## CSci 5271
## Introduction to Computer Security
## Day 4: Low-level attacks

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## Outline

Non-buffer problems

Classic code injection attacks

Announcements intermission

Shellcode and other targets

Exploiting other vulnerabilities

## Integer overflow

- Fixed size result $\neq$ math result
- Sum of two positive `int`s negative or less than addend
- Also multiplication, left shift, etc.
- Negation of most-negative value
- `(low + high)/2`

## Integer overflow example

```
int n = read_int();
obj *p = malloc(n * sizeof(obj));
for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
    p[i] = read_obj();
```

## Signed and unsigned

- Unsigned gives more range for, e.g., `size_t`
- At machine level, many but not all operations are the same
- Most important difference: ordering
- In C, signed overflow is undefined behavior

## Mixing integer sizes

- Complicated rules for implicit conversions
  - Also includes signed vs. unsigned
- Generally, convert before operation:
  - E.g., `1ULL << 63`
- Sign-extend vs. zero-extend
  - `char c = 0xff; (int)c`

## Null pointers

- Vanilla null dereference is usually non-exploitable (just a DoS)
- But not if there could be an offset (e.g., field of struct)
- And not in the kernel if an untrusted user has allocated the zero page

## Undefined behavior

- C standard "undefined behavior": anything could happen
- Can be unexpectedly bad for security
- Most common problem: compiler optimizes assuming undefined behavior cannot happen

## Linux kernel example

```
struct sock *sk = tun->sk;
// ...
if (!tun)
    return POLLERR;
// more uses of tun and sk
```

## Format strings

- `printf` format strings are a little interpreter
- `printf(msg)` with untrusted `msg` lets the attacker program it
- Allows:
  - Dumping stack contents
  - Denial of service
  - Arbitrary memory modifications!

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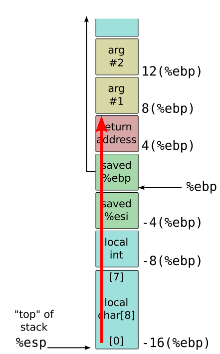
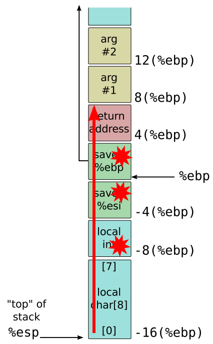
## Overwriting the return address



## Collateral damage




## Collateral damage

- Stop the program from crashing early
- 'Overwrite' with same value, or another legal one
- Minimize time between overwrite and use

## Other code injection targets

- Function pointers
  - Local, global, on heap
- `longjmp` buffers
- GOT (PLT) / import tables
- Exception handlers

## Indirect overwrites

- Change a data pointer used to access a code pointer
- Easiest if there are few other uses
- Common examples
  - Frame pointer
  - C++ object vtable pointer

## Non-sequential writes

- E.g. missing bounds check, corrupted pointer
- Can be more flexible and targeted
- More likely needs an absolute location
- May have less control of value written

## Unexpected-size writes

- Attacks don't need to obey normal conventions
- Overwrite one byte within a pointer
- Use mis-aligned word writes to isolate a byte

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## Project meeting scheduling

- Will pick a half-hour meeting slot, use for three different meetings
- List of about 75 slots on the web page
- Choose ordered list in pre-proposal, length inverse to popularity

## HA1 first attack

- First attack due tomorrow (Friday) night
- Most groups have gotten their VM assignments
- Suggested first exploit: back door
- Moodle or email to staff available for questions

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## Basic definition

- Shellcode: attacker supplied instructions implementing malicious functionality
- Name comes from example of starting a shell
- Often requires attention to machine-language encoding

## Classic execve `/bin/sh`

- `execve(fname, argv, envp)` system call
- Specialized syscall calling conventions
- Omit unneeded arguments
- Doable in under 25 bytes for Linux/x86

## Avoiding zero bytes

- Common requirement for shellcode in C string
- Analogy: broken 0 key on keyboard
- May occur in other parts of encoding as well

## More restrictions

- No newlines
- Only printable characters
- Only alphanumeric characters
- "English Shellcode" (CCS'09)

## Transformations

- Fold case, escapes, Latin1 to Unicode, etc.
- Invariant: unchanged by transformation
- Pre-image: becomes shellcode only after transformation

