



# Threats and Attacks

# Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this material, you should be able to:

- Identify and understand the **threats** posed to information security
- Identify and understand the more common **attacks** associated with those threats

# Information Security VS Computer Security

computer security  
technical measures

- access control
- identification & authentication;
- system & communication protection
- system & information integrity

management controls  
and procedures

- awareness & training
- audit & accountability
- certification, accreditation, & security assessments
- contingency planning
- maintenance
- physical & environmental protection
- planning
- personnel security
- risk assessment
- systems & services acquisition

overlap computer  
security technical  
measures and  
management controls

- configuration management
- incident response
- media protection

Computer Security is more focused on “Technical measures” while Information Security is more focused on “Management controls”.

# Threats

- **Threat:** an object, person, or other entity that represents a constant danger to an asset
- Management must be informed of the different threats facing the organization
- By examining each threat category, management effectively protects information through policy, education, training, and technology controls

# Threats (continued)

- The 2004 Computer Security Institute (CSI)/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) survey found:
  - 79 percent of organizations reported cyber security breaches within the last 12 months
  - 54 percent of those organizations reported financial losses totaling over \$141 million

**TABLE 2-1** Threats to Information Security<sup>4</sup>

Categories of threat	Examples
1. Acts of human error or failure	Accidents, employee mistakes
2. Compromises to intellectual property	Piracy, copyright infringement
3. Deliberate acts of espionage or trespass	Unauthorized access and/or data collection
4. Deliberate acts of information extortion	Blackmail of information disclosure
5. Deliberate acts of sabotage or vandalism	Destruction of systems or information
6. Deliberate acts of theft	Illegal confiscation of equipment or information
7. Deliberate software attacks	Viruses, worms, macros, denial-of-service
8. Forces of nature	Fire, flood, earthquake, lightning
9. Deviations in quality of service from service providers	Power and WAN service issues
10. Technical hardware failures or errors	Equipment failure
11. Technical software failures or errors	Bugs, code problems, unknown loopholes
12. Technological obsolescence	Antiquated or outdated technologies

# Threats (continued)

## Acts of Human Error or Failure

- Includes acts performed without malicious intent
- Causes include:
  - Inexperience
  - Improper training
  - Incorrect assumptions
- Employees are among the greatest threats to an organization's data

# Threats (continued)

## Acts of Human Error or Failure (continued)

- Employee mistakes can easily lead to:
  - Revelation of classified data
  - Entry of erroneous data
  - Accidental data deletion or modification
  - Data storage in unprotected areas
  - Failure to protect information
- Many of these threats can be prevented with controls



## Who is the biggest threat to your organization?



Tom Twostory  
convicted burglar



Dick Davis a.k.a.  
"wannabe amateur hacker"

