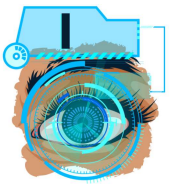
Jr Penetration Tester > Network Security > Nmap Live Host Discovery



Nmap Live Host Discovery

Learn how to use Nmap to discover live hosts using ARP scan, ICMP scan, and TCP/UDP ping scan.

Medium 120 min

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3754 | Options

Task 1 Introduction

Access Machines 4 1

Task 3 Enumerating Targets

Task 4 Discovering Live Hosts

Room completed (100%)

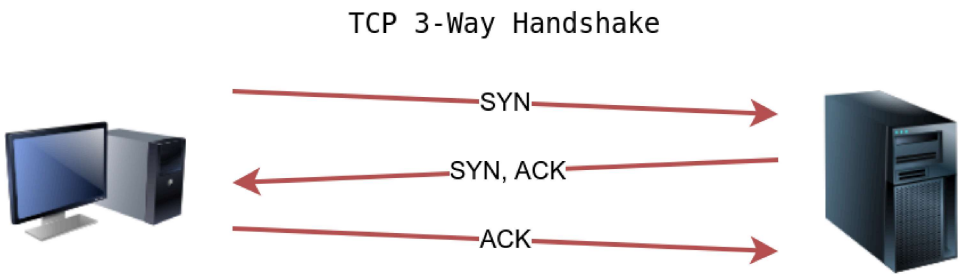
Task 5 Nmap Host Discovery Using ARP

Task 6 Nmap Host Discovery Using ICMP

Task 7 Nmap Host Discovery Using TCP and UDP

TCP SYN Ping

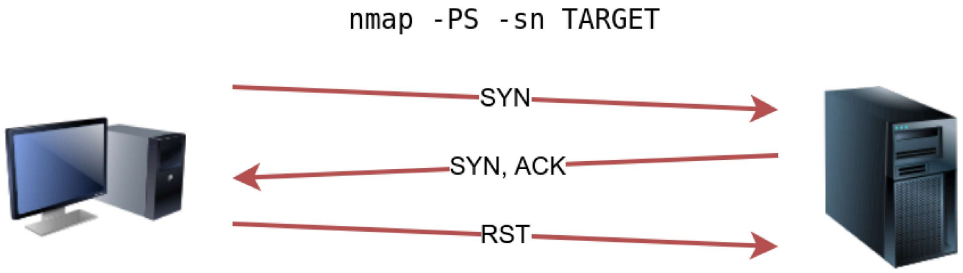
We can send a packet with the SYN (Synchronize) flag set to a TCP port, 80 by default, and wait for a response. An open port should reply with a SYN/ACK (Acknowledge); a closed port would result in an RST (Reset). In this case, we only check whether we will get any response to infer whether the host is up. The specific state of the port is not significant here. The figure below is a reminder of how a TCP 3-way handshake usually works.



Case: TCP port is open.

If you want Nmap to use TCP SYN ping, you can do so via the option `-PS` followed by the port number, range, list, or a combination of them. For example, `-PS21` will target port 21, while `-PS21-25` will target ports 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25. Finally `-PS80,443,8080` will target the three ports 80, 443, and 8080.

Privileged users (root and sudoers) can send TCP SYN packets and don't need to complete the TCP 3-way handshake even if the port is open, as shown in the figure below. Unprivileged users have no choice but to complete the 3-way handshake if the port is open.



