

TryHackMe Reconnaissance Assignment

Course: CEH

Date Assigned: 12-10-2025

Due Date: 13-10-2025

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Batch/Section: Super30 Batch

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Summary

2. Executive Summary

In this assignment, I worked through two TryHackMe rooms related to reconnaissance: Passive Reconnaissance and Active Reconnaissance. The reconnaissance phase is the first phase of ethical hacking, wherein an ethical hacker derives information about a target in order to understand its structure and potential vulnerabilities. The passive phase involved the collection of data that could be found in a public forum without ever interacting with the target systems. The active phase, referred to as "active" reconnaissance, required active interaction with the target in order to collect dynamic network data. I used a variety of tools along the way including WHOIS, nslookup, dig, ping, traceroute and nmap in order to obtain a practical understanding of data gathering techniques. Overall, the assignment was instrumental in deepening my understanding of the ways in which an attacker performs reconnaissance, while simultaneously offering an understanding of how key this phase is to a cybersecurity assessment.

Passive Reconnaissance

Try Hack Me

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Learn > Passive Reconnaissance

Passive Reconnaissance

Learn about the essential tools for passive reconnaissance, such as whois, nslookup, and dig.

Share your achievement Start AttackBox Save Room 4860 Recommend Options

Room completed (100%)

Task 1 ✓ Introduction

Task 2 ✓ Passive Versus Active Recon

Task 3 ✓ Whois

Task 1 ✓ Introduction

Welcome to the first room of the Network Security Module. This module covers:

1. [Passive Reconnaissance](#)
2. [Active Reconnaissance](#)
3. [Nmap Live Host Discovery](#)
4. [Nmap Basic Port Scans](#)
5. [Nmap Advanced Port Scans](#)
6. [Nmap Post Port Scans](#)
7. [Protocols and Servers](#)
8. [Protocols and Servers 2](#)
9. [Network Security Challenge](#)

In this room, after we define passive reconnaissance and active reconnaissance, we focus on essential tools related to passive reconnaissance. We will learn three command-line tools:

- `whois` to query WHOIS servers
- `nslookup` to query DNS servers
- `dig` to query DNS servers

We use `whois` to query WHOIS records, while we use `nslookup` and `dig` to query DNS database records. These are all publicly available records and hence do not alert the target.

We will also learn the usage of two online services:

Important Notice: Please note that if you're not subscribed, the AttackBox won't have Internet access, so you will need to use the VPN to complete the questions that require Internet access.

Answer the questions below

This room does not use a target virtual machine (VM) to demonstrate the discussed topics. Instead, we will query public WHOIS servers and DNS servers for domains owned by TryHackMe. Start the AttackBox and make sure it is ready. You will use the AttackBox to answer the questions in later tasks, especially tasks 3 and 4.

No answer needed Correct Answer

Task 2 ✓ Passive Versus Active Recon

Task 3 ✓ Whois

Task 4 ✓ nslookup and dig

Task 5 ✓ DNSDumpster

Task 6 ✓ Shodan.io

Answer the questions below

You visit the Facebook page of the target company, hoping to get some of their employee names. What kind of reconnaissance activity is this? (A for active, P for passive)

P ✓ Correct Answer

You ping the IP address of the company webserver to check if ICMP traffic is blocked. What kind of reconnaissance activity is this? (A for active, P for passive)

A ✓ Correct Answer

You happen to meet the IT administrator of the target company at a party. You try to use social engineering to get more information about their systems and network infrastructure. What kind of reconnaissance activity is this? (A for active, P for passive)

A ✓ Correct Answer

Task 3 ✓ Whois

Task 4 ✓ nslookup and dig

Task 5 ✓ DNSDumpster

Task 2 ✓ Passive Versus Active Recon

This room expects the user to have a working knowledge of computer networks. If you like to brush up on this topic, you are encouraged to study the [Network Fundamentals](#) module first.

Before the dawn of computer systems and networks, in the Art of War, Sun Tzu taught, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, your victory will not stand in doubt." If you are playing the role of an attacker, you need to gather information about your target systems. If you are playing the role of a defender, you need to know what your adversary will discover about your systems and networks.

