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Great Ideas in Computer Architecture (a.k.a. Machine Structures)



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AI & Machine Learning

BFloat16: The secret to high performance on Cloud TPUs

August 23, 2019

format was conceived. Bfloat16 is carefully used within systolic arrays to accelerate matrix multiplication operations on Cloud TPUs. More precisely, each multiply-accumulate operation in a matrix multiplication uses bfloat16 for the multiplication and 32-bit IEEE floating point for accumulation. In this

Today's material is not required for Project 1. It is covered in Homework 03.

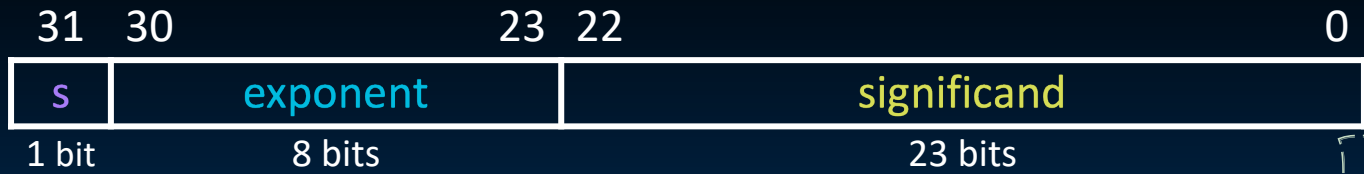
C Generics and Function Pointers



From Last Time

www.h-schmidt.net/FloatConverter/IEEE754.html

- **Floating Point** lets us...
 - Represent numbers with both integer and fractional parts making efficient use of available bits.
 - Store approximate values for very large and very small #s.
- **IEEE 754 Floating Point Standard** is the most widely accepted attempt to standardize interpretation of such numbers.
 - Every computer since ~1997 follows these conventions!
- Summary (single precision, or **fp32**):



$$(-1)^s \times (1 + \text{significand}) \times 2^{(\text{exponent}-127)}$$

Can store NaN, $\pm \infty$

Exponent tells Significand how much (2^i) to count by (... , 1/4, 1/2, 1, 2, ...)

Special Numbers

- Normalized numbers are only a fraction (heh) of floating point representations. For single-precision (32-bit):

Biased Exponent	Significand field	Object
0	all zeros	± 0
0	nonzero	Denormalized numbers
1 – 254	anything	Normalized floating point
255	all zeros	$\pm \infty$
255	nonzero	NaNs



Today: denorms
Full slidedeck in L06

The fields 0 and 255 accommodate **overflow, underflow**, and arithmetic errors.

Overflow and Underflow

[from last time]

- Because 0 and 255 are reserved exponent fields, the range of normalized single-precision floating point is:

- Largest magnitude:

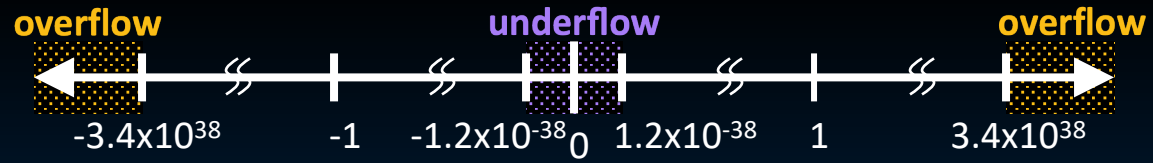
s	1111 1110	1...1 (23 bits)
---	-----------	-----------------

$$(1.1...1) \times 2^{(254-127)} \approx 3.4 \times 10^{38}$$

- Smallest magnitude:

s	0000 0001	0...0 (23 bits)
---	-----------	-----------------

$$(1.0) \times 2^{(1-127)} \approx 1.2 \times 10^{-38}$$



- What if a number falls outside this range?
 - Too large: **overflow**. Magnitude of value is too large to represent!
 - Too small: **underflow**. Magnitude of value is too small to represent!

