

action) and, if successful, leads to an undesirable violation of security, or threat consequence. The agent carrying out the attack is referred to as an attacker, or **threat agent**. We can distinguish two types of attacks:

- **Active attack:** An attempt to alter system resources or affect their operation.
- **Passive attack:** An attempt to learn or make use of information from the system that does not affect system resources.

We can also classify attacks based on the origin of the attack:

- **Inside attack:** Initiated by an entity inside the security perimeter (an “insider”). The insider is authorized to access system resources but uses them in a way not approved by those who granted the authorization.
- **Outside attack:** Initiated from outside the perimeter, by an unauthorized or illegitimate user of the system (an “outsider”). On the Internet, potential outside attackers range from amateur pranksters to organized criminals, international terrorists, and hostile governments.

Finally, a **countermeasure** is any means taken to deal with a security attack. Ideally, a countermeasure can be devised to **prevent** a particular type of attack from succeeding. When prevention is not possible, or fails in some instance, the goal is to **detect** the attack and then **recover** from the effects of the attack. A countermeasure may itself introduce new vulnerabilities. In any case, residual vulnerabilities may remain after the imposition of countermeasures. Such vulnerabilities may be exploited by threat agents representing a residual level of **risk** to the assets. Owners will seek to minimize that risk given other constraints.

## 1.2 THREATS, ATTACKS, AND ASSETS

We now turn to a more detailed look at threats, attacks, and assets. First, we look at the types of security threats that must be dealt with, and then give some examples of the types of threats that apply to different categories of assets.

### Threats and Attacks

Table 1.2, based on RFC 4949, describes four kinds of threat consequences and lists the kinds of attacks that result in each consequence.

**Unauthorized disclosure** is a threat to confidentiality. The following types of attacks can result in this threat consequence:

- **Exposure:** This can be deliberate, as when an insider intentionally releases sensitive information, such as credit card numbers, to an outsider. It can also be the result of a human, hardware, or software error, which results in an entity gaining unauthorized knowledge of sensitive data. There have been numerous instances of this, such as universities accidentally posting student confidential information on the Web.

**Table 1.2 Threat Consequences, and the Types of Threat Actions that Cause Each Consequence**

Threat Consequence	Threat Action (Attack)
<b>Unauthorized Disclosure</b> A circumstance or event whereby an entity gains access to data for which the entity is not authorized.	<b>Exposure:</b> Sensitive data are directly released to an unauthorized entity. <b>Interception:</b> An unauthorized entity directly accesses sensitive data traveling between authorized sources and destinations. <b>Inference:</b> A threat action whereby an unauthorized entity indirectly accesses sensitive data (but not necessarily the data contained in the communication) by reasoning from characteristics or by-products of communications. <b>Intrusion:</b> An unauthorized entity gains access to sensitive data by circumventing a system's security protections.
<b>Deception</b> A circumstance or event that may result in an authorized entity receiving false data and believing it to be true.	<b>Masquerade:</b> An unauthorized entity gains access to a system or performs a malicious act by posing as an authorized entity. <b>Falsification:</b> False data deceive an authorized entity. <b>Repudiation:</b> An entity deceives another by falsely denying responsibility for an act.
<b>Disruption</b> A circumstance or event that interrupts or prevents the correct operation of system services and functions.	<b>Incapacitation:</b> Prevents or interrupts system operation by disabling a system component. <b>Corruption:</b> Undesirably alters system operation by adversely modifying system functions or data. <b>Obstruction:</b> A threat action that interrupts delivery of system services by hindering system operation.
<b>Usurpation</b> A circumstance or event that results in control of system services or functions by an unauthorized entity.	<b>Misappropriation:</b> An entity assumes unauthorized logical or physical control of a system resource. <b>Misuse:</b> Causes a system component to perform a function or service that is detrimental to system security.

