysis. The main display area is divided into three sections:

- Packet List:** A table showing a list of captured packets. The columns are No., Time, Source, Destination, Protocol, Length, and Info. The first packet (No. 1) is highlighted in blue. It is a Probe Response (SN=2891, FN=0, Flags=..., BI=100, ...).
- Packet Bytes:** A section showing the raw bytes of the selected packet in hexadecimal and ASCII. The hex data starts with 50 00 00 00 46 dd 4b 74 e2 a2 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42. The ASCII data starts with P...F.Kt ...f.B.
- Packet Details:** A tree view showing the structure of the selected packet. It is an IEEE 802.11 Probe Response. The details include:
 - Type/Subtype: Probe Response (0x0005)
 - Frame Control Field: 0x5000
 - Version: 0
 - Type: Management frame (0)
 - Subtype: 5
 - Flags: 0x00
 - DS status: Not leaving DS or network is operating in AD-HOC mode (To DS: 0 From DS: 0) (0x00)
 - More Fragments: This is the last fragment
 - Retry: Frame is not being retransmitted
 - PWR MGT: STA will stay up
 - More Data: No data buffered

The status bar at the bottom indicates: wlan-capture-01, Packets: 23808, Displayed: 553 (2.3%), Load time: 0:0.139, Profile: Default.

In Wireshark, the top part of the window will show the (ordered) list of captured packets. In the middle part, you can see details of the selected packet, including the headers at each layer of the network stack. At the bottom, you will see the complete packet contents, in both hex format (on the left) and ASCII (on the right).

Scroll through the packet list and find the (first) packet that carries the message you sent with `netcat`. You should be able to actually see the text of your message:

The screenshot shows the Wireshark interface with a list of captured packets. The selected packet (No. 22850) is a TCP ACK from 192.168.0.19 to 192.168.0.16. The detailed view shows the following structure:

- Frame Control Field: 0x0801
 - Version: 0
 - Type: Data frame (2)
 - Subtype: 0
 - Flags: 0x01
 - DS status: Frame from STA to DS via an AP (To DS: 1 From DS: 0) (0x01)
 - More Fragments: This is the last fragment
 - Retry: Frame is not being retransmitted
 - PWR MGT: STA will stay up
 - More Data: No data buffered
 - Protected flag: Data is not protected
 - Order flag: Not strictly ordered
 - Duration: 48 microseconds
 - Receiver address: Apple_66:b2:42 (e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42)
 - Destination address: Apple_5a:0c:5e (e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e)
 - Transmitter address: Apple_5b:a1:f6 (e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6)
 - Source address: Apple_5b:a1:f6 (e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6)
 - BSS Id: Apple_66:b2:42 (e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42)
 - STA address: Apple_5b:a1:f6 (e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6)
 - Fragment number: 0
 - Sequence number: 15
- Logical-Link Control
- Internet Protocol Version 4, Src: 192.168.0.16, Dst: 192.168.0.19
- Transmission Control Protocol, Src Port: 57372 (57372), Dst Port: 4444 (4444), Seq: 1, Ack: 1, Len: 3
- Data (3 bytes)
 - Data: 48690a
 - Text: Hi\n
 - Length: 3

The packet bytes pane shows the raw data: 0000 08 01 30 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6 ..0...f .B...[...]

We are going to trace this message from the time that it is transmitted, until it is received.

In the middle pane, expand the "IEEE 802.11" header section to see the details of the 802.11 frame header. We will go through them one at a time.

Note: If you can't find the captured message, it may not have been picked up by the monitor. Go back to the [Set up monitoring](#) section of these instructions and repeat the steps from there on.

Frame control field

The "type" in the "Frame Control" field indicates that the frame is a "Data" frame (as opposed to "Control" or "Management").

```
Frame Control Field: 0x0801
    .... ..00 = Version: 0
    .... 10.. = Type: Data frame (2)
    0000 .... = Subtype: 0
```

