Subject: Bar Rules -- For New and Old Flies alike FAQ 1b
Posted by theoryman on Thu, 08 Apr 2021 23:09:41 GMT
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These were originally posted by Deann Allen, aka "Silverdrake," and updated in February and April 2021.

"[Baen's Bar] seems to be a big family that supports each other. At the same time, it's a family that smacks each other at the dinner table when the parents aren't watching."
 -- Eileen McKinney

Rule Number 1 -- Do Not Be A Butthead. All else follows from this.

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MODERATORS

Abiding by the rules at all times is each individual's responsibility. Each individual also has the right to call another on a violation. (Just be sure that it *is* a violation. See Rule Number 1.) This is actually the best way to handle it, and handling it this way has kept the Bar as a fairly convivial forum for most of its existence. Moderators should be called in only when the matter cannot be resolved by the individuals involved.

Toni Weisskopf, the publisher of Baen Books and the owner of SFF Forums, has the final say on whether a discussion, or even a user, remains on the Bar.
David Catchings (Motiak) is the forum administrator. Blair Davis (Theoryman) is an administrator in training.
Deann Allen and James Cochrane are Moderators Emeritus.
Doug Jones, Edith Maor, Blair Davis (Theoryman) and Robin Brooks (Chief Dragon Lady) are designated moderators-at-large.

When requesting moderator input or intervention, refer to the specific post or thread, not just a conference, and when appropriate, quote the conference owner's request or rule.
Once a moderator has been called, comment from all other parties shall cease.

Note: Anything regarding the operation of the Bar itself (manipulation of software, spoofing user IDs, etc.) goes straight to Motiak's attention.

All rules and commentary set forth by Jim Baen remain in effect, per ruling by Toni Weisskopf.

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FEELINGS

This conference was set up for discussions of personal matters -- divorce, medical conditions,* relationships (on-Bar and off), financial hardship, etc. Please keep them there. This will prevent them from going to Blazes when other Barflies object to someone's personal expose taking up space in another conference.

*See "From Jim Baen: New Rules" in "Conduct Unbecoming" below.

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BLAZES

Blazes is a special conference where people can vent, rant, rage, have personal arguments, and otherwise have exchanges that push the boundaries of Bar conduct. This is the place for threads that have descended from discussion to "visceral" levels in other forums, and/or for topics that can reasonably be expected to so descend straight out of the gate. Participation in this conference is entirely voluntary. If an argument raises tempers on the Bar, the participants can move their part of the discussion to Blazes and hash it out without disturbing the original conference.
(Open Blazes, Post new thread. Use a topic title related to the thread in the originating conference, or one suited to the actual topic under discussion.)
Topic titles, and ensuing discussions, may not violate Bar rules.

If it cannot be worked out between the individuals involved in the thread, then it is time to call in a moderator. Either post a message with "Attn: Moderator" in the subject title (preferably within the thread it concerns), or send an email to moderators@baensbar.net. The former requires that a moderator be reading the conference; the latter will bring it directly to the attention of all moderators.

If a moderator moves a discussion to Blazes, the participants may continue, or take the move as a strong hint to let the argument die quietly. Regardless, this is not a mud-slinging pit. Blazes has the same rules as the rest of the Bar. If it gets to mud-slinging, a moderator can hose down the conference (delete the thread) and everyone gets a bath. If it goes past that, the combatants might go down the drain.
(See "CONDUCT UNBECOMING (Or: How to get permanently booted off the Bar)" below.)

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ADVICE ON CONDUCT

From: Eric Flint (Mutter of Demons, 1632 conferences, Grantville Gazette, Baen Free Library):

[Baen's Bar] is (was) a public discussion area that Baen Books provides to the public free of charge.

***** No longer open to the public but only to paying customers of Baen Books. *****

Outside of occasionally monitoring the discussion and keeping it from flaring into the all-too-common flamewars typical of online discussion areas, Baen makes no attempt to "moderate."

Baen Books, it ought to be obvious, is not responsible for statements made by individuals. To think otherwise is as absurd as claiming that a restaurant owner is responsible if one of the patrons says something outrageous over a meal. Restaurants are also, after all, places where people are allowed -- even encouraged -- to exercise their freedom of speech in a private setting. As long as they do it in a manner which doesn't disturb people sitting at other tables.

From experience, Baen's Bar has decided that the best way to "bounce" people who get into too rambunctious an argument is to "exile" the whole dispute to a conference specifically set up for the purpose. That conference is "Blazes"....

Blazes allows Baen the discretion of not applying the "ultimate penalty" -- very rarely used -- of banning people from the Bar altogether. It's the equivalent of a restaurant owner telling patrons who are getting into too loud an argument, "Take it outside, you're irritating the rest of my customers. Come back when you've calmed down." Whether people choose to exercise that option is entirely at their discretion, depending on whether they feel it's worth it to them.

