# Meow on Hack The Box

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During my exploration of Hack The Box's Meow machine, I delved into fundamental aspects of penetration testing, focusing on practical skills and tool usage. This task started by establishing a connection to the target machine through Pwnbox. Pwnbox, a user-friendly web-based terminal, significantly simplifies the connection process, allowing me to access the machine without having to set up a Virtual Private Network (VPN) manually. This streamlined process gave me more time to focus on identifying vulnerabilities in the target machine.  
Once connected, the next phase of my process was enumeration. Enumeration is one of the essential first steps in any penetration test, involving gathering as much information as possible about the target machine to uncover potential weaknesses. To achieve this, I used nmap, a widely used network scanning tool, to identify open ports and services running on the target. The nmap scan revealed that the Meow machine was running a telnet service on port 23/tcp. Telnet is a protocol that facilitates remote connections to a system, often for administrative purposes. Although telnet is considered outdated and less secure due to its lack of encryption, it remains prevalent in legacy systems, making it a useful vulnerability for penetration testers to exploit.  
Through my research, I learned that telnet connections are often secured by simple username-password combinations. However, in many cases, these credentials can be easily bypassed due to common misconfigurations, such as leaving critical accounts without passwords. After attempting a few default credentials, I successfully logged into the system using the 'root' account without any password.  
After gaining access to the system, I explored the directories available to me. I identified the flag.txt file, which contained a hash value. By extracting this flag, I successfully completed my first penetration testing task on Hack The Box.  
The Meow machine exercise emphasized the importance of persistence, attention to detail, and practical knowledge of penetration testing tools like nmap and telnet. I gained a deeper understanding of how to identify and exploit vulnerabilities in outdated services like telnet, while also learning the value of proper enumeration and research. These lessons are crucial as I continue to develop my skills as a penetration tester.  
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A screenshot of a computer program

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# References

Hack The Box. (2024). Meow - Starting Point. https://app.hackthebox.com/starting-point