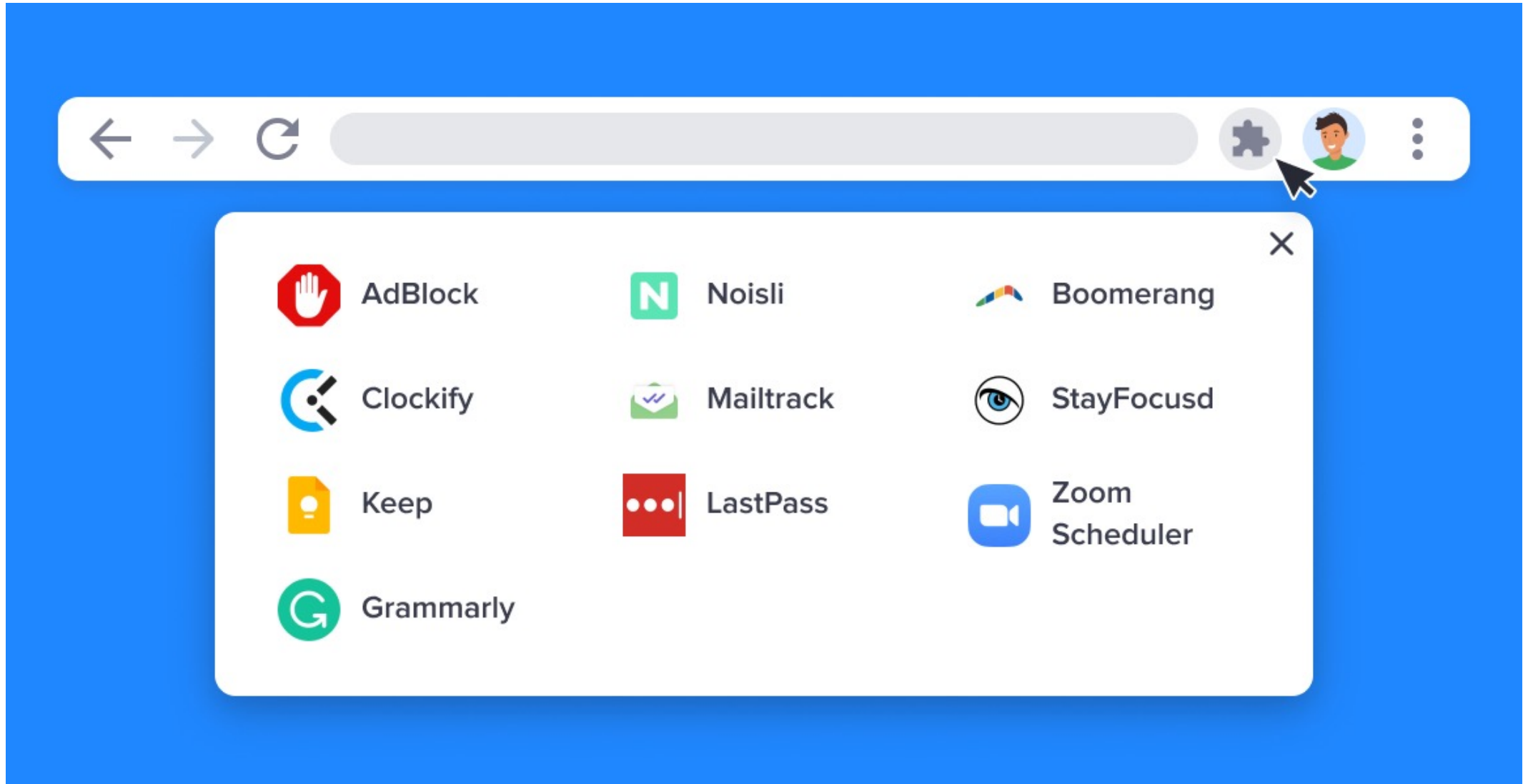


# CSE610: Web Programming & Security

## 9. Browser Extensions & Phishing

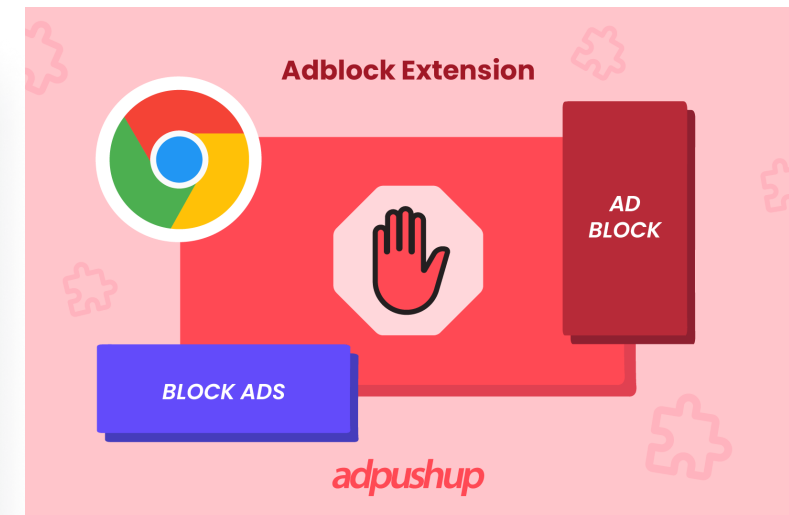
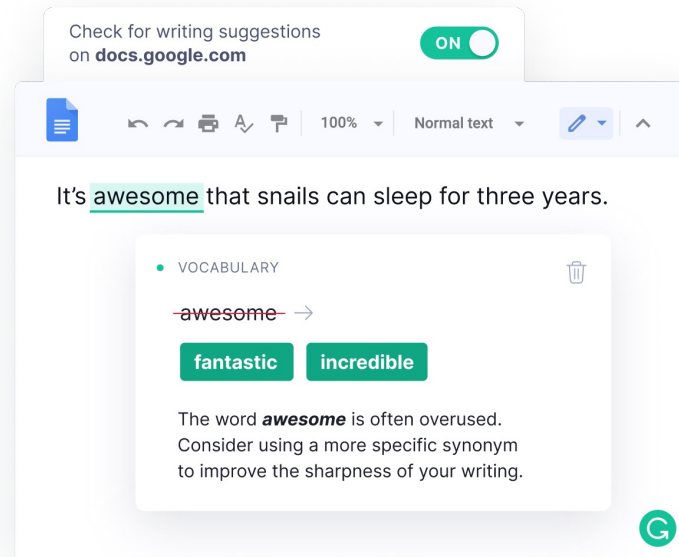
Seongil Wi

# Browser Extension



# What is a Browser Extension?

- A software that allows you to **customize your web browser/website**
  - Add extra features



# Popularity of Extensions

---

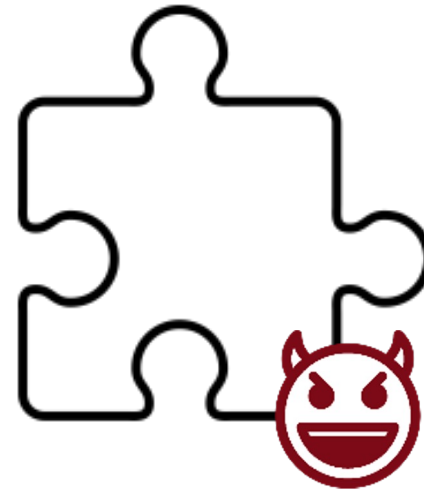
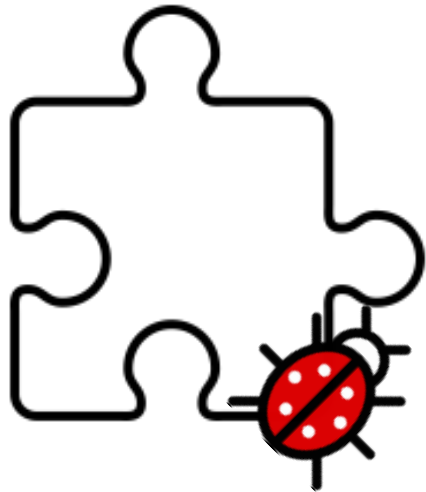
- 93% of enterprise companies use browser extensions
- 130,445 extensions are available for Chrome (2024)