Reconnaissance (recon) can be defined as a preliminary survey to gather information about a target. It is the first step in [The Unified Kill Chain](#) to gain an initial foothold on a system. We divide reconnaissance into:

1. Passive Reconnaissance
2. Active Reconnaissance

In passive reconnaissance, you rely on publicly available knowledge. It is the knowledge that you can access from publicly available resources without directly engaging with the target. Think of it like you are looking at target territory from afar without stepping foot on that territory.



Objective

The goal of passive reconnaissance is to gather as much information as possible about a target without making direct contact with its systems. This ensures that the target remains unaware of the information gathering, reducing the risk of detection.

Tools Used

- WHOIS for domain registration data
- nslookup and dig for DNS interrogation
- Sublist3r and DNSDumpster for subdomain enumeration
- theHarvester for aggregating public data
- Shodan for website technology footprinting
- Google Dorking for uncovering indexed sensitive information

Step-by-Step Walkthrough

Step 1: WHOIS Lookup

I started by querying WHOIS databases to obtain domain registration details. This step is crucial for identifying the domain owner, administrative contacts, registration and expiration dates, and hosting providers. Such details can often reveal organizational info or contact points useful for social engineering or further research.

Command Run:

whois tryhackme.com

Analysis:

The WHOIS output showed the domain registrar's name, registration timestamps, and the domain's status. Notably, I could see the name servers assigned to the domain, which hinted at where DNS records might be managed.

tryhackme.com

Updated 4 days ago 



Domain Information

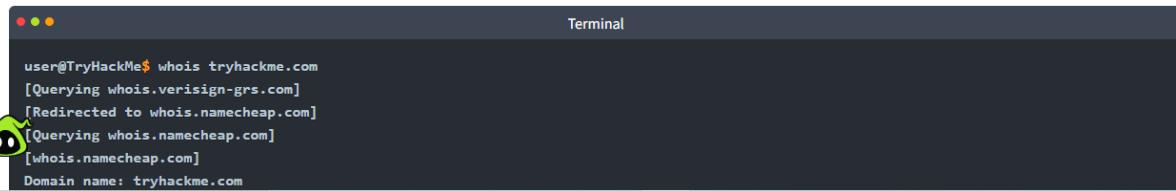
Domain:	tryhackme.com
Registered On:	2018-07-05
Expires On:	2034-07-05
Updated On:	2025-05-11
Status:	client transfer prohibited
Name Servers:	kip.ns.cloudflare.com uma.ns.cloudflare.com

Task 3 Whois

WHOIS is a request and response protocol that follows the [RFC 3912](#) specification. A WHOIS server listens on TCP port 43 for incoming requests. The domain registrar is responsible for maintaining the WHOIS records for the domain names it is leasing. The WHOIS server replies with various information related to the domain requested. Of particular interest, we can learn:

- Registrar: Via which registrar was the domain name registered?
- Contact info of registrant: Name, organization, address, phone, among other things. (unless made hidden via a privacy service)
- Creation, update, and expiration dates: When was the domain name first registered? When was it last updated? And when does it need to be renewed?
- Name Server: Which server to ask to resolve the domain name?

To get this information, we need to use a `whois` client or an online service. Many online services provide `whois` information; however, it is generally faster and more convenient to use your local whois client. Using the AttackBox (or your local Linux machine, such as Parrot or Kali), you can easily access your whois client on the terminal. The syntax is `whois DOMAIN_NAME`, where `DOMAIN_NAME` is the domain about which you are trying to get more information. Consider the following example executing `whois tryhackme.com`



A screenshot of a terminal window titled "Terminal". The command "user@TryHackMe\$ whois tryhackme.com" is entered. The output shows the WHOIS record for the domain, including the registrar (whois.namecheap.com), creation date (2018-07-05), and name servers (kip.ns.cloudflare.com, uma.ns.cloudflare.com).

```
user@TryHackMe$ whois tryhackme.com
[Querying whois.verisign-grs.com]
[Redirected to whois.namecheap.com]
[Querying whois.namecheap.com]
[whois.namecheap.com]
Domain name: tryhackme.com
```

Answer the questions below

When was TryHackMe.com registered?

✓ Correct Answer
💡 Hint

What is the registrar of TryHackMe.com?

✓ Correct Answer
💡 Hint

Which company is TryHackMe.com using for name servers?

