

Learn Penetration Testing with Python 3.x

An ethical hacker's blueprint for offensive security

2nd Edition

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Dedicated to

My wife Faten Hmem

My father Mamdouh Elghaly

and

My daughter Elina Elghaly

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Preface

Understanding and keeping up to date with cyber threats is essential for those who work or are interested in cybersecurity, especially the offensive cyber security. Using programming languages to create tools or scripts in different security assessments is also essential to discover different IT, IoT and OT systems and applications bugs. Using programming languages is mandatory for saving time and creating more efficient results during offensive cyber security assessment. Python3 is one of the top selected programming languages by the cybersecurity community that is being used by penetration testers, red teams, SOC analysts, and IT Administrators.

Comprising of fourteen insightful chapters, this book covers a wide range of topics starting from teaching the basics of Python3 and creating your first script, moving to creating advanced scripts and tools that used in many areas such as web applications, network, wireless networks, crypto and cracking, network monitoring, fuzzing and exploitation development, forensics, burp suite extensions and using ChatGPT to enhance your scripts.

The book not only focuses on the technical part but each chapter is also designed to commence with a theoretical foundation offering the readers a profound depth understanding systems, network, protocols, web applications. This offers the readers a deep understanding of the underlying principle of cybersecurity and the digital domain. The practical part in each chapter will start with creating basic scripts, giving the readers a solid practical foundation, and then moving forward to more advanced scripts.

This book is designed to cater to all undergraduate students, from diverse academic backgrounds, including computer science to information technology. Additionally, individuals who are new to offensive or defensive cyber security and those who are working as penetration testers, red team, IT administrators or SOC analysts, who can understand different attack tactics and techniques and learn how to defend against those attacks.

Through practical examples, comprehensive explanations, and a structured approach, this book aims to equip readers with a solid understanding to master Python3 to create advanced scripts and tools used in offensive security. Whether you are a novice or an experienced learner, we hope this book will serve as a valuable resource in your journey of exploring Python3 in cybersecurity.

Chapter 1: Starting with Penetration Testing and Basic Python – This chapter provides an introduction to penetration testing methodologies, red team different activities, mobile application and wireless penetration testing types. It gives an introduction of the most famous tools used in penetration testers nowadays. The second part of the chapter will teach the basics of Python3 for those who are unfamiliar with programming languages, reaching to creating your first program with Python3.

Chapter 2: Cracking with Python 3 – This chapter at the beginning will provide learning about different types of crypto world, and the difference between encoding, encryption, hashing, and obfuscation. Then it will move to teach the readers about different types of credential attacks and when to use them. In the practical part it teaches how to create scripts that can generate usernames and passwords list, decrypt MD5, SHA1 and crack zip-protected files using Python3.

Chapter 3: Service and Applications Brute Forcing with Python – This chapter provides a practical experience of how to create scripts that can crack different network protocols such as FTP, SMTP, SSH, and web application broken authentication along with how to add custom functions that can brute force different network protocols using wordlists.

Chapter 4: Python Services Identifications: Ports and Banner – This chapter provides a deep learning of how ethernet networks operate, how communication takes place, and what the three-way handshake is. This should take us deeper inside IP, TCP, and UDP packet headers. Moving to teaching how wireless communication works by understanding the four-way handshake that wireless networks rely on. In the practical side it will teach how to create Python3 scripts, uncover different services and collect the banner information for each service. In addition to the way of using the socket library to conduct TCP and UDP scans, it will teach how to identify live hosts within the network and use the socket library to play with DNS.

Chapter 5: Python Network Modules and Nmap – This chapter focuses on creating scripts that can perform port scanners using Python3 and nmap libraries, identify banner grabbing, and discover live hosts using the socket library. Perform advanced network reconnaissance using a Python module such as Scapy and Nmap library, and build a packet from scratch using Scapy.

Chapter 6: Network Monitoring with Python – This chapter will use Python3 but from the eye of the blue team's perspective. It will start with teaching network monitoring and its importance. The chapter gives an introduction of what is SOC and its role inside the organization. In the practical part it teaches how to create scripts that can network monitoring using the socket and scapy library. The chapter teaches how to create scripts

that can monitor HTTP and DNS and using scapy, along with how to create scripts that can analyze pcap file.

