



9. HACKERS AND CRACKERS

Two students from Oxford University are facing disciplinary action after hacking into the university's computer system. They could be fined £500 or be suspended after infiltrating the system and publishing their story in a student newspaper. The students said they wanted to expose the weakness in the IT system. It took them only minutes, with a program they found using Google, to hack into the main university server. They were also able to access fellow students' email passwords and see which webpages they were viewing. The students are now facing several investigations by Thames Valley Police and university bodies. The students say they are being treated very harshly for something they did with good intent. They claimed to be 'hackers' (people who are interested in computers), not 'crackers' (those who try to do damage to systems).

1. Read the passage above carefully. Explain the words in the grid below, using examples.

Hacker	Google
A person who uses computers to gain unauthorized access to data.	Google is an internet search engine.
Server	Cracker
A computer or computer program which manages access to a centralized resource or service in a network.	A person who breaks into a computer system, typically for an illegal purpose.

2. Do you accept the students' excuse that they were trying to help the university? Explain why.

I do not accept the students' excuse that they were trying to help the university because it was none of their business anyway and they would know that the university would not be happy about them viewing these things because university students are not thick.

3. Explain why the students saw a difference between 'hackers' and 'crackers'. Is there a difference?

They were according to them not trying to cause damage and were not doing it for the wrong reasons. Legally there is a difference however the students may have been overly exploiting this difference.

4. Why are hackers often employed by businesses worried about the security of their systems?

Hackers are often employed as it is a way that the companies can control their security as by hiring a hacker they know if it is possible to get into it without someone unauthorized doing it.

5. Hackers need to obtain or guess usernames and passwords in order to gain access to computer systems. Identify a common username and password used by administrators all over the world. What measures could administrators use to make the username and password difficult to guess?

A common username – forenamesurname
 A common password – birthdate/ family birthdate