# Unfortunately...

---



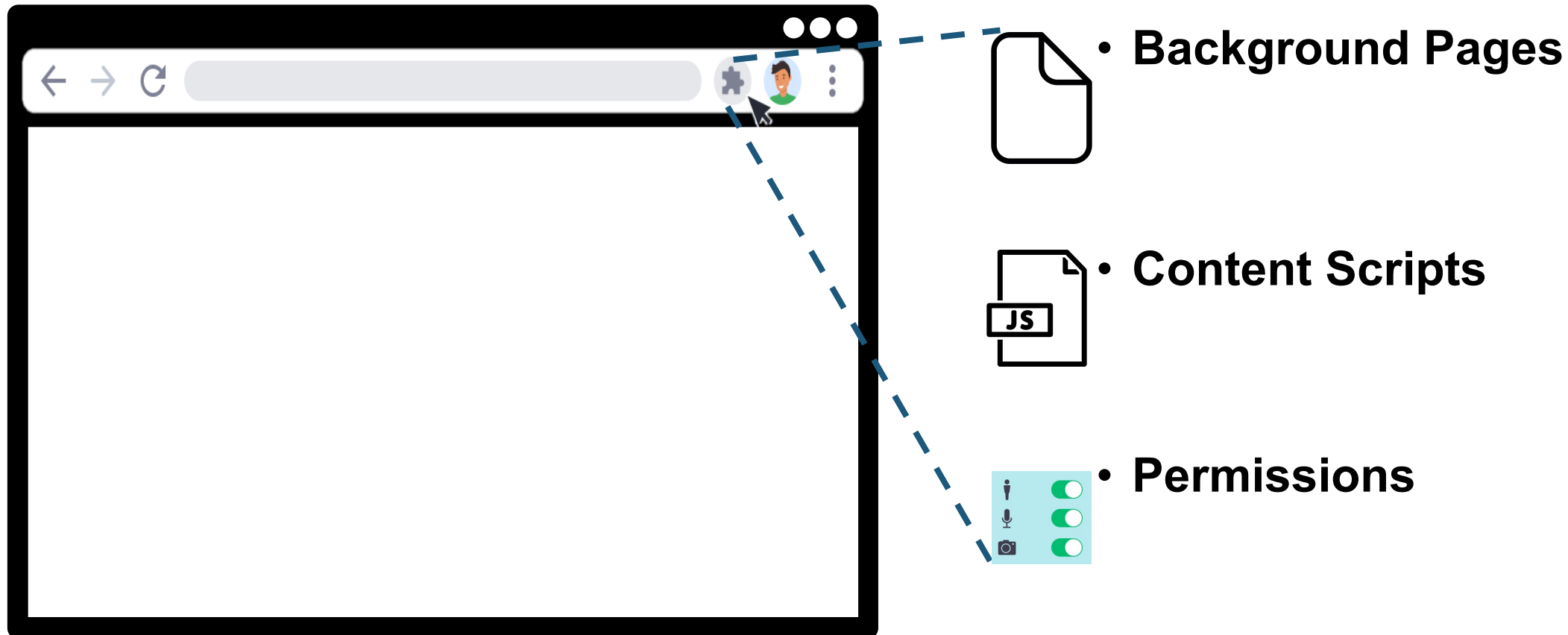
- There are lots of vulnerable or malicious extensions



# Browser Extensions - Structure Overview

6

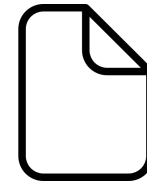
- A browser extension consists of three components:  
**background pages**, **content scripts**, and **permissions**



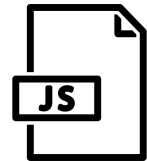
# Manifest File

Defines extension properties

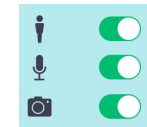
```
"background": {  
  "scripts": ["background.js"]  
},  
  
"content_scripts": [{  
  "matches": ["http://www.google.com/*"],  
  "css": ["mystyle.css"]  
  "js": ["jquery.js", "myscript.js"]  
}],  
  
"permissions": [  
  "bookmarks",  
  "*://*.facebook.com/",  
  "https://www.google.com/"  
],  
...
```



• **Background Pages**



• **Content Scripts**



• **Permissions**

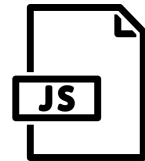
# Background Pages



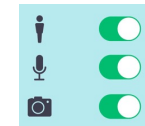
```
"background": {  
  "scripts": ["background.js"]  
},  
  
"content_scripts": [{  
  "matches": ["http://www.google.com/*"],  
  "css": ["mystyle.css"],  
  "js": ["jquery.js", "myscript.js"]  
}],  
  
"permissions": [  
  "bookmarks",  
  "*/**/facebook.com/",  
  "https://www.google.com/"  
],  
...
```



- **Background Pages:** define the behavior of the extension
  - Do not have any visibility to the user



- **Content Scripts**



- **Permissions**



# Content Scripts



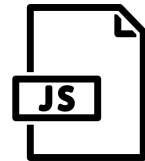
```
"background": {
  "scripts": ["background.js"]
},

"content_scripts": [{
  "matches": ["http://www.google.com/*"],
  "css": ["mystyle.css"]
  "js": ["jquery.js", "myscript.js"]
}],

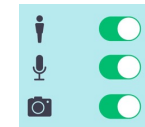
"permissions": [
  "bookmarks",
  "*://*.facebook.com/",
  "https://www.google.com/"
],
...
```



- **Background Pages:** define the behavior of the extension
  - Do not have any visibility to the user



- **Content Scripts:** JavaScript files that runs in the context of a web page



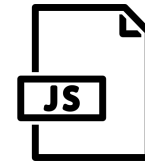
- **Permissions**

# Content Scripts

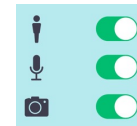
Two JavaScript files will be run in the page for any URLs matching the specified URL patterns

```
"background":  
  "scripts": [  
  ],  
  
"content_scripts": [{  
  "matches": ["http://www.google.com/*"],  
  "css": ["mystyle.css"]  
  "js": ["jquery.js", "myscript.js"]  
}],  
  
"permissions": [  
  "bookmarks",  
  "*://*.facebook.com/",  
  "https://www.google.com/"  
],  
...
```

- **Background Pages:** define the behavior of the extension
  - Do not have any visibility to the user

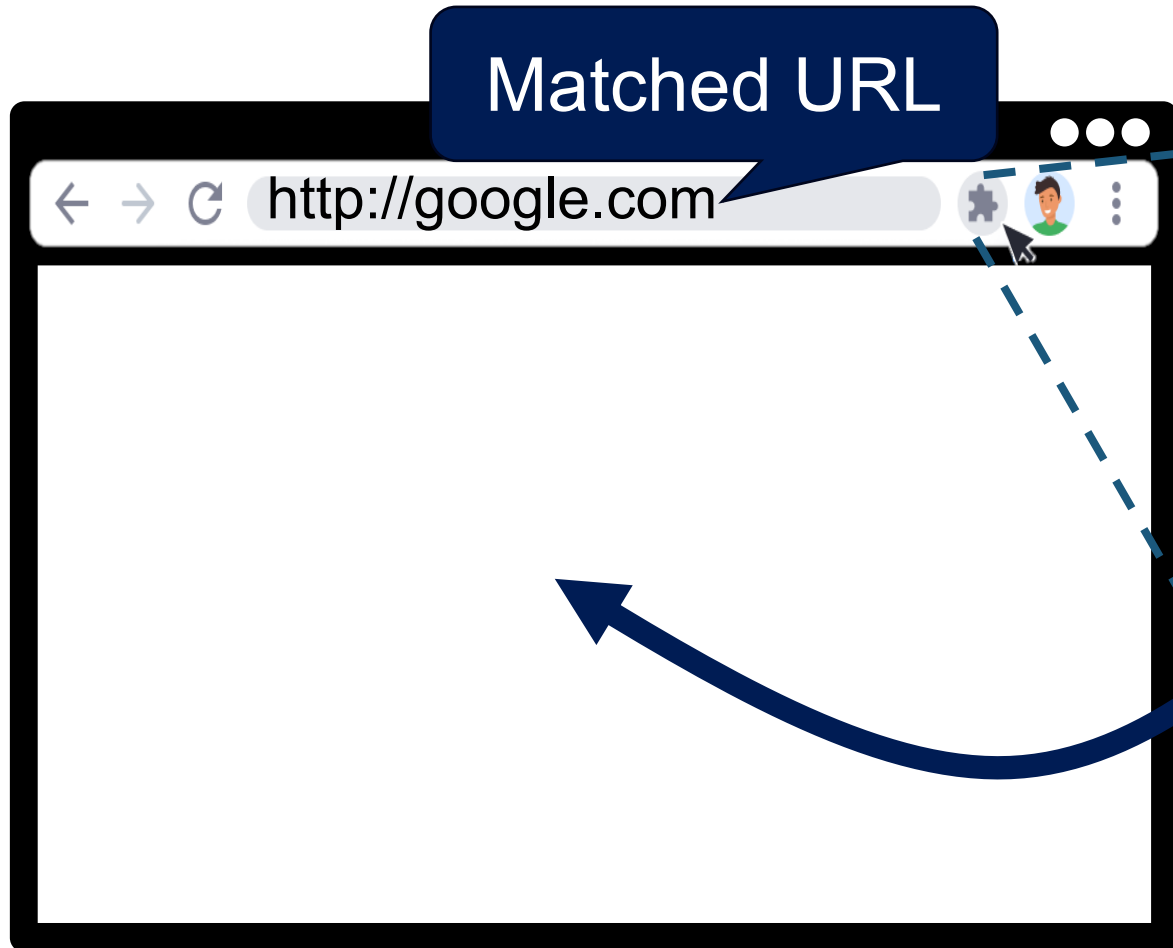


- **Content Scripts:** JavaScript files that runs in the context of a web page



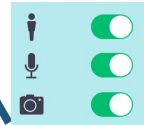
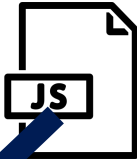
- **Permissions**

