- **Reassociation:** Enables an established association to be transferred from one AP to another, allowing a mobile station to move from one BSS to another.
- **Disassociation:** A notification from either a station or an AP that an existing association is terminated. A station should give this notification before leaving an ESS or shutting down. However, the MAC management facility protects itself against stations that disappear without notification.

Access and Privacy Services There are two characteristics of a wired LAN that are not inherent in a wireless LAN.

1. In order to transmit over a wired LAN, a station must be physically connected to the LAN. On the other hand, with a wireless LAN, any station within radio range of the other devices on the LAN can transmit. In a sense, there is a form of authentication with a wired LAN, in that it requires some positive and presumably observable action to connect a station to a wired LAN.
2. Similarly, in order to receive a transmission from a station that is part of a wired LAN, the receiving station must also be attached to the wired LAN. On the other hand, with a wireless LAN, any station within radio range can receive. Thus, a wired LAN provides a degree of privacy, limiting reception of data to stations connected to the LAN.

IEEE 802.11 defines three services that provide a wireless LAN with these two features:

- **Authentication:** Used to establish the identity of stations to each other. In a wired LAN, it is generally assumed that access to a physical connection conveys authority to connect to the LAN. This is not a valid assumption for a wireless LAN, in which connectivity is achieved simply by having an attached antenna that is properly tuned. The authentication service is used by stations to establish their identity with stations they wish to communicate with. IEEE 802.11 supports several authentication schemes and allows for expansion of the functionality of these schemes. The standard does not mandate any particular authentication scheme, which could range from relatively unsecure handshaking to public key encryption schemes. However, IEEE 802.11 requires mutually acceptable, successful authentication before a station can establish an association with an AP.
- **Deauthentication:** This service is invoked whenever an existing authentication is to be terminated.
- **Privacy:** Used to prevent the contents of messages from being read by other than the intended recipient. The standard provides for the optional use of encryption to assure privacy.

Section 14.6 discusses authentication and privacy features of 802.11.

14.3 IEEE 802.11 MEDIUM ACCESS CONTROL

The IEEE 802.11 MAC layer covers three functional areas: reliable data delivery, medium access control, and security. This section covers the first two topics.

Reliable Data Delivery

As with any wireless network, a wireless LAN using the IEEE 802.11 physical and MAC layers is subject to considerable unreliability. Noise, interference, and other propagation effects result in the loss of a significant number of frames. Even with error-correction codes, a number of MAC frames may not successfully be received. This situation can be dealt with by reliability mechanisms at a higher layer, such as TCP. However, timers used for retransmission at higher layers are typically on the order of seconds. It is therefore more efficient to deal with errors at the MAC level. For this purpose, IEEE 802.11 includes a frame exchange protocol. When a station receives a data frame from another station, it returns an acknowledgment (ACK) frame to the source station. This exchange is treated as an atomic unit, not to be interrupted by a transmission from any other station. If the source does not receive an ACK within a short period of time, either because its data frame was damaged or because the returning ACK was damaged, the source retransmits the frame.

Thus, the basic data transfer mechanism in IEEE 802.11 involves an exchange of two frames. To further enhance reliability, a four-frame exchange may be used. In this scheme, a source first issues a request to send (RTS) frame to the destination. The destination then responds with a clear to send (CTS). After receiving the CTS, the source transmits the data frame, and the destination responds with an ACK. The RTS alerts all stations that are within reception range of the source that an exchange is under way; these stations refrain from transmission in order to avoid a collision between two frames transmitted at the same time. Similarly, the CTS alerts all stations that are within reception range of the destination that an exchange is under way. The RTS/CTS portion of the exchange is a required function of the MAC but may be disabled.

stop one self or during scheduling

Medium Access Control

The 802.11 working group considered two types of proposals for a MAC algorithm: distributed access protocols, which, like Ethernet, distribute the decision to transmit over all the nodes using a carrier-sense mechanism; and centralized access protocols, which involve regulation of transmission by a centralized decision maker. A distributed access protocol makes sense for an ad hoc network of peer workstations (typically an IBSS) and may also be attractive in other wireless LAN configurations that consist primarily of bursty traffic. A centralized access protocol is natural for configurations in which a number of wireless stations are interconnected with each other and some sort of base station that attaches to a backbone wired LAN; it is especially useful if some of the data is time sensitive or high priority.

