

Forum:[Hack Forums](#)

Thread: [Festive Cryptography Puzzle \[Free Upgrade/L33T/Ep1c/Ub3r/Gift Award\]](#)

Ronan. - November 25, 2016, 9:36 pm

Seasons Greetings

Preface:

I've always wanted to run an upgrade contest but I never liked the idea of doing so by means of RNG, if you want to get a free upgrade, prove that you have skills/knowledge to offer.

Intro:

With December swiftly approaching, Christmas sites are reemerging and deal collectives are taking advantage of the hype.

And yes, I'm looking at you too

Mr.ICanMake\$50kAMonthViaAmazonAffiliateLinksBecauseAnEBookSaidSo.

We received word that a few days ago, malicious hacker and Visual Basic mastermind, The Phisherman, has hacked Santa's directory containing the names and addresses of... well everyone.

Every file on the network has been encrypted and the only way to save Christmas is by getting the decryption key, conveniently hidden behind various challenges.

It is your mission, nay, your duty to protect the innocence of the world's youth and the rep of St.Nick.

Details:

There are a total of 12 steps to recovering the key.

Once you have completed the final step, post the final key in the thread and establish your technical prowess amongst your fellow crackers.

The prize is dependent on your current user status:

Normal -> L33t

(Ub3r approved) : L33t -> Ub3r ? L33t -> Ep1c

(!Ep1c) : Ub3r-> Ep1c ? Ub3r -> Gift Award

If you're an Ep1c Ub3r with a gift award, then you don't get any awards/upgrades.

Instead I'll make a thread describing my approval of your technical ability, pay for it to be stickied as well as hand-drawing your username/avatar, framing it and attaching a photo of it at the top of the thread.

Keep your progress updated here so I can gauge where people are getting stuck, if there is a lot of confusion on a single step, I'll drop some hints (See Hints).

The deadline is the 18th of December, in case nobody wins. In such an event, the winner will be whomever reached the furthest.

Terms:

By taking part in this challenge you are agreeing to the following terms:

You agree that 8 is a beautiful number.

I am not responsible for any injuries caused by your frustration.

I reserve the right to cancel my Netflix account at any time if I no longer find the content interesting.

If you have any questions feel free to PM me.

I'll also be giving \$5 to a random person in the thread that has been engaged with the puzzle. This

doesn't mean begging for answers.

BONUS:

This challenge isn't easy. I've been testing this out for a few weeks and I'm pretty happy with it's current state. I've re-created the entire puzzle with suggestions from a few friends/professionals.

It took an MIT graduate 2 days to crack this.*

That said, I don't doubt the ability of some of the incredibly talented people on here.

I'm offering an additional \$50 reward for anyone that completes this challenge within 24 hours of this post. Tick tock.

Small change, every day the puzzle remains unsolved, the bonus will go down by \$20. If we get to day 3 (bonus will be \$10) the bonus will not be paid as part of the prize, but used to purchase a fiverr gig of my choice for you.

Current Bonus: \$0 The bonus is 0 but I'm going to do the fiverr thing anyway.

*Original version of this was slightly different, though the general processes were the same.

Hints:

Due to the complexity of some of the later stages, I'm implementing a 'failsafe'.

If you are stumped on a step, keep trying, but before doing so, post the following here:

Hint Request

Stage: (Give the stage, 0-12)

What you've tried: (List anything you've tried so far)

This should not only give others experiencing the same problem a better idea of what you've attempted, but might indirectly provide help for those stuck on earlier pages.

If at least 3 people are stuck on the same step for 24 hours, I'll drop a hint.

Status:

Stage 1: Cracked

Stage 2: Cracked

Stage 3: Cracked

Stage 4: Cracked

Stage 5: Cracked

Stage 6: Cracked

Stage 7: Cracked

Stage 8: Cracked

Stage 9: Cracked

Stage 10: Cracked

Stage 11: Cracked

Stage 12: Cracked

This contest is now over, the answers to this are available here:

<https://hackforums.net/showthread.php?tid=5490269> - Feel free to work through the thread yourself and check here in case you need a hand.

How do I start?

68 74 74 70 3a 2f 2f 70 61 73 74 65 62 69 6e 2e 63 6f 6d 2f 46 55 54 77 33 43 4c 61

Im confused already. Is there a puzzle or am i blind as Fuk

Does it have something too do with your Signature?

