Outline

User authentication
Announcements intermission
Error rate trade-offs
Web authentication
Names and identities

Authentication factors

- Something you know (password, PIN)
- Something you have (e.g., smart card)
- Something you are (biometrics)
- CAPTCHAs, time and location, ...
- Multi-factor authentication

Passwords: love to hate

- Many problems for users, sysadmins, researchers
- But familiar and near-zero cost of entry
- User-chosen passwords proliferate for low-stakes
  web site authentication

Password entropy

- Model password choice as probabilistic process
- If uniform, $\log_2 |S|$
- Controls difficulty of guessing attacks
- Hard to estimate for user-chosen passwords
  - Length is an imperfect proxy

Password hashing

- Idea: don’t store password or equivalent information
- Password ‘encryption’ is a long-standing misnomer
  - E.g., Unix crypt(3)
- Presumably hard-to-invert function $h$
- Store only $h(p)$

Dictionary attacks

- Online: send guesses to server
- Offline: attacker can check guesses internally
- Specialized password lists more effective than literal
dictionaries
  - Also generation algorithms ($s \rightarrow \$, etc.)
- ~25% of passwords consistently vulnerable

Better password hashing

- Generate random salt $s$, store $(s, h(s, p))$
  - Block pre-computed tables and equality inferences
  - Salt must also have enough entropy
- Deliberately expensive hash function
  - AKA password-based key derivation function (PBKDF)
  - Requirement for time and/or space
Password usability

- User compliance can be a major challenge
  - Often caused by unrealistic demands
- Distributed random passwords usually unrealistic
- Password aging: not too frequently
- Never have a fixed default password in a product

Backup authentication

- Desire: unassisted recovery from forgotten password
- Fall back to other presumed-authentic channel
  - Email, cell phone
- Harder to forget (but less secret) shared information
  - Mother's maiden name, first pet's name
- Brittle: ask Sarah Palin or Mat Honan

Backup auth suggestion: use time

- Need for backup often comes for infrequently-used accounts
- May be acceptable to slow down recovery if it reduces attack risk
  - Account recovery is a hassle anyway
- Time can allow legitimate owner to notice malicious request

Centralized authentication

- Enterprise-wide (e.g., UMN ID)
- Anderson: Microsoft Passport
- Today: Facebook Connect, Google ID
- May or may not be single-sign-on (SSO)

Biometric authentication

- Authenticate by a physical body attribute
  - Hard to lose
  - Hard to reset
  - Inherently statistical
  - Variation among people

Example biometrics

- (Handwritten) signatures
- Fingerprints, hand geometry
- Face and voice recognition
- Iris codes

Outline

- User authentication
- Announcements intermission
- Error rate trade-offs
- Web authentication
- Names and identities

Note to early readers

- This is the section of the slides most likely to change in the final version
- If class has already happened, make sure you have the latest slides for announcements
Outline

User authentication
Announcements intermission
Error rate trade-offs
Web authentication
Names and identities

Imperfect detection

- Many security mechanisms involve imperfect detection/classification of relevant events
- Biometric authentication
- Network intrusion detection
- Anti-virus (malware detection)
- Anything based on machine learning

Detection results

- True positive: detector says yes, reality is yes
- True negative: detector says no, reality is no
- False positive: detector says yes, reality is no
- False negative: detector says no, reality is yes
- Note: terminology may flip based on detecting good or bad

Why a trade-off?

- Imperfect methods have a trade-off between avoiding FPs and avoiding FNs
- Sometimes a continuous trade-off (curve), e.g. based on a threshold
  - E.g., spam detector “score”
- May need to choose both a basic mechanism and a threshold

Two ratios to capture the trade-off

- True positive rate:
  \[ \text{TPR} = \frac{TP}{P} = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} = 1 - \text{FNR} \]
- False positive rate:
  \[ \text{FPR} = \frac{FP}{N} = \frac{FP}{FP + TN} = 1 - \text{TNR} \]

Error rates: ROC curve intro

- Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/index.php?curid=91019284

Extreme biometrics examples

- **exact_iris_code_match**: very low false positive (false authentication)
- **similar_voice_pitch**: very low false negative (false reject)
Where are these in ROC space?