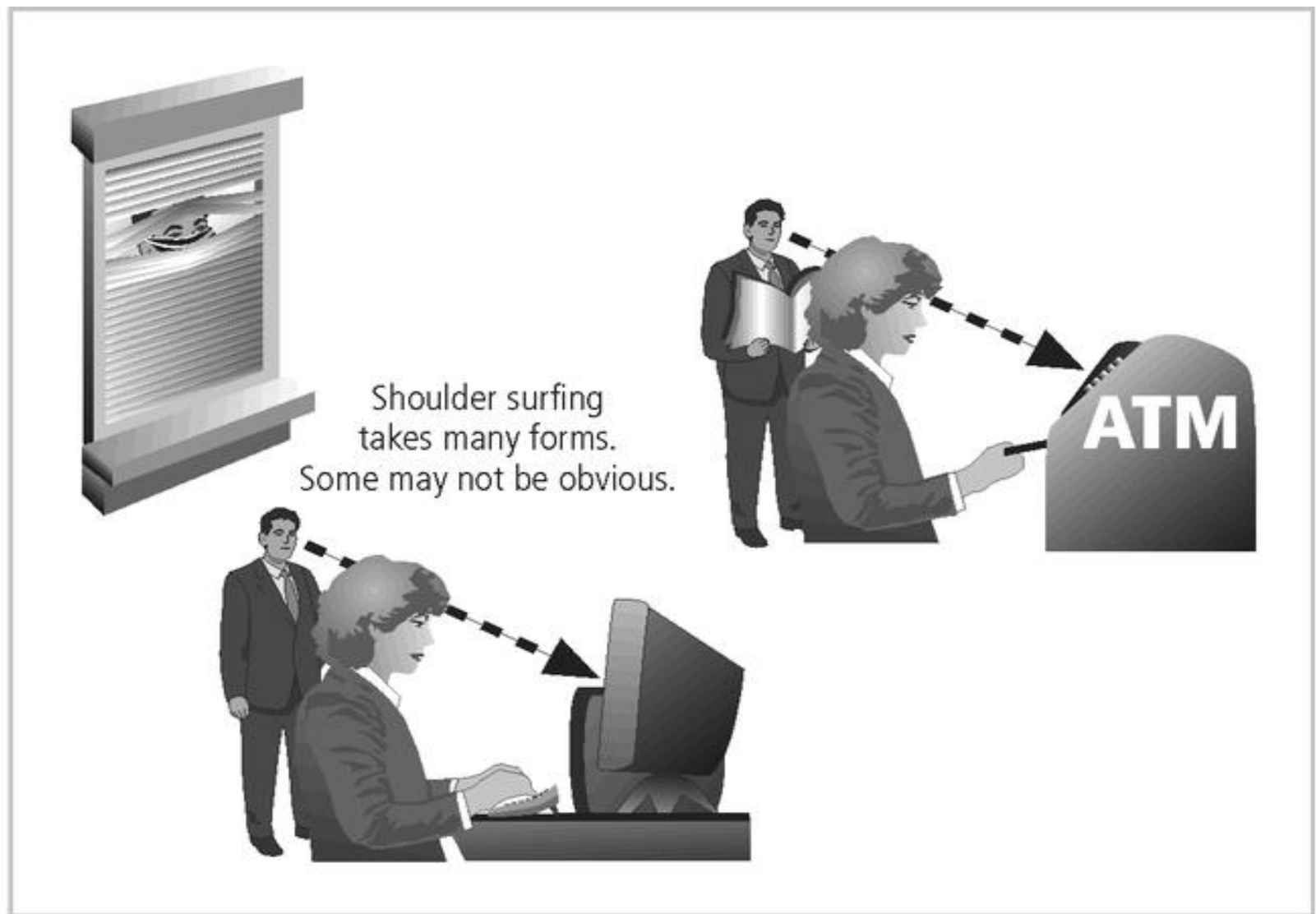


Harriet Allthumbs  
employee  
accidentally  
deleted the one copy  
of a critical report

## Threats (continued)

### Deliberate Acts of Espionage or Trespass

- Access of protected information by unauthorized individuals
- Shoulder surfing occurs anywhere a person accesses confidential information
- Controls let trespassers know they are encroaching on organization's cyberspace
- Hackers uses skill, guile, or fraud to bypass controls protecting others' information