Ronan. - November 25, 2016, 10:07 pm

(Nov 25, 2016 10:55 PM)Sadistic Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Im confused already. Is there a puzzle or am i blind as Fuk

Does it have something too do with your Signature?

Look a little bit closer.

veLoc??y - November 25, 2016, 10:10 pm

This is fun, I'm on stage 1 :D

Dr Steve Brule - November 25, 2016, 10:21 pm

So am I missing an "I" or? A"!"NTABITCHHF? Or am I retarded?

veLoc??y - November 25, 2016, 10:23 pm

Stage 2! Loving this so far.

Dr Steve Brule - November 25, 2016, 10:25 pm

(Nov 25, 2016 11:22 PM)Ka\$h Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) try do it again lol, i sorta did the same thing, youll realise straight away what you missed

Holy shit u right, i'm blind. god damn ole' saint nick.

Stealth™ - November 25, 2016, 10:28 pm

Step 1: Highlight the text at the bottom of OP's post to get these hexadecimal values: 68 74 74 70 3a 2f 2f 70 61 73 74 65 62 69 6e 2e 63 6f 6d 2f 46 55 54 77 33 43 4c 61. Converting these to ASCII yields the following link: <http://pastebin.com/FUTw3CLa>

Step 2: After following the tinyurl link like an idiot, you realize that there has to be something else. Noticing that letters in some words are capitalized, just type every capitalized letter:

SANTABITCHHF

Will update as I get closer.

Sadistic - November 25, 2016, 10:30 pm

I see. Interesting... Will work on this overnight and update w/ progress

ProtectNull™ - November 25, 2016, 11:48 pm

I'm in the 4th stage now, I love puzzles like these.

Dammit, I'm stuck in the email part. I will find out what it is..

Stage: The email one

What you've tried: Trying to send it bash commands, that didn't work. Imao

Ronan. - November 26, 2016, 5:02 am

Updated the thread with an option to request a hint.

Biocides - November 26, 2016, 2:32 pm

Hint Request

Stage: 5 or 6

What you've tried:

42 9 4

105 42 9 * 4

4294

422162

36288

158760

HEX

Stealth™ - November 26, 2016, 3:20 pm

OP, why did you take away the \$50 additional prize if it hasn't been 24 hours?

I'm stuck on the e-mail stage: xxsniiperklausbabexxx@gmail.com

Ronan. - November 26, 2016, 3:48 pm

(Nov 26, 2016 04:20 PM)Stealth™ Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) OP, why did you take away the \$50 additional prize if it hasn't been 24 hours?

I'm stuck on the e-mail stage: xxsniiperklausbabexxx@gmail.com

I'm re-writing the bonus section, the closest person that I know of is at stage 8 so I doubt anyone will break it tonight. I'm going to have a bonus that goes down each day ?

Linus Torvalds - November 26, 2016, 5:19 pm

If you email the email it responds with this:

If you hover over the email address's avatar you'll see some text that represents a pastebin.

which is here: <http://pastebin.com/sUzUPMeW>

Me and my boi Ware over here ?

SIM-2015410 - November 26, 2016, 5:38 pm

(Nov 26, 2016 06:19 PM)ripping Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) -snip-

Me and my boi Ware over here ?

I'm also on this step, haven't worked out how to get past it yet. Not sure if the HZMGZHSVOKVI185 is still relevant of if that was just a bit of extra confusion haha

Ronan. - November 26, 2016, 5:49 pm

(Nov 26, 2016 06:38 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I'm also on this step, haven't worked out how to get past it yet. Not sure if the HZMGZHSVOKVI185 is still relevant of if that was just a bit of extra confusion haha

Nah the only red herring was the tinyurl after the first step :)

It's all relevant.

SIM-2015410 - November 26, 2016, 5:59 pm

Also not sure about the numbers in the brackets. It reminds me of array index notation from most major programming languages, but I doubt thats on the right track because 03 is not an array lol.

Is the current challenge we are on number 4? So perhaps the 03 refers to challenge 3, i.e. perhaps some characters from the HZMGZHSVOKVI185

veLoc??y - November 26, 2016, 7:39 pm

The amount of porn sites ive accessed trying different combinations of tinyurl links is ridiculous smh.

