

Compiler construction in4020 – lecture 12

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Overview: memory management

- explicit deallocation
 - malloc() + free()
- implicit deallocation: **garbage collection**
 - reference counting
 - mark & scan
 - two-space copying

Memory management

What has a compiler to do with memory management?

- compiler uses heap-allocated data structures
- modern languages have **automatic** data (de)allocation
 - garbage collection part of runtime support system
 - compiler usually assists in identifying pointers

Data allocation with explicit deallocation

```
#include <stdlib.h>

void *calloc(size_t nmemb, size_t size);
void *malloc(size_t size);
void free(void *ptr);
void *realloc(void *ptr, size_t size);
```

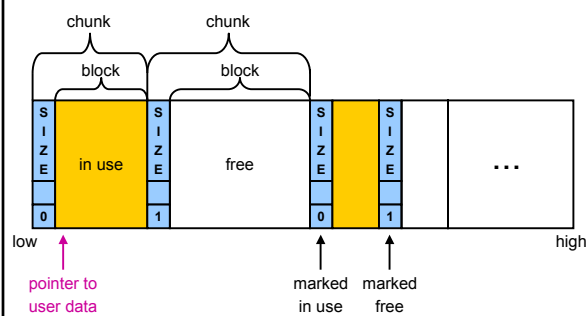
malloc()

- find free block of requested size
- mark it in use
- return a pointer to it.

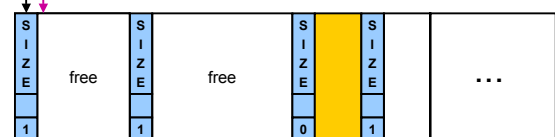
free()

- mark the block as not in use.

Heap layout

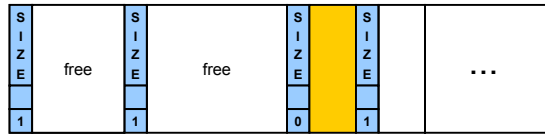


Free()



```
PROCEDURE Free (Block pointer):
    SET Chunk pointer TO Block pointer - Admin size;
    SET Chunk pointer .free TO True;
```

Malloc()



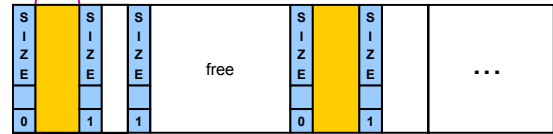
```

FUNCTION Malloc (Block size) RETURNS a generic pointer:
    SET Pointer TO Free block of size (Block size);
    IF pointer != NULL: RETURN pointer;

Coalesce free chunks ();
RETURN Free block of size (Block size);

```

Free block of size (request)



- **walk chunks from low to high**
- **check if chunk is free AND large enough**
- **if so, mark chunk in use AND return block pointer**
- **optimization:** split chunk to free unused part

Free block of size

```

FUNCTION Free block of size (Block size)
    RETURNS a generic pointer:

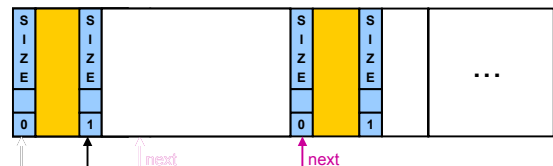
    SET Chunk ptr TO Heap low;
    SET Request TO Block size + Admin size;

    WHILE Chunk ptr < Heap high:
        IF Chunk ptr .free AND Chunk ptr .size >= Request:
            Split chunk (Chunk ptr, Request)
            SET Chunk ptr .free TO False;
            RETURN Chunk ptr + Admin size;

    SET Chunk ptr TO Chunk ptr + Chunk ptr .size;
    RETURN NULL;

```

Coalesce free chunks ()



- walk chunks from low to high
- check if chunk is free
- if so, coalesce all subsequent free chunks

Coalesce free chunks

```

PROCEDURE Coalesce free chunks ():
  SET Chunk ptr TO Heap low;

  WHILE Chunk ptr < Heap high:
    IF Chunk ptr .free:
      SET Next TO Chunk ptr + Chunk ptr .size;
      WHILE Next < Heap high AND Next .free:
        SET Next TO Next + Next .size;
      SET Chunk ptr .size TO Next - Chunk ptr;

  SET Chunk ptr TO Chunk ptr + Chunk ptr .size;

```

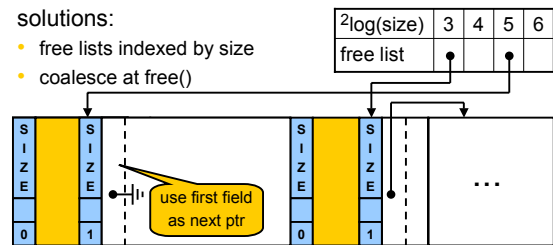
Optimizations

free: poor performance (linear search)

malloc: irregular performance (coalesce phase)

solutions:

