

COS 217: Introduction to Programming Systems

Assembly Language

Part 2



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



Goals of this Lecture

Help you learn:

- Intermediate aspects of AARCH64 assembly language:
- Control flow with signed integers
- Control flow with unsigned integers
- Arrays
- Structures



What goes where?



Q: Which section(s) would (globals) `power`, `base`, `exp`, `i` go into?

```
int power = 1;
int base;
int exp;
int i;
```

A. All on stack

B. `power` in `.data` and rest in `.rodata`

C. All in `.data`

D. `power` in `.bss` and rest in `.data`

3 E. `power` in `.data` and rest in `.bss`

E

none are string literals: not `RODATA`

all are file scope, process
duration: not `STACK`

`power` is initialized: `DATA`

the rest are not: `BSS`

Agenda



Flattened C code

Control flow with signed integers

Control flow with unsigned integers

Arrays

Structures



Flattened C Code

Problem

- Translating from C to assembly language is difficult when the C code doesn't proceed in consecutive lines

Solution

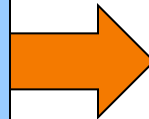
- **Flatten** the C code to eliminate all nesting

Flatly Iffy



C

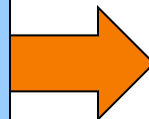
```
if (expr)
{ statement1;
  ...
  statementN;
}
```



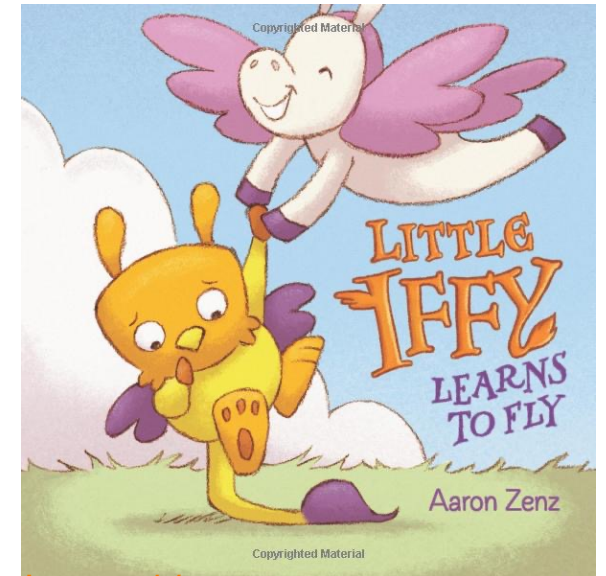
Flattened C

```
if (! expr) goto endif1;
  statement1;
  ...
  statementN;
endif1:
```

```
if (expr)
{ statementT1;
  ...
  statementTN;
}
else
{ statementF1;
  ...
  statementFN;
}
```



```
if (! expr) goto else1;
  statementT1;
  ...
  statementTN;
goto endif1;
else1:
  statementF1;
  ...
  statementFN;
endif1:
```



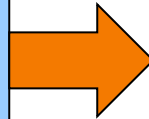
<https://www.aaronzenz.com>

Flatly Loopy



C

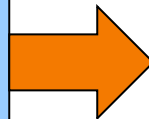
```
while (expr)
{ statement1;
  ...
  statementN;
}
```



Flattened C

```
loop1:
  if (! expr) goto endloop1;
  statement1;
  ...
  statementN;
  goto loop1;
endloop1:
```

```
for (expr1; expr2; expr3)
{ statement1;
  ...
  statementN;
}
```



```
expr1;
loop1:
  if (! expr2) goto endloop1;
  statement1;
  ...
  statementN;
  expr3;
  goto loop1;
endloop1:
```



Agenda



Flattened C code

Control flow with signed integers

Control flow with unsigned integers

Arrays

Structures



if Example

C

```
int i;  
...  
if (i < 0)  
    i = -i;
```

Flattened C

```
int i;  
...  
    if (i >= 0) goto endif1;  
    i = -i;  
endif1:
```



if Example

Flattened C

```
int i;  
...  
    if (i >= 0) goto endif1;  
    i = -i;  
endif1:
```

Assembly

```
.section ".bss"  
i: .skip 4  
...  
.section ".text"  
...  
adr x0, i  
ldr w1, [x0]  
cmp w1, 0  
bge endif1  
neg w1, w1  
endif1:
```

Assembler shorthand for
subs w1, w1, 0

Notes:

cmp instruction: compares operands, sets condition flags

bge instruction (conditional branch if greater than or equal):

Examines condition flags in PSTATE register



if...else Example

C

```
int i;  
int j;  
int smaller;  
...  
if (i < j)  
    smaller = i;  
else  
    smaller = j;
```

