# net.Thread™ Documentation

**Complete user documentation for the *net.Genesis™* net.Thread product.**

*net.Genesis'* **net.Thread provides a complete solution for adding threaded discussion-group functionality to Web sites. It can be used for specialized discussion forums, on-line customer support, internal project planning and tracking. With net.Thread, users can quickly navigate discussion threads and post new messages in a variety of flexible formats. Its intuitive, customizable user interface enables users to easily follow and navigate on-line discussions.**

**IMPORTANT**  Please review and complete the included licensing agreement before installing or using net.Thread.

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net.Genesis

- WELCOME TO NET.THREAD 1.0

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## 1.1 Welcome to net.Thread 1.0

net.Thread is a World Wide Web server application which allows you to host discussion forums accessible through a Web browser interface. In addition to providing a threaded, outline-view organization of messages within a forum, net.Thread allows you to structure any number of forums within a hierarchy. Numerous administrative functions are also provided through a password protected Web browser interface.

Most companies today have established Web sites and use them as sources of customer interaction and feedback. To attract large numbers of repeat users, sites must be dynamic and interactive. Enabling site users to easily interact with companies and each other requires improved site quality and communications. Along with this "discussion-group" functionality, site providers need an easy, efficient means of managing discussion areas.

*net.Genesis'* net.Thread provides a complete solution for adding threaded discussion-group functionality to Web sites. It can be used for specialized discussion forums, on-line customer support, internal project planning and tracking.

With net.Thread, users can quickly navigate discussion threads and post new messages in a variety of flexible formats. Its intuitive, customizable user interface enables users to easily follow and navigate on-line discussions.

net.Thread links into the site's existing HTML structure. The site administrator posts several "seed" messages for discussion-group functionality. For users unfamiliar with threaded discussions, a complete on-line help area explains net.Thread's functionality.

After an automated installation procedure, net.Thread provides a "community meeting place." Site administrators can create new discussion areas, complete with titles, banners and group descriptions. They can log into net.Thread's Web-based administrative mode to create new discussion groups, remove old messages or delete inappropriate messages.

After a simple login procedure, net.Thread displays a hierarchical message tree that illustrates "conversation" flows. Users select messages to view, based on message titles, posters and time stamps. The message text appears in its entirety, along with any responses or replies. The user can investigate a different thread, navigate the current thread or post his or her own message.

## 1.2 Benefits and Capabilities

### 1.2.1 Key Benefits

- Instantly creates on-line discussion forums
- Enhances site interactivity
- Easily maintained via administrative interface

### 1.2.2 Product Features

- Allows interactive HTML generation
- Organizes discussions in hierarchical threads
- Simple user navigation
- Removal of old messages, deletion of specific messages
- Automated installation procedure
- Works with all Common Gateway Interface (CGI)-compliant servers, HTML Level 2.0 or above compliant browsers
- Supports multiple platforms—OSF/1, Irix, SunOS, Solaris, AIX, HP-UX, Linux

## 1.3 Installing net.Thread

### 1.3.1 System Requirements

**Hardware**

- Any UNIX system with at least 100 KB free hard drive space. net.Thread has no inherent RAM requirements.
- FTP access to the Internet or a 3.5" diskette drive (and the "mtools" package).

**Software**

- A properly installed HTTP server which supports the Common Gateway Interface (CGI). All major httpd servers support the CGI specification, including NCSA httpd, CERN httpd, and Netscape Communication Corp.'s Netsite servers.
- The Perl programming language completely installed.
- The sendmail program installed and appropriately configured.

### 1.3.2 Installation Procedure

**IMPORTANT**   net.Thread will not function unless it is properly installed. Additionally, your copy of net.Thread will automatically be registered during the installation process, thus entitling you to customer support.

1. Copy the contents of the distribution media (or download the files from the Internet) the directory in which you would like to install the source for net.Form. **Be sure to read the included README file** for any revisions to the installation procedure. Standard locations are `/usr/local/src` and `/tmp`. The following files will be copied:

   - `net.Thread.1.0.tar.Z`
   - `README`
   - `INSTALL`

2. Review the included README file by entering "`more README`".

3. Enter "`perl INSTALL`".

4. Follow the on-screen prompts. This will completely install, configure, and register the license of net.Thread.

**Note**   The installation procedure will automatically generate the configuration file `net.Thread.config.pl` and the executable `net.Thread.pl`

# 2.0 QUICK START TUTORIAL: NET.THREAD SETUP

net.Genesis

- OVERVIEW
- INITIAL SETUP
- CREATING DISCUSSION GROUPS
- POSTING MESSAGES
- DELETING MESSAGES
- OTHER NOTES

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### 2.1 Overview

The following tutorial has been designed to give you the skills and confidence necessary to create your first functional net.Thread discussion forums. The tutorial covers basic concepts such as creating discussion groups, posting messages, and removing messages.

After completing this tutorial, you will understand how net.Thread is controlled as well as the power and flexibility net.Thread allows.

**IMPORTANT**    Completing this tutorial also serves to test the net.Thread installation. We recommend that you complete this tutorial before experimenting with net.Thread.

## 2.2  Initial Setup

Your net.Thread site is administered using your Web browser. net.Thread provides for a password-protected "administrator" mode which is similar to the normal user mode but provides additional button selections. To access the administrator mode, you must first log in as the "`webmaster`" as follows:

1. Using your Web browser, go to the URL `http://yourdomain/cgi-bin/ net.Thread.pl`, or select the "`Settings`" button if you are already using net.Thread.