**FIGURE 2-2** Shoulder Surfing

# Threats (continued)

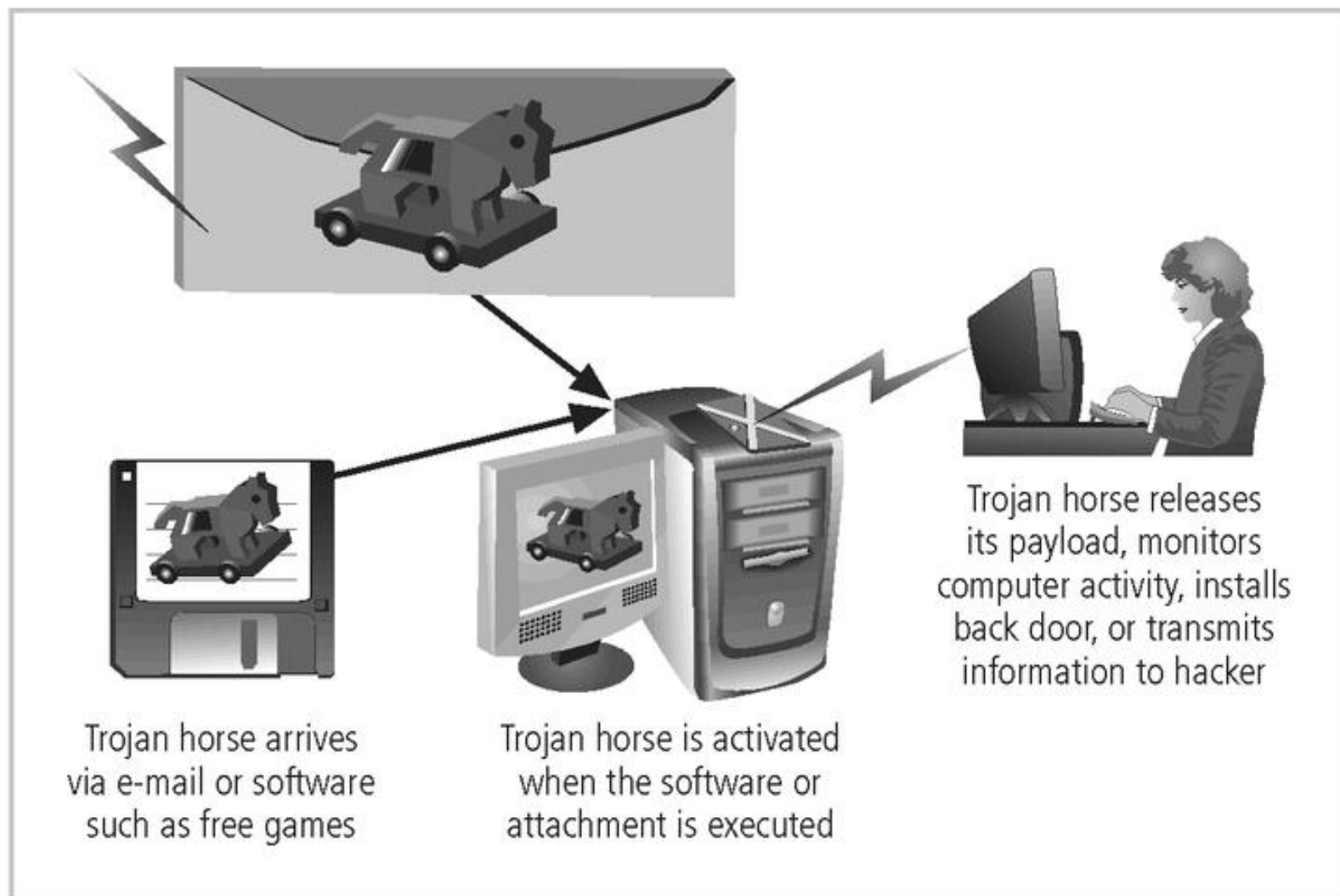
## Deliberate Acts of Theft

- Illegal taking of another's physical, electronic, or intellectual property
- Physical theft is controlled relatively easily
- Electronic theft is more complex problem; evidence of crime not readily apparent

# Threats (continued)

## Deliberate Software Attacks

- Malicious software (malware) designed to damage, destroy, or deny service to target systems
- *Includes*  
viruses,  
worms,  
Trojan horses,  
logic bombs,  
back doors,  
and denial-of-services attacks (DoS)



**FIGURE 2-8** Trojan Horse Attack

# Threats (continued)

## Forces of Nature

- Forces of nature are among the most dangerous threats
- Disrupt not only individual lives, but also storage, transmission, and use of information
- Organizations must implement controls to limit damage and prepare contingency plans for continued operations