# Content Scripts



Execute this JS from  
http://google.com origin

define the  
on  
to the user



- **Content Scripts:** JavaScript files that runs in the context of a web page
- **Permissions**

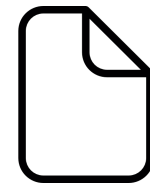
# Permissions



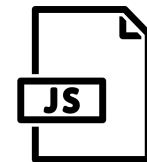
```
"background": {
  "scripts": ["background.js"]
},

"content_scripts": [{
  "matches": ["http://www.google.com/*"],
  "css": ["mystyle.css"]
  "js": ["jquery.js", "myscript.js"]
}],

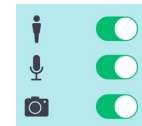
"permissions": [
  "bookmarks",
  "*/**/facebook.com/",
  "https://www.google.com/"
],
...
```



- **Background Pages:** define the behavior of the extension
  - Do not have any visibility to the user



- **Content Scripts:** JavaScript files that runs in the context of a web page



- **Permissions**

# Permissions



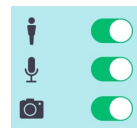
```
"background": {  
  "scripts": ["background.js"]  
}
```

**Extension API permission:**  
tab, geolocation, bookmarks,  
webRequests, ... (browser  
provided APIs)

```
}],  
  
"permissions": [  
  "bookmarks",  
  "*/**/facebook.com/",  
  "https://www.google.com/"  
],  
...
```

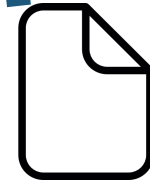
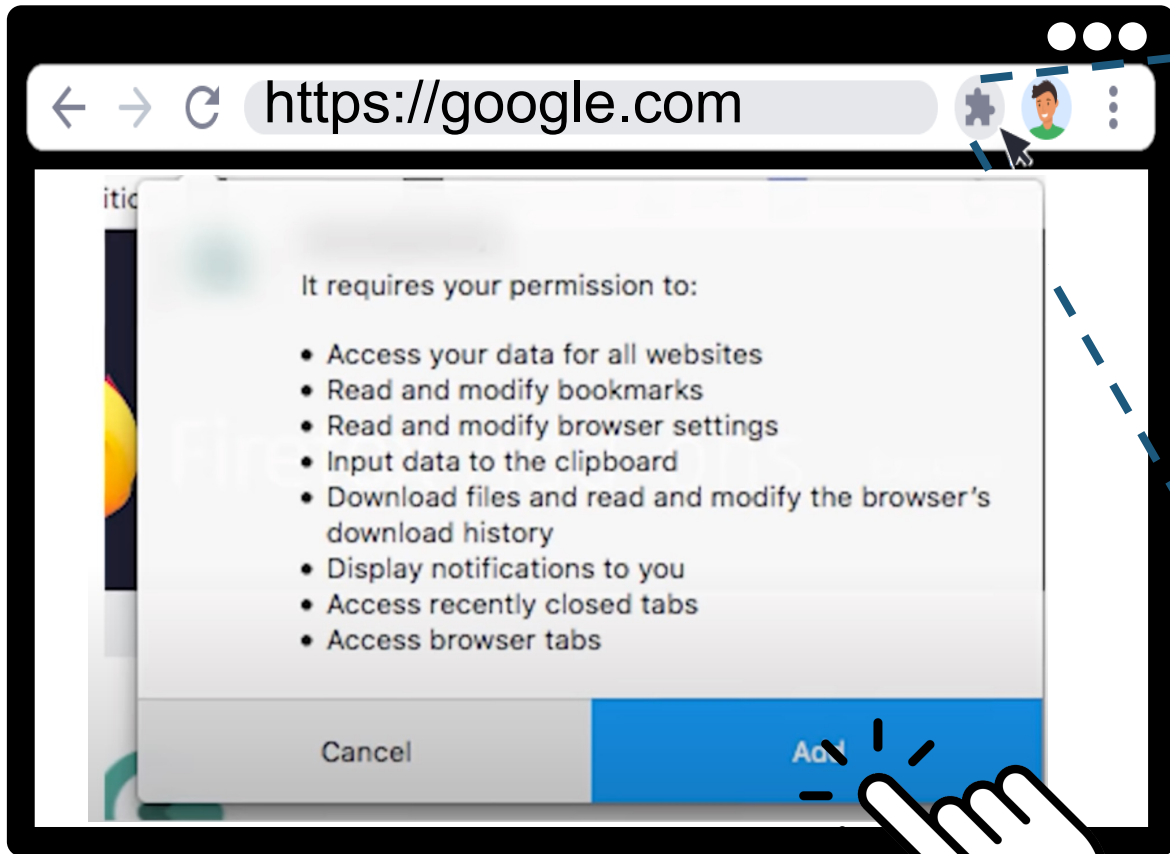
**Background Pages:** define the  
**Extension API permissions**  
operate in conjunction with the  
optional **host permissions**

... defines that runs in the context of a  
web page

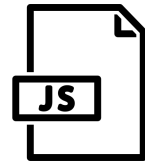


**Permissions:** permissions to  
access the different parts of the  
extension API

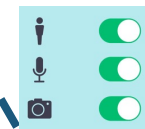
# Permissions



- **Background Pages:** define the behavior of the extension
  - Do not have any visibility to the user



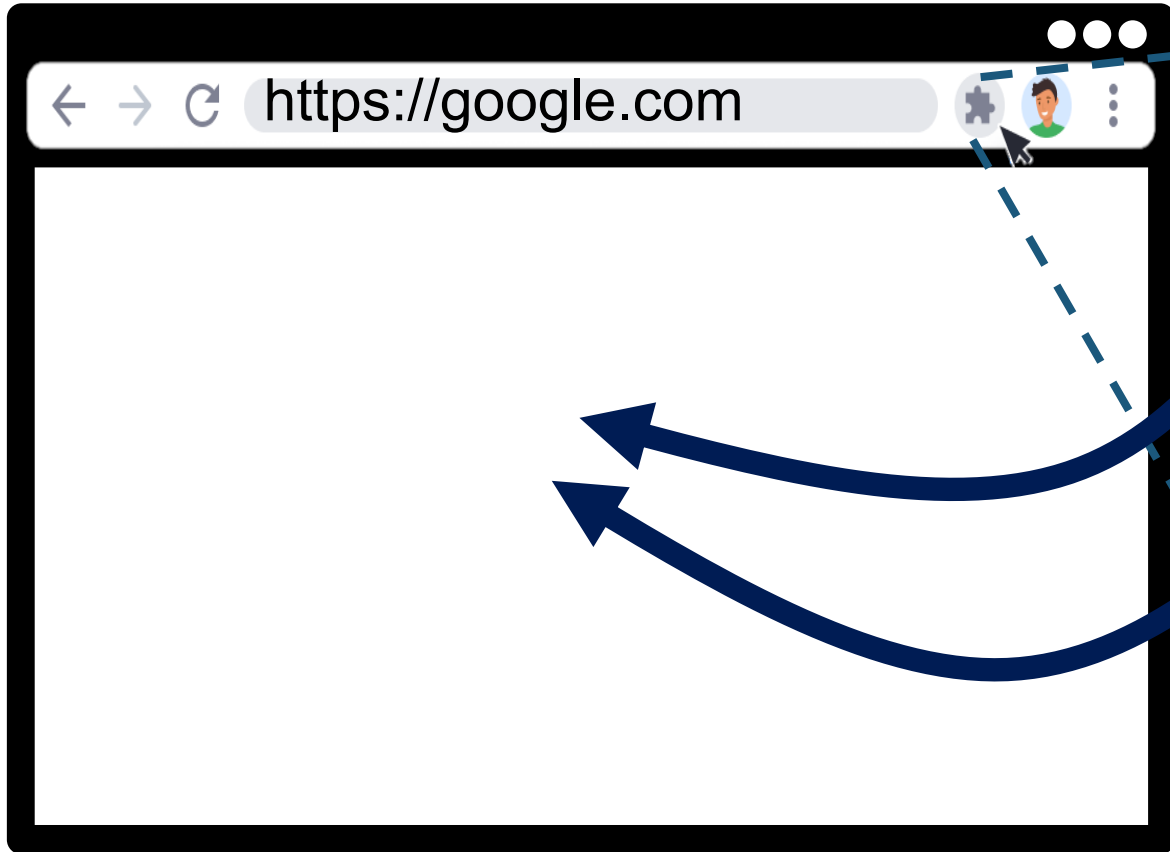
- **Content Scripts:** JavaScript files that runs in the context of a web page



- **Permissions:** permissions to access the different parts of the extension API

# Permissions

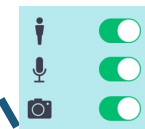
Can execute privileged chrome.\* APIs according to its permissions



