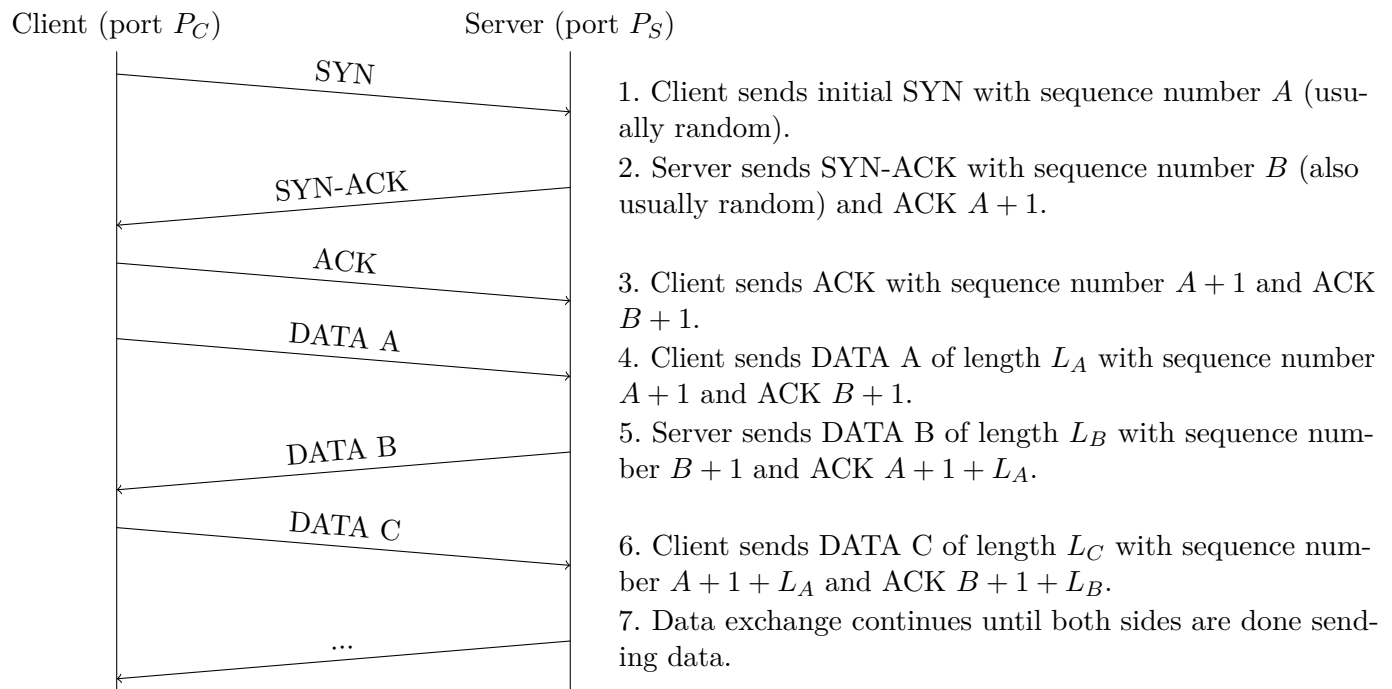


## Network Security I

### Question 1 *Attack on TCP*

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Suppose that a client connects to a server, and then performs the following TCP handshake and initial data transfer:



- (a) Assume that the next transmission in this connection will be DATA D from the server to the client. What will this packet look like?

Sequence number:	$B + 1 + L_B$	ACK:	$A + 1 + L_A + L_C$
Source port:	$P_S$	Destination port:	$P_C$
Length:	$L_D$	Flags:	ACK

- (b) You should be familiar with the concept and capabilities of a *man-in-the-middle* as an attacker who **can observe** and **can modify** traffic. There are two other types of relevant attackers in this scenario:
1. *On-path* attacker: **can observe** traffic but **cannot modify** it.
  2. *Off-path* attacker: **cannot observe** traffic and **cannot modify** it.