The end result for 802.11 is a MAC algorithm called DFWMAC (distributed foundation wireless MAC) that provides a distributed access control mechanism with an optional centralized control built on top of that. Figure 14.5 illustrates the architecture. The lower sublayer of the MAC layer is the distributed coordination function (DCF). DCF uses a contention algorithm to provide access to all traffic. Ordinary asynchronous traffic directly uses DCF. The point coordination function (PCF) is a centralized MAC algorithm used to provide contention-free service. PCF is built on top of DCF and exploits features of DCF to assure access for its users. Let us consider these two sublayers in turn.

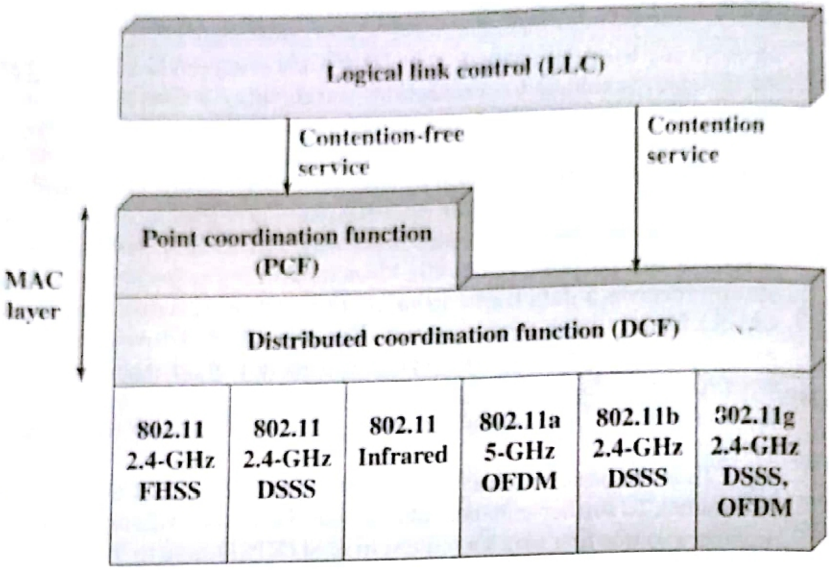


Figure 14.5 IEEE 802.11 Protocol Architecture

Distributed Coordination Function The DCF sublayer makes use of a simple CSMA (carrier sense multiple access) algorithm, which functions as follows. If a station has a MAC frame to transmit, it listens to the medium. If the medium is idle, the station may transmit; otherwise the station must wait until the current transmission is complete before transmitting. The DCF does not include a collision detection function (i.e., CSMA/CD) because collision detection is not practical on a wireless network. The dynamic range of the signals on the medium is very large, so that a transmitting station cannot effectively distinguish incoming weak signals from noise and the effects of its own transmission.

To ensure the smooth and fair functioning of this algorithm, DCF includes a set of delays that amounts to a priority scheme. Let us start by considering a single delay known as an interframe space (IFS). In fact, there are three different IFS values, but the algorithm is best explained by initially ignoring this detail. Using an IFS, the rules for CSMA access are as follows (Figure 14.6):

1. A station with a frame to transmit senses the medium. If the medium is idle, it waits to see if the medium remains idle for a time equal to IFS. If so, the station may transmit immediately.
2. If the medium is busy (either because the station initially finds the medium busy or because the medium becomes busy during the IFS idle time), the station defers transmission and continues to monitor the medium until the current transmission is over.
3. Once the current transmission is over, the station delays another IFS. If the medium remains idle for this period, then the station backs off a random amount of time and again senses the medium. If the medium is still idle, the station may

