**Submitting Comments**

When submitting comments to the FCC, be aware that:

* Comments should include your name.
* You must include the docket number or rulemaking number of the proceeding for the corresponding comment. The docket number or rulemaking number of the proceeding can be found on the first page of the FCC document or Public Notice opening the proceeding.
* You can file a comment both electronically and in paper format.
  + Electronic comments must be filed by midnight Eastern Time on the date of the comment deadline.
  + Written comments must be filed by 7p.m. ET on the date of the comment deadline.
* Comments you submit to the FCC will be made public.

**Filing Electronically**

The FCC's [Electronic Comment Filing System](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs) allows you to submit comments via the internet for docketed or rulemaking proceedings.

ECFS Express is a simplified comment filing process for consumers that is based on topics, rather than a docket or rulemaking number. ECFS Express [lists the topics](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/browse-popular-proceedings) considered to be of most interest. By clicking on a topic, an individual can fill in personal information, write their comments and press send to file the comments.

Generally, you will file only one copy of an electronic comment, but if you are filing comments in a proceeding that lists multiple docket or rulemaking numbers on its front page, you must use the standard upload form and not ECFS Express. See [ECFS FAQs](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/help/ecfs) for more information.

For assistance using ECFS, send an email to [ECFS@fcc.gov](mailto:ECFS@fcc.gov), or call the ECFS Help Desk at (202) 418-0193, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. ET.

**Acronyms and Terms**

The following are some FCC-related terms and acronyms and some instructions that will help you in filing comments and understanding the FCC's decision-making processes.

* [**En banc  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

An en banc hearing is a presentation to the full Commission on specific topics, usually by representatives of interested outside groups. Topics for en banc hearings have included Children's Television, Digital Television and Broadcast Ownership.

* [**Ex parte  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

The FCC's ex parte rules ensure that all participants in an FCC proceeding have a fair opportunity to learn of the views presented by others in the proceeding. An ex parte presentation is any written or oral communication by an outside party to the Commission, or any Commission staff involved in decision making, directed to the merits or outcome of a proceeding and not served on (mailed or delivered to) all the parties to the proceeding (if written) or of which all the parties have not been given advance notice (if oral). The ex parte rules establish whether, and under what circumstances, ex parte presentations may be made to the FCC. Most rulemaking proceedings are "permit but disclose," meaning that ex parte presentations are allowed as long as copies (or in the case of oral presentations, written summaries) are filed in the record of the proceeding. Certain other proceedings, such as those designated for hearings and licensing proceedings, are "restricted," meaning that ex parte communications are prohibited unless specifically exempted. You can obtain a copy of the FCC's ex parte rules online at: [ex parte rules online](https://www.fcc.gov/exparte), or by calling the FCC's Office of the Secretary at (202) 418-0300, or (202) 418-2960 (TTY).

* [**Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM)  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

After reviewing the comments received in response to an NPRM, the FCC issues either a FNPRM seeking additional public comment on certain issues in the proceeding, or a Report and Order (R&O).

* [**Memorandum Opinion and Order (MO&O)  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

The FCC may adopt a MO&O in response to other requests from outside entities, such as petitions for waiver or petitions for forbearance, or when it takes other actions in a proceeding.

* [**Notice of Inquiry (NOI)  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

The FCC issues a NOI to gather facts and information on a particular subject or issue to determine if further action by the FCC is warranted. Typically, an NOI asks questions about a given topic and seeks comments from the public on that topic.

* [**Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

The FCC issues a NPRM to propose new rules or changes to existing rules and seek comments on the proposals. A summary of the NPRM is published in the Federal Register and announces the deadlines for filing comments and reply comments.

* [**Order on Reconsideration  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

The FCC adopts an Order on Reconsideration in response to a Petition for Reconsideration. It modifies a previous FCC action or states why the action will not be changed.

* [**Petition for Rulemaking (Petition)  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

A person outside of the FCC files a Petition to suggest new rules or changes to existing rules. Unless directed otherwise in the FCC's Public Notice seeking comment on the petition, the public has 30 days from the date of the Public Notice to submit comments on whether the FCC should grant or deny the petition. After reviewing the comments received in response to the petition, the FCC issues a Report and Order (R&O) disposing of the petition, a Notice of Inquiry (NOI), or a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). Copies of Petitions for Rulemaking are available for viewing on the FCC's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS), and for inspection in the FCC's Reference Information Center, 445 12th Street, SW, Room CY-A257, Washington, DC 20554.

* [**Public Notice (PN)  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

The FCC issues a PN to inform the public about an action or event. Sometimes a PN invites public comment. When a PN seeks public comment, it generally includes filing deadlines and ``````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````````

* [**Report and Order (R&O)  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

An R&O adopts new rules, amends existing rules or states that there will be no changes. Sometimes the FCC issues a combined R&O and FNPRM. The FCC publishes summaries of FNPRMs and R&Os in the Federal Register, and also states when a rule change will become effective.

* [**Petition for Reconsideration  [expand and contract](javascript:;)**](javascript:;)

A party can file a Petition for Reconsideration within 30 days of the date the summary of a R&O appears in the Federal Register. A Petition for Reconsideration formally requests the FCC to modify its ruling.

