

# Internet, please forget threaded comments

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Nested comments are bad for you, for the article, for the discussion and for readability.

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Early forum software used nested replies and some people still prefer this format. These are probably the same people who think you should still be able to buy leaded gasoline. - [Why Vanilla Doesn't Have Nested Comments](#)<sup>[^1]</sup>

In reality I see the opposite: relatively new things, like Disqus, that's just recently been adopted widely, are by default, nested. And this is not good for you, for the commenters, for the site - no one, to be honest.

It's good for flames but one of the worst things that can happen to a discussion.

# Threaded comments = shattered discussions

## Try read this thread

- | #1, a response for the article
- | | #2, a response for #1
- | | | #3, a response for #2
- | | | | #5, a response for #3
- | | | #4, a response for #2
- | | #6, a response for #1
- | | | #8, a response for #6
- | | | #9, a response for #8
- | #7, a response for the article
- | | #10 a response for #7

When you've reached #6, would you remember what it was a reply for without a quote, a name, without anything? No one would.

## Now try this

1. #1, a response for the article
2. re#1: (a response for #1)
3. re#2: (a response for #2)
4. re#2: (a response for #2)
5. re#3: (a response for #3)

6. re#1: (a response for #1)
7. #7, a response for the article
8. re#6: (a response for #6)
9. re#8: (a response for #8)
10. re#7: (a response for #7)

# Why is it bad

## **It goes against continuity**

It is just impossible to read a thread with nested comments in order. It's even worse if you want to find new comments, because you need to read up which sub-thread it was a reply to.

## **It breaks readability**

Have you ever tried to figure out which comment is a reply to which in a 2+ level nested situation? The worst is when you want to follow more than one subthread.

## **From nest level 2, 99% of the comments have nothing to do with the original content**

Flames, ideology war, anything can happen in those little subthreads, any most probably none of them will have anything in common with the original topic.

## **Limited levels and/or limited screen size**

Most of the systems have limited nesting capabilities, but the thread might go on and on. After a while, they are forced to be on the same nest level and everything falls apart.

# Solutions

## re, @reply, (username) XYZ:

Refer back to the actual comment in the text you're writing. It's possible to be parsed so it can be highlighted, the referred user notified, and so on. Twitter is a fairly good example for this:

| @jtroyer @etherealmind blogs. They might be re-named to #indieweb though.  
- pmlnr (@petermolnar) October 6, 2014

## in-text quotes

Quote from the original comment text you're replying to, making context for the reply.



The screenshot shows a forum post from 'hardergeneration.org' dated 2010. April 4, 14:41. The post is titled 'Kismacsek (#49) írta:' and contains a quote from 'Monday (#46) írta:'. The quote reads: 'Azt mondanám rá: érdekes. [Igaz negatív értelemben.] Bár, az igazsághoz közelebb áll a semmilyen.' Below the quote is a plus sign and the text '+ kifejezéstelen.'. At the bottom of the post, there is a signature: 'ezek aztán a konstruktív kritikák, az autentikus hangoktól! még ilyen please, hadd okuljanak az alkotók.' The forum post also includes a profile picture of a person wearing a cap and a jacket, and a signature block with the text 'We are not the same as I hope to show.' and 'MODERÁTOR'.

## quoted\_comments

And... that's it. Keep it simple.

## Links

1. <http://blog.vanillaforums.com/philosophy/why-vanilla-no-nested-comments/>

Created by Peter Molnar <mail@petermolnar.net>, published at 2014-10-11 15:43 UTC, last modified at 2021-10-31 15:57 UTC , to canonical URL <https://petermolnar.net/journal/nested-comments-are-bad/> , licensed under CC-BY-4.0 .