The flags in the "Frame Control" field show that

- the frame is being transmitted *from* a wireless station to the distribution system (DS) through the AP.
- the frame is not one of the first of a set of fragments of higher-layer PDU that has been split up into multiple frames.
- the frame is not a retransmission of a frame that was already transmitted, but not acknowledged.

```
Flags: 0x01
    .... ..01 = DS status: Frame from STA to DS via an AP (To
DS: 1 From DS: 0) (0x01)
    .... .0.. = More Fragments: This is the last fragment
    .... 0... = Retry: Frame is not being retransmitted
    ...0 .... = PWR MGT: STA will stay up
    ..0. .... = More Data: No data buffered
    .0.. .... = Protected flag: Data is not protected
    0... .... = Order flag: Not strictly ordered````
```

In the hex dump, these binary flags - the bits 0000 1000 0000 0001 - are visible as hex digits 08 01:

```
08 01 30 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6
e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e f0 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00
45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10
c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49
80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5
00 00 33 85 48 69 0a
```

Duration field

Next, we see that 48 microseconds have been allocated for this transmission:

```
.000 0000 0011 0000 = Duration: 48 microseconds
```

We can also pick this out in the hex dump - 48 in decimal is 30 00 in hex:

```
08 01 30 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6
e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e f0 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00
45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10
c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49
80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5
00 00 33 85 48 69 0a
```

Addresses

Next, we can pick out the MAC addresses in the hex dump. In data frames, and when the network is in infrastructure mode, the address

fields depend on the value of the DS flags in the frame control field:

	To DS bit	From DS bit	Address 1 (receiver)	Address 2 (transmitter)	Address 3	Address 4
To AP	1	0	BSSID (MAC of AP)	MAC address of transmitting STA	MAC address of destination STA	Not used
From AP	0	1	MAC address of destination STA	BSSID (MAC of AP)	MAC address of source STA	Not used

Recall that for this frame, the To DS bit was 1 and the From DS bit was 0, corresponding to the first row in this table.

First, we see the receiver address, which is the MAC address of the device where this frame will be received next. In this case, the frame is sent from one station to another via the AP, so the receiver address is the MAC address of the AP:

```
08 01 30 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6
e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e f0 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00
45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10
c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49
80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5
00 00 33 85 48 69 0a
```

Next, we see the transmitter address, which is the MAC address of the wireless station that sent the frame:

```

08 01 30 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6
e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e f0 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00
45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10
c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49
80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5
00 00 33 85 48 69 0a

```

This is followed by the destination address. The destination address is the MAC address of the wireless station to which this frame should eventually be delivered:

```

08 01 30 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6
e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e f0 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00
45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10
c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49
80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5
00 00 33 85 48 69 0a

```

Wireshark helpfully summarizes the addresses that can be inferred from these fields:

```

Receiver address: e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42
Destination address: e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e
Transmitter address: e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6
Source address: e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6
BSS Id: e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42
STA address: e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6

```

Sequence number

The next field includes the sequence number, 15:

```
0000 0000 1111 .... = Sequence number: 15
```

and the fragment number, 0:

```
.... .... .... 0000 = Fragment number: 0
```

These binary digits - 0000 0000 1111 0000 - are visible in the hex dump as well:

```
08 01 30 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6
e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e f0 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00
45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10
c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49
80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5
00 00 33 85 48 69 0a
```

Acknowledgment

Next, look in the capture file for the 802.11 acknowledgment for that data frame. It should be the next frame in the capture:

The screenshot shows the Wireshark interface with a packet list and a packet details pane. The packet list shows several 802.11 frames, including Probe Responses and Acknowledgements. The selected packet (No. 22851) is an IEEE 802.11 Acknowledgement frame. The details pane shows the following fields:

- Type/Subtype: Acknowledgement (0x001d)
- Frame Control Field: 0xd400
 - Version: 0
 - Type: Control frame (1)
 - Subtype: 13
- Flags: 0x00
 - DS status: Not leaving DS or network is operating in AD-HOC mode (To DS: 0 From DS: 0) (0x00)
 - More Fragments: This is the last fragment
 - Retry: Frame is not being retransmitted
 - PWR MGT: STA will stay up
 - More Data: No data buffered
 - Protected flag: Data is not protected
 - Order flag: Not strictly ordered
 - Duration: 0 microseconds
 - Receiver address: e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6

The packet bytes pane shows the raw data: d4 00 00 00 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6

ACK frames have only three fields:

- **Frame Control** bits are set to 1101 to indicate an ACK frame.
- **Duration** field is set to 0 if acknowledging a complete data frame or the final fragment in a fragment burst.
- **Receiver address** field is set to the Address 2 field (transmitter address) of the frame that is being acknowledged.