- **Background Pages:** define the behavior of the extension
  - Do not have any visibility to the user

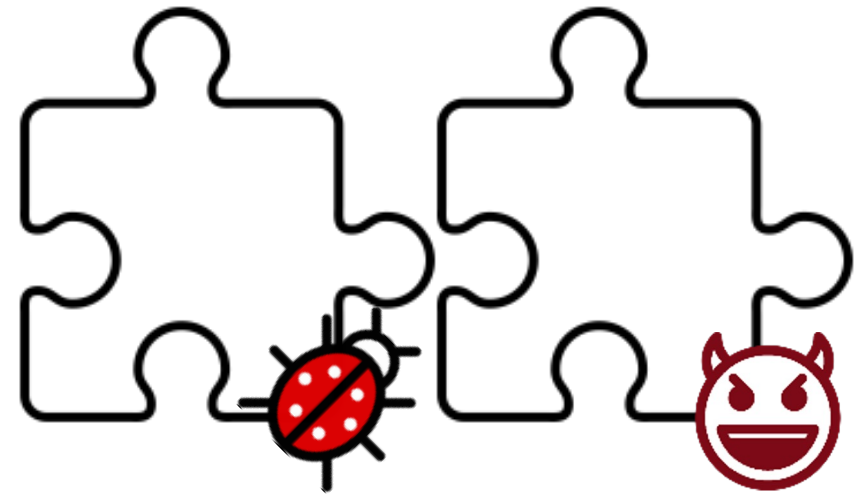


- **Content Scripts:** JavaScript files that runs in the context of a web page



- **Permissions:** permissions to access the different parts of the extension API

# Is Your Extension Secure?





# Malicious Extensions



```
"background": {  
  "scripts": ["background.js"]  
},  
  
"content_scripts": [{  
  "matches": ["*"],  
  "js": ["attacker.js"]  
}],  
  
"permissions": [  
  "bookmarks",  
  "geolocation", ... //all permissions  
  "*" ]  
...  
...  
...
```

Execute arbitrary JS  
code in any domain

Execute arbitrary browser  
APIs in any domain



ACCEPT

# Malicious Extensions

---



- Modify page content
- Keystroke logging (steal your information)
- Steal cookies
- See browser histories
- Cryptocurrency mining
- Inject ad

# Malicious Extensions



**Chris Pederick**  
@chrispederick



The Web Developer for Chrome account has been compromised and a hacked version of the extension (0

12:25 AM - Aug 3, 2017

33 406 146

## ENDPOINT SECURITY

# 1.4 Million Users Install Chrome Extensions That Inject Code Into eCommerce Sites

Endpoint security company McAfee warns of five malicious Chrome extensions designed to track users' browsing activity and inject code into ecommerce platforms.



By **Ionut Arghire**  
August 31, 2022



# AWAKE

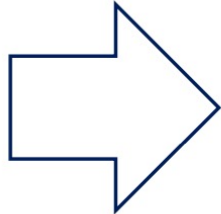
**"...in the past three months alone, 111 malicious or fake Chrome extensions were installed approximately 33 million times"**

# Difficulties in Identifying Malicious Extensions <sup>20</sup>



- JavaScript Obfuscation

```
<script>
function NewObject(prefix)
{
  var count=0;
  this.SayHello=function(msg)
  {
    count++;
    alert(prefix+msg);
  }
  this.GetCount=function()
  {
    return count;
  }
}
var obj=new NewObject("Message : ");
obj.SayHello("You are welcome.");
</script>
```



```
<script>
var _0x69ad=
["\x53\x61\x79\x48\x65\x6C\x6C\x6F","\x47\x65\x74\x43\x66\x75\x6E\x74","\x4D\x65\x73\x73\x61\x67\x65\x20\x3A\x20",
"\x59\x6F\x75\x20\x61\x72\x65\x20\x77\x65\x6C\x63\x6F\x6D\x65\x2E"];function NewObject(_0xceccx2){var
_0xceccx3=0;this[_0x69ad[0]]= function(_0xceccx4)
{ _0xceccx3++;alert(_0xceccx2+_0xceccx4)};this[_0x69ad[1]]= function(){return
_0xceccx3}}var obj= new
NewObject(_0x69ad[2]);obj.SayHello(_0x69ad[3])

</script>
```

# Difficulties in Identifying Malicious Extensions<sup>21</sup>

---



- **JavaScript Obfuscation**
- **Cloacking:** a malicious extension loads different code based on the tester's location and IP
  - Google's IP range: loads legitimate code
  - IP range outside of Google: loads malicious code
- Its malicious behaviors can be triggered remotely
- No malicious behaviors appear until certain conditions met

- Dynamically detect malicious extensions

## Hulk: Eliciting Malicious Behavior in Browser Extensions

*Alexandros Kapravelos<sup>◇</sup> Chris Grier<sup>†\*</sup> Neha Chachra<sup>‡</sup> Christopher Kruegel<sup>◇</sup>  
Giovanni Vigna<sup>◇</sup> Vern Paxson<sup>†\*</sup>*

*<sup>◇</sup>UC Santa Barbara   <sup>†</sup>UC Berkeley   <sup>‡</sup>UC San Diego*

*\*International Computer Science Institute*

*{kapravel, chris, vigna}@cs.ucsb.edu   {grier, vern}@cs.berkeley.edu   nchachra@cs.ucsd.edu*

### Abstract

We present Hulk, a dynamic analysis system that detects malicious behavior in browser extensions by monitoring their execution and corresponding network activity. Hulk elicits malicious behavior in extensions in two ways. First, Hulk leverages *HoneyPages*, which are dynamic pages that adapt to an extension's expectations in web page structure and content. Second, Hulk employs

to monetize a victim's web browsing session and readily access web-related content and private data.

Our work examines extensions for Google Chrome that are designed with malicious intent—a threat distinct from that posed by attackers exploiting bugs in benign extensions, which has seen prior study [6, 5]. Extensions for Google Chrome are primarily distributed through the Chrome Web Store.<sup>1</sup> Like app stores for

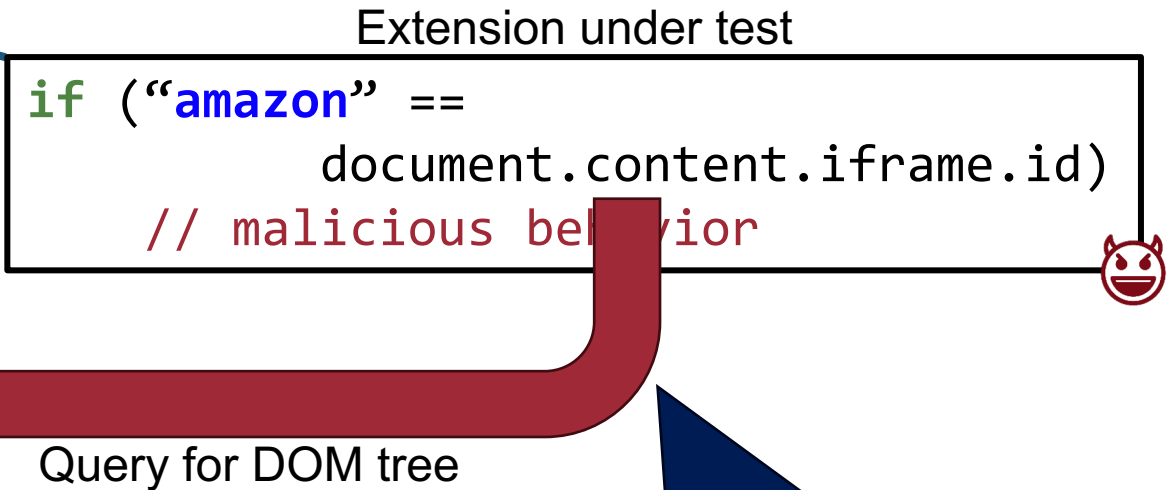
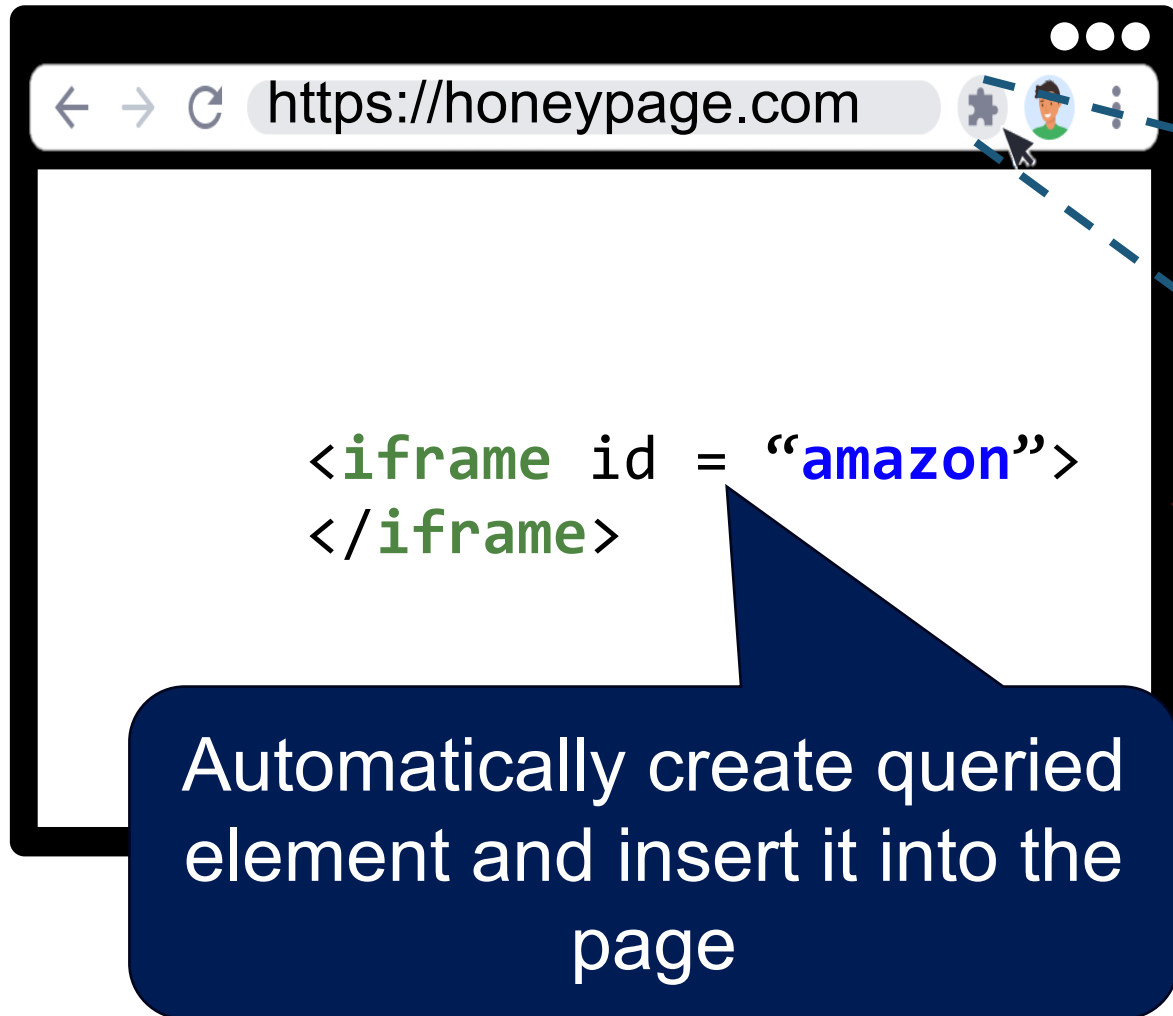
# Hulk, *UNISEX SEC'2014*

