System-Level I/O

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Today

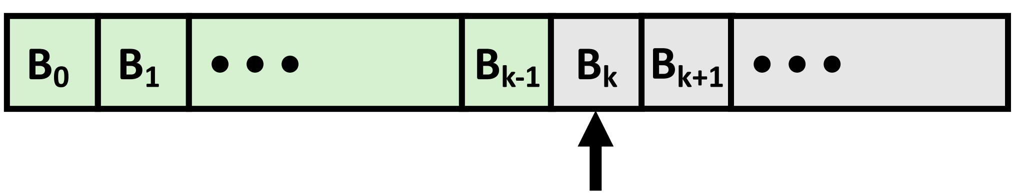
- Unix I/O
- RIO (robust I/O) package
- Metadata, sharing, and redirection
- Standard I/O
- Closing remarks

Unix I/O Overview

- A Linux ***file*** is a sequence of *m* bytes:
  - $B_0, B_1, \ldots, B_k, \ldots, B_{m-1}$
- Cool fact: All I/O devices are represented as files:
  - **`/dev/sda2`** (**`/usr`** disk partition)
  - **`/dev/tty2`** (terminal)
- Even the kernel is represented as a file:
  - **`/boot/vmlinuz-3.13.0-55-generic`** (kernel image)
  - **`/proc`** (kernel data structures)

Unix I/O Overview

- **Elegant mapping of files to devices allows kernel to export simple interface called *Unix I/O:***
  - Opening and closing files
    - **`open()`** and **`close()`**
  - Reading and writing a file
    - **`read()`** and **`write()`**
  - Changing the ***current file position*** (seek)
    - indicates next offset into file to read or write
    - **`lseek()`**



Current file position = k

File Types

- **Each file has a *type* indicating its role in the system**
  - *Regular file:* Contains arbitrary data
  - *Directory:* Index for a related group of files
  - *Socket:* For communicating with a process on another machine

- **Other file types beyond our scope**
  - *Named pipes (FIFOs)*
  - *Symbolic links*
  - *Character and block devices*

Regular Files

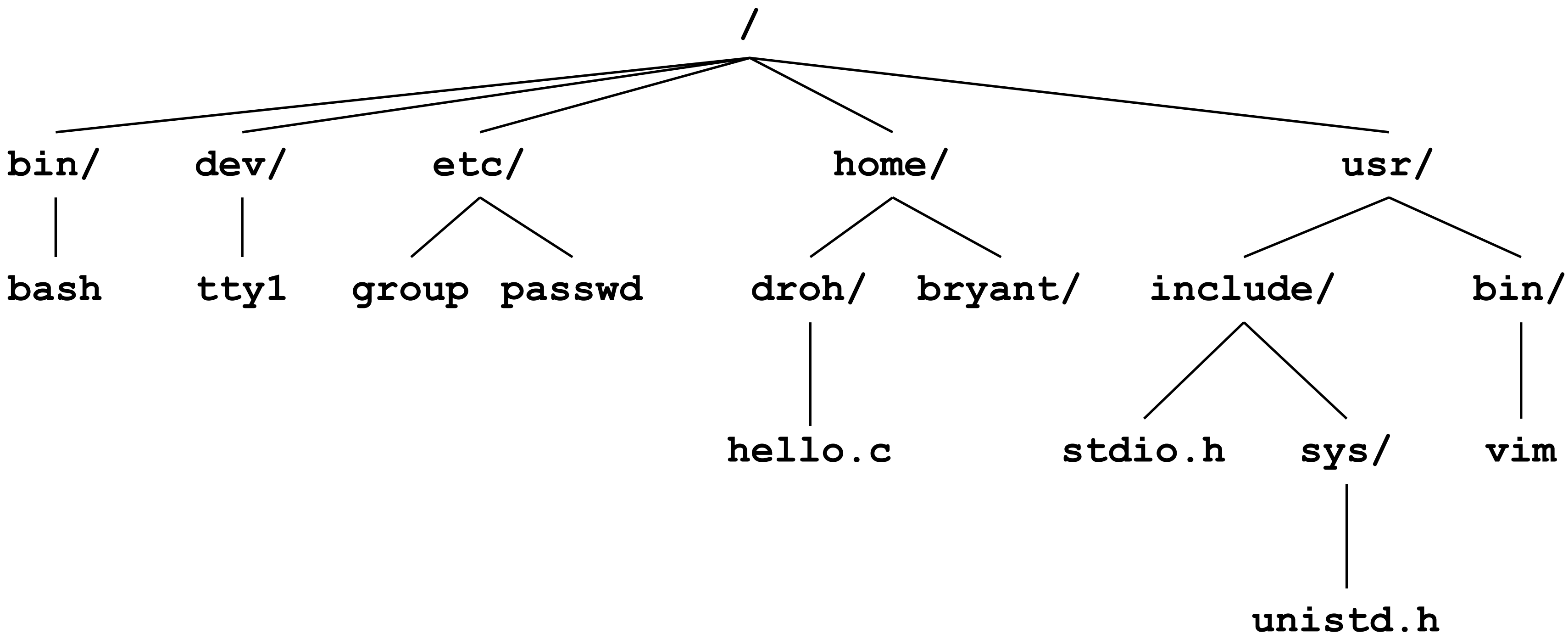
- **A regular file contains arbitrary data**
- **Applications often distinguish between *text files* and *binary files***
  - Text files are regular files with only ASCII or Unicode characters
  - Binary files are everything else
    - e.g., object files, JPEG images
  - Kernel doesn't know the difference!
- **Text file is sequence of *text lines***
  - Text line is sequence of chars terminated by *newline char* (‘`\n`’)
    - Newline is `0xa`, same as ASCII line feed character (LF)
- **End of line (EOL) indicators in other systems**
  - Linux and Mac OS: ‘`\n`’ (`0xa`)
    - line feed (LF)
  - Windows and Internet protocols: ‘`\r\n`’ (`0xd 0xa`)
    - Carriage return (CR) followed by line feed (LF)