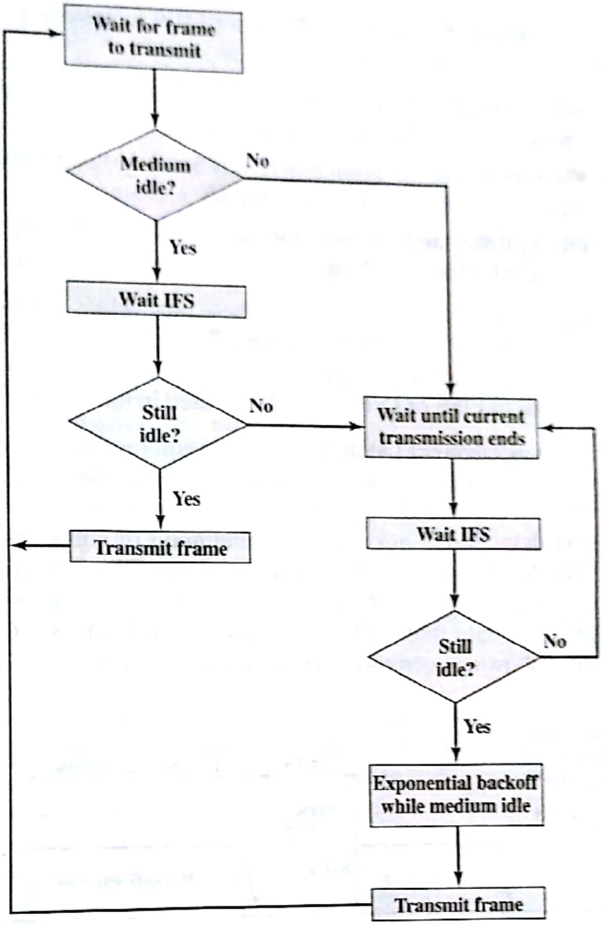

Wait for frame to transmit
Medium idle?
No
Yes
Wait IFS
Still idle?
No
Yes
Transmit frame
Wait until current transmission ends
Wait IFS
Still idle?
No
Yes
Exponential backoff while medium idle
Transmit frame

Figure 14.6 IEEE 802.11 Medium Access Control Logic

transmit. During the backoff time, if the medium becomes busy, the backoff timer is halted and resumes when the medium becomes idle.

4. If the transmission is unsuccessful, which is determined by the absence of an acknowledgement, then it is assumed that a collision has occurred.