Flattened C

```
int i;  
int j;  
int smaller;  
...  
    if (i >= j) goto else1;  
    smaller = i;  
    goto endif1;  
else1:  
    smaller = j;  
endif1:
```



if...else Example

Flattened C

```
int i;  
int j;  
int smaller;  
...  
    if (i >= j) goto else1;  
    smaller = i;  
    goto endif1;  
else1:  
    smaller = j;  
endif1:
```

Assembly

```
...  
    adr x0, i  
    ldr w1, [x0]  
    adr x0, j  
    ldr w2, [x0]  
    cmp w1, w2  
    bge else1  
    adr x0, smaller  
    str w1, [x0]  
    b endif1  
else1:  
    adr x0, smaller  
    str w2, [x0]  
endif1:
```

Note:

b instruction (unconditional branch)

while Example



C

```
int n;  
int fact;  
...  
fact = 1;  
while (n > 1)  
{ fact *= n;  
  n--;  
}
```

Flattened C

```
int n;  
int fact;  
...  
    fact = 1;  
loop1:  
    if (n <= 1) goto endloop1;  
    fact *= n;  
    n--;  
    goto loop1;  
endloop1:
```

while Example



Flattened C

```
int n;  
int fact;  
...  
    fact = 1;  
loop1:  
    if (n <= 1) goto endloop1;  
    fact *= n;  
    n--;  
    goto loop1;  
endloop1:
```

Assembly

```
...  
    adr x0, n  
    ldr w1, [x0]  
    mov w2, 1  
loop1:  
    cmp w1, 1  
    ble endloop1  
    mul w2, w2, w1  
    sub w1, w1, 1  
    b loop1  
endloop1:  
// str w2 into fact
```

We could store here,
but not needed for this
code

Note:

ble instruction (conditional branch if less than or equal)



for Example

C

```
int power = 1;
int base;
int exp;
int i;
...
for (i = 0; i < exp; i++)
    power *= base;
```

Flattened C

```
int power = 1;
int base;
int exp;
int i;
...
    i = 0;
loop1:
    if (i >= exp) goto endloop1;
    power *= base;
    i++;
    goto loop1;
endloop1:
```



for Example

Flattened C

```
int power = 1;
int base;
int exp;
int i;
...
    i = 0;
loop1:
    if (i >= exp) goto endloop1;
    power *= base;
    i++;
    goto loop1;
endloop1:
```

Assembly

```
.section ".data"
power: .word 1
...
.section ".bss"
base:  .skip 4
exp:   .skip 4
i:     .skip 4
...
```




for Example

Flattened C

```
int power = 1;
int base;
int exp;
int i;
...
    i = 0;
loop1:
    if (i >= exp) goto endloop1;
    power *= base;
    i++;
    goto loop1;
endloop1:
```

Assembly

```
adr x0, power
ldr w1, [x0]
adr x0, base
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, exp
ldr w3, [x0]
mov w4, 0
loop1:
    cmp w4, w3
    bge endloop1
    mul w1, w1, w2
    add w4, w4, 1
    b loop1
endloop1:
// str w1 into power
```

Missing anything?



Control Flow with Signed Integers

Unconditional branch

```
b label      Branch to label
```

Compare

```
cmp Xm, Xn   Compare Xm to Xn  
cmp Wm, Wn   Compare Wm to Wn
```

- Set condition flags in PSTATE register

Conditional branches after comparing signed integers

```
beq label    Branch to label if equal  
bne label    Branch to label if not equal  
blt label    Branch to label if less than  
ble label    Branch to label if less or equal  
bgt label    Branch to label if greater than  
bge label    Branch to label if greater or equal
```

- Examine condition flags in PSTATE register

Agenda



Flattened C

Control flow with signed integers

Control flow with unsigned integers

Arrays

Structures



Control Flow with Unsigned Integers

Unconditional branch

| | | |
|---------|---------|-----------------|
| b label | b label | Branch to label |
|---------|---------|-----------------|

Compare

| | | |
|------------|------------|------------------|
| cmp Xm, Xn | cmp Xm, Xn | Compare Xm to Xn |
| cmp Wm, Wn | cmp Wm, Wn | Compare Wm to Wn |

- Set condition flags in PSTATE register

Conditional branches after comparing **unsigned** integers

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| beq label | beq label | Branch to label if equal |
| bne label | bne label | Branch to label if not equal |
| blt label | blo label | Branch to label if lower |
| ble label | bls label | Branch to label if lower or same |
| bgt label | bhi label | Branch to label if higher |
| bge label | bhs label | Branch to label if higher or same |

