

# Regex to Machine Learning: Techniques to Get Ahead of Cyber Attackers

Evan Gaustad

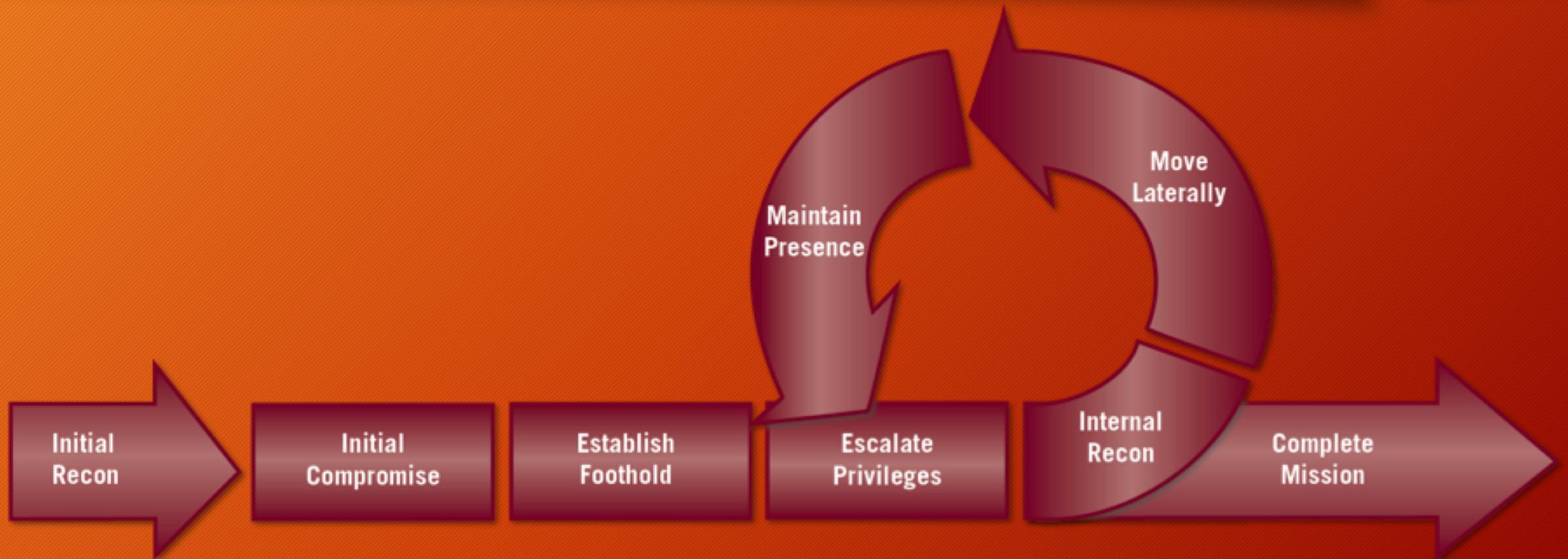
# Introduction

- About me
  - Cyber Security Professional and Data Scientist
  - Twitter: @cyberaitech
  - LinkedIn: evangaustad
- Success for this talk:
  - Share and demonstrate powerful analytics to catch bad guys

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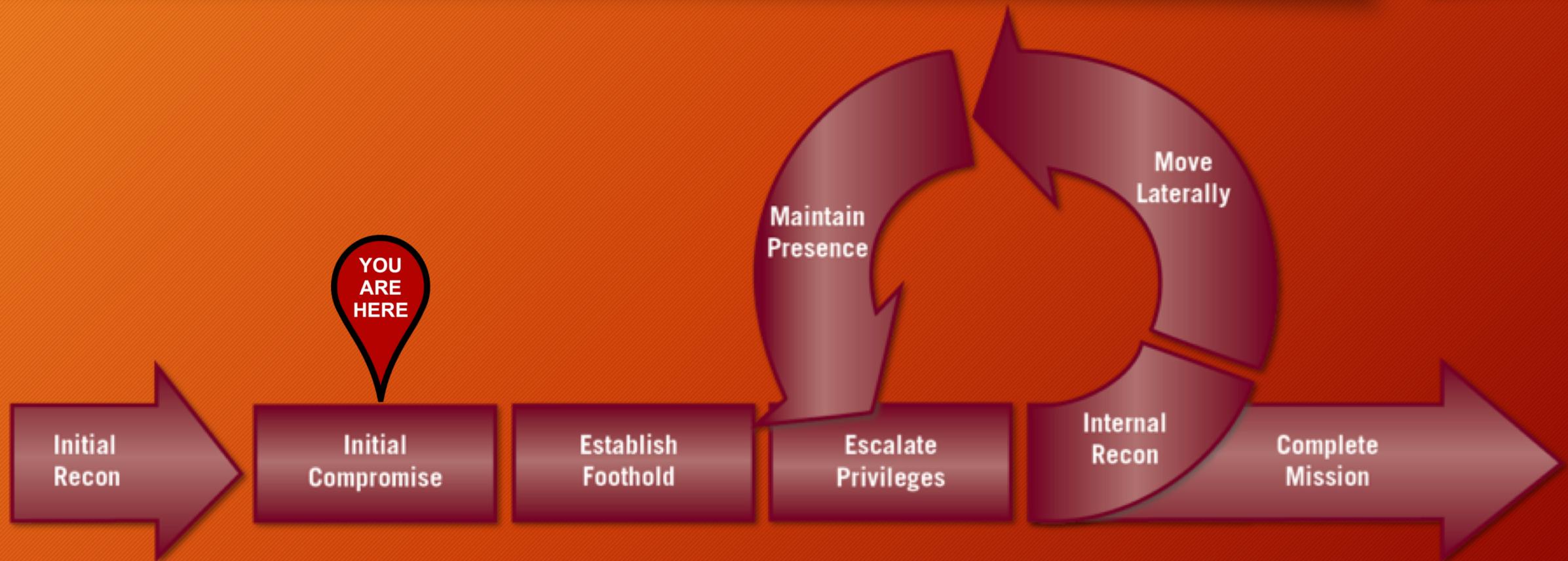
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- Success for this talk:
  - Share and demonstrate powerful analytics to catch bad guys
- Failure for this talk:
  - Drag people through an hour of math and code for no reason

