

# Security with SSH

Mike Jager

Network Startup Resource Center

mike.jager@synack.co.nz



These materials are licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International license  
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

# Topics

- What is SSH
- Where to get SSH
- How to enable and configure SSH
- Where to get SSH clients for Windows
- Host keys: authentication of server to client
- Issues to do with changing of the host key
- Password authentication of client to server
- Cryptographic authentication client to server
- hostkey exchange, scp, and sftp labs

# What is SSH?

## From Wikipedia:

*Secure Shell (SSH) is a cryptographic network protocol for secure data communication, remote command-line login, remote command execution, and other secure network services between two networked computers that connects, via a secure channel over an insecure network, a server and a client (running SSH server and SSH client programs, respectively).*

i.e., ssh gives you a secure command line interface on remote machines...

# Topics

- Where SSH applies directly to dealing with these two areas of security:
  - Confidentiality
  - Keeping our data safe from prying eyes
- Authentication and Authorization
  - Is this person who they claim to be?
  - *With keys alternative method to passwords*

# Where to get SSH

- First see if SSH is installed on your system and what version. Easiest way is:

```
$ ssh -V
```

- Commonly used SSH in Linux and FreeBSD is OpenSSH. You can find the home page here:

<http://www.openssh.org/>

- You can install OpenSSH via packages on Linux and FreeBSD. Ubuntu 12.04.3 LTS currently installs version 5.9p1 of OpenSSH.

# Obtain SSH Client for Windows

There are several free, shareware, and commercial ssh clients for Windows. See <http://www.openssh.org/windows.html> for a list.

## Two free clients:

Putty: <http://www.chiark.greenend.org.uk/~sgtatham/putty/>

Secure Shell from [ssh.com](http://ssh.com) (free for personal use):  
<http://www.ssh.com/products/ssh/download.cfm>

*We will use Putty in this class and it is available on our local server.*

# Enable & Configure OpenSSH

## FreeBSD

- `/usr/ports/security/openssh-portable/make install`
- You should make sure that `/etc/rc.conf` is set:

```
sshd_enable="YES"
```

## Linux

- Take a look at `/etc/ssh/ssh_config` and `/etc/sshd_config`. In `sshd_config` you might be interested in:

```
PermitRootLogin yes/no      (you generally want "no")
```

- We'll allow root login, but only with keys in our exercises.

*Many options in `ssh_config` & `sshd_config`. Read through these files to verify they meet your expectations.*

# Some Useful SSH Resources

If you want a great SSH RSA/DSA key overview Daniel Robbins ex-CEO of gentoo.org has written a 3-part series hosted on the IBM Developer Works pages.

The three papers and URL's are:

OpenSSH Key Management, Part 1

<http://www-106.ibm.com/developerworks/library/l-keyc.html>

OpenSSH Key Management, Part 2

<http://www-106.ibm.com/developerworks/library/l-keyc2/>

OpenSSH Key Management, Part 3

<http://www-106.ibm.com/developerworks/library/l-keyc3/>

# More SSH References

**For a comparison of SSH Version 1 and 2 see:**

<http://www.snailbook.com/faq/ssh-1-vs-2.auto.html>

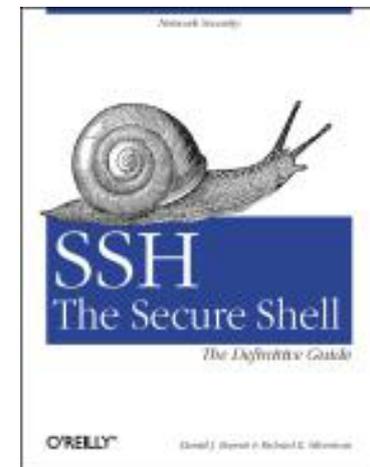
**An excellent book on SSH is:**

SSH, The Secure Shell  
The Definitive Guide,  
Second Edition.