Source: Based on RFC 4949

- **Interception:** Interception is a common attack in the context of communications. On a shared local area network (LAN), such as a wireless LAN or a broadcast Ethernet, any device attached to the LAN can receive a copy of packets intended for another device. On the Internet, a determined hacker can gain access to e-mail traffic and other data transfers. All of these situations create the potential for unauthorized access to data.
- **Inference:** An example of inference is known as traffic analysis, in which an adversary is able to gain information from observing the pattern of traffic on a network, such as the amount of traffic between particular pairs of hosts on the network. Another example is the inference of detailed information from a database by a user who has only limited access; this is accomplished by repeated queries whose combined results enable inference.
- **Intrusion:** An example of intrusion is an adversary gaining unauthorized access to sensitive data by overcoming the system's access control protections.

**Deception** is a threat to either system integrity or data integrity. The following types of attacks can result in this threat consequence:

- **Masquerade:** One example of masquerade is an attempt by an unauthorized user to gain access to a system by posing as an authorized user; this could happen if the unauthorized user has learned another user's logon ID and password. Another example is malicious logic, such as a Trojan horse, that appears to perform a useful or desirable function but actually gains unauthorized access to system resources or tricks a user into executing other malicious logic.
- **Falsification:** This refers to the altering or replacing of valid data or the introduction of false data into a file or database. For example, a student may alter his or her grades on a school database.
- **Repudiation:** In this case, a user either denies sending data or a user denies receiving or possessing the data.

**Disruption** is a threat to availability or system integrity. The following types of attacks can result in this threat consequence:

- **Incapacitation:** This is an attack on system availability. This could occur as a result of physical destruction of or damage to system hardware. More typically, malicious software, such as Trojan horses, viruses, or worms, could operate in such a way as to disable a system or some of its services.
- **Corruption:** This is an attack on system integrity. Malicious software in this context could operate in such a way that system resources or services function in an unintended manner. Or a user could gain unauthorized access to a system and modify some of its functions. An example of the latter is a user placing backdoor logic in the system to provide subsequent access to a system and its resources by other than the usual procedure.
- **Obstruction:** One way to obstruct system operation is to interfere with communications by disabling communication links or altering communication control information. Another way is to overload the system by placing excess burden on communication traffic or processing resources.

**Usurpation** is a threat to system integrity. The following types of attacks can result in this threat consequence:

- **Misappropriation:** This can include theft of service. An example is a distributed denial of service attack, when malicious software is installed on a number of hosts to be used as platforms to launch traffic at a target host. In this case, the malicious software makes unauthorized use of processor and operating system resources.
- **Misuse:** Misuse can occur by means of either malicious logic or a hacker that has gained unauthorized access to a system. In either case, security functions can be disabled or thwarted.