# Phishing in the cyber kill chain



B. Zeng. (2014). “Zero-Day Attacks are not the same as Zero-Day Vulnerabilities”, FireEye  
<https://www.fireeye.com/blog/executive-perspective/2014/04/zero-day-attacks-are-not-the-same-as-zero-day-vulnerabilities.html>

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# MITRE ATT&CK Framework Plug

Initial Access	Execution	Persistence	Privilege Escalation	Defense Evasion	Credential Access	Discovery	Lateral Movement	Collection	Exfiltration	Command And Control
10 items	31 items	56 items	28 items	59 items	20 items	19 items	17 items	13 items	9 items	21 items
Drive-by Compromise	AppleScript	.bash_profile and .bashrc	Access Token Manipulation	Access Token Manipulation	Account Manipulation	Account Discovery	AppleScript	Audio Capture	Automated Exfiltration	Commonly Used Port
Exploit Public-Facing Application	CMSTP	Accessibility Features	Accessibility Features	Binary Padding	Bash History	Application Window Discovery	Application Deployment Software	Automated Collection	Data Compressed	Communication Through Removable Media
Hardware Additions	Command-Line Interface	AppCert DLLs	AppCert DLLs	BITS Jobs	Brute Force	Browser Bookmark Discovery	Distributed Component Object Model	Clipboard Data	Data Encrypted	Data Transfer Size Limits
Replication Through Removable Media	Control Panel Items	AppInit DLLs	AppInit DLLs	Bypass User Account Control	Credential Dumping	Credentials in Files	File and Directory Discovery	Data from Information Repositories	Data Transfer Size Limits	Custom Command and Connection Proxy
Spearphishing Attachment	Dynamic Data Exchange	Application Shimming	Application Shimming	Clear Command History	Credentials in Registry	Exploitation for Credential Access	Exploitation of Remote Services	Data from Local System	Exfiltration Over Alternative Protocol	Custom Cryptographic Protocol
Spearphishing Link	Execution through API	Authentication Package	Application Shimming	CMSTP	Network Service Scanning	Logon Scripts	Data from Network Shared Drive	Data from Local System	Exfiltration Over Command and Control Channel	Data Encoding
Spearphishing via Service	Execution through Module Load	BITS Jobs	Bypass User	Code Signing	Forced Authentication	Network Share Discovery	Pass the Hash	Data from Network Shared Drive	Data from Network Shared Drive	Data Obfuscation
Supply Chain Compromise	Exploitation for Client Execution	Bootkit	Account Control	Component Firmware	Component Object Model Hijacking	Hooking	Pass the Ticket	Data from Removable Media	Exfiltration Over Other Network Medium	Domain Fronting
InstallUtil	Graphical User Interface	Browser Extensions	DLL Search Order Hijacking	Control Panel Items	Input Capture	Password Policy Discovery	Remote Desktop Protocol	Data Staged	Fallback Channels	Multi-hop Proxy
Trusted Relationship	Launchctl	Component Firmware	Exploitation for Privilege Escalation	DCShadow	Input Prompt	Peripheral Device Discovery	Remote File Copy	Email Collection	Exfiltration Over Physical Medium	Multi-stage Channels
Valid Accounts	Local Job Scheduling	Component Object Model Hijacking	Extra Window Memory Injection	Deobfuscate/Decode Files or Information	Kerberoasting	Permission Groups Discovery	Remote Services	Input Capture	Scheduled Transfer	Multiband Communication
	LSASS Driver	Create Account	Extra Window Memory Injection	Keychain	LLMNR/NBT-NS Poisoning	Process Discovery	Replication Through Removable Media	Man in the Browser	Screen Capture	Multilayer Encryption
	Mshta	DLL Search Order Hijacking	File System Permissions Weakness	Disabling Security Tools	NTP Poisoning	Query Registry	Shared Webroot	SSH Hijacking	Video Capture	Port Knocking
	PowerShell	Regsvcs/Regasm	DLL Side-Loading	DLL Search Order Hijacking	Network Sniffing	Remote System Discovery	Third-party Software	Taint Shared Content	Remote Access Tools	Remote File Copy
	Rundll32	Regsvr32	Exploitation for Defense Evasion	Image File Execution Options Injection	>Password Filter DLL	Security Software Discovery	Windows Admin Shares	Standard Application Layer Protocol	Standard Cryptographic Protocol	Standard Non-Application Layer Protocol
	Scheduled Task	External Remote Services	Private Keys	Extra Window Memory Injection	Replication Through Removable Media	System Information Discovery	Windows Remote Management	Uncommonly Used Port	Uncommonly Used Port	Uncommonly Used Port
	Scripting	File System Permissions Weakness	New Service	File Deletion	Securityd Memory	System Network Configuration Discovery	System Network Connections Discovery	System Network Connections Discovery	System Network Connections Discovery	System Network Connections Discovery
	Service Execution	Hidden Files and Directories	Path Interception	File System Logical Offsets	Two-Factor Authentication Interception	System Network Configuration Discovery	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares
	Signed Binary Proxy Execution	Hooking	Plist Modification	Gatekeeper Bypass	Hidden Files and Directories	System Network Configuration Discovery	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares
	Signed Script Proxy Execution	Hypervisor	Port Monitors	Hidden Files and Directories	Hidden Users	System Network Connections Discovery	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares	Windows Admin Shares