By Daniel J. Barrett,  
Richard Silverman, &  
Robert G. Byrnes

May 2005

ISBN: 0-596-00895-3



# SSH Connection Methods

Several things can happen when using SSH to connect from your machine (client) to another machine (server):

Server's public host key is passed back to the client and verified against `known_hosts`

Password prompt is used if public key is accepted, or already on client, or

RSA/DSA key exchange takes place and you must enter in your private key passphrase to authenticate (assuming you have one).

# SSH Quick Tips

You have a choice of authentication keys - RSA is the default (dsa is fine as well).

The files you care about are:

`/etc/ssh/ssh_config`

`/etc/ssh/sshd_config`

`~/.ssh/id_dsa` and `id_dsa.pub`

`~/.ssh/id_rsa` and `id_rsa.pub`

`~/.ssh/known_hosts`

`~/.ssh/authorized_keys`

And, note the `rsa/dsa` host-wide key files in `/etc/ssh`

# SSH Authentication

Private key can be protected by a passphrase

So you have to give it each time you log in

Or use "ssh-agent" which holds a copy of your  
passphrase in RAM

No need to change passwords across dozens of  
machines

Disable passwords entirely!

```
/etc/ssh/ssh_config
```

```
# PasswordAuthentication yes
```

# Man in the Middle Attacks

The first time you connect to a remote host, its public key is stored in `~/.ssh/known_hosts`

The next time you connect, if the remote key is different, then maybe an attacker is intercepting the connection!

Or maybe the remote host has just got a new key, e.g. after a reinstall. But it's up to you to resolve.

You will be warned if the key changes.

# Exchanging Host Keys

## First time connecting with ssh:

```
ssh username@pc1.cctld.pacnog2.dnsdojo.net
The authenticity of host 'pc1.cctld.pacnog2.dnsdojo.net (202.4.34.65)' can't
be established.
DSA key fingerprint is 91:ba:bf:e4:36:cd:e3:9e:8e:92:26:e4:57:c4:cb:da.
Are you sure you want to continue connecting (yes/no)? yes
Warning: Permanently added 'pc1.cctld.pacnog2.dnsdojo.net, 202.4.34.1' (DSA)
to the list of known hosts.
username@pc1.cctld.pacnog2.dnsdojo.net's password:
```

At this point the client has in the file `~/.ssh/known_hosts` the contents of `pc1.cctld.pacnog2.dnsdojo.net's /etc/ssh/ssh_host_dsa_key.pub`.

## Next connection:

```
[hallen@hallen-lt .ssh]$ ssh usrname@pc1.cctld.pacnog2.dnsdojo.net
username@pc1.cctld.pacnog2.dnsdojo.net's password:
```

Now trusted - Not necessarily a good thing...

# Exchanging Host Keys (continued)

<u>Command</u>	<u>Key Type Generated</u>	<u>Public File</u>
ssh-keygen -t rsa	RSA (SSH protocol 2)	id_rsa.pub
ssh-keygen -t dsa	DSA (SSH protocol 2)	id_dsa.pub

Default key size is 1024 bits

Public files are text

Private files are encrypted if you use a passphrase

Corresponding file on host for host key exchange is “known\_hosts”.

# Exchanging Host Keys (continued)

How does SSH decide what files to compare?

Look in `/etc/ssh/sshd_config`. For OpenSSH version 3 the server defaults to protocol 2.

By default OpenSSH v2 client connects in order:

- RSA version 2 key
- DSA version 2 key
- Password based authentication (even if RSA version 1 key is present)

Pay attention to the “HostKeyAlgorithms” setting in `/etc/ssh/ssh_config` to help determine this order - or use ssh command line switches to override these settings.

# SSH Magic Phrase

How an SSH connection is made using RSA/DSA key combo:

- Client X contacts server Y via port 22.
- Y generates a random number and encrypts this using X's public key. X's public key must reside on Y. You can use scp to copy this over.
- Encrypted random number is sent back to X.
- X decrypts the random number using it's private key and sends it back to Y.
- *If the decrypted number matches the original encrypted number, then a connection is made.*
- The originally encrypted random number sent from Y to X is the "Magic Phrase"

# Tunneling with SSH

You can use SSH to tunnel insecure services in a secure manner.