Directories

- **Directory consists of an array of *links***
  - Each link maps a *filename* to a file
- **Each directory contains at least two entries**
  - `.` (dot) is a link to itself
  - `..` (dot dot) is a link to *the parent directory* in the *directory hierarchy* (next slide)
- **Commands for manipulating directories**
  - `mkdir`: create empty directory
  - `ls`: view directory contents
  - `rmdir`: delete empty directory

Directory Hierarchy

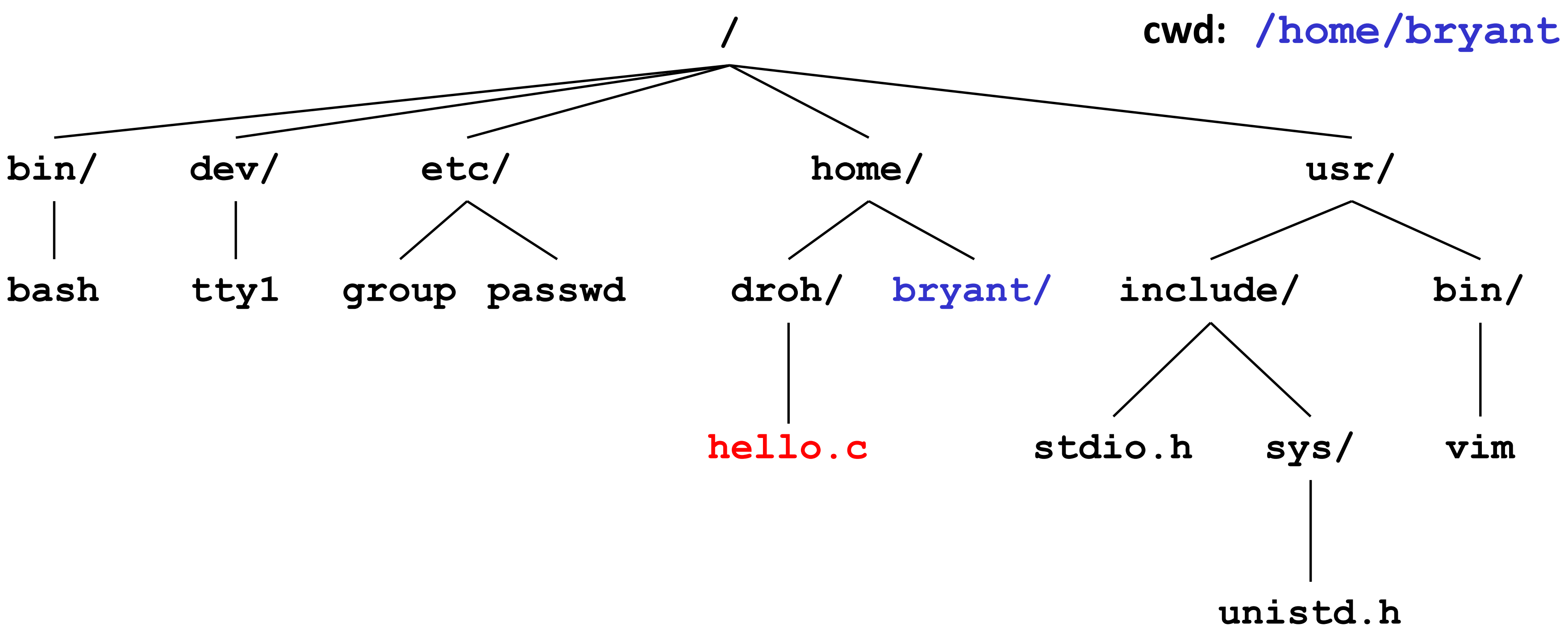
- **All files are organized as a hierarchy anchored by root directory named / (slash)**



- **Kernel maintains *current working directory (cwd)* for each process**
  - Modified using the `cd` command

Pathnames

- **Locations of files in the hierarchy denoted by *pathnames***
  - *Absolute pathname* starts with '/' and denotes path from root
    - `/home/droh/hello.c`
  - *Relative pathname* denotes path from current working directory
    - `../home/droh/hello.c`



Opening Files

- **Opening a file informs the kernel that you are getting ready to access that file**

```
int fd;   /* file descriptor */

if ((fd = open("/etc/hosts", O_RDONLY)) < 0) {
   perror("open");
   exit(1);
}
```

- **Returns a small identifying integer *file descriptor***
  - `fd == -1` indicates that an error occurred
- **Each process created by a Linux shell begins life with three open files associated with a terminal:**
  - 0: standard input (stdin)
  - 1: standard output (stdout)
  - 2: standard error (stderr)

Closing Files

- Closing a file informs the kernel that you are finished accessing that file

```
int fd;      /* file descriptor */
int retval; /* return value */

if ((retval = close(fd)) < 0) {
   perror("close");
   exit(1);
}
```

- Closing an already closed file is a recipe for disaster in threaded programs (more on this later)
- Moral: Always check return codes, even for seemingly benign functions such as `close()`

Reading Files

- **Reading a file copies bytes from the current file position to memory, and then updates file position**

```
char buf[512];
int fd;         /* file descriptor */
int nbytes;     /* number of bytes read */

/* Open file fd ...  */
/* Then read up to 512 bytes from file fd */
if ((nbytes = read(fd, buf, sizeof(buf))) < 0) {
   perror("read");
   exit(1);
}
```

- **Returns number of bytes read from file `fd` into `buf`**
  - Return type **`ssize_t`** is signed integer
  - **`nbytes < 0`** indicates that an error occurred
  - ***Short counts*** (**`nbytes < sizeof(buf)`**) are possible and are not errors!