Chapter 7: Attacking Wireless with Python – This chapter will start with an introduction 802.11 packet headers, how are the wireless connections happening in the background, the wireless frequency, and the channels moving to wireless BSSID and SSID, and ESSID and the purpose of each of them. The chapter will provide an introduction of different types of wireless encryptions and their weaknesses from an offensive perspective, how to crack the WEP encryption key and use the dictionary method to attack the WPA/WPA2 keys. The chapter teaches how to use the evil twin method to attack WPA/WPA2 and understand how KRACK occurs. In the practical part it will teach how to create scripts that can scan close networks and grab information like SSID, BSSID, channel, and encryption, send death packets which allows to disconnect clients from the access point and grant the 4-way handshake.

Chapter 8: Analyzing Web Applications with Python – This chapter will start with an introduction of different HTTP methods and how to create Python3 scripts using the HTTP methods like GET, POST, PUT.etc. The chapter will discuss Python modules (Beautiful Soup and Requests) and how to create a script using them to parse URLs from different web applications. The chapter will teach how to create scripts to extract cookies and live sessions from web applications. teaches how to use Python to extract images and documents from web applications, and how to use Python modules to extract image metadata like date and time, camera module, and geolocation. The chapter will include a section on how to use Python to scan the web application for hidden web directories using dictionary files, along with how to use the Scrapy module to parse URLs from dynamic web application pages.

Chapter 9: Attacking Web Applications with Python – This chapter will focus on attacking web application. Starting with understanding of a variety of cybersecurity topics and methodologies. It will start with creating scripts that use Shodan, a powerful search engine used for security research, detailing how it operates and the methods for extracting critical data such as *domains*, *IP addresses*, and *banners*. The chapter delves into **cross-site trace (XST)** attacks, offering guidance on scripting to detect such vulnerabilities within web applications. The narrative then shifts to the identification of **web application firewalls (WAFs)**, discussing the use of different tools and scripting techniques for detection purposes. The chapter also covers the intricacies of **cross-site scripting (XSS)**, including its various forms and scripting strategies to validate false positives. Additionally, it explores the open redirect vulnerability, showcasing how to uncover such flaws through Python programming. A section on bypassing firewalls introduces methods for payload

encoding using diverse encoding techniques, enhancing the reader's ability to navigate security measures. Lastly, the discussion on web logic vulnerabilities provides insights into their identification and exploitation, equipping readers with the necessary knowledge to address these security challenges effectively.

Chapter 10: Exploit Development with Python – This chapter will start with comprehensive understanding of various foundational concepts in computer architecture and cybersecurity. First, you will learn about Intel's CPU architecture, specifically the x86, and delve into the roles of its general-purpose and special-purpose registers, along with segment and EFLAGS registers, understanding their unique purposes. Additionally, it will explore the structure of Windows memory and how programs or processes are managed within memory, offering insight into the complex workings of computer systems. Further, the chapter will guide through critical system components like the Kernel, Process Environment Block (PEB), Thread Environment Block (TEB), Portable Executable (PE) formats, and **dynamic-link libraries (DLLs)**, demystifying how these elements interact within a computing environment. It will also teach about the stack and heap, two fundamental data structures in programming, and how manipulation of the stack can be leveraged in various computing contexts. Moreover, it will grasp the concepts of big- and little-endian data formats, which are essential for understanding data representation and manipulation in exploit development. The chapter will culminate in teaching the basics of writing buffer overflow exploits, an essential skill in exploit development. Through hands-on practice, it will teach the mechanics behind exploiting software vulnerabilities and the various protections in place to mitigate such attacks.

Chapter 11: Forensics with Python – This chapter will focus on forensics starting with teaching what is file analysis and how to extract different information from different file extensions. From network analysis, it will teach how to capture and dissect network traffic, perform packet analysis, and whip up network-based intrusion detection systems like a master. From memory analysis, it will dive into memory dumps to extract precious intel, detect nasty malware, and investigate memory-based attacks. Finally, it will teach how to perform disk analysis, such as recover deleted files, analyze disk images, and investigate file systems for evidence.

Chapter 12: Python with Burp Suite – This chapter will focus on Burp Suite, the most used proxy tools for testing web applications. It will start with an introduction of Burp Suite features and extensions. Teaches to create scripts that can be attached to Burp Suite, and can detect cross-domain resource sharing, sensitive data exposure, and default credentials or pages. The chapter will teach how to create Python3 scripts working as burp suite extensions that can detect open redirect and cross-site scripting.