- Examine condition flags in PSTATE register



while Example

Flattened C

```
unsigned int n;  
unsigned int fact;  
...  
    fact = 1;  
loop1:  
    if (n <= 1)  
        goto endloop1;  
    fact *= n;  
    n--;  
    goto loop1;  
endloop1:
```

Assembly: Signed → Unsigned

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| ... | ... |
| adr x0, n | adr x0, n |
| ldr w1, [x0] | ldr w1, [x0] |
| mov w2, 1 | mov w2, 1 |
| loop1: | loop1: |
| cmp w1, 1 | cmp w1, 1 |
| ble endloop1 | bls endloop1 |
| mul w2, w2, w1 | mul w2, w2, w1 |
| sub w1, w1, 1 | sub w1, w1, 1 |
| b loop1 | b loop1 |
| endloop1: | endloop1: |
| # str w2 into fact | # str w2 into fact |

Note:

bls instruction (instead of **ble**)



Alternative Control Flow: CBZ, CBNZ

Special-case, all-in-one compare-and-branch instructions

- DO NOT examine condition flags in PSTATE register

```
cbz Xn, label Branch to label if Xn is zero  
cbz Wn, label Branch to label if Wn is zero  
cbnz Xn, label Branch to label if Xn is nonzero  
cbnz Wn, label Branch to label if Wn is nonzero
```

Agenda



Flattened C

Control flow with signed integers

Control flow with unsigned integers

Arrays

Structures



Arrays: Brute Force (Setup)

C

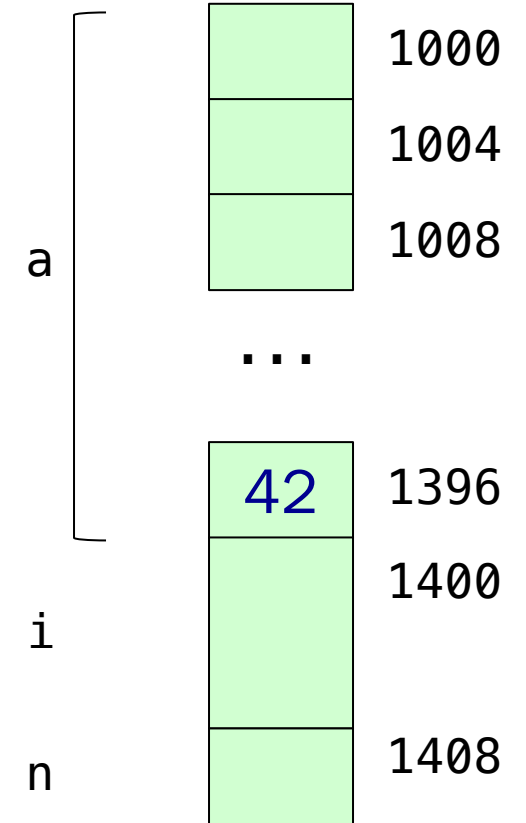
```
int a[100];
size_t i;
int n;
...
i = 99;
...
n = a[i]
...
```

To do array lookup, need to compute address of $a[i] \equiv *(a+i)$
 Let's take it one step at a time...

Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
a: .skip 400
i: .skip 8
n: .skip 4
...
.section ".text"
...
mov x1, 99
...
adr x0, a
lsl x1, x1, 2
add x0, x0, x1
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, n
str w2, [x0]
...
```

Memory



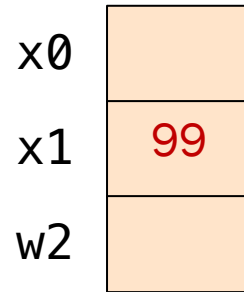


Arrays: Brute Force (Initialize i)

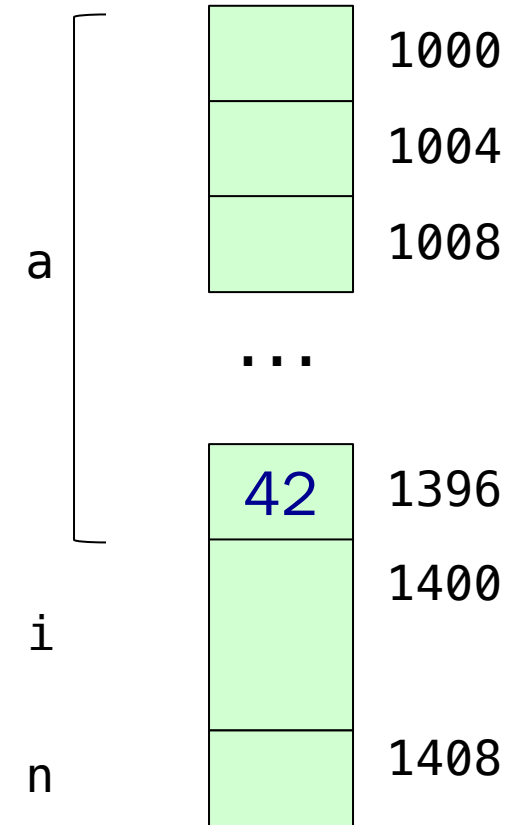
Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
a: .skip 400
i: .skip 8
n: .skip 4
...
.section ".text"
...
mov x1, 99
...
adr x0, a
lsl x1, x1, 2
add x0, x0, x1
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, n
str w2, [x0]
...
```

