

Introduction

What is Flare-On?

From the [official website](#):

“The Flare-On Challenge is the FLARE team's annual Capture-the-Flag (CTF) contest. It is a single-player series of Reverse Engineering puzzles that runs for 6 weeks every fall.

Notably, it is *the* reverse engineering CTF. The 11th edition, taking place in autumn of 2024, comprised of 10 challenges of increasing difficulty. The challenges were unlocked one at a time, each becoming available after the previous one had been solved.

If you're interested in trying to solve the challenges yourself, they should be available for [download from flare-on.com](#).

A First Time Player

Although I've heard of Flare-On before and maybe even signed up out of curiosity, I never really tried putting in the effort and solving as many challenges as I could, until this year. Although I toyed with all kinds of tools, debuggers and even some crackmes as a teenager, my first proper introduction to reverse engineering binaries was in late 2023 when I took the Reverse Engineering course at FIT CTU. At that time, I was simultaneously working on my bachelor's thesis, so there wasn't much time to spend on pastimes such as a reversing CTF, but one year (and completed degree) later, I simply needed to try it out and see how far my skills would get me.

Eventually, I managed to solve 8 challenges before running out of energy. They all taught me a lot individually, but perhaps the biggest lesson of all was common to many of them — among the many ways this lesson could be phrased, perhaps "work smarter, not harder" or "don't overthink it" are some of the most fitting.

Unfortunately, being a full-time student with a part-time job, completing these writeups was only possible months after the CTF ended, and as such, I was not sure if they would have any value to anyone. All that is to say — welcome, and please enjoy the read.

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