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	Signed Script Proxy Execution	Signed Script Proxy Execution	File System Logical Offsets	Gatekeeper Bypass			
			Hypervisor	Hidden Files and Directories			
			Image File Execution Options Injection	Port Monitors			
			Process Injection	Hidden Files and Directories			
				Hidden Users			

# MITRE ATT&CK Plug (T1192)

## Spearphishing Link

Spearphishing with a link is a specific variant of spearphishing. It is different from other forms of spearphishing in that it employs the use of links to download malware contained in email, instead of attachment malicious files to the email itself, to avoid defenses that may inspect email attachments.

All forms of spearphishing are electronically delivered social engineering targeted at a specific individual, company, or industry. In this case, the malicious emails contain links. Generally, the links will be accompanied by social engineering text and require the user to actively click or copy and paste a URL into a browser, leveraging [User Execution](#). The visited website may compromise the web browser using an exploit, or the user will be prompted to download applications, documents, zip files, or even executables depending on the pretext for the email in the first place. Adversaries may also include links that are intended to interact directly with an email reader, including embedded images intended to exploit the end system directly or verify the receipt of an email (i.e. web bugs/web beacons).

### Spearphishing Link Technique

<b>ID</b>	T1192
<b>Tactic</b>	Initial Access
<b>Platform</b>	Linux, Windows, macOS
<b>Data</b>	Packet capture, Web proxy,
<b>Sources</b>	Email gateway, Detonation chamber, SSL/TLS inspection, DNS records, Mail server
<b>CAPEC</b>	<a href="#">CAPEC-163</a>
<b>ID</b>	

# Phishing Prevalence and Click Rate

- Phishing and pretexting represent 98% of social incidents and 93% of breaches.<sup>1</sup>
- 91% of attacks begin with phishing<sup>2</sup>
- On average 4% of people click on a link in a given campaign.
- Targeted phishing was able to generate up to 54% click rates<sup>3</sup>
- Techniques include:
  - Malicious Links in emails
  - Attachments to emails
  - Soliciting information via email

