

Glossary

Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA)

A US federal criminal law ([18 U.S.C. § 1030](#)) that makes unlawful certain computer-related activities involving the unauthorized access of:

- Any computer to obtain certain types of prohibited information.
- A protected computer, defined by the statute to include a computer used:
 - by or for the federal government or a financial institution; or
 - in interstate or foreign commerce or communication.

Specifically, the CFAA prohibits:

- Knowingly accessing a computer without authorization to obtain national security or other government-restricted data.
- Intentionally accessing a computer without authorization to obtain certain information from:
 - a financial institution or consumer reporting agency;
 - the federal government; or

Maintained

Resource Type

Glossary

Jurisdiction

USA (National/Federal)

- a protected computer.
- Intentionally accessing and affecting the use of a government computer.
- Knowingly accessing a protected computer to defraud and obtain anything of value.
- Causing damages specified in the statute by knowingly transmitting harmful items or intentionally accessing a protected computer.
- Knowingly trafficking in computer passwords.
- Extortion involving threats to damage a protected computer.

In certain circumstances, the CFAA permits an individual who suffers damages to bring a civil action for damages or injunctive relief against a violator.

For more information on the CFAA, see [Practice Notes, Key Issues in Computer Fraud and Abuse Act \(CFAA\) Civil Litigation and US Privacy Litigation: Overview](#).

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