Carol is an *on-path* attacker. Can Carol do anything malicious to the connection? If so, what can she do?

**Solution:** Yes, Carol can leverage the information she learns from your traffic to hijack the session.

In part (a), we identified the values of all of the fields of concern expected in the next data transmission in the connection. Say Carol wants to spoof a packet from the server to the client; Carol can create a packet with the source IP as the server's IP, the destination IP as the client's IP, and the payload as whatever she wants. To spoof traffic in the other direction, she swaps the sequence number/ACK, source port/destination port, and source IP/destination IP. The recipient of this data cannot distinguish it from legitimate traffic, so she has effectively hijacked the session from her victim, allowing her to inject arbitrary data.

- (c) David is an *off-path* attacker. Can David do anything malicious to the connection? If so, what can he do?

**Solution:** No, there isn't much he can do.

In part (b), we demonstrated that we are effectively defenseless against an attacker that knows the *sequence numbers* and the *port numbers* of the connection. An off-path attacker, however, does not have the power to observe the traffic and find these parameters.

Even without prior knowledge of these parameters, though, an *off-path* attacker may attempt to guess them. In a typical TCP client-server connection, the client's port is an *ephemeral* port, with a maximum potential range of  $[0, 2^{16} - 1]$  (this varies, so we make an overestimation). The server's port is usually a *well-known* port for a specific service, such as port 80 for HTTP, which makes it much easier to guess. The sequence number and acknowledgement numbers are in the range  $[0, 2^{32} - 1]$ . However, an attacker can just ignore the acknowledgement number or use a random number. The TCP connection will not be reset with an invalid acknowledgement number as long as it's within the window (out of scope). Thus, an attacker has a rough  $\frac{1}{2^{48}}$  chance of successfully brute forcing the correct parameters.

If, for some reason, the initial sequence numbers are not properly randomized, David may be able to make educated guesses on the sequence numbers and significantly decrease the range of possibilities. However, assuming that they are properly randomized, this attack is theoretically possible but largely improbable.

We call this attack *blind hijacking*, as David has no concrete information when attempting to hijack the session.

- (d) The client starts getting responses from the server that don't make any sense. Inferring that David is attempting to hijack the connection, the client then immediately sends the server a **RST** packet, which terminates the ongoing connection. David wants to impersonate the client by establishing a new connection. How would he go about doing this?

**Solution:** If David attempts to start a new connection, he can *choose* the source port (the *ephemeral* port) and the source sequence number to be whatever values he wants. The values of these parameters for any subsequent transmissions in the connection will then be predictable. The server's port remains a well-known port; the only remaining unknown is the server's sequence number. Because David is still an off-path attacker, he still has to guess this field, with an overall probability of  $\frac{1}{2^{32}}$  of success, which we note is higher than the *blind hijacking* approach.

Note that there's now a time constraint on David's attack: if the client receives a response from the server based on his spoofed *SYN*, it will send a **RST** and terminate the connection, putting David back at step 1.

We call this attack *blind spoofing*, as David has no concrete information when attempting to spoof a new session.

**Question 2** *TLS protocol details*

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Depicted below is a typical instance of a TLS handshake.