---



- Dynamically detect malicious extensions
- Let's trigger the malicious code, which is conditionally executed
  - How?
  - **Intuition:** several malicious extensions activate based on the content of a web page
  - **Idea:** Honey Page (Extension testing page)
  - Dynamically create DOM elements whenever an extension requests certain DOM elements

# Honey Pages





# Hulk, *UNISEX SEC'2014*

---



- Dynamically detect malicious extensions
- Let's trigger the malicious code, which is conditionally executed
  - How?
  - **Intuition:** several malicious extensions activate based on the content of a web page
  - **Idea:** Honey Page (Extension testing page)
  - Dynamically create DOM elements whenever an extension requests certain DOM elements

How to detect maliciousness?

# Malicious Behaviors (Bug Oracle)

- Attempt to uninstall other extensions
- Make hard to be uninstalled
  - Dynamically replace or remove that tab `chrome://extensions`
- Remove security request headers
  - X-Frame-Options and Content-Security-Policy
- Inject keylogger JS code
  - Intercepting every keystroke
- Looking for DOM elements whose name is “password”
- Alter outgoing HTTP requests
  - For requests from Amazon pages, the extensions adds parameters that credit a particular affiliation
  - <http://www.amazon.com/dp/096182570/?tag=affiliateID>

# Experimental Results

---



- Total: 48,332
- **Benign**: 43,490
- **Suspicious**: 4,712
  - Injects dynamic JavaScript
  - Evals with input >128 long
  - Produces HTTP 4xx errors
  - Performs requests to non-existent domains (Why?)
- **Malicious**: 130
  - Ad replacement
  - Affiliate fraud
  - Keylogger
  - Online social network abuse: spams on Facebook account

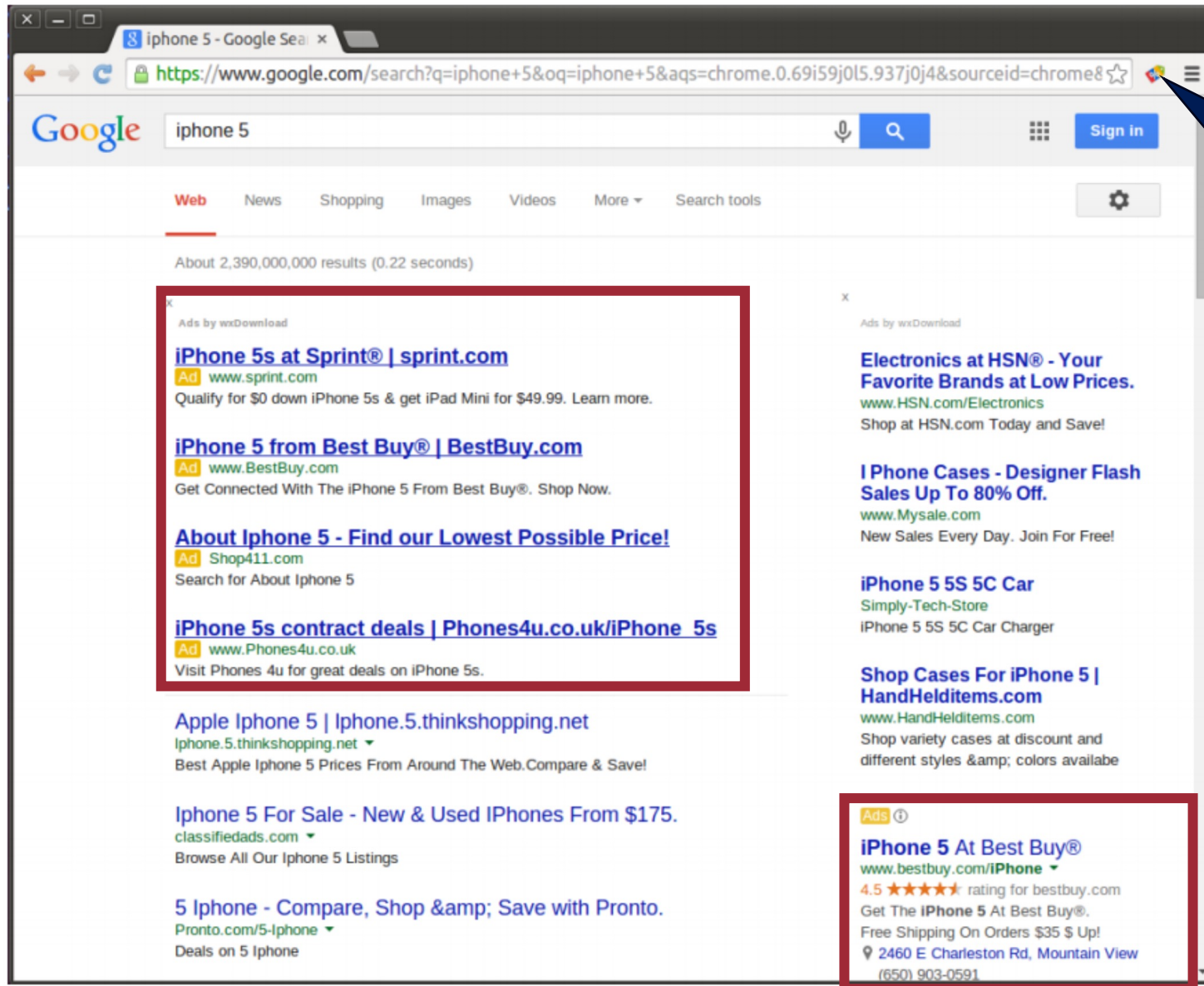
# Limitations

---



- Difficult to detect extensions that perform **cloaking**
- Searching **coverage**
  - If the extension looks for multiple structural DOM elements, Hulk failed to prepare such DOMs
- Any malicious extension can **detect** whether Hulk is in place
  - Ask for a random DOM element to the honey page
  - If it returns, Hulk is in place

# Ad Injection



**Ad injector:**  
Modify a page's content to insert or replace advertisements

# Ad Injection

The screenshot shows the Amazon.com search results for "blueray". The page features a navigation bar with the Amazon logo, search bar, and account links. The search results are displayed in a grid format. A red box highlights a "Hot Deals!" section on the right side of the page, which contains four product listings for Blu-ray players. Another red box highlights a "Recently Bought" section at the bottom of the page, which contains two product listings for Blu-ray players. The injected advertisements are clearly marked with "Best Deal" banners and are positioned in areas where they would not naturally appear in the search results.