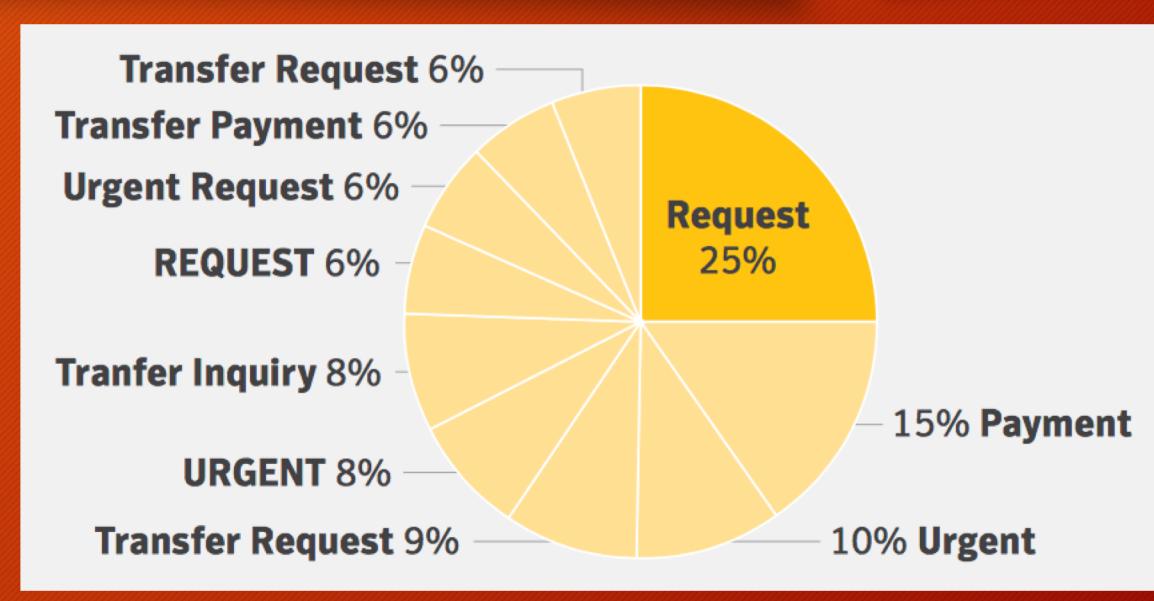
[1] Verizon Data Breach Investigations Report. (2018). <http://www.verizonenterprise.com/verizon-insights-lab/dbir/2018/>

[2] PhishMe (2016). “Enterprise Phishing Susceptability and Resiliency Report” <https://cofense.com/enterprise-phishing-susceptibility-report>

[3] Friedrich-Alexander Universitat Erlangen-Nurnberg (2016). <https://www.fau.eu/2016/08/25/news/research/one-in-two-users-click-on-links-from-unknown-senders/>

# The lure

- Often a sense of action, urgency, or curiosity is used to entice people
- Others are crafted to the individual, sometimes creating fake online identities or websites



Common Email Subject Lines

# The Lure: Hancitor Example

From HelloFax Inc. <hellofax@whiteroadgraphics.com>Reply | Reply All | Forward | More

Subject: Welcome to HelloFax, Someone Sent You a Fax Date: Thu, 31 May 2018 16:18 UTC  
To [removed] <>

 **HELLOFAX**  
The easiest way to sign and send faxes on-line

**Dear Client,**  
Here is Your Fax  
  
Date and Time: 05/31/2018 09:14 AM  
Number of pages received: 8  
  
Reference #: TGH746358K.

[Download Your Fax](#)

**hxxp://clinicasholadoctora.com?**  
*[string of characters]=[encoded string representing recipient's email address]*

Thanks for going paper less!  
- HelloFax Community



# Common Response

*“Phishers will randomize credential harvesting links sent through email, making it even more difficult to implement blocks when email Sender and Subject correlations don’t detect all of the messages from a particular phishing campaign. As you search and sanitize, if you notice **URL patterns begin to emerge**, consider implementing Splunk **RegEx searches** to help fill in the gaps in your detections.”*

# Uniform Resource Locator (URL)

https://help-protect01.000webhostapp.com:8443/payment-update.html?tab=payments&ref=settings\_nav



Protocol 3<sup>rd</sup> lvl Domain 2<sup>nd</sup> lvl Domain TLD Port

Query

Key / Value Pairs

# Uniform Resource Locator (URL)

https://help-protect01.000webhostapp.com:8443/payment-update.html?tab=payments&ref=settings\_nav

Protocol    3<sup>rd</sup> lvl Domain    2<sup>nd</sup> lvl Domain TLD    Port

Query

Key / Value Pairs

Host

Uniform Resource Identifier

# Regular Expressions (RegEx) for Patterns

- Characters
  - [A-Za-z0-9] to match alpha-numeric characters
  - . Matches any single character
- Repeated Characters
  - \* match the specified character zero or more times
  - {N, M} match the preceding character at least N and no more than M times

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  - \* match the specified character zero or more times
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- Examples:
  - [a-z]{1, 6}
  - .\*
  - [A-Z]\.php

would match the string “regex” but “Regex” would not  
matches any string  
matches a upper case letter followed by .php

