**Description of an Attacker**

* An “attacker” is an individual who attempts to compromise security controls and gain unauthorized access to resources on a computer network.
* Attackers can be ignorant or have malicious intent.
* Attackers can be internal or external to the network.
* They are often referred to as hackers.

**Categories of Attackers**

* **Hackers**
* Recreational hackers: For these individuals, hacking is a hobby and they often do not think about the consequences of their actions. They enjoy learning and exploring.
* Opportunistic hackers: These individual are unlikely to initiate an attack out of fear of getting caught, but if opportunity presents itself and there is little risk of discovery, they may act.
* Professional hackers: These are criminals for whom hacking may be a career.
* **Internal Attackers**
* Disgruntled employees: These attackers may feel they have been wronged by the organization. They may engage in criminal activity or cause disruption.
* Contract workers: They typically have no loyalty to the organization; therefore, they are more likely to act unethically if it is within their nature to do so.
* Hackers: Some employees may fall into one of the three types of hackers described above.

**Motivations**

* **Hacking for Financial Gain**
* Financial gain may be immediate, such as transferring funds to an account controlled by the hacker or theft of credit card information for personal use.
* Hackers may acquire assets; such as credit card data, trade secrets, or corporate documents, in order to sell them to interested parties.
* Hackers may sell their services to others. These services include:
  + Denial of service (DoS) or distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks
  + Spam distribution
  + Password cracking
  + Eavesdropping
* **Hacking for Personal Reasons**
* Some hackers find risk of getting caught thrilling.
* Some hackers enjoy the challenge and look upon it as a game.
* Others enjoy the ego boost from having power over network defenders.
* Some are simply bored and use hacking as a form of entertainment.
* Some may use hacking as a means of furthering a political or social agenda (i.e.; “hacktivism”).
* Some may hack as a means of revenge.
* **Hacking for Status**
* Hackers have peers and social groups.
* Peer pressure may motivate hackers of low social order.
* Frequent hacking may be required to maintain membership.
* Successful attacks may raise a hacker’s social status.
* These motivations apply to hacking groups as well as individual hackers.