Writing Files

- **Writing a file copies bytes from memory to the current file position, and then updates current file position**

```
char buf[512];
int fd;         /* file descriptor */
int nbytes;     /* number of bytes read */

/* Open the file fd ... */
/* Then write up to 512 bytes from buf to file fd */
if ((nbytes = write(fd, buf, sizeof(buf)) < 0) {
   perror("write");
   exit(1);
}
```

- **Returns number of bytes written from `buf` to file `fd`**
  - `nbytes < 0` indicates that an error occurred
  - As with reads, short counts are possible and are not errors!

Simple Unix I/O example

- **Copying stdin to stdout, one byte at a time**

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


int main()
{
    char c;
    while(read(STDIN_FILENO, &c, 1) != 0)
        write(STDOUT_FILENO, &c, 1);
    exit(0);
}
```

On Short Counts

- **Short counts can occur in these situations:**
  - Encountering (end-of-file) EOF on reads
  - Reading text lines from a terminal
  - Reading and writing network sockets

- **Short counts never occur in these situations:**
  - Reading from disk files (except for EOF)
  - Writing to disk files

- **Best practice is to always allow for short counts.**

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- **RIO (robust I/O) package**
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The RIO Package

- **RIO is a set of wrappers that provide efficient and robust I/O in apps, such as network programs that are subject to short counts**

- **RIO provides two different kinds of functions**
  - Unbuffered input and output of binary data
    - **`rio_readn`** and **`rio_writen`**
  - Buffered input of text lines and binary data
    - **`rio_readlineb`** and **`rio_readnb`**
    - Buffered RIO routines are thread-safe and can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor

- **Download from http://csapp.cs.cmu.edu/3e/code.html**

  → **`src/csapp.c`** and **`include/csapp.h`**

RIO Input and Output

- Same interface as Unix `read` and `write`
- Especially useful for transferring data on network sockets

```
#include "csapp.h"

ssize_t rio_readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
ssize_t rio_writen(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
```

Return: num. bytes transferred if OK, 0 on EOF (`rio_readn` only), -1 on error

- `rio_readn` returns short count only if it encounters EOF
  - Only use it when you know how many bytes to read
- `rio_writen` never returns a short count
- Calls to `rio_readn` and `rio_writen` can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor

Implementation of `rio_readn`

```
/*
 * rio_readn - Robustly read n bytes (unbuffered)
 */
ssize_t rio_readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n)
{
    size_t nleft = n;
    ssize_t nread;
    char *bufp = usrbuf;

    while (nleft > 0) {
        if ((nread = read(fd, bufp, nleft)) < 0) {
            if (errno == EINTR) /* Interrupted by sig handler return */
                nread = 0;      /* and call read() again */
            else
                return -1;      /* errno set by read() */
        }
        else if (nread == 0)
            break;              /* EOF */
        nleft -= nread;
        bufp += nread;
    }
    return (n - nleft);         /* Return >= 0 */
}
```

csapp.c

Buffered RIO Input Functions

- **Efficiently read text lines from a file partially cached in an internal memory buffer**

```
// a.txt
Marry had a little lamb.
He followed her to school.
```

```
...
read(fd, buf, 1);
if(*buf == '\n') break;
...
```

  - **`read`** reads a text line by 1 byte from file **`fd`**
  - Stopping condition
    - EOF encountered
    - Newline ('**`\n`**') encountered

  - Frequent invocation of system calls make a program very slower!

Buffered RIO Input Functions

- **Efficiently** read text lines from a file **partially cached** in an **internal memory buffer**

```
#include "csapp.h"

ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen);
```

Return: num. bytes read if OK, 0 on EOF, -1 on error

- `rio_readlineb` reads a text line of up to `maxlen` bytes from file `fd` and stores the line in `usrbuf`
  - Especially useful for reading text lines from network sockets
- Stopping conditions
  - `maxlen` bytes read
  - EOF encountered
  - Newline (‘`\n`’) encountered

Buffered RIO Input Functions

- `rio_read`: read bytes from a file and partially caches it in an internal memory buffer

```c
/*
 * rio_read - This is a wrapper for the Unix read() function that
 *    transfers min(n, rio_cnt) bytes from an internal buffer to a user
 *    buffer, where n is the number of bytes requested by the user and
 *    rio_cnt is the number of unread bytes in the internal buffer. On
 *    entry, rio_read() refills the internal buffer via a call to
 *    read() if the internal buffer is empty.
 */
/* $begin rio_read */
static ssize_t rio_read(rio_t *rp, char *usrbuf, size_t n)
{
    int cnt;

    while (rp->rio_cnt <= 0) {  /* Refill if buf is empty */
        rp->rio_cnt = read(rp->rio_fd, rp->rio_buf,
                sizeof(rp->rio_buf));
        if (rp->rio_cnt < 0) {
            if (errno != EINTR) /* Interrupted by sig handler return */
            return -1;
        }
        else if (rp->rio_cnt == 0)  /* EOF */
            return 0;
        else
            rp->rio_bufptr = rp->rio_buf; /* Reset buffer ptr */
    }

    /* Copy min(n, rp->rio_cnt) bytes from internal buf to user buf */
    cnt = n;
    if (rp->rio_cnt < n)
        cnt = rp->rio_cnt;
    memcpy(usrbuf, rp->rio_bufptr, cnt);
    rp->rio_bufptr += cnt;
    rp->rio_cnt -= cnt;
    return cnt;
}
/* $end rio_read */
```

```c
/* Persistent state for the robust I/O (Rio) package */
/* $begin rio_t */
#define RIO_BUFSIZE 8192
typedef struct {
    int rio_fd;                /* Descriptor for this internal buf */
    int rio_cnt;               /* Unread bytes in internal buf */
    char *rio_bufptr;          /* Next unread byte in internal buf */
```

Buffered RIO Input Functions

- `rio_readlineb`