# Common Practitioner Response

New Search

```
daysago=30 index=web_proxy \.php\?id  
| regex url=".*/[a-zA-Z0-9]{5,15}\/[a-zA-Z0-9]{5,15}\.php\?id=.*[a-zA-Z0-9]{1,15}@[a-zA-Z0-9]{1,10}\.[a-z]{2,3}$"  
| table _time user url
```

url
<a href="http://pgeseeourprogress.com/r7T2y/9xVmGsBJT.php?id=">http://pgeseeourprogress.com/r7T2y/9xVmGsBJT.php?id=</a>
<a href="http://musee-verre.fr/7C8wDZX/6WqtQhOl0F.php?id=">http://musee-verre.fr/7C8wDZX/6WqtQhOl0F.php?id=</a>
<a href="http://metadroloficial-br.com/VECkg/m8HYUB.php?id=">http://metadroloficial-br.com/VECkg/m8HYUB.php?id=</a>
<a href="http://gleeseason3.org/cmiRx/gTBX4su6QW.php?id=">http://gleeseason3.org/cmiRx/gTBX4su6QW.php?id=</a>
<a href="http://coderedsecurityrgv.com/ZerQL1ntD/6upnz3k.php?id=">http://coderedsecurityrgv.com/ZerQL1ntD/6upnz3k.php?id=</a>
<a href="http://virtualfuture.ru/bRiesW/7c0D8FREPd.php?id=">http://virtualfuture.ru/bRiesW/7c0D8FREPd.php?id=</a>

