

"scanf()" and "fscanf()" format strings should specify a field width for the "%s" string placeholder

Vulnerability
Critical

- [cwe](#)
- [sans-top25](#)
- [owasp](#)
- [injection](#)

The %s placeholder is used to read a word into a string.

By default, there is no restriction on the length of that word, and the developer is required to pass a sufficiently large buffer for storing it.

No matter how large the buffer is, there will always be a longer word.

Therefore, programs relying on %s are vulnerable to buffer overflows.

A field width specifier can be used together with the %s placeholder to limit the number of bytes which will be written to the buffer.

Note that an additional byte is required to store the null terminator.

Noncompliant Code Example

```
char buffer[10];
scanf("%s", buffer);          // Noncompliant - will overflow when a word
                              longer than 9 characters is entered
```

Compliant Solution

```
char buffer[10];
scanf("%9s", buffer);        // Compliant - will not overflow
```

See

- [OWASP Top 10 2017 Category A9](#) - Using Components with Known Vulnerabilities
- [MITRE, CWE-120](#) - Buffer Copy without Checking Size of Input ('Classic Buffer Overflow')
- [MITRE, CWE-676](#) - Use of Potentially Dangerous Function
- [SANS Top 25](#) - Risky Resource Management

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