



Assemblers and Linkers

CS 217



Goals of This Lecture

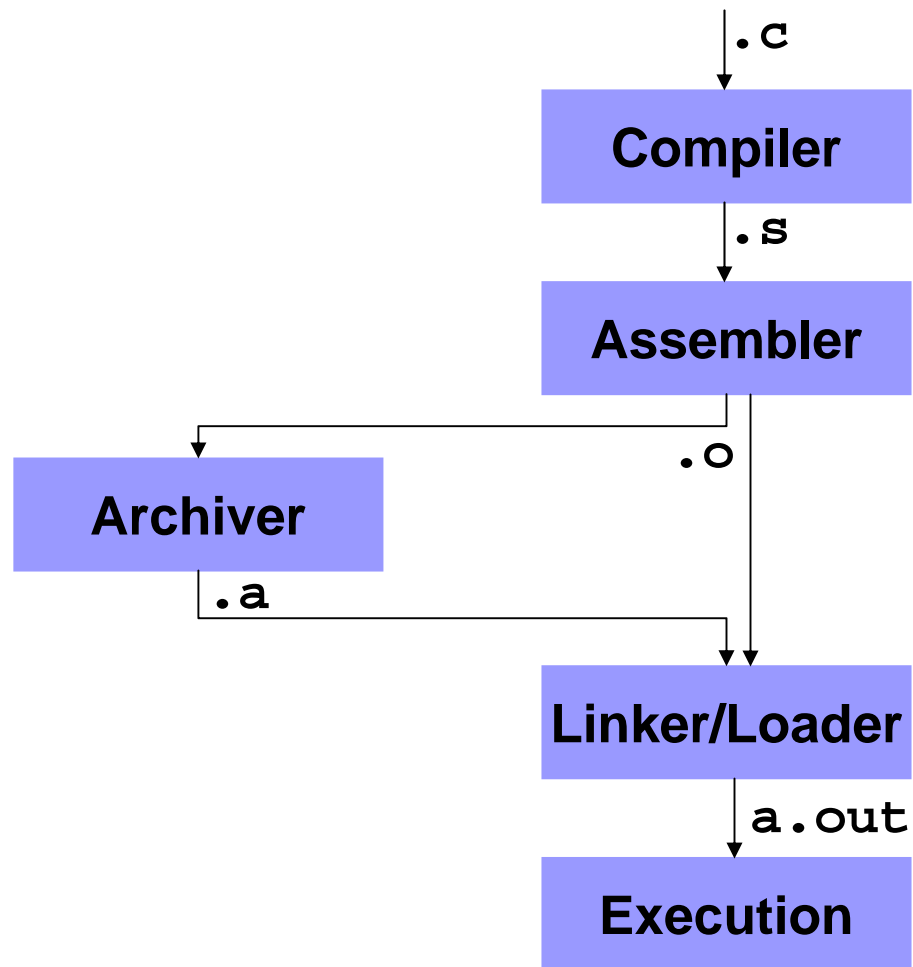
- **Compilation process**
 - Compile, assemble, archive, link, execute
- **Assembling**
 - Representing instructions
 - Prefix, opcode, addressing modes, operands
 - Translating labels into memory addresses
 - Symbol table, and filling in local addresses
 - Connecting symbolic references with definitions
 - Relocation records
 - Specifying the regions of memory
 - Generating sections (data, BSS, text, etc.)
- **Linking**
 - Concatenating object files
 - Patching references



Compilation Pipeline

- **Compiler (gcc): .c → .s**
 - Translates high-level language to assembly language
- **Assembler (as): .s → .o**
 - Translates assembly language to machine language
- **Archiver (ar): .o → .a**
 - Collects object files into a single library
- **Linker (ld): .o + .a → a.out**
 - Builds an executable file from a collection of object files
- **Execution (execvp)**
 - Loads an executable file into memory and starts it

Compilation Pipeline



Assembler



- Purpose

- Translates assembly language into machine language
 - Translate instruction mnemonics into op-codes
 - Translate symbolic names for memory locations
- Store result in object file (.o)

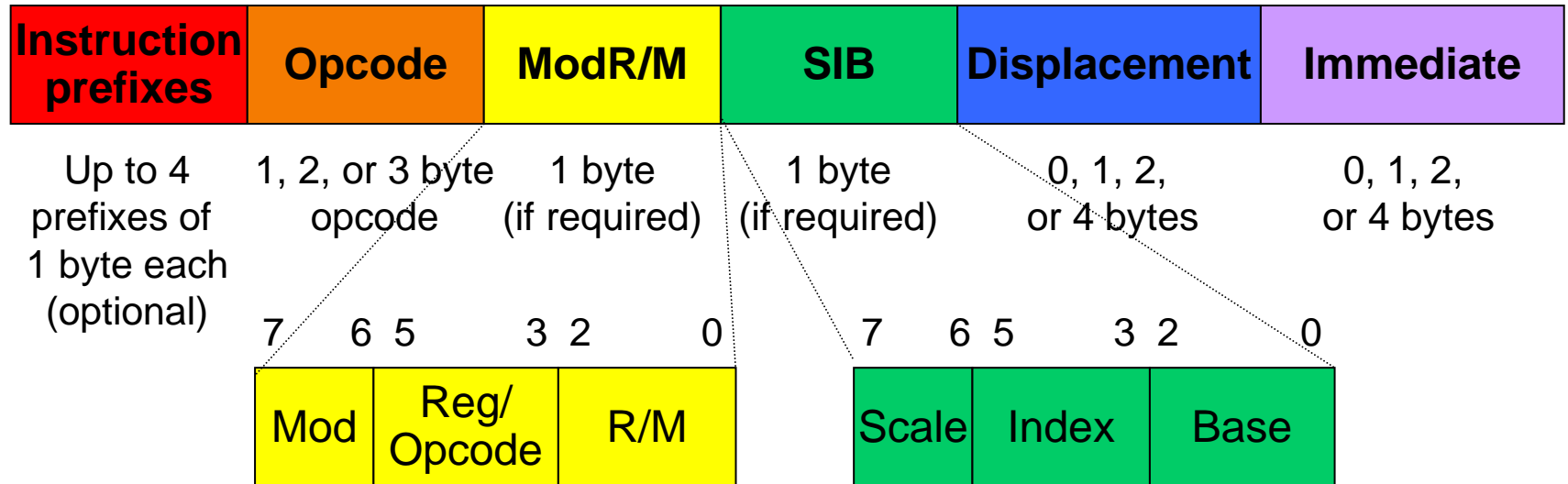
- Assembly language

- A symbolic representation of machine instructions

- Machine language

- Contains everything needed to link, load, and execute the program

General IA32 Instruction Format



- Prefixes: we won't worry about these for now
- Opcode
- ModR/M and SIB (scale-index-base): for memory operands
- Displacement and immediate: depending on opcode, ModR/M and SIB
- Note: byte order is little-endian (low-order byte of word at lower addresses)



Example: Push on to Stack

- Assembly language:

```
pushl %edx
```

- Machine code:

- IA32 has a separate opcode for push for each register operand
 - 50: pushl %eax
 - 51: pushl %ecx
 - 52: pushl %edx
 - ...



0101 0010

- Results in a one-byte instruction
- Observe
 - Sometimes one assembly language instruction can map to a *group* of different opcodes

Example: Load Effective Address



- Assembly language:

```
leal (%eax,%eax,4), %eax
```

- Machine code:

- Byte 1: 8D (opcode for “load effective address”)
- Byte 2: 04 (dest %eax, with scale-index-base)
- Byte 3: 80 (scale=4, index=%eax, base=%eax)