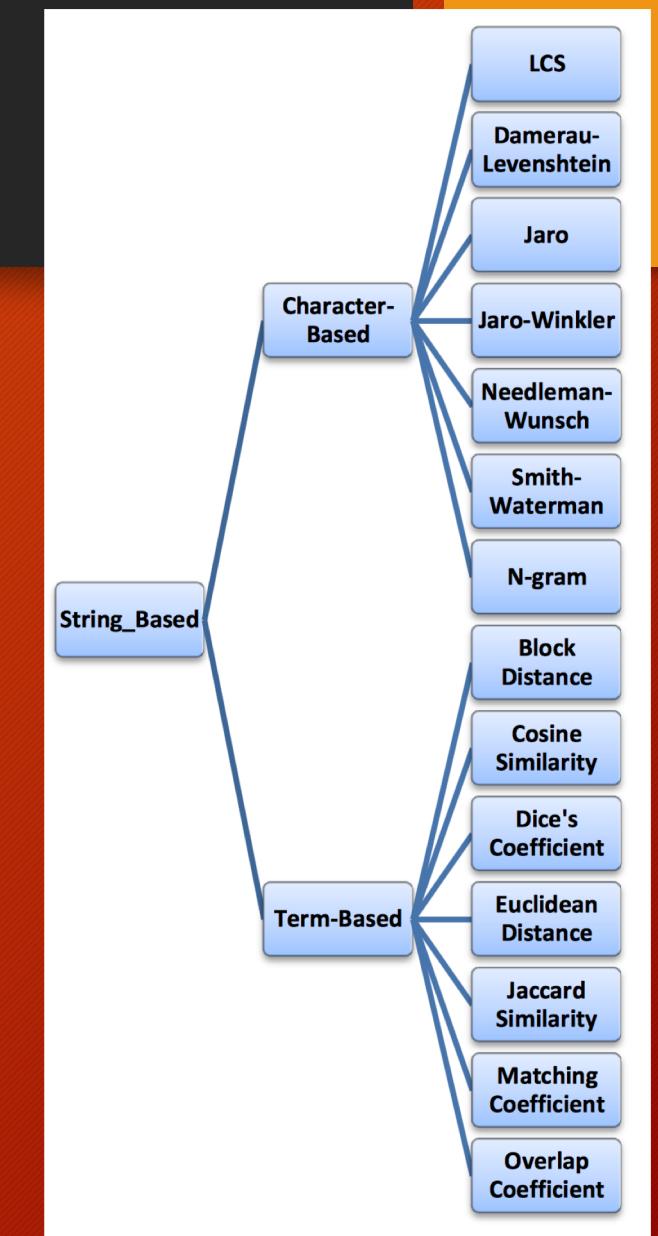
# Text Similarity

- Regular Expressions are one tool



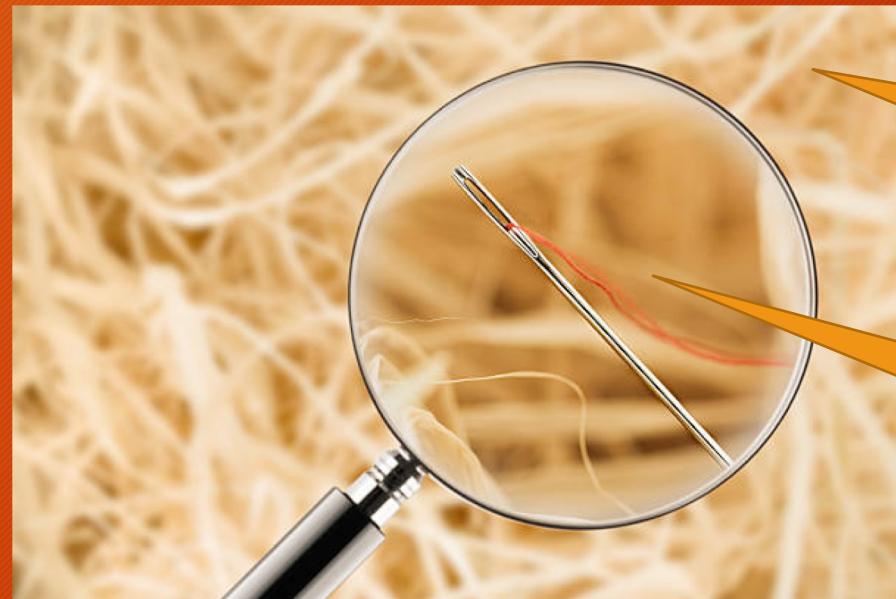
# Text Similarity

- Regular Expressions are one tool
- ...there are many others



# Defender's Task

- Given some examples of what's malicious, find similar malicious examples in your own environment (if they exist)



Events in the millions or billions per day

Relatively small volume of true malicious events

# Which set of tools to use?

- Needle in a haystack: given a handful of examples

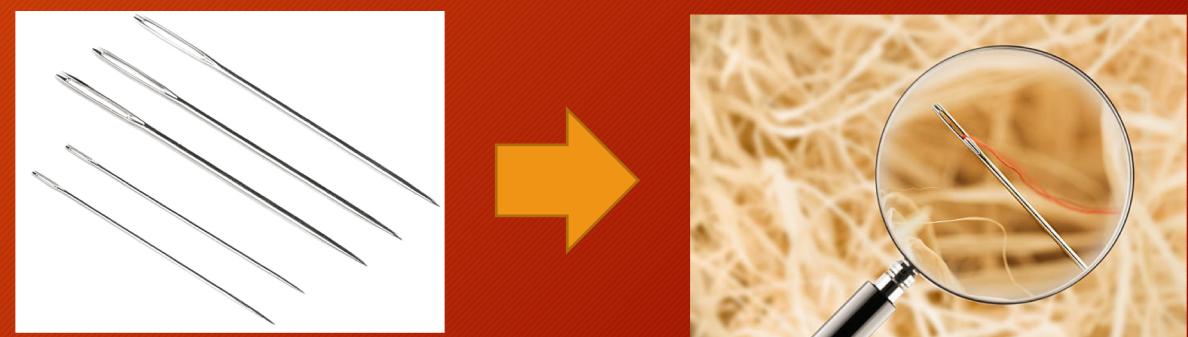


- Needle-stack of needles: ...but I have thousands or more examples



# Given a few needles, find a needle in a haystack

- Given a handful of examples, find similar examples in another environment
- String similarity
  - Levenshtein
  - Jaro
- Distance / similarity measurements
  - Cosine
  - Euclidean



# String Distance / Similarity Measurements

- Levenshtein Distance (“Edit Distance”)
  - String metric representing the minimum number of edits e.g. insertions, deletions, and substitutions required to turn one string into another.
- Jaro Similarity
  - Measures several aspects of string similarity:
    - Number of matching characters
    - String length
    - Sequence of characters and transpositions

# String Distance / Similarity Measurements

String1	String2	Levenshtein	Jaro	Note
google.com	google.com	0	1.0	Exact match
google.com	g00gle.com	2	0.867	Replace letter o with number zero
google.com	google.badguy.com	7	0.863	Subdomain mimicking legitimate registered domain
google.com	malware.ru	9	0.533	Completely unrelated

Wikipedia. (2018). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levenshtein\\_distance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Levenshtein_distance)

Wikipedia. (2018). [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaro%E2%80%93Winkler\\_distance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jaro%E2%80%93Winkler_distance)

# Text to Numeric Vector

- Many techniques only work with numbers as input, rather than text
- This requires transforming words into numbers