Sadistic - November 26, 2016, 7:47 pm

(Nov 26, 2016 08:39 PM)veLoc??y Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) The amount of porn sites ive accessed trying different combinations of tinyurl links is ridiculous smh.

Dido.

Wait. The email has XXX in it? What if its ment to be a porn site?

krypt0 d3st0y3r - November 26, 2016, 8:10 pm

oml wth, is this, help me

SIM-2015410 - November 26, 2016, 9:24 pm

(Nov 26, 2016 08:47 PM)Sadistic Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Dido.

Wait. The email has XXX in it? What if its ment to be a porn site?

Ditto*

No I think the XXX is just an overly stereotypical "l33t" gaming name haha

Ronan. - November 27, 2016, 3:01 am

(Nov 26, 2016 06:59 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Also not sure about the numbers in the brackets. It reminds me of array index notation from most major programming languages, but I doubt thats on the right track because 03 is not an array lol.

Is the current challenge we are on number 4? So perhaps the 03 refers to challenge 3, i.e. perhaps some characters from the HZMGZHSVOKVI185

You're on the right lines, but don't think too hard about it, it's not as strong of a tie as you might be thinking.

You certainly need the text that you received from the email.

I'll post a hint for this section later today if nobody manages to get it.

(Nov 26, 2016 08:47 PM)Sadistic Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Dido.

Wait. The email has XXX in it? What if its ment to be a porn site?

For the sake of everyone else, I'll clear this up.

No Santa porn is involved.

Next year though...

Snakester - November 27, 2016, 5:07 am

wow i am stuck on very first one

i am retarded!

got the tinyurl and it was.....

Ronan. - November 27, 2016, 11:14 am

Alright here's the hint for stage 9:

Santa is asking for Help. Where could you seek this?

I've also added a side-competition to the OP, chance to win a free game if you wear the sig:

<http://pastebin.com/GjrT8FZN>

?

yoyoyo999 - November 27, 2016, 1:26 pm

HINT REQUEST

What stage im at, I believe this is stage 3, since stage 1 was your post, stage 2 was getting to the pastebin that gives the imgur link and now, I'm stuck on the Christmasdirectory.santa pwned by phisherman I tried various options for tinyurl, bitly, and even pastebin, I tried to find a website xmasdirectory.santa, christmas directory. santa however nothing seemed to work. Can I get a hint please

Ronan. - November 27, 2016, 1:27 pm

(Nov 27, 2016 02:26 PM)yoyoyo999 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I'm stuck on the Christmasdirectory.santa pwned by phisherman I tried various options for tinyurl, bitly, and even pastebin however nothing seemed to work. Can I get a hint please

That sneaky hacker must've hidden the text somewhere, look closer!

yoyoyo999 - November 27, 2016, 1:33 pm

YASSS I FOUND IT, Thank the almighty lords of puzzles

STYLING - November 27, 2016, 1:43 pm

stuck at the

tinyurl/#####
#####

yoyoyo999 - November 27, 2016, 2:41 pm

Help Request

What Stage im at I believe 4 since three was the email in the picture.

What have I tried so far I tried so far HZMGZHSVOKVI185 I tried to convert this from ascii to hex 485a4d475a4853564f4b5649313835. I then tried the array from converting the tinyurl/## etc to ascii and going to line 3. Then I tried doing some math105#421174 lol I tried so many iterations by converting the message in the email to decimal from letters trying ascii from there various differnt time i cant count lol. I then tried going into bash from terminal and trying help commands, man command, and then info commands and then did research on google. Still confused can I get a hint please

EDIT: Been working on this over the past hour since the past hint

Ronan. - November 27, 2016, 2:46 pm

(Nov 27, 2016 03:41 PM)yoyoyo999 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Help Request

What Stage im at I believe 4 since three was the email in the picture.

What have I tried so far I tried so far HZMGZHSVOKVI185 I tried to convert this from ascii to hex 485a4d475a4853564f4b5649313835. I then tried the array from converting the tinyurl/## etc to ascii and going to line 3. Then I tried doing some math105#421174 lol I tried so many iterations by converting the message in the email to decimal from letters trying ascii from there various differnt time i cant count lol. I then tried going into bash from terminal and trying help commands, man command, and then info commands and then did research on google. Still confused can I get a hint please

EDIT: Been working on this over the past hour since the past hint

Only a couple of people have beaten this step, it's a tricky one.