   Notice that the text "`This is a sample 'Msghdr' file`" appears at the top of the screen.

2. In the "`Login Name`" field, type "`webmaster`". This field is case-sensitive— make sure you type entirely in lower case.

3. Press the "`Login`" button. The form will be refreshed, this time displaying "`Password`", "`New Password`" and "`Confirm`" fields.

4. In the "`Password`" field, enter your administrator password. Remember that the password is case-sensitive. (To change the webmaster password, see "5.2 Changing the Webmaster Password" on page 24).

5. Press "`Login`" again. Congratulations! You are now logged in for secure administrator access.

**IMPORTANT**  As a security precaution, your administrator login is valid for 15 (fifteen) minutes. If this time period expires and you attempt to execute an operation, net.Thread will request that you log in again. If this occurs, you need only type the password and press "`Login`", and the operation you selected previously will proceed.

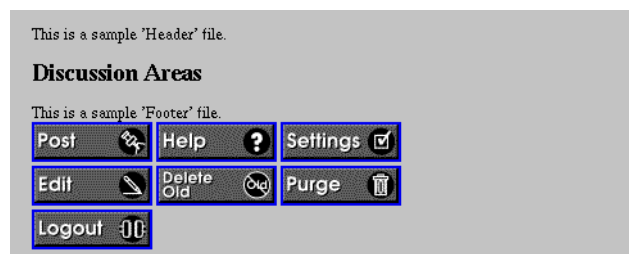Upon successful log in, you will see the following display:



**FIGURE 1.**  Initial net.Thread root.

**6.** The first step to creating an active net.Thread area is modifying the root characteristics. To do so, click the "Edit" button. You will then see the "Group Information" update form.

**7.** Replace the text in the "Title" field with the text you would like to appear as the root documents HTML title. This title will appear in the browser, on hotlists, etc. For the sake of this tutorial, change the title to

```
My Thread Root
```

**8.** The "Header" information appears at the top of the Group. Note that the header information is interpreted as HTML, so any HTML tags in the header field will be rendered appropriately. Change the text in the "Header" field with

```
<strong>Please use these discussion areas freely</strong><br>
```

**9.** Similarly, the "Footer" information appears at the bottom of the Group (but before the button bar). The footer information is also interpreted as HTML. Replace the text in the "Footer" field with

```
<em>Thank you for visiting!</em><p>
```

**10.** The "Message Header" information appears at the top of the login screen (noted in step 1). The message header is interpreted as HTML. Replace the text in the "Message Header" field with

```
Welcome to my Discussion Area!<br>
```

**11.** Click the "Update" button to update the Group information. The login message will be changed and the root thread will appear like this:



| FIGURE 2. | Revised root Group. |

**12.** In the future, to revise the Header, Footer, or Message Header information, log in as "webmaster", go to the Group to be revised, and click the "Edit" button.

*Great! By logging in as "webmaster" and modifying the root directory's "Group Information" form, you have finished setting up net.Thread. Now get ready to create your first Discussion Group.*

---

### 2.3 Creating Discussion Groups

1. Now that the initial set up is complete, you are ready to begin adding Discussion Groups to your net.Thread installation. To do so, click the "Post" button.

   Again, you will go to the "Group Information" form, but this time the default values in the various fields will be different. Also, two radio buttons will appear at the bottom.

   This group information will affect the Discussion Groups you create beneath the root Group. As before, modify the default values.

2. Replace the text in the "Title" field with

   Test Posting Group

3. Change the text in the "Header" field with

   ```
   <h1><img src="/thread_images/logo.gif">
   Welcome to the TPG</h1><hr>
   ```

   (Note that this assumes that the images directory is /thread_images.)

4. Add the following line to the "Footer" field:

   ```
   <strong>Thank you for stopping by!</strong><p>
   ```

5. When creating new groups, the "Message Header" is displayed when a user attempts to access the Group directly from outside net.Thread (see "5.5 Providing Users with access URLs" on page 30), as well as at the top of each posting. For now, leave this blank.

6. Leave the "Users will post messages to this group" radio button selected. This specifies that the will be a Discussion Forum Group, as opposed to a Group containing further Groups.

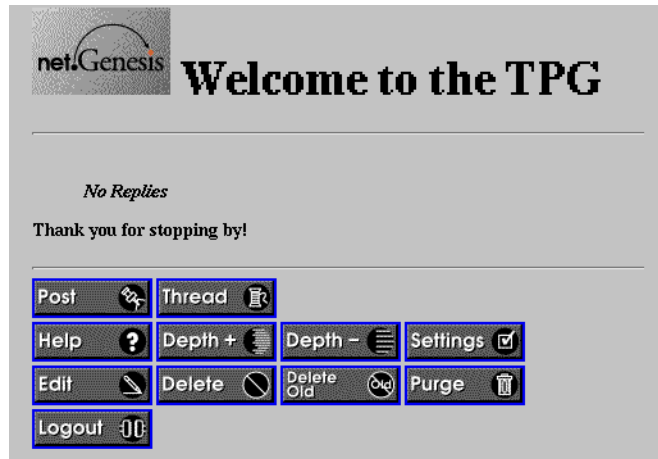**7.** Click the "Update" button. You will see the new Discussion Group:

**FIGURE 3.** How net.Thread renders a newly created Discussion Group.

**8.** Click on the "Thread" button. You will go back to the root Group and see the that "Test Posting Group" has been added to the root hierarchy.
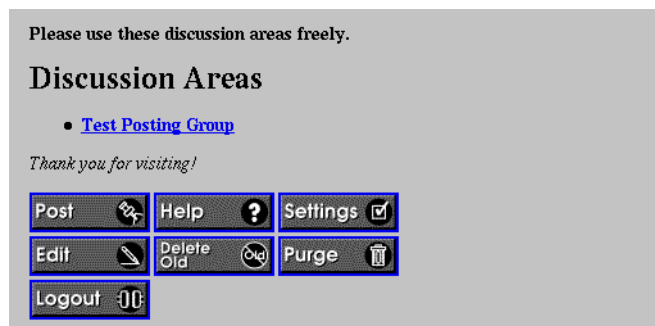


**FIGURE 4.** The new Group appears in the root hierarchy.

*Congratulations! By using the "Post" button as webmaster, you have created a Discussion Group which allows users to post new messages to your net.Thread discussion area. Next you will practice posting a message.*

### 2.3.1 Creating Groups of Groups

In order to create a Group of Groups, follow the above procedure until step 6. Instead of leaving "`Users will post messages to this group`" selected, select "`This group will be the parent of sub-groups`". The resulting Group can only contain other groups (as opposed to messages). This is useful for creating hierarchical discussion areas, such as

```
General Discussion
Sports
    Soccer
        US
        Europe
        South America
    Basketball
        NCAA (messages)
        NBA
            Teams
                Boston (messages)
                Chicago (messages)
                Sacramento (messages)
            Leagues
    Football
        NCAA
        NFL
        CFL
```
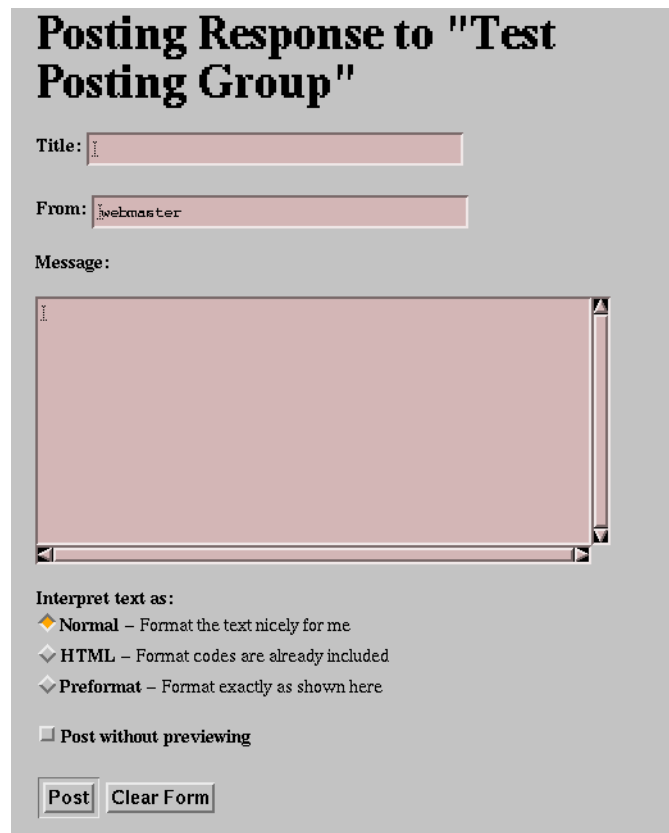
**IMPORTANT**   Creating a group will be your only opportunity to specify the group type. Once the group is created, this status cannot be changed. Note also that the top-level is always set up as the parent of sub-groups.

### 2.4 Posting Messages

Now that you have created a Discussion Group, try posting a message to that group.

**1.** From the root Discussion Area page (see Figure 4 on page 11), enter the "Test Posting Group" by clicking on it.

**2.** As the discussion area is brand new, no messages will be listed. To add a new message, click on the "Post" button. You will see the following form:



**FIGURE 5.** net.Thread's post form allows you to post messages as Normal, HTML, or Preformat. It also gives you the option to skip the Preview (see below).

**3.** In the "Title" field, enter

```
Using the TPG
```

4. In the "Message" field, enter

   Please feel free to use the TPG to test our net.Thread
   installation. If you have any questions, use the "Help" button
   or send email to "webmaster@yourdomain.com".

   Thanks!

5. Leave the "Normal" radio button selected. This will "auto-format" the text for you, so that net.Thread renders your message appropriately (see "Section 4.2.1, Posting a message" on page 21). Additionally, leave the "Post without previewing" box unchecked.

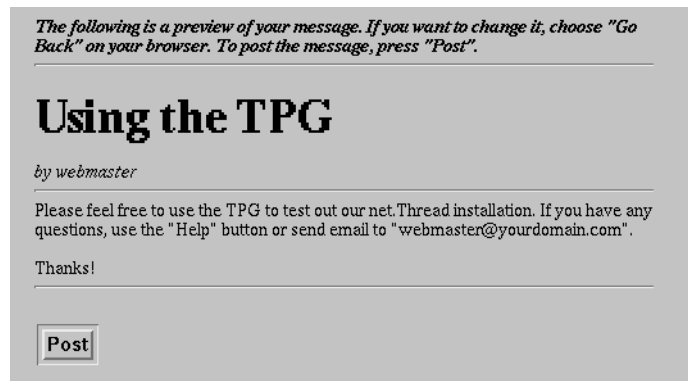6. Click the "Post" button. You will see the following preview of your message:



*The following is a preview of your message. If you want to change it, choose "Go Back" on your browser. To post the message, press "Post".*

# Using the TPG

*by webmaster*

Please feel free to use the TPG to test out our net.Thread installation. If you have any questions, use the "Help" button or send email to "webmaster@yourdomain.com".