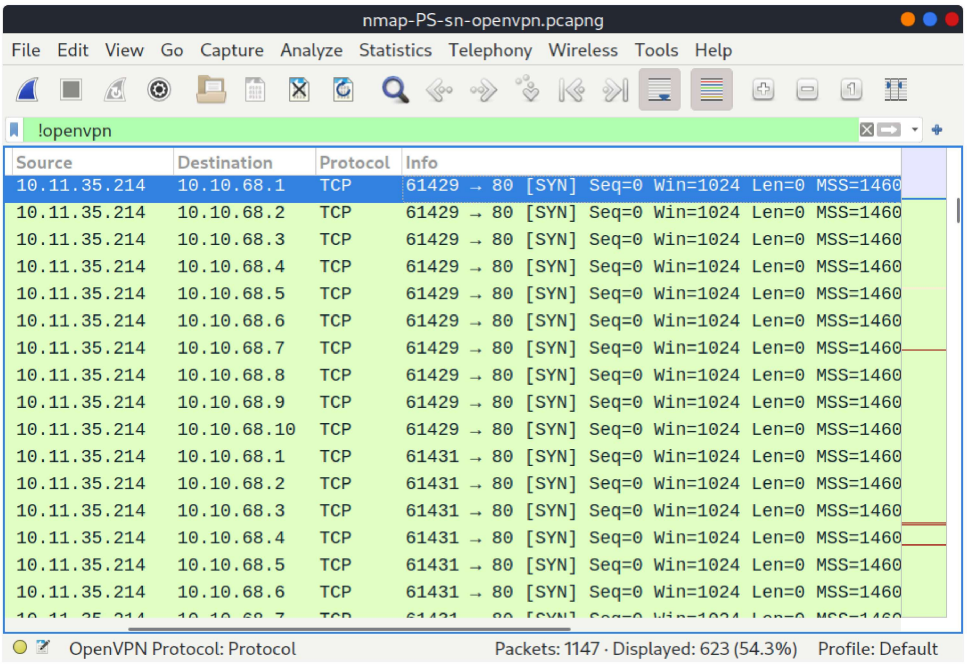
Case: TCP port is open.

We will run `nmap -PS -sn MACHINE_IP/24` to scan the target VM subnet. As we can see in the output below, we were able to discover five hosts.

Pentester Terminal

```
pentester@TryHackMe$ sudo nmap -PS -sn 10.10.68.220/24
Starting Nmap 7.92 ( https://nmap.org ) at 2021-09-02 13:45 EEST
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.52
Host is up (0.10s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.121
Host is up (0.16s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.125
Host is up (0.089s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.134
Host is up (0.13s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.220
Host is up (0.11s latency).
Nmap done: 256 IP addresses (5 hosts up) scanned in 17.38 seconds
```

Let's take a closer look at what happened behind the scenes by looking at the network traffic on Wireshark in the figure below. Technically speaking, since we didn't specify any TCP ports to use in the TCP ping scan, Nmap used common ports; in this case, it is TCP port 80. Any service listening on port 80 is expected to reply, indirectly indicating that the host is online.

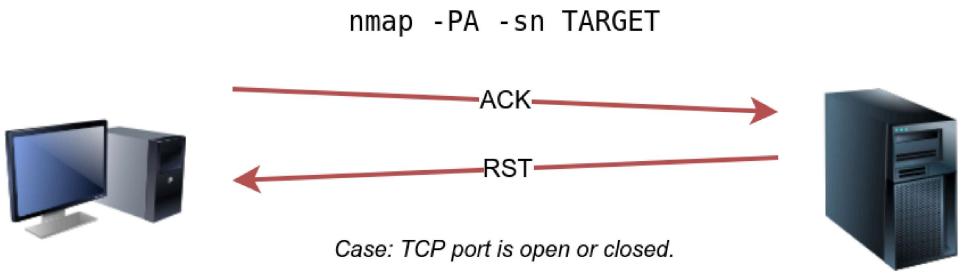


TCP ACK Ping

As you have guessed, this sends a packet with an ACK flag set. You must be running Nmap as a privileged user to be able to accomplish this. If you try it as an unprivileged user, Nmap will attempt a 3-way handshake.

By default, port 80 is used. The syntax is similar to TCP SYN ping. `-PA` should be followed by a port number, range, list, or a combination of them. For example, consider `-PA21` , `-PA21-25` and `-PA80,443,8080` . If no port is specified, port 80 will be used.

The following figure shows that any TCP packet with an ACK flag should get a TCP packet back with an RST flag set. The target responds with the RST flag set because the TCP packet with the ACK flag is not part of any ongoing connection. The expected response is used to detect if the target host is up.