Denorms: Gradual Underflow (1/2)

- Problem:
 - There's a **gap** among representable FP numbers around zero!
 - Smallest normalized number:

0	0000 0001	000...000
---	-----------	-----------

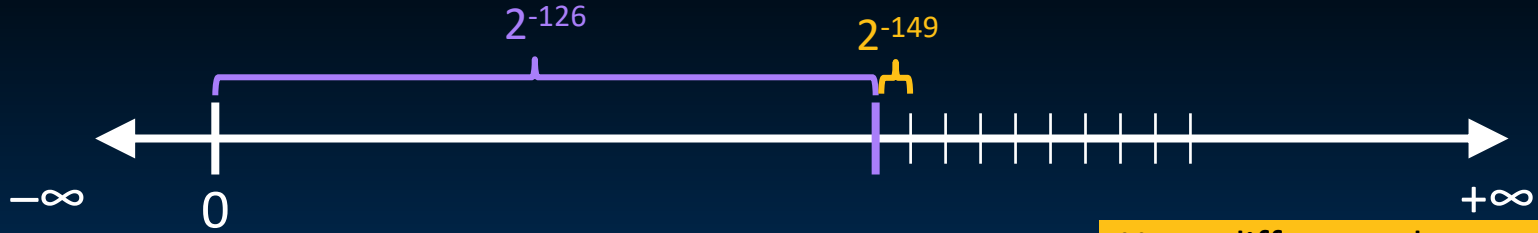
$$(1.0) \times 2^{(1-127)} = 2^{-126}$$

- 2nd smallest normalized number:

31	30	23	22	1	0
0	0000 0001	00000...0000	1		

$$(1.000.....1_2) \times 2^{(1-127)}$$

$$= (1 + 2^{-23}) \times 2^{-126} = 2^{-126} + 2^{-149}$$



Huge difference between 0 and smallest vs. smallest and 2nd smallest! Occurs b/c of normalization and implicit leading 1.

Denorms: Gradual Underflow (2/2)

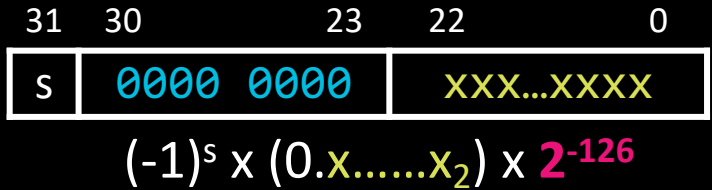
[for next time]

■ Solution:

- We still haven't used Exponent = 0, Significand nonzero.

■ DEnormalized number:

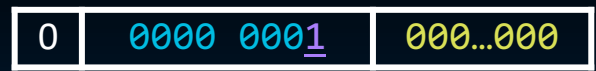
- no (implied) leading 1
- implicit exponent for all denorms = -126.



Smallest denormalized number



Smallest normalized number



- Double Precision (vs. Single Precision)
 - C variable declared as **double**
 - Exponent bias now 1023.
 - Represent numbers from $\sim 2.0 \times 10^{-308}$ to $\sim 2.0 \times 10^{308}$.
 - The primary advantage is greater **accuracy** due to larger significand.

Today's lecture

- Floats Wrap-up (denorms)
- Function Pointers
- Generic Functions
- Writing Generics: Episode I
- Writing Generics: Episode II
- Pointer Arithmetic in Generics

- Pointers are used to point to a variable of a particular data type.
 - Normally a pointer can only point to one type.
- `void *` is a type that can point to anything (generic pointer).
 - Use sparingly to help avoid program bugs... and security issues... and a lot of other bad things!
- You can even have pointers to functions...
 - `int (*fn) (void *, void *) = &foo;`
 - `fn` is a function that accepts two `void *` pointers and returns an `int` and is initially pointing to the function `foo`.
 - `(*fn)(x, y);` will then call the function

```
int *xptr;
char *str;
struct llist *foo_ptr;
```

(more later **now**)

Function Pointers

- Floats Wrap-up (denorms)
- Function Pointers
- Generic Functions
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Function Pointers

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 - Normally a pointer can only point to one type.
- `void *` is a type that can point to anything (generic pointer).
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 - `int (*fn) (void *, void *) = &foo;`
 - `fn` is a function that accepts two `void *` pointers and returns an `int` and is initially pointing to the function `foo`.
 - `(*fn)(x, y);` will then call the function

```
int *xptr;  
char *str;  
struct llist *foo_ptr;
```

- A **function pointer** is a variable storing the starting address of a function.
 - Function pointers are also typed!

Function Pointers allow us to define **higher-order functions**, such as `map`, `filter`, and `generic sort`.

