Exemplar_Use regular expressions to find patterns

March 11, 2025

1 Exemplar: Use regular expressions to find patterns

1.1 Introduction

Security analysts often analyze log files, including those that contain information about login attempts. For example as an analyst, you might flag IP addresses that relate to unusual attempts to log in to the system.

Another area of focus in cybersecurity is detecting devices that require updates. Software updates help prevent security issues due to vulnerabilities.

Using regular expressions in Python can help automate the processes involved in both of these areas of cybersecurity. Regular expression patterns and functions can be used to efficiently extract important information from strings and files.

In this lab, you'll write regular expressions to extract information such as device IDs or IP addresses.

Tips for completing this lab

As you navigate this lab, keep the following tips in mind:

- ### YOUR CODE HERE ### indicates where you should write code. Be sure to replace this with your own code before running the code cell.
- Feel free to open the hints for additional guidance as you work on each task.
- To enter your answer to a question, double-click the markdown cell to edit. Be sure to replace the "[Double-click to enter your responses here.]" with your own answer.
- You can save your work manually by clicking File and then Save in the menu bar at the top of the notebook.
- You can download your work locally by clicking File and then Download and then specifying your preferred file format in the menu bar at the top of the notebook.

1.2 Scenario

In this lab, you're working as a security analyst and your main tasks are as follows: - extracting device IDs containing certain characters from a log; these characters correspond with a certain operating system that requires an update. - extracting all IP addresses from a log and then comparing them to those that are flagged in a list.

1.3 Task 1

In order to work with regular expressions in Python, start by importing the **re** module. This module contains many functions that will help you work with regular expressions. By running the following code cell, the module will be available through the rest of the notebook.

```
[1]: # Import the `re` module in Python

import re
```

1.4 Task 2

In your work as a cybersecurity analyst, you're responsible for updating devices. A device ID that begins with the characters "r15" indicates that the device has a certain operating system that must be updated.

You're given a log of device IDs, stored in a variable named devices. Your eventual goal is to extract the device IDs that start with the characters "r15". For now, display the contents of the whole string to examine what it contains. Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

```
[2]: # Assign `devices` to a string containing device IDs, each device ID

→represented by alphanumeric characters

devices = "r262c36 67bv8fy 41j1u2e r151dm4 1270t3o 42dr56i r15xk9h 2j33krk

→253be78 ac742a1 r15u9q5 zh86b2l ii286fq 9x482kt 6oa6m6u x3463ac i4156nq

→g07h55q 081qc9t r159r1u"

# Display the contents of `devices`

print(devices)
```

r262c36 67bv8fy 41j1u2e r151dm4 1270t3o 42dr56i r15xk9h 2j33krk 253be78 ac742a1 r15u9q5 zh86b2l ii286fq 9x482kt 6oa6m6u x3463ac i4156nq g07h55q 081qc9t r159r1u

Hint 1

Use the print() function to display the contents of devices.

1.5 Task 3

In this task, you'll write a pattern to find devices that start with the character combination of "r15".

Use the regular expression symbols \w and + to create the pattern, and store it as a string in a variable named target_pattern.

Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell. Note that the code cell will contain only variable assignments, so running it will not produce an output.

```
[3]: # Assign `devices` to a string containing device IDs, each device ID

→represented by alphanumeric characters

devices = "r262c36 67bv8fy 41j1u2e r151dm4 1270t3o 42dr56i r15xk9h 2j33krk

→253be78 ac742a1 r15u9q5 zh86b2l ii286fq 9x482kt 6oa6m6u x3463ac i4156nq

→g07h55q 081qc9t r159r1u"

# Assign `target_pattern` to a regular expression pattern for finding device

→IDs that start with "r15"

target_pattern = "r15\w+"
```

Hint 1

The regular expression symbol \w matches with any alphanumeric character.

The regular expression symbol + matches with one or more occurrences of the character before it in the pattern.

Hint 2

Combining the regular expression symbols \w and + results in $\w+$, which matches with an alphanumeric string of any length.

Hint 3

Since target_pattern needs to match with an alphanumeric string that starts with "r15", make sure the pattern starts with r15, followed by \w+.

Question 1 What regular expression pattern did you use? For each component of the pattern, what would happen if it were missing?

The regular expression pattern used was "r15\w+". Without the r15, the pattern will not match with device IDs that start with the characters "r15". Without the \w, the pattern will not match with alphanumeric characters following "r15". Without the +, the pattern will match with only the first alphanumeric character that occurs after "r15".

