11.02 Assignment Instructions
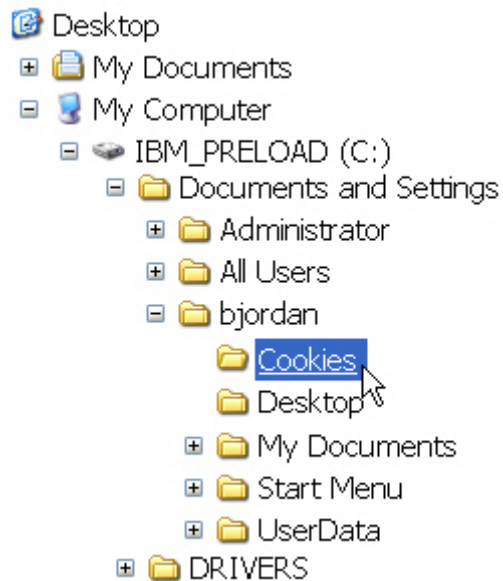
Instructions: Conduct an audit of your computer system to determine if there are any weaknesses in your security.

Part 1: Have you ever wondered what cookies are residing on your machine and what they actually look like?

If you are using the Windows XP operating system, look in the Documents and Settings folder and you should find a subfolder called Cookies. If you are not using Windows, use the Help or Search features of the operating system and locate the information you need.

Open the Cookies folder and you will probably see a long list (perhaps really long) of all the cookies that web sites have placed on your computer. They are simply small segments of text, so you can open them with any word processor. Interpretation of this cryptic code is not obvious, but you can begin to get an idea of what a cookie contains by reading the article about how cookies work.

If you toss your cookies, you can do an interesting experiment. Choose Internet Options from the Tools menu of Internet Explorer, and then select the General tab. If you click on the Delete Cookies button, all cookies will be deleted from your hard drive. After you delete your cookies, return to the Cookies folder to verify that they have been tossed out. Then, log onto one web site and re-inspect the Cookies folder. You will probably have at least one new cookie. Visit some other web sites and watch how rapidly cookies accumulate on your system.

Your web browser or operating system probably allows you to customize your privacy settings to control whether cookies will be automatically downloaded without your knowledge. Experiment with changing the default settings; you may decide manually accepting each and every cookie is an annoyance you just don't have time to deal with. However, you may want to toss your cookies every few months just to feel like you have a little bit of control over your privacy.

Part 2: Have you evaluated your computer system's vulnerability to outside attack lately?

1. Locate the Automatic Update feature for your specific operating system. (If you use Windows XP it can be found on the Control Panel.) Be sure that updates are automatically detected and installed.
2. If you have virus protection software, make sure that definitions are automatically updated at least once a week.
3. Conduct an independent security scan and virus scan using Symnatec's online detection tool (http://security.symantec.com/sscv6/default.asp?productid=symhome&langid=ie&venid=sym).
4. Your computer may also be accumulating unwanted spyware or adware. If you are running Vista operating system, Windows Defender should already be installed and operational. For earlier versions, you can determine whether you have minimal protection against adware and spyware by right clicking on the Start button, selecting All Programs, and scanning the list for Windows Defender. If this program is not installed you should download either Windows Defender or Ad-Aware. Scan your computer with one of these programs and remove unwanted spyware and adware.