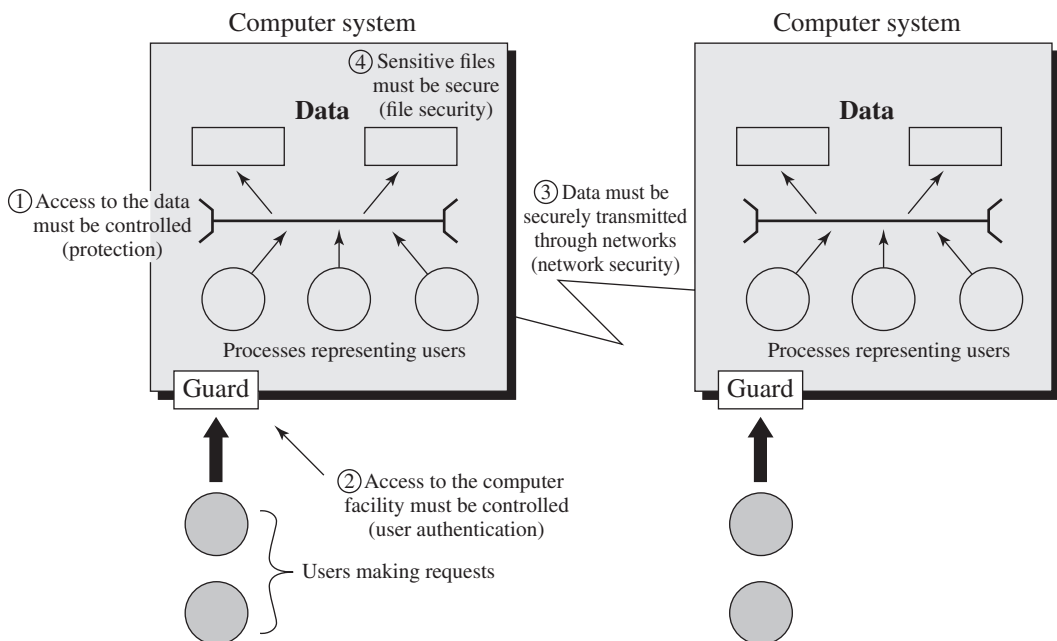
## Threats and Assets

The assets of a computer system can be categorized as hardware, software, data, and communication lines and networks. In this subsection, we briefly describe these

four categories and relate these to the concepts of integrity, confidentiality, and availability introduced in Section 1.1 (see Figure 1.2 and Table 1.3).

**HARDWARE** A major threat to computer system hardware is the threat to availability. Hardware is the most vulnerable to attack and the least susceptible to automated controls. Threats include accidental and deliberate damage to equipment as well as theft. The proliferation of personal computers and workstations and the widespread use of LANs increase the potential for losses in this area. Theft of CD-ROMs and DVDs can lead to loss of confidentiality. Physical and administrative security measures are needed to deal with these threats.

**SOFTWARE** Software includes the operating system, utilities, and application programs. A key threat to software is an attack on availability. Software, especially application software, is often easy to delete. Software can also be altered or damaged to render it useless. Careful software configuration management, which includes making backups of the most recent version of software, can maintain high availability. A more difficult problem to deal with is software modification that results in a program that still functions but that behaves differently than before, which is a threat to integrity/authenticity. Computer viruses and related attacks fall into this category. A final problem is protection against software piracy. Although



**Figure 1.2 Scope of Computer Security**

*Note:* This figure depicts security concerns other than physical security, including controlling of access to computers systems, safeguarding of data transmitted over communications systems, and safeguarding of stored data.

**Table 1.3 Computer and Network Assets, with Examples of Threats**

	<b>Availability</b>	<b>Confidentiality</b>	<b>Integrity</b>
<b>Hardware</b>	Equipment is stolen or disabled, thus denying service.	An unencrypted CD-ROM or DVD is stolen.	
<b>Software</b>	Programs are deleted, denying access to users.	An unauthorized copy of software is made.	A working program is modified, either to cause it to fail during execution or to cause it to do some unintended task.
<b>Data</b>	Files are deleted, denying access to users.	An unauthorized read of data is performed. An analysis of statistical data reveals underlying data.	Existing files are modified or new files are fabricated.
<b>Communication Lines and Networks</b>	Messages are destroyed or deleted. Communication lines or networks are rendered unavailable.	Messages are read. The traffic pattern of messages is observed.	Messages are modified, delayed, reordered, or duplicated. False messages are fabricated.

certain countermeasures are available, by and large the problem of unauthorized copying of software has not been solved.

**DATA** Hardware and software security are typically concerns of computing center professionals or individual concerns of personal computer users. A much more widespread problem is data security, which involves files and other forms of data controlled by individuals, groups, and business organizations.

Security concerns with respect to data are broad, encompassing availability, secrecy, and integrity. In the case of availability, the concern is with the destruction of data files, which can occur either accidentally or maliciously.

The obvious concern with secrecy is the unauthorized reading of data files or databases, and this area has been the subject of perhaps more research and effort than any other area of computer security. A less obvious threat to secrecy involves the analysis of data and manifests itself in the use of so-called statistical databases, which provide summary or aggregate information. Presumably, the existence of aggregate information does not threaten the privacy of the individuals involved. However, as the use of statistical databases grows, there is an increasing potential for disclosure of personal information. In essence, characteristics of constituent individuals may be identified through careful analysis. For example, if one table records the aggregate of the incomes of respondents A, B, C, and D and another records the aggregate of the incomes of A, B, C, D, and E, the difference between the two aggregates would be the income of E. This problem is exacerbated by the increasing desire to combine data sets. In many cases, matching several sets of data for consistency at different levels of aggregation requires access to individual units. Thus, the individual units, which are the subject of privacy concerns, are available at various stages in the processing of data sets.