1000 1101

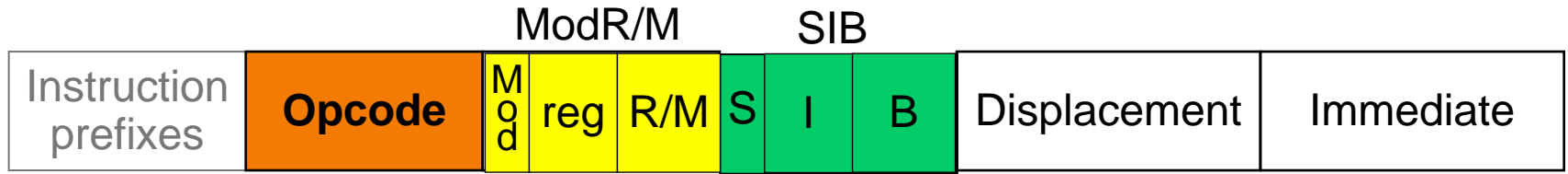
0000 0100

1000 0000

Load the address $\%eax + 4 * \%eax$ into register %eax



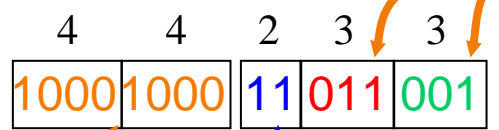
Example: Movl (Opcode 44)



movl %ecx, %ebx

mov r/m32,r32

mode %_, %_

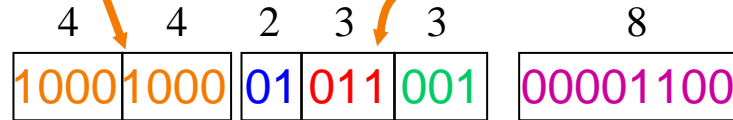


Mod=11 table

- EAX 0
- ECX 1
- EDX 2
- EBX 3
- ESP 4
- EBP 5
- ESI 6
- EDI 7

movl 12(%ecx), %ebx

mode disp8(%_), %_

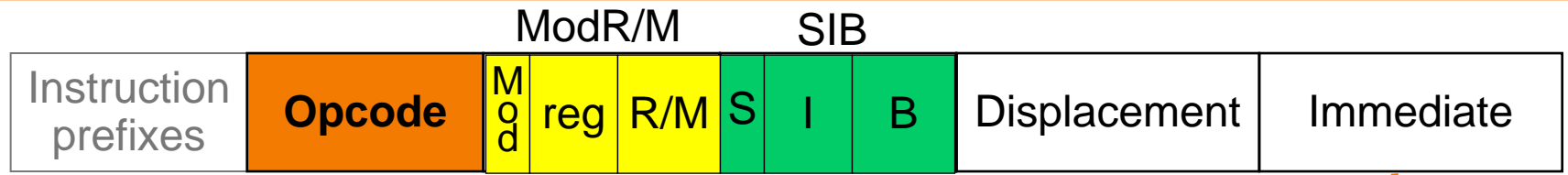


Mod=01 table

- [EAX]+disp8 0
- [ECX]+disp8 1
- [EDX]+disp8 2
- [EBX]+disp8 3
- [--][--]+disp8 4
- [EBP]+disp8 5
- [ESI]+disp8 6
- [EDI]+disp8 7

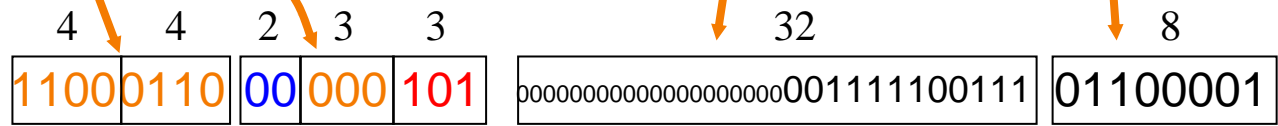
Reference: IA-32 Intel Architecture Software Developer's Manual, volume 2, page 2-1, page 2-6, and page 3-441

Example: Mov Immediate to Memory



mov r/m8,imm8

`movb $97, 999`



999 97

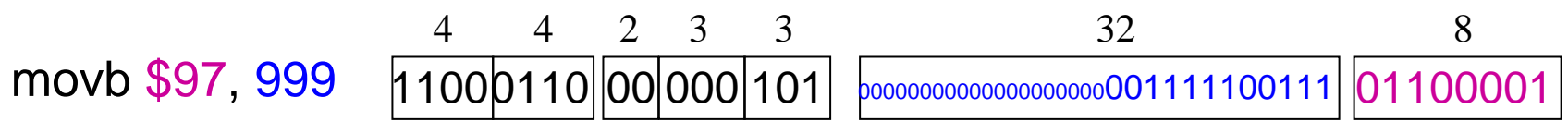
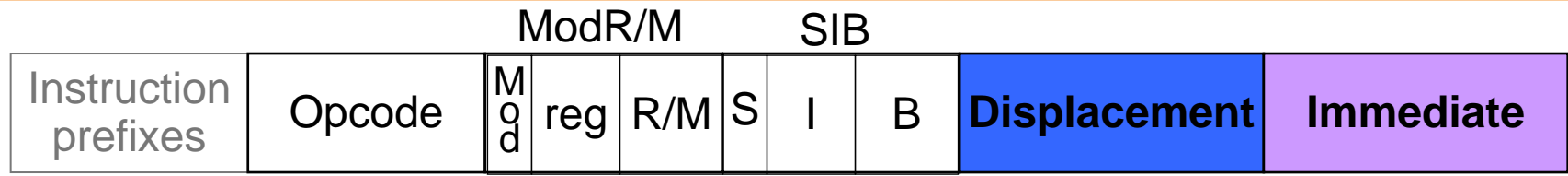
mode disp32

Mod=00 table

- [EAX] 0
- [ECX] 1
- [EDX] 2
- [EBX] 3
- [--][--] 4
- disp32 5**
- [ESI] 6
- [EDI] 7



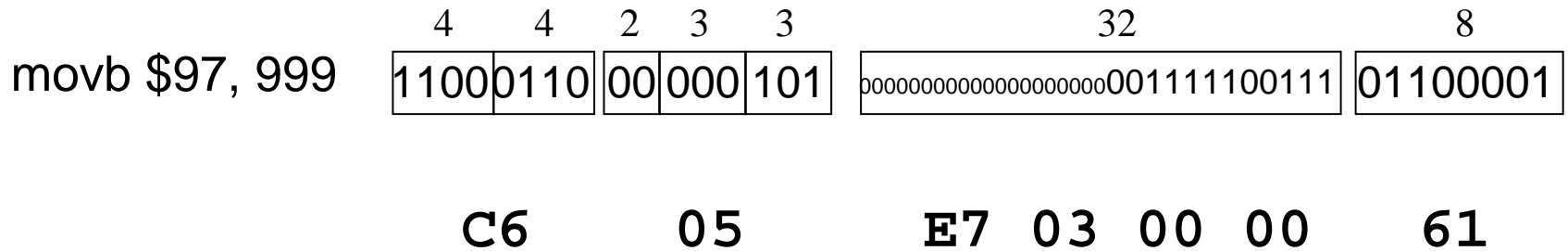
Encoding as Byte String



C6 05 E7 03 00 00 61

little-endian

Assembly Language



```
.globl grade
.data
grade:
```

```
.byte 67
.text
:
movb '$a', grade
:
```

