What „update“ means

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Problem

- Meaning of „update“ tag not (well) defined which leads to
  - confusion and a varying range of „right use“ in the community, and
  - over and over again to rather time-wasting discussion about its use.

- „update“ is differently used in different RFCs, e.g. for
  - actual text changes/updates for (bug) fixes (often in patch-style),
  - new versions of a protocol,
  - (non-mandatory or mandatory) (backwards-compatible) extensions,
  - providing an easy link to a new (maybe informational) RFC
    - so new implementations of the updated RFC are aware and may even be more likely to also implement the updating RFC,
  - others…?
What „update“ NOT means...

• „update“ does not mean that all updating RFCs need to be implemented when the updated RFC is implemented.
Background

• RFC Style Guide (RFC7322) does describe the „update“ tag
  • but does not define what „update“ means/when or how it should be used.

• Difference of „obsolete“ and „historic“ is further defined/clarified in „IESG Statement on Designating RFCs as Historic“
  • but no further reference for „update“ available.
draft-wilde-updating-rfcs

- describes the problem in order to clarify how to use it (covers two cases - bug fix and extension), and

- proposes the use of an "Reasons for updating RFCXXXX" section for all RFC that update another RFC.
What to do now?

• Document in an RFC valid uses of „update“ (with examples) and clarify that updates as no further implications beside providing a way to link two RFCs
  • Or maybe just provide some clarification in an IESG statement?

• Alternatively, change something:
  • Define new tag(s) to differentiate the different use cases
    • at least „mandatory-to-implement and potentially not-backwards-compatible bug fix“ vs. „nice-to-have and worth-at-least-an-additional-read link to new RFC“

  • Provide further guidance/define further requirements on use of „update“ e.g. on the use of patch-style changes, additional information in abstract (e.g. if mandatory-to-implement), or others…?