And people should just use some common sense, dammit. If you like to discuss politics, fine. There's a conference for it. Beyond that, there are authors' conferences where politics get frequently kicked around. And I dare say you can find pretty much the entire spectrum here. Smile

If you discover that the "tone" in one conference just really sets your teeth on edge ... GO SOMEWHERE ELSE. If you're a dyed-in-the-wool conservative and find my remarks send your blood pressure sailing, go over to John Ringo's conference. Smile And vice versa.

Common sense, no? I do think people need to occasionally ask themselves some questions. Do you find yourself ending up in Blazes every other Tuesday? Um. Mebbe you oughta change your Bar-hopping habits. Avoid this conference, spend more time in that one.

Whatever you do, keep one thing in mind. This forum is ultimately devoted to an interaction between SF fans -- whether those fans be publishers, editors, writers, or readers. That's the single point of attraction, and therefore the forum itself and all of its participants have the right to expect everyone to respect that.

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A Discussion on Trolling and Argument

[Ed. Note: While the below addresses Ringo's conference, what he says is generally applicable to the entire Bar.]

From: John Ringo (Ringo's Tavern)

The first thing to understand is what a "troll" is.

"Troll" is not the root in this case. The root is "trolling", the noun in this case deriving from the verb. "Trolling" comes from the phrase "trolling for newbies." This is a puerile sport popular on USENET in which a person finds a new poster, reads a couple of posts and then comments on one of the posts in a way to cause the newbie the maximum possible anger. The general term for this is "flames" and the intent is to start another USENET favorite, the "flamewar," which consists of various insults.

There are several types of trolls.

Type 1: Immediately joins conversations and does everything possible to start and maintain a

flamewar. Rarely has actual convictions. By and large just wants to make people angry. The equivalent of the kid in school that just had to moon people because he was desperately in need of attention and couldn't get it any other way.

Type 2: Starts out seeming reasonable but posts become more and more dogmatic and erratic until the person is in full blown flame mode. More a person of convictions but also likes to anger opponents rather than have truly rational discussions. Especially begins saying things to anger the "other" side when losing the argument.

Type 3: Starts out reasonable and generally stays reasonable but so dogmatic in position (which is generally far out) that they are horribly annoying. They generally tend to refuse to drop a subject, even after it is beaten to death and return to it in virtually every posting. They also tend to follow people around from discussion to discussion attacking them for whatever reason they have. Sometimes those reasons have some validity. The attack dog method generally does _not_.

Type 4: Very close to a Type 2 but in fact a Type 1. The person starts reasonable and often maintains reasonability but uses subtle passive aggressive attacks instead of direct attacks to anger their opponent. Often has large numbers of sympathetic supporters who "rally around" when someone points out that they are truly vile people.

(There's a very funny cartoon database of the various on-line personalities including the various forms of trolls: http://www.flamewarriorsguide.com/)

Now, examples of each of the above are to be found even on Baen's Bar. I'm now well known in certain experienced circles as a "genocidal, racist, xenophobic asshole" without reason. (The reason being, by the way, that after I stated my position on the probable events in the Middle East post 9/11, (which are, by golly, turning out pretty close to what I said they would) other writers stated that I was the above. I have thus far managed to restrain a reply.) There is a reason that Blazes exists and there is a reason that Feelings exists. When I or Arnold (who is far more experienced than I in the types) sees signs of any of the above, the discussion gets kicked out to the appropriate forum, that forum NOT being the Tavern.

It is also true that some people act like trolls but aren't trolls. I have seen examples of all four on the Bar where the person really wasn't trying to be a troll, they simply had no "online communications" skills whatsoever. Or they did have them and didn't choose to use them. Or forgot about them in the heat of a discussion. Or didn't realize that they were an emotional leech causing ruin to the good feelings and happiness of all around them.

The difference is subtle and sometimes too subtle to matter. If a person can't make the minimum effort necessary to avoid pissing large numbers of people off, then there's no reason that they have to stay in "The Tavern." If a person comes into a real Tavern drunk, acting stupid and apparently trying to pick fights with all and sundry, there's no reason at all not to toss them out on their ear. Nor is there reason to keep a person around who, "through no fault of their own" just keeps causing fights to break out around them. The term here is "agents provocateurs" and even if they don't know why it is happening, that's not an excuse.

Even if they are a regular.

A discussion on argument techniques and logic:

The first item is sort of "how to argue."

As Michael Palin said, "an argument is a logically constructed series of statements intended to prove a central premise."

Now, in any such series of statements, there are going to be minor items that can be discussed. Gravity is not a fully understood phenomenon. But the truth is, if you step off a 50 story building, you are going to go splat, whether that be from zero point interaction or philosophical attraction. You are going to go splat.

