

Hash Functions

One major drawback of plain RSA is that the document itself is the signature. How can we separate the signature from the document? For this purpose, **hash functions** are introduced.

Characteristics of Hash Functions (requirements)

- **Fixed-length output:** These are special functions that, given a variable-length input, produce a fixed-length output.
- **Pre-image resistance:** It is difficult to find an input x that matches a given hash output y , where $y = H(x)$.
- **Collision resistance:** It is hard to find two different inputs x and x' such that $H(x) = H(x')$ (i.e., both inputs produce the same hash code).
- **Efficiency:** Despite the complexity, $H(x)$ should be easy to compute.
- **Avalanche effect:** Even a small change in the input (such as flipping just one bit) should result in a significant and unpredictable change in the output, ideally altering about half of the output bits.

Well-known Hash Functions

- **SHA-1**
- **MD2**
- **MD5** (Message Digest 5)

Hash functions play a crucial role in cryptography by allowing us to generate a fixed-size “fingerprint” or “digest” of a document. This makes it possible to sign the hash of the document instead of the entire document itself, making digital signatures more efficient.

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