# Threats (continued)

## Deviations in Quality of Service

- Includes situations where products or services not delivered as expected
- Information system depends on many interdependent support systems
- Internet service, communications, and power irregularities dramatically affect availability of information and systems



# Threats (continued)

## Internet Service Issues

- Internet service provider (ISP) failures can considerably undermine availability of information
- Outsourced Web hosting provider assumes responsibility for all Internet services as well as hardware and Web site operating system software

# Attacks

- Act or action that exploits vulnerability (i.e., an identified weakness) in controlled system
- Accomplished by threat agent which damages or steals organization's information

**Table 2-2** Attack Replication Vectors

Vector	Description
IP scan and attack	The infected system scans a random or local range of IP addresses and targets any of several vulnerabilities known to hackers or left over from previous exploits such as Code Red, Back Orifice, or PoizonBox.
Web browsing	If the infected system has write access to any Web pages, it makes all Web content files (.html, .asp, .cgi, and others) infectious, so that users who browse to those pages become infected.
Virus	Each infected machine infects certain common executable or script files on all computers to which it can write with virus code that can cause infection.
Unprotected shares	Using vulnerabilities in file systems and the way many organizations configure them, the infected machine copies the viral component to all locations it can reach.
Mass mail	By sending e-mail infections to addresses found in the address book, the infected machine infects many users, whose mail-reading programs also automatically run the program and infect other systems.
Simple Network Management Protocol (SNMP)	By using the widely known and common passwords that were employed in early versions of this protocol (which is used for remote management of network and computer devices), the attacking program can gain control of the device. Most vendors have closed these vulnerabilities with software upgrades.

# Attacks (continued)

- **Malicious code:** includes execution of viruses, worms, Trojan horses, and active Web scripts with intent to destroy or steal information