```
/*
 * rio_readlineb - Robustly read a text line (buffered)
 */
/* $begin rio_readlineb */
ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen)
{
    int n, rc;
    char c, *bufp = usrbuf;

    for (n = 1; n < maxlen; n++) {
        if ((rc = rio_read(rp, &c, 1)) == 1) {
        *bufp++ = c;
        if (c == '\n') {
                n++;
            break;
            }
    } else if (rc == 0) {
        if (n == 1)
        return 0; /* EOF, no data read */
        else
        break;    /* EOF, some data was read */
    } else
        return -1;    /* Error */
    }
    *bufp = 0;
    return n-1;
}
/* $end rio_readlineb */
```

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File Metadata

- *Metadata* is data about data, in this case file data
- Per-file metadata maintained by kernel
  - accessed by users with the **stat** and **fstat** functions

```
/* Metadata returned by the stat and fstat functions */
struct stat {
    dev_t         st_dev;      /* Device */
    ino_t         st_ino;      /* inode */
    mode_t        st_mode;     /* Protection and file type */
    nlink_t       st_nlink;    /* Number of hard links */
    uid_t         st_uid;      /* User ID of owner */
    gid_t         st_gid;      /* Group ID of owner */
    dev_t         st_rdev;     /* Device type (if inode device) */
    off_t         st_size;     /* Total size, in bytes */
    unsigned long st_blksize;  /* Blocksize for filesystem I/O */
    unsigned long st_blocks;   /* Number of blocks allocated */
    time_t        st_atime;    /* Time of last access */
    time_t        st_mtime;    /* Time of last modification */
    time_t        st_ctime;    /* Time of last change */
};
```

Example of Accessing File Metadata

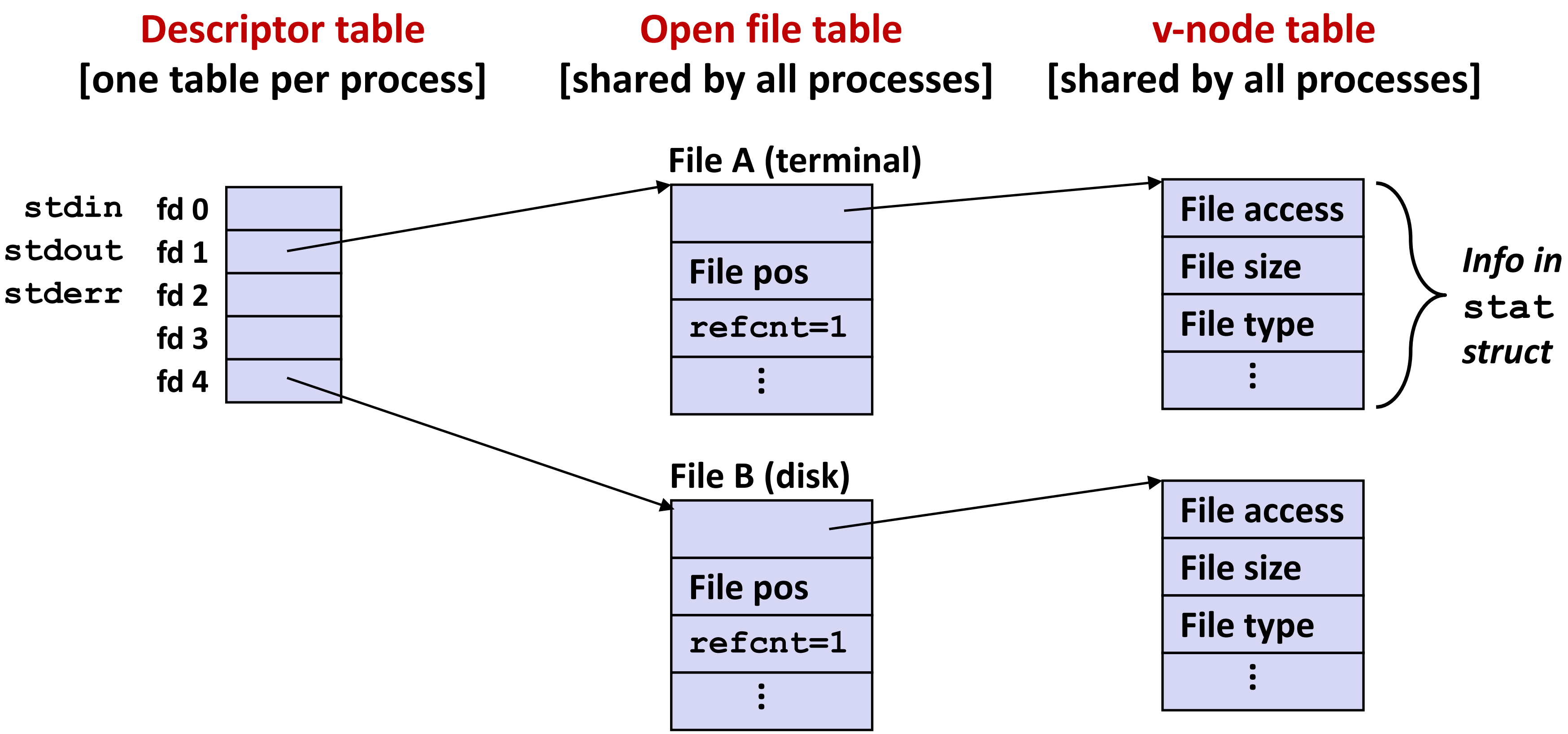
```
linux> ./statcheck statcheck.c
type: regular, read: yes
linux> chmod 000 statcheck.c
linux> ./statcheck statcheck.c
type: regular, read: no
linux> ./statcheck ..
type: directory, read: yes
```