Others have found the 'skip' though you still require the original path.

Look into some basic cryptography tools, you might stumble across what you're looking for ;)

Chill Dill - November 27, 2016, 3:55 pm

Nice puzzle i have been working on this and think this is the tinyurl.com/01010 btw not sure

adonix - November 27, 2016, 8:41 pm

Nice puzzle contest, but totally confused what to do after going to pastebin :v

Ronan. - November 28, 2016, 12:20 am

(Nov 27, 2016 09:41 PM)adonix Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Nice puzzle contest, but totally confused what to do after going to pastebin :v

Look at the text, anything jumping out at you?

av00 - November 28, 2016, 12:40 am

So I did decode HZMGZHSVOKVI185, now stuck on where to go from there. Does the email address respond to specific input? Or is it just the first message and that's it?

Ronan. - November 28, 2016, 12:49 am

(Nov 28, 2016 01:40 AM)nyx! Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) So I did decode HZMGZHSVOKVI185, now stuck on where to go from there. Does the email address respond to specific input? Or is it just the first message and that's it?

There is no other response other than the one you got.

This is helpful for you too:

Ronan. Wrote: Look into some basic cryptography tools, you might stumble across what you're looking for ;)

av00 - November 28, 2016, 12:52 am

(Nov 28, 2016 01:49 AM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) There is no other response other than the one you got.

This is helpful for you too:

Alright, that helps. So you're saying there's more to decrypt? I did decrypt HZMGZHSVOKVI185 (just don't want to spoil it for others), just don't know how it's going to help me (yet) :D.

Some thoughts

> This message has 185 at its end.

> '8 is a beautiful number'.

> there are 105 # signs in the pastebin.

Ronan. - November 28, 2016, 1:10 am

(Nov 28, 2016 01:52 AM)nyx! Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Alright, that helps. So you're saying there's more to decrypt? I did decrypt HZMGZHSVOKVI185 (just don't want to spoil it for others), just don't know how it's going to help me (yet) :D.

Ah good job!

Without spoiling the decryption, think about what it looks like and where it may be applicable.

jawsh33 - November 28, 2016, 1:17 am

HZMGZHSVOKVI185 = "SantaClausHat"

Have I won??

Phobya - November 28, 2016, 5:17 am

Currently stuck on HZMGZHSVOKVI185.

I've tried using Bash to see if there's some sort of command that will decrypt that letter/number configuration but it seems every command in the help menu is useless. I've used read, readarray, readonly, etc. Also tried to use OpenSSL but I don't think there's anything OpenSSL will help me with. I hope I've got the right idea, at least.

av00 - November 28, 2016, 5:40 am

(Nov 28, 2016 06:17 AM)Phobya Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Currently stuck on HZMGZHSVOKVI185.

I've tried using Bash to see if there's some sort of command that will decrypt that letter/number configuration but it seems every command in the help menu is useless. I've used read, readarray, readyonly, etc. Also tried to use OpenSSL but I don't think there's anything OpenSSL will help me with. I hope I've got the right idea, at least.

You don't need to use bash to decrypt that message. As Ronan said before;

(Nov 27, 2016 03:46 PM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) ...

Look into some basic cryptography tools, you might stumble across what you're looking for ;)

yoyoyo999 - November 28, 2016, 5:56 am

I decrypted but now I'm stuck on what to do with the decrypted message ive tried tinyurl, pastebin. Now I have two clues.

The 105 hashtags 42 03[01] +03[02] 4 (clue 1)

I think the 03 is referring to the decrypted message the obvious part in that. (Don't wanna spoil it.) (I thought it was an IP address too but it didn't work)

and the decrypted message (clue 2)

But with ronnans message that he posted "what it looks like and where it might be applicable"

I thought it might be applicable here? But he is also said "santa is looking for help where would he find this"

(If that pertains to this step (step 6)) I believe?

I tried bash help, info, man -k nothing worked. Tried various combinations of tinyurl and pastebin. Even tried to further decrypt the numerical 105 thing. Maybe instead of actually counting the hashtags and using 105 we have to use ascii to convert all of it the way it is listed and use that to find the 105th character from the hex lmao. I'm running out of ideas I'm at work ATM but I will look into more cryptography methods when I get home.

av00 - November 28, 2016, 7:44 am

So I know what to do with the message now and got a step further, to a new message. Now stuck on where to go from there.