Chapter 13: Fuzzing with Python – This chapter will focus on fuzzing, starting giving a comprehensive guide to the world of fuzzing. We will embark on a journey to explore the fundamentals of fuzzing, delve into various fuzzing techniques, and understand how Python can be leveraged to build effective fuzzing tools. The chapter will focus on the real world practical side and teaching how to create fuzzers targeting web applications and network protocols that will help to identify different bugs that will help testers to develop different exploits.

Chapter 14 ChatGPT with Python – This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive guide on using ChatGPT with Python in offensive cyber security. It will teach how to use ChatGPT to generate and complete Python codes, enhance the quality and efficiency of Python code for effective tasks, and use ChatGPT effectively in ML projects. It will also teach how ChatGPT can be integrated with Python libraries and frameworks. Finally, it gives an understanding of the challenges and best practices in ChatGPT-Python integration.

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Table of Contents

1. Starting with Penetration Testing and Basic Python.....	1
Introduction	1
Structure	2
Objectives	2
Introducing penetration testing	2
<i>Exploits writing.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Origin of the term hacking</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Vulnerability assessments</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Red team assessments.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Social engineering</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Physical assessments</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Blue team assessments.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Purple team assessments.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Different assessment methodologies</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Black box.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Gray box</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>White box.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Combined box testing</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Reverse engineering engagements.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Penetration testing phases.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Intelligence gathering.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Vulnerability analysis</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Exploitation</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Post-exploitation.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Reporting.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Penetration testing types.....	12
Wireless testing	12
WEP encryption	13

WPA and WPA2 encryption.....	13
WPA3 encryption.....	13
Mobile application penetration testing	13
An overview of iOS	14
An overview of Android	15
Client-side testing	15
Server-side testing.....	16
Common mobile application VAPT tools.....	16
Penetration testing tools.....	17
Recon and service identification tools	17
Network mapper	17
Bypassing firewalls with NMAP.....	18
theHarvester	18
Maltego.....	18
Netcat	18
Exploitation tools.....	19
Metasploit	19
Veil	20
Burp Suite	22
SQLMAP	22
Social engineering toolkit.....	22
Cracking tools	23
Hydra	23
John the Ripper	23
Mimikatz and Incognito.....	24
Responder	24
The basics of Python 3.....	24
Differences between high-level and scripting languages.....	25
Powerful Python.....	25
Difference between Python 2.X and Python 3.X	26
Setting up your environment.....	27

<i>Setting up third-party libraries</i>	27
<i>Your first Python script</i>	28
<i>Modules and imports</i>	28
<i>The most common hacking libraries</i>	29
Python variables	30
<i>Indentation in Python</i>	30
<i>Numbers and math in Python 3</i>	30
<i>Strings in Python 3</i>	31
<i>String formatting operator</i>	32
<i>Slicing and lengths in Python 3</i>	33
<i>Python 3 conversions</i>	34
<i>Lists in Python 3</i>	34
<i>Tuples in Python 3</i>	35
<i>Dictionaries in Python 3</i>	35
Statements in Python 3	36
<i>If/else statements</i>	36
<i>elif statements</i>	37
<i>for loops</i>	38
<i>while loops</i>	38
<i>Conditional handlers</i>	39
Operators in Python 3	40
<i>Comparison operators</i>	40
<i>Assignment operators</i>	40
<i>Arithmetic operators</i>	41
<i>Logical and membership operators</i>	41
Functions in Python 3	42
<i>Comments</i>	42
Classes, self, and destructors in Python 3	43
<i>Threading in Python 3</i>	44
Conclusion	44
General questions	45
Programming questions	45

A programming challenge	46
<i>Answers</i>	46
Further readings	46
2. Cracking with Python 3	47
Introduction	47
Structure	48
Objectives	48
Types of crypto world	48
<i>Encoding</i>	48
<i>Encryption</i>	49
<i>Symmetric encryption</i>	49
<i>Asymmetric encryption</i>	50
<i>Hashing</i>	50
<i>Obfuscation</i>	51
Types of credential attacks	52
<i>Online credentials attacks</i>	52
<i>Offline credentials attacks</i>	53
Attacking passwords with Python	54
<i>Generate usernames and passwords</i>	54
<i>Crack MD5 with Python</i>	59
<i>Crack SHA1 with Python</i>	63
<i>Crack protected zip files</i>	65
Conclusion	67
General questions	67
Programming questions	68
Programming challenge	68
<i>Answers</i>	68
Further readings	69
3. Service and Applications Brute Forcing with Python	71
Introduction	71
Structure	71