Thanks!

Post

---

**FIGURE 6.**  net.Thread's Preview function allows you to preview your posts.

7. If you would like to change your message, use your browser's "Back" function. Otherwise, click the "Post" button. You will then see the final rendering of your post in net.Thread.

---

**8.** Click the "Test Posting Group" link at the top of the document. This will return you to the top of the "Test Posting Group" hierarchy. Notice that your post now appears in the Group's message hierarchy:



| FIGURE 7. | After a post has been sent to a discussion group, its title, author, and date posted will appear in the Group hierarchy. |

### 2.5 Deleting Old Messages

Occasionally, the net.Thread administrator may need to delete messages from the hierarchy. Remember that deleting a message also deletes all of its replies as well (see "Section 5.4, Editing and Deleting Messages" on page 27). Let's delete the post you just made.

**1.** View the post by clicking on the "Using the TPG" link.

**2.** When the message is displayed, click the "Delete" button. net.Thread will confirm that you want to delete the displayed message and all its replies.
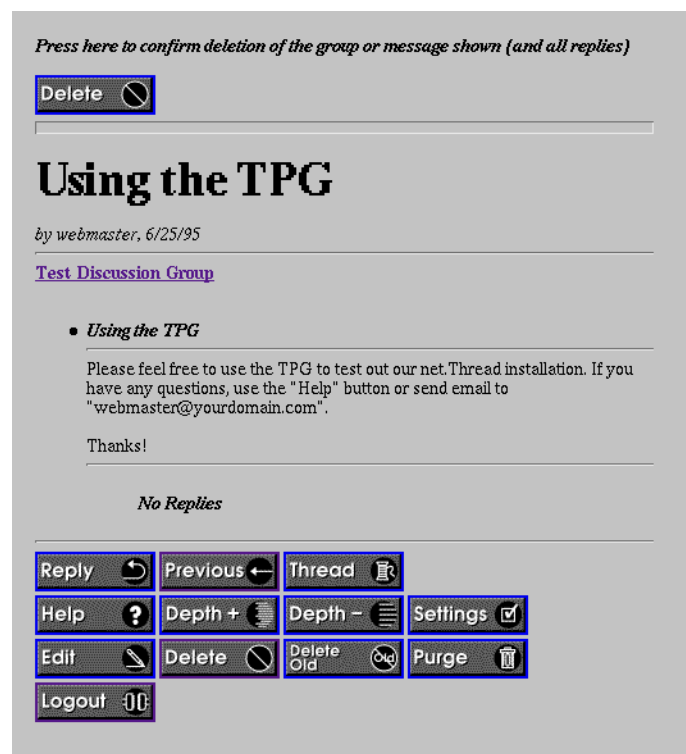


**FIGURE 8.**  To prevent accidental deletion of messages, net.Thread asks for confirmation on all message deletions.

**3.** To delete the message and remove it from the hierarchy, click the "Delete" button at the top of the confirmation page. You will then be returned to the top level of the "Test Posting Group".

*Congratulations! You have completed the basic tasks necessary to effectively administer net.Thread. We recommend that you read the remainder of the manual in order to familiarize yourself with all of net.Thread's functionality. If you have further questions, please contact net.Genesis at netthread-support@netgen.com or (617) 577-9800.*

## 3.0 BASIC DEFINITIONS

- HIERARCHY

- GROUP

- PARENT

- CHILD

- GROUP DISCUSSION FORUM

- POST

- REPLY

- MESSAGE

### 3.1 Basic Definitions

- **Hierarchy**

  net.Thread information is organized in a tree-structured hierarchy similar to an organization chart or outline structure. Each message has a "Parent" message above it in the hierarchy, and may have any number of "Child" messages which represent replies to the message (below, "NBA" is the parent of "Message 1"). For consistency, Discussion Forums and Groups are also part of this hierarchy and comprise the topmost levels of it. By starting at the top-level Group in the hierarchy, you can access any message maintained by net.Thread by successively choosing Child messages (or Groups) until you reach the desired message. For example:

```
net.Genesis Sports Information Service
    NBA
        (Message 1)
        (Message 2)
    NFL
        (Message 1)
            (Reply to Message 1)
            ...
        (Message 2)
    MLB
    NHL

World Wide Web Discussions
    (Message 1)
    (Message 2)

General Discussion
    HTML 3.0 Standard
```

- **Group**

  A Group is a set of messages or Groups. It is used for organizing the discussion topics within your net.Thread installation. The top-level of the hierarchy is a Group, as are all the items immediately below it in the hierarchy. In the example above, all the items not in parentheses are Groups. Groups that have actual messages as their immediate children are referred to as "Discussion Forum Groups" (see above). In the example above, NBA and NFL are Discussion Forum Groups, each of which contain messages.

- **Message**

  A Message is the basic unit of information in net.Thread. It contains a Title, Message Contents, Author, and a Date. A Message is located within the net.Thread message hierarchy, has a Parent message above it in the hierarchy, and may have Children (replies) below it in the hierarchy.

- **Parent**

  The message or Group above a given message in the hierarchy. Every message and Group, except the top-level, has a parent. In the example above, the Parent of `MLB` is `Sports Information Service.`

- **Child**

  A message or Group below a given message or group in the hierarchy. Any message or Group can have any number of Children. Messages and Discussion Forum Groups may only have messages as children, while non-Discussion Forum Groups may only have other Groups as Children. In the example above, MLB is a Child of Sports Information Service.