```
int main (int argc, char **argv)
{
    struct stat stat;
    char *type, *readok;

    stat(argv[1], &stat);
    if (S_ISREG(stat.st_mode))     /* Determine file type */
        type = "regular";
    else if (S_ISDIR(stat.st_mode))
        type = "directory";
    else
        type = "other";
    if ((stat.st_mode & S_IRUSR)) /* Check read access */
        readok = "yes";
    else
        readok = "no";

    printf("type: %s, read: %s\n", type, readok);
    exit(0);
}
```

statcheck.c

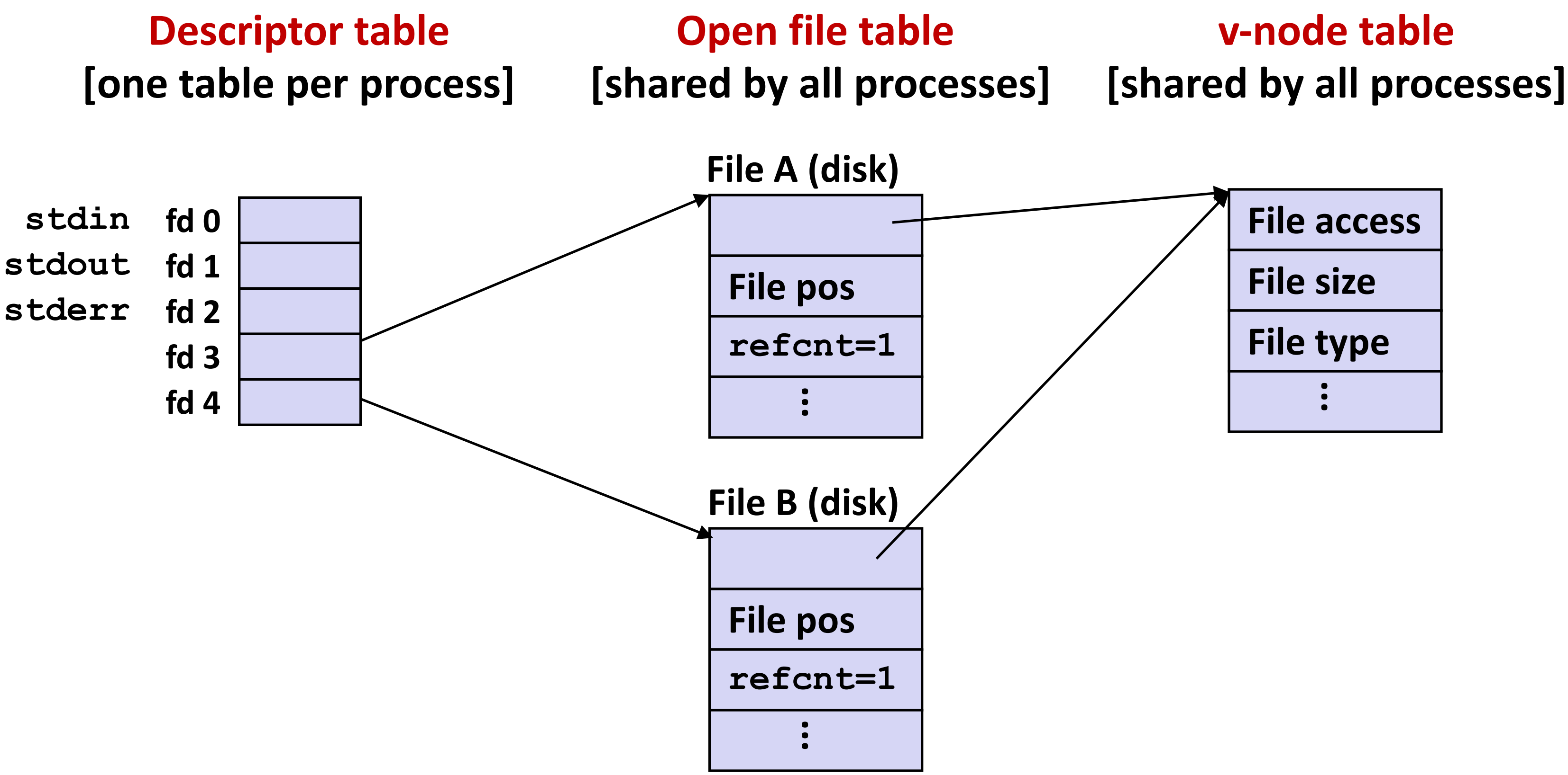
How the Unix Kernel Represents Open Files

- Two descriptors referencing two distinct open files. Descriptor 1 (stdout) points to terminal, and descriptor 4 points to open disk file