Objectives	72
Services brute forcing	72
SMTP brute forcing	72
FTP brute force attack.....	76
SSH brute force attack	80
Web broken authentication.....	87
Conclusion	95
General questions.....	95
Programming questions.....	95
<i>Answers</i>	96
Programming challenge	96
4. Python Services Identifications: Ports and Banner	97
Introduction	97
Structure	97
Objectives	98
Deeper inside systems communication	98
Ethernet networks.....	100
Ethernet frames architecture	101
Wireless networks	101
IP packet architecture	102
TCP packet header	103
UDP packet header	105
TCP three-way handshake.....	106
Wireless four-way handshake	107
Services uncovered by Python	109
Socket library	109
Python port scanner.....	113
Python live host check.....	114
Python DNS	118
Conclusion	121
General questions.....	122

Programming questions	122
<i>Answers</i>	123
Programming challenge	123
5. Python Network Modules and Nmap	125
Introduction	125
Structure	125
Objectives	126
Python Nmap	126
<i>SYN scanning method</i>	128
<i>ACK scanning method</i>	128
<i>UDP scanning method</i>	128
Python network modules	129
Understanding Scapy	134
Network discovery with Scapy	137
Fuzz method	142
TCP SYN-ACK ping methods	143
ARP ping method	144
Scapy UDP ping	145
Scapy traceroute	146
Scapy port scanner	149
Create custom packet	150
ICMP packet header	150
<i>ARP packet header</i>	151
<i>Hiding data inside ICMP packet</i>	155
<i>Scapy ARP poisoning</i>	156
Conclusion	157
Further readings	158
General questions	158
Programming questions	159
Programming challenge	159
<i>Answers</i>	159

6. Network Monitoring with Python	161
Introduction	161
Structure	161
Objectives	162
Understanding network monitoring	162
Network monitoring and its importance	163
Understanding network tools	164
Security Operation Center	166
Network monitoring using socket library	167
Monitoring and analysis with SCAPY	173
Scapy HTTP monitoring	176
Scapy DNS monitoring	178
<i>SCAPY analyze network traffic</i>	180
Conclusion	183
Further readings	183
General questions	183
Programming questions	184
Programming challenge	184
<i>Answers</i>	184
7. Attacking Wireless with Python	185
Introduction	185
Structure	185
Objectives	186
802.11 packet headers	186
Wireless frequency and channels	186
Wireless BSSID and SSID and ESSID	187
Wireless encryption family	189
<i>Wired Equivalent Privacy</i>	189
<i>Cracking WEP key</i>	190
<i>WiFi Protected Access</i>	194
<i>WiFi Protected Access II</i>	194

<i>Cracking WAP/WPA2 key</i>	197
<i>WPA/WPA2 phishing attack</i>	198
<i>WiFi Protected Access III</i>	201
Wireless SSID using Scapy	202
Deauthentication using Python	205
Conclusion	207
General questions	207
Programming questions	207
<i>Answers</i>	208
Programming challenge	208
Further readings	208
8. Analyzing Web Applications with Python	209
Introduction	209
Structure	209
Objectives	210
HTTP methods with Python	210
Python modules	215
Parsing URLs	215
Extracting cookies	218
Extracting images and documents	220
Images metadata	222
Hidden web directories	225
Scrapy module	227
Conclusion	229
General questions	230
Programming questions	230
<i>Answers</i>	231
Programming challenge	231
Further readings	231
9. Attacking Web Applications with Python	233
Introduction	233
Structure	233