Amazon.com: blueray x  
www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb\_sb\_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=blueray&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3Abl

amazon  
Your Amazon.com Today's Deals Gift Cards Sell Help  
AMAZON PILOT SEASON presented by GEICO Watch now for free

Shop by Department Search All blueray Go Hello, Sign in Your Account Try Prime Cart Wish List

1-16 of 37,405 results for "blueray"

Show results for

- Electronics >
  - Blu-Ray Disc Players
  - Streaming Media Players
  - Blank BD-R Discs
  - DVD Players
  - HDMI Cables
- Computers & Accessories >
  - Internal Blu-ray Drives
- Movies & TV >
  - Blu-ray
  - Music Videos & Concerts
  - Action & Adventure
  - Movies
  - Science Fiction

+ See All 31 Departments

Refine by

Eligible for Free Shipping  
Free Shipping by Amazon

Television Feature

- 3D
- Internet Ready

Brand

- LG
- Sony

"Samsung BD-H5100 Blu-ray disc player"  
ChuppiShop.com  
"Samsung BD-H5100 Blu-ray disc player"  
Samsung BD-H5900 - 3D Blu-ray  
Dell.com  
Samsung BD-H5900 - 3D Blu-ray disc player - Ethernet, Wi-Fi  
Oppo BDP-105 (BK) Blu-ray player  
Crutchfield  
Oppo BDP-105 (BK) Blu-ray player with networking  
Philips BDP2185/F7 Smart 3D Blu-ray  
Walmart.com  
Philips BDP2185/F7 Smart 3D Blu-ray Player with Built-In WiFi, Refurbished

KOHL'S WE'RE CELEBRATING THE FIRST ANNUAL KOHL'S REWARD PROGRAM. WON'T YOU JOIN? (YOU'LL EARN POINTS ON YOUR PURCHASES)

Did you mean: [blu ray](#)

Recently Bought

Best Deal "Samsung BD-H5100 Blu-ray disc..." \$53.99 CHUPPI

Samsung BD-F5100/ZA Blu-ray PL... \$69.98 Walmart

Hot Deals!

Best Deal "Samsung BD-H5100 Blu-ray disc..." \$53.99 CHUPPI

Samsung Bd-h5100 Blu-ray Disc ... \$94.88 eBay

Samsung BD-H6500 - 3D Blu-ray ... \$147.99 DELL

Samsung BD-H5900 - 3D Blu-ray ... \$97.99 DELL

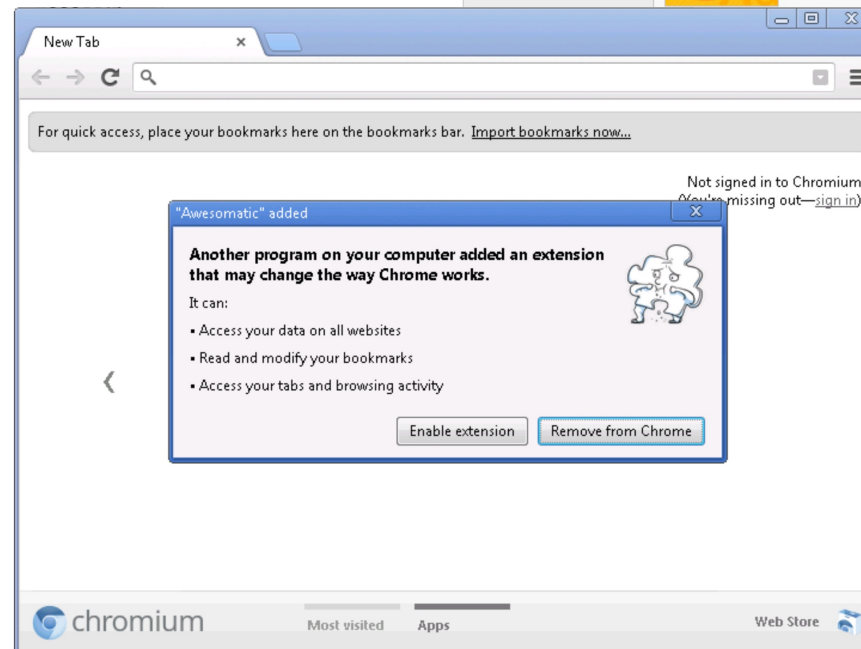
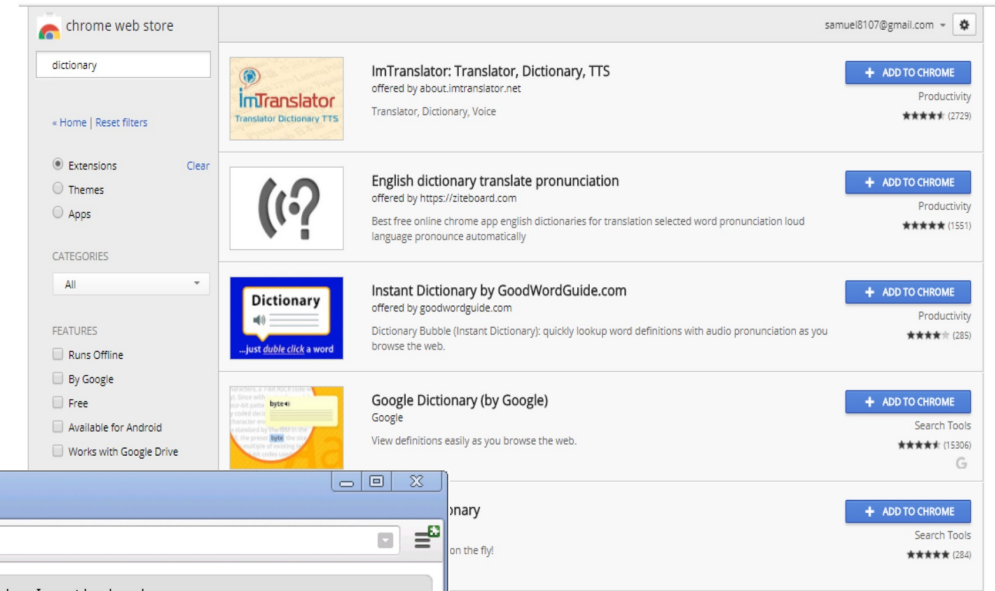
Powered by wxDownload®

Shipping  
Electronics: See all 1,511 items

# How Are Users Exposed to Ad Injectors?

31

- Chrome web store
- Sideloading extension
- Malware infection



# Is Ad Injector Malicious?

---



- Why?
  - (**Privacy**) Monitor user's browser activities for tracking and advertisement selection
  - (**User experience**) Increases page load latency
  - (**User experience**) Overwhelm the original content (spurious “search results” and fly-in banners)
  - (**Security**) Serve spam, malware, phishing
- Who can be damaged from ad injections?
  - **End users**



# Ad Injection at Scale, *S&P'2015*

- Identifies ad injection in the wild
- Found 50,870 ad injector extensions, 38% of which are explicitly malicious

## Ad Injection at Scale: Assessing Deceptive Advertisement Modifications

Kurt Thomas<sup>◇</sup>, Elie Bursztein<sup>◇</sup>, Chris Grier<sup>□</sup>, Grant Ho<sup>†</sup>, Nav Jagpal<sup>◇</sup>, Alexandros Kapravelos<sup>▽</sup>,  
Damon McCoy<sup>‡†\*</sup>, Antonio Nappa<sup>§○</sup>, Vern Paxson<sup>†\*</sup>, Paul Pearce<sup>†</sup>, Niels Provos<sup>◇</sup>, Moheeb Abu Rajab<sup>◇</sup>

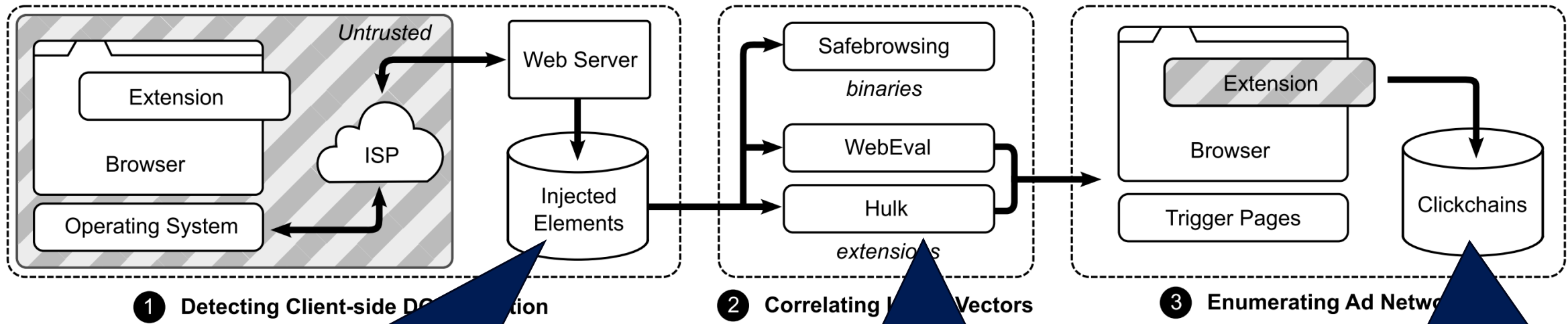
{kurtthomas, elieb, nav, niels, moheeb}@google.com {grantho, vern, pearce}@cs.berkeley.edu  
antonio.nappa@imdea.org chris@databricks.com damon@cs.gmu.edu kapravel@cs.ucsb.edu