Finally, data integrity is a major concern in most installations. Modifications to data files can have consequences ranging from minor to disastrous.

**COMMUNICATION LINES AND NETWORKS** Network security attacks can be classified as *passive attacks* and *active attacks*. A passive attack attempts to learn or make use of information from the system but does not affect system resources. An active attack attempts to alter system resources or affect their operation.

**Passive attacks** are in the nature of eavesdropping on, or monitoring of, transmissions. The goal of the attacker is to obtain information that is being transmitted. Two types of passive attacks are the release of message contents and traffic analysis.

The **release of message contents** is easily understood. A telephone conversation, an electronic mail message, and a transferred file may contain sensitive or confidential information. We would like to prevent an opponent from learning the contents of these transmissions.

A second type of passive attack, **traffic analysis**, is subtler. Suppose that we had a way of masking the contents of messages or other information traffic so that opponents, even if they captured the message, could not extract the information from the message. The common technique for masking contents is encryption. If we had encryption protection in place, an opponent might still be able to observe the pattern of these messages. The opponent could determine the location and identity of communicating hosts and could observe the frequency and length of messages being exchanged. This information might be useful in guessing the nature of the communication that was taking place.

Passive attacks are very difficult to detect because they do not involve any alteration of the data. Typically, the message traffic is sent and received in an apparently normal fashion and neither the sender nor receiver is aware that a third party has read the messages or observed the traffic pattern. However, it is feasible to prevent the success of these attacks, usually by means of encryption. Thus, the emphasis in dealing with passive attacks is on prevention rather than detection.

**Active attacks** involve some modification of the data stream or the creation of a false stream and can be subdivided into four categories: replay, masquerade, modification of messages, and denial of service.

**Replay** involves the passive capture of a data unit and its subsequent retransmission to produce an unauthorized effect.

A **masquerade** takes place when one entity pretends to be a different entity. A masquerade attack usually includes one of the other forms of active attack. For example, authentication sequences can be captured and replayed after a valid authentication sequence has taken place, thus enabling an authorized entity with few privileges to obtain extra privileges by impersonating an entity that has those privileges.

**Modification of messages** simply means that some portion of a legitimate message is altered, or that messages are delayed or reordered, to produce an unauthorized effect. For example, a message stating, "Allow John Smith to read confidential file accounts" is modified to say, "Allow Fred Brown to read confidential file accounts."

The **denial of service** prevents or inhibits the normal use or management of communication facilities. This attack may have a specific target; for example, an entity may suppress all messages directed to a particular destination (e.g., the security audit service). Another form of service denial is the disruption of an entire network,

either by disabling the network or by overloading it with messages so as to degrade performance.

Active attacks present the opposite characteristics of passive attacks. Whereas passive attacks are difficult to detect, measures are available to prevent their success. On the other hand, it is quite difficult to prevent active attacks absolutely, because to do so would require physical protection of all communication facilities and paths at all times. Instead, the goal is to detect them and to recover from any disruption or delays caused by them. Because the detection has a deterrent effect, it may also contribute to prevention.

### 1.3 SECURITY FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

There are a number of ways of classifying and characterizing the countermeasures that may be used to reduce vulnerabilities and deal with threats to system assets. It will be useful for the presentation in the remainder of the book to look at several approaches, which we do in this and the next two sections. In this section, we view countermeasures in terms of functional requirements, and we follow the classification defined in FIPS 200 (*Minimum Security Requirements for Federal Information and Information Systems*). This standard enumerates 17 security-related areas with regard to protecting the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information systems and the information processed, stored, and transmitted by those systems. The areas are defined in Table 1.4.

The requirements listed in FIPS 200 encompass a wide range of countermeasures to security vulnerabilities and threats. Roughly, we can divide these countermeasures into two categories: those that require computer security technical measures (covered in this book in Parts One and Two), either hardware or software, or both; and those that are fundamentally management issues (covered in Part Three).