- **Discussion Forum Group**

  A Group which has messages as Children. These Groups are where real discussion activity takes place—other Groups are used to organize specific topics. In the example above, `NFL` is a Discussion Forum Group.

- **Post**

  Posting creates a new message at the top of a Discussion Forum Group, or for the Webmaster, create a new Group within a Group. There is no functional difference between Post and Reply, but at the top of a Discussion Forum a Post generally represents a new discussion thread initiated by the user. In the `NFL` Discussion Forum Group, `(Message 1)` is a Post.

- **Reply**

  Replying creates a new message in response to an existing message. This continues and adds to a discussion thread. There is no functional difference between Reply and Post, but Reply is generally used to represent the continuation of a discussion thread rather than the initiation of one. In the `NFL` Discussion Forum Group, `(Reply to Message 1)` is a Reply.

# 4.0 USING NET.THREAD

net.Genesis

- OVERVIEW
- BASIC USER FUNCTIONS

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### 4.1 Overview

net.Thread is intended to be self-explanatory and simple to use. You will provide users with the URL to directly access a discussion forum, a specific message, or the top-level of your site's hierarchy. When users access this URL, net.Thread will require a brief log in (without password). The log in procedure also allows users to specify the desired outline display depth and their last log in date.

To experiment as a user with a net.Thread installation, please refer to

```
http://www.netgen.com/cgi-bin/netgen-thread/
```
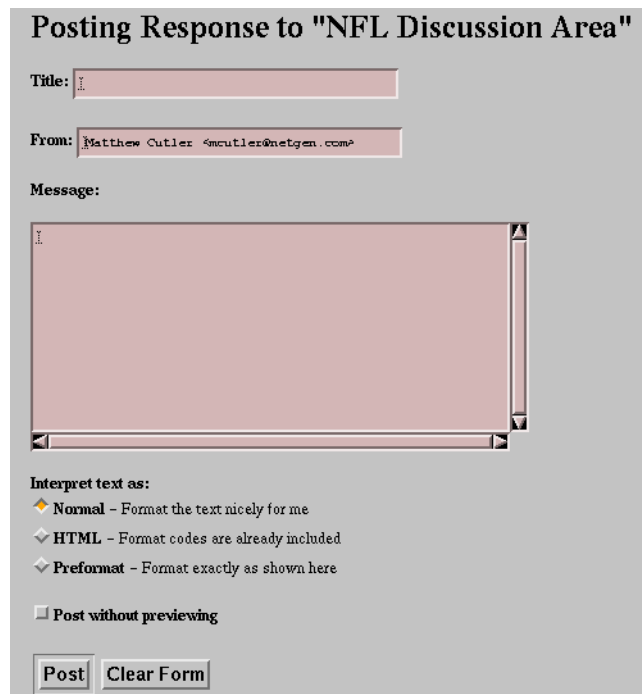
## 4.2 Basic User Functions

Once logged in, net.Thread will display the message or discussion forum located at the URL originally indicated, along with the appropriate hierarchy above and below the message. Each message title is displayed as a "hyperlink" which allows the user to jump directly to the indicated message. At the bottom of the web display is a series of buttons which allow the user to:

- Post a new message, or Reply to the current message
- Go to the Previous or Next message
- Go to the top-level of the site hierarchy
- Display help information
- Change login settings

### 4.2.1 Posting a Message

Users post new messages by pressing either the Post button (from the top level of the forum) or the Reply button (from a specific message).



**Posting Response to "NFL Discussion Area"**

Title:

From: Matthew Cutler <mcutler@netgen.com>

Message:

Interpret text as:
◆ **Normal** – Format the text nicely for me
◇ **HTML** – Format codes are already included
◇ **Preformat** – Format exactly as shown here

☐ **Post without previewing**

Post   Clear Form

**FIGURE 9.**          The net.Thread posting form.

A form is displayed which allows the user to enter a Title (which will appear on the message outline as well as when the message is displayed), who the message is From

(defaulting to the name used for login, but allowing changes), and the text of the message.

The user can specify whether the message as one of the following types"

- "normal text" where double-blank lines will be treated as HTML paragraphs, words surrounded by asterisks will be displayed <strong> (*strong* = **strong**), and words surrounded by underscores will be displayed emphasized (_emphasized_ = *emphasized*)
- "HTML", where net.Thread assumes that HTML codes are already included in the message
- "Preformat", where net.Thread displays the message in a fixed-pitch font exactly as entered by the user.

Unless the user indicates otherwise with the provided checkbox, the message will be previewed before it is actually posted. This is particularly useful in the case of HTML messages which might not display as expected.

### 4.2.2  Changing Settings

The user can change certain settings related to the display of messages. Specifically:

- Login name: This is used as the default value for "From" when a message is posted.
- Maximum display depth: This is the number of levels of message hierarchy to display below the currently viewed message.
- Last Login: Messages posted on or after the date specified here will be indicated as "New!"

Note also that the maximum display depth can also be directly increased or reduced one level by pressing the appropriate button (see "6.0 Button Reference" on page 31).

# 5.0 ADMINISTERING NET.THREAD

net.Genesis

- OVERVIEW
- CHANGING THE WEBMASTER PASSWORD
- SETTING UP GROUPS AND FORUMS
- EDITING AND DELETING MESSAGES
- UPDATING THE GROUP HIERARCHY
- PROVIDING USERS WITH ACCESS URLs

### 5.1 Overview

Your net.Thread site is administered using your Web browser. net.Thread provides for a password-protected "administrator" mode which is similar to the normal user mode but provides additional button selections. To access the administrator mode, you must first log in as the "webmaster" as follows:

1. Using your Web browser, go to the URL `http://yourdomain/cgi-bin/ net.Thread.pl`, or select the "Settings" button if you are already using net.Thread. Note that this URL is dependent on where net.Thread is installed on your system.