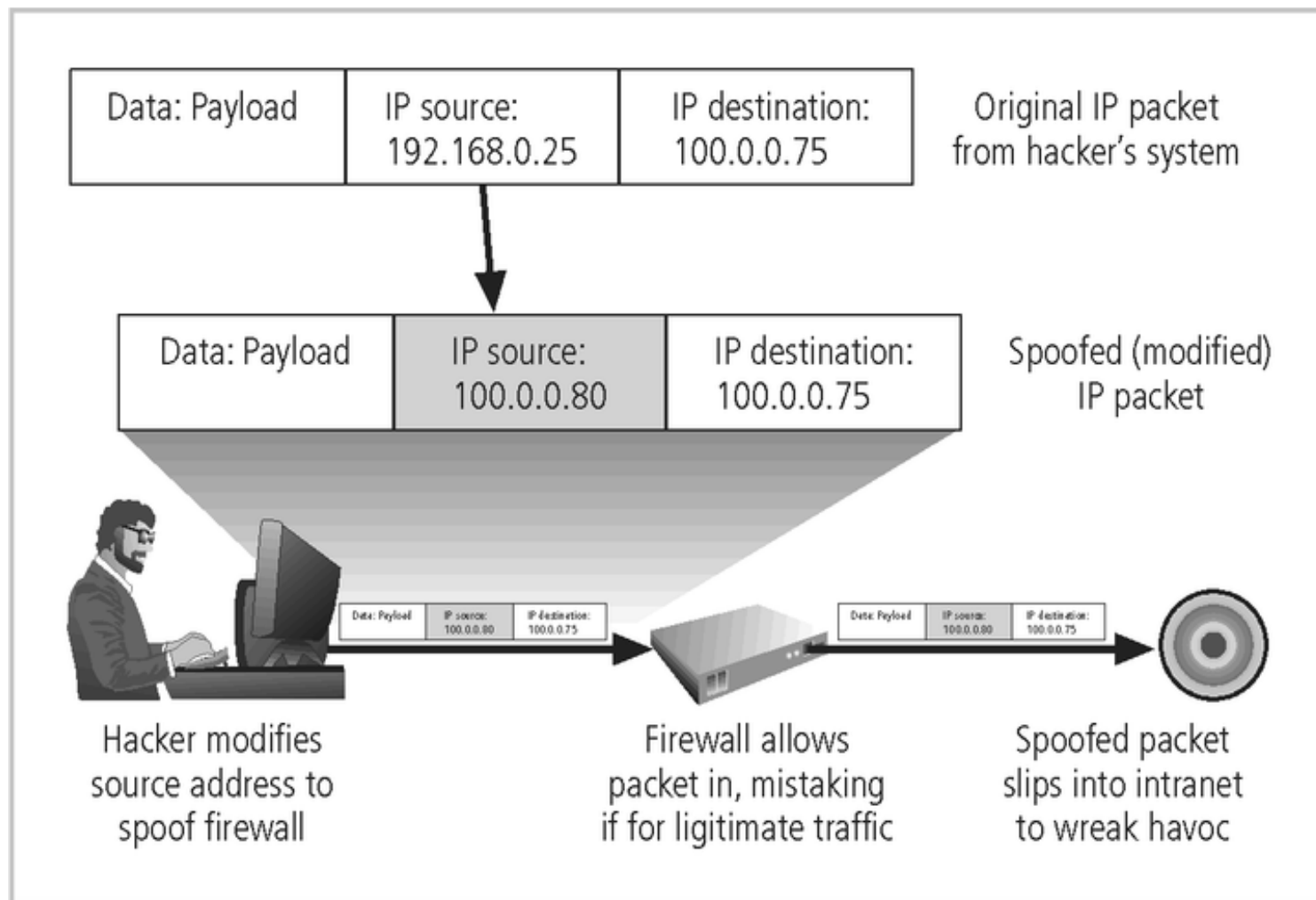
- **Back door:** gaining access to system or network using known or previously unknown/newly discovered access mechanism