Biocides - November 28, 2016, 7:46 am

1 Lo5t

I Lost?

I don't know :S

av00 - November 28, 2016, 12:30 pm

(Nov 28, 2016 01:17 PM)Snow32 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) -snip-Here's Java cause I'm bored

```
Code for (char c: txt.toCharArray()) {  
    if (Character.isUpperCase(c)) System.out.print(c);  
}
```

Stealth™ - November 28, 2016, 12:38 pm

I'm not sure who would need a program to count like 15 characters lol.

av00 - November 28, 2016, 12:50 pm

(Nov 28, 2016 01:38 PM)Stealth™ Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I'm not sure who would need a program to count like 15 characters lol.Same. Just killing time while I'm thinking about the puzzle. ?

Ronan. - November 28, 2016, 1:03 pm

(Nov 28, 2016 01:38 PM)Stealth™ Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I'm not sure who would need a program to count like 15 characters lol.

I actually planned on having a section involve writing scripts, though opted against it for the sake of making the challenge more accessible. I'd love to do challenges like this more often though so if that's something of interest I'll be sure to stick it in next time ?

SIM-2015410 - November 28, 2016, 1:37 pm

What were you saying about no santa porn ?

Ronan. - November 28, 2016, 1:42 pm

(Nov 28, 2016 02:37 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) What were you saying about no santa porn ?
Hey, no nips, no age restriction.

The content of the video isn't part of the clue, just motivation ?

SIM-2015410 - November 28, 2016, 1:46 pm

(Nov 28, 2016 02:42 PM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Hey, no nips, no age restriction.

The content of the video isn't part of the clue, just motivation ?

Ah that's a relief, I was considering downloading it and analysing it on my computer haha

Biocides - November 28, 2016, 1:47 pm

(Nov 28, 2016 02:42 PM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Hey, no nips, no age restriction.

The content of the video isn't part of the clue, just motivation ? I enjoyed the motivation ?
10/10

yoyoyo999 - November 28, 2016, 6:06 pm

HINT Request

Ok so this is a combined post of my status update and a hint request.

I found the clue from the email used it and found the video and was kind of puzzled on how to continue from here.

Still have the clue from the paste bin

[tinyurl/onehundredfivehash](https://tinyurl.com/onehundredfivehash)

42

03[1] + 03[2]

4

looking at this im assuming this is referring to the next link which is a tinyurl link.

not sure what to do here with the numbers. I've tried combining them converting them. decrypting them nothing is clicking.

I've tried 1054294

ive tried 10542134

and also ive tried the above sequence multiplied and i got 229320 tried to convert this nope. I even thought of this being a phone number but that didnt work either

Can we get a hint how to proceed from here, you said the video was not part of the clues? So does this mean you want us to use the pastebin i mentioned?

Ronan. - November 29, 2016, 12:37 am

What happens when you type help in square brackets?

yoyoyo999 - November 29, 2016, 4:20 am

Ahh the help pages. So the numbers must be forming a word from letters in those positions. I tried to use the xmp service but being a normal user I don't have access so that can't be it. Il updat on

what words I can come up with or what pages I can access thanks Ron an great puzzle by the way if I could give rep I would you really went all out for this

'Palladium - November 29, 2016, 4:33 am

Hey, I would just to let you know that this is a very great puzzle Ronan and we might need some more after this puzzle has been completed as these are really fun, good luck! I am up to step 4 without cheating/looking at other people's posts (I looked after).

Good job Ronan!

Ronan. - November 29, 2016, 10:16 am

Thanks a lot for the feedback guys :)

I'm planning on doing a breakdown thread post-crack, happy to see there's so much interest in this though! I'll definitely consider doing more, holiday-depending.

Biocides - November 30, 2016, 4:48 am

Another hint for 9 :S

I have tried everything :/

Prince791 - November 30, 2016, 7:58 am

Very cheesy contest xD, seems too hard for me.

Ronan. - November 30, 2016, 11:54 am

(Nov 30, 2016 05:48 AM)Wares Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Another hint for 9 :S

I have tried everything :/

0 Helpful stuff to know

00 When to Contact Staff

00[0] W

Grats on L33T btw!