Objectives	234
Information gathering with Shodan.....	234
Cross-site trace.....	238
Identifying web application firewalls	239
Cross-site scripting.....	241
Open redirect with Python	252
Bypassing web application firewalls.....	254
Encoding your payload.....	255
Business logic vulnerabilities	257
Conclusion	259
General questions.....	260
Programming questions.....	260
<i>Answers</i>	261
Programming challenge	261
Further readings.....	261
10. Exploit Development with Python	263
Introduction	263
Structure	263
Objectives	264
Intel CPU architecture (x86)	265
General purpose registers.....	265
Special purpose registers	266
Segment registers	267
EFLAGS register.....	268
X64 registers.....	269
Windows memory structure.....	270
<i>Kernel</i>	271
<i>Process Environment Block</i>	271
<i>Thread Environment Block</i>	272
<i>Stack and heap</i>	273
<i>Heap</i>	278

<i>Portable executable and dynamic-link libraries</i>	278
<i>Dynamic-link libraries</i>	279
Big and little endian	280
Playing with the stack	282
Debugger tools	283
Immunity Debugger	284
Fuzzing	285
Basic buffer overflow	285
<i>Writing a buffer overflow exploit</i>	288
<i>The offset of the EIP</i>	290
<i>Free-space for our shellcode</i>	293
Removing bad characters	293
Building our exploit	295
Exploit development protections	297
Conclusion	297
Multiple choice questions	298
<i>Answers</i>	298
Programming challenge	299
Further readings	299
11. Forensics with Python	301
Introduction	301
Structure	302
Objectives	302
File analysis	302
<i>Types of file analysis</i>	303
File metadata	304
<i>Analyzing executables</i>	305
Analyzing PDF files	307
Analyzing TXT files	317
Data visualization	322
Network forensics	325

Conclusion	330
General questions.....	331
Programming questions.....	331
<i>Answers</i>	331
Programming challenge	332
Further readings	332
12. Python with Burp Suite.....	333
Introduction	333
Structure	334
Objectives	334
Burp Suite features.....	334
Burp Suite extensions	336
Jython.....	337
<i>Jython installation</i>	338
Detecting misconfiguration	338
Cross-origin resource sharing	339
Sensitive data exposure.....	343
Default credentials or pages	348
Detecting vulnerabilities	354
<i>Detecting open redirect</i>	354
Detecting cross-site scripting.....	359
Burp Suite Professional	363
<i>Installing extensions</i>	364
OWASP Zed Attack Proxy	365
Conclusion	366
General questions.....	366
Programming questions.....	367
<i>Answers</i>	367
Programming challenge	367
Further readings	368

13. Fuzzing with Python.....	369
Introduction	369
Structure	370
Objectives	370
Importance of fuzzing in security testing.....	370
Fundamentals of Python in fuzzing.....	371
Types of fuzzing techniques	373
Designing a basic fuzzer in Python	374
<i>Understanding the target application</i>	<i>376</i>
Advanced fuzzing concepts with Python	380
Fuzzing network protocols with Python.....	381
Creating fuzzers for executables.....	386
Famous tools used in fuzzing executables	387
Fuzzing Windows executables.....	387
Fuzzing Linux executables	391
Creating fuzzers for web applications	396
Challenges and limitations of fuzzing with Python	399
Conclusion	399
General questions.....	400
Programming questions.....	400
<i>Answers</i>	<i>400</i>
Programming challenge	400
Further readings.....	400
14. ChatGPT with Python	401
Introduction	401
Structure	402
Objectives	402
Generating and completing code.....	402
Enhancing code quality and efficiency	404
Leveraging ChatGPT in Machine Learning projects.....	406
<i>Data preprocessing and analysis</i>	<i>406</i>

<i>Example: Preprocessing network traffic data for anomaly detection</i>	407
<i>Model development and fine-tuning</i>	407
<i>Example: Training a model for malware detection</i>	407
Integrating ChatGPT with Python libraries and frameworks	408
<i>Example: Integration with Scapy for network packet crafting</i>	408
<i>Custom integrations and extensions</i>	409
<i>Example: Extending exploit development tools with ChatGPT</i>	409
Challenges and best practices in ChatGPT-Python integration	410
Conclusion	411
General questions.....	411
<i>Answers</i>	411
Programming challenge	412
Index	413-420

CHAPTER 1

Starting with Penetration Testing and Basic Python

Introduction

Nowadays, cybersecurity is becoming a dire necessity due to the rise of cyber-attacks not only on an individual but also on corporate and government levels. Cyber-attacks have become more sophisticated and harder to detect. Ethical hackers may have different skills and may have followed different paths, but they all share one common skill: programming.