2. In the "Login Name" field, type "webmaster". This field is case-sensitive— make sure you type entirely in lower case.

3. Press the "Login" button. The form will be refreshed, this time displaying "Password", "New Password" and "Confirm" fields.

4. In the "Password" field, enter your administrator password. Remember that the password is case-sensitive.

5. Press "Login" again. You are now logged in for secure administrator access.

**IMPORTANT** Your administrator login is valid for 15 (fifteen) minutes. If this time period expires and you attempt to execute an operation, net.Thread will request that you log in again. If this occurs, you need only type the password and press Login, and the operation you selected previously will proceed. net.Thread functions in this manner to enhance the security protection afforded by the system. Even so, when you are done using the administrator mode you should press the Logout button to immediately cancel your access.

### 5.2 Changing the Webmaster Password

Administrative access to net.Thread is gained through logging in as "webmaster". Because the "webmaster" has administrative privileges (such as creating new discussion areas and deleting old messages), webmaster access is password protected. As with any administrative password, we recommend that the password be changed frequently and remain strictly confidential. Each time you log in as "webmaster," net.Thread allows you to change the password. To do so, use the following procedure:

1. Using your Web browser, go to the URL `http://yourdomain/cgi-bin/net.Thread/`

2. In the "`Login Name`" field, type "`webmaster`". This field is case-sensitive— make sure you type entirely in lower case.

3. Press the "`Login`" button. The form will be refreshed, this time displaying "`Password`", "`New Password`" and "`Confirm`" fields.

4. In the "`Password`" field, enter "`webmaster`". Remember that the Webmaster password is specified during the installation procedure.

5. In the "`New Password`" field, enter your new password. One good way to select a password is to use the first letter of each word of a memorable phrase.

6. In the "`Confirm`" field, enter your new password again, exactly as before. Remember that the password is case-sensitive.

7. Press "`Login`" again. Your password will be changed and you will now be logged in for secure administrator access.

### 5.3 Setting Up Groups and Forums

Once you have installed net.Thread, you will set up your discussion forums. You can create any number of forums, and you can organize them in a hierarchical, tree-structured fashion. This hierarchy is best determined in advance. For example:

```
Sports Discussions
 NBA
     Celtics
     76ers
     Bulls
 NFL
     Patriots
     Eagles
 NHL
     Bruins
 MLB
     Red Sox
     White Sox
```

To begin, log in as "webmaster" as described above. You will probably want to modify the information associated with the top level of the hierarchy (see "Section 2.2, Intial Setup" on page 8).

To create a new branch of the discussion-forum tree, press the "Post" button. The form which appears is the same as that used to edit group information, with one exception: at the very bottom of the form is a pair of radio buttons where you indicate whether the new group will be a "discussion forum" where users will post messages, or a "parent" group which has other groups branching from it. This will be your only opportunity to specify the type of group. Once the group is created, this status cannot be changed. In the example above, when creating the groups NBA, NFL, NHL, and MLB, you would select "This group will be the parent of sub-groups". For the other groups, such as Celtics, Bruins, and Red Sox, you would select "Users will post messages to this group." Note that the top-level is always set up as the parent of sub-groups.

Enter the group information (see "Section 7.3, Group Update Form" on page 39) and press the Update button. The group will be created and displayed. You can modify the group information at any time by pressing the "Edit" button.

## 5.4 Editing and Deleting Messages

While logged in as "`webmaster`," you can modify and delete any message or group in the hierarchy (except that you may not delete the top-level). You may wish to do this because a group or message thread is no longer in use, or to exercise editorial control over the message content.

**IMPORTANT**  net.Thread contains an optional rudimentary "expletive checker" which disallows certain words from messages, but motivated users will find ways to bypass this feature. This feature is configured during the installation process.

### 5.4.1 Deleting Messages

To edit a message, view that message by selecting it from the hierarchy. Press the "`Edit`" button and a form will be displayed with the current contents of the message. Modify the contents of the message as desired and press "`Update`." If you wish to erase the contents of the message, but want to retain its responses in the message outline, click the checkbox "`Check here to erase message`" prior to pressing "`Update`."

To delete a message, view the message and press the "`Delete`" button. net.Thread will redisplay the message and will ask you to confirm the deletion by pressing the Delete button a second time.

**IMPORTANT**  Due to the hierarchical nature of discussion forums, **deleting a message also deletes the entire hierarchy below it (all children associated with the deleted message)**. Be sure to use this feature carefully.

**WARNING**  *It is your responsibility to carefully consider the implications of deleting or modifying messages to exercise editorial control. Users may react negatively to having their messages modified, and recent court decisions indicate that forum sponsors may be held responsible for libelous or obscene postings if any editorial control whatsoever is exercised on the forum. net.Thread provides these functions only for the purpose of allowing you the option to use them.*

### 5.4.2 Purge Function

Deleted messages are not completely removed from the system until they are "Purged." Use Purge when you are confident that all the messages that have been deleted will not be needed in the future.