Biocides - November 30, 2016, 1:12 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 12:54 PM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) 0 Helpful stuff to know

00 When to Contact Staff

00[0] W

Grats on L33T btw!Will check now ;)

Thanks man!

Th4nat0s - November 30, 2016, 1:43 pm

Any hint on how to decrypt HZMGZHSVOKVI185 ?

SIM-2015410 - November 30, 2016, 1:47 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 02:43 PM)Th4nat0s Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Any hint on how to decrypt HZMGZHSVOKVI185 ?

Its a cipher, not caesar but something almost as easy. Just try some things out and you will probably get it :)

Ronan. - November 30, 2016, 1:53 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 02:43 PM)Th4nat0s Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Any hint on how to decrypt HZMGZHSVOKVI185 ?

What comes after HZMGZHSVOKVI185?

Biocides - November 30, 2016, 1:57 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 02:43 PM)Th4nat0s Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Any hint on how to decrypt HZMGZHSVOKVI185 ?

<https://cryptii.com/text/select>

:D

Ronan. - November 30, 2016, 2:54 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 02:57 PM)Wares Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) <https://cryptii.com/text/select>

:D

I thought my terminal hint was pretty :ok_hand: on this puzzle

Biocides - November 30, 2016, 3:00 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 03:54 PM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) I thought my terminal hint was pretty :ok_hand: on this puzzleIt was :ok_hand:

Ronan. - November 30, 2016, 4:50 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 05:35 PM)Snow32 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Hint Request

Stage: 6

What you've tried: I tried to convert the message to hex, no idea what is that

v=

:)

yoyoyo999 - November 30, 2016, 5:31 pm

lol im still stuck at the tinyurl/105# hint

I checked the help pages but still havent found success i think this has to do with the XMPP but i dont have aaccess

Ronan. - November 30, 2016, 5:38 pm

(Nov 30, 2016 06:31 PM)yoyoyo999 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) lol im still stuck at the tinyurl/105# hint

I checked the help pages but still havent found success i think this has to do with the XMPP but i dont have aaccess

Nothing to do with XMPP :)

Check the last page for a big hint

SIM-2015410 - December 1, 2016, 5:59 pm

Hint Request

Stage: The bracket thing)()))(())(((((())((()

What you've tried: (List anything you've tried so far)

Breaking it into a AxB grid of all possible combinations of factors of 64414 to see if there was a picture (tried replacing some brackets with spaces and others with ## to see), tried converting brackets to binary both ways with length 7 (because 8 isn't a factor and all english ASCII characters don't use the 8th bit anyway), but just comes out with rubbish. Considered other encoding systems but the irregularity of brackets and the fact that they aren't matched open and closed eliminates anything I can think of.

Ronan. - December 2, 2016, 9:25 am

(Dec 1, 2016 06:59 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Hint Request

Stage: The bracket thing)()))(())(((((())((()

What you've tried: (List anything you've tried so far)

Breaking it into a AxB grid of all possible combinations of factors of 64414 to see if there was a picture (tried replacing some brackets with spaces and others with ## to see), tried converting brackets to binary both ways with length 7 (because 8 isn't a factor and all english ASCII characters don't use the 8th bit anyway), but just comes out with rubbish. Considered other encoding systems but the irregularity of brackets and the fact that they aren't matched open and closed eliminates anything I can think of.

((())()() = 0

SIM-2015410 - December 2, 2016, 6:09 pm

(Dec 2, 2016 10:25 AM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) $((()))()() = 0$

But that is 10 characters? 64414 is not divisible by 10 character blocks? Are not all numbers 10 brackets long?

EDIT: Can't just be different groups of 10 brackets, if we split the file up into groups of 10, there are 1021 different 'characters' so that obviously isn't right :/

Also tried looking for the shortest length of brackets between 2 zeros since that would have to be an exact number of characters I would imagine, the shortest one is $()((()))()()())()()(((())())()$ but I have no idea how to work out where each character starts and ends

Ronan. - December 3, 2016, 3:20 am

(Dec 2, 2016 07:09 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) But that is 10 characters? 64414 is not divisible by 10 character blocks? Are not all numbers 10 brackets long?

