**🌟 The Golden Age of Hacking**

**(Roughly: Late 1980s to Early 2000s)**

**🔍 What Is It?**

The **Golden Age of Hacking** refers to a period in history when hacking was **new, underground, rebellious**, and even **romanticized**. It was a time when **technology was rapidly growing**, but **security was still weak**, and **hackers explored digital frontiers** without today’s strict laws or corporate surveillance.

**🧑‍💻 Key Features of This Era:**

| **Feature** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| 🎮 Curiosity > Crime | Many hackers did it to **learn, explore, or test boundaries**, not for money or harm. |
| 💾 Open Systems | Early internet (ARPANET) & networks were **less secured**, allowing easy access. |
| 🧠 DIY Culture | Hackers often self-taught, using **Bulletin Boards (BBS)**, forums, and text files (zines). |
| 📰 Media Buzz | Movies like *WarGames* (1983) made hacking look cool or mysterious. |
| 🧑‍🔬 Hackers = Explorers | Known as **"white hats"** or "grey hats", many exposed flaws rather than exploiting them. |

**🧨 Notable Hacks / Events:**

| **Year** | **Event** |
| --- | --- |
| 1983 | *WarGames* movie shows a teen nearly starting WW3 via modem—changed public view of hacking |
| 1986 | **Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA)** passed in the U.S. after real hacks |
| 1989 | First known **ransomware attack** using floppy disks (AIDS Trojan) |
| 1994 | **Kevin Mitnick** arrested – became most famous hacker of his time |
| 1998 | **Cult of the Dead Cow** (hacker group) coins the term "hacktivism" |
| Early 2000s | **Anonymous**, **L0pht**, and other groups gain traction |

**👥 Famous Hackers from This Era:**

| **Name** | **Notability** |
| --- | --- |
| **Kevin Mitnick** | Social engineering expert, ex-hacker turned security consultant |
| **Adrian Lamo** | Hacked NYT, Microsoft; later informed on Chelsea Manning |
| **Gary McKinnon** | Hacked NASA & Pentagon looking for UFO evidence |
| **Kevin Poulsen** | Took over radio phone lines to win a Porsche |

**📉 Why It Ended?**

| **Reason** | **Impact** |
| --- | --- |
| 🚨 Stronger laws | Hacking became **criminalized globally** |
| 🧱 Better security | Companies started investing in **firewalls, IDS, encryption** |
| 💰 Monetization | Cybercrime shifted toward **money (ransomware, data theft)** |
| 🎯 State actors | Nation-states entered the field — less about fun, more about war & espionage |

**🧠 Why You Should Study It:**

* Learn how **security evolved**
* Understand the **roots of ethical hacking**
* Appreciate **curiosity-driven exploration**
* See how laws & tech responses shaped today's landscape