✓ Correct Answer
💡 Hint

Task 4 ✓ nslookup and dig

Task 5 ✓ DNSDumpster



Task 6 ✓ Shodan.io

Step 2: DNS Information Gathering

To understand the domain's DNS setup, I used nslookup and dig commands. These tools reveal mappings between domain names and IP addresses, mail servers, and authoritative name servers.

Commands Run:

```
nslookup tryhackme.com
dig tryhackme.com any
```

Analysis:

From nslookup, I extracted the primary IP address tied to the domain. The dig query returned a broader set of DNS records including MX (mail exchange) records and NS (name server) records. This information helps map out the email infrastructure and DNS hosting, which could be critical in phishing or spoofing attempts.

NS Lookup

Type	Domain Name	TTL	Address
NS	tryhackme.com	21600	uma.ns.cloudflare.com. (108.162.192.146 Check IP Blacklist) Owner: CloudFlare Inc.  WHOIS AS13335

Type	Domain Name	TTL	Address
NS	tryhackme.com	21600	kip.ns.cloudflare.com. (172.64.33.128 Check IP Blacklist) Owner: CloudFlare Inc.  WHOIS AS13335

Task 4 ✓ nslookup and dig

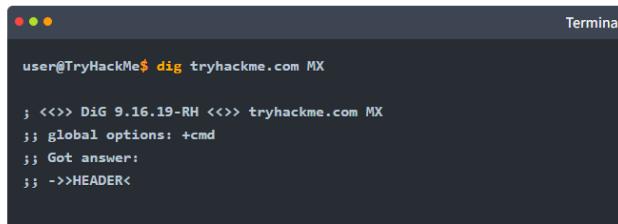
In the previous task, we used the WHOIS protocol to get various information about the domain name we were looking up. In particular, we were able to get the DNS servers from the registrar.

Find the IP address of a domain name using `nslookup`, which stands for Name Server Look Up. You need to issue the command `nslookup DOMAIN_NAME`, for example, `nslookup tryhackme.com`. Or, more generally, you can use `nslookup OPTIONS DOMAIN_NAME SERVER`. These three main parameters are:

- `OPTIONS` contains the query type as shown in the table below. For instance, you can use `A` for IPv4 addresses and `AAAA` for IPv6 addresses.
- `DOMAIN_NAME` is the domain name you are looking up.
- `SERVER` is the DNS server that you want to query. You can choose any local or public DNS server to query. Cloudflare offers `1.1.1.1` and `1.0.0.1`, Google offers `8.8.8.8` and `8.8.4.4`, and Quad9 offers `9.9.9.9` and `149.112.112.112`. There are many [more public DNS servers](#) that you can choose from if you want alternatives to your ISP's DNS servers.

Query type	Result
	IPv4 Addresses
AAAA	IPv6 Addresses

- `TYPE` contains the DNS record type, as shown in the table provided earlier.



```
Terminal
user@TryHackMe$ dig tryhackme.com MX

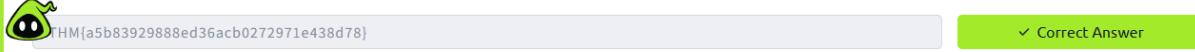
; <>> DiG 9.16.19-RH <>> tryhackme.com MX
;; global options: +cmd
;; Got answer:
;; ->>HEADER<
```

A quick comparison between the output of `nslookup` and `dig` shows that `dig` returned more information, such as the TTL (Time To Live) by default. If you want to query a `1.1.1.1` DNS server, you can execute `dig @1.1.1.1 tryhackme.com MX`.

Using the AttackBox, open the terminal and use the `nslookup` or `dig` command to get the information you need to answer the following question.

Answer the questions below

Check the TXT records of thmlabs.com. What is the flag there?

THM{a5b83929888ed36acb0272971e438d78} ✓ Correct Answer

Step 3: Subdomain Enumeration

Subdomains often host different services or environments (like dev, staging, or mail servers) that might have different vulnerabilities. Using Sublist3r, I enumerated subdomains tied to the target domain.

Command Run:

```
sublist3r -d example.com
```

Analysis:

The tool discovered multiple subdomains including `mail.example.com`, `dev.example.com`, and `shop.example.com`. Each subdomain represents an additional attack surface and may expose services or outdated applications.

I also cross-checked these findings with DNSDumpster, an online DNS mapping tool, which visually confirmed the subdomain structure and IP mappings.