← *located at address 999*

Symbol Manipulation



```
.text
    ...
    movl count, %eax
    ...
.data
count:
    .word 0
    ...
```

```
.globl loop
loop:
    cmpl %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

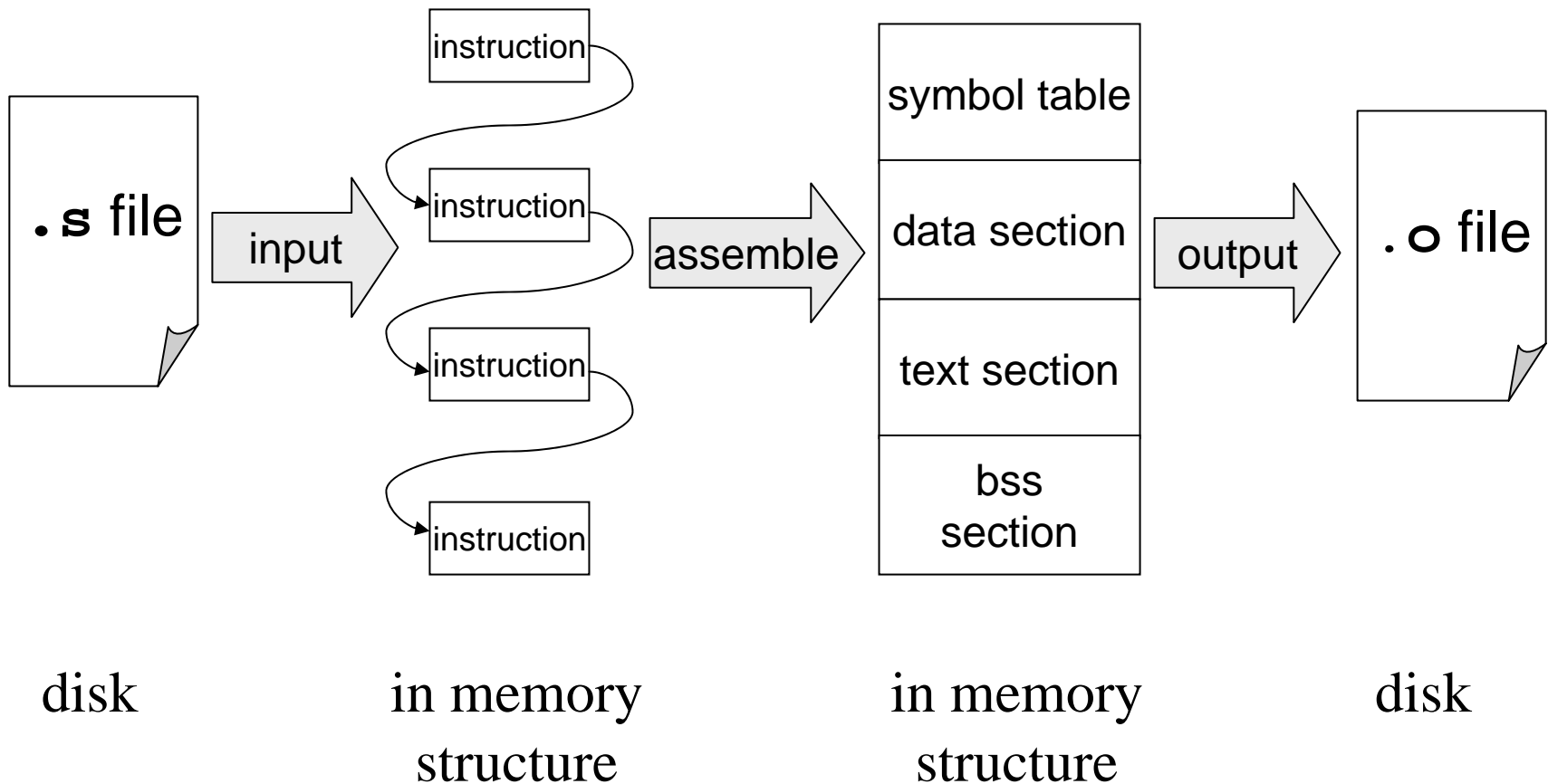
*Create labels and remember their addresses
Deal with the “forward reference problem”*

Dealing with Forward References



- Most assemblers have two passes
 - Pass 1: symbol definition
 - Pass 2: instruction assembly
- Or, alternatively,
 - Pass 1: instruction assembly
 - Pass 2: patch the cross-reference

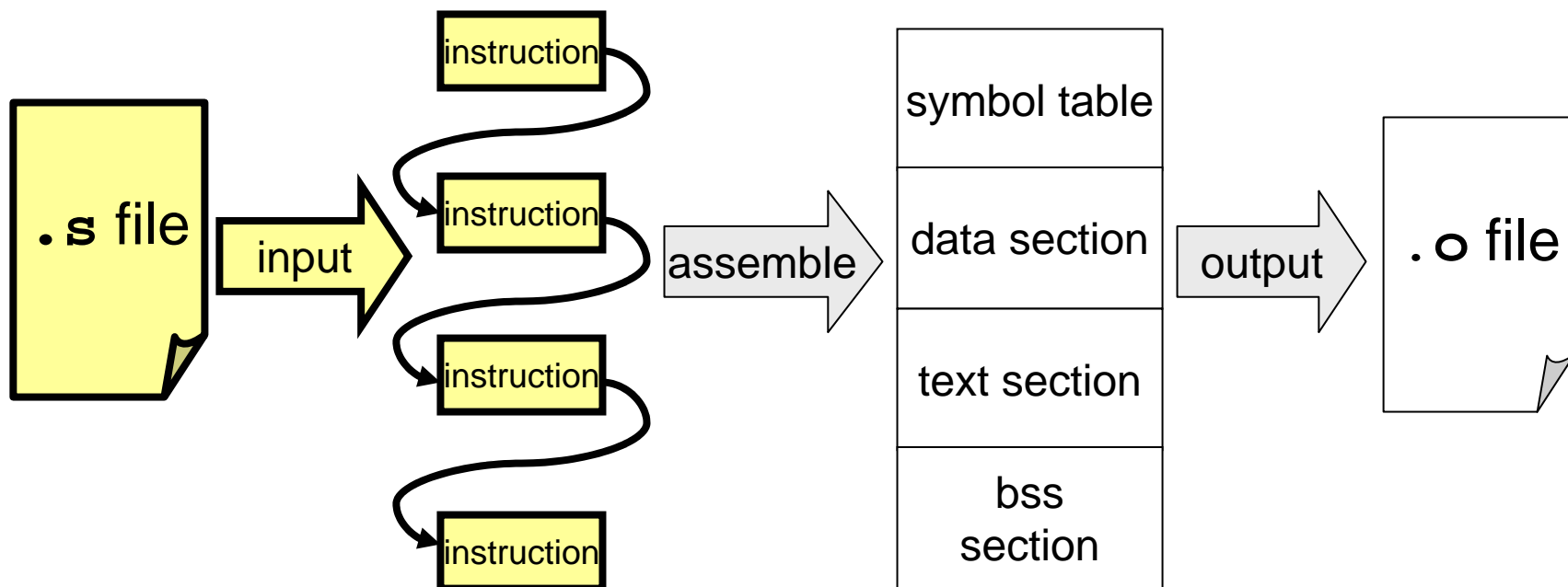
Implementing an Assembler





Input Functions

- Read assembly language and produce list of instructions





Input Functions

- Lexical analyzer

- Group a stream of characters into tokens

`add %g1 , 10 , %g2`

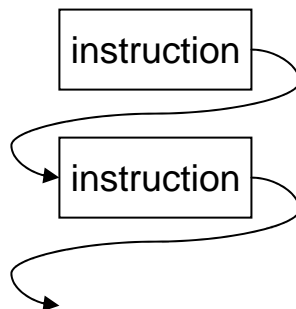
- Syntactic analyzer

- Check the syntax of the program

`<MNEMONIC><REG><COMMA><REG><COMMA><REG>`

- Instruction list producer

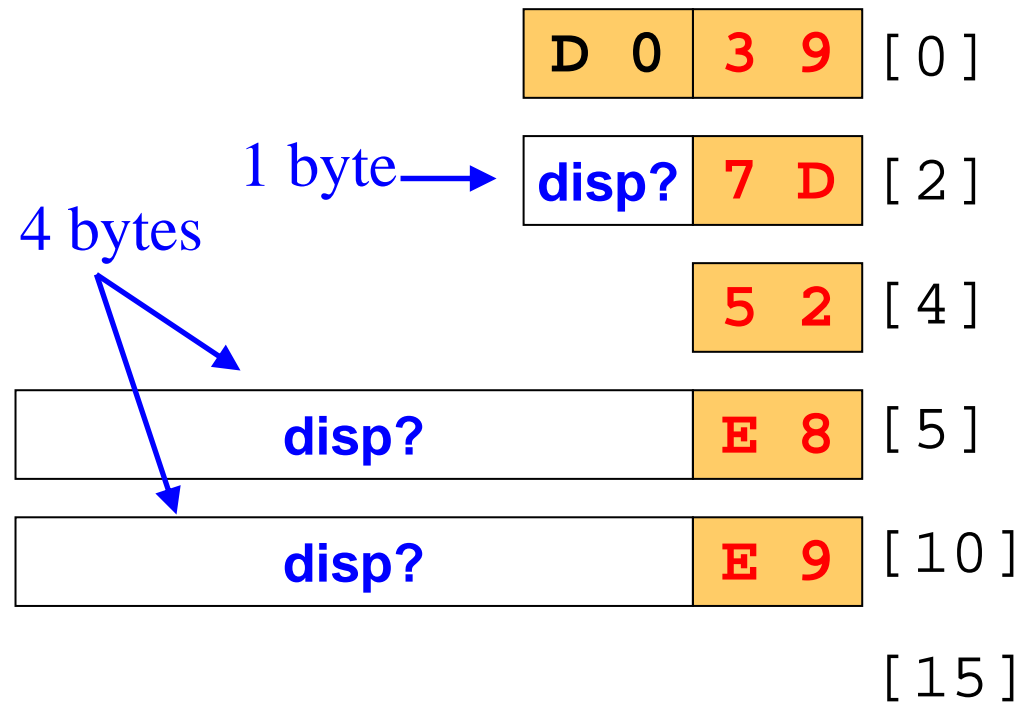
- Produce an in-memory list of instruction data structures





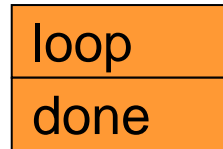
Instruction Assembly

```
...  
loop:  
    cmpl %edx, %eax  
    jge done  
    pushl %edx  
    call foo  
    jmp loop  
done:
```



How to compute the address displacements?

Symbol Table



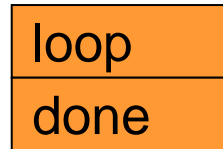
<i>type</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>address</i>
def	loop	0
disp_s	done	2
disp_l	foo	5
disp_l	loop	10
def	done	15

```
.globl loop
loop:
    cml %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

D 0	3 9	[0]
disp_s	7 D	[2]
	5 2	[4]
disp_l	E 8	[5]
disp_l	E 9	[10]
		[15]

disp_l	E 8	[5]
disp_l	E 9	[10]

