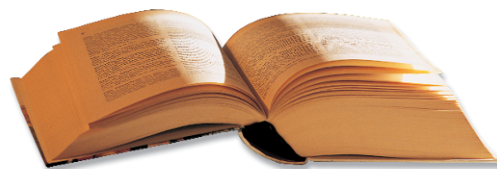


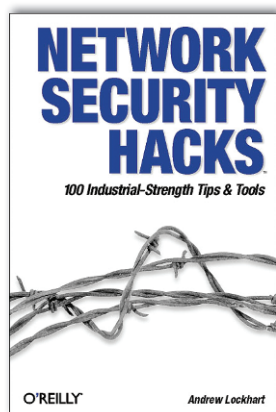
Book Reviews



Network Security Hacks

The latest book in the Hacks series is subtitled “100 Industrial-Strength Tips and Tools”. This does seem like a hard challenge to live up to. Although the book is divided into eight chapters, it is split into 100 different topics. These range from the “Test your firewall” to “Encrypt your temp folder”.

Each of these topics then describes what it is intending to do such as looking for suspicious activity by monitoring file access. It then goes on to explain why we should be doing this, and how this activity can be achieved in the most sensible manner.



Command line examples are shown at each stage along with screenshots of any graphical tool required. The chapters try to give some sort of subject order to help you find similar topics, and while this is a good idea, there is nothing to stop you dipping into the book at any point just to browse and spark a little interest.

Overall the book is in a different class to the Hacking for Dummies book. This is not because it concentrates on Linux tools, but that it does not treat the reader as a mindless drone. Although every technique should be familiar to security personnel, it is a nice way to make sure you are not just checking boxes on your security

worksheet as each topic makes you think of other possibilities.

Normally security books can leave the reader with a cold feeling that they are not in control of anything. After working your way through this small book, you realize that you may once again have the power to hold off the attackers from the gates to your castle.

For those who are unsure whether they want to spend the money on such a book, you can always visit the <http://hacks.oreilly.com> site and take a look at the full list of 100 topics covered, then if you feel you want the details with the methods to achieve each topic, you can buy the book. ■

Andrew Lockhart

316 pages

O'Reilly, 0-596-00643-8

£17.50, US\$ 24.95, EUR 23.00

Hacking for Dummies

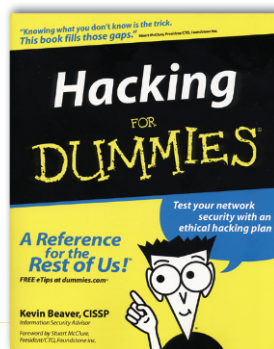
If you are a security-conscious system administrator, then this book may well be what you need to inspire you into checking and improving your company's policies. I suspect, however, that “The Art of Deception” does a better job of instilling paranoia. This one seems just a little too cozy and twee with its little symbols for warnings. The dummies format works well with other subjects but seems to sit less happily with such a serious topic as security.

Much of the book deals with Windows vulnerabilities. Some general chapters touch briefly on Linux and Unix, Usually just to mention programs and applications that can be used. Even the chapter devoted to Linux says little that cannot be covered by common sense. Make sure you update your system with the latest security patches etc.

A couple of chapters deal with the things the sysadmin has little or no control over. There are lengthy discussions on social engineering and passwords,

but as everybody knows there is little that can be done about the one idiot who decides that their mother's maiden name is good enough for the bank, so it must be good enough for all of their passwords at work, and then compromises all security by passing this fact on to the over-friendly engineer who drops by to test their machine.

The basic premise of the book is that by learning where our systems' vulnerabilities lie, we can protect them against attack. The author promotes so called white hat or ethical hacking to test a system and prevent malicious hacking attacks. There is, of course, nothing to prevent the book being used in the wrong way. Most of the information is there to be found on the Internet or elsewhere, so it is unlikely to encourage the



wrong sort of people to hack into your system.

Many utilities are mentioned to test specific parts of the system, to crack passwords etc., Some are Windows-specific, others can be used across the board. Some sections such as the one on War dialing are US-

oriented, and will be of little interest to readers in Europe, but the majority of topics are relevant to us all. This is a good basic introduction to a topic that concerns us all, but in many ways it does not go far enough and in my opinion is best read in conjunction with other texts on the topic. ■

Kevin Beaver

358 pages

Wiley, 0-7645-5784-X

£16.99, US\$ 24.99, EUR 21.50

Linux Unwired

All you ever wanted to know about WiFi. Actually, this book is all you ever wanted to know plus a whole lot more. It has everything from hidden nodes to building your own access points.

The book starts with an introduction to wireless technologies for those of us who are not radio hams and need that physics refresher course. It is written in such a way that it is understandable to all readers no matter what their level of competence is. Later chapters walk you through the practicalities of connecting a Linux system to a wireless network.

The book is good at explaining the hardware choices and options and this can be put to good use when you need to purchase more hardware at a later date. Differing configurations are stepped through to get the various hardware to work, while explaining what is optimal and what you can get away with.

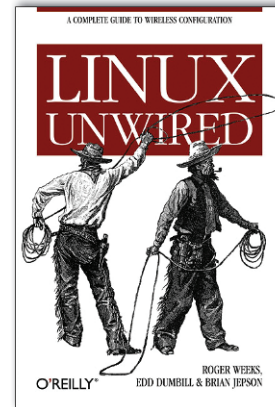
For those who fancy a hardware challenge, the book describes various

projects that focus around recycling older computer hardware, with tips on what to buy, as well as the prices you should expect to pay for the hardware.

Although some of the commercial networks mentioned are no longer in existence, the techniques mentioned are still valid.

The main chapters in the book deal with setting up your own WiFi system using an access point, and a four steps to WiFi guide that covers compiling the Linux kernel to ensure you have the correct tools for the job. There is even a guide to war chalking symbols that you can look out for while walking to your nearest Starbucks.

For those who just want to get their



hardware up and running the book is overkill. They may be better advised to search for specific howtos on the Web. Anyone who wishes to go a little further, and explore the world of WiFi, should find this a most useful reference book. It can be read from cover to cover,

although you will probably need to go and find more about some of the projects mentioned to satisfy your own curiosity. Every topic for wireless networking is covered, from PalmOS connectivity and Bluetooth, to Antenna design and GPS. ■

Roger Weeks, Edd Dumbill & Brian Jepson
298 pages
O'Reilly, 0-596-00583-0
£17.50, US\$ 24.95, EUR 23.00

Linux Lunacy '04

CRUISE THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN



SPONSORED BY: LINUX MAGAZINE

www.geekcruises.com

7 Night Cruise • Departs October 10, 2004
Internationally-renowned authors & speakers