A if (iris()) return REJECT; else return ACCEPT;
B return REJECT;
C if (iris()) return ACCEPT; else return REJECT;
D if (iris() && pitch()) return ACCEPT; else return REJECT;
E return ACCEPT;
F if (rand() & 1) return ACCEPT; else return REJECT;
G if (pitch()) return ACCEPT; else return REJECT;
H if (iris() || pitch()) return ACCEPT; else return REJECT;

Outline
User authentication
Announcements intermission
Error rate trade-offs
Web authentication
Names and identities

Per-website authentication

Many web sites implement their own login systems
+ If users pick unique passwords, little systemic risk
  - Inconvenient, many will reuse passwords
  - Lots of functionality each site must implement correctly
  - Without enough framework support, many possible pitfalls

Building a session

HTTP was originally stateless, but many sites want stateful login sessions
Built by tying requests together with a shared session ID
Must protect confidentiality and integrity

Session ID: what

Must not be predictable
  - Not a sequential counter
Should ensure freshness
  - E.g., limited validity window
If encoding data in ID, must be unforgeable
  - E.g., data with properly used MAC
  - Negative example: crypt(username || server secret)

Session ID: where

Session IDs in URLs are prone to leaking
  - Including via user cut-and-paste
  - Usual choice: non-persistent cookie
    - Against network attacker, must send only under HTTPS
Because of CSRF, should also have a non-cookie unique ID

Session management

Create new session ID on each login
Invalidate session on logout
Invalidate after timeout
  - Usability / security tradeoff
  - Needed to protect users who fail to log out from public browsers

Account management

Limitations on account creation
  - CAPTCHA? Outside email address?
See previous discussion on hashed password storage
Automated password recovery
  - Usually a weak spot
  - But, practically required for large system
Client and server checks
- For usability, interface should show what’s possible
- But must not rely on client to perform checks
- Attackers can read/modify anything on the client side
- Easy example: item price in hidden field

Direct object references
- Seems convenient: query parameter names resource directly
  - E.g., database key, filename (path traversal)
- Easy to forget to validate on each use
- Alternative: indirect reference like per-session table
  - Not fundamentally more secure, but harder to forget check

Function-level access control
- E.g., pages accessed by URLs or interface buttons
- Must check each time that user is authorized
  - Attack: find URL when authorized, reuse when logged off
- Helped by consistent structure in code

Outline
- User authentication
- Announcements intermission
- Error rate trade-offs
- Web authentication
- Names and identities
- Function-level access control
- Direct object references

Accounts versus identities
- "Identity" is a broad term that can refer to a personal conception or an automated system
- "Name" is also ambiguous in this way
- "Account" and "authentication" refer unambiguously to institutional/computer abstractions
- Any account system is only an approximation of the real world

Real human names are messy
- Most assumptions your code might make will fail for someone
  - ASCII, length limit, uniqueness, unchanging, etc.
- So, don’t design in assumptions about real names
- Use something more computer-friendly as the core identifier
  - Make “real” names or nicknames a presentation aspect

Zooko’s triangle
- Claims (2001) it is hard/impossible for a naming scheme to be simultaneously:
  - Human-meaningful
  - Secure
  - Decentralized
- Too imprecise to be definitively proven/refuted
  - Blockchain-based name systems are highest-profile claimed counterexamples
- A useful heuristic for seeing design tensions

Identity documents: mostly unhelpful
- "Send us a scan of your driver’s license”
  - Sometimes called for by specific regulations
  - Unnecessary storage is a disclosure risk
  - Fake IDs are very common
Identity numbers: mostly unhelpful

- Common US example: social security number
- Variously used as an identifier or an authenticator
  - Dual use is itself a cause for concern
- Known by many third parties (e.g., banks)
- No checksum, guessing risks
- Published soon after a person dies

“Identity theft”

- The first-order crime is impersonation fraud between two other parties
  - E.g., criminal trying to get money from a bank under false pretenses
- The impersonated “victim” is effectively victimized by follow-on false statements
  - E.g., by credit reporting agencies
  - These costs are arguably the result of poor regulatory choices
- Be careful w/ negative info from 3rd parties