Symbol Table



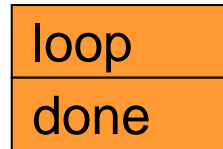
<i>type</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>address</i>
def	loop	0
disp_s	done	2
disp_l	foo	5
disp_l	loop	10
def	done	15

```
.globl loop
loop:
    cml %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

D 0	3 9	[0]
disp_s	7 D	[2]
	5 2	[4]
disp_l	E 8	[5]
disp_l	E 9	[10]
		[15]

disp_l	E 8	[5]
disp_l	E 9	[10]

Symbol Table



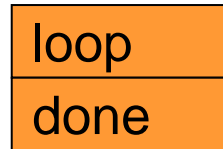
<i>type</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>address</i>
def	loop	0
disp_s	done	2
disp_l	foo	5
disp_l	loop	10
def	done	15

```
.globl loop
loop:
    cml %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

D 0	3 9	[0]
+13	7 D	[2]
	5 2	[4]
	E 8	[5]
	E 9	[10]
		[15]

disp_l	E 8	[5]
disp_l	E 9	[10]

Symbol Table



<i>type</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>address</i>
def	loop	0
disp_s	done	2
disp_l	foo	5
disp_l	loop	10
def	done	15

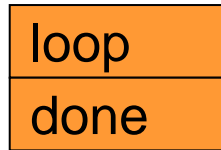
```
.globl loop
loop:
    cml %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

D 0	3 9	[0]
+13	7 D	[2]
	5 2	[4]
	E 8	[5]
	E 9	[10]
		[15]

disp_l	
disp_l	



Filling in Local Addresses



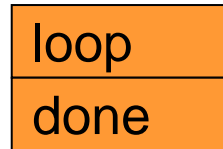
<i>type</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>address</i>
def	loop	0
disp_s	done	2
disp_l	foo	5
disp_l	loop	10
def	done	15

```
.globl loop
loop:
    cml %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

D 0	3 9	[0]
+13	7 D	[2]
	5 2	[4]
disp_l	E 8	[5]
-10	E 9	[10]
		[15]

disp_l
-10

Filling in Local Addresses



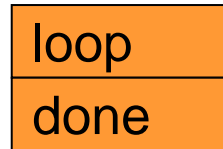
<i>type</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>address</i>
def	loop	0
disp_s	done	2
disp_l	foo	5
disp_l	loop	10
def	done	15

```
.globl loop
loop:
    cml %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

D 0	3 9	[0]
+13	7 D	[2]
	5 2	[4]
	E 8	[5]
	E 9	[10]
		[15]

	disp_l	E 8	[5]
	-10	E 9	[10]

Filling in Local Addresses



<i>type</i>	<i>label</i>	<i>address</i>
def	loop	0
disp_s	done	2
disp_l	foo	5
disp_l	loop	10
def	done	15

```
.globl loop
loop:
    cml %edx, %eax
    jge done
    pushl %edx
    call foo
    jmp loop
done:
```

D 0	3 9	[0]
+13	7 D	[2]
	5 2	[4]
disp_l	E 8	[5]
-10	E 9	[10]
		[15]



Relocation Records

```
...  
.globl loop  
loop:  
    cmpl %edx, %eax  
    jge done  
    pushl %edx  
    call foo  
    jmp loop  
done:
```

def	loop	0		
disp_l	foo	5		
		D 0	3 9	[0]
		+13	7 D	[2]
			5 2	[4]
	disp_l		E 8	[5]
	-10		E 9	[10]
				[15]



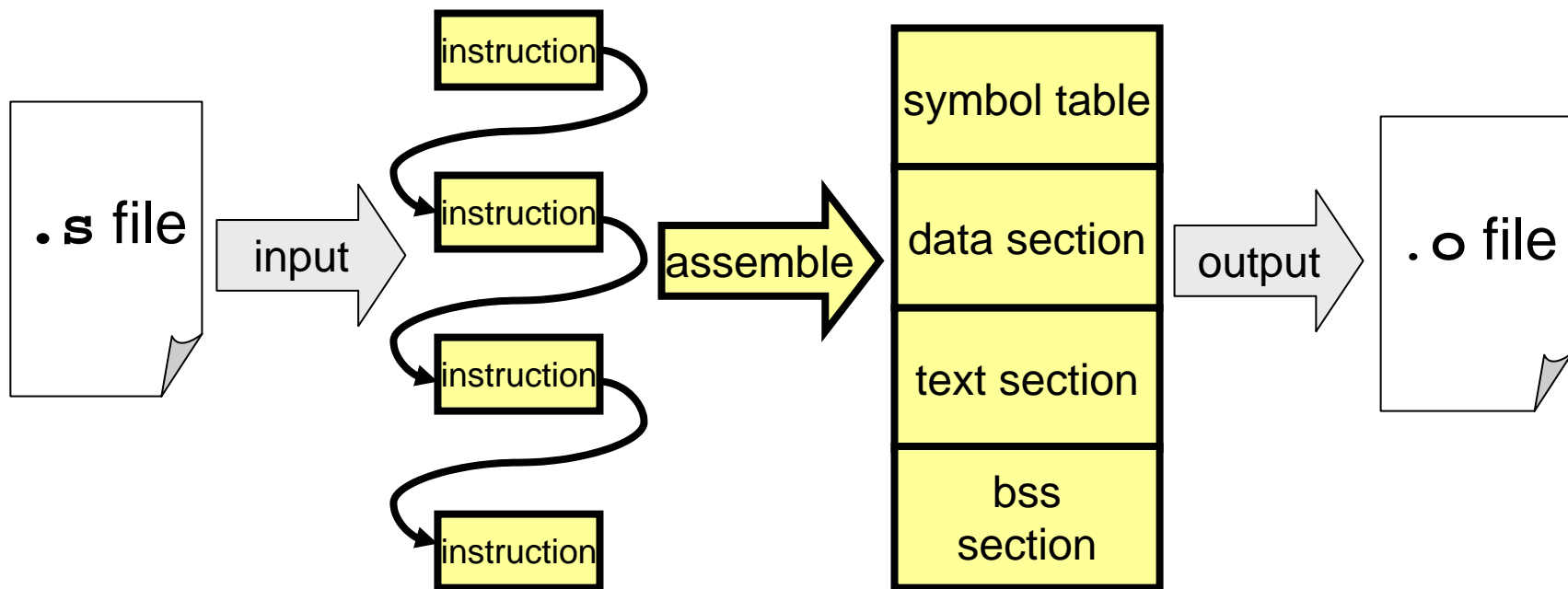
Assembler Directives

- Delineate segments
 - `.section`
- Allocate/initialize data and bss segments
 - `.word .half .byte`
 - `.ascii .asciz`
 - `.align .skip`
- Make symbols in text externally visible
 - `.global`



Assemble into Sections

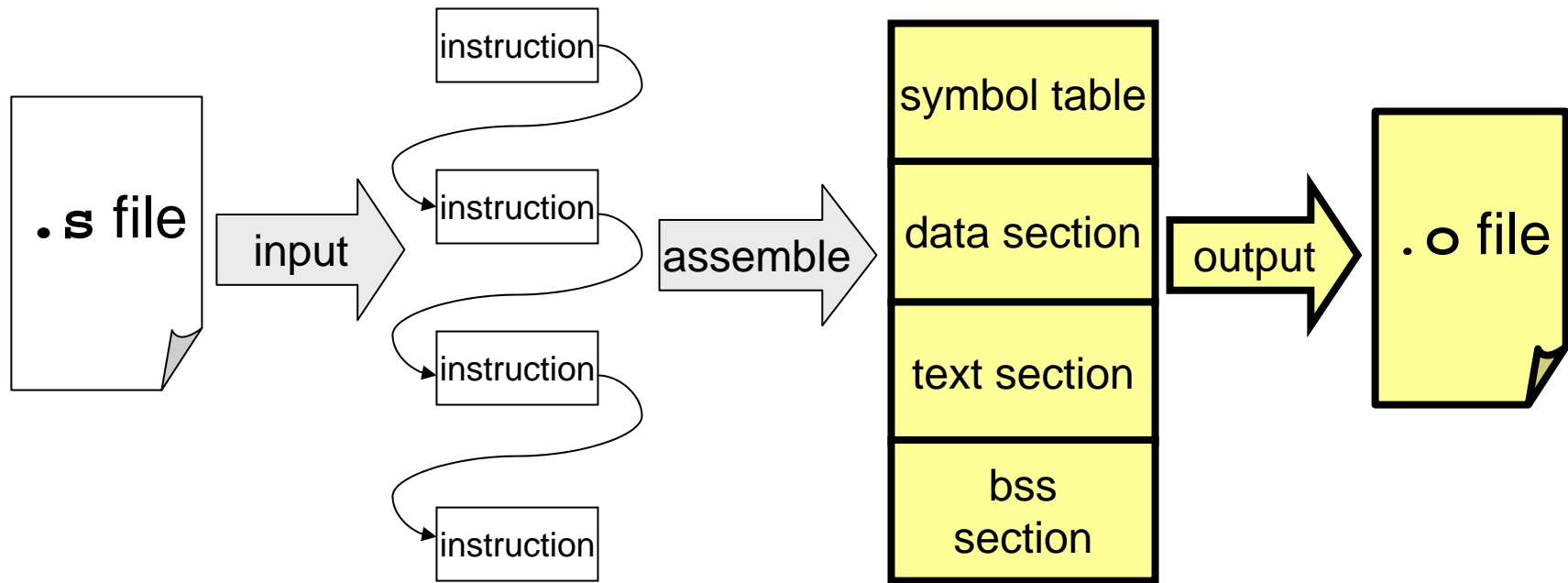
- Process instructions and directives to produce object file output structures





Output Functions

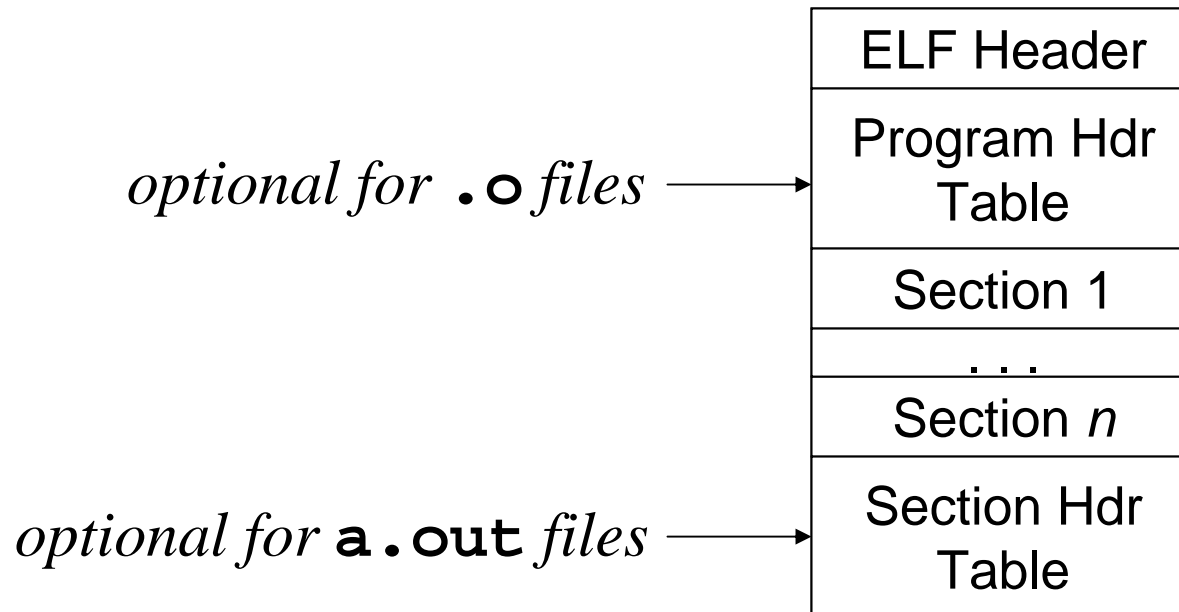
- Machine language output
 - Write symbol table and sections into object file



ELF: Executable and Linking Format



- Format of `.o` and `a.out` files
 - Output by the assembler
 - Input and output of linker





Invoking the Linker

