

## IEEE Standards Interpretation for IEEE Std 1003.1™-1990 IEEE Standard for Information Technology--Portable Operating System Interfaces (POSIX®)

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### Interpretation Request #59

**Topic:** `unlink()` vs `remove()` **Relevant Sections:** 5.5

Does POSIX.1-1990 require that the ANSI C `remove()` function be effective when the filename argument is not a regular file? The question arises because several filename resolution assertions in 2003.1-1992 can be tested only if `remove()` is effective when filename is a directory.

My reading is that neither POSIX.1-1990 nor ANSI C makes any specific requirements. The rationale for `remove()` in ANSI C notes that `remove` is intended to be a portable replacement for the UNIX (now POSIX.1, too) `unlink()` function. A conforming implementation might implement `remove()` as a simple call to `unlink()`. However, I think that an implementation of `remove()` that fails when the argument is not the name of a regular file is also conforming.

### Interpretation Response

The behavior for file types other than regular files is unspecified.

### Rationale for Interpretation

There is no requirement in POSIX.1-1990 for `remove()` to succeed on file types other than regular file.

### Editorial note

The proposed changes to IEEE Std 2003.1-1992 are as follows: Changes to `remove()` assertions 9 and 10, (8.1.33.4, lines 2047 and 2050) Replace "(A)" with "(C) If `remove()` supports directory file types:"