Basic Encryption Methods

- Substitutions
  - Monoalphabetic
  - Polyalphabetic
- Permutations

Substitution Ciphers

- Substitute one or more characters in a message with one or more different characters
- Using some set of rules
- Decryption is performed by reversing the substitutions

Example of a Simple Substitution Cipher

How did this transformation happen?

```
Sqzmredq
#099 sn lx
rzuhmfr
zbbntms
```

```
Sqzmredq
#099 sn lx
rzuhmfr
zbbntms
```

Every letter was changed to the "next lower" letter

Caesar Ciphers

- A simple substitution cipher like the previous example
  - Supposedly invented by Julius Caesar
- Translate each letter a fixed number of positions in the alphabet
- Reverse by translating in opposite direction

Is the Caesar Cipher a Good Cipher?

- Well, it worked great 2000 years ago
- It’s simple, but
- It’s simple
- Fails to conceal many important characteristics of the message
- Which makes cryptanalysis easier
- Limited number of useful keys

How Would Cryptanalysis Attack a Caesar Cipher?

- Letter frequencies
- In English (and other alphabetic languages), some letters occur more frequently than others
- Caesar ciphers translate all occurrences of a given plaintext letter into the same ciphertext letter
- All you need is the offset

More On Frequency Distributions

- In most languages, some letters used more than others
  - In English, “e,” “t,” and “s” are common
- True even in non-natural languages
  - Certain characters appear frequently in C code
  - Zero appears often in numeric data

Cryptanalysis and Frequency Distribution

- If you know what kind of data was encrypted, you can (often) use frequency distributions to break it
- Especially for Caesar ciphers
  - And other simple substitution-based encryption algorithms

Breaking Caesar Ciphers

- Identify (or guess) the kind of data
- Count frequency of each encrypted symbol
- Match to observed frequencies of unencrypted symbols in similar plaintext
- Provides probable mapping of cipher
- The more ciphertext available, the more reliable this technique

Example

- With ciphertext “Sqzmredq #099 sn lx rzuhmfr zbbntms”
- Frequencies -

```
a   0 | b   2 | c   0 | d   1 | e   1
f   1 | g   0 | h   1 | i   0 | j   0
k   0 | l   1 | m   3 | n   2 | o   0
p   0 | q   2 | r   3 | s   3 | t   1
u   1 | v   0 | w   0 | x   1 | y   0
z   3
```

Applying Frequencies To Our Example

a	0	b	2	c	0	d	1	e	1
f	1	g	0	h	1	i	0	j	0
k	0	l	1	m	3	n	2	o	0
p	0	q	2	r	3	s	3	t	1
u	1	v	0	w	0	x	1	y	0
z	3								

- The most common English letters are typically “e,” “t,” “a,” “o,” and “s”
- Four out of five of the common English letters in the plaintext map to these letters

Cracking the Caesar Cipher

- Since all substitutions are offset by the same amount, just need to figure out how much
- How about +1?
  - That would only work for a=>b
- How about -1?
  - That would work for t=>s, a=>z, o=>n, and s=>r
  - Try it on the whole message and see if it looks good

More Complex Substitutions

- Monoalphabetic substitutions
  - Each plaintext letter maps to a single, unique ciphertext letter
- Any mapping is permitted
- Key can provide method of determining the mapping
  - Key could <u>be</u> the mapping

Are These Monoalphabetic Ciphers Better?

- Only a little
- Finding the mapping for one character doesn't give you all mappings
- But the same simple techniques can be used to find the other mappings
- Generally insufficient for anything serious

Codes and Monoalphabetic Ciphers

- Codes are sometimes considered different than ciphers
- A series of important words or phrases are replaced with meaningless words or phrases
- E.g., “Transfer $100 to my savings account” becomes
  - “The hawk flies at midnight”

Are Codes More Secure?

- Frequency attacks based on letters don’t work
- But frequency attacks based on phrases may
- And other tricks may cause problems
- In some ways, just a limited form of substitution cipher
- Weakness based on need for codebook
  – Can your codebook contain all message components?

Superencipherment

- First translate message using a code book
- Then encipher the result
- If opponent can't break the cipher, great
- If he can, he still has to break the code
- Depending on several factors, may (or may not) be better than just a cipher
- Popular during WWII (but the Allies still read Japan's and Germany's messages)

Polyalphabetic Ciphers

- Ciphers that don’t always translate a given plaintext character into the same ciphertext character
- For example, use different substitutions for odd and even positions

Example of Simple Polyalphabetic Cipher

- Move one character "up" in even positions, one character "down" in odd positions
- Note that same character translates to different characters in some cases

```
Transfer
$100 to my
savings
account
```

```
Sszorgds
%019 sp nx
tbujmhr
zdbptos
```

Are Polyalphabetic Ciphers Better?

- Depends on how easy it is to determine the pattern of substitutions
- If it's easy, then you've gained little

Cryptanalysis of Our Example

- Consider all even characters as one set
- And all odd characters as another set
- Apply basic cryptanalysis to each set
- The transformations fall out easily
- How did you know to do that?
  – You guessed
  – Might require several guesses to find the right pattern

How About For More Complex Patterns?

- Good if the attacker doesn’t know the choices of which characters get transformed which way
- Attempt to hide patterns well
- But known methods still exist for breaking them

Methods of Attacking Polyalphabetic Ciphers

- Kasiski method tries to find repetitions of the encryption pattern
- Index of coincidence predicts the number of alphabets used to perform the encryption
- Both require lots of ciphertext

How Does the Cryptanalyst "Know" When He's Succeeded?

- Every key translates a message into something
- If a cryptanalyst thinks he's got the right key, how can he be sure?
- Usually because he doesn't get garbage when he tries it
- He almost certainly will get garbage from any other key
- Why?

Consider A Caesar Cipher

- There are 25 useful keys (in English)
- The right one will clearly yield meaningful text
- What's the chances that any of the other 24 will?
  - Pretty poor
- So if the decrypted text makes sense, you've got the key

The Unbreakable Cipher

- There is a “perfect” substitution cipher
- One that is theoretically (and practically) unbreakable without the key
- And you can’t guess the key
  - If the key was chosen in the right way . . .

One-Time Pads

- Essentially, use a new substitution alphabet for <u>every</u> character
- Substitution alphabets chosen purely at random
  - These constitute the key
- Provably unbreakable without knowing this key

Example of One Time Pads

- Usually explained with bits, not characters
- We shall use a highly complex cryptographic transformation:
  - XOR
- And a three bit message
  - 010

One Time Pads at Work

0	1	0

Flip some coins to get random numbers

0	0	1

Apply our sophisticated cryptographic algorithm

0	1	1

We now have an unbreakable cryptographic message

What's So Secure About That?

- <u>Any</u> key was equally likely
- <u>Any</u> plaintext could have produced this message with one of those keys
- Let's look at our example more closely

Why Is the Message Secure?

Let's say there are only two possible meaningful messages

0	1	1

0	1	0

0	0	0

Could the message decrypt to either or both of these?

There's a key that works for each

And they're equally likely

0	0	1

0	1	1

Security of One-Time Pads

- If the key is truly random, provable that it can't be broken without the key
- But there are problems
- Need one bit of key per bit of message
- Key distribution is painful
- Synchronization of keys is vital
- A good random number generator is hard to find

One-Time Pads and Cryptographic Snake Oil

- Companies regularly claim they have "unbreakable" cryptography
- Usually based on one-time pads
- But typically misused
  - Pads distributed with some other crypto mechanism
  - Pads generated with non-random process
  - Pads reused