```
• ld bar.o main.o -l libc.a -o a.out
```

Diagram illustrating the components of the linker command:

- `bar.o main.o`: compiled program modules
- `-l libc.a`: library (contains more .o files)
- `-o a.out`: output (also in ".o" format, but no undefined symbols)

- Invoked automatically by gcc,
- but you can call it directly if you like.

Multiple Object Files

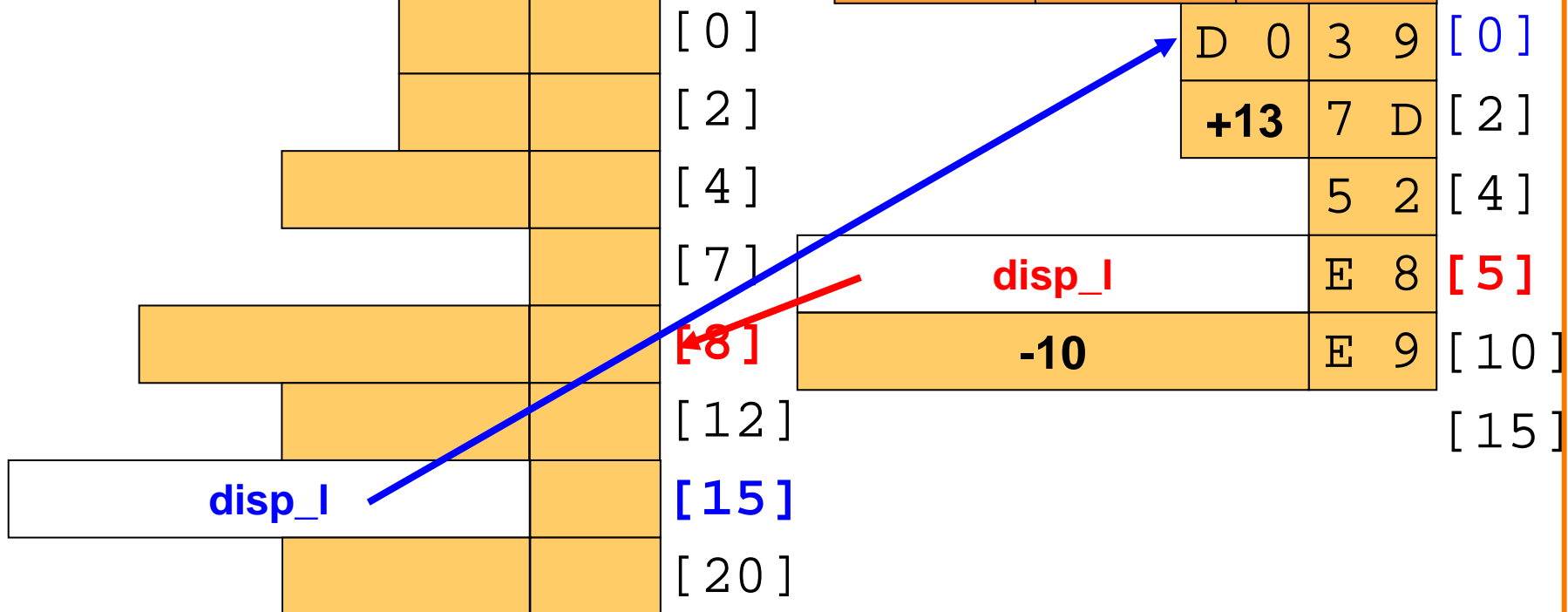


main.o

bar.o

start	main	0
def	foo	8
disp_l	loop	15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 1: Pick An Order