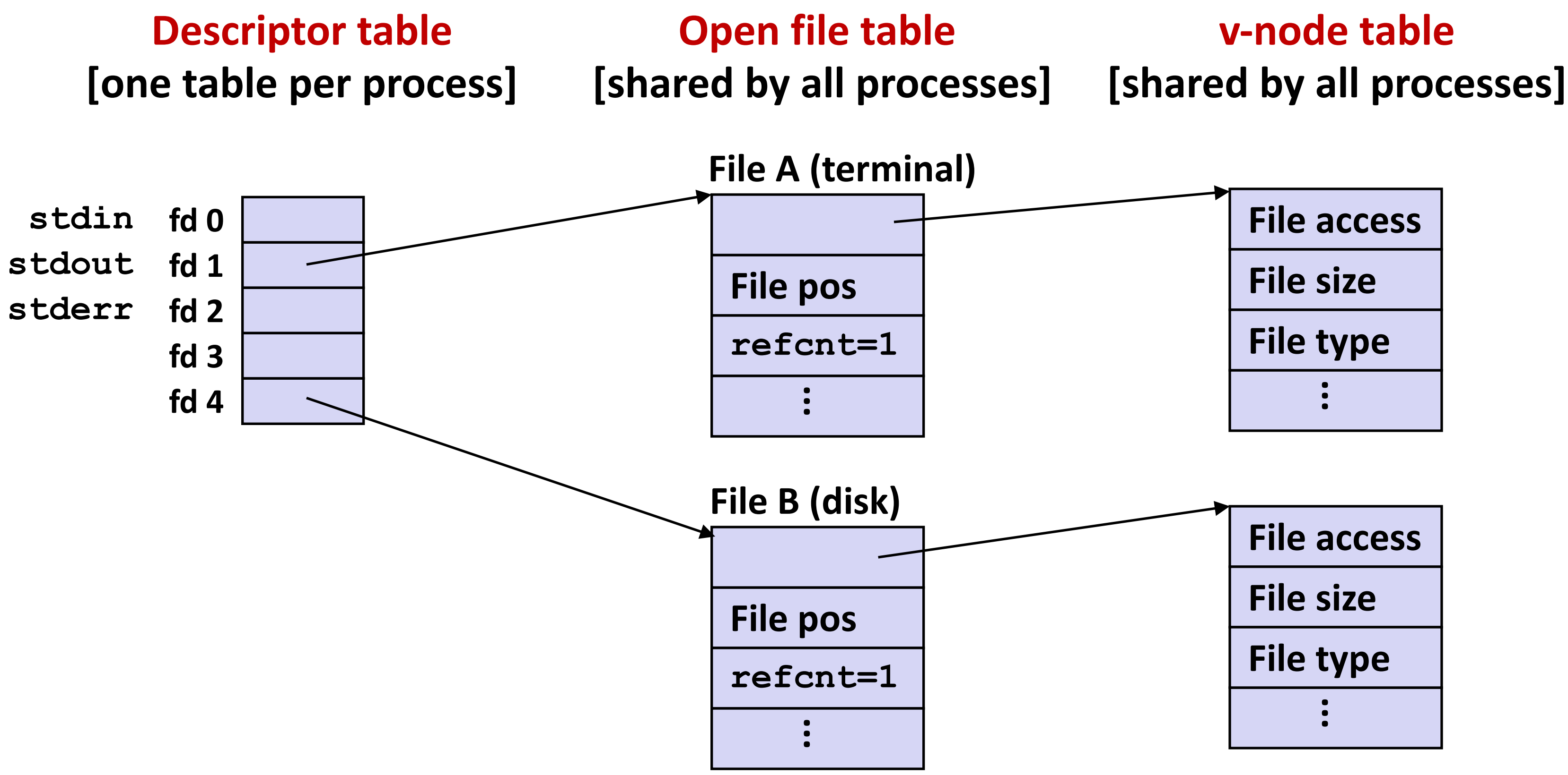
File Sharing

- **Two distinct descriptors sharing the same disk file through two distinct open file table entries**
  - E.g., Calling `open` twice with the same `filename` argument



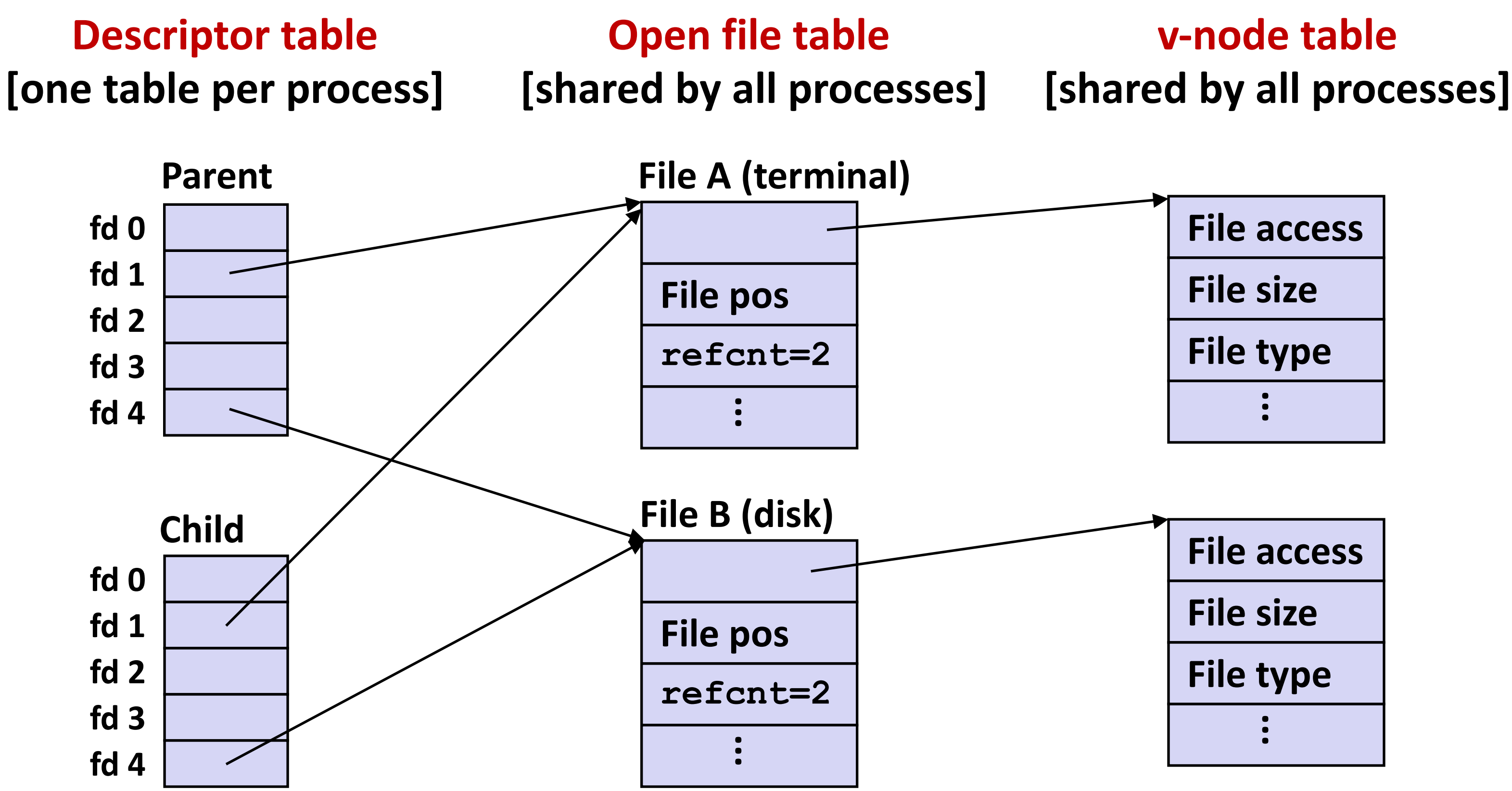
How Processes Share Files: `fork`

- A child process inherits its parent's open files
  - Note: situation unchanged by `exec` functions (use `fcntl` to change)
- *Before* `fork` call:



How Processes Share Files: `fork`

- **A child process inherits its parent's open files**
- ***After*** **`fork`:**
  - Child's table same as parent's, and +1 to each refcnt



I/O Redirection

- **Question: How does a shell implement I/O redirection?**