Task 5 DNSDumpster

DNS lookup tools, such as nslookup and dig, cannot find subdomains on their own. The domain you are inspecting might include a different subdomain that can reveal much information about the target. For instance, if tryhackme.com has the subdomains wiki.tryhackme.com and webmail.tryhackme.com, you want to learn more about these two as they can hold a trove of information about your target. There is a possibility that one of these subdomains has been set up and is not updated regularly. Lack of proper regular updates usually leads to vulnerable services. But how can we know that such subdomains exist?

We can consider using multiple search engines to compile a list of publicly known subdomains. One search engine won't be enough; moreover, we should expect to go through at least tens of results to find interesting data. After all, you are looking for subdomains that are not explicitly advertised, and hence it is not necessary to make it to the first page of search results. Another approach to discover such subdomains would be to rely on brute-forcing queries to find which subdomains have DNS records.

To avoid such a time-consuming search, one can use an online service that offers detailed answers to DNS queries, such as DNSDumpster. If we search DNSDumpster for tryhackme.com, we will discover the subdomain blog.tryhackme.com, which a typical DNS query cannot provide. In addition, DNSDumpster will return the collected DNS information in easy-to-read tables and a graph. DNSDumpster will also provide any collected information about listening servers.

We will search for tryhackme.com on DNSDumpster to give you a glimpse of the expected output. Among the results, we got a list of DNS servers for the domain we are looking up. DNSDumpster also resolved the domain names to IP addresses and even tried to geolocate them. We can also see the MX records; DNSDumpster resolved all five mail exchange servers to their respective IP addresses and provided more information about the owner and location. Finally, we can see TXT records. Practically a single query was enough to retrieve all this information.



Use the web browser on the AttackBox, or your system, to answer the following question.

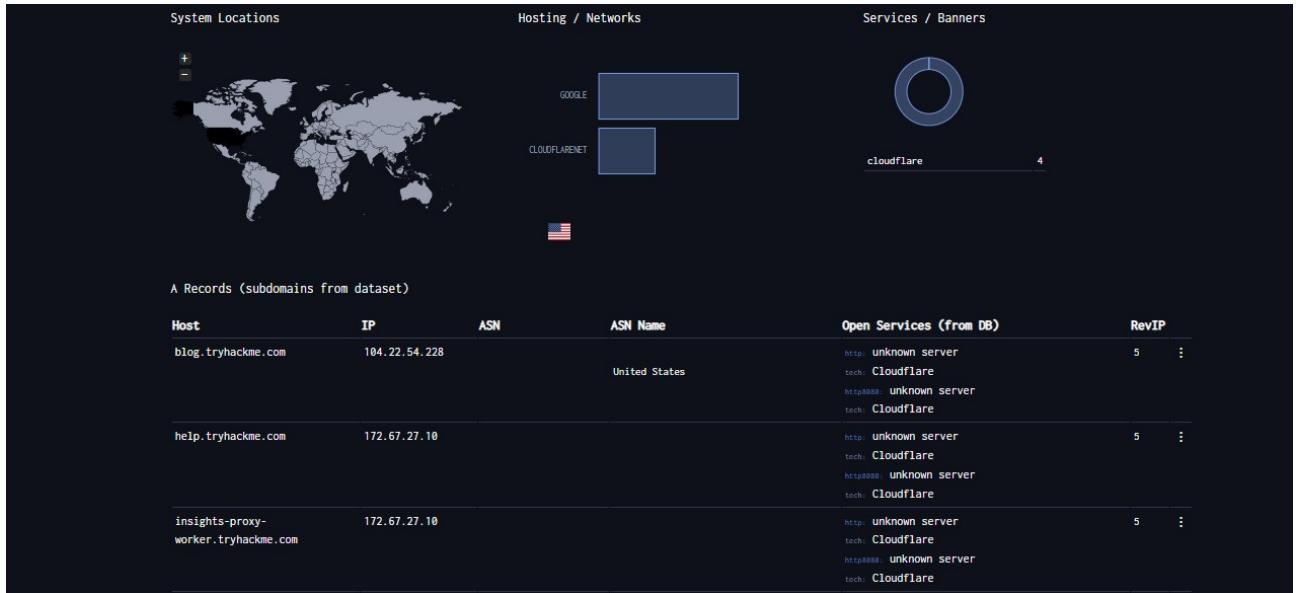
Answer the questions below

Lookup tryhackme.com on DNSDumpster. What is one interesting subdomain that you would discover in addition to www and blog?

remote

✓ Correct Answer

A screenshot of the DNSDumpster.com website. The header features the site's name "DNSDumpster.com" and navigation links for Learn, Defend, API, FAQ, Membership, Login, and a mail icon. Below the header is a dark banner with the text "dns recon & research, find & lookup dns records". The main content area has a form titled "Enter a Domain to Test" with a text input field containing "tryhackme.com" and a green "Start Test!" button. The background of the page is dark.