1.6 Task 4

Use the findall() function from the re module to find the device IDs that the target_pattern matches with. Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

Note: In order to use re.findall() in Tasks 4, 7, 8, 9 and 11, you must have previously run the code import re in Task 1.

```
['r151dm4', 'r15xk9h', 'r15u9q5', 'r159r1u']
```

The findall() function from the re module takes in a regular expression, followed by a string. The function applies the regular expression to the string and returns a list of matches.

Hint 2

When calling the re.findall() function, pass in the target_pattern variable as the first argument and the devices variable as the second argument. This will ensure that target_pattern is applied to the string stored in devices.

1.7 Task 5

Now, the next task you're responsible for is analyzing a network security log file and determining which IP addresses have been flagged for unusual activity.

You're given the log file as a string stored in a variable named log_file. There are some invalid IP addresses in the log file due to issues in data collection. Your eventual goal is to use regular expressions to extract the valid IP addresses from the string.

Start by displaying the contents of the log_file to examine the details inside. Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

```
[5]: # Assign `log_file` to a string containing username, date, login time, and IP_{\square} \rightarrow address for a series of login attempts
```

```
eraab 2022-05-10 6:03:41 192.168.152.148
iuduike 2022-05-09 6:46:40 192.168.22.115
smartell 2022-05-09 19:30:32 192.168.190.178
arutley 2022-05-12 17:00:59 1923.1689.3.24
rjensen 2022-05-11 0:59:26 192.168.213.128
aestrada 2022-05-09 19:28:12 1924.1680.27.57
asundara 2022-05-11 18:38:07 192.168.96.200
dkot 2022-05-12 10:52:00 1921.168.1283.75
abernard 2022-05-12 23:38:46 19245.168.2345.49
cjackson 2022-05-12 19:36:42 192.168.247.153
jclark 2022-05-10 10:48:02 192.168.174.117
alevitsk 2022-05-08 12:09:10 192.16874.1390.176
jrafael 2022-05-12 10:37:22 192.168.148.115
yappiah 2022-05-12 10:37:22 192.168.103.10654
daquino 2022-05-08 7:02:35 192.168.168.144
```

Use the print() function to display the contents of the log_file.

1.8 Task 6

In this task, you'll build a regular expression pattern that you can use later on to extract IP addresses that are in the form of xxx.xxx.xxx. In other words, you'll extract all IP addresses that contain four segments of three digits that are separated by periods.

Write a regular expression pattern that will match with these IP addresses and store it in a variable named pattern. Use the regular expression symbols \d and \. in your pattern. Note that the symbol \d matches with digits, in other words, any integer between 0 and 9. Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code. Since you'll just build the pattern here, there won't be any output when you run this cell.

The $\$. symbol matches with periods.

Hint 2

Recall that this task's focus is on IP addresses in the form of xxx.xxx.xxx, where each x is a digit. In other words, these addresses have the following format: three digits followed by a period, three digits followed by a period, three digits.

To build a pattern that matches with IP addresses in this form, use the \d symbol for every digit and the $\.$ for every period that should be in the IP address.

Hint 3

You can use the regular expression \d\d\d\. to match with a segment of three digits followed by a period.

1.9 Task 7

In this task, you'll use the re.findall() function on the regular expression pattern stored in the pattern variable and the provided log_file to extract the corresponding IP addresses. Afterwards, run the cell and take note of what it outputs. Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

```
[7]: # Assign `log_file` to a string containing username, date, login time, and IP__ 

-address for a series of login attempts
```

```
log_file = "eraab 2022-05-10 6:03:41 192.168.152.148 \niuduike 2022-05-09 6:46:
-40 192.168.22.115 \nsmartell 2022-05-09 19:30:32 192.168.190.178 \narutley_⊥
→2022-05-12 17:00:59 1923.1689.3.24 \nrjensen 2022-05-11 0:59:26 192.168.213.
→128 \naestrada 2022-05-09 19:28:12 1924.1680.27.57 \nasundara 2022-05-11 18:
→38:07 192.168.96.200 \ndkot 2022-05-12 10:52:00 1921.168.1283.75 \nabernard_
\Rightarrow2022-05-12 23:38:46 19245.168.2345.49 \ncjackson 2022-05-12 19:36:42 192.168.
-247.153 \njclark 2022-05-10 10:48:02 192.168.174.117 \nalevitsk 2022-05-08
→12:09:10 192.16874.1390.176 \njrafael 2022-05-10 22:40:01 192.168.148.115
→\nyappiah 2022-05-12 10:37:22 192.168.103.10654 \ndaquino 2022-05-08 7:02:35|
\hookrightarrow 192.168.168.144"
# Assign `pattern` to a regular expression pattern that will match with IP_{\sqcup}
\rightarrow addresses of the form xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx
pattern = "\d\d\d\.\d\d\d\.\d\d\d\.\d\d\d\"
# Use the `re.findall()` function on `pattern` and `log_file` to extract the IP_{\sqcup}
→addresses of the form xxx.xxx.xxx and display the results
print(re.findall(pattern, log_file))
```

```
['192.168.152.148', '192.168.190.178', '192.168.213.128', '192.168.247.153', '192.168.174.117', '192.168.148.115', '192.168.103.106', '192.168.168.144']
```