Registers



Memory



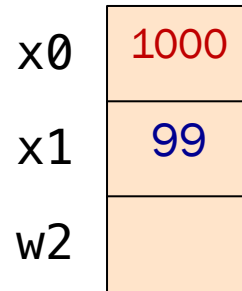


Arrays: Brute Force (Get a's base address)

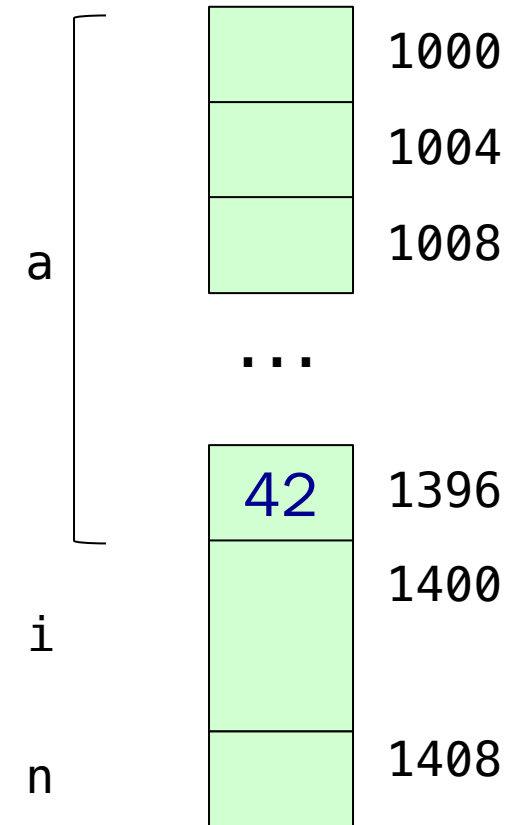
Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
a: .skip 400
i: .skip 8
n: .skip 4
...
.section ".text"
...
mov x1, 99
...
adr x0, a
lsl x1, x1, 2
add x0, x0, x1
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, n
str w2, [x0]
...
```

Registers



Memory





Arrays: Brute Force (Calculate byte-offset of i)

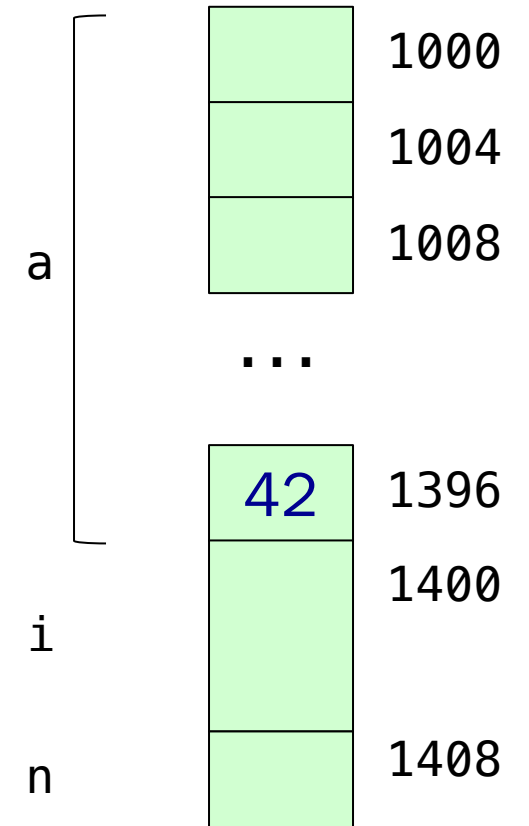
Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
a: .skip 400
i: .skip 8
n: .skip 4
...
.section ".text"
...
mov x1, 99
...
adr x0, a
lsl x1, x1, 2
add x0, x0, x1
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, n
str w2, [x0]
...
```

Registers

| | |
|----|------|
| x0 | 1000 |
| x1 | 396 |
| w2 | |

Memory





Arrays: Brute Force (Calculate address of a[i])