Retransmission from AP to destination

Next, in our capture, we can observe that the same data payload is transmitted from the AP to the destination STA:

The screenshot displays a Wireshark capture of network traffic. The packet list pane shows a series of packets, with packet 22852 highlighted in blue. This packet is a TCP retransmission of a segment with sequence number 57372 and acknowledgment number 4444. The packet details pane shows the IEEE 802.11 Data frame structure, including the Frame Control field, Flags, and various addresses. The packet bytes pane shows the raw data of the segment, with the sequence number 57372 and acknowledgment number 4444 visible.

No.	Time	Source	Destination	Protocol	Length	Info
22520	2017-03-22 15:51:38.112168	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42	bc:9f:ef:77:c0:01	802.11	83	Probe Response, SN=3906, FN=0, Flags=....., BI=100,...
22828	2017-03-22 15:51:38.612904	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42	10:40:f3:89:20:c2	802.11	83	Probe Response, SN=3912, FN=0, Flags=....., BI=100,...
22830	2017-03-22 15:51:38.622118	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42	10:40:f3:89:20:c2	802.11	83	Probe Response, SN=3913, FN=0, Flags=....., BI=100,...
22849	2017-03-22 15:51:38.826400		e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6 (RA)	802.11	10	Clear-to-send, Flags=.....
22850	2017-03-22 15:51:38.826397	192.168.0.16	192.168.0.19	TCP	87	57372 → 4444 [PSH, ACK] Seq=1 Ack=1 Win=29312 Len=3 TS...
22851	2017-03-22 15:51:38.826408		e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6 (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....
22852	2017-03-22 15:51:38.827432	192.168.0.16	192.168.0.19	TCP	87	[TCP Retransmission] 57372 → 4444 [PSH, ACK] Seq=1 Ack...
22853	2017-03-22 15:51:38.827420		e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....
22854	2017-03-22 15:51:38.829467	192.168.0.19	192.168.0.16	TCP	84	4444 → 57372 [ACK] Seq=1 Ack=4 Win=29056 Len=0 TSval=1...
22855	2017-03-22 15:51:38.829481		e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....
22856	2017-03-22 15:51:38.830504		e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	802.11	10	Clear-to-send, Flags=.....
22857	2017-03-22 15:51:38.830504	192.168.0.19	192.168.0.16	TCP	84	[TCP Dup ACK 22854#1] 4444 → 57372 [ACK] Seq=1 Ack=4 W...
22858	2017-03-22 15:51:38.830494		e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....

▼ Frame 22852: 87 bytes on wire (696 bits), 87 bytes captured (696 bits)
 ▼ IEEE 802.11 Data, Flags:F.
 Type/Subtype: Data (0x0020)
 ▼ Frame Control Field: 0x0802
00 = Version: 0
10.. = Type: Data frame (2)
 0000 = Subtype: 0
 ▼ Flags: 0x02
10 = DS status: Frame from DS to a STA via AP(To DS: 0 From DS: 1) (0x02)
0.. = More Fragments: This is the last fragment
0... = Retry: Frame is not being retransmitted
 ...0 ... = PWR MGT: STA will stay up
 ..0 = More Data: No data buffered
 .0... .. = Protected flag: Data is not protected
 0... .. = Order flag: Not strictly ordered
 .000 0000 1101 0101 = Duration: 213 microseconds
 Receiver address: e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e
 Destination address: e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e
 Transmitter address: e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42
 Source address: e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6
 BSS Id: e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42
 STA address: e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e
 0000 = Fragment number: 0
 0000 0000 0111 = Sequence number: 7
 ▶ Logical-Link Control
 ▶ Internet Protocol Version 4, Src: 192.168.0.16, Dst: 192.168.0.19
 ▶ Transmission Control Protocol, Src Port: 57372 (57372), Dst Port: 4444 (4444), Seq: 1, Ack: 1, Len: 3

```

0000 08 02 d5 00 e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42  ....Z.^...f.B
0010 e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6 70 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00  ...[.p.....
0020 45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10  E..7Y3@. @. ....
0030 c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49  ......\mh...I
0040 80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5  .........3.
0050 00 00 33 85 48 69 0a  ....H.
  