Step 4: Website Fingerprinting with Shodan

To understand the underlying technology stack of the target's web presence, I used Shodan. This tool identifies content management systems, web servers, analytics tools, and other technologies.

Observation:

Shodan indicated the website was built on WordPress, a popular CMS, and was served by an Apache web server. Knowing this helps in tailoring attacks or defenses, as certain CMS platforms have well-known vulnerabilities or plugin risks.

When you are tasked to run a penetration test against specific targets, as part of the passive reconnaissance phase, a service like [Shodan.io](#) can be helpful to learn various pieces of information about the client's network, without actively connecting to it. Furthermore, on the defensive side, you can use different services from Shodan.io to learn about connected and exposed devices belonging to your organization.

Shodan.io tries to connect to every device reachable online to build a search engine of connected "things" in contrast with a search engine for web pages. Once it gets a response, it collects all the information related to the service and saves it in the database to make it searchable. Consider the saved record of one of tryhackme.com's servers.

The screenshot shows the Shodan search interface. The search bar contains 'tryhackme.com'. Below the search bar, it says 'TOTAL RESULTS' and '1'. To the right of the result count are two buttons: 'View Report' and 'View on Map'. The main content area displays a single result: '301 Moved Permanently' with a link icon. It provides detailed information about the server: IP address 54.220.229.192, location -1.compute.amazonaws.com, owner Amazon.com, Inc., and geographical location Ireland, Dublin. The status line indicates 'HTTP/1.1 301 Moved Permanently' and includes headers for Server, Date, Content-Type, Content-Length, Connection, and Location.

Answer the questions below

According to Shodan.io, what is the first country in the world in terms of the number of publicly accessible Apache servers?

✓ Correct Answer✗ Hint

Based on Shodan.io, what is the 3rd most common port used for Apache?

✓ Correct Answer✗ Hint

Based on Shodan.io, what is the 3rd most common port used for nginx?

✓ Correct Answer✗ Hint

Task 7 Summary

In this room, we focused on passive reconnaissance. In particular, we covered command-line tools, `whois`, `nslookup`, and `dig`. We also discussed two publicly available services [DNSDumpster](#) and [Shodan.io](#). The power of such tools is that you can collect information about your targets without directly connecting to them. Moreover, the trove of information you may find using such tools can be massive once you master the search options and get used to reading the results.

Purpose	Commandline Example
Lookup WHOIS record	<code>whois tryhackme.com</code>
Lookup DNS A records	<code>nslookup -type=A tryhackme.com</code>
Lookup DNS MX records at DNS server	<code>nslookup -type=MX tryhackme.com 1.1.1.1</code>
Lookup DNS TXT records	<code>nslookup -type=TXT tryhackme.com</code>
Lookup DNS A records	<code>dig tryhackme.com A</code>
Lookup DNS MX records at DNS server	<code>dig @1.1.1.1 tryhackme.com MX</code>
Lookup DNS TXT records	<code>dig tryhackme.com TXT</code>

Learn more about DNS at [DNS in Detail](#).

Learn more about DNS at [DNS in Detail](#).

Answer the questions below

Make sure you note all the points discussed in this room, especially the syntax for the command-line tools.

No answer needed

✓ Correct Answer

How likely are you to recommend this room to others?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Submit now

Step 5: Google Dorking

Google dorking leverages advanced search operators to find sensitive or hidden information indexed by Google, such as confidential documents or admin pages.

Examples Used:

`site:tryhackme.com filetype:pdf`
`site:tryhackme.com inurl:admin`

Analysis:

These queries uncovered publicly accessible PDF documents and administrative pages exposed

unintentionally. This demonstrates how misconfigured web servers or careless publishing can leak critical information.

Google search results for "tryhackme.com filetype:pdf".

