

Demonstration of unsafe string concatenation in C using **strcat()**

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <string.h>

int main() {
    char s1[] = "security";
    char s2[15] = "software";
    char s3[10] = "";

    printf("Before strcat operations...\n");
    printf("s1: \"%s\" size: %zu length: %zu\n", s1, sizeof(s1), strlen(s1));
    printf("s2: \"%s\" size: %zu length: %zu\n", s2, sizeof(s2), strlen(s2));
    printf("s3: \"%s\" size: %zu length: %zu\n", s3, sizeof(s3), strlen(s3));

    strcat(s2,s1);           // append s1 to s2
    strcat(s3,s1);           // append s1 to s3
    strcat(s3,s2);           // append s2 to s3

    printf("After strcat() operations...\n");
    printf("s1: \"%s\" size: %zu length: %zu\n", s1, sizeof(s1), strlen(s1));
    printf("s2: \"%s\" size: %zu length: %zu\n", s2, sizeof(s2), strlen(s2));
    printf("s3: \"%s\" size: %zu length: %zu\n", s3, sizeof(s3), strlen(s3));
}
```

Let's assume the storage for arrays s1, s2, and s3 is allocated in the order of declarations in the source code (high memory address to low memory address).

Step 1: Show the stack frame contents BEFORE call to **strcat function (left table on next page)**

Step 2: Use the before call stack frame contents to determine the output produced by the first three print statements.

```
s1: "security" size: 9 length: 8
s2: "software" size: 15 length: 8
s3: "" size: 10 length: 0
```

Step 3: Show the stack frame contents AFTER call to **strcat function (right table on next page)**

Step 4: Use the after call stack frame contents to determine the output produced by the last three print statements.

```
s1: "y" size: 9 length: 1
s2: "ecurity" size: 15 length: 7
s3: "ysoftwaresecurity" size: 10 length: 17
```

Stack frame (before call to `strcat`)

High address CFP → s1[8]	RA (4 bytes)
	PFP (4 bytes)
	'\0'
	'y'
	't'
	'i'
	'r'
	'u'
	'c'
	'e'
	's'
	s2[14]
s1[0]	
s2[0]	\0
	'e'
	'r'
	'a'
	'w'
	't'
	'f'
	'o'
	's'
s3[9]	
Low address s3[0]	
	'\0'

Stack frame (after call to `strcat`)

High address	s1[8]	RA (4 bytes)
CFP →		PPF (4 bytes)
	'\0'	
	'y'	
	't'	
	'i'	
	'r'	
	'u'	
	'c'	
	'e' '\0'	
s1[0]	's' 'y'	
s2[14]	't'	
	'i'	
	'r'	
	'u'	
	'c'	
	'e'	
	'\0' 's'	
	'e' '\0'	
	'r' 'y'	
	'a' 't'	
	'w' 'i'	
	't' 'r'	
	'f' 'u'	
	'o' 'c'	
s2[0]	's' 'e'	
s3[9]	's'	
	'e'	
	'r'	
	'a'	
	'w'	
	't'	
	'f'	
	'o'	
	'\0' 's'	
Low address	s3[0]	'\0' 'y'