One of the most specious argument forms I have seen on the Bar and elsewhere ... is pointing out minor flaws in one or two of the statements and then stating that the entire premise is invalid.

One example that irks the hell out of me is when a person restates their position over and over and over again as "truth" when others have ripped it to shreds logically. The person generally finds one item or two that he can argue in the other person's presentation and takes that as "proof" that they are wrong. I've seen that sort of argument used on the Bar from time to time. It's bullsh*t pure and simple. If a person presents nine pieces of evidence and one of them is flawed or arguable, it does not "shred" their argument.

Personally, I consider this a form of trolling. If the only argument you can make against another person's logic is the functional equivalent of "Einstein missed a comma in his abstract therefore his theory is invalid" you've lost the argument. If you're arguing at that level, take it to Blazes.

Another form of specious argument is "I don't like it." Well, that's fine. But don't try to wrap the "I don't like it" in specious arguments. Quite often the other side of the argument doesn't like the logic or the reality either. But if you can't come up with a better argument, or a better answer, then you don't have an argument, you're just crying about reality.

The second is the doctrine of unpersuasibility. To have a valid discussion, both sides have to be willing to be persuaded. If one side or the other is unwilling to be persuaded, then they should say that up front. I am unpersuasible that there was any rational legal basis for the assault on the Branch Davidians. I personally think that everyone from Janet Reno to the lowliest ATF doorkicker should be lined up against a wall and shot. And, no, I'm not joking. The term is "pour encourager les autres", meaning that the next time some doorkicker gets ready to go into a building, they're going to stand up and ask "Is this going to get me lined up against a wall and shot? Because if it is, I don't want to kick the f*cking door. Fire my ass."

The point is, I have cop friends who are just as unpersuasible that no one made any mistakes at any time in any way except the Branch Davidians and therefore there isn't even a need for an investigation. "It was all their fault."

We can be friends, drink a beer, look at girls, etc. But on this subject, we Just Can't Talk.

If it's a discussion where both sides seem unpersuasible, both sides need to take it to Blazes or drop it. Yes, there are people out there who haven't had enough information to make a rational

decision. We've gotten quite a few of those in the Bar over the years. But once you've restated your position, if both sides are unpersuasible, DROP IT and go on.

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CONDUCT UNBECOMING (Or: How to get permanently booted off the Bar)

Formerly, when Jim Baen was around and the Bar was smaller, he would monitor the postings and admonish those who needed it. The Bar grew too big for any one person to do that anymore. That task has been delegated to the "posse of authors" in their own conferences (see Conference Description to see who owns the conference) and to the moderators-at-large in other conferences.

Moderators will not intervene in an owned conference without the owner's request. However, some conference owners have delegated authority to specific moderators.

Additionally, Bar members have the right to call others on conduct that violates Bar standards and etiquette. Just because it doesn't come from an "official" source doesn't mean it can be ignored. Official sources can be brought in, and will not look favorably on someone who has ignored previous warnings. It is therefore best for the Barflies involved (whether posting or theretofore merely reading) to work it out amongst themselves.

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IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH SOMEONE
1) Bring it to their attention and try to resolve it, either on the Bar or in private email.
2) Don't read their posts. Skip them on the Bar or use a filter to remove them in email or nntp. (See "killfile" and "plonk" in FAQs: Master Lexicon 1.)
3) Don't read conferences where they hang out or where the general tone is supportive of their positions.
4) Take it to Blazes or Feelings, as appropriate.
5) Agree to disagree and drop the subject.

If you see evidence that they are deliberately being obnoxious (trolling, flaming), call them on it. If they persist in these actions, bring it to the attention of the conference owner or moderators. To call in a moderator, use the button "Report message to a moderator" which appears at the bottom of each post. For those who access the Bar via email, sorry, you need to log in to the web interface to do this.

No Hitting!

Do Not Be A Butthead!

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From: Arnold Bailey (Original Bar Administrator)

Lately there has been an increase in name calling, to wit calling people trolls, or using "legalistic" arguments from the FAQ in an attempt to control someone else's actions. E-lawyers. I guess people decided "troll" was an acceptable insult because it was defined in the FAQ. So for the record, calling someone a troll is hitting. The proper response to someone you consider a troll is to

put them in Coventry. Don't respond to their posts, don't acknowledge their existence, no matter how irritating they may be to you. Deprived of fuel, they generally go away. If not, a moderator will usually notice and start dumping them into Blazes.

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From: Jim Baen (Founding Publisher)

I had thought for years that with one tiny rule, "No Hitting," plus lots of content that would attract lots of folk who liked to play with ideas, I could create the perfect adult playground.

New Rules:

1. Warning the general Barflies off of somebody's postings is at best incredibly rude and the very worst violation of the "No Hitting" rule.