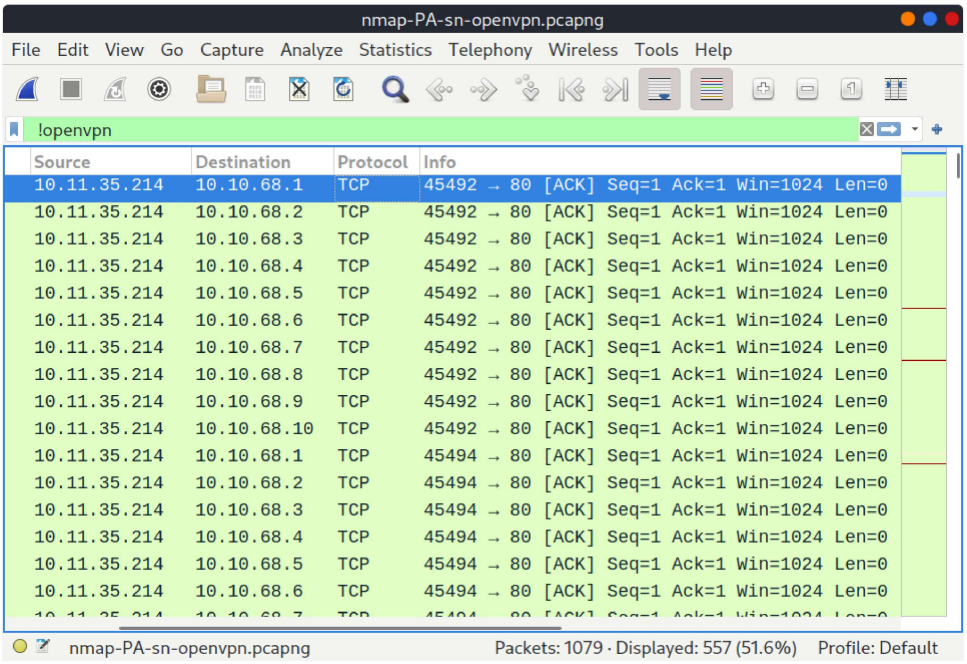


In this example, we run `sudo nmap -PA -sn MACHINE_IP/24` to discover the online hosts on the target's subnet. We can see that the TCP ACK ping scan detected five hosts as up.

Pentester Terminal

```
pentester@TryHackMe$ sudo nmap -PA -sn 10.10.68.220/24
Starting Nmap 7.92 ( https://nmap.org ) at 2021-09-02 13:46 EEST
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.52
Host is up (0.11s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.121
Host is up (0.12s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.125
Host is up (0.10s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.134
Host is up (0.10s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.220
Host is up (0.10s latency).
Nmap done: 256 IP addresses (5 hosts up) scanned in 29.89 seconds
```

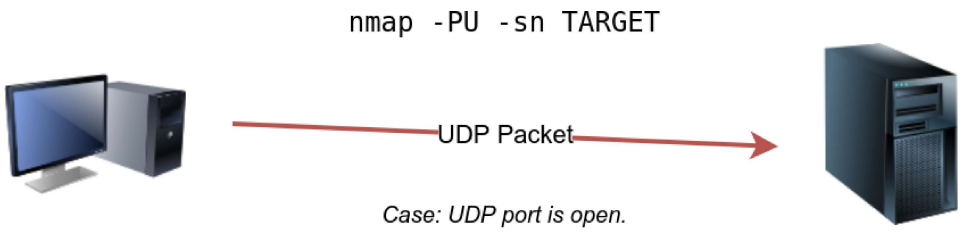
If we peek at the network traffic as shown in the figure below, we will discover many packets with the ACK flag set and sent to port 80 of the target systems. Nmap sends each packet twice. The systems that don't respond are offline or inaccessible.



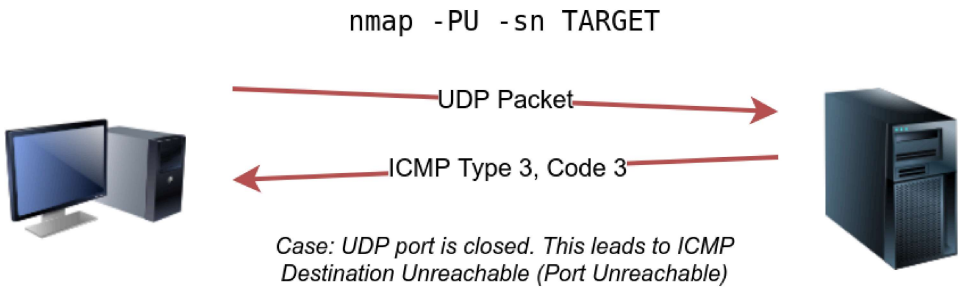
UDP Ping

Finally, we can use UDP to discover if the host is online. Contrary to TCP SYN ping, sending a UDP packet to an open port is not expected to lead to any reply. However, if we send a UDP packet to a closed UDP port, we expect to get an ICMP port unreachable packet; this indicates that the target system is up and available.

In the following figure, we see a UDP packet sent to an open UDP port and not triggering any response. However, sending a UDP packet to any closed UDP port can trigger a response indirectly indicating that the target is online.