EDIT: Can't just be different groups of 10 brackets, if we split the file up into groups of 10, there are 1021 different 'characters' so that obviously isn't right :/

Also tried looking for the shortest length of brackets between 2 zeros since that would have to be an exact number of characters I would imagine, the shortest one is $()((()))()()())()()(((())())()$ but I have no idea how to work out where each character starts and ends

Don't think of it as an exclusive group, you need to equate the entire string to a number.

SIM-2015410 - December 3, 2016, 7:24 pm

(Dec 3, 2016 04:20 AM)Ronan. Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Don't think of it as an exclusive group, you need to equate the entire string to a number.

I still can't think of anything at all about how this might work, I'm completely out of ideas sorry ?

EDIT: Is it just the number of unmatched brackets? i.e. the difference between the number of open and the number of close brackets? 246?

yoyoyo999 - December 3, 2016, 7:36 pm

Lol im still stuck on the help page part with the tiny url 105 hash tagsI used the hint

0 Helpful stuff to know

00 When to Contact Staff

00[0] W

Nothing worked I've had over a 100 ideas all failed I've been at it since my last post lol

SIM-2015410 - December 3, 2016, 7:54 pm

(Dec 3, 2016 08:36 PM)yoyoyo999 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Lol im still stuck on the help page part with the tiny url 105 hash tagsI used the hint

0 Helpful stuff to know

00 When to Contact Staff

00[0] W

Nothing worked I've had over a 100 ideas all failed I've been at it since my last post lol

Use the numbers that were in the pastebin. Following that idea, what would 03[1] be?

Ronan. - December 4, 2016, 8:00 am

(Dec 3, 2016 08:24 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) EDIT: Is it just the number of unmatched brackets? i.e. the difference between the number of open and the number of close brackets? 246? Spot on :)

(Dec 3, 2016 08:36 PM)yoyoyo999 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Lol im still stuck on the help page part with the tiny url 105 hash tagsI used the hint

0 Helpful stuff to know
00 When to Contact Staff
00[0] W

Nothing worked I've had over a 100 ideas all failed I've been at it since my last post lol
Just follow the same logic as that hint and you've got the answer!

mrkoolaid - December 4, 2016, 11:33 am

i started but lost interest, meh

<http://pastebin.com/5WK0YdD5>

SIM-2015410 - December 4, 2016, 12:02 pm

the password is password1

Ronan. - December 4, 2016, 12:11 pm

Congratulations MeshCollider!

So, seems you're an Ep1c Ub3r with a Gift award. I guess I better get drawing then.

I want to give a huge thanks for everyone that took part in this, I'm so pleased that there was so much interest in puzzles like this.

I'll be posting a breakdown of this challenge later on next week when I get chance.

I'll link the stickied thread here when it goes up.

yoyoyo999 - December 4, 2016, 6:39 pm

Aw man i was so close regardless congratas on the win and thanks for your help Mesh

TheFallenKingdom - December 4, 2016, 6:43 pm

7 is the real beautiful number though. :)

SIM-2015410 - December 4, 2016, 6:49 pm

(Dec 4, 2016 07:39 PM)yoyoyo999 Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Aw man i was so close regardless congratas on the win and thanks for your help Mesh

Yeah you did well in the end man, no problem and thanks ?

ddosfun - December 5, 2016, 6:43 am

(Dec 4, 2016 01:02 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) the password is password1

Damn I could have just guessed this from the beginning ???

Biocides - December 5, 2016, 8:44 am

(Dec 4, 2016 07:49 PM)MeshCollider Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) Yeah you did well in the end man, no problem and thanks ?GG Mesh ;)

Was a difficult run. Stage 12 was just too much for me :P

Uchiharr - December 6, 2016, 4:34 am

I didn't even think to look for someone already finishing this ?

Th4nat0s - December 7, 2016, 2:34 am

It would be awesome if you make a walkthrough :)

SIM-2015410 - December 7, 2016, 2:45 am

(Dec 7, 2016 03:34 AM)Th4nat0s Wrote: [\[CITE\]](#) It would be awesome if you make a walkthrough :)

Ronan. said he will make a walkthrough soon, be patient :)

Toasties - *December 10, 2016, 3:20 am*

Very interesting challenge! Even though it's finished I'll try it out later. Thank you :)