Personal SE

Computer Memory Addresses
C Pointers
Computer Memory Organization

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- Bytes can be combined into larger units:
  - Half-words (shorts) 16 bits 65,536 combinations
  - Words (ints) 32 bits \( \approx 4 \times 10^9 \approx 4 \text{ billion} \)
  - Double words (long) 64 bits \( \approx 16 \times 10^{18} \approx 16 \text{ quadrillion} \)
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- Think of it as an array named memory.
- Then memory[a] is the byte at index / location / address a.
- Normally the addresses run from 0 to some maximum.
Either way (horizontal or vertical) is fine.
The key is that memory is logically an array
What's In a Number?

- What does the hexadecimal number 0x4A6F65 mean?
What's In a Number?

- What does the hexadecimal number \texttt{0x4A6F65} mean?
- Possibilities:
  - It could be the decimal number 4,878,181
  - It could be the string "Joe"
    'J' = 0x4A, 'o' = 0x6F, 'e' = 0x65
  - It could be the address of the 4,878,181\textsuperscript{st} byte in memory
  - It could be an instruction to, say, increment (op code = 0x4A) a location (address = 0x6F65) by 1
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- How do we know??????

  - We don't until we use it!
    - If we send it to a printer, it's a string.
    - If we use it to access memory, it's an address.
    - If we fetch it as an instruction, it's an instruction.
Computer Numbers as Shape-Shifters

- The ability of numbers to "morph" their meaning is very powerful.
  - We can manipulate characters like numbers.
  - We can change instructions on the fly.
  - We can perform computation on addresses.
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BUT: What if we use a number other than intended:
- We get run-time errors (using an integer as an address).
- We get hard-to-fix bugs (executing data as instructions).
- We get weird printout (sending addresses to a printer).
Spiderman Is A "C" Programmer

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With great power comes great responsibility.
Pointers in C

- Consider the following two declarations:
  ```c
  int i;
  int *ip;
  ```
Pointers in C

Consider the following two declarations:

```c
int i;
int *ip;
```

"*" says that ip is a pointer, not an integer
Pointers in C

Consider the following two declarations:
```
int i;
int *ip;
```

The "*" is attached to the variable, not the type.
Pointers in C

Consider the following two declarations:

```c
int i;
int *ip;
```

Equivalent to these two declarations:

```c
int i, *ip;
```
Pointers in C

- Consider the following two declarations:
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  ```
- On most systems, both allocate 32 bits for i and ip.
Pointers in C

- Consider the following two declarations:
  ```c
  int i;
  int *ip;
  ```
- On most systems, both allocate 32 bits for `i` and `ip`.
- The difference?
  - `i`'s contents are treated as an *integer* – just a number.
  - `ip`'s contents are treated as an *address* (where an integer can be found).
Pointers in C

- Consider the following two declarations:
  ```c
  int i;
  int *ip;
  ```
- On most systems, both allocate 32 bits for `i` and `ip`.
- The difference?
  - `i`'s contents are treated as an integer.
    - All we can manipulate is the integer value in `i`.
  - `ip`'s contents are treated as an address (where an integer can be found).
    - We can manipulate the address (make it point elsewhere).
    - We can manipulate the integer at the current address.
double x = 3.14159;
double y = 2.71828;
double *dp;

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double x = 3.14159;
double y = 2.71828;
double *dp;
dp = &x;

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dp = &x;

& = "address of"
The address of a variable is a pointer to the variable's type

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A Short Example

double x = 3.14159 ;
double y = 2.71828 ;
double *dp ;
dp = &x ;
x = *dp * 2.0 ;

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double y = 2.71828;
double *dp;

dp = &x;
x = *dp * 2.0;

* = "dereference"
The value the pointer addresses, not the pointer itself
A Short Example – The Effect

double x = 3.14159 ;
double y = 2.71828 ;
double *dp ;
dp = &x ;
x = *dp * 2.0 ; // same as x = x * 2.0

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double y = 2.71828;
double *dp;

dp = &x;

x = *dp * 2.0; // same as x = x * 2.0

dp = &y;

*dp += x;

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Pointers – Reference Parameters
// Swap – the wrong way

void swap( grade_entry x, grade_entry y ) {
    grade_entry temp ;
    temp = x ;    x = y ;    y = temp ;
    return ;
}
// Swap – the wrong way

void swap( grade_entry x, grade_entry y ) {
    grade_entry temp;
    temp = x;    x = y;    y = temp;
    return;
}

// Swap – the right way

void swap( grade_entry *x, grade_entry *y ) {
    grade_entry temp;
    temp = *x;  *x = *y;  *y = temp;
    return;
}
Pointers – Call by Reference
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// Array element exchange the wrong way
swap( grade_list[ i ], grade_list[ j ] );
Pointers – Call by Reference

// Array element exchange the wrong way
swap( grade_list[ i ], grade_list[ j ] );

// Array element exchange the right way
swap( &grade_list[ i ], &grade_list[ j ] );