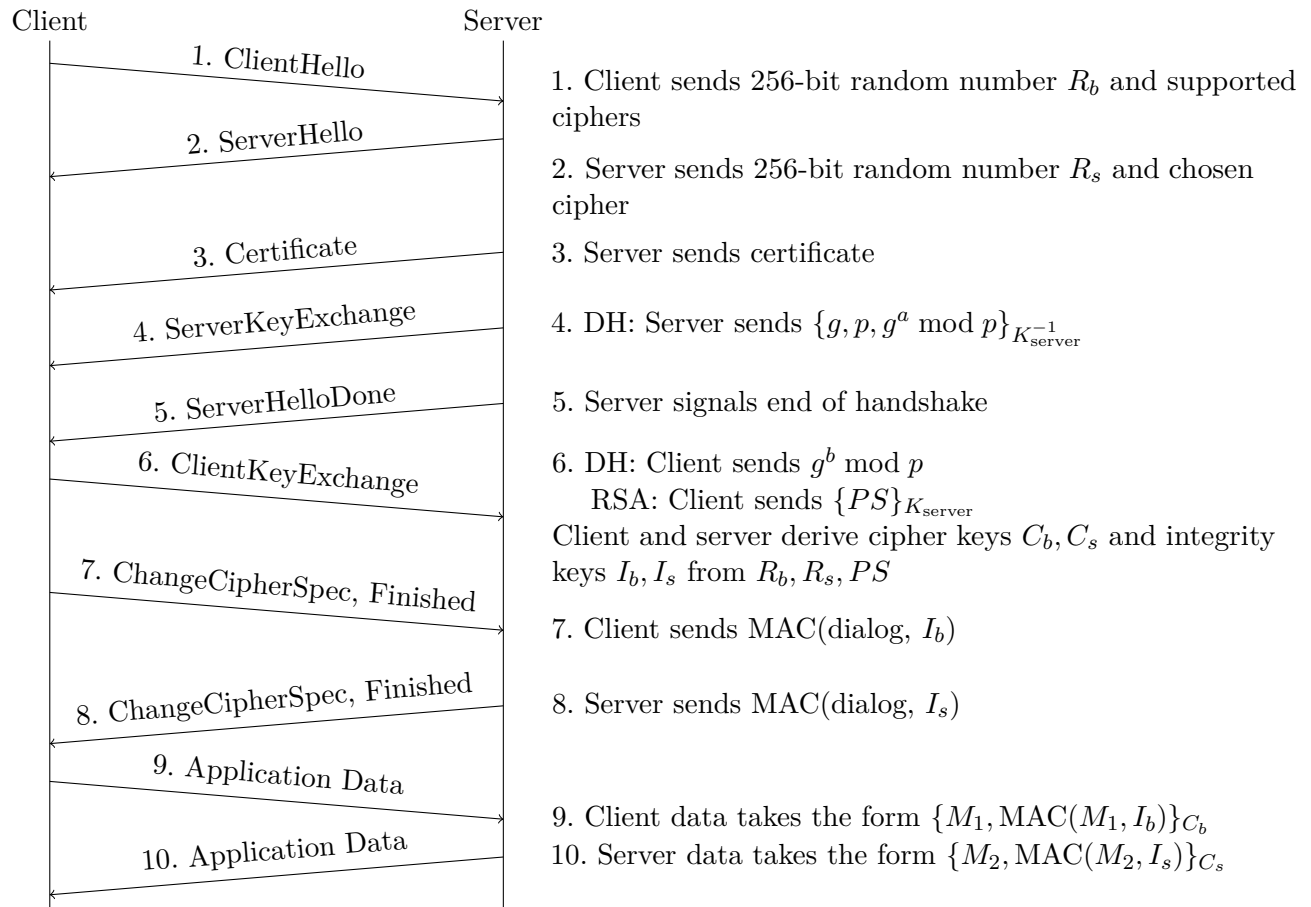


Figure 1: TLS 1.2 Key Exchange

(a) What is the purpose of the *client random* and *server random* fields?

**Solution:** They act as nonces to prevent replay attacks.  
NOTE: Previous versions of the discussion mistakenly claimed that these values were used to add entropy to the key - this is incorrect.

(b) ClientHello and ServerHello are not encrypted or authenticated. Explain why a man-in-the-middle cannot exploit this. (Consider both the Diffie-Hellman and RSA case.)

**Solution:** The use of either public key encryption (RSA handshake) or a Diffie-Hellman exchange prevents an eavesdropper from learning the Premaster Secret. A MITM attacker who alters any of the values will be exposed, as follows.