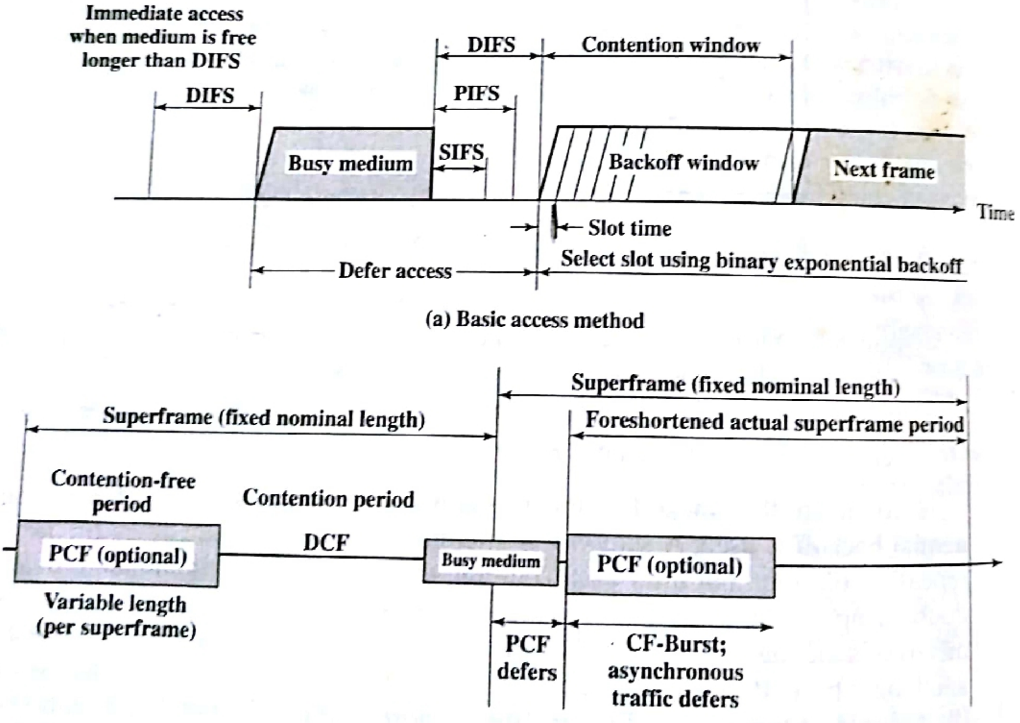
To ensure that backoff maintains stability, a technique known as **binary exponential backoff** is used. A station will attempt to transmit repeatedly in the face of repeated collisions, but after each collision, the mean value of the random delay is doubled up to some maximum value. The binary exponential backoff provides a means of handling a heavy load. Repeated failed attempts to transmit result in longer and longer backoff times, which helps to smooth out the load. Without such a backoff, the following situation could occur. Two or more stations attempt to transmit at the same time, causing a collision. These stations then immediately attempt to retransmit, causing a new collision.

The preceding scheme is refined for DCF to provide priority-based access by the simple expedient of using three values for IFS:

- **SIFS (short IFS):** The shortest IFS, used for all immediate response actions, as explained in the following discussion
- **PIFS (point coordination function IFS):** A midlength IFS, used by the centralized controller in the PCF scheme when issuing polls
- **DIFS (distributed coordination function IFS):** The longest IFS, used as a minimum delay for asynchronous frames contending for access

Figure 14.7a illustrates the use of these time values. Consider first the SIFS. Any station using SIFS to determine transmission opportunity has, in effect, the highest priority, because it will always gain access in preference to a station waiting an amount of time equal to PIFS or DIFS. The SIFS is used in the following circumstances:

- **Acknowledgment (ACK):** When a station receives a frame addressed only to itself (not multicast or broadcast) it responds with an ACK frame after waiting only for an SIFS gap. This has two desirable effects. First, because collision detection is not used, the likelihood of collisions is greater than with CSMA/CD, and the MAC-level ACK provides for efficient collision recovery. Second, the SIFS can be used to provide efficient delivery of an LLC protocol data unit (PDU) that requires multiple MAC frames. In this case, the following scenario occurs. A station with a multiframe LLC PDU to


Immediate access when medium is free longer than DIFS
DIFS
DIFS
Contention window
PIFS
SIFS
Busy medium
Backoff window
Next frame
Time
Slot time
Defer access
Select slot using binary exponential backoff

(a) Basic access method

Superframe (fixed nominal length)
Superframe (fixed nominal length)
Foreshortened actual superframe period
Contention-free period
Contention period
DCF
PCF (optional)
Busy medium
PCF (optional)
Variable length (per superframe)
PCF defers
CF-Burst; asynchronous traffic defers

(b) PCF superframe construction

Figure 14.7 IEEE 802.11 MAC Timing

transmit sends out the MAC frames one at a time. Each frame is acknowledged after SIFS by the recipient. When the source receives an ACK, it immediately (after SIFS) sends the next frame in the sequence. The result is that once a station has contended for the channel, it will maintain control of the channel until it has sent all of the fragments of an LLC PDU.

- **Clear to Send (CTS):** A station can ensure that its data frame will get through by first issuing a small Request to Send (RTS) frame. The station to which this frame is addressed should immediately respond with a CTS frame if it is ready to receive. All other stations receive the RTS and defer using the medium.
- **Poll response:** This is explained in the following discussion of PCF.