(1/3) Function Pointer Example: The Output

```

1  /* map a function onto int array */
2  void mutate_map(int arr[], int n,
3                  int(*fp)(int)) {
4      for (int i = 0; i < n; i++)
5          arr[i] = (*fp)(arr[i]);
6  }
7  int multiply2 (int x) { return 2 * x; }
8  int multiply10(int x) { return 10 * x; }
9  int main() {
10     int arr[] = {3,1,4}
11     int n = sizeof(arr)/sizeof(arr[0]);
12     print_array(arr, n); // 1
13     mutate_map (arr, n, &multiply2);
14     print_array(arr, n); // 2
15     mutate_map (arr, n, &multiply10);
16     print_array(arr, n); // 3
17     return 0;
18 }

```

```

$ ./map_func
3 1 4
6 2 8
60 20 80

```

(2/3) Function Pointer Example

```

1  /* map a function onto int array */
2  void mutate_map(int arr[], int n,
3                  int(*fp)(int)) {
4      for (int i = 0; i < n; i++)
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```

- The fp parameter is a function **pointer**.
 - Type: int parameter, int retval

Function Pointer Example

```

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17     return 0;
18 }

```

```

$ ./map_func
3 1 4
6 2 8
60 20 80

```

- The fp parameter is a function pointer.
 - Type: int parameter, int retval
- Call the function pointed to by the function pointer.

Function Pointer Example

```

1  /* map a function onto int array */
2  void mutate_map(int arr[], int n,
3                  int(*fp)(int)) {
4      for (int i = 0; i < n; i++)
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```

```

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3 1 4
6 2 8
60 20 80

```

- The fp parameter is a function pointer.
 - Type: int parameter, int retval
- Call the function pointed to by the function pointer.
- Assign the function pointer a value.

Function Pointer Example

```

1  /* map a function onto int array */
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3                  int(*fp)(int)) {
4      for (int i = 0; i < n; i++)
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```

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3 1 4
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```

- The fp parameter is a function pointer.
 - Type: int parameter, int retval
- Call the function pointed to by the function pointer.
- Assign the function pointer a value.

(C quirk: Outside of declaration, functions implicitly convert to pointers.)

- (*fp)(arg) and fp = &fname are optional, but strongly recommended for readability. [\[link\]](#), [\[link2\]](#)

Yan, Yokota



Agenda

Generic Functions

- Floats Wrap-up (denorms)
- Function Pointers
- Generic Functions
- Writing Generics: Episode I
- Writing Generics: Episode II
- Pointer Arithmetic in Generics

When should we use void *?


r/C_Programming · 7 mo. ago

Is using void* considered "evil" in C just as it is in C++?

Question

I read that it was considered bad practice to use void* in C++ in a couple of places, including Reddit, SO, and Quora. But found little about the use of the same construct in C. I noticed that it was used in many functions in the standard library `<stdlib.h>` such as `qsort` so it musn't be that bad right?

41
84
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Sort by: Best

+ Add a Comment


7mo ago · Edited 7mo ago

No. Think of it as C's answer for Generics.

Generics is short for **generic functions**.



Why generic functions?

- We want to write general-purpose code.
 - Generic code reduces code duplication and means you can make improvements and fix bugs in one place rather than many.
 - Generics are used throughout C for functions to sort any array, search any array, free arbitrary memory, and more.
- In general, generics:
 - Should generally work regardless of argument type
 - Update blocks of memory, regardless of data type stored in those blocks

MALLOC(3)

Linux Programmer's Manual

MALLOC(3)

NAME

malloc, free, calloc, realloc, reallocarray - allocate and free dynamic memory

SYNOPSIS

```
#include <stdlib.h>
```

```
void *malloc(size_t size);
```

```
void free(void *ptr);
```

```
void *calloc(size_t nmemb, size_t size);
```

```
void *realloc(void *ptr, size_t size);
```

```
void *reallocarray(void *ptr, size_t nmemb, size_t size);
```

Pro Tip: run `man malloc`! The Linux manual page describes the heap API well (as well as what behavior is undefined).

```
typedef struct { ... } TreeNode;
TreeNode *tp = (TreeNode *) malloc(sizeof(TreeNode));
```

(interesting Ed convo on malloc casting convention: [#114db](#))

Heap `stdlib.h` functions are general purpose and therefore accept/return generic pointers.

(This joke will be explained later)

~~Star Wars~~



Writing Generics: Episode I



(1999)

- Floats Wrap-up (denorms)
- Function Pointers
- Generic Functions
- Writing Generics: Episode I
- Writing Generics: Episode II
- Pointer Arithmetic in Generics

Swap integers

```

1 void swap_int(int *ptr1, int *ptr2) {
2     int temp = *ptr1;
3     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
4     *ptr2 = temp;
5 }

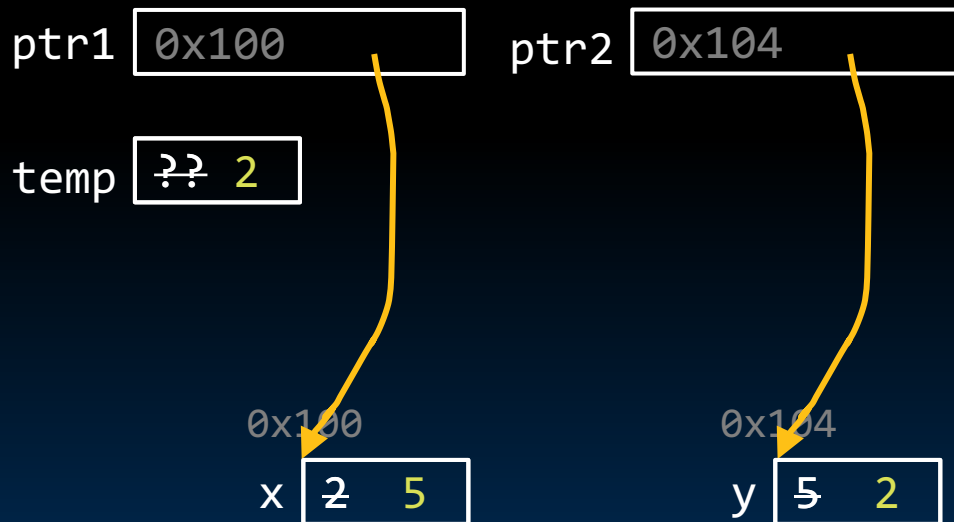
```

```

6 int main() {
7     int x = 2;
8     int y = 5;
9     swap_int(&x, &y);
10    // now, x=5 and y=2
11    ...
12    return 0;
13 }

```

- Remember: C is pass-by-value.
 - Pass in arguments to `swap_int` as **pointers** to swap local variables `x`, `y` in `main`.



Swap other types

```

1 void swap_int(int *ptr1, int *ptr2) {
2     int temp = *ptr1;
3     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
4     *ptr2 = temp;
5 }

```

```

6 void swap_short(short *ptr1,
7                 short *ptr2) {
8     short temp = *ptr1;
9     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
10    *ptr2 = temp;
11 }

```

```

11 void swap_string(char **ptr1,
12                  char **ptr2) {
13     char *temp = *ptr1;
14     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
15     *ptr2 = temp;
16 }

```

- Remember: C is pass-by-value.
 - Pass in arguments to `swap_int` as **pointers** to swap local variables `x`, `y` in `main`.
- With different types, the logic is still similar.

Swap other types

```

1 void swap_int(int *ptr1, int *ptr2) {
2     int temp = *ptr1;
3     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
4     *ptr2 = temp;
5 }

```

```

6 void swap_short(short *ptr1,
7                 short *ptr2) {
8     short temp = *ptr1;
9     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
10    *ptr2 = temp;
11 }

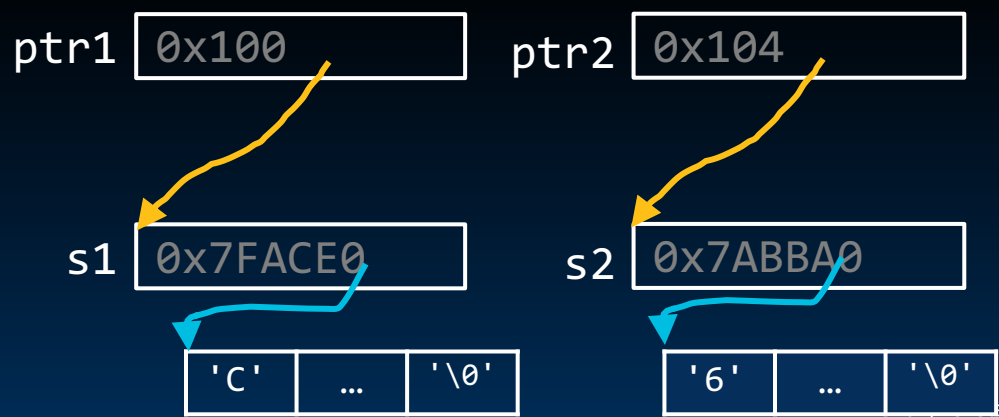
```

```

11 void swap_string(char **ptr1,
12                  char **ptr2) {
13     char *temp = *ptr1;
14     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
15     *ptr2 = temp;
16 }

```

- Remember: C is pass-by-value.
 - Pass in arguments to `swap_int` as **pointers** to swap local variables `x`, `y` in `main`.
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Swap other types

```

1 void swap_int(int *ptr1, int *ptr2) {
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3     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
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5 }

```

```

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7                 short *ptr2) {
8     short temp = *ptr1;
9     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
10    *ptr2 = temp;
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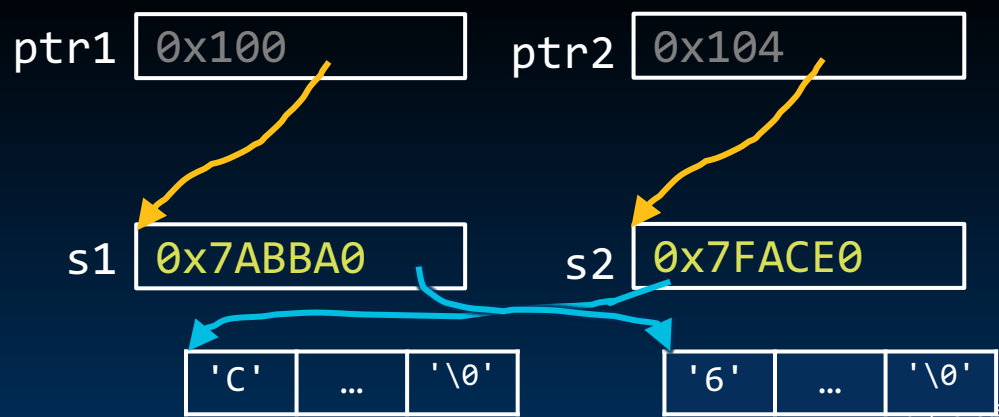
```

```

11 void swap_string(char **ptr1,
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13     char *temp = *ptr1;
14     *ptr1 = *ptr2;
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16 }

```

- Remember: C is pass-by-value.
 - Pass in arguments to `swap_int` as **pointers** to swap local variables `x`, `y` in `main`.
- With different types, the logic is still similar.



Generic swap...? An attempt

```
void swap_int(int *ptr1,
              int *ptr2) {
    int temp = *ptr1;
    *ptr1 = *ptr2;
    *ptr2 = temp;
}
```

...

```
void swap_string(char **ptr1,
                  char **ptr2) {
    char *temp = *ptr1;
    *ptr1 = *ptr2;
    *ptr2 = temp;
}
```



```
void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
    // 1. store a copy of data1 in temporary storage
    // 2. copy data2 to location of data1
    // 3. copy data in temporary storage to location of data2
}
```

Can you write this
function?

- What happens in each case? Select all that apply.

```
// Case 1
1 void *ptr = ...;
2 printf("%p\n", *ptr);
```

```
// Case 2
1 void **doubleptr = ...;
2 printf("%p\n", *doubleptr);
```

- A. Dereference pointer in Line 2
- B. Compile error
- C. Compile warning
- D. Runtime error/undefined behavior
- E. Don't know

Dereferencing void *

- What happens in each case? Select all that apply.

```
// Case 1
1 void *ptr = ...;
2 printf("%p\n", *ptr);
```

B, C

warning: dereferencing 'void *' pointer
error: invalid use of void expression

```
// Case 2
1 void **doubleptr = ...;
2 printf("%p\n", *doubleptr);
```

A

- Dereferencing doubleptr gives another pointer, of type void *!
- sizeof(*doubleptr) == sizeof(void *) == sizeof(<any pointer type>)

- A. Dereference pointer in Line 2
- B. Compile error
- C. Compile warning
- D. Runtime error/undefined behavior
- E. Don't know

To dereference a pointer, we must know the number of bytes to access from memory **at compile time**.

Generics employ generic pointers and therefore cannot use the dereference operator!



The joke, explained



Agenda

(This joke will be explained ~~later~~ ^{now})

~~Star Wars~~
Writing
Generics:
Episode I





Agenda

Writing Generics: Episode II

- Floats Wrap-up (denorms)
- Function Pointers
- Generic Functions
- Writing Generics: Episode I
- Writing Generics: Episode II
- Pointer Arithmetic in Generics

Generic memory copying

- To access some number of bytes in memory with a generic-typed `void *` pointer, we use two generics in the `string` standard library:

```
void *memcpy(void *dest, const void *src, size_t n);
```

- Copy `n` bytes from memory area `src` to memory area `dest`. Return a pointer to `dest`.
- `man memcpy`: “The memory areas **must not overlap**.”

```
void *memmove(void *dest, const void *src, size_t n);
```

- Copy `n` bytes from memory area `src` to memory area `dest`. Return a pointer to `dest`.
- `man memmove`: “copying takes place **as though** the bytes in `src` are first copied into a **temporary array** ... then copied ... to `dest`.”
- Use `memcpy` for performance reasons (unless you know memory areas overlap).
 - Not only is `memcpy` faster, but some implementations of `memmove` actually employ temporary storage (like in C99), which risks running out of memory. [[source1](#), [source2](#)]

From dereferencing to memcpy

- Let's rewrite Line 3 to use memcpy:

```
void *memcpy(
    void *dest,
    const void *src,
    size_t n);
```

function signature

```
void swap_int(int *ptr1, int *ptr2) {
    1  int temp = *ptr1;
    2  *ptr1 = *ptr2;
    3  *ptr2 = temp;
}
```

`memcpy(ptr1, ptr2, sizeof(int));`

- We must know how many bytes are pointed to!
- Let's add this parameter to swap:

```
void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2, size_t nbytes);
```

Constructing generic swap

Suppose:

- ptr1 points to nbytes of memory (call this data1)
- ptr2 points to nbytes of memory (call this data2)
- Assume no overlap in these two memory areas

```
void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2, size_t nbytes) {
    // 1. store a copy of data1 in temporary storage
    char temp[nbytes];
    memcpy(temp, ptr1, nbytes);

    // 2. copy data2 to location of data1
    memcpy(ptr1, ptr2, nbytes);

    // 3. copy data in temporary storage to location of data2
    memcpy(ptr2, temp, nbytes);
}
```

If temp is a local **byte array**, this resolves to a pointer.

```
void swap_int(int *ptr1,
              int *ptr2) {
    int temp = *ptr1; // 1
    *ptr1 = *ptr2;    // 2
    *ptr2 = temp;     // 3
}
```

In C, `sizeof(char) == 1` byte, regardless of architecture.

To create temporary “generic” storage, declare a local character array (i.e., **buffer**).

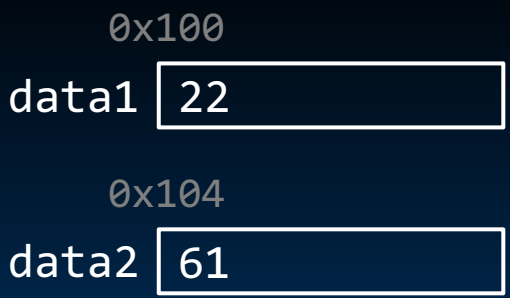
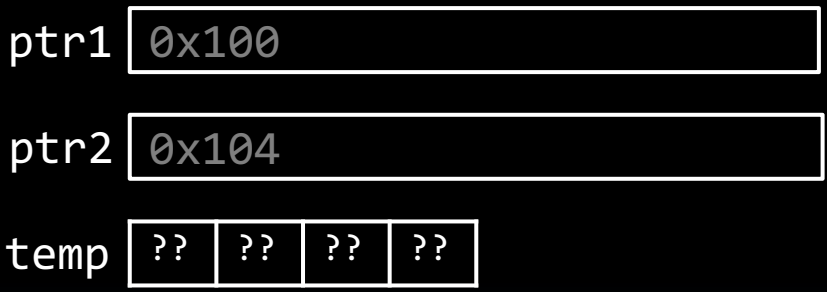
Generic swap

(assume sizeof(int) == 4)

```

1 void swap(void *ptr1,
           void *ptr2,
           size_t nbytes) {
2     char temp[nbytes];
3     memcpy(temp, ptr1, nbytes);
4     memcpy(ptr1, ptr2, nbytes);
5     memcpy(ptr2, temp, nbytes);
6 }

7 int main() {
8     int data1 = 22;
9     int data2 = 61;
10    swap(&data1,
        &data2,
        sizeof(data1));
11    return 0;
12 }
    
```



(see more code examples in Drive)

Yan, Yokota

Generic swap

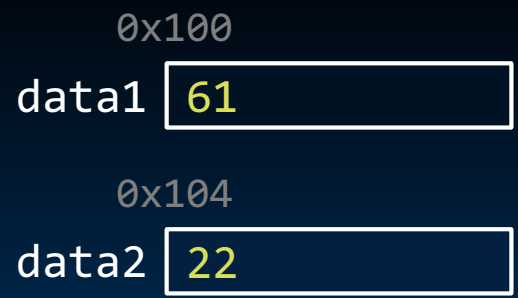
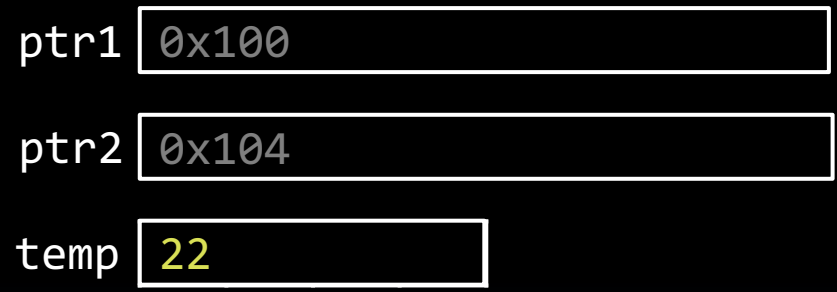
(assume sizeof(int) == 4)

```

1 void swap(void *ptr1,
           void *ptr2,
           size_t nbytes) {
2     char temp[nbytes];
3     memcpy(temp, ptr1, nbytes);
4     memcpy(ptr1, ptr2, nbytes);
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6 }

7 int main() {
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(see more code examples in Drive)

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Pointer Arithmetic in Generics

- Floats Wrap-up (denorms)
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- Writing Generics: Episode I
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Now your turn! swap_ends

- Finally, let's consider generics that operate on a generic array of values.
 - We'll need to do pointer arithmetic!
- Use the swap function to swap the first and last elements in an array:

```
1 void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2, size_t nbytes) {...}
2
3
4
5
6
```

```
7 int main() {
8     int arr[] = {1, 2, 3, 4, 5}, n = sizeof(arr)/sizeof(arr[0]);
9     swap_ends(arr, n, sizeof(arr[0])); // to implement
... }
...
... }
```

0x100

0x114

1	5	2	3	4	5	1
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

arr

07-C Generics and Function Pointers (38)

Now your turn! swap_ends

- Finally, let's consider generics that operate on a generic array of values.
 - We'll need to do pointer arithmetic!
- Use the swap function to swap the first and last elements in an array:

```

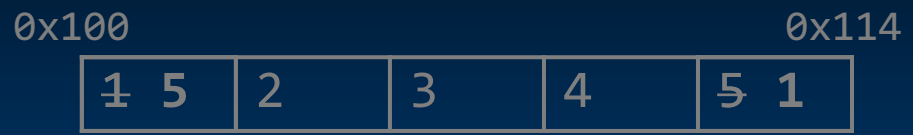
1 void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2, size_t nbytes) {...}
2 void swap_ends(void *arr,
3               size_t nelems,           "Array" parameter needs # elements in array
4               size_t nbytes) {        Generics need size of each element (in bytes)
5     ...
6 }
```

```

7 int main() {
8     int arr[] = {1, 2, 3, 4, 5}, n = sizeof(arr)/sizeof(arr[0]);
9     swap_ends(arr, n, sizeof(arr[0]));
... }

```

(assume sizeof(int) == 4)



arr

Now your turn! swap_ends

[concept check]

- Finally, let's consider generics that operate on a generic array of values.
 - We'll need to do pointer arithmetic!
- Use the swap function to swap the first and last elements in an array:

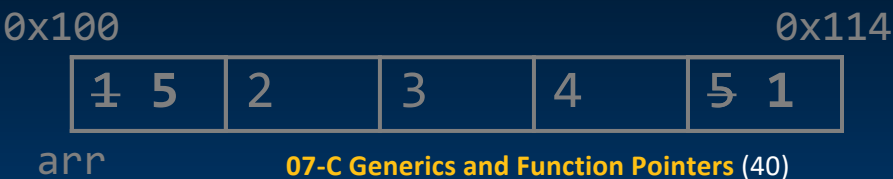
```

1 void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2, size_t nbytes) {...}
2 void swap_ends(void *arr,
3               size_t nelems,
4               size_t nbytes) {
5     swap(arr, ???, nbytes);
6 }

7 int main() {
8     ...
9     swap_ends(arr, n, sizeof(arr[0]));
10    ...
11 }
    
```

- A. `arr + nelems`
- B. `arr + nelems*nbytes`
- C. `(char *) arr + nelems*nbytes`
- D. `arr + nelems - 1`
- E. `arr + (nelems - 1)*nbytes`
- F. `(char *) arr + (nelems - 1)*nbytes`
- G. Something else

(assume sizeof(int) == 4)



What should go in the blank?

0

A. `arr + nelems`

0%

B. `arr + nelems*nbytes`

0%

C. `(char *) arr + nelems*nbytes`

0%

D. `arr + nelems - 1`

0%

E. `arr + (nelems - 1)*nbytes`

0%

F. `(char *) arr + (nelems - 1)*nbytes`

0%

G. Something else

0%

Generic byte arithmetic with (char *) typecast

Pointer arithmetic in generics must be **byte-wise** arithmetic.

1. Cast void * pointer to char *.
2. Pointer arithmetic is then effectively byte-wise!

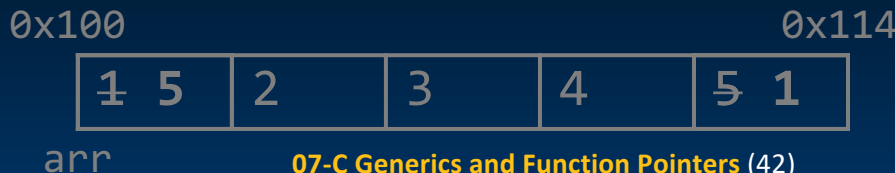
```

1 void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2, size_t nbytes) {...}
2 void swap_ends(void *arr,
3               size_t nelems,
4               size_t nbytes) {
5     swap(arr, ???, nbytes);
6 }

7 int main() {
8     ...
9     swap_ends(arr, n, sizeof(arr[0]));
10    ...
11 }
    
```

- A. arr + nelems
- B. arr + nelems*nbytes
- C. (char *) arr + nelems*nbytes
- D. arr + nelems - 1
- E. arr + (nelems - 1)*nbytes
- F. (char *) arr + (nelems - 1)*nbytes**
- G. Something else

⚠ Caution! Option E (no explicit cast to char *) will work on hive but is not standard C [\[source\]](#).



(assume sizeof(int) == 4)

And in Conclusion...

- Function pointers enable higher-order functions in C.
 - map, filter, sorting, etc.
- Generic functions (i.e., generics), use `void *` pointers to operate on memory.
 - Generics are widely present in the C standard library! (`malloc`, `memcpy`, `qsort`, ...)
 - Generics require a solid understanding of memory! By manipulating arbitrary bytes, you risk violating data boundaries, e.g., “Frankenstein”-ing two halves of ints.
- Reminders when writing generics:
 - Generic pointers do not support dereferencing, as the number of bytes to access from memory is not known at compile-time.
 - Instead, use byte handling functions (`memcpy`, `memmove`).
 - Pointer arithmetic: first cast to byte arrays with (`char *`).



The C standard library header `string.h`

[optional]

- `string.h` contains not only functions for handling strings, but also those for handling memory.
 - Common memory functions: `memcpy`, `memmove`, `memset`, ...
- While the header name is a bit misleading, memory handling functions operate byte-by-byte, and strings are effectively (null-terminated) byte arrays.
- `glibc`'s `strncpy` implementation:

```
char *strncpy(char *dest, const char *src, size_t n) {
    size_t size = strlen(src, n); // max(strlen(src), n)
    if (size != n)
        memset(dest + size, '\0', n - size); // write '\0's
    return memcpy(dest, src, size);
}
```

<https://code.woboq.org/userspace/glibc/string/strncpy.c.html>

Yan, Yokota

Full code for Function Pointer example

```

1  /* map a function onto int array */
2  void mutate_map(int arr[], int n,
3                  int(*fp)(int)) {
4      for (int i = 0; i < n; i++)
5          arr[i] = (*fp)(arr[i]);
6  }
7  int multiply2 (int x) { return 2 * x; }
8  int multiply10(int x) { return 10 * x; }
9  int main() {
10     int arr[] = {3,1,4}
11     int n = sizeof(arr)/sizeof(arr[0]);
12     print_array(arr, n); // 1
13     mutate_map (arr, n, &multiply2);
14     print_array(arr, n); // 2
15     mutate_map (arr, n, &multiply10);
16     print_array(arr, n); // 3
17     return 0;
18 }

```

(see code in Drive)

(C quirk: Outside of declaration, functions implicitly convert to pointers.)

(*fp)(arg) and fp = &fname are optional, but strongly recommended for readability. [\[link\]](#), [\[link2\]](#)

```

$ ./map_func
3 1 4
6 2 8
60 20 80

```

Full code for swap_ends

```

1 void swap(void *ptr1, void *ptr2, size_t nbytes) {
    char temp[nbytes];
    memcpy(temp, ptr1, nbytes);
    memcpy(ptr1, ptr2, nbytes);
    memcpy(ptr2, temp, nbytes);
}
2 void swap_ends(void *arr,
3               size_t nelems,
4               size_t nbytes) {
5     swap(arr, (char *) arr + (nelems - 1)*nbytes, nbytes);
6 }
7 int main() {
8     int arr[] = {1, 2, 3, 4, 5}, n = sizeof(arr)/sizeof(arr[0]);
9     swap_ends(arr, n, sizeof(arr[0]));
...
}

```

(see code in Drive)

⚠ Caution! With generic pointers, omitting the explicit `char *` cast to) will work on hive (gcc uses GNU C) but is not standard C [\[source\]](#).

(assume sizeof(int) == 4)