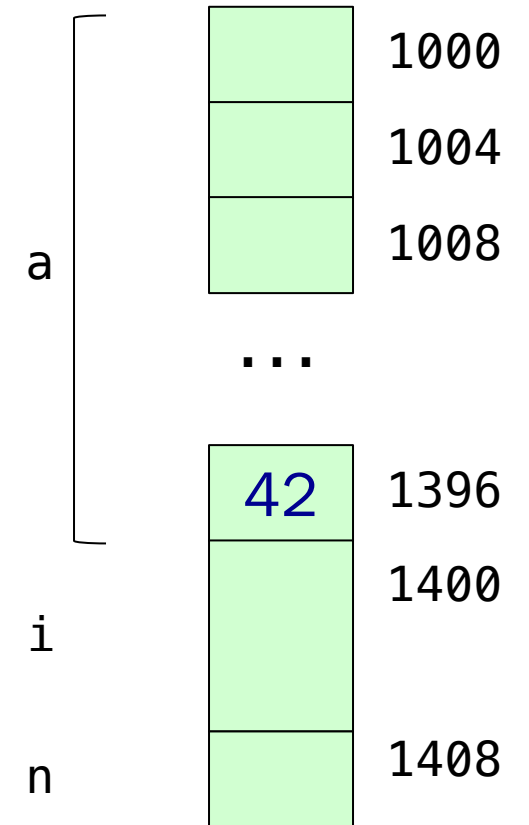
Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
a: .skip 400
i: .skip 8
n: .skip 4
...
.section ".text"
...
mov x1, 99
...
adr x0, a
lsl x1, x1, 2
add x0, x0, x1
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, n
str w2, [x0]
...
```

Registers

| | |
|----|------|
| x0 | 1396 |
| x1 | 396 |
| w2 | |

Memory





Arrays: Brute Force (Read value at a [i] into w2)

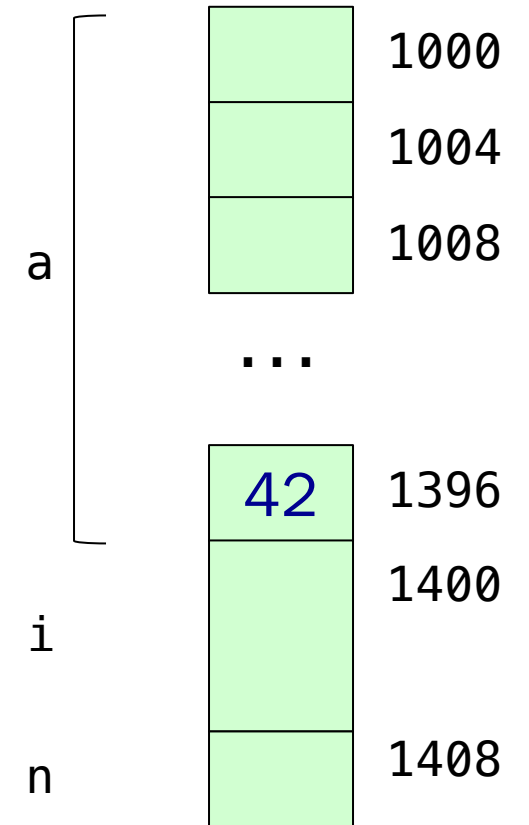
Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
a: .skip 400
i: .skip 8
n: .skip 4
...
.section ".text"
...
mov x1, 99
...
adr x0, a
lsl x1, x1, 2
add x0, x0, x1
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, n
str w2, [x0]
...
```

Registers

| | |
|----|------|
| x0 | 1396 |
| x1 | 396 |
| w2 | 42 |

Memory





Arrays: Brute Force (Get n's address)

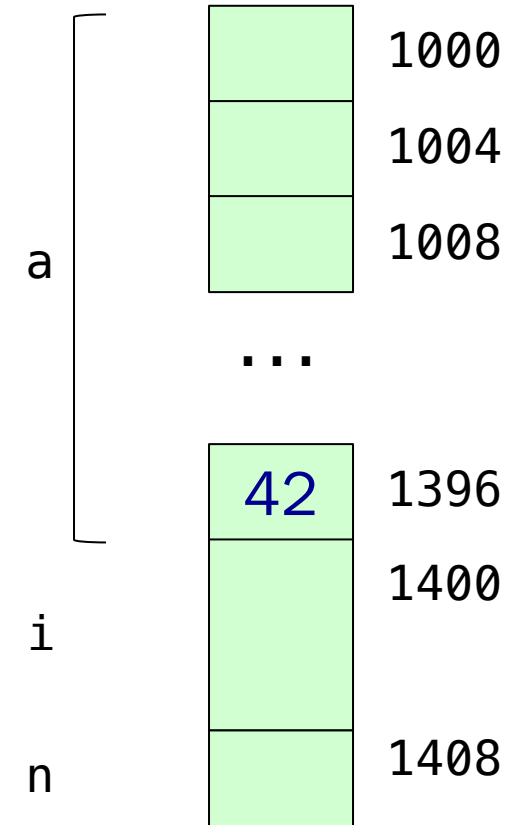
Assembly

```
.section ".bss"  
a: .skip 400  
i: .skip 8  
n: .skip 4  
...  
.section ".text"  
...  
mov x1, 99  
...  
adr x0, a  
lsl x1, x1, 2  
add x0, x0, x1  
ldr w2, [x0]  
adr x0, n  
str w2, [x0]  
...
```