<sup>◇</sup>Google <sup>†</sup>University of California, Berkeley <sup>\*</sup>International Computer Science Institute  
<sup>‡</sup>George Mason University <sup>□</sup>Databricks <sup>○</sup>IMDEA Software Institute  
<sup>§</sup>Universidad Politécnica de Madrid <sup>▽</sup>University of California, Santa Barbara

**Abstract**—Today, *web injection* manifests in many forms, but fundamentally occurs when malicious and unwanted actors tamper directly with browser sessions for their own profit. In this work we illuminate the scope and negative impact of one of these forms, *ad injection*, in which users have ads imposed

In this work we illuminate the negative impact of ad injection on users and expose the structure of the ad injection ecosystem. Of over 100,000 triaged Chrome user complaints in July, 2014, nearly 20% were related to ad injection—the

# Large-scale Ad Injection Investigation, *S&P'2015*



**Identify injected DOM elements by JS**

- Compare between Injected VS. untampered version

**Identify extensions**

- Static Analysis
  - Manifest permissions, Access to Cookie, Age of the extension, Developer reputation, ...
- Dynamic Analysis
  - Capture all Chrome API calls, DOM method calls, network requests, ...

**Execute them to click on the injected ad**

- Harvest advertisement revenue clickchains

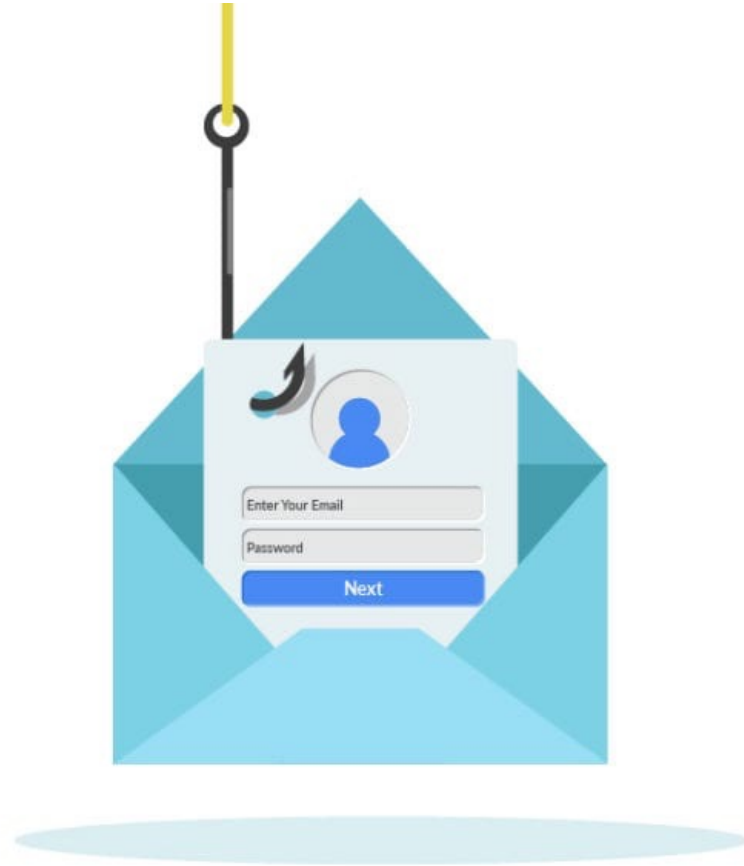
# Limitations

---



- The data is only from Google website
- Cloacking

# Phishing



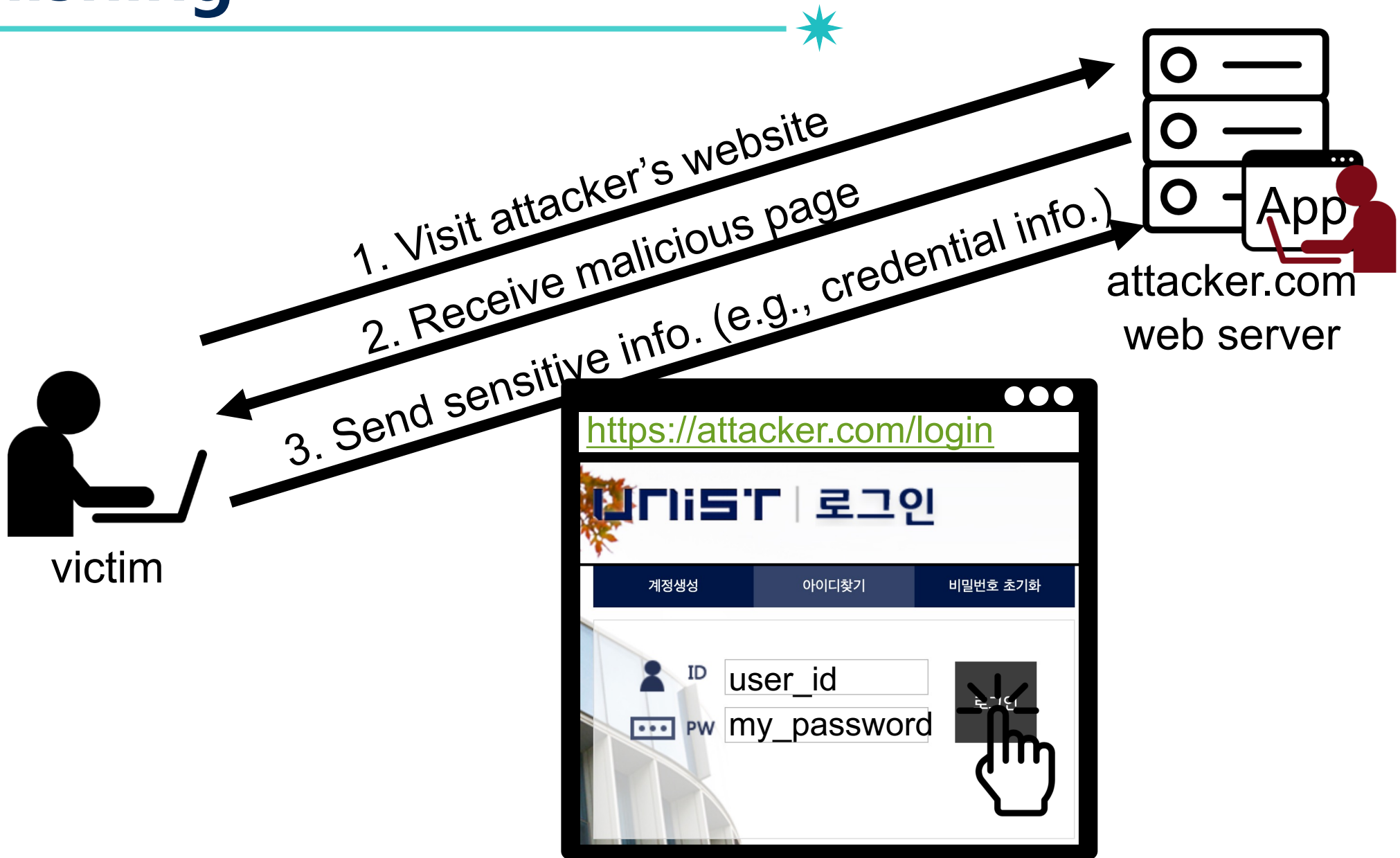
# Phishing

---



- Disguising as a trustworthy entity, and obtain private information
  - Login credentials
  - Financial records

# Phishing



# Phishing

---



- Disguising as a trustworthy entity, and obtain private information
  - Login credentials
  - Financial records
- Links to phishing webpages dispatched to victims through email or SMS
- According to a report from the FBI, it received 800,944 reports of phishing, with losses exceeding \$10.3 billion in 2022

# Outlook



## Sign in

to continue to Outlook

Email address, phone number, or Skype

No account? [Create one!](#)

[Can't access your account?](#)

[Sign-in options](#)

Next



# Phishing

From: apple.Inc <[Update.account.confirmed@altermvista.org](mailto:Update.account.confirmed@altermvista.org)>  
To:  
Sent: Thursday, April 24, 2014 12:35 PM  
Subject: Update your Account information !



Dear iTunes Customer!

Your itunes account has been frozen because we are unable to validate your account information. Once you have updated your account records, we will try again to validate your information and your account suspension will be lifted. This will help protect your account in the future. This process does not take more than 3 minutes. To proceed to confirm your account details please click on the link below and follow the instructions.