The re.findall() function takes in a regular expression, followed by a string. The function applies the regular expression to the string and returns a list of matches.

Hint 2

When calling the re.findall() function, pass in the pattern variable as the first argument and the log_file variable as the second argument. This will ensure that pattern is applied to the string stored in log_file.

Question 2 What are some examples of IP addresses that were extracted? What are some examples of IP addresses that were not extracted? Do any that were not extracted seem to be valid IP addresses?

Examples of IP addresses that were extracted include "192.168.152.148" and "192.168.190.178". Examples of IP addresses that were not extracted include "192.168.22.115" and "1923.1689.3.24". IP addresses that have fewer then three digits per segment, such as "192.168.22.115" (which has two digits in the third segment and three digits in each of the other segments), are valid IP addresses but were not extracted.

1.10 Task 8

There are some valid IP addresses in the log_file that you haven't extracted yet. This is because each segment of digits in a valid IP address can have anywhere between one and three digits.

Adjust the regular expression in the pattern to allow for variation in the number of digits in each segment. You can do this by using the + symbol after the \d symbol. Afterwards, use the updated pattern to extract remaining IP addresses. Then, run the cell to analyze the results. Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

```
[8]: # Assign `log_file` to a string containing username, date, login time, and IP
      →address for a series of login attempts
     log file = "eraab 2022-05-10 6:03:41 192.168.152.148 \niuduike 2022-05-09 6:46:
      →40 192.168.22.115 \nsmartell 2022-05-09 19:30:32 192.168.190.178 \narutley_
      \hookrightarrow2022-05-12 17:00:59 1923.1689.3.24 \nrjensen 2022-05-11 0:59:26 192.168.213.
      \hookrightarrow128 \naestrada 2022-05-09 19:28:12 1924.1680.27.57 \nasundara 2022-05-11 18:
      →38:07 192.168.96.200 \ndkot 2022-05-12 10:52:00 1921.168.1283.75 \nabernard_1
      →2022-05-12 23:38:46 19245.168.2345.49 \ncjackson 2022-05-12 19:36:42 192.168.
      -247.153 \njclark 2022-05-10 10:48:02 192.168.174.117 \nalevitsk 2022-05-08
      →12:09:10 192.16874.1390.176 \njrafael 2022-05-10 22:40:01 192.168.148.115 \( \)
      \rightarrow\nyappiah 2022-05-12 10:37:22 192.168.103.10654 \ndaquino 2022-05-08 7:02:35_{\sqcup}
      \hookrightarrow 192.168.168.144"
     # Update `pattern` to a regular expression pattern that will match with <math>IP_{f U}
      →addresses with any variation in the number of digits per segment
     pattern = "\d+\.\d+\.\d+\.\d+\.
     # Use the `re.findall()` function on `pattern` and `log_file` to extract the IP_
      →addresses of the updated form specifed above and display the results
     print(re.findall(pattern, log_file))
```

```
['192.168.152.148', '192.168.22.115', '192.168.190.178', '1923.1689.3.24', '192.168.213.128', '1924.1680.27.57', '192.168.96.200', '1921.168.1283.75', '19245.168.2345.49', '192.168.247.153', '192.168.174.117', '192.16874.1390.176', '192.168.148.115', '192.168.103.10654', '192.168.168.144']
```

Hint 1

The regular expression symbol + represents one or more occurrences of a specific character.

The regular expression symbol \d matches with digits, in other words any integer between 0 and 9.