[What is a Proceeding?](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/)

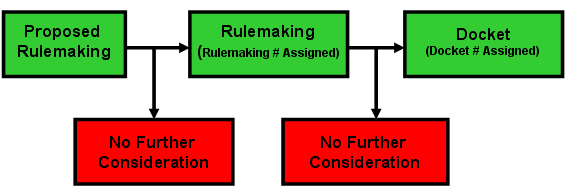
While you don't need to fully understand the FCC rulemaking process to submit a filing, it may help to get a general understanding of some of the terms we use for ECFS. For a discussion of the entire life cycle of a proceeding, please see CGB's fact sheet on ["How to Comment"Opens a New Window.](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/howtocomment.html).

A Proposed Rulemaking is initiated when someone (usually from outside the FCC) submits a Petition for Rulemaking recommending a change to a current rule. Consider the example of an individual applying for a call sign to start a radio station after doing some field research. The FCC may decide to gather more information, and releases a Proposed Rulemaking to the public for a specified comment period. This allows the FCC to gather more information from multiple sources to determine whether this Proposed Rulemaking merits more consideration. During the comment period, the public can submit comments through ECFS. [ *Rulemaking proceeding in ECFS is closed and consolidated to a docket]*

If the FCC determines that it does merit more consideration, a Rulemaking will be released on the same item with another round of commenting from the public. This would provide anyone else the opportunity to review this data, compare it to their own, and even consider joining the petition or beginning one of their own. Comment periods normally last 60 days, during which anyone can submit their comments through ECFS.

If, after the Rulemaking period, the FCC determines that it wants to pursue the Rulemaking further, the Rulemaking proceeding in ECFS is closed and consolidated to a docket. From then on, any searches for filings in the Docket will also return the filings from the Rulemaking(s) that were consolidated into the Docket. A docket number is another way that the FCC and the public can track the item, and as a docket the item can be more formally researched. Assigning a docket number to a proceeding doesn't mean that it will lead to a rule change; however, it usually does mean the proceeding will merit further (and more serious) consideration.

Anything can be assigned a docket number at any time; however, dockets can often follow the standard workflow as follows:



**Dockets:** Dockets have a two-digit year, a hyphen, and then a unique number (e.g. 96-45). You may sometimes see docket number written with a two-letter bureau code such as "CC Docket No. 96-45". However, ECFS only recognizes docket numbers (i.e. 96-45).

**Rulemaking**: Numbers start with "RM-" followed by a unique number (e.g. "RM-12345").

**Proposed Rulemaking**: Numbers start with "PRM", then a two-digit year, then a two-letter code for the relevant bureau (Ex. PRM09MB. The "09" means 2009, and "MB" means Media Bureau).

[How do I find the right proceeding?](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/)

If you are commenting on an FCC Action that has been in the news recently, there's a good chance it will appear in the [Most Popular ProceedingsOpens a New Window.](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/browse-popular-proceedings), sometimes known as the 'Hot Dockets'. Click on the 'New Filing' or 'Express Reply' links next to the appropriate proceeding to start a new comment.

If your proceeding is not on the Hot Dockets list, you can try the [Proceeding Search](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/search-proceedings). Enter as much information as you know in the search criteria, and the system will find all matches.

Click the Has Activity in the Last 30 Days radio button. If you don't have much information, clicking this radio button and searching will bring up the proceedings with the most recent activity on them. If it's a popular item, it should be high on this list.

Filter Your Results. In the results page, the left hand column contains a number of filters that you can use to narrow down the results.

When the FCC decides to pursue a Rulemaking, the Rulemaking proceeding in ECFS is closed and **consolidated** to a docket. From then on, any searches for filings in the Docket will also return the filings from the Rulemaking(s) that were consolidated into the Docket.

[What does the Filing Status mean?](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/)

When browsing through ECFS, or checking on your filing, you will encounter three possible statuses:

* **SUBMITTED**: This means that you have completed the submission of your filing to the FCC on this website. The submission timestamp reflects the time that your submission was saved at the FCC, in the Eastern timezone.
* **RECEIVED**: This is the date and time that the FCC officially received your filing. If you made your submission during FCC official office hours, then the Submission timestamp and the Receipt timestamp are the same. But if you made your submission outside of office hours, then your submission will not be officially received until the next business day. Note that this will happen automatically.
* **DISSEMINATED / POSTED**: Once your submission has been received by the FCC, it is Disseminated to the public (or "Posted"; the terms are used interchangeably on ths site). This means that it is now available for search and display on the ECFS application.

[Express Form](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/)

**Proceeding(s):**

**Name of Filer**: Enter your name if these are your personal comments. If you are filing on behalf of an organization, you may want to use the [Standard FilingOpens a New Window.](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filings) form.

**Email Address**: Your email address is not required. If you do provide it, we will not make your email address publicly available.

**Address**: You must fill out your address. If you have an international address, check the "International" box.

**Type or paste in your brief comments**: If your comments take more than a few minutes to compose, we recommend you type them up in another program before pasting your comments into the window. That way you will not lose your work if there is a problem uploading. If you want to attach your comments as a file, you should use the [Standard FilingOpens a New Window.](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filings) form.