```

A data segment used in reassembly of a lower-level protocol (tcp.segment_data), 3 bytes
 Packets: 23808 · Displayed: 553 (2.3%) · Load time: 0:0.218 · Profile: Default

Here, we see some changes in the headers:

- The DS bits have changed, to indicate that this frame is sent from the AP to the distribution system.
- The duration is different.
- The addresses are different. We are now following the scheme in the second row in the table in the [Addresses](#) section, and the receiver and transmitter addresses are different now because the

frame is going from the AP to the destination STA, rather than from the source STA to the AP.

- The sequence number is different. This number indicates where a frame belongs in the sequence of frames sent from a transmitter address, to a receiver address. The STA1 to AP sequence numbers are incremented separately from the AP to STA2 sequence numbers.

But, the *data payload* of the frame, including all the higher-layer headers and the text of the message, are the same:

```
08 02 d5 00 e4 ce 8f 5a 0c 5e e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42
e4 ce 8f 5b a1 f6 70 00 aa aa 03 00 00 00 08 00
45 00 00 37 59 33 40 00 40 06 60 1a c0 a8 00 10
c0 a8 00 13 e0 1c 11 5c f4 6d 68 b2 cf a7 ee 49
80 18 00 e5 2d eb 00 00 01 01 08 0a 00 00 33 f5
00 00 33 85 48 69 0a
```

Second acknowledgment

Finally, we see that this frame, too, is acknowledged by its receiver:

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wlan.bssid == E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42 or wlan.ra == E4:CE:8F:66:B2:42 or wlan.ra == e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e or wlan.ra == e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6

No.	Time	Source	Destination	Protocol	Length	Info
22520	2017-03-22 15:51:38.112168	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42	bc:9f:ef:77:c0:01	802.11	83	Probe Response, SN=3906, FN=0, Flags=....., BI=100,...
22828	2017-03-22 15:51:38.612904	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42	10:40:f3:89:20:c2	802.11	83	Probe Response, SN=3912, FN=0, Flags=....., BI=100,...
22830	2017-03-22 15:51:38.622118	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42	10:40:f3:89:20:c2	802.11	83	Probe Response, SN=3913, FN=0, Flags=....., BI=100,...
22849	2017-03-22 15:51:38.826400	e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6 (RA)	e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6 (RA)	802.11	10	Clear-to-send, Flags=.....
22850	2017-03-22 15:51:38.826397	192.168.0.16	192.168.0.19	TCP	87	57372 → 4444 [PSH, ACK] Seq=1 Ack=1 Win=29312 Len=3 TS...
22851	2017-03-22 15:51:38.826408	192.168.0.16	e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6 (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....
22852	2017-03-22 15:51:38.827432	192.168.0.16	192.168.0.19	TCP	87	[TCP Retransmission] 57372 → 4444 [PSH, ACK] Seq=1 Ack...
22853	2017-03-22 15:51:38.827420	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....
22854	2017-03-22 15:51:38.829467	192.168.0.19	192.168.0.16	TCP	84	4444 → 57372 [ACK] Seq=1 Ack=4 Win=29056 Len=0 TSval=1...
22855	2017-03-22 15:51:38.829481	e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e (RA)	e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....
22856	2017-03-22 15:51:38.830504	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	802.11	10	Clear-to-send, Flags=.....
22857	2017-03-22 15:51:38.830504	192.168.0.19	192.168.0.16	TCP	84	[TCP Dup ACK 22854#1] 4444 → 57372 [ACK] Seq=1 Ack=4 W...
22858	2017-03-22 15:51:38.830494	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42 (RA)	802.11	10	Acknowledgement, Flags=.....

▶ Frame 22853: 10 bytes on wire (80 bits), 10 bytes captured (80 bits)

▼ IEEE 802.11 Acknowledgement, Flags:

Type/Subtype: Acknowledgement (0x001d)

▼ Frame Control Field: 0xd400

- 00 = Version: 0
- 01.. = Type: Control frame (1)
- 1101 = Subtype: 13

▼ Flags: 0x00

- 00 = DS status: Not leaving DS or network is operating in AD-HOC mode (To DS: 0 From DS: 0) (0x00)
- 0.. = More Fragments: This is the last fragment
- 0... = Retry: Frame is not being retransmitted
- ...0 = PWR MGT: STA will stay up
- ..0. = More Data: No data buffered
- .0.. = Protected flag: Data is not protected
- 0... = Order flag: Not strictly ordered

.000 0000 0000 0000 = Duration: 0 microseconds

Receiver address: e4:ce:8f:66:b2:42

0000 d4 00 00 00 e4 ce 8f 66 b2 42f .B

Frame (frame), 10 bytes

Packets: 23808 · Displayed: 553 (2.3%) · Load time: 0:0.218 · Profile: Default

The receiver address of the ACK is the MAC address of the AP. This receive ACK lets the AP know that the frame was received at the destination STA.