In the first part of this chapter, we will learn about the different penetration testing methodologies in use nowadays. We will also learn about wireless and mobile applications penetration testing and red teaming activities. We will familiarize ourselves with different tools used by **ethical hackers**.

If you are unfamiliar with the basics of Python programming, in the second part of this chapter, you will learn about the basics of Python programming and how to create your first program. If you already are a penetration tester, you can skip *Chapter 2, Cracking with Python*, which will shed light on how to use Python in cracking.

NOTE: The offensive tools and programming scripts you will learn in this book can be used only in your local environment. Using offensive tools in a live environment like companies requires written permission from the entity. Always remember that penetration testing without permission from clients is illegal. Note: Tools and programming scripts in this book will be tested in a local environment. You need to set up your environment using virtualization as a first step. You can choose between

VMWARE (<https://www.vmware.com/products/>) or Oracle Virtual Box (<https://www.virtualbox.org>). In the second step, you must download and install an updated KALI Linux on a virtual machine from (<https://www.kali.org/downloads/>). Also, you need to install Windows on a virtual machine, preferably a Windows 10. Ensure the two virtual machines are on the same IP range using (NAT or Bridged). If any other tools or software are required, they will be indicated when appropriate in the chapters.

Structure

In this chapter, we will cover the following topics:

- Introducing penetration testing
- Penetration testing types
- Mobile application penetration testing
- Penetration testing tools
- The basics of Python 3
- Python variables
- Statements in Python 3
- Operators in Python 3
- Functions in Python 3
- Classes, self, and detractors in Python 3

Objectives

When you complete the first part of this chapter, you will be able to understand different penetration testing methodologies and red teaming. You will also understand all the penetration testing phases. You will get practical knowledge of the most offensive tools used these days by ethical hackers.

When you complete the second part of this chapter, you will be writing your scripts using Python 3, in which you get the required programming skills to write advanced scripts in the coming chapters.

Introducing penetration testing

Penetration testing, pen testing, or ethical hacking all refer to the *process of testing* a computer system, network, web application, or wireless mobile application to find security holes or vulnerabilities that may be abused by malicious users or criminals to gain unauthorized access to a system. Malicious users are not only external users but can also be internal

ones or employees; many reported incidents were from inside organizations. Penetration testers use their skills to prove the existence of security holes in different systems so they can fix those security holes and, consequently, prevent access to attackers who may abuse them.

Penetration testers usually have the knowledge and expertise to test different environments to discover security holes. This expertise and knowledge should contain at least one programming language, which makes them not fully dependent on existing tools, and of course, the deep knowledge of systems, networks, and web protocols.

However, knowing how to use different hacking tools and their limits, and how they work in the background is necessary, as most systems that are being tested are in production, so any mistakes will affect the client's business. In the end, you can write everything.

Penetration testers should have mixed knowledge of how to use existing tools and the ability to write their scripts and programs. Depending only on existing tools to discover vulnerabilities is inefficient, as we have recently seen many private and governmental entities being attacked successfully despite penetration testing and red teaming assessments being carried out.

This is because many companies do not apply manual penetration testing that focuses on discovering vulnerabilities in application functionalities. Instead, they depend solely on vulnerability scanners, leading to inaccurate results and false positives.

The only systems not tested during operation are SCADA, which are systems used in countries' infrastructures. The rationale is that any mistake or wrong packet sent while testing will cause a disaster. Since SCADA systems control oil and gas operations, water and electricity, nuclear powers, vessels, and so on. Therefore, governments often clone the operating system to allow the penetration testers to try to find potential vulnerabilities. Besides, updating and patching the vulnerabilities and replacing software or hardware is not easy as they require suspending certain production functions.

There are two types of penetration testing:

- **Automated:** This is concerned with using different tools to discover existing vulnerabilities.
- **Manual:** This is concerned with viewing the application manually without using the tools or scanners and trying to abuse the application's functionality. Usually, manual testing is used in web applications and source code reviews.

Exploits writing

There is a common misunderstanding that penetration testers should be able to discover the **zero-day** vulnerability, which has a zero-day patch (that is, the vendor does not know about its existence). Usually, this type of vulnerability costs thousands of dollars in the black market. Penetration testers do not have to know how to discover zero days simply

because it takes a very long time to them on software or hardware. However, the pen tester must know basic reverse engineering and exploitation development. In certain companies and governments, exploit writers and reverse engineers are hired to create cyber weapons for the government.