Registers

| | |
|----|------|
| x0 | 1408 |
| x1 | 396 |
| w2 | 42 |

Memory





Arrays: Brute Force (Store value into n)

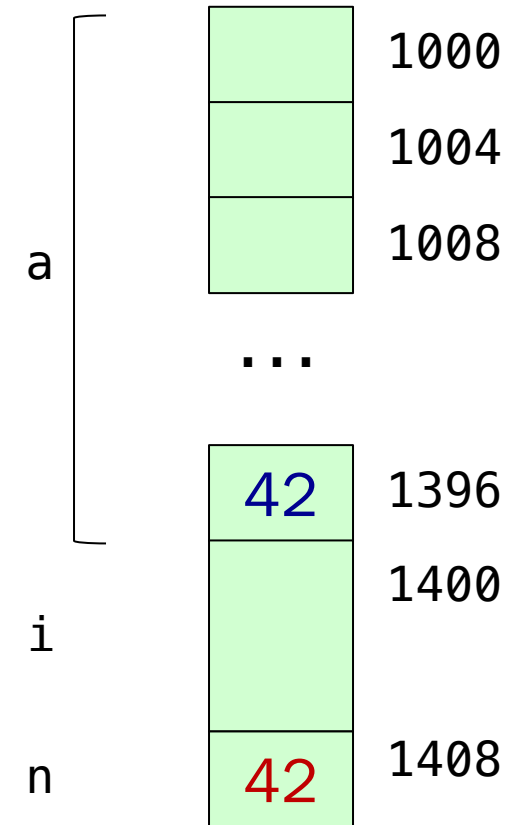
Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
a: .skip 400
i: .skip 8
n: .skip 4
...
.section ".text"
...
mov x1, 99
...
adr x0, a
lsl x1, x1, 2
add x0, x0, x1
ldr w2, [x0]
adr x0, n
str w2, [x0]
...
```

Registers

| | |
|----|------|
| x0 | 1404 |
| x1 | 8 |
| w2 | 42 |

Memory





Arrays: Register Offset Addressing

C

```
int a[100];  
long i;  
int n;  
...  
i = 99;  
...  
n = a[i]  
...
```

Brute-Force

```
.section ".bss"  
a: .skip 400  
i: .skip 8  
n: .skip 4  
...  
.section ".text"  
...  
mov x1, 99  
...  
adr x0, a  
lsl x1, x1, 2  
add x0, x0, x1  
ldr w2, [x0]  
adr x0, n  
str w2, [x0]  
...
```

Register Offset

```
.section ".bss"  
a: .skip 400  
i: .skip 8  
n: .skip 4  
...  
.section ".text"  
...  
mov x1, 99  
...  
adr x0, a  
...  
ldr w2, [x0, x1, lsl 2]  
...  
adr x0, n  
str w2, [x0]  
...
```

Doesn't change
x0 or x1

This uses a different **addressing mode** for the load



Memory Addressing Modes

ldr Wt, [Xn, offset]

Address loaded:

$Xn + \text{offset}$ ($-2^8 \leq \text{offset} < 2^{14}$)

ldr Wt, [Xn]

Xn (shortcut for offset=0)

ldr Wt, [Xn, Xm]

$Xn + Xm$

ldr Wt, [Xn, Xm, LSL n]

$Xn + (Xm \ll n)$ ($n = 3$ for 64-bit elements, 2 for 32-bit elements, ...)

All these addressing modes are also available for 64-bit loads:

ldr Xt, [Xn, offset]

$Xn + \text{offset}$

etc.

All these addressing modes are also available for 32-bit and 64-bit stores.

Agenda



Flattened C

Control flow with signed integers

Control flow with unsigned integers

Arrays

Structures



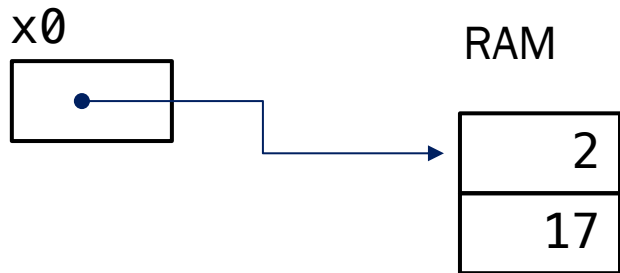
Structures: Brute Force

C