Notes

Exercise

Annotate the packets you captured following the tutorial above, as I have done in the [Results](#) section. Show **four** annotated packets:

- The first frame carrying the message you typed into `netcat`

- its 802.11 acknowledgment
- its retransmission by the AP
- the 802.11 acknowledgment of the retransmission.

Then, modify the experiment so that the network operates in ad-hoc mode, rather than in infrastructure mode, as follows:

First, reconfigure each of the two wireless station nodes so that they are in ad-hoc mode:

```
modprobe ath9k
ifconfig wlan0 down
iwconfig wlan0 mode ad-hoc
iwconfig wlan0 channel 11
iwconfig wlan0 essid 'witest-adhoc'
ifconfig wlan0 up
```

Verify connectivity with

```
iwconfig wlan0
```

(it may take a few moments for the connection to be established). Note that the BSSID will be a random MAC address, like this:

```
wlan0      IEEE 802.11abgn  ESSID:"witest-adhoc"
          Mode:Ad-Hoc  Frequency:2.462 GHz  Cell: FA:3D:4C:02:AD:87
          Tx-Power=20 dBm
          Retry long limit:7   RTS thr:off   Fragment thr:off
```

```
Encryption key:off  
Power Management:off
```

Make a note of this BSSID address. Then, configure an IP address on each with `ifconfig` as before, and verify connectivity with `ping`.

On the monitoring node, run

```
airodump-ng -c 11 --bssid FA:3D:4C:02:AD:87 --output-format pcap -w wlan
```

using the BSSID you noted in the previous step.

Use `netcat` as before to send a message from one wireless station to another, then use Ctrl+C to stop everything. On the monitoring node, use `ls` to verify that there is a new capture file. The capture file should still have the prefix "wlan-capture", but the number is incremented, e.g. "wlan-capture-02.cap".

Transfer this capture file to your computer, and observe it in Wireshark. Filter as before, but using the new BSSID, e.g.

```
wlan.bssid == FA:3D:4C:02:AD:87 or wlan.ra == FA:3D:4C:02:AD:87 or  
wlan.ra == e4:ce:8f:5a:0c:5e or wlan.ra == e4:ce:8f:5b:a1:f6
```

Show the frame(s) carrying the message you typed into `netcat`. Which header fields are different, compared to the previous experiment? What else is different about operation in ad-hoc mode vs. infrastructure mode? Explain.

Using other wireless testbeds

You may also run this experiment on the "outdoor" testbed at [ORBIT](#), using any group of four nodes that are available, close to one another, and have Atheros 9XXX cards. You can verify the availability of "outdoor" nodes and their capabilities as follows:

- Visit <http://geni.orbit-lab.org> and log in
- Click on "Control Panel"
- Click on "Status Page"
- Choose the "outdoor" tab
- Scroll down to the "WiFi" panel, and check the box next to "Ath9k". (This will mark with an X any node that has a WiFi interface in the Atheros 9xxx family.)

In the display, nodes that are available are shown as blue or green squares; nodes that are not available are shown as red squares. You can find out the name of a node by clicking on it, and then looking at the "Info" panel on the left. Use this information to make substitutions in the instructions, replacing unavailable nodes (if any; shown as red squares) with nearby available nodes that have Atheros 9xxx cards.

This experiment will also work on the "sb4" testbed at ORBIT, which currently has four Atheros 9xxx-equipped nodes: node1-3, node1-4, node1-5, and node1-6.