SSH tunneling services includes authentication between known\_hosts, password challenge, and public/private key exchanges.

You can even indirectly tunnel via an intermediary machine.

# Tunneling with SSH: Concept

Connect from one machine to another as username.

Use ssh options to specify the port number on the remote machine that you wish to forward to the port on your local machine.

Your ssh connection will “tunnel” data securely across ssh from the remote machine to your local machine.

There are several options to be aware of.

# Tunneling with SSH: By Example

## Sample tunnel using SSH under FreeBSD:

```
ssh -C -f username@host.domain -L 1100:localhost:110 sleep 10000
```

## What is happening here?

'-C' option specifies compress the data. Good if it works.

'-f' means ssh goes to the background just before executing the specified command listed (in this case, "sleep 10000").

'-L' forwards the port on the left, or client (1100) to the one on the right (110) or remote side.

# SSH Tunneling Example (continued)

So, what does this command do?

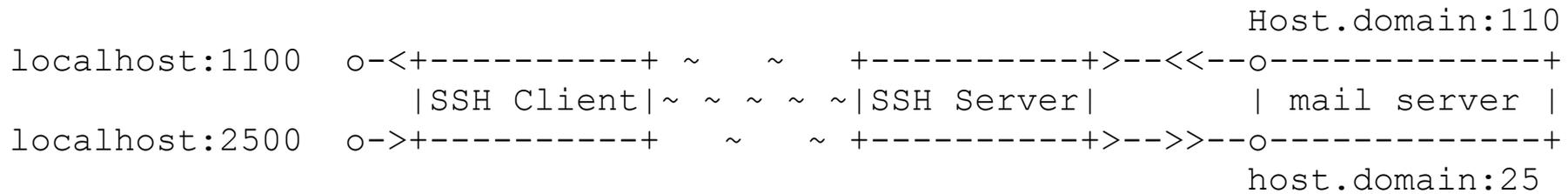
```
ssh -C -f username@host.domain -L 1100:localhost:110 sleep 10000
```

This “tunnels” your POP email from port 110 on the remote side through port 1100 on your local side.

The process backgrounds for 10000 seconds (detaches and runs).

This is done under the authority between yourself (client) and user@host.domain

## Diagram of Tunneling both smtp and POP Services



# SSH Tunneling Example (continued)

Why use something like ports “1100” and “2500”?

Ports up to 1024 can only be reset by the admin user.

If you are admin you can forward 110 to 110, 25 to 25, and so on.

Other popular tunneling tricks include tunnels for XWindows, IMAP, etc.

On the client side you must set programs to use “localhost” - For example, for POP and smtp, your mail client must use “localhost” instead of host.domain (i.e. no more “mail.host.domain”).

If you are not admin, and your ports are changed, then your mail client must be able to set the smtp and POP ports as well.

We may show or discuss this using a local email client now.

# SSH Indirect Port Forwarding

What to do if your organization's email sits behind a firewall?

Connect via an intermediary box (gateway).

Here's a real world example:

```
Ssh -C -f hallen@gateway.turbolinux.com -L 2500:mail.us.tlan:25 -L  
1100:mail.us.tlan:110 /bin/sleep 10000
```

```
localhost:1100  o-<+-----+ ~ ~ +-----+>--<<--o-----+..  
                |SSH Client|~ ~ ~ ~|SSH Server|      | gateway |..  
localhost:2500  o->+-----+ ~ ~ +-----+>-->>--o-----+..  
  
                host.domain:110  
...>--<<--+-----+>--<<--o-----+  
                |SSH Server|      | mail.us.tlan|  
...>-->>--+-----+>-->>--o-----+  
                host.domain:25
```

# SSH Tunneling Conclusion

Tunneling lets you securely access basic services such as POP and IMAP.

You can securely tunnel ports using SSH.

You can use `/etc/services` to verify you are not using a port that is already defined.

Only admin can redefine ports below 1024

You can tunnel ports directly between two machines, and indirectly with a machine in the middle.