```
linux> ls > foo.txt
```

- **Answer: By calling the `dup2(oldfd, newfd)` function**
  - Copies (per-process) descriptor table entry **`oldfd`** to entry **`newfd`**

Descriptor table *before* `dup2(4,1)`

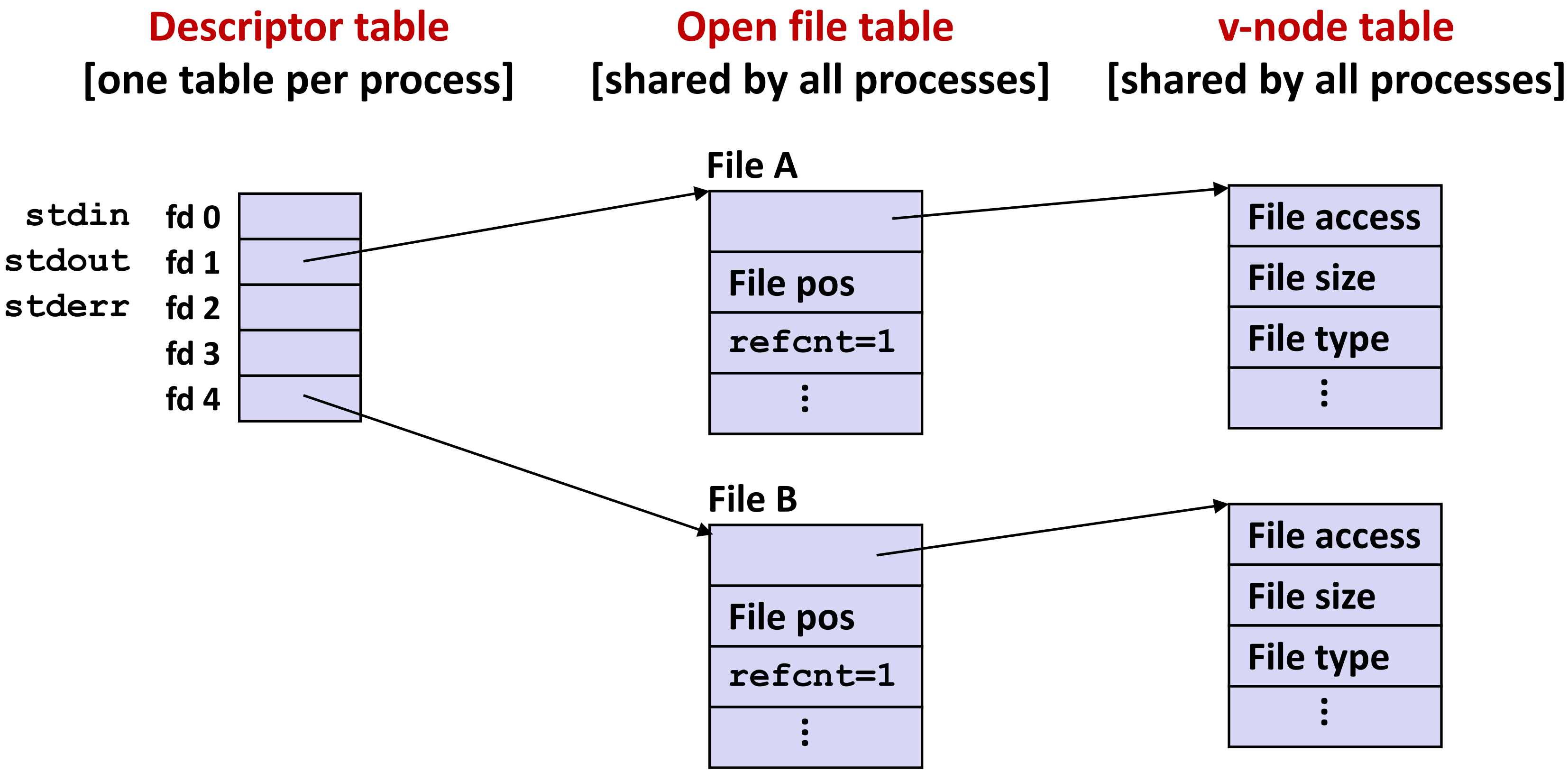
fd 0	
fd 1	a
fd 2	
fd 3	
fd 4	b

Descriptor table *after* `dup2(4,1)`

fd 0	
fd 1	b
fd 2	
fd 3	
fd 4	b

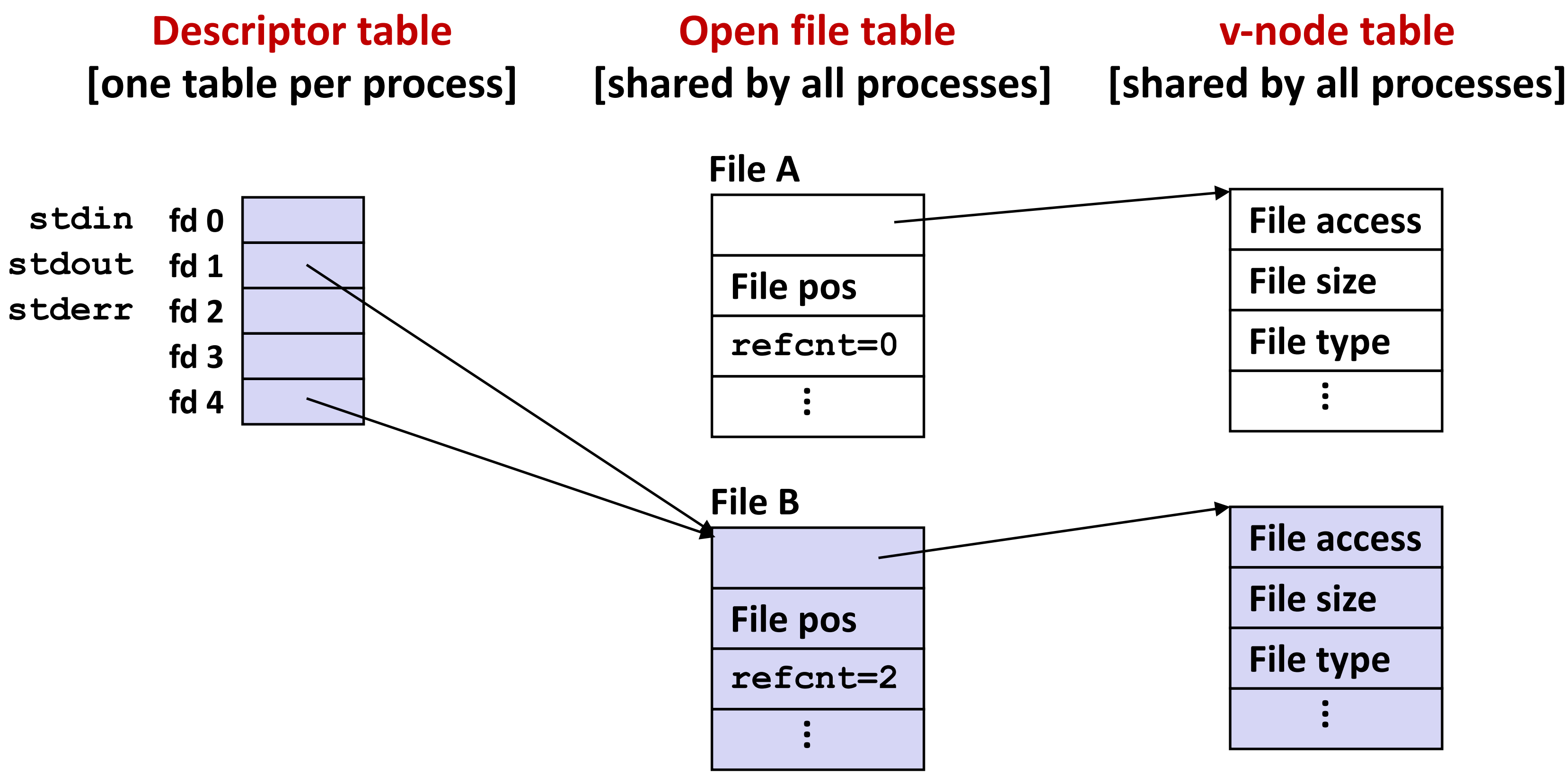
I/O Redirection Example

- **Step #1: open file to which stdout should be redirected**
  - Happens in child executing shell code, before **`exec`**



I/O Redirection Example (cont.)

- **Step #2: call `dup2(4,1)`**
  - cause fd=1 (stdout) to refer to disk file pointed at by fd=4



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Standard I/O Functions

- **The C standard library (`libc.so`) contains a collection of higher-level *standard I/O* functions**
  - Documented in Appendix B of K&R