If using "sb4", when you first log in to the "sb4" console you should run

```
wget -qO- "http://internal2dmz.orbit-lab.org:5054/instr/setAll?att=0"
```

```
wget -qO- "http://internal2dmz.orbit-lab.org:5054/instr/selDevice?switc
wget -qO- "http://internal2dmz.orbit-lab.org:5054/instr/selDevice?switc
wget -qO- "http://internal2dmz.orbit-lab.org:5054/instr/selDevice?switc
wget -qO- "http://internal2dmz.orbit-lab.org:5054/instr/selDevice?switc
```

to reset sb4's programmable attenuation matrix to zero attenuation between all pairs of nodes.

Similarly, you may also run this experiment on any group of four Ath9k-capable nodes on the "grid" testbed at ORBIT. The "grid" testbed is generally in high demand, however, and is difficult to get time on.

If using another testbed, you will have to make some minor changes to these instructions.

- You'll need to SSH in to the console of the testbed you have reserved, e.g. "outdoor.orbit-lab.org" or "sb4.orbit-lab.org", instead of "witestlab.poly.edu".
- The `wifi-experiment.ndz` disk image is also available on ORBIT, but you will substitute the correct node names in the `omf load` and `omf tell` commands. For example, on sb4:

```
omf-5.4 load -i wifi-experiment.ndz -t node1-3.sb4.orbit-
lab.org,node1-4.sb4.orbit-lab.org,node1-5.sb4.orbit-lab.org,node1-
6.sb4.orbit-lab.org

omf tell -a on -t node1-3.sb4.orbit-lab.org,node1-4.sb4.orbit-
lab.org,node1-5.sb4.orbit-lab.org,node1-6.sb4.orbit-lab.org
```

- You will also have assigned different IP addresses to the wireless interfaces, so you should make sure to use the correct IP addresses in the `netcat` commands.
- Your `scp` command will have to change to reflect the testbed you are running on and the node on which you are monitoring traffic.

Using testbeds besides for ORBIT or WITest

To use another wireless testbed besides for ORBIT or WITest, you may need to install some software or do some other configuration steps that are already prepared on the `wifi-experiment.ndz` disk image on ORBIT/WITest.

To create the `wifi-experiment.ndz` disk image, I started from a baseline Ubuntu 14.04 disk image. Then I installed some software from the Ubuntu package repositories:

```
apt-get update
apt-get -y install git hostapd iproute2 dnsmasq iptables haveged
aircrack-ng
```

I installed the `create_ap` tool, which makes it easy to set up a device as a WiFi access point:

```
git clone https://github.com/oblique/create_ap.git
cd create_ap
make install
```

I also un-blacklisted the `ath9k` driver, i.e.

```
rm /etc/modprobe.d/blacklist-ath9k.conf
```

so that the `ath9k` module is loaded at boot. Alternatively, you can manually load the module on each boot with

```
modprobe ath9k
```



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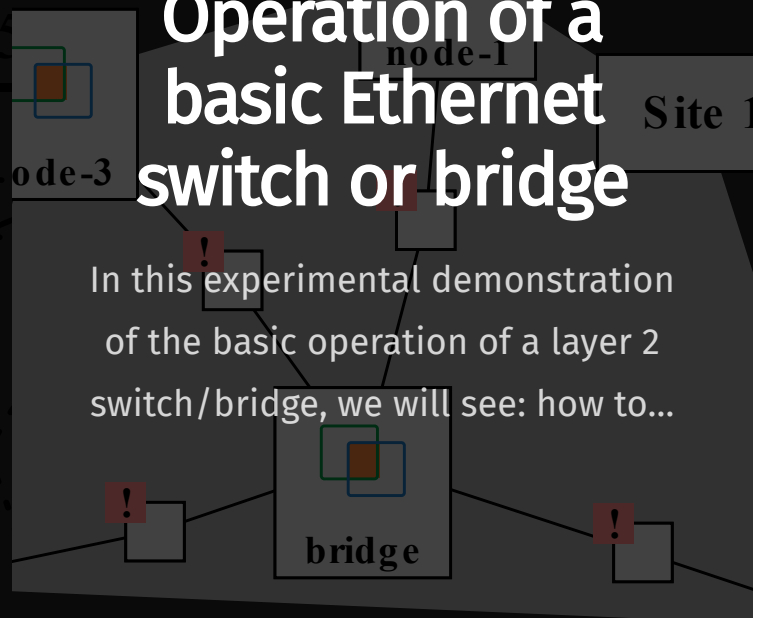
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