The next longest IFS interval is the PIFS. This is used by the centralized controller in issuing polls and takes precedence over normal contention traffic. However, those frames transmitted using SIFS have precedence over a PCF poll.

Finally, the DIFS interval is used for all ordinary asynchronous traffic.

Point Coordination Function PCF is an alternative access method implemented on top of the DCF. The operation consists of polling by the centralized polling master (point coordinator). The point coordinator makes use of PIFS when issuing polls. Because PIFS is smaller than DIFS, the point coordinator can seize the medium and lock out all asynchronous traffic while it issues polls and receives responses.

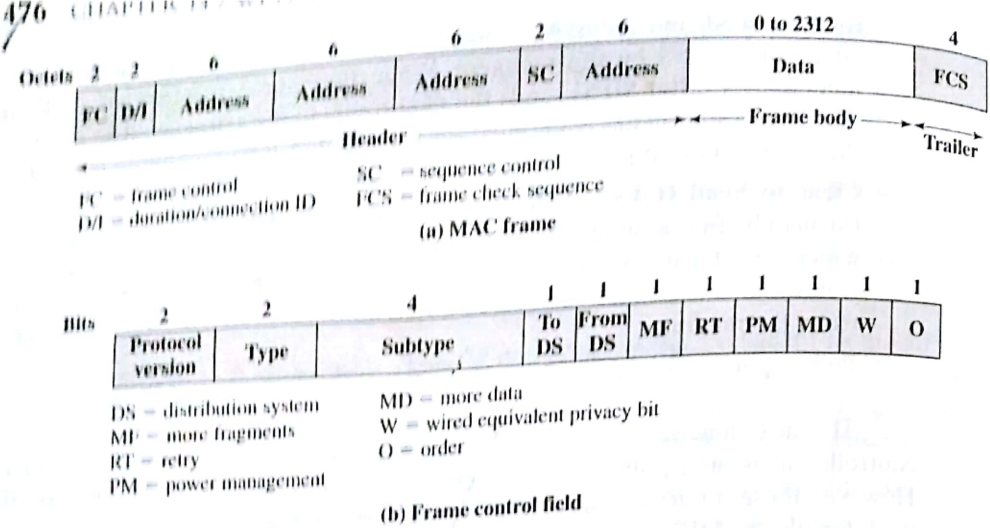
Take hold of suddenly

arrange

As an extreme, consider the following possible scenario. A wireless network is configured so that a number of stations with time-sensitive traffic are controlled by the point coordinator while remaining traffic contends for access using CSMA. The point coordinator could issue polls in a round-robin fashion to all stations configured for polling. When a poll is issued, the polled station may respond using SIFS. If the point coordinator receives a response, it issues another poll using PIFS. If no response is received during the expected turnaround time, the coordinator issues a poll.

If the discipline of the preceding paragraph were implemented, the point coordinator would lock out all asynchronous traffic by repeatedly issuing polls. To prevent this, an interval known as the superframe is defined. During the first part of this interval, the point coordinator issues polls in a round-robin fashion to all stations configured for polling. The point coordinator then idles for the remainder of the superframe, allowing a contention period for asynchronous access.

Figure 14.7b illustrates the use of the superframe. At the beginning of a superframe, the point coordinator may optionally seize control and issues polls for a give period of time. This interval varies because of the variable frame size issued by responding stations. The remainder of the superframe is available for contention-based access. At the end of the superframe interval, the point coordinator contends for access to the medium using PIFS. If the medium is idle, the point coordinator gains immediate access and a full superframe period follows. However, the medium may be busy at the end of a superframe. In this case, the point coordinator must wait until the medium is idle to gain access; this results in a foreshortened superframe period for the next cycle.



