

FAQ 3.20 How can I hide the source for my Perl program?

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/Perl/comp.lang.perl.misc/2005-04/msg01627.html>

- *From:* PerlFAQ Server <comdog@xxxxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Fri, 22 Apr 2005 22:03:01 +0000 (UTC)
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This message is one of several periodic postings to comp.lang.perl.misc intended to make it easier for perl programmers to find answers to common questions. The core of this message represents an excerpt from the documentation provided with Perl.

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Delete it. :-) Seriously, there are a number of (mostly unsatisfactory) solutions with varying levels of ``security".

First of all, however, you **can't** take away read permission, because the source code has to be readable in order to be compiled and interpreted. (That doesn't mean that a CGI script's source is readable by people on the web, though—only by people with access to the filesystem.) So you have to leave the permissions at the socially friendly 0755 level.

Some people regard this as a security problem. If your program does insecure things and relies on people not knowing how to exploit those insecurities, it is not secure. It is often possible for someone to determine the insecure things and exploit them without viewing the source. Security through obscurity, the name for hiding your bugs instead of fixing them, is little security indeed.

You can try using encryption via source filters (Starting from Perl 5.8 the `Filter::Simple` and `Filter::Util::Call` modules are included in the standard distribution), but any decent programmer will be able to decrypt it. You can try using the byte code compiler and interpreter described below, but the curious might still be able to de-compile it. You can try using the native-code compiler described below, but crackers might be able to disassemble it. These pose varying degrees of difficulty to people wanting to get at your code, but none can definitively conceal it (true of every language, not just Perl).

It is very easy to recover the source of Perl programs. You simply feed the program to the perl interpreter and use the modules in the `B::`

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hierarchy. The B::Deparse module should be able to defeat most attempts to hide source. Again, this is not unique to Perl.

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