

# TOCTOU attack

## **find/rm**

---

```
readdir (“/tmp”) → “badetc”  
lstat (“/tmp/badetc”) → DIRECTORY  
readdir (“/tmp/badetc”) → “passwd”  
  
unlink (“/tmp/badetc/passwd”)
```

## **Attacker**

---

```
mkdir (“/tmp/badetc”)  
creat (“/tmp/badetc/passwd”)  
  
rename (“/tmp/badetc” → “/tmp/x”)  
symlink (“/etc”, “/tmp/badetc”)
```

Time-of-check-to-time-of-use (a.k.a TOCTOU) bug

- find checks that /tmp/badetc is not symlink
- but meaning of file name changes before it is used

# Another example - xterm

`xterm` Provides a terminal window in X-windows - used to run with `setuid root` privileges

- Requires kernel pseudo-terminal (`pty`) device
- Required root privileges to change ownership of `pty` to user
- Also writes protected `utmp/wtmp` files to record users

Had feature to log terminal session to file

```
if (access (logfile, W_OK) < 0)
    return ERROR;

fd = open (logfile, O_CREAT|O_WRONLY|O_TRUNC, 0666);
/* ... */
```

➡ `xterm` is root, but should not log to file user cannot write

✓ `access` call does permission check with real, not effective UID

• .... but another TOCTOU bug