(a) MAC frame

(b) Frame control field

Figure 14.8 IEEE 802.11 MAC Frame Format

MAC Frame

Figure 14.8a shows the 802.11 frame format when no security features are used. This general format is used for all data and control frames, but not all fields are used in all contexts. The fields are as follows:

- **Frame Control:** Indicates the type of frame and provides control information, as explained presently.
- **Duration/Connection ID:** If used as a duration field, indicates the time (in microseconds) the channel will be allocated for successful transmission of a MAC frame. In some control frames, this field contains an association, or connection, identifier.
- **Addresses:** The number and meaning of the 48-bit address fields depend on context. The **transmitter address** and **receiver address** are the MAC addresses of stations joined to the BSS that are transmitting and receiving frames over the wireless LAN. The **service set ID** (SSID) identifies the wireless LAN over which a frame is transmitted. For an IBSS, the SSID is a random number generated at the time the network is formed. For a wireless LAN that is part of a larger configuration the SSID identifies the BSS over which the frame is transmitted; specifically, the SSID is the MAC-level address of the AP for this BSS (Figure 14.4). Finally the **source address** and **destination address** are the MAC addresses of stations, wireless or otherwise, that are the ultimate source and destination of this frame. The source address may be identical to the transmitter address and the destination address may be identical to the receiver address.
- **Sequence Control:** Contains a 4-bit fragment number subfield used for fragmentation and reassembly, and a 12-bit sequence number used to number frames sent between a given transmitter and receiver.
- **Frame Body:** Contains an MSDU or a fragment of an MSDU. The MSDU is a LLC protocol data unit or MAC control information.

- **Frame Check Sequence:** A 32-bit cyclic redundancy check.

The frame control field, shown in Figure 14.8b, consists of the following fields:

- **Protocol Version:** 802.11 version, currently version 0.
- **Type:** Identifies the frame as control, management, or data.
- **Subtype:** Further identifies the function of frame. Table 14.4 defines the valid combinations of type and subtype.
- **To DS:** The MAC coordination sets this bit to 1 in a frame destined to the distribution system.
- **From DS:** The MAC coordination sets this bit to 1 in a frame leaving the distribution system.
- **More Fragments:** Set to 1 if more fragments follow this one.
- **Retry:** Set to 1 if this is a retransmission of a previous frame.

Table 14.4 Valid Type and Subtype Combinations

Type Value	Type Description	Subtype Value	Subtype Description
00	Management	0000	Association request
00	Management	0001	Association response
00	Management	0010	Reassociation request
00	Management	0011	Reassociation response
00	Management	0100	Probe request
00	Management	0101	Probe response
00	Management	1000	Beacon
00	Management	1001	Announcement traffic indication message
00	Management	1010	Dissociation
00	Management	1011	Authentication
00	Management	1100	Deauthentication
01	Control	1010	Power save-poll
01	Control	1011	Request to send
01	Control	1100	Clear to send
01	Control	1101	Acknowledgment
01	Control	1110	Contention-Free (CF)-End
01	Control	1111	CF-End + CF-Ack
10	Data	0000	Data
10	Data	0001	Data + CF-Ack
10	Data	0010	Data + CF-Poll
10	Data	0011	Data + CF-Ack+CF-Poll
10	Data	0100	Null function (no data)
10	Data	0101	CF-Ack (no data)
10	Data	0110	CF-Poll (no data)
10	Data	0111	CF-Ack + CF-Poll (no data)

- **Power Management:** Set to 1 if the transmitting station is in a sleep mode.
- **More Data:** Indicates that a station has additional data to send. Each block of data may be sent as one frame or a group of fragments in multiple frames.
- **WEP:** Set to 1 if the optional wired equivalent protocol is implemented. WEP is used in the exchange of encryption keys for secure data exchange. This bit also is set if the newer WPA security mechanism is employed, as described in Section 14.6.
- **Order:** Set to 1 in any data frame sent using the Strictly Ordered service, which tells the receiving station that frames must be processed in order.

We now look at the various MAC frame types.

