Hackers Hour

Hack All Things

27th-28th September 2020
10.00 AM - 12.00 AM

#HackersHour

Beginner's Guide to Capture the Flag (CTF)

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What are Capture the flag competitions?

In CTF competitions, the flag is typically a snippet of code, a piece of hardware on a network, or perhaps a file. In other cases, the competition may progress through a series of questions, like a race.

They can either be single events or ongoing challenges — and typically fall into three main categories: Jeopardy, Attack-Defense.

Category of CTF

Attack-Defense

This style of competition is much closer to the backyard capture the flag game than the Jeopardy style. In these types of events, teams defend a host PC while still trying to attack opposing teams' target PCs. Each team starts off with an allotted time for patching and securing the PC, trying to discover as many vulnerabilities as possible before the opponent attacking teams can strike. The team with the most points wins.

Jeopardy CTF

Jeopardy-style CTFs present competitors with a set of questions that reveal clues that guide them in solving complex tasks in a specific order. By revealing clues, contestants learn the right direction regarding techniques and methodologies that are needed going forward. Teams receive points for each solved task. The more difficult the task, the more points you can earn upon its successful completion.

Ongoing, online CTF competitions are most likely to be Jeopardy style. It's easier to play solo and requires less coordination among players than an Attack and Defend competition.

What to do in CTF?

If you've never experienced a CTF event before, don't get frustrated or give up, because the key to any type of hacking is patience. While this is sometimes a difficult thing to have, the only way to learn is to persist and practice on your own.

Tricks to Win CTF?

- **Practice alone**

  There are tons of ways you can practice for CTF competitions. Many old contests will upload their past flags and solutions. Folks will often also post writeups on their security blogs of particularly interesting challenges and puzzles they've solved.

- **Follow the news**

  CTFs like to be trendy. Keeping up with what's going on at other CTFs, security conferences, and the wider cybersecurity community can be important in giving you an idea on how to approach hacks and which vulnerabilities to try and exploit. If you see an interesting proof of concept hack or exploit online that you can replicate in your home lab, take the time to work through it and pick up new skills.

- **Build a toolkit**

  Before you even get to a CTF you should know what tools you need to win. As you do practice exercises and go to CTFs, keep a list of tools you find yourself using and keep them stored in one place on your computer. Find an approach that works for you and be sure that you spend the bare minimum time at a CTF downloading and researching tools you've used in the past.

- **Take care of yourself**

  Like at Hackathons, it's important at a CTF to keep track of your personal well-being. If you need to sleep - do so.

- **Make some friends**

  Take time to get to the know the other teams at the competition. Be friendly and approachable yourself. Reciprocate and be nice to people who approach you but try and keep strategically important information close.

Get Started

If you're brand new to hacking, then find a good course to teach you the skills. You can start by setting up a Kali Linux / Parrot Security practice lab, so you can get hands-on experience immediately.

When you're ready, work through the CTF challenges, review the write-ups, and maybe even enter a competition. By competing in these competitions and following the challenges, you not

only strengthen your knowledge and understanding of how the technologies work, but also how to select the appropriate responses to a challenge.

Resources

Tools and Resources to Prepare for a Hacker CTF Competition or Challenge
https://resources.infosecinstitute.com/tools-of-trade-and-resources-to-prepare-in-a-hacker-ctf-competition-or-challenge/#gref

TryHackMe | Learn Cybersecurity
https://tryhackme.com/

Hack The Box :: Penetration Testing Labs
www.hackthebox.eu

Hacksplaining
https://www.hacksplaining.com/

Practice CTF List / Permanent CTF List
https://captf.com/practice-ctf/

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