Purge operates only on the message hierarchy below the message currently viewed, so if you wish to purge an entire forum you must be viewing the top level of that forum. To purge the entire message database, go to the top level of the hierarchy (by pressing "Thread") and use Purge from there.

net.Thread also provides a "Delete Old" capability so that you can more easily manage the size of the message database. Like Purge and Delete, "Delete Old" operates on the entire hierarchy below the message you are currently viewing. View the desired message and press "Delete Old". net.Thread will ask you how many days old a message must be to be included in the deletion, and when you press "Proceed" it will display the titles of the messages it intends to delete. You must press Delete Old again to confirm the deletion of these messages.

**IMPORTANT**   A message will only be deleted if it and all messages below it in the hierarchy are older than the number of days specified.

### 5.5  Updating the Group Hierarchy

The hierarchy of your discussion forums can be modified to a large extent after it has been created. In certain cases, however, it will be necessary to delete and re-create groups to achieve the desired new hierarchy. When logged in as "`webmaster`," you can:

- Delete a group. View the group and press the `Delete` button. All groups and messages below the indicated group in the hierarchy will be deleted.
- Modify group information. View the group and press the `Edit` button.
- Create new groups. View the group which will be the parent of the new group, and press the `Post` button. Note that the parent must have been specified as the parent of groups rather than as a place where users post messages (if not, when you press the `Post` button you will simply be posting a message to the group).

It is not possible to create a group below a point where users post messages. If you must modify the hierarchy in this way, it will be necessary to delete the affected messages and groups and create them from scratch.

## 5.6 Providing Users with access URLs

To advertise your discussion forums, you must provide a URL where each forum can be accessed. To determine the appropriate URL, simply view the desired discussion forum or message. Provide the entire URL up to but not including the question mark ("?"). Typically, this URL will be something like:

```
http://www.netgen.com/cgi-bin/net.Thread/message/3/1
```

net.Thread will automatically request that the user log in and will then direct him or her to the indicated message location. Keep in mind that once you have advertised this URL you will want to avoid deleting it, or else users will experience an error condition when they try to access it.

## 6.0 BUTTON REFERENCE

- POST
- REPLY
- NEXT
- PREVIOUS
- THREAD
- HELP
- DEPTH +
- DEPTH -
- SETTINGS
- EDIT
- DELETE
- DELETE OLD
- PURGE
- LOGOUT

### 6.1 Overview

The following is a reference to each button available to users and administrators.

#### 6.1.1 Post

Post    Create a new message or group as a "child" of the currently viewed group.

**User Notes:** Only available when viewing the top level of a discussion forum.

**Webmaster:** When viewing a group that is the parent of other groups, allows the creation of a new group or forum. When viewing the top level of a discussion forum, functions normally.

#### 6.1.2 Reply

Reply    Create a new message as the next "child" of the currently viewed message.

**User Notes:** Only available when viewing a message.

**Webmaster:** Functions normally.

#### 6.1.3 Next

Next    Views the next message (goes down one message in the outline display) from the message currently viewed.

**User Notes:** Only available when there is a next message.

**Webmaster:** Functions normally.

#### 6.1.4 Previous

Previous    Views the previous message (goes up one message in the outline display) from the message currently viewed.

**User Notes:** Only available when there is a previous message.

**Webmaster:** Functions normally.

#### 6.1.5 Thread

Thread    Views the very top level of the site's thread hierarchy.

**User Notes:** Not available at top level of hierarchy.

**Webmaster:** Functions normally.

### 6.1.6 Help

Help ❓ Views a static help display.

**User Notes:** None.
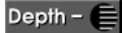
**Webmaster:** Functions normally.

### 6.1.7 Depth +

Depth + Increases the display depth (the number of levels of hierarchy shown in the outline below the current message) by one unit.

**User Notes:** Only available when viewing a message or a discussion forum.

**Webmaster:** Functions normally.

### 6.1.8 Depth -

Depth − Reduces the display depth (the number of levels of hierarchy shown in the outline below the current message) by one unit.

**User Notes:** Only available when viewing a message or a discussion forum.

**Webmaster:** Functions normally.

### 6.1.9 Settings

Settings ☑ Accesses the login screen so that the login name, display depth, and last login date can be modified. Returns to currently viewed message after settings are changed.

**User Notes:** None.

**Webmaster:** Should not be used to leave administrator mode (see "Logout").

### 6.1.10 Edit

Edit ✎ Modify a message or a group.

**User Notes:** Not available.

**Webmaster:** If viewing a message, accesses the message update form; if viewing a group, accesses the group update form.

### 6.1.11 Delete

Delete ⊘ Delete a message or a group.

**User Notes:** Not available.

**Webmaster:** Marks a message as deleted, such that the message (and any responses or hierarchy below it) is no longer displayed anywhere in the outline. A confirmation is required. Deleted messages are not completely lost until they are purged.

### 6.1.12 Delete Old

Delete Old ⊘ Delete messages older than a specified number of days.

**User Notes:** Not available.

**Webmaster:** Checks all messages at or below the one currently viewed to determine whether they are older than specified age. Displays a list of titles and requires confirmation. Messages are only deleted due to age if all messages below them in the hierarchy are also old.

### 6.1.13 Purge

Purge 🗑 Permanently remove deleted messages.

**User Notes:** Not available.

**Webmaster**: Operates on messages at or below the one currently viewed. Displays a list of titles and requires confirmation. Once messages are purged, they are irretrievably lost.

### 6.1.14 Logout

Logout 🔟 Cancels administrator access.

**User Notes:** Not available.

**Webmaster:** Cancels the administrator access and returns to the Login form at the top level of the site's hierarchy. For security reasons, it is important to log out rather than change the login name or exit the Web browser.