Control Frames Control frames assist in the reliable delivery of data frames. There are six control frame subtypes:

- **Power Save-Poll (PS-Poll):** This frame is sent by any station to the station that includes the AP (access point). Its purpose is to request that the AP transmit a frame that has been buffered for this station while the station was in power-saving mode.
- **Request to Send (RTS):** This is the first frame in the four-way frame exchange discussed under the subsection on reliable data delivery at the beginning of Section 14.3. The station sending this message is alerting a potential destination, and all other stations within reception range, that it intends to send a data frame to that destination.
- **Clear to Send (CTS):** This is the second frame in the four-way exchange. It is sent by the destination station to the source station to grant permission to send a data frame.
- **Acknowledgment:** Provides an acknowledgment from the destination to the source that the immediately preceding data, management, or PS-Poll frame was received correctly.
- **Contention-Free (CF)-End:** Announces the end of a contention-free period that is part of the point coordination function.
- **CF-End + CF-Ack:** Acknowledges the CF-end. This frame ends the contention-free period and releases stations from the restrictions associated with that period.

Data Frames There are eight data frame subtypes, organized into two groups. The first four subtypes define frames that carry upper-level data from the source station to the destination station. The four data-carrying frames are as follows:

- **Data:** This is the simplest data frame. It may be used in both a contention period and a contention-free period.
- **Data + CF-Ack:** May only be sent during a contention-free period. In addition to carrying data, this frame acknowledges previously received data.
- **Data + CF-Poll:** Used by a point coordinator to deliver data to a mobile station and also to request that the mobile station send a data frame that it may have buffered.

- **Data + CF-Ack + CF-Poll:** Combines the functions of the Data + CF-Ack and Data + CF-Poll into a single frame.

The remaining four subtypes of data frames do not in fact carry any user data. The Null Function data frame carries no data, polls, or acknowledgments. It is used only to carry the power management bit in the frame control field to the AP, to indicate that the station is changing to a low-power operating state. The remaining three frames (CF-Ack, CF-Poll, CF-Ack + CF-Poll) have the same functionality as the corresponding data frame subtypes in the preceding list (Data + CF-Ack, Data + CF-Poll, Data + CF-Ack + CF-Poll) but without the data.

Management Frames Management frames are used to manage communications between stations and APs. The following subtypes are included:

- **Association Request:** Sent by a station to an AP to request an association with this BSS. This frame includes capability information, such as whether encryption is to be used and whether this station is pollable.
- **Association Response:** Returned by the AP to the station to indicate whether it is accepting this association request.
- **Reassociation Request:** Sent by a station when it moves from one BSS to another and needs to make an association with the AP in the new BSS. The station uses reassociation rather than simply association so that the new AP knows to negotiate with the old AP for the forwarding of data frames.
- **Reassociation Response:** Returned by the AP to the station to indicate whether it is accepting this reassociation request.
- **Probe Request:** Used by a station to obtain information from another station or AP. This frame is used to locate an IEEE 802.11 BSS.
- **Probe Response:** Response to a probe request.
- **Beacon:** Transmitted periodically to allow mobile stations to locate and identify a BSS.
- **Announcement Traffic Indication Message:** Sent by a mobile station to alert other mobile stations that may have been in low power mode that this station has frames buffered and waiting to be delivered to the station addressed in this frame.
- **Dissociation:** Used by a station to terminate an association.
- **Authentication:** Multiple authentication frames are used in an exchange to authenticate one station to another.
- **Deauthentication:** Sent by a station to another station or AP to indicate that it is terminating secure communications.

14.4 IEEE 802.11 PHYSICAL LAYER

The physical layer for IEEE 802.11 has been issued in four stages. The first part, simply called IEEE 802.11, includes the MAC layer and three physical layer specifications, two in the 2.4-GHz band (ISM) and one in the infrared, all operating at 1 and 2 Mbps. IEEE 802.11a operates in the 5-GHz band at data rates up to 54 Mbps.