- **Examples of standard I/O functions:**
  - Opening and closing files (**`fopen`** and **`fclose`**)
  - Reading and writing bytes (**`fread`** and **`fwrite`**)
  - Reading and writing text lines (**`fgets`** and **`fputs`**)
  - Formatted reading and writing (**`fscanf`** and **`fprintf`**)

Standard I/O Streams

- **Standard I/O models open files as *streams***
  - Abstraction for a file descriptor and a buffer in memory

- **C programs begin life with three open streams (defined in `stdio.h`)**
  - `stdin` (standard input)
  - `stdout` (standard output)
  - `stderr` (standard error)

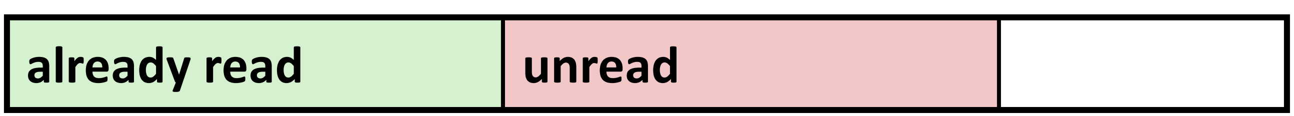
```
#include <stdio.h>
extern FILE *stdin;  /* standard input  (descriptor 0) */
extern FILE *stdout; /* standard output (descriptor 1) */
extern FILE *stderr; /* standard error  (descriptor 2) */

int main() {
    fprintf(stdout, "Hello, world\n");
}
```

Buffered I/O: Motivation