```
struct S
{ int i;
  int j;
};
...
struct S myStruct;
...
myStruct.i = 2;
...
myStruct.j = 17;
```

Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
myStruct: .skip 8
...
.section ".text"
...
adr x0, myStruct
...
mov w1, 2
str w1, [x0]
...
mov w1, 17
str ???
```



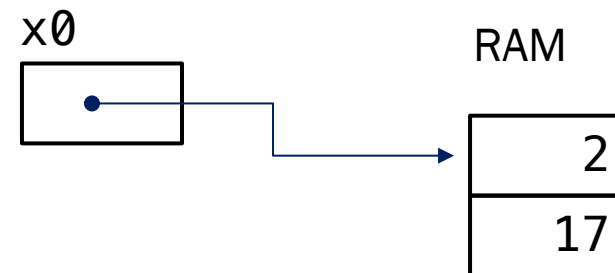


Which mode is à la mode?



Q: Which addressing mode is most appropriate to store `myStruct.j`?

```
.section ".bss"
myStruct: .skip 8
...
.section ".text"
...
adr x0, myStruct
...
mov w1, 2
str w1, [x0]
...
mov w1, 17
str ???
```



- A. `str W1, [X0, offset]`
- B. `str W1, [X0]`
- C. `str W1, [X0, Xm, LSL 2]`
- D. `str W1, [X0, Xm]`

A is the simplest option:
the only one that requires
no additional setup.



Structures: Offset Addressing

C

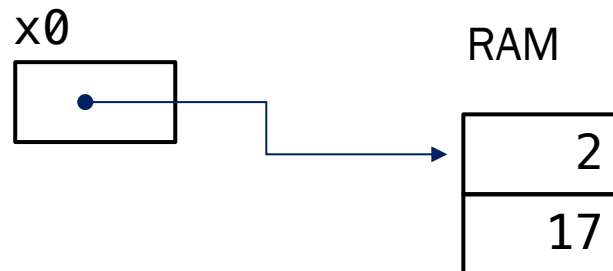
```
struct S  
{ int i;  
  int j;  
};  
...  
struct S myStruct;  
...  
myStruct.i = 2;  
...  
myStruct.j = 17;
```

Brute-Force

```
.section ".bss"  
myStruct: .skip 8  
...  
.section ".text"  
...  
    adr x0, myStruct  
...  
    mov w1, 2  
    str w1, [x0]  
...  
    mov w1, 17  
    add x0, x0, 4  
    str w1, [x0]
```

Offset

```
.section ".bss"  
myStruct: .skip 8  
...  
.section ".text"  
...  
    adr x0, myStruct  
...  
    mov w1, 2  
    str w1, [x0]  
...  
    mov w1, 17  
    str w1, [x0, 4]
```





Structures: Padding

C

```
struct S
{ char c;
  int i;
};
...
struct S myStruct;
...
myStruct.c = 'A';
...
myStruct.i = 217;
```

Three-byte
pad here

Assembly

```
.section ".bss"
myStruct: .skip 8
...
.section ".text"
...
adr x0, myStruct
...
mov w1, 'A'
strb w1, [x0]
...
mov w1, 217
str w1, [x0, 4]
```

Still 8, not 5

Still 4, not 1

Beware:

As we've seen, the Compiler sometimes inserts padding after fields

So now that you're the "Compiler" ...



Structures: Padding

AARCH64 rules:

| Data type | Within a struct, field must begin at address that is evenly divisible by: |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (unsigned) char | 1 |
| (unsigned) short | 2 |
| (unsigned) int | 4 |
| (unsigned) long | 8 |
| float | 4 |
| double | 8 |
| long double | 16 |
| any pointer | 8 |

- Compiler may add padding after last field if struct is within an array, so that first field of next element is aligned



Summary

Intermediate aspects of AARCH64 assembly language...

Flattened C code

Control transfer with signed integers

Control transfer with unsigned integers

Arrays

- Addressing modes

Structures

- Padding

Appendix



Setting and using condition flags in PSTATE register



Setting Condition Flags

Question

- How does `cmp` (or an arithmetic instruction with “s” suffix) set condition flags?