A lot of penetration testers do not discover zero-day vulnerabilities in client applications or networks simply because this requires lots of time and persistence. Usually, zero-day vulnerabilities are only discovered in governmental entities. They must know, however, how the memory works during a program's execution. They should also be aware of the assembly languages to understand how to read programs from the debuggers and manipulate CPU registers which are small storage systems that store the programs' data during execution. We are going to talk about this in *Chapter 10, Exploit Development with Python*.

Origin of the term hacking

There is a huge misunderstanding about the term hacking. Hacking, in today's world, is related to criminal activities like *stealing money*, *fraud*, or *destroying a company's system*. This is particularly the case in the media. However, if we look at hacking from a cybersecurity perspective, we realize that it is related to attacking systems to prove they are being vulnerable or exploitable, which is partly correct but not totally.

The term *hacking* came from MIT in 1955. It started with a group calling themselves *hackers* who edited and modified train models and elaborated miniature buildings. Hacking originally referred to understanding a system so deeply that you can modify it or add functions to it. It is not only related to computers; for example, a person who modifies the mechanics of a car is known as a **car hacker**. Returning to the cybersecurity domain, if we apply the original meaning of the word *hacking*, we can see that penetration testers should fully understand how the application or system works, and then they will be able to find not only existing vulnerabilities but also logical ones. This is where the importance of manual penetration testing comes in handy.

Vulnerability assessments

A **vulnerability assessment (VA)** is the process of identifying vulnerabilities and security holes in systems, networks, and applications. The difference between VAs and penetration testing is that in a VA, you only identify the existence of the vulnerability without taking any further steps. For example, let us say that we have an FTP server in a system that is vulnerable to remote code execution due to a version that has not been updated. In a VA, you would identify the vulnerability by the *FTP version number*, or you can identify vulnerabilities based on *known vulnerabilities* or *CVEs*. For example, the famous (CVE-2017-0144) is the *Eternal Blue* vulnerability that targets SMB protocol, but you do not exploit that vulnerability. In penetration testing, however, you would exploit that FTP server to gain access to the system. You might also carry out an escalation of privileges

and hash dumping or try to access other systems within the network, which is part of the post-exploitation process.

There is a misunderstanding that vulnerability assessments are carried out using only vulnerability scanners, which is inaccurate. Vulnerability scanners produce many false positives and false negatives. While they can provide a good starting point to indicate the most critical areas in a network, there are many blind spots that vulnerability scanners cannot see. There are also many different risk ratings in different vulnerability scanners. You may find that a vulnerability risk is rated as low in one scanner but medium in another, so we follow the international risk rating like security vulnerability database/information source (CVE) or **Common Vulnerability Scoring System Version 3.1 Calculator (CVSS)** <https://www.first.org/cvss/calculator/3.0>. It is more important to consider the business risk and how it might affect the company.

Red team assessments

Red team assessments and penetration testing are almost the same, but they differ in their approach and their final goal. We know that penetration testing is a process that identifies and exploit vulnerabilities in the targeted system, network, or application. In penetration testing, you discover and exploit all the vulnerabilities that can be found on the target network, application, or the provided assets from the client. Also, you show how the exploitable vulnerabilities affect the client business, and you show how far the target network or application, or system is weak and needs to be patched or requires mitigation.

In the penetration testing process, the client provides the pen tester with the targeted scope of IP addresses or applications to be tested. In other situations, the client asks the pen tester to search for the published services over the internet and then confirm with the client what they have found.

In a red team assessment, however, the tester acts like a real criminal who wants to access a specific company, either through network access or physical access. Red teaming does not involve discovering all vulnerabilities, but instead, one or a few that help them to reach their goal. More methods are used during red teaming assessments, including social engineering, physical break-ins, bypassing monitoring systems, or attacking the internet wirelessly. In red teaming, there is no specific scope because the aim is simply to test the company's incident response and the effectiveness of the detection of any malicious actions.

Social engineering

Social engineering is the art of manipulating people's behavior to gain information or unauthorized physical access. Social engineering is different from scamming. The emails you receive that offer you \$1 million from the prince of Nigeria are scams, not examples of social engineering. Social engineering is a combination of psychology (including micro-expressions, colors, and their effect on the subconscious, body, and eye language) and