- free lists indexed by size
- coalesce at free()



Malloc() with free lists

```

FUNCTION Malloc (Block size) RETURNS a generic pointer:
  SET Chunk size TO Block size + Admin size;
  SET Index TO  $2^{\lceil \log(\text{Chunk size}) \rceil}$ ;

  IF Index < 3:
    SET Index TO 3;

  IF Index <= 10 AND Free list[Index] != NULL:
    SET Pointer TO Free list[Index];
    SET Free list[Index] .next TO Pointer .next;
    RETURN Pointer + Admin size;

  RETURN Free block of size (Block size);
    
```

Exercise (5 min.)

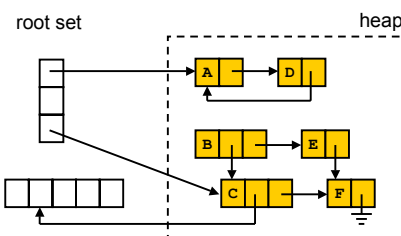
- give the pseudo code for `free()` when using free lists indexed by size.

Answers

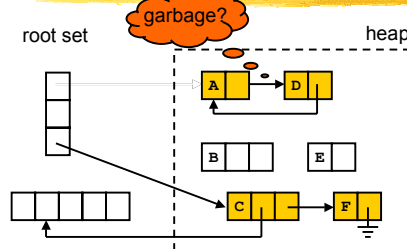
Garbage collection

- memory allocation is explicit (`new`)
- memory deallocation is implicit
- **garbage set**: all chunks that will no longer be used by the program
 - chunks without incoming pointers
 - chunks that are unreachable from non-heap data

Example



Cyclic garbage



- "no-pointers": NO
- "not-reachable": YES

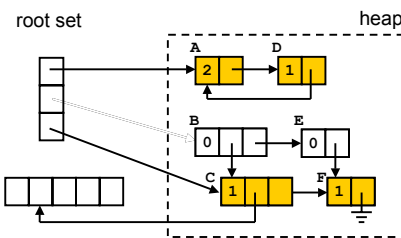
Compiler assistance: identifying pointers

- pointers inside chunks
 - user-defined data structures
 - compiler: generate self-descriptive chunks
- pointers located outside the heap (root set)
 - global data + stack
 - compiler: generate activation record descriptions

Self-descriptive chunks

- bitmap per data type
 - problem: overhead per chunk / interpretation
- compiler-generated routine per data type
 - calls GC for each pointer
 - problem: recursion
- organize data type to start off with n pointers
 - solution: n can be squeezed into chunk admin

Reference counting



- record #pointers to each chunk
- reclaim when reference count drops to zero

Maintaining reference counts

pointer assignment:

```
VAR p, q : pointer;
...
p := q;
```

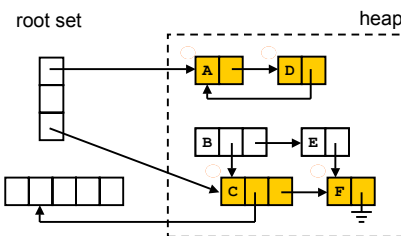
source

```
IF Points into the heap (q) :
    Increment q .ref count;
IF Points into the heap (p) :
    Decrement p .ref count;
    IF p .ref count = 0 :
        Free recursively (p);
SET p TO q;
```

target

```
PROCEDURE Free recursively (Pointer) :
    FOR each field  $f_i$  of record Pointer:
        IF Points into the heap ( $f_i$ ) :
            Decrement  $f_i$  .ref count;
            IF  $f_i$  .ref count = 0 :
                Free recursively ( $f_i$ );
    Free chunk (Pointer);
```

Mark & scan



- mark all reachable chunks
- scan heap for unmarked chunks that can be freed

```
PROCEDURE Mark (Pointer) :
    IF NOT Points into the heap (Pointer) : RETURN;
    SET Pointer .marked TO True;
    FOR each field  $f_i$  of record Pointer:
        Mark ( $f_i$ );
```

```
PROCEDURE Scan () :
    SET Chunk ptr TO Heap low;
    WHILE Chunk ptr < Heap high:
        IF Chunk ptr .marked:
            SET Chunk ptr .marked TO False;
        ELSE
            SET Chunk ptr .free TO True;
        SET Chunk ptr TO Chunk ptr + Chunk ptr .size;
```

