

The Story of Kevin Mitnick

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Beginnings

- Kevin Mitnick was born in 1963 in Los Angeles. While Mitnick was growing up, computers were beginning to become popular (Freeman, 2001).
- Mitnick's first successful hack was his high school's computer system (Freeman, 2001). This success seems to have set him on the path he took later in life.
- Mitnick was also “a skilled phone phreak”, meaning he was capable of “taking over a telephone company's digital central office” (Freeman, 2001).
- In 1981, Mitnick had his first run-in with the law. He was arrested for “breaking into the offices of Pacific Bell and stealing technical manuals” (Freeman, 2001).

Beginnings (Cont.)

- Mitnick was arrested again in 1983, for “breaking into a Pentagon computer from the University of Southern California”, and he served six months in a juvenile prison for that crime (Freeman, 2001).
- Mitnick avoided more legal trouble until 1987, at which point he was found guilty of “stealing software from Santa Cruz Operation” and “was sentenced to three years’ probation” (Freeman, 2001).
- Mitnick became bolder after this seemingly lenient punishment, as he was convicted of a felony as an adult in 1989 for “illegally downloading source code from Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC)” (Freeman, 2001).

Beginnings (Cont.)

- The felony conviction caused Mitnick to spend “a year in federal custody”, 8 months of which were in solitary confinement. He also spent “six months in a halfway house for his ‘addiction’” (Feeman, 2001). After leaving the halfway house, Mitnick underwent three years of supervised release (Freeman, 2001).
- Allegedly, a rumor circulating around this time was that “Mitnick ‘could launch nuclear missiles merely by whistling into a telephone’” (Freeman, 2001).

The Final Arrest

- In 1992, “Mitnick was charged with violating the terms of his probation”, and he soon went underground to avoid capture (Freeman, 2001).
- Mitnick spent the better part of three years on the run. During this time, he “used the Internet to steal software from such companies as Motorola, Nokia, and Fujitsu” (Freeman, 2001).
- Mitnick was eventually captured in 1995 in an apartment in Raleigh, NC by the FBI. The FBI were assisted by Tsutomu Shimomura. His computer network had been “a victim of Mitnick’s hacking (Freeman, 2001). Shimomura provided technical support to the FBI for the capture and arrest of Mitnick.

WANTED BY U.S. MARSHALS	
NOTICE TO ARRESTING AGENCY: Before arrest, validate warrant through National Crime Information Center (NCIC).	
United States Marshall Service NCIC entry number: (NOC/ <u>VJ21460021</u>)	
NAME:	MITNICK, KEVIN DAVID
AKS(S):	MITNICK, KEVIN DAVID MERRILL, BRIAN ALLEN
DESCRIPTION:	
Sex:	MALE
Race:	WHITE
Place of Birth:	VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA
Date(s) of Birth:	08/06/63; 10/18/70
Height:	5'11"
Weight:	190
Eyes:	BLUE
Hair:	BROWN
Skintone:	LIGHT
Scars, Marks, Tattoos:	NONE KNOWN



Figure 1: U.S. Marshall Arrest Notice for Mitnick ([Wired, 2012](#))

Arrest Aftermath

- After he was arrested in 1995, Mitnick was held for nearly five years without bail, 8 months of which was in solitary confinement (Freeman, 2001).
- Out of fear that he would use the computer for nefarious purposes, Mitnick “was not allowed to use a modemless personal computer to review the evidence against him” (Freeman, 2001).
- In 1999, Mitnick pleaded guilty to “wire and computer fraud for accessing information on company networks ” (Freeman, 2001). According to Mitnick, his actions caused no more than \$5-10 million in damages. Mitnick was forced to pay \$4000 in damages and was sentenced to another 10 months in prison (Freeman, 2001). He was released in January of 2000 and was on parole until January 2003 (Freeman, 2001).

A New Start

- After his release from prison, Mitnick achieved some level of popularity, becoming a public figure who frequently speaks on matters regarding computer security.
- As per the original terms of his parole, Mitnick could not “discuss the specifics of his case nor make any profit from telling his story ” (Freeman, 2001). However, this was later changed so that he could “write, lecture, and consult” (Freeman, 2001).
- Mitnick has stated that consulting and advising companies on computer security is “how [he] intend[s] to make a living now (Freeman, 2001).

Mitnick Security Consulting



Figure 2: Mitnick Working as a Consultant ([ON24](#))

- In 2003, Mitnick founded Mitnick Security Consulting in Las Vegas, Nevada, where Mitnick now resides. The company specializes in penetrating the networks of customers using a variety of social and technical means in order to help those companies detect and fix security issues.
- When Mitnick is not “leading his penetration forces” he “assumes his role as Chief Hacking Officer of KnowBe4— the world's #1 security awareness training and platform” (Mitnick Security Consulting, 2023).

Public Speaker

- In addition to founding his company, Mitnick has made the rounds as a speaker in the years after his arrest.
- He speaks at many different events, such as company cybersecurity seminars, cybersecurity conferences, and online events.
- In addition to just speaking, Mitnick can be scheduled for panels and roundtables, VIP appearances, tradeshow booth appearances, and a variety of promotional bookings (Mitnick Security Consulting, 2023).



Figure 3: Mitnick Speaking at an Event ([Speaking.com](https://speaking.com))

References

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Freeman. (2001). The Legend and Legacy of Kevin Mitnick. *Information Systems Security*, 10(2), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1201/1086/43314.10.2.20010506/31397.2>

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