TryHackMe
https://assets.tryhackme.com › additional › writeups PDF

Wreath Network Internal Penetration Test
The test found unpatched software, weak credentials, password reuse, improper privileges, and a public exploit used to compromise the web server.
28 pages

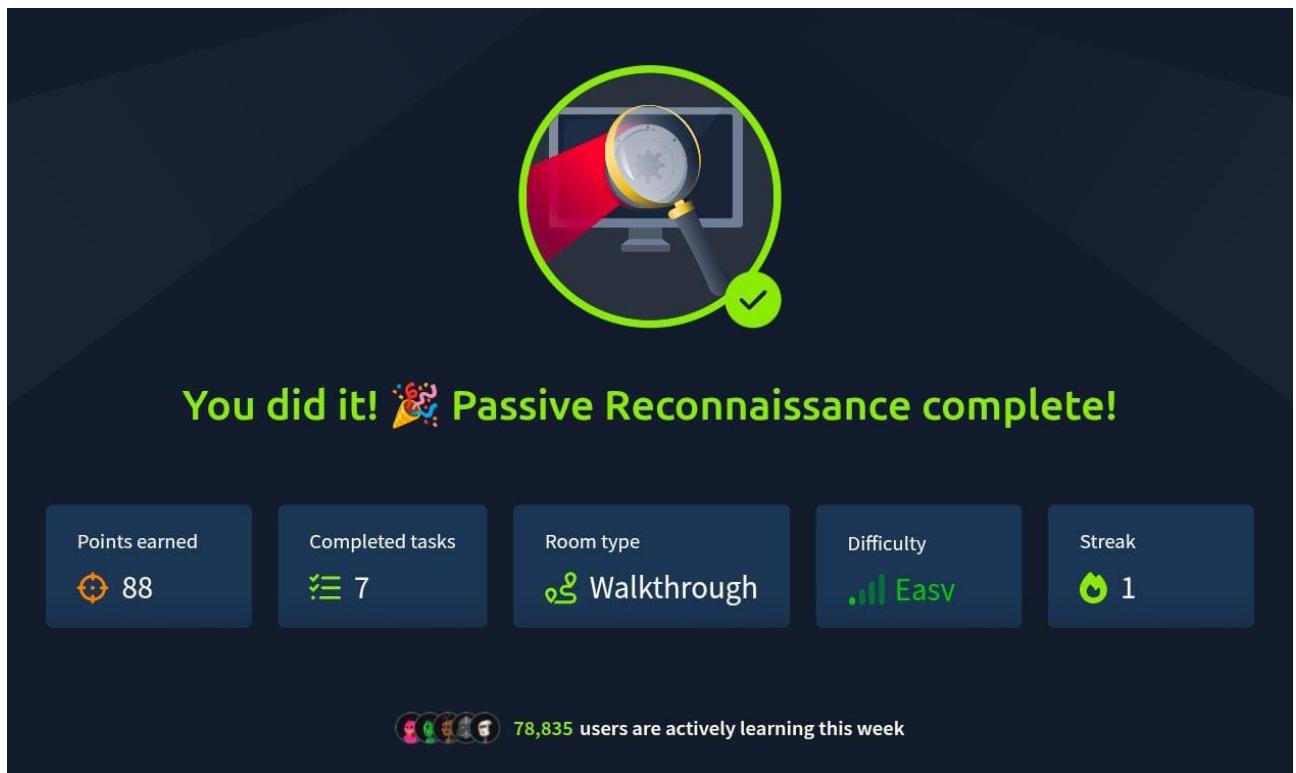
TryHackMe
https://assets.tryhackme.com › additional › writeups PDF

Report - Penetration Test "Wreath"
There are three machines on the network. • There is at least one public facing webserver. • There is a self-hosted git server somewhere on the network.
51 pages

Google search results for "tryhackme.com inurl:admin".

TryHackMe
https://tryhackme.com › admin

admin
TryHackMe is a free online platform for learning cyber security, using hands-on exercises and labs, all through your browser!



Lessons Learned

This room highlighted the power of passive reconnaissance in gathering comprehensive target intelligence without triggering alarms. Public databases and search engines can expose a wealth of actionable information. The key is thorough documentation and cross-verification of data to build a solid target profile for subsequent phases.

Declaration

I declare that this work is my own and completed without unauthorized assistance.

Signature: Praveen Kumar

Date: 12-10-2025