Condition Flags



Condition flags

- **N**: negative flag: set to 1 iff result is **negative**
- **Z**: zero flag: set to 1 iff result is **zero**
- **C**: carry flag: set to 1 iff carry/borrow from msb (**unsigned overflow**)
- **V**: overflow flag: set to 1 iff **signed overflow** occurred



Condition Flags

Example: `adds dest, src1, src2`

- Compute sum (`src1+src2`)
- Assign sum to `dest`
- N: set to 1 iff `sum < 0`
- Z: set to 1 iff `sum == 0`
- C: set to 1 iff unsigned overflow: `sum < src1` or `src2`
- V: set to 1 iff signed overflow:
`(src1 > 0 && src2 > 0 && sum < 0) ||`
`(src1 < 0 && src2 < 0 && sum >= 0)`



Condition Flags

Example: `cmp src1, src2`

- Recall that this is a shorthand for `subs xzr, src1, src2`
- Compute sum (`src1+(-src2)`)
- Throw away result
- N: set to 1 iff `sum < 0`
- Z: set to 1 iff `sum == 0` (i.e., `src1 == src2`)
- C: set to 1 iff unsigned overflow (i.e., `src1 >= src2`)
- V: set to 1 iff signed overflow:
`(src1 > 0 && src2 < 0 && sum < 0) ||`
`(src1 < 0 && src2 > 0 && sum >= 0)`



Unsigned comparison

Why is carry bit set if $\text{src1} \geq \text{src2}$? Informal explanation:

(1) $\text{largenum} - \text{smallnum}$

- $\text{largenum} + (\text{two's complement of smallnum})$ *does* cause carry
- $\Rightarrow C=1$

(2) $\text{smallnum} - \text{largenum}$ (below)

- $\text{smallnum} + (\text{two's complement of largenum})$ *does not* cause carry
- $\Rightarrow C=0$



Using Condition Flags

Question

- How do conditional branch instructions use the condition flags?

Answer

- (See following slides)



Conditional Branches: Unsigned

After comparing unsigned data

| Branch instruction | Use of condition flags |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| beq label | Z |
| bne label | $\sim Z$ |
| blo label | $\sim C$ |
| bhs label | C |
| bls label | $(\sim C) \mid Z$ |
| bhi label | $C \ \& \ (\sim Z)$ |

Note:

- If you can understand why `blo` branches iff $\sim C$
- ... then the others follow



Conditional Branches: Unsigned

Why does blo branch iff $\sim C$? Informal explanation:

(1) largenum - smallnum (not below)

- largenum + (two's complement of smallnum) *does* cause carry
- $\Rightarrow C=1 \Rightarrow$ don't branch

(2) smallnum - largenum (below)

- smallnum + (two's complement of largenum) *does not* cause carry
- $\Rightarrow C=0 \Rightarrow$ branch



Conditional Branches: Signed

After comparing **signed** data

| Branch instruction | Use of condition flags |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| beq label | Z |
| bne label | $\sim Z$ |
| blt label | $V \wedge N$ |
| bge label | $\sim(V \wedge N)$ |
| ble label | $(V \wedge N) \mid Z$ |
| bgt label | $\sim((V \wedge N) \mid Z)$ |

Note:

- If you can understand why `blt` branches iff $V \wedge N$
- ... then the others follow



Conditional Branches: Signed

Why does blt branch iff $V \wedge N$?
Informal explanation:

(1) largeposnum –
smallposnum (not less than)

- Certainly correct result
- $\Rightarrow V=0, N=0, V \wedge N == 0 \Rightarrow$ don't branch

(2) smallposnum –
largeposnum (less than)

- Certainly correct result
- $\Rightarrow V=0, N=1, V \wedge N == 1 \Rightarrow$ branch

(3) largenegnum –
smallnegnum (less than)

- Certainly correct result
- $\Rightarrow V=0, N=1 \Rightarrow (V \wedge N) == 1 \Rightarrow$ branch

(4) smallnegnum –
largenegnum (not less than)

- Certainly correct result
- $\Rightarrow V=0, N=0 \Rightarrow (V \wedge N) == 0 \Rightarrow$ don't branch



Conditional Branches: Signed

(5) posnum – negnum
(not less than)

- Suppose correct result
- $\Rightarrow V=0, N=0 \Rightarrow (V^{\wedge}N)=0 \Rightarrow$ don't branch

(6) posnum – negnum
(not less than)

- Suppose incorrect result
- $\Rightarrow V=1, N=1 \Rightarrow (V^{\wedge}N)=0 \Rightarrow$ don't branch

(7) negnum – posnum
(less than)

- Suppose correct result
- $\Rightarrow V=0, N=1 \Rightarrow (V^{\wedge}N)=1 \Rightarrow$ branch

(8) negnum – posnum
(less than)

- Suppose incorrect result
- $\Rightarrow V=1, N=0 \Rightarrow (V^{\wedge}N)=1 \Rightarrow$ branch