Each of the functional areas may involve both computer security technical measures and management measures. Functional areas that primarily require computer security technical measures include access control, identification and authentication, system and communication protection, and system and information integrity. Functional areas that primarily involve management controls and procedures include awareness and training; audit and accountability; certification, accreditation, and security assessments; contingency planning; maintenance; physical and environmental protection; planning; personnel security; risk assessment; and systems and services acquisition. Functional areas that overlap computer security technical measures and management controls include configuration management, incident response, and media protection.

Note that the majority of the functional requirements areas in FIPS 200 are either primarily issues of management or at least have a significant management component, as opposed to purely software or hardware solutions. This may be new to some readers and is not reflected in many of the books on computer and information security. But as one computer security expert observed, “If you think technology can solve your security problems, then you don’t understand the problems and you



**Table 1.4 Security Requirements**

**Access Control:** Limit information system access to authorized users, processes acting on behalf of authorized users, or devices (including other information systems) and to the types of transactions and functions that authorized users are permitted to exercise.

**Awareness and Training:** (i) Ensure that managers and users of organizational information systems are made aware of the security risks associated with their activities and of the applicable laws, regulation, and policies related to the security of organizational information systems; and (ii) ensure that personnel are adequately trained to carry out their assigned information security-related duties and responsibilities.

**Audit and Accountability:** (i) Create, protect, and retain information system audit records to the extent needed to enable the monitoring, analysis, investigation, and reporting of unlawful, unauthorized, or inappropriate information system activity; and (ii) ensure that the actions of individual information system users can be uniquely traced to those users so they can be held accountable for their actions.

**Certification, Accreditation, and Security Assessments:** (i) Periodically assess the security controls in organizational information systems to determine if the controls are effective in their application; (ii) develop and implement plans of action designed to correct deficiencies and reduce or eliminate vulnerabilities in organizational information systems; (iii) authorize the operation of organizational information systems and any associated information system connections; and (iv) monitor information system security controls on an ongoing basis to ensure the continued effectiveness of the controls.

**Configuration Management:** (i) Establish and maintain baseline configurations and inventories of organizational information systems (including hardware, software, firmware, and documentation) throughout the respective system development life cycles; and (ii) establish and enforce security configuration settings for information technology products employed in organizational information systems.

**Contingency Planning:** Establish, maintain, and implement plans for emergency response, backup operations, and postdisaster recovery for organizational information systems to ensure the availability of critical information resources and continuity of operations in emergency situations.

**Identification and Authentication:** Identify information system users, processes acting on behalf of users, or devices, and authenticate (or verify) the identities of those users, processes, or devices, as a prerequisite to allowing access to organizational information systems.

**Incident Response:** (i) Establish an operational incident-handling capability for organizational information systems that includes adequate preparation, detection, analysis, containment, recovery, and user-response activities; and (ii) track, document, and report incidents to appropriate organizational officials and/or authorities.

**Maintenance:** (i) Perform periodic and timely maintenance on organizational information systems; and (ii) provide effective controls on the tools, techniques, mechanisms, and personnel used to conduct information system maintenance.

**Media Protection:** (i) Protect information system media, both paper and digital; (ii) limit access to information on information system media to authorized users; and (iii) sanitize or destroy information system media before disposal or release for reuse.

**Physical and Environmental Protection:** (i) Limit physical access to information systems, equipment, and the respective operating environments to authorized individuals; (ii) protect the physical plant and support infrastructure for information systems; (iii) provide supporting utilities for information systems; (iv) protect information systems against environmental hazards; and (v) provide appropriate environmental controls in facilities containing information systems.

**Planning:** Develop, document, periodically update, and implement security plans for organizational information systems that describe the security controls in place or planned for the information systems and the rules of behavior for individuals accessing the information systems.

*(Continued)*



**Personnel Security:** (i) Ensure that individuals occupying positions of responsibility within organizations (including third-party service providers) are trustworthy and meet established security criteria for those positions; (ii) ensure that organizational information and information systems are protected during and after personnel actions such as terminations and transfers; and (iii) employ formal sanctions for personnel failing to comply with organizational security policies and procedures.

