Definition: hacker from Philip's Encyclopedia

In computing, a person who obtains unauthorized entry to a computer database. A hacker, who usually gains access through the public telephone system using a modem, may read or even alter the information in the database.

Summary Article: hacking

From The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Unauthorized access to computer systems, either for fun or for malicious or fraudulent purposes. Hackers generally use computers and telephone lines to obtain access. In computing, the term is used in a wider sense to mean using software for enjoyment or self-education, not necessarily involving unauthorized access. The most destructive form of hacking is the introduction of a computer virus.

There is some dispute over the correct use of the term hacker. Some believe hacker should be used to describe someone who develops computer software, with the term cracker being used for a person who breaks into a computer system.

Some hackers call themselves ethical or white hat hackers. Ethical hackers probe Web sites for holes in the security system, either fixing the holes themselves or alerting the company in question. White hat hackers are computer experts employed by companies to hack into their networks to expose weaknesses in security.

In the UK, hacking is illegal under the Computer Misuse Act 1990. British hacker Paul Bedworth was the first to be prosecuted under this act in 1993.

Hacking can be divided into four main areas: viruses, software piracy (stripping away the protective coding that should prevent the software being copied), denial-of-service attacks (where a Web site is bombarded with so many messages that it crashes), and ‘phishing’ (tricking Internet users into revealing credit card or bank account details). Sophisticated hackers are now able to reverse-engineer security patches, allowing them to penetrate computer systems where the patches have not yet been applied.

weblinks

Electronic Privacy Information Center

Hacking Lexicon

APA
Chicago
Harvard

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