1. Ethical Hacking – Overview

Hacking has been a part of computing for almost five decades and it is a very broad discipline, which covers a wide range of topics. The first known event of hacking had taken place in 1960 at MIT and at the same time, the term "Hacker" was originated.

Hacking is the act of finding the possible entry points that exist in a computer system or a computer network and finally entering into them. Hacking is usually done to gain unauthorized access to a computer system or a computer network, either to harm the systems or to steal sensitive information available on the computer.

Hacking is usually legal as long as it is being done to find weaknesses in a computer or network system for testing purpose. This sort of hacking is what we call **Ethical Hacking**.

A computer expert who does the act of hacking is called a "Hacker". Hackers are those who seek knowledge, to understand how systems operate, how they are designed, and then attempt to play with these systems.

Types of Hacking

We can segregate hacking into different categories, based on what is being hacked. Here is a set of examples:

- **Website Hacking:** Hacking a website means taking unauthorized control over a web server and its associated software such as databases and other interfaces.
- **Network Hacking:** Hacking a network means gathering information about a network by using tools like Telnet, NS lookup, Ping, Tracert, Netstat, etc. with the intent to harm the network system and hamper its operation.
- **Email Hacking:** It includes getting unauthorized access on an Email account and using it without taking the consent of its owner.
- **Ethical Hacking:** Ethical hacking involves finding weaknesses in a computer or network system for testing purpose and finally getting them fixed.
- **Password Hacking:** This is the process of recovering secret passwords from data that has been stored in or transmitted by a computer system.
- **Computer Hacking:** This is the process of stealing computer ID and password by applying hacking methods and getting unauthorized access to a computer system.

Advantages of Hacking

Hacking is quite useful in the following scenarios:

- To recover lost information, especially in case you lost your password.
- To perform penetration testing to strengthen computer and network security.
- To put adequate preventative measures in place to prevent security breaches.

- To have a computer system that prevents malicious hackers from gaining access.

Disadvantages of Hacking

Hacking is quite dangerous if it is done with harmful intent. It can cause:

- Massive security breach.
- Unauthorized system access on private information.
- Privacy violation.
- Hampering system operation.
- Denial of service attacks
- Malicious attack on the system.

Purpose of Hacking

There could be various positive and negative intentions behind performing hacking activities. Here is a list of some probable reasons why people indulge in hacking activities:

- Just for fun
- Show-off
- Steal important information
- Damaging the system
- Hampering privacy
- Money extortion
- System security testing
- To break policy compliance

2. Ethical Hacking – Hacker Types

Hackers can be classified into different categories such as white hat, black hat, and grey hat, based on their intent of hacking a system. These different terms come from old Spaghetti Westerns, where the bad guy wears a black cowboy hat and the good guy wears a white hat.

White Hat Hackers

White Hat hackers are also known as **Ethical Hackers**. They never intent to harm a system, rather they try to find out weaknesses in a computer or a network system as a part of penetration testing and vulnerability assessments.

Ethical hacking is not illegal and it is one of the demanding jobs available in the IT industry. There are numerous companies that hire ethical hackers for penetration testing and vulnerability assessments.

Black Hat Hackers

Black Hat hackers, also known as **crackers**, are those who hack in order to gain unauthorized access to a system and harm its operations or steal sensitive information.

Black Hat hacking is always illegal because of its bad intent which includes stealing corporate data, violating privacy, damaging the system, blocking network communication, etc.

Grey Hat Hackers

Grey hat hackers are a blend of both black hat and white hat hackers. They act without malicious intent but for their fun, they exploit a security weakness in a computer system or network without the owner's permission or knowledge.

Their intent is to bring the weakness to the attention of the owners and getting appreciation or a little bounty from the owners.

Miscellaneous Hackers

Apart from the above well-known classes of hackers, we have the following categories of hackers based on what they hack and how they do it:

Red Hat Hackers

Red hat hackers are again a blend of both black hat and white hat hackers. They are usually on the level of hacking government agencies, top-secret information hubs, and generally anything that falls under the category of sensitive information.

Blue Hat Hackers

A blue hat hacker is someone outside computer security consulting firms who is used to bug-test a system prior to its launch. They look for loopholes that can be exploited and try to close these gaps. Microsoft also uses the term **BlueHat** to represent a series of security briefing events.

Elite Hackers

This is a social status among hackers, which is used to describe the most skilled. Newly discovered exploits will circulate among these hackers.

Script Kiddie

A script kiddie is a non-expert who breaks into computer systems by using pre-packaged automated tools written by others, usually with little understanding of the underlying concept, hence the term **Kiddie**.

Neophyte

A neophyte, "n00b", or "newbie" or "Green Hat Hacker" is someone who is new to hacking or phreaking and has almost no knowledge or experience of the workings of technology and hacking.

Hacktivist

A hacktivist is a hacker who utilizes technology to announce a social, ideological, religious, or political message. In general, most hacktivism involves website defacement or denial-of-service attacks.