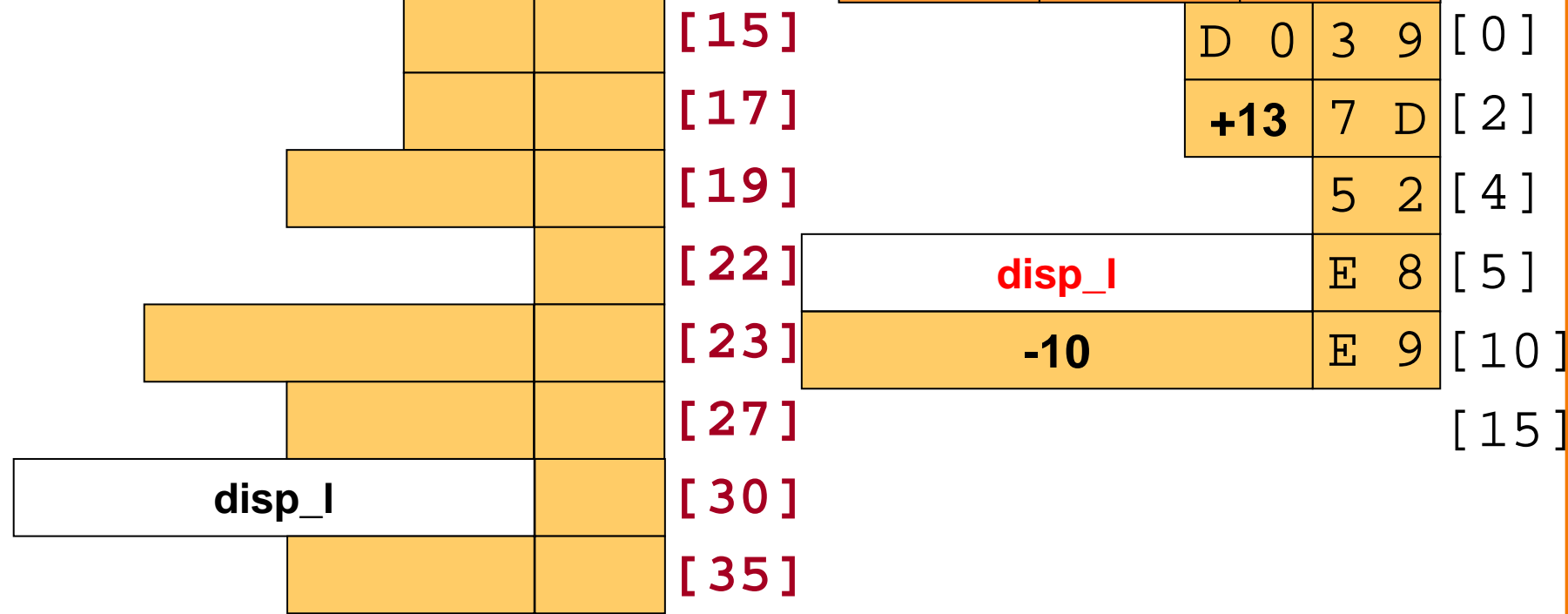


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 1: Pick An Order

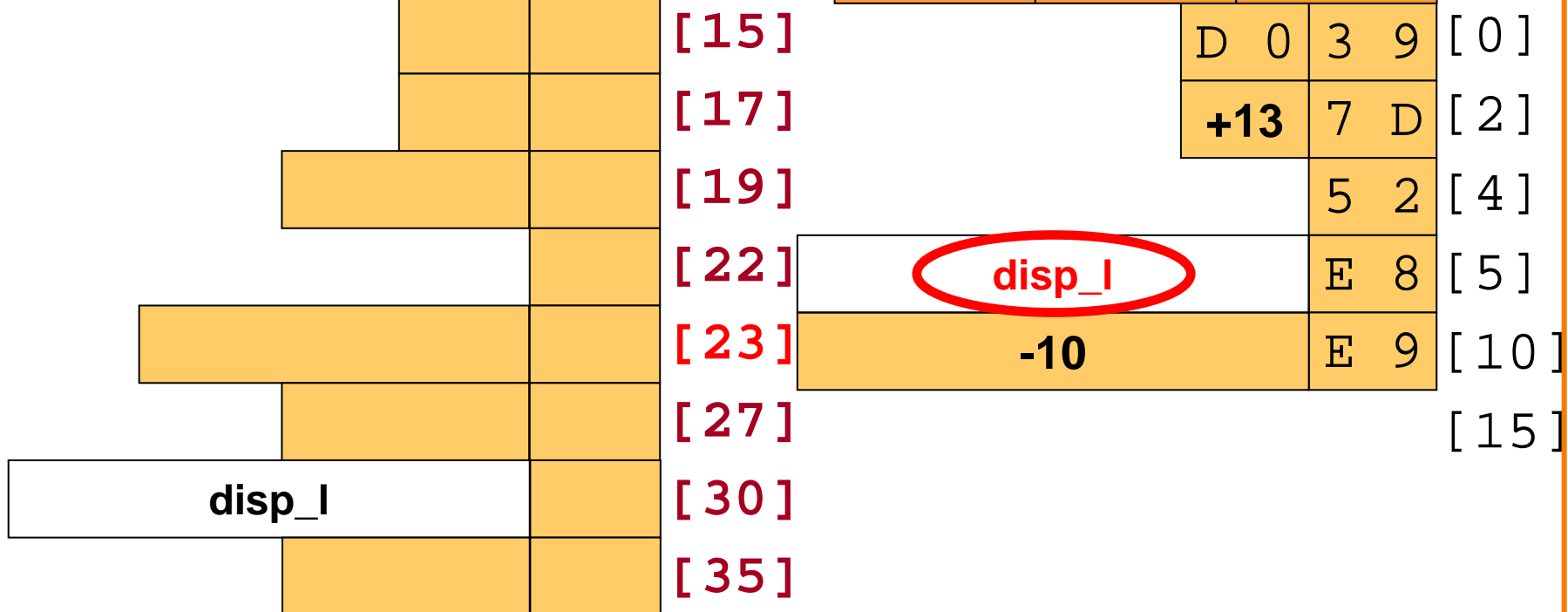


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 2: Patch

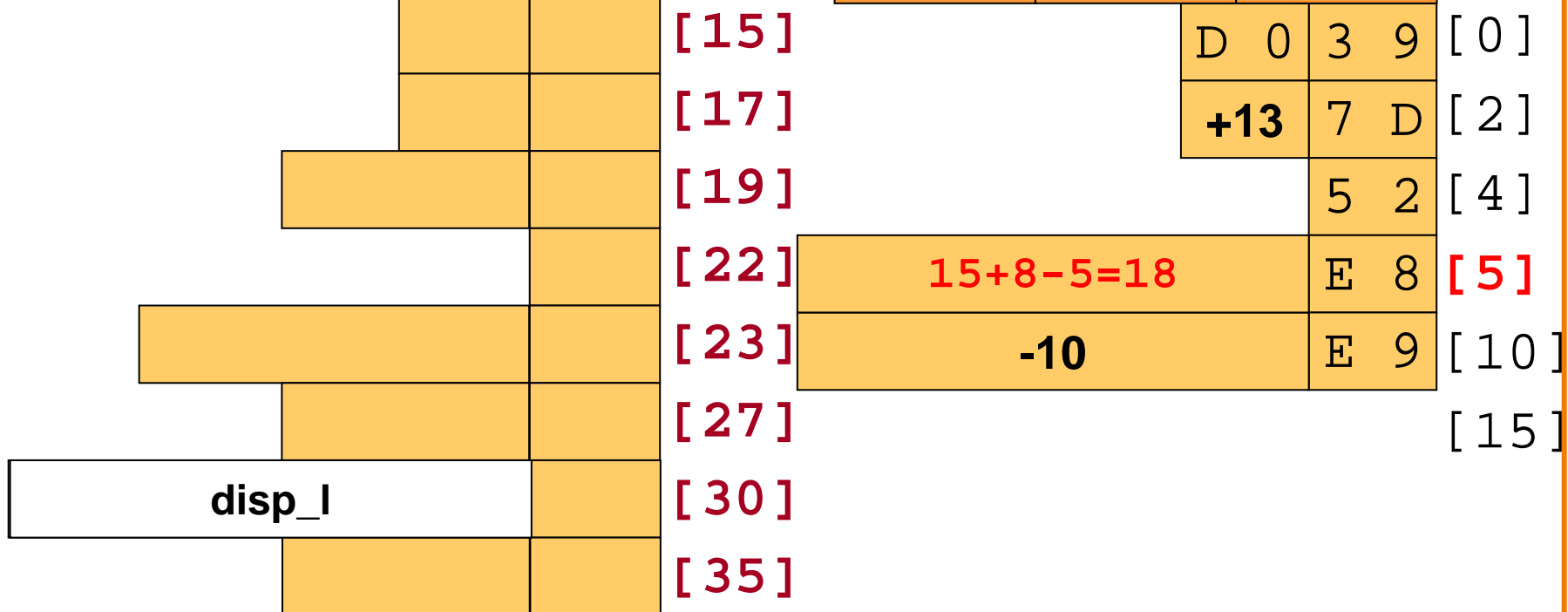


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 2: Patch

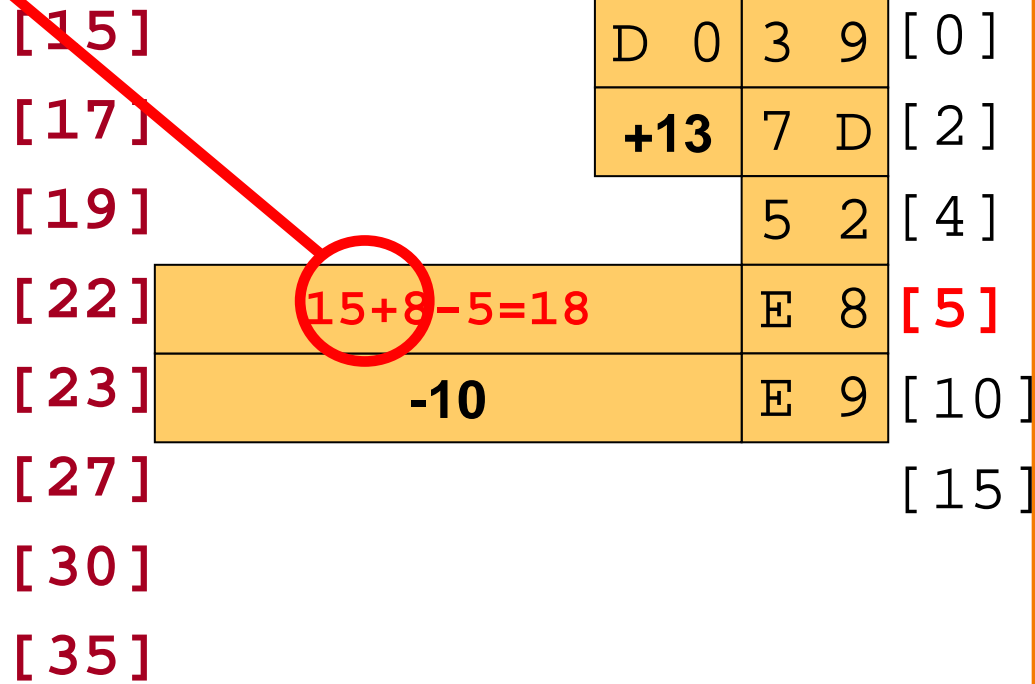


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 2: Patch