Hint 2

Placing + after \d results in \d+, which will match with one or more digits.

Question 3 What gets extracted here? Do all extracted IP addresses have between one and three digits in every segment?

Now, extracted IP addresses include those with exactly three digits per segment (such as "192.168.152.148"), those with fewer than three digits per segment (such as "192.168.22.115"), and those with more than three digits per segment (such as "1923.1689.3.24"). Not all of the extracted IP addresses have between one and three digits in every segment.

1.11 Task 9

Note that all the IP addresses are now extracted but they also include invalid IP addresses with more than three digits per segment.

In this task, you'll update the pattern using curly brackets instead of the + symbol. In regular expressions, curly brackets can be used to represent an exact number of repetitions between two numbers. For example, {2,4} in a regular expression means between 2 and 4 occurrences of something. Applying this to an example, \w{2,4} would match with two, three, or four alphanumeric characters. Afterwards, you'll call the re.findall() function on the updated pattern and the log_file and store the output in a variable named valid_ip_addresses.

Then, display the contents of valid_ip_addresses and run the cell to analyze the results. Be sure to replace each ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

```
[9]: # Assign `log_file` to a string containing username, date, login time, and IPu
      →address for a series of login attempts
     log_file = "eraab 2022-05-10 6:03:41 192.168.152.148 \niuduike 2022-05-09 6:46:
      _{\hookrightarrow}40 192.168.22.115 \nsmartell 2022-05-09 19:30:32 192.168.190.178 \narutley_{\sqcup}
      →2022-05-12 17:00:59 1923.1689.3.24 \nrjensen 2022-05-11 0:59:26 192.168.213.
      →128 \naestrada 2022-05-09 19:28:12 1924.1680.27.57 \nasundara 2022-05-11 18:
      →38:07 192.168.96.200 \ndkot 2022-05-12 10:52:00 1921.168.1283.75 \nabernard
      →2022-05-12 23:38:46 19245.168.2345.49 \ncjackson 2022-05-12 19:36:42 192.168.
      -247.153 \njclark 2022-05-10 10:48:02 192.168.174.117 \nalevitsk 2022-05-08
      →12:09:10 192.16874.1390.176 \njrafael 2022-05-10 22:40:01 192.168.148.115
      \rightarrow\nyappiah 2022-05-12 10:37:22 192.168.103.10654 \ndaquino 2022-05-08 7:02:35_{\square}
      \hookrightarrow 192.168.168.144"
     # Assign `pattern` to a regular expression that matches with all valid \mathit{IP}_{\sqcup}
      →addresses and only those
     pattern = \frac{d{1,3}}.d{1,3}..d{1,3}..d{1,3}
     # Use `re.findall()` on `pattern` and `log_file` and assign_
      → `valid_ip_addresses` to the output
     valid_ip_addresses = re.findall(pattern, log_file)
     # Display the contents of `valid_ip_addresses`
```

print(valid_ip_addresses)

```
['192.168.152.148', '192.168.22.115', '192.168.190.178', '192.168.213.128', '192.168.96.200', '192.168.247.153', '192.168.174.117', '192.168.148.115', '192.168.103.106', '192.168.168.144']
```

Hint 1

Recall that curly brackets in regular expressions match with a number of repetitions between two specified numbers.

To build a regular expression pattern that matches with anywhere between one and three digits, use \d{1,3}.

Hint 2

Recall that a valid IP address consists of four segments of three digits each, separated by periods.

To represent a segment of three digits followed by a period, use $\d{1,3}\$. in the regular expression pattern you build.

Question 4 What do you notice about the extracted IP addresses here compared to those extracted in the previous two tasks?

Here, the extracted IP addresses all have between one and three digits per segment. Recall that in Task 7, only IP addresses with exactly three digits per segment were extracted. And in Task 8, IP addresses with more than three digits per segment were also extracted.

1.12 Task 10

Now, all of the valid IP addresses have been extracted. The next step is to identify flagged IP addresses.

You're given a list of IP addresses that have been previously flagged for unusual activity, stored in a variable named flagged_addresses. When these addresses are encountered, they should be investigated further. This list is just for educational purposes and contains examples of private IP addresses that are found only within internal networks.