# Counting “Terms”

badsite.pl/index.php?pl



URL #1	
<u>Term</u>	<u>Term Count</u>
badsite	1
index	1
pl	2
php	1

# terms in this URL: 5

badsite.br/index?  
click=br&br=click



URL #2	
<u>Term</u>	<u>Term Count</u>
badsite	1
index	1
click	2
br	3

# terms in this URL: 7

# Counting “Terms”

badsite.pl/index.php?pl



URL #1	
<u>Term</u>	<u>Term Count</u>
badsite	1
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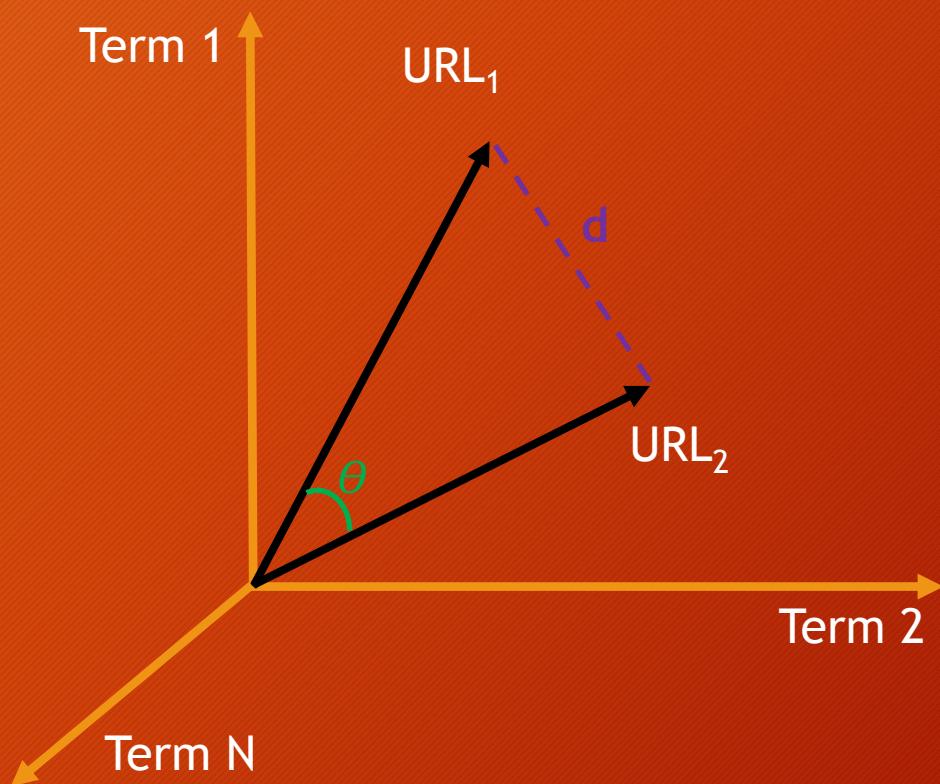
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click	2
br	3

# terms in this URL: 7



# String Distance Measurements

- Text > Numbers > **Cosine Similarity** or **Euclidean Distance**



# Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency

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click=br&br=click



URL #2	
<u>Term</u>	<u>Term Count</u>
badsite	1
index	1
click	2
br	3

# term in this URL: 7

URL #1	
<u>Term</u>	<u>TF</u>
badsite	$1/5 = .2$
index	$1/5 = .2$
pl	$2/5 = .4$
php	$1/5 = .2$

URL #2	
<u>Term</u>	<u>TF</u>
badsite	$1/7 = 0.14$
index	$1/7 = 0.14$
click	$2/7 = .29$
br	$3/7 = .43$

# Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency

badsite.pl/index.php?pl



URL #1	
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URL #2	
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badsite	1
index	1
click	2
br	3

# term in this URL: 7

URL #1		
<u>Term</u>	<u>TF</u>	<u>IDF</u>
badsite	$1/5 = .2$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$
index	$1/5 = .2$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$
pl	$2/5 = .4$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$
php	$1/5 = .2$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$

$IDF = \log_e(\# \text{ URLs} / \# \text{ URLs with word})$

URL #2		
<u>Term</u>	<u>TF</u>	<u>IDF</u>
badsite	$1/7 = 0.14$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$
index	$1/7 = 0.14$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$
click	$2/7 = .29$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$
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badsite	1
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click	2
br	3

# term in this URL: 7

URL #1			
Term	TF	IDF	TF*IDF
badsite	$1/5 = .2$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$	0
index	$1/5 = .2$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$	0
pl	$2/5 = .4$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$	0.1204
php	$1/5 = .2$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$	0.0602

$IDF = \log_e(\# \text{ URLs} / \# \text{ URLs with word})$

URL #2			
Term	TF	IDF	TF*IDF
badsite	$1/7 = 0.14$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$	0
index	$1/7 = 0.14$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$	0
click	$2/7 = .29$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$	0.0873
br	$3/7 = .43$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$	0.1294

# Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency

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pl	$2/5 = .4$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$	0.1204
php	$1/5 = .2$	$\log(2 / 1) = 0.301$	0.0602

$IDF = \log_e(\# \text{ URLs} / \# \text{ URLs with word})$

URL #2			
<u>Term</u>	<u>TF</u>	<u>IDF</u>	<u>TF*IDF</u>
badsite	$1/7 = 0.14$	$\log(2 / 2) = 0$	0
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# Text to Numeric Vector