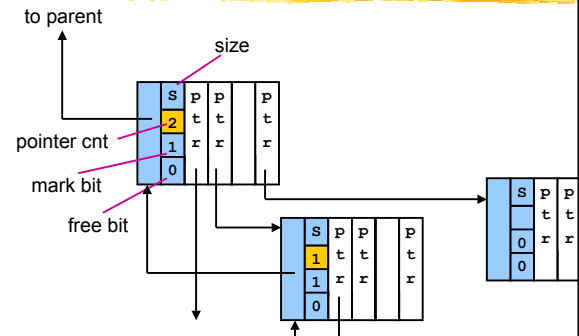
Advanced marking

- problem: mark() is recursive
- solution: embed stack in the chunks

each chunk records:

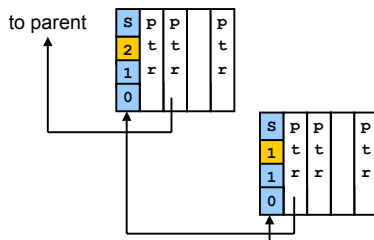
- a **count** denoting which child pointer is next
- a **pointer** to the parent node

Advanced marking



Advanced marking: pointer reversal

- avoid additional parent pointer
- use the n -th child pointer when visiting child n

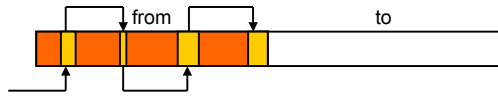


Two-space copying

- most chunks have a short live time
- memory fragmentation must be addressed

copy all reachable chunks
to consecutive locations

- partition heap in two spaces

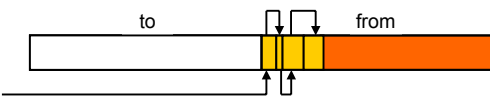


Two-space copying

- most chunks have a short live time
- memory fragmentation must be addressed

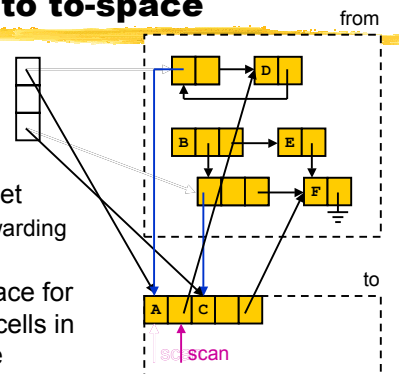
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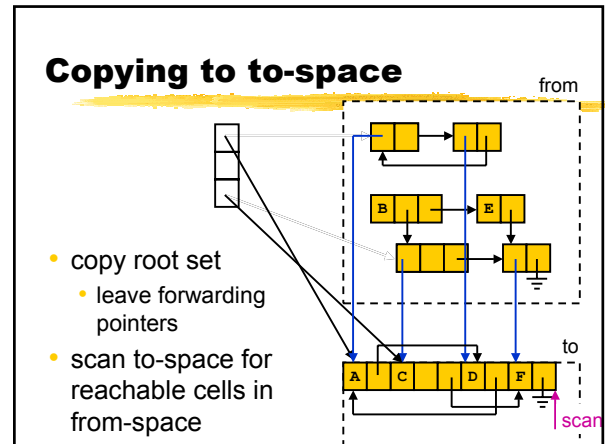
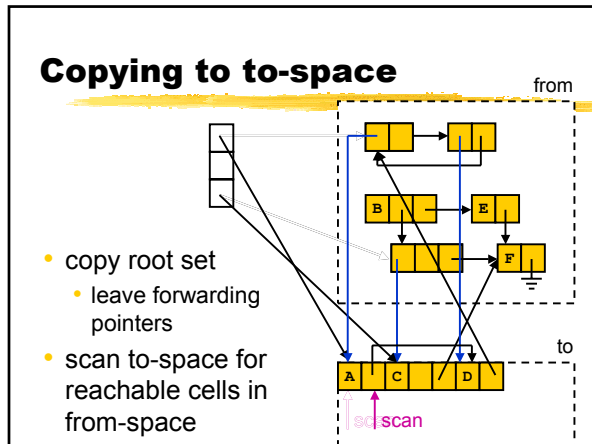
- partition heap in two spaces



Copying to to-space

- copy root set
 - leave forwarding pointers
- scan to-space for reachable cells in from-space





Summary

Memory management

- explicit deallocation
 - malloc() + free()
- implicit deallocation: [garbage collection](#)
 - reference counting
 - mark & scan
 - two-space copying

Homework

- study sections:
 - 5.2.6 Compaction
 - 5.2.7 Generational garbage collection
- assignment 2:
 - make Asterix OO
 - deadline June 4 08:59
- print handout for [last](#) week [blackboard]