Display this list and examine what it contains by running the cell. Be sure to replace the ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

```
[10]: # Assign `flagged_addresses` to a list of IP addresses that have been_

→ previously flagged for unusual activity

flagged_addresses = ["192.168.190.178", "192.168.96.200", "192.168.174.117",

→ "192.168.168.144"]

# Display the contents of `flagged_addresses`
```

print(flagged_addresses)

```
['192.168.190.178', '192.168.96.200', '192.168.174.117', '192.168.168.144']
Hint 1
```

Use the print() function to display the contents of flagged_addresses.

1.13 Task 11

Finally, you will write an iterative statement that loops through the valid_ip_addresses list and checks if each IP address is flagged. In the following code, the address will be the loop variable. Also, include a conditional that checks if the address belongs to the flagged_addresses list. If so, it should display "The IP address _____ has been flagged for further analysis." If not, it should display "The IP address _____ does not require further analysis." Be sure to replace each ### YOUR CODE HERE ### with your own code before you run the following cell.

```
[11]: | # Assign `log_file` to a string containing username, date, login time, and IP
       →address for a series of login attempts
      log_file = "eraab 2022-05-10 6:03:41 192.168.152.148 \niuduike 2022-05-09 6:46:
       →40 192.168.22.115 \nsmartell 2022-05-09 19:30:32 192.168.190.178 \narutley_\
       →2022-05-12 17:00:59 1923.1689.3.24 \nrjensen 2022-05-11 0:59:26 192.168.213.
       →128 \naestrada 2022-05-09 19:28:12 1924.1680.27.57 \nasundara 2022-05-11 18:
       -38:07 192.168.96.200 \ndkot 2022-05-12 10:52:00 1921.168.1283.75 \nabernard_1
       →2022-05-12 23:38:46 19245.168.2345.49 \ncjackson 2022-05-12 19:36:42 192.168.
       _{\circ}247.153 \njclark 2022-05-10 10:48:02 192.168.174.117 \nalevitsk 2022-05-08
       →12:09:10 192.16874.1390.176 \njrafael 2022-05-10 22:40:01 192.168.148.115 \u00ed
       \rightarrow\nyappiah 2022-05-12 10:37:22 192.168.103.10654 \ndaquino 2022-05-08 7:02:35_{\sqcup}
       \hookrightarrow 192.168.168.144"
      # Assign `pattern` to a regular expression that matches with all valid \mathit{IP}_{\sqcup}
      →addresses and only those
      pattern = \frac{d{1,3}}.d{1,3}..d{1,3}
      # Use `re.findall()` on `pattern` and `log_file` and assign_
      → `valid_ip_addresses` to the output
      valid_ip_addresses = re.findall(pattern, log_file)
      # Assign `flagged_addresses` to a list of IP addresses that have been_
       → previously flagged for unusual activity
      flagged_addresses = ["192.168.190.178", "192.168.96.200", "192.168.174.117", __
       →"192.168.168.144"]
```

```
The IP address 192.168.152.148 does not require further analysis. The IP address 192.168.22.115 does not require further analysis. The IP address 192.168.190.178 has been flagged for further analysis. The IP address 192.168.213.128 does not require further analysis. The IP address 192.168.96.200 has been flagged for further analysis. The IP address 192.168.247.153 does not require further analysis. The IP address 192.168.174.117 has been flagged for further analysis. The IP address 192.168.148.115 does not require further analysis. The IP address 192.168.103.106 does not require further analysis. The IP address 192.168.103.106 does not require further analysis.
```

Complete the for loop condition so that the loop iterates through the valid_ip_addresses list.

Hint 2

Complete the if condition so that the if statement checks whether the value of the loop variable address is in the flagged_addresses list.

Hint 3

Inside the else statement, use the print() function to display the specified message.

1.14 Conclusion

What are your key takeaways from this lab?

• Regular expressions in Python allow you to create patterns that you can then use to find important strings.

- Regular expression patterns can be built to match specific characters and character combinations.
- Examples of regular expression symbols practiced in this lab:
 - \w represents any alphanumeric character.
 - + represents one or more occurrences of the previous character in the regular expression.
 - \d represents any digit.
 - $\$. represents a period.
 - {x,y} represents anywhere between x and y number of occurrences of the previous character in the regular expression. The x and y can be replaced with any two positive integers to indicate an exact range for the number of occurrences.
- The re module in Python contains functions that are useful when working with regular expressions.
 - One example is the re.findall() function, which takes in a regular expression pattern as well as a string, checks for all instances in the string that match with the pattern and outputs a list of the matches.