**Email Confirmation**: Check this box if you would like an email confirmation of your submission. The email will be sent to the address provided above.

**Continue**: When you are ready to submit, click Continue. You will then be prompted to Review and Confirm your submission. Make sure to click the SUBMIT button at the bottom of this screen, because your submission is not completed until you do!

Need to add more information or attach documents? You should use the [Standard FilingOpens a New Window.](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/filings) form instead.

[Tips for Searching](https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/)

**Hot Dockets**: Are you here to respond to a proceeding that has been in the news? More than likely, that proceeding can be found in the list of Most Popular Proceedings, or "Hot Dockets", on the front page of the ECFS application. You can click on the proceeding's ID number to see all the filings that have been submitted into it, or the "New Filing" or "Express Reply" links to submit your own.

**Full-Text Search**: The text of every filing, including their attached documents, is indexed for search. On the main search bar, just type the text and press ENTER to perform the text search. Note that the best results from a Full-Text search appear at the top when you change the sort to **Relevance**. You can also use Quoted searches:

**Quoted Search**: Placing any search terms in between quotes (") will return only results that contain that phrase, either in the document text, or in the filing metadata, with a small amount of flexibility.

or Boolean searches:

**AND**: By default, if you provide two or more search terms, ECFS will only return filings that contain ALL of those terms. You can also explicitly request that by using the search qualifier "AND" in between the terms. For example, a search on "media AND radio" (without the quotes) will return any filing that contains both the words "media" and "radio", but not if the filing only contains one of those terms.

**OR**: The search qualifier "OR" returns filings that contain any of those terms. For example, a search on "media OR radio" (without the quotes) will return the combined results of any filing that contains the word "media" and any filing that contains the word "radio".

**NOT**: This qualifier in front of a search term will filter out any results that contain that term. For example, a search on "media NOT radio" will find all filings with the word "media", but filter out any results that also contain the word "radio".

\*NB: The search terms above MUST be entered in UPPER CASE to be considered as search qualifiers. For example, a search on "media AND radio" (no quotes) will return filings with both words "media" and "radio". But a search on "media and radio" will return filings with any of the words "media", "radio", OR "and"; in other words, the "and" becomes just another search term (and since there's no search qualifier, the search engine defaults to "OR" between all of the terms).

**Tokenized Field Search**: Some of the fields on the forms and search pages, such as the Proceeding field, are tokenized, accepting multiple objects within a single search. By typing your search term and then pressing the ENTER key on your keyboard, you can create a token for searching. Repeat the process to create additional tokens. In this way, you can request the search engine to search for multiple names in those fields.

**Pre-Filtered Search**: For certain fields, such as the Proceeding field on the Search page, you can create search tokens using a number of pre-defined filters. For example, start typing in the docket number or name of a proceeding. A dropdown will appear showing possible matches. Use your mouse to click on your proceeding, or use the keyboard arrow keys to highlight a proceeding, and then press the ENTER key to tokenize the filter. There is also a wildcard option (\*) available. You can continue to add search tokens to that field, or press Enter again to perform the search.

Public API

An open API, also known as a public API, is an [application programming interface](https://searchmicroservices.techtarget.com/definition/application-program-interface-API) that allows the owner of a network-accessible service to give universal access to consumers of that service, such as developers.

An API is a software intermediary that makes it possible for [application programs](https://searchsoftwarequality.techtarget.com/definition/application-program) to interact with each other and share data. It's often an implementation of [REST](https://searchmicroservices.techtarget.com/definition/REST-representational-state-transfer) that exposes a specific service or software functionality while protecting the rest of the application.

Open APIs are published on the internet and shared freely. A [startup](https://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/startup) software company, for example, might publish a series of APIs to encourage [third-party](https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/third-party) developers in vertical industries to be innovative and figure out new ways to use the startup's software product. In theory, it's a win-win business arrangement.

Using an open API, a third-party developer can make money by licensing a new program, a [mashup](https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/mash-up) with advanced functionalities or an innovative use of the service being accessed that provides users value in ways the originator of the service had never envisioned. Meanwhile, the open API's publisher gets to expand its user base without having to spend any money to develop niche industry software -- and it still gets to keep its [source code](https://searchmicroservices.techtarget.com/definition/source-code)proprietary.

**Drawbacks of open APIs**

An open API should be treated like any other [customer-facing](https://searchcrm.techtarget.com/definition/customer-facing) product because the reputation of the company can improve or suffer damage depending upon how the open API is received by the developers using it.

With that in mind, it's crucial to avoid problems with open APIs. Just like any application an organization might release to the public, it is important to ensure an open API:

* Does not contain software [bugs](https://searchsoftwarequality.techtarget.com/definition/bug);
* Does not perform poorly;
* Does not contain security flaws; and
* Does not leak any private data.

Furthermore, open APIs can be problematic for developers because the company publishing the API has all the power. If a startup ever decides to change the terms of use for its API, for example, or decides to charge a fee for licensing the API, a third-party developer has no choice but to accept it.