## Multi-stage approach

- Initially executable portion unpacks rest from another format
- Improves efficiency in restricted environments
- But self-modifying code has pitfalls

## NOP sleds

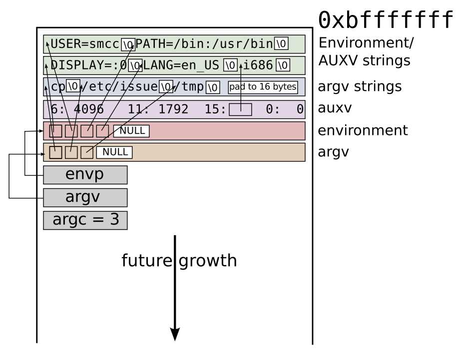
- Goal: make the shellcode an easier target to hit
- Long sequence of no-op instructions, real shellcode at the end
  - x86: 0x90 0x90 0x90 0x90 0x90 . . . shellcode

## Where to put shellcode?

- In overflowed buffer, if big enough
- Anywhere else you can get it
  - Nice to have: predictable location
- Convenient choice of Unix local exploits:

## Where to put shellcode?

Environment variables




## Code reuse

- If can't get your own shellcode, use existing code
- Classic example: `system` implementation in C library
  - "Return to libc" attack
- More variations on this later

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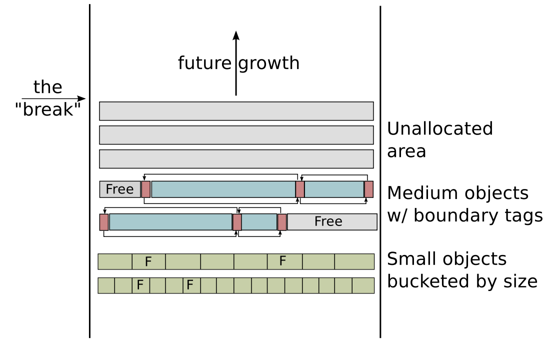
## Non-control data overwrite

- Overwrite other security-sensitive data
- No change to program control flow
- Set user ID to 0, set permissions to all, etc.

## Heap meta-data

- Boundary tags similar to doubly-linked list
- Overwritten on heap overflow
- Arbitrary write triggered on `free`
- Simple version stopped by sanity checks

## Heap meta-data



## Use after free

- Write to new object overwrites old, or vice-versa
- Key issue is what heap object is reused for
- Influence by controlling other heap operations

## Integer overflows

- Easiest to use: overflow in small (8-, 16-bit) value, or only overflowed value used
- 2GB write in 100 byte buffer
  - Find some other way to make it stop
- Arbitrary single overwrite
  - Use math to figure out overflowing value

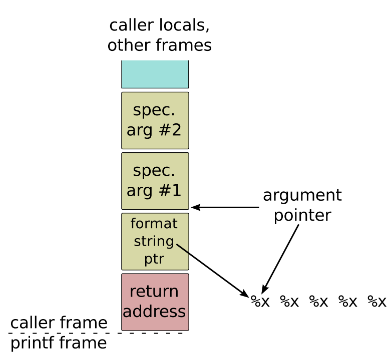
## Null pointer dereference

- Add offset to make a predictable pointer
  - On Windows, interesting address start low
- Allocate data on the zero page
  - Most common in user-space to kernel attacks
  - Read more dangerous than a write

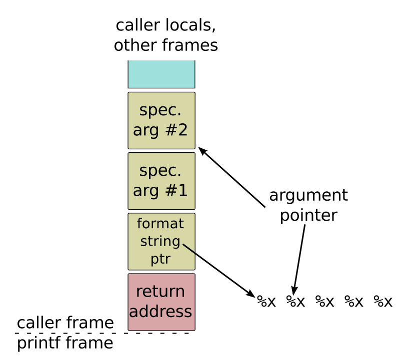
## Format string attack

- Attacker-controlled format: little interpreter
- Step one: add extra integer specifiers, dump stack
  - Already useful for information disclosure

## Format string attack layout




## Format string attack layout



## Format string attack: overwrite

- `%n` specifier: store number of chars written so far to pointer arg
- Advance format arg pointer to other attacker-controlled data
- Control number of chars written with padding
- On x86, use unaligned stores to create pointer

## Next time

- Defenses and counter-attacks