# Attacks (continued)

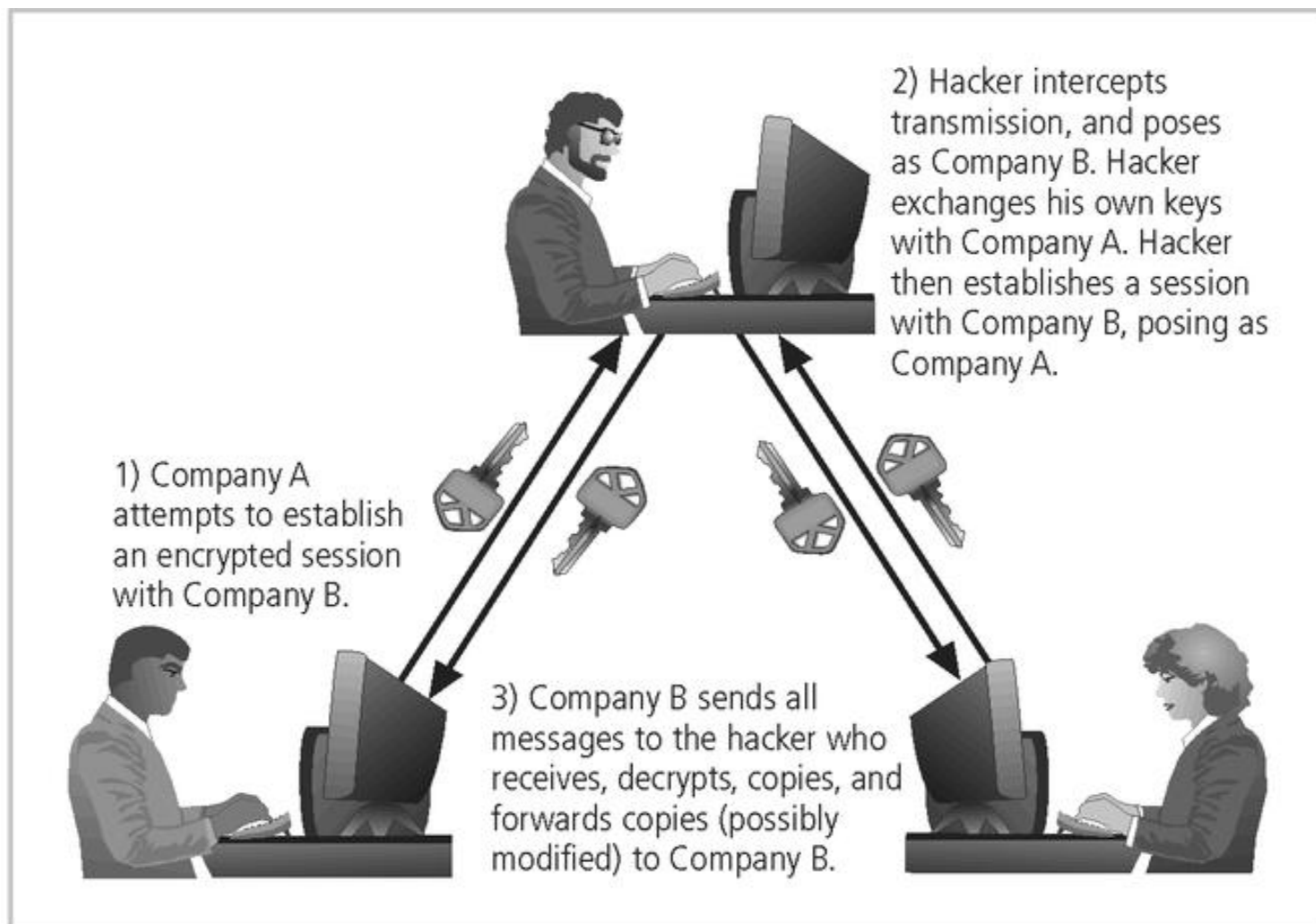
- **Password crack:** attempting to reverse calculate a password
- **Brute force:** trying every possible combination of options of a password
- **Dictionary:** selects specific accounts to attack and uses commonly used passwords (i.e., the dictionary) to guide guesses

# Attacks (continued)

- **Spoofing**: technique used to gain unauthorized access; intruder assumes a trusted IP address
- **Man-in-the-middle**: attacker monitors network packets, modifies them, and inserts them back into network
- **Spam**: unsolicited commercial e-mail; more a nuisance than an attack, though is emerging as a vector for some attacks



**FIGURE 2-10** IP Spoofing



**FIGURE 2-11** Man-in-the-Middle Attack



## Attacks (continued)

- **Mail bombing:** also a DoS; attacker routes large quantities of e-mail to target
- **Sniffers:** program or device that monitors data traveling over network; can be used both for legitimate purposes and for stealing information from a network
- **Social engineering:** using social skills to convince people to reveal access credentials or other valuable information to attacker