For the RSA handshake case, the MITM will be unable to read the Premaster Secret sent by the client because it is encrypted using the server's public key. When the client and server exchange MACs over the the handshake dialog, the MITM will be unable to compute the correct MACs for their altered dialog because they will not know the corresponding integrity keys derived from the Master secret.

For the Diffie-Hellman case, the MITM will be unable to alter the value of  $g^a \bmod p$ , because the client requires that the value have a correct signature using the server's public key. Because the MITM cannot alter the value, they cannot substitute  $g^{a'} \bmod p$  for which they know  $a'$ . Without knowledge of the exponent, the MITM cannot compute  $g^{ab} \bmod p$  to obtain the Premaster Secret.

- (c) Note that in the TLS protocol presented above, there are two cipher keys  $C_b$  and  $C_s$ . One key is used only by the client, and the other is used only by the server. Likewise, there are two integrity keys  $I_b$  and  $I_s$ . Alice proposes that both the server and the client should simply share one cipher key  $C$  and one integrity key  $I$ . Why might this be a bad idea?

**Solution:** Vulnerable to **reflection** attacks: a man-in-the-middle can send a client's application data back to them. It will still verify the appropriate checks, but the user will think that this is the response from the server. Likewise, an attacker can reflect a server's response back to the client. Note that due to the existence of sequence numbers in the TLS specification, the actual attack would be a little more complicated.

- (d) The protocol given above is a simplified form of what actually happens. After step 8 (ChangeCipherSpec), the protocol as described above is still vulnerable. What is the vulnerability and how could you fix this?

**Solution:** An attacker can perform a **replay** attack, where they send the same application data twice. The solution is to add sequence numbers (which is what the actual TLS specification does, with some extra details involved).

### Question 3 *TLS threats*

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An attacker is trying to attack the company Boogle and its users. Assume that users always visit Boogle’s website with an HTTPS connection, using ephemeral Diffie-Hellman. You should also assume that Boogle does not use certificate pinning. The attacker may have one of three possible goals:

1. Impersonate the Boogle web server to a user
2. Discover some of the plaintext of data sent during a past connection between a user and Boogle’s website
3. Replay data that a user previously sent to the Boogle server over a prior HTTPS connection

For each of the following scenarios, describe if and how the attacker can achieve each goal.

- (a) The attacker obtains a copy of Boogle’s certificate.

**Solution:** None of the above. The certificate is public. Anyone can obtain a copy simply by connecting to Boogle’s webserver, so learning the certificate doesn’t help the attacker.

- (b) The attacker obtains the private key of a certificate authority trusted by users of Boogle.

**Solution:**

The attacker can impersonate the Boogle web server to a user. The CA’s private key can be used for creating bogus certificates, which can be used to fool the client into thinking it is talking to Boogle.

The attacker can’t decrypt past data. First, Boogle’s private key is used in the protocol, not the CA’s. Second, Diffie-Hellman provides “forward-secrecy” (as in part (c)), and so the attacker could not decrypt it regardless.

Replays aren’t possible, due to the nonces in the TLS handshake.

- (c) The attacker obtains the private key corresponding to an old certificate used by Boogle’s server during a past connection between a victim and Boogle’s server. Assume that this old certificate has been revoked and is no longer valid. Note that the attacker does not have the private key corresponding to current certificate.

**Solution:** None. Unless the attacker can figure out either a or b, the attacker will not be able to decrypt the data of past connections.

This can’t be used to impersonate a Boogle server because the attacker doesn’t

have a fresh valid certificate corresponding to the stolen private key, and can't use the previous certificate for that key because it's been revoked.

Now, assume that users always visit Boogle's website with an HTTPS connection, based on RSA.

- (d) The attacker obtains Boogle's private key and the private key of a certificate authority trusted by users of Boogle.

**Solution:**

The attacker can impersonate the Boogle web server to a user. The CA's private key can be used for creating bogus certificates, which can be used to fool the client into thinking it is talking to Boogle. The attacker can decrypt past data, since RSA does not provide forward secrecy. Replays aren't possible, due to the nonces in the TLS handshake.