

Hacking Ethics & Legality

Hacker Definition:



A security hacker is someone who seeks to break through defenses and exploit weaknesses in a computer system or network.

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Are all hackers
bad?

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Introducing

***“White Hat”
and
“Black Hat”***

White Hat/Black Hat



Origins in early Western films

Hero = white hat

Villain = black hat

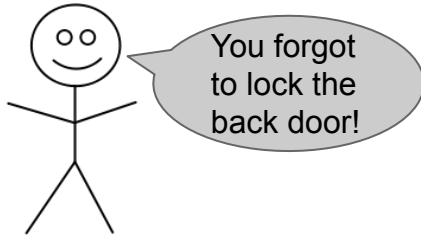
Black Hat Hackers

- Break into secure networks to destroy, modify, or steal data
- Break network functionality
- Hack for personal gain or to cause harm
- **Criminal hackers who face serious legal consequences**



White Hat Hackers

- Have permission to hack a system
- Hired for penetration testing:
 - Use same methods as black hats
 - Find vulnerabilities before malicious attackers
- Contribute to robust security systems



Grey Hat Hackers

- Hack without permission--oftentimes illegally
- Once vulnerabilities are found, will contact the organization and request payment



Bug Bounty Programs

- Companies pay individuals who report vulnerabilities before malicious hackers can exploit them
- Program rules may exclude certain products or hacking methods



Legal Hacking

Examples of legal hacking:

- Working as a penetration tester
- Following the rules of a company's bug bounty program
- Hacking a site created explicitly as a teaching tool (hackthissite.org)



Illegal Hacking

Examples of illegal hacking:

- Finding and exploiting vulnerabilities for personal gain
- “Hacktivism” (hacking to promote a political agenda or social change)
- Trying to find system vulnerabilities without permission (grey hat hacking)
- Breaking the rules of a bug bounty program



Consequences of Illegal Hacking

In the United States, a criminal hacker faces:

- Felony charges
- Prison time (up to 20 years)
- Fines (up to \$15,000)



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In addition to punishment for any other crimes committed!

Conclusion:

- Don't break the law.
 - Only hack with explicit permission
 - If you aren't sure about the legality of your actions, stop and seek clarification
- **There are very real consequences for illegal hacking, *even if you don't mean any harm***