

# Account Enumeration

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## What is Account Enumeration?

**Account enumeration** is a type of security issue where someone can figure out whether a specific username or email address is registered on a website or app — even if they don't know the password.

### A simple way to think about it

Imagine you try to log in to a site and enter an email address. If the site responds with:

- “Email not found” → you now know that account doesn't exist
- “Incorrect password” → you now know the account *does* exist

That difference in responses lets someone “probe” the system and build a list of valid accounts. That's account enumeration.

### Why it's a problem

On its own, it might not seem serious—but it creates a foundation for more harmful attacks:

- **Targeted hacking attempts:** Attackers can focus only on real accounts instead of guessing blindly
- **Password attacks:** Once valid accounts are known, they can try common or leaked passwords
- **Privacy risks:** Someone could check if a person is registered on a specific platform (e.g., a dating site or medical service)
- **Phishing:** Knowing an email is valid makes scam messages more convincing

### How it usually happens

Account enumeration often occurs through small clues in how a system behaves:

- **Different error messages** during login (“user not found” vs “wrong password”)
- **Password reset forms** that confirm whether an email exists
- **Signup pages** that say “this email is already registered”
- **Timing differences** (responses take longer when an account exists)

Attackers often automate this process, trying thousands or millions of possible emails or usernames very quickly.

### TLDR

Account enumeration is like checking which names are on a guest list before trying to sneak into a party. It doesn't break in by itself — but it makes breaking in much easier.