2. Don't construe hitting like some word-weasel lawyer gaming the Constitution. If you have to reason through that it is hitting, you are deliberately trolling and will be treated accordingly.

2a. Rule of thumb question: Is somebody who is reading on the Bar going to feel personally attacked? As for people who are not on the Bar, you can hit at will.

3. No solicitation of money, period, except under the coordination of the Management, as with Jimmy http://www.readassist.org/.

4. We will please keep data regarding personal fluids to ourselves. This is more info than any board needs.

5. I must insist that threats and even hints of future threats in humorous guise be dispensed with.

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Moderator Policy

Rule Number 1 -- Do Not Be A Butthead.

A spate of E-lawyering and feeding fire to flamewars caused Jim to issue a hunting license to the moderators. Toni has endorsed this. If you feed the flames in dustups, or you E-lawyer over them, or you otherwise generally make an unpleasant, annoying nuisance of yourself, you can be warned and/or have your account deleted. If accumulation of these behaviors starts to damage the atmosphere of the Bar, people in these categories shall have their accounts deleted to whatever extent the moderator staff feels is necessary to get the Bar back to being a good place to be. Fair Warning.

Moderators will move offensive posts to Blazes or the trash. If a post or a thread disappears from a conference, and it's not in Blazes, consider it killed with extreme prejudice.

E-lawyering -- Squabbles should be settled civilly before they get serious enough for a moderator to be called in. When and if a moderator has been called in, it is a serious situation which is taking up the time of a real human being who has other things to do and is not in the least interested in

the thread and would rather not have had to read it. Accordingly, a moderator ruling is not an invitation for the person moderated or all their friends to pile on about how unfair or misguided they believe the ruling to be.
Both the plaintiff and the defendant had better understand that they are looking at judge, jury and executioner.
And ain't none of the three pleased with either side.

But can't you appeal? Sure you can. On your own behalf. To one other moderator. Once. And if the other moderator disagrees with you, you go on final warning for E-lawyering, and if you do it again, you go away. Because nobody who should be trusted with doing this job has time to treat a moderation ruling like a political, religious, or philosophical discussion. It isn't one. That's what happens before a moderator is called in.

So if you just have to appeal, better think of the other guy's side first and be darned sure your position isn't even slightly marginal -- because if a second moderator disagrees with you, final warning (or in a second instance, deletion) will be the consequence.

Now, if a thread went away and you don't know if it was you that made it go and you're worried, yeah, you can ask for free. And if you're the one moderated and you genuinely don't understand why, you can ask about it and get clarification about why. But if we think you're just couching arguing in terms of a request for clarification, you will be treated accordingly.

On hunting licenses: If you make yourself so annoying that other Barflies of good reputation killfile you; if you are the figurative loud drunk staggering around, breathing beer fumes in people's faces and puking on their shoes, lack of a technical infraction will not protect you. You will shape up or ship out. Being on enough killfiles means that you're automatically eligible to stop being a Barfly.

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ON FLAMES, PERSISTENCE, AND YOUR TERM ON THE BAR

Do Not:
- Be a butthead.
- Violate the "No Hitting" rule.
- Misquote or misattribute someone else's posts, words, or opinions.
- Post using a forbidden quoting format (see Posting Mechanics in Part Ia) that can cause accusations of misattribution or misquoting.
- Threaten anyone even in jest with a smiley after it.
- Troll (make statements crafted to elicit angry responses, or to weasel around the rules.)
- E-lawyer a moderator ruling.
- Post spam.
- Post hype for other publishers' books or products.
- Solicit money for any reason without the activity being approved by the management.
- "Stalk" someone by pursuing an argument across conferences and/or into threads where it did not previously exist.
- Continue any other objectionable behavior after being asked/told to stop.
- Threaten to sue someone.*
- Threaten to sue Baen books or Baen personnel.*
- Threaten to drag Baen's Bar into a lawsuit.*

- Make statements that are legally objectionable or actionable (libel, threats, etc.).*
- Get so far into an argument that you border on making such statements.
- Try to manipulate the Bar software in a manner that allows you to pass yourself off as another Barfly.*
- Harass, threaten, libel, or otherwise make legally actionable statements against a Bar member in private email, on other fora, or in other media.*

These actions can (*will, at the very least), get you permanently banned from the Bar.

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Newbie FAQ Major Contributors: Pam (Pogo) Poggiani, Judith Lasker, Michael Caffrey, Jody Dorsett, Deann Allen, Mike Helfstein, Eric Flint, John Ringo, Arnold Bailey, Jim Baen, Morgen Kirby, Martin Bonham, Doug Jones, Julie Cochrane, Greg Dougherty, Edith Maor, 'nother Mike.

Thanks to Judith Lasker and Mike Helfstein for doing the majority of organizing this FAQ.

Updated April 2021 by Theoryman