[Get Started](#) ▼

If you need our Help left by clicking the Help link located in the upper right-hand corner of any Apple page. <http://goo.gl/Gkx2HM>

Sincerely,

Apple Inc

Please do not reply to this email. We are unable to respond to inquiries sent to this address. For immediate answers to your questions, visit our Help left by clicking "Help" at the top of any Apple page.

Copyright © 2014 Apple Inc. All rights reserved. Apple is located at 2211 N. First St., San Jose, CA 95131.

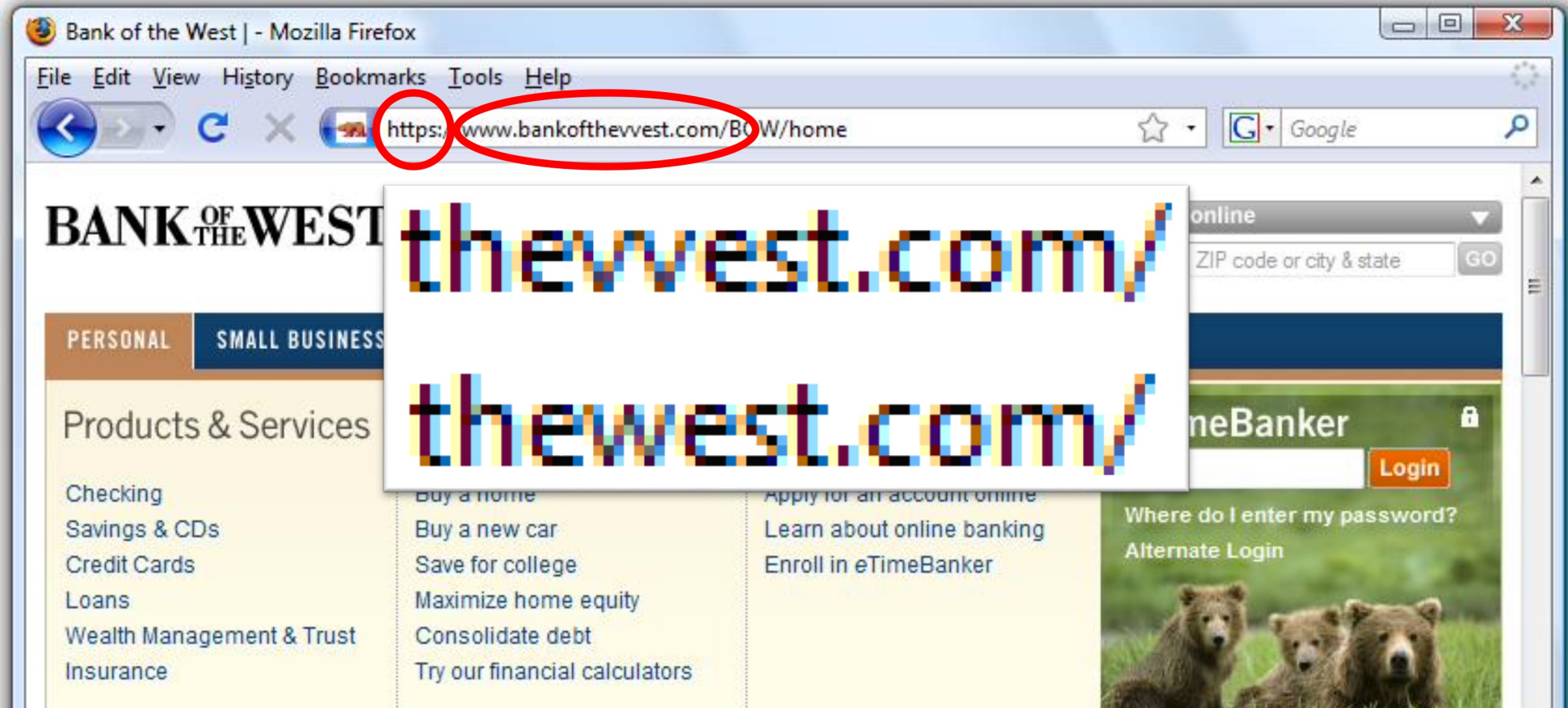
# Typical Properties of Spoofed Sites

---



- Attackers manually copy/recreate web content from target website
  - Show logos found on the honest site
- Have suspicious URLs: mostly, being camouflaged as a URL that looks familiar to people
  - E.g., `umist.ac.kr`
- Ask for user input
  - Debit card number, username, password, ...
- Phishing content served from attacker-owned web server
  - Or a compromised web server

# Safe to Type Your Password?



# Spear Phishing



- Phishing attempts directed at specific individuals
- This can increase the likelihood of success, as the sender appears more credible and informed



# Spear Phishing

---



From: UDEL HR <[hremployee payroll@udel.edu](mailto:hremployee payroll@udel.edu)>

Date: August 13, 2015 at 12:48:29 PM EDT

To: <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Your August 2015 Paycheck



Hello,

We assessed the 2015 payment structure as provided for under the terms of employment and discovered that you are due for a salary raise starting August 2015.

Your salary raise documents are enclosed below:

[Access the documents here](#)

Faithfully

Human Resources

University of Delaware

# Spear Phishing

47



Mrs. Füsun Tümsavaş <jsc7339@gmail.com>

09-12 (화) , 오전 1:01

Seongil Wi <seongil.wi@unist.ac.kr> ↕

↶ 전체 회신

지운 편지함

Hello Seongil Wi,

I am contacting you for the receipt of the sum of US\$9,500,000.00 (Nine Million Five Hundred United State **Dollar**s) only.

Please Let me know if you are interested,

Regards,

Mrs. Füsun Tümsavaş

# How to Detect Phishing?

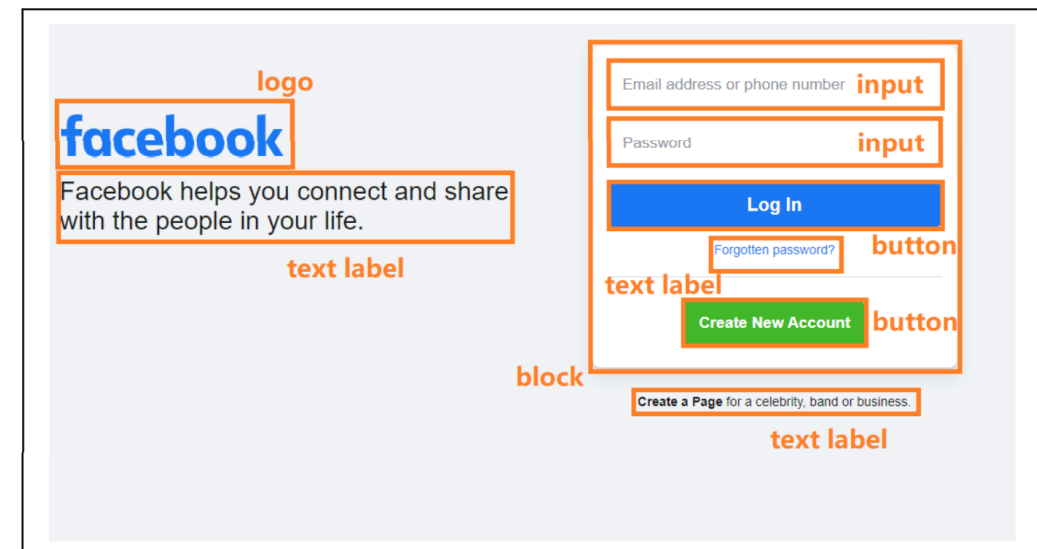
- Crowdsourcing, Blacklisting
  - lists reported phishing URLs
  - E.g., <https://openphish.com/>

Phishing URL	Targeted Brand	Time
<a href="https://diepost-zoll-ch.com/steps/">https://diepost-zoll-ch.com/steps/</a>	Generic/Spear Phishing	06:24:20
<a href="https://257.nhksf.com/">https://257.nhksf.com/</a>	Tencent	06:18:49
<a href="https://ffspind7my.terbaru-2023.com/vhsfhqpdhdxih1">https://ffspind7my.terbaru-2023.com/vhsfhqpdhdxih1</a>	Garena	06:17:46
<a href="https://web.telegram.data-bees.cn/">https://web.telegram.data-bees.cn/</a>	Telegram	06:17:26
<a href="http://wantlengtime.com/">http://wantlengtime.com/</a>	WhatsApp	06:16:08
<a href="http://manualmetarestore-39f.pages.dev/">http://manualmetarestore-39f.pages.dev/</a>	Crypto/Wallet	06:15:36

# How to Detect Phishing?

- Crowdsourcing, Blacklisting
  - lists reported phishing URLs
  - E.g., <https://openphish.com/>
- URL-based pattern detection
  - E.g., A URL is phishy if its length  $\geq 76$
  - E.g., Brand name modification with '-'
    - youtube-x.com
- Content-based pattern detection

- Require human intervention and verification
- Phishers are starting to use one-time URLs





**Question?**