Case: UDP port is open.



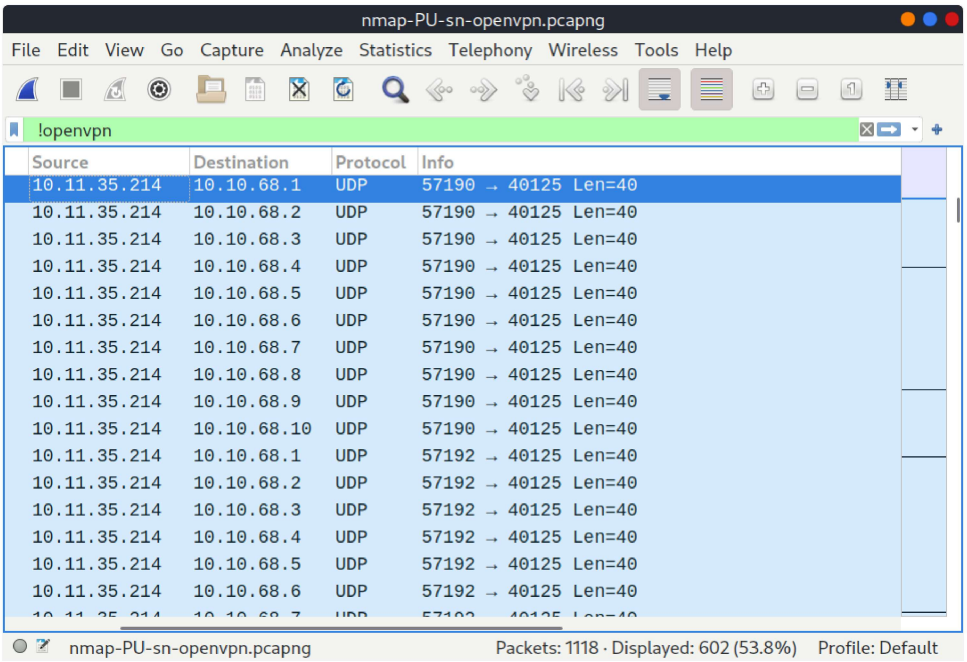
Case: UDP port is closed. This leads to ICMP Destination Unreachable (Port Unreachable)

The syntax to specify the ports is similar to that of TCP SYN ping and TCP ACK ping; Nmap uses `-PU` for UDP ping. In the following example, we use a UDP scan, and we discover five live hosts.

Pentester Terminal

```
pentester@TryHackMe$ sudo nmap -PU -sn 10.10.68.220/24
Starting Nmap 7.92 ( https://nmap.org ) at 2021-09-02 13:45 EEST
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.52
Host is up (0.10s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.121
Host is up (0.10s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.125
Host is up (0.14s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.134
Host is up (0.096s latency).
Nmap scan report for 10.10.68.220
Host is up (0.11s latency).
Nmap done: 256 IP addresses (5 hosts up) scanned in 9.20 seconds
```

Let's inspect the UDP packets generated. In the following Wireshark screenshot, we notice Nmap sending UDP packets to UDP ports that are most likely closed. The image below shows that Nmap uses an uncommon UDP port to trigger an ICMP destination unreachable (port unreachable) error.



Masscan

On a side note, Masscan uses a similar approach to discover the available systems. However, to finish its network scan quickly, Masscan is quite aggressive with the rate of packets it generates. The syntax is quite similar: `-p` can be followed by a port number, list, or range. Consider the following examples:

- `masscan MACHINE_IP/24 -p443`
- `masscan MACHINE_IP/24 -p80,443`
- `masscan MACHINE_IP/24 -p22-25`
- `masscan MACHINE_IP/24 --top-ports 100`

Masscan is not installed on the AttackBox; however, it can be installed using `apt install masscan`.

Answer the questions below

Which TCP ping scan does not require a privileged account?

TCP SYN Ping ✓ Correct Answer

Which TCP ping scan requires a privileged account?

TCP ACK Ping ✓ Correct Answer

What option do you need to add to Nmap to run a TCP SYN ping scan on the telnet port?

-PS23 ✓ Correct Answer Hint

Task 8 Using Reverse-DNS Lookup

Task 9 Summary

Created by

tryhackme strategos

Room Type **Users in Room** **Created**

Free Room. Anyone can deploy virtual machines in the room (without being subscribed)!	168,140	1064 days ago