

# Troubleshooting C News

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## Important First Step

Read the documentation.

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### **READ THE DOCUMENTATION!!!**

Reading documentation is a bit tedious, and it seems sort of peripheral when there's a problem crying out to be solved, but news processing is relatively complex and effective troubleshooting requires that you understand what's going on. The investment of time is worthwhile. In particular...

If you are having trouble getting C News installed, or it seems to be malfunctioning, you should read "Known Porting Problems With C News" (currently *notebook/problems*) carefully. Don't assume that your problem is not the same as one mentioned there just because you're on machine ABC and the one mentioned is on machine XYZ; some problems arise from generic causes that can occur on many systems.

If the software seems to be installed properly and appears to know what it's doing, but isn't doing what you want, careful reading of the manual pages is in order. We recommend particular attention to *news(5)*, which documents the format of most of the control files in considerable detail.

## General Approach

In general, your first priority should be to establish precisely what is going wrong and where. Read the documentation on how data flows within C News and how it interfaces to the rest of the system, and track down exactly where trouble is striking. If the software is sort of working but isn't doing things right, inspection of the *log* and *errlog* files in NEWSCTL often reveals what it thinks it's doing.

## Frequently Reported Problems

*It all seems to work, but it's very slow and the history.pag file is enormous, many megabytes, much larger than the history file. By the way, this is on a 386.* See "Known Porting Problems With C News", specifically the section titled "386 Optimizer vs. dbz". (Note: at a site with a relatively small feed, it is normal for the *history.pag* file to be about half a megabyte for the first ten days, until *dbz* feels it has enough usage history to safely shrink the file.)

*It works fine but the articles I post don't get sent to my neighbors.* This is probably a mistake in your *sys* file. See *news(5)* and the sample *sys* file in the *conf* directory. Note in particular that an article is not sent to a site unless *both* its newsgroup(s) *and* its distribution match those specified in the *sys* line, and the *sys*-line distribution does *not* default to "all". The single commonest change needed to old *sys* files is to put "/all" on the ends of the newsgroup lists to specify transmission of all distributions.

*It works fine for incoming news, but whenever I try to post an article myself I get a complaint about "renouncing setuid".* There are two places in C News where the pathnames of things like the control-file directory are known. One is the "config" file, typically */usr/lib/news/bin/config*. The other is compiled into some of the programs. You *cannot* change one without also changing the other; this means that you basically cannot change either without rebuilding the software. The "renouncing setuid" message means that the two are inconsistent. Do not try to edit the config file without rebuilding the software; that doesn't work.

*I'm seeing articles filed in surprising places and/or propagated (not propagated) to sites that I thought shouldn't (should) get them.* The interaction of various policies in this area is *not* simple. It is almost certain that the software is doing what you told it to do. Close and careful reading of the *news*(5) and *relaynews*(8) manual pages will probably clear up the difference between what you told it to do and what you *thought* you told it to do.

*I had trouble compiling your stdio speedups, and/or they failed the compatibility test, but I used them anyway, and now I'm having bizarre problems.* If the speedups don't compile smoothly or failed the compatibility test, **DON'T USE THEM!** In this area, being "a little bit broken" is like being a little bit pregnant. As *build* told you, there are systems where the speedups do not work.

*I'm having trouble compiling libc/datetok.c with my ANSI C compiler.* We don't have ANSI C compilers handy for our own use, and there are a few troublesome areas where older compilers make difficulties and encourage errors. Until this particular bug gets fixed, a workaround is to move the definitions of *datetktbl* and *szdatetktbl* up to the beginning of the file, and delete the erroneous *extern* declarations.

*I get a news feed from my neighbor, and it arrives fine, but my system sends him not just the things I post locally, but also everything I get from him.* News-loop prevention is based on the **Path** header lines. The name your neighbor is known by in your *sys* file does not match the one he's inserting into **Path**, so your news system thinks he hasn't seen those articles yet. A common cause of this is that he's putting a full domain name in **Path** and you're using a short version in your *sys* file, or vice versa. The best fix is to agree on names. A workaround, often useful, is to alter the *sys* line to use the exclusion feature. Say he's putting "abc.def.ghi" in his Paths and your *sys* file knows him only as "abc". If there is some reason why you can't just agree on the name, start the *sys* line with "abc/abc.def.ghi:" rather than just "abc:", to tell the news system "send abc only things that have not passed through abc.def.ghi".

*Will C News work if my article tree is spread over more than one filesystem?* Yes, if your system supports symbolic links. Some tweaking is necessary: you will have to give *doexpire* the **-I** flag so it knows about the situation, and you will need to alter *spacefor* to check space on more than one filesystem. There is also a problem, currently, in that the *find* command used by *mkhistory* and *admissing* will not follow symbolic links; a fix for this is coming.

*How do I configure C News so that it will not automatically create any newsgroups just because some yo-yo on the net sends out a newgroup message?* This is not provided as a configuration option at present. Most control messages are handled by shell files in *NEWSBIN/ctl*, and those can be edited to implement any local policies desired.

*It ran fine for a while, but now relaynews is complaining that it's unable to write the history file, saying "(File too large)".* This means you're on a System V or related system that implements the stupid *ulimit* feature, limiting the size of files, and the *ulimit* is too low. Note that while some sensible suppliers have their *login* raise the limit to a very high value, most of them seem to have forgotten to do the same for *cron*... and much of C News is run from *cron*.

*I occasionally get a mail message saying a whole bunch of groups are invalid and I should delete them. What's going on?* This is the result of a *checkgroups* control message being received. There is no clear specification for the contents of such a message, and the C News *checkgroups* code is known to be buggy. This will be fixed eventually. For now, ignore the mail.

*The daily status reports from newsdaily mention my own site as one sending bad headers! What's going on?* This is a bug in the logging code: when it wants to generate a log message for some condition that has no site name associated, it uses your own rather than something like '<no\_name>'. This will be fixed eventually.