

The Psychology of Social Engineering

TOPIC: SOCIAL ENGINEERING

GRADES 9-12

LESSON DURATION: THREE CLASS PERIODS (TEACHER DISCRETION)

SOFT SKILLS: CRITICAL THINKING, RESEARCH, COLLABORATION

Introduction:

- Social engineering represents one of the biggest threats in cybersecurity. Although the tactics are constantly evolving, many of the underlying factors remain the same. This lesson will allow students to explore the psychology behind social engineering attacks while exploring some common current attack methods.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will articulate the meaning of social engineering.
- Students will recognize the reasons why social engineering is successful.
- Students will work collaboratively to create a presentation on a social engineering topic, with the aid of technology.

Materials:

- An online source regarding psychology and social engineering
 - Link: <https://www.social-engineer.org/framework/psychological-principles/>
- Presentation on [Social Engineering](#)
- [Student handout for website activity and partner project](#)

Activities:

1. The teacher should spend some time familiarizing himself/herself with the website above. This source was chosen because it has a wealth of information on social engineering and it current/up to date.
2. Due to the fact that social engineering is not commonly included in psychology textbooks, background information has been provided in the presentation above. The first day should be spent giving students information and allowing them to work through the presentation questions.
3. Day 2: Give the hand out to students. Students will work individually on Part 1, doing some basic online research. Be sure that all students understand social engineering before allowing them to move on to parts 2 and 3.
4. Place students in small groups or with a partner. It is suggested that students with prior knowledge be placed with students with no prior knowledge for best results. Explain that students will be doing some basic online research but the end goal is to create a skit showing

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one example of social engineering, as well as presenting information to classmates. Students should look ahead to part 3 so that they know the end goals while collecting information.

5. Allow students time to work.
6. On skit day, be sure that students have all necessary props to ensure that the skit is done in a realistic fashion. During the presentation, students should be graded on content and presentation skills. No rubric was included here because each teacher will want discretion in how students are graded.

Further Discussion:

1. Wrap up the unit by discussing the psychology behind social engineering. Even though people know about social engineering, they still fall for tactics. The teacher may discuss some current developments to help overcome human weakness such as email alerts/banners that organizations are using. These alerts result from entails form outside the network and alert the receiver that something in the email appears to be “dangerous.” (attachments, time sent, sent from unknown source, etc). Other network settings, block certain emails because they are deemed too “dangerous.” Students might be asked to reflect on what other methods might be used to counteract human behavior to ensure that we do not become victims.

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