**Risk Assessment:** Periodically assess the risk to organizational operations (including mission, functions, image, or reputation), organizational assets, and individuals, resulting from the operation of organizational information systems and the associated processing, storage, or transmission of organizational information.

**Systems and Services Acquisition:** (i) Allocate sufficient resources to adequately protect organizational information systems; (ii) employ system development life cycle processes that incorporate information security considerations; (iii) employ software usage and installation restrictions; and (iv) ensure that third-party providers employ adequate security measures to protect information, applications, and/or services outsourced from the organization.

**System and Communications Protection:** (i) Monitor, control, and protect organizational communications (i.e., information transmitted or received by organizational information systems) at the external boundaries and key internal boundaries of the information systems; and (ii) employ architectural designs, software development techniques, and systems engineering principles that promote effective information security within organizational information systems.

**System and Information Integrity:** (i) Identify, report, and correct information and information system flaws in a timely manner; (ii) provide protection from malicious code at appropriate locations within organizational information systems; and (iii) monitor information system security alerts and advisories and take appropriate actions in response.

*Source:* Based on FIPS 200

don't technology" [SCHN00]. This book reflects the need to combine technical and managerial approaches to achieve effective computer security.

FIPS 200 provides a useful summary of the principal areas of concern, both technical and managerial, with respect to computer security. This book attempts to cover all of these areas.

## 1.4 FUNDAMENTAL SECURITY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Despite years of research and development, it has not been possible to develop security design and implementation techniques that systematically exclude security flaws and prevent all unauthorized actions. In the absence of such foolproof techniques, it is useful to have a set of widely agreed design principles that can guide the development of protection mechanisms. The National Centers of Academic Excellence in Information Assurance/Cyber Defense, which is jointly sponsored by the U.S. National Security Agency and the U. S. Department of Homeland Security, list the following as fundamental security design principles [NCAE13]:

- Economy of mechanism
- Fail-safe defaults
- Complete mediation
- Open design

- Separation of privilege
- Least privilege
- Least common mechanism
- Psychological acceptability
- Isolation
- Encapsulation
- Modularity
- Layering
- Least astonishment

The first eight listed principles were first proposed in [SALT75] and have withstood the test of time. In this section, we briefly discuss each principle.

**Economy of mechanism** means that the design of security measures embodied in both hardware and software should be as simple and small as possible. The motivation for this principle is that relatively simple, small design is easier to test and verify thoroughly. With a complex design, there are many more opportunities for an adversary to discover subtle weaknesses to exploit that may be difficult to spot ahead of time. The more complex the mechanism, the more likely it is to possess exploitable flaws. Simple mechanisms tend to have fewer exploitable flaws and require less maintenance. Furthermore, because configuration management issues are simplified, updating or replacing a simple mechanism becomes a less intensive process. In practice, this is perhaps the most difficult principle to honor. There is a constant demand for new features in both hardware and software, complicating the security design task. The best that can be done is to keep this principle in mind during system design to try to eliminate unnecessary complexity.

**Fail-safe default** means that access decisions should be based on permission rather than exclusion. That is, the default situation is lack of access, and the protection scheme identifies conditions under which access is permitted. This approach exhibits a better failure mode than the alternative approach, where the default is to permit access. A design or implementation mistake in a mechanism that gives explicit permission tends to fail by refusing permission, a safe situation that can be quickly detected. On the other hand, a design or implementation mistake in a mechanism that explicitly excludes access tends to fail by allowing access, a failure that may long go unnoticed in normal use. For example, most file access systems work on this principle and virtually all protected services on client/server systems work this way.

**Complete mediation** means that every access must be checked against the access control mechanism. Systems should not rely on access decisions retrieved from a cache. In a system designed to operate continuously, this principle requires that, if access decisions are remembered for future use, careful consideration be given to how changes in authority are propagated into such local memories. File access systems appear to provide an example of a system that complies with this principle. However, typically, once a user has opened a file, no check is made to see if permissions change. To fully implement complete mediation, every time a user reads a field or record in a file, or a data item in a database, the system must exercise access control. This resource-intensive approach is rarely used.