# Attacks (continued)

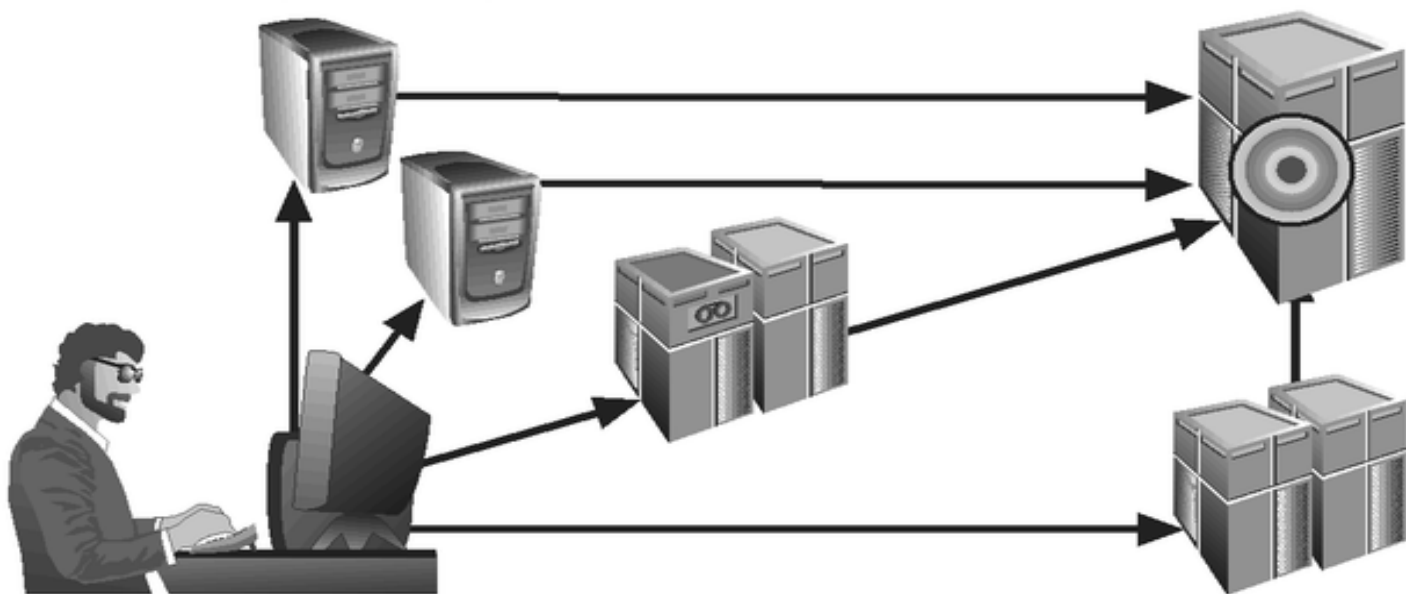
- **Buffer overflow:** application error occurring when more data is sent to a buffer than can be handled
- **Timing attack:** relatively new; works by exploring contents of a Web browser's cache to create malicious cookie

# Attacks (continued)

- **Denial-of-service (DoS):** attacker sends large number of connection or information requests to a target
  - Target system cannot handle successfully along with other, legitimate service requests
  - May result in system crash or inability to perform ordinary functions
- **Distributed denial-of-service (DDoS):** coordinated stream of requests is launched against target from many locations simultaneously

In a denial-of-service attack, a hacker compromises a system and uses that system to attack the target computer, flooding it with more requests for services than the target can handle.

In a distributed denial-of-service attack, dozens or even hundreds of computers (known as zombies) are compromised, loaded with DoS attack software and then remotely activated by the hacker to conduct a coordinated attack.



**FIGURE 2-9** Denial-of-Service Attacks

# What Makes DDoS Attacks Possible?

- Internet was designed with functionality & not security in mind
- Internet security is highly interdependent
- Internet resources are limited
- Power of many is greater than power of a few

# Summary

- Threat: object, person, or other entity representing a constant danger to an asset
- Attack: a deliberate act that exploits vulnerability

# Exercise

- Consider the statement: an individual threat agent, like a hacker, can be a factor in more than one threat category. If a hacker hacks into a network, copies a few files, defaces the Web page, and steals credit card numbers, how many different threat categories does this attack fall into?

# Review Questions

- Why is data the most important asset an organization possesses? What other assets in the organization require protection?
- Why do employees constitute one of the greatest threats to information security?, give examples
- What measures can individuals take to protect against shoulder surfing?
- What are the various types of malware? How do worms differ from viruses? Do Trojan horses carry viruses or worms?
- Why does polymorphism cause greater concern than traditional malware? How does it affect detection?