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URL #1	
Term	TF*IDF
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php	0.0602



badsite.br/index?  
click=br&br=click



URL #2	
Term	TF*IDF
badsite	0
index	0
click	0.0873
br	0.1294



URL	badsite	index	pl	php	click	br
#1	0	0	0.1204	0.0602	0	0
#2	0	0	0	0	0.0873	0.1294

# Given a needle stack of needles, find a needle in a haystack

- Given many examples of “benign” and “malicious”, find “bad” examples in another environment
- Text Classification (“benign” or “malicious”)
  - Naïve Bayes
  - Logistic Regression
  - Decision Trees
  - Random Forest
  - Neural Networks
  - and more...



# Naïve Bayes Example

## Corpus

1. I loved the movie
2. I hated the movie
3. A great movie. A good movie.
4. Poor acting
5. Great acting, a good movie



Doc	I	loved	the	movie	hated	a	great	poor	acting	good	label
#1	1	1	1	1							+
#2	1		1	1	1						-
#3				2		1	1			1	+
#4								1	1		-
#5				1		1	1		1	1	+

Example: What's the value of “I hated the poor acting”?

$$V(+) = P(+|+)P(I|+|+)P(hated|+|+)P(the|+|+)P(poor|+|+)P(acting|+|+) = 6.05 \cdot 10^{-7}$$

$$V(-) = P(-|-)P(I|-,+)P(hated|-,+)P(the|-,+)P(poor|-,+)P(acting|-,+) = 1.22 \cdot 10^{-5}$$

# Questions?

Data, Code, Slides:

[https://github.com/egaus/malicious\\_url\\_analysis](https://github.com/egaus/malicious_url_analysis)

 @cyberaitech  
 evangaustad



# URL Retrieval: Thug (honeyclient)

```
# Pull Docker Image
```

```
docker pull honeynet/thug
```

```
# Run container, mounting local logs directory
```

```
docker run -it -v ${PWD}/logs:/logs honeynet/thug
```

```
# Inside container run thug, with desired options
```

```
python /opt/thug/src/thug.py -u win7ie100 -T 300 -w 5000 -FZ https://www.google.com
```

Benefits:

- Rich logging (e.g. all redirects and additional analysis)
- Can identify attempted exploitation
- Multiple “personalities”
- ...and more

<https://buffer.github.io/thug/doc/docker.html>

# URL Retrieval: sURLi

```
# docker run --rm -v ${PWD}/data:/surli/results -it surli -u  
https://www.google.com
```

## Benefits:

- Final rendered page content
- Zip encrypted content, pw: “infected”
- Final rendered screenshot of page
- Browser logs of each intermediate step of URL retrieval

<https://github.com/egaus/sURLi>

# Naïve Bayes Example

Given these definitions...

$$N_{k+} = \# \text{ times word } K \text{ occurs in the + class}$$

$$N_{k-} = \# \text{ times word } K \text{ occurs in the - class}$$

$$|\text{vocab}| = \# \text{ unique words in vocabulary} = 10$$

$$P_+ = 3 / 5 = .6$$

$$P_- = 2 / 5 = .4$$

$$n_+ = \text{sum of word counts for that class} = 14$$

$$n_- = \text{sum of word counts for that class} = 6$$

$W_k$  = a word, like “loved”

...we get the probability of any word for its label

$$P(W_k | +) = (N_{k+} + 1) / (n_+ + |\text{vocab}|)$$

$$P(W_k | -) = (N_{k-} + 1) / (n_- + |\text{vocab}|)$$

Example for word “good”:

$$\begin{aligned} P(\text{“good”} | -) &= (N_{k-} + 1) / (n_- + |\text{vocab}|) \\ &= 0 + 1 / 6 + 10 = 1 / 16 = 0.0625 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} P(\text{“good”} | +) &= (N_{k+} + 1) / (n_+ + |\text{vocab}|) \\ &= (2 + 1) / (14 + 10) = 3 / 24 = 0.125 \end{aligned}$$

Example: What's the value of “I hated the poor acting”?

$$V(+) = P(+)\text{P(I|+)}\text{P(hated|+)}\text{P(the|+)}\text{P(poor|+)}\text{P(acting|+)} = 6.05 \cdot 10^{-7}$$

$$V(-) = P(-)\text{P(I|-)}\text{P(hated|-)}\text{P(the|-)}\text{P(poor|-)}\text{P(acting|-)} = 1.22 \cdot 10^{-5}$$

\*Based on the Naïve Bayes model the sentence is more likely to be negative (-), since  $1.22 \cdot 10^{-5}$  is bigger than  $6.05 \cdot 10^{-7}$ .