## 7.0 FORM REFERENCE

- LOGIN FORM
- MESSAGE UPDATE FORM
- GROUP UPDATE FORM

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**7.1  Login Form**



**FIGURE 10.**    The webmaster login screen. Note that the password field contains hidden text.

**Login Name:** For administration, must be "webmaster".

**Maximum Display Depth:** Number of outline levels to display under the currently viewed message. It may be useful to set this to a high number, perhaps 10 (ten) while operating as the administrator.
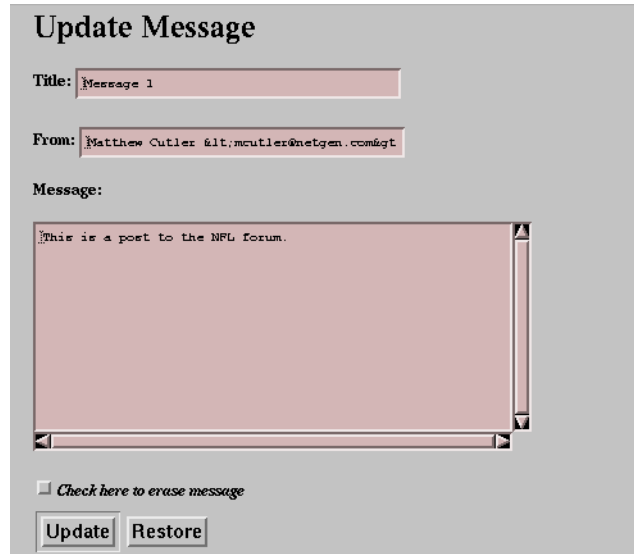
**Last Login:** Messages posted on or after the Last Login date will be marked as "New" when displayed.

**Password:** The administrator password. Initially "webmaster", should be changed at time of installation.

**New Password:** When changing the password, enter the new password here. The current password and confirmation must be correctly entered as well.

**Confirm:** When changing the password, enter the new password again here. It must match the New Password field exactly, including upper or lower case.

### 7.2 Message Update Form

**FIGURE 11.**

The message update form.

**Title:** Defaults to the existing message title and allows any changes. Unlike in the post message any changes are interpreted as HTML.

**From:** Defaults to existing author of message. Unlike in the post message form, any changes are interpreted as HTML.
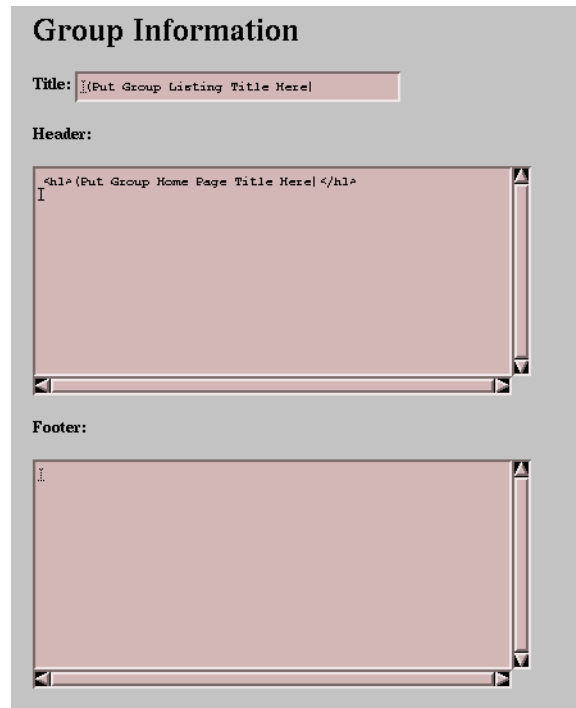
**Message:** Defaults to existing contents of message. This will include any HTML codes that were added by net.Thread in initially formatting the message. The contents will be interpreted directly as HTML.

**Check here to erase message:** A quick way to remove the contents of a message without removing it from the hierarchy and without affecting any of its responses (children). Changes the title to "Message erased", the author to "webmaster," and the message to "This message has been erased by the administrator."

**Update:** This button posts the form. Note that there is no preview for the Update form, because if desired you can simply back up and edit again.

**Restore:** Restores all fields to their original values from when the form was first displayed. This may or may not function as you expect if you have already pressed Update.

### 7.3 Group Update Form



| FIGURE 12. | The first half of the group update form. |
|---|---|

**Title:** Will be displayed in the group and message hierarchy. Also used as the document title for the returned HTML. Is not displayed when the group is viewed.

**Header:** Shown at the top of the display when the group itself is viewed. This can include text, HTML codes, references to images, links, etc. The group display can be thought of as a "home page" for the group, and the group header is where you would enter the contents of this home page.

**Footer:** Similar to header, except displayed immediately after (below) the message outline.

| | |
|---|---|
| **FIGURE 13.** | The second half of the group update form. |

**Message Header:** This contains text, HTML codes, references to images, links, etc. to be displayed at the top of every message in the group and on the Login form when logging in to any message in the group. For a "parent" group, the only time the message header is displayed is when logging in directly to that parent group.

**Users will post messages to this group:** Select this radio button if this group represents a discussion forum of messages posted by users, and will not have any other groups below it in the hierarchy. Only available when group is initially created.

**This group will be the parent of sub-groups:** Select this radio button if the group will have more specific groups beneath it in the hierarchy, and will not have any messages posted directly to it by users. Only available when group is initially created.

**Update:** Store your changes or entries.

**Restore:** Restores all fields to their original values when the form was first displayed. *This may or may not function as you expect if you have already pressed "Update".*