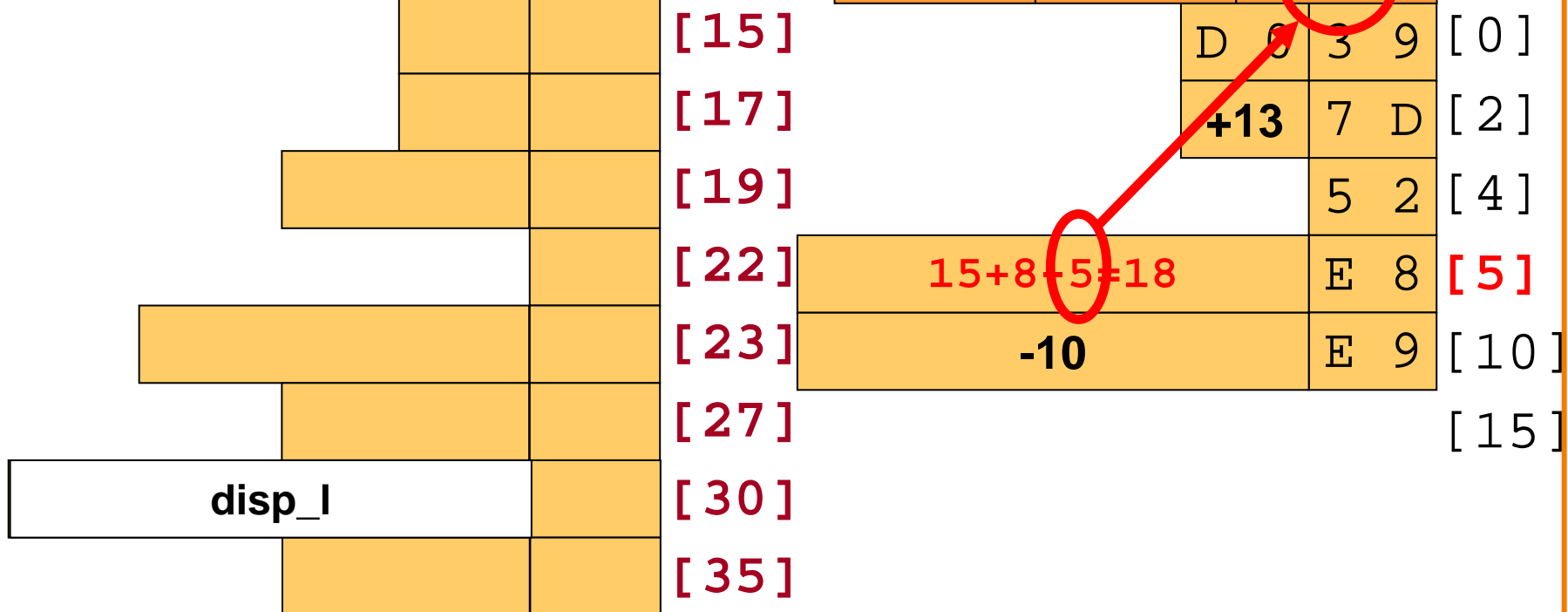


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 2: Patch

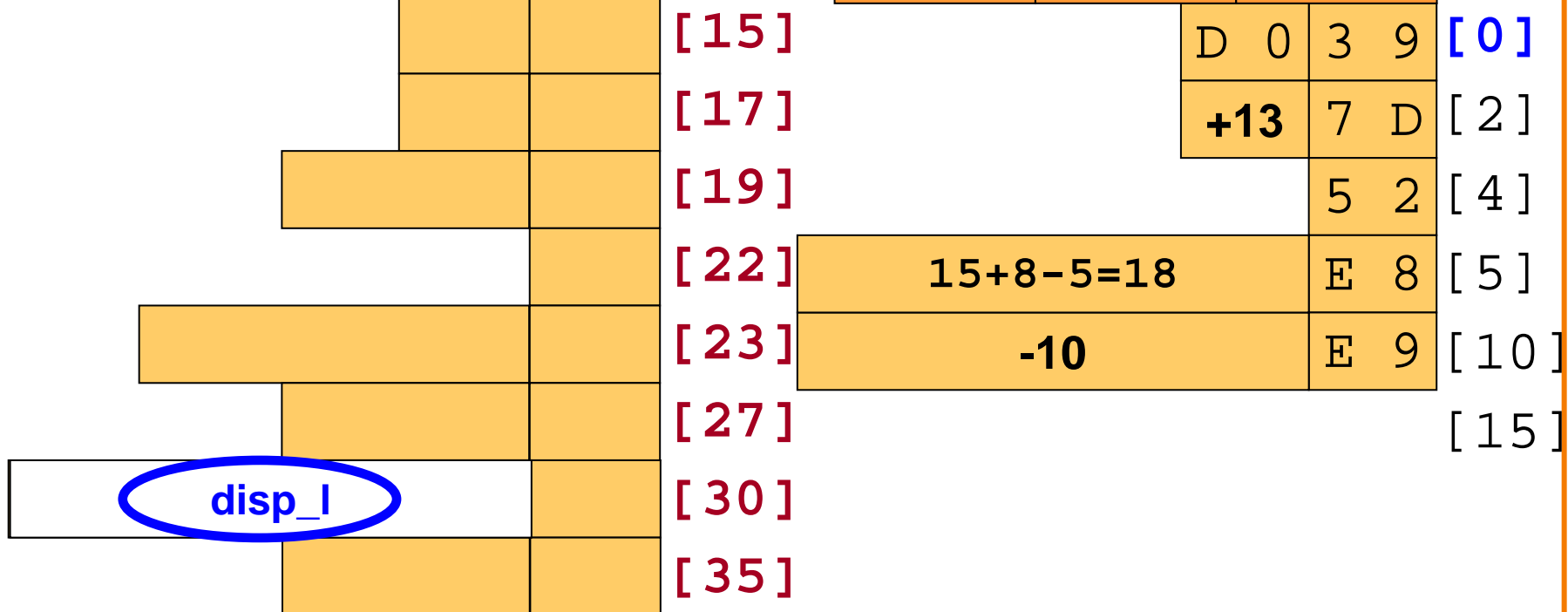


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 2: Patch

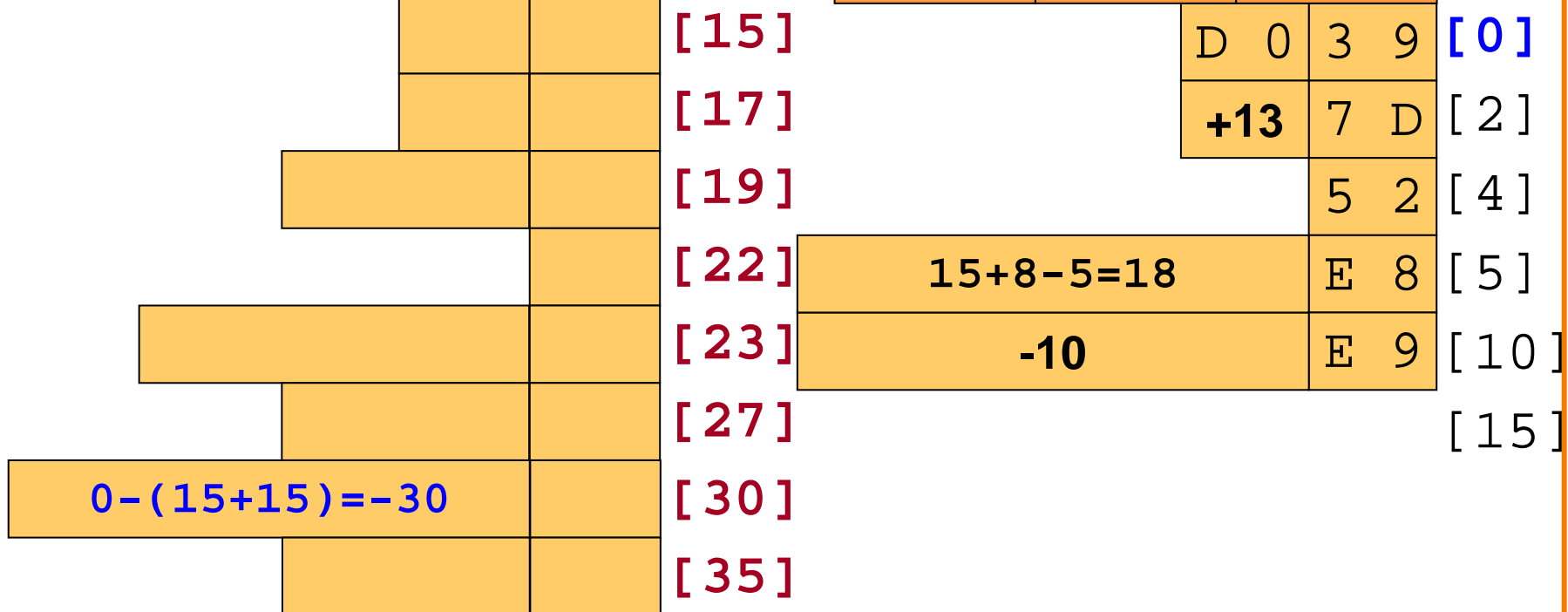


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 2: Patch

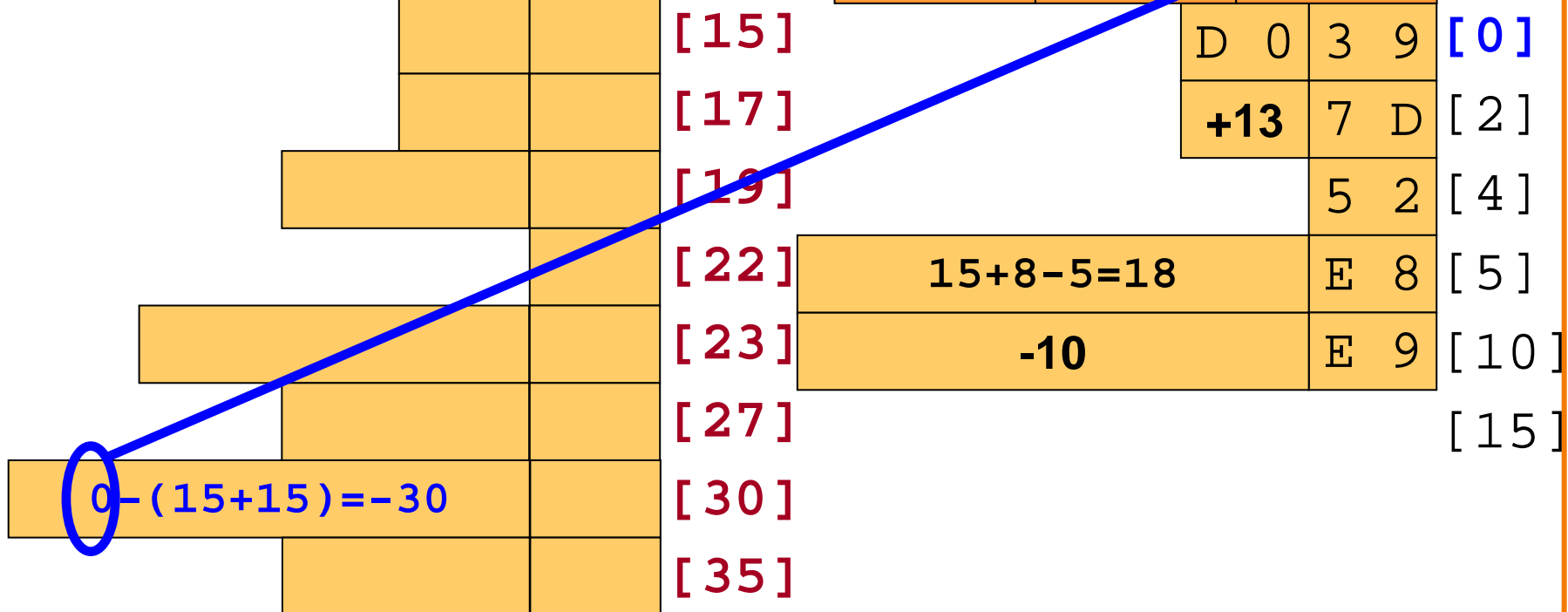


main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5





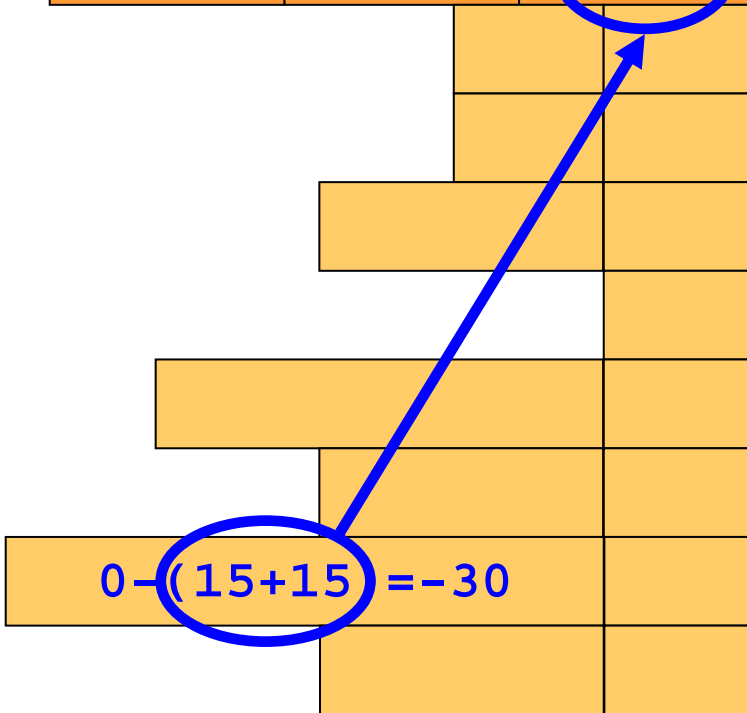
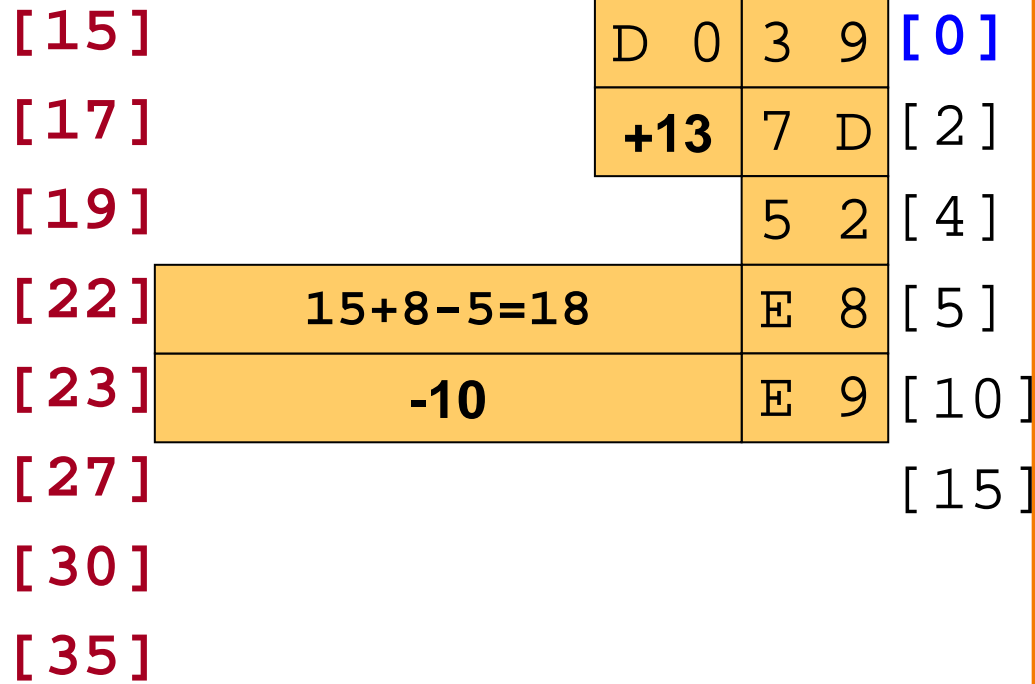
Step 2: Patch

main.o

bar.o

start	main	15+0
def	foo	15+8
disp_l	loop	15+15

def	loop	0
disp_l	foo	5



Step 3: Concatenate



a.out

start	main	15+0	
		D 0	3 9 [0]
		+13	7 D [2]
			5 2 [4]
	+18		E 8 [5]
	-10		E 9 [10]
			[15]
			[17]
			[19]
			[22]
			[23]
			[27]
	-30		[30]
			[35]

Summary



- **Assembler**
 - Read assembly language
 - Two-pass execution (resolve symbols)
 - Produce object file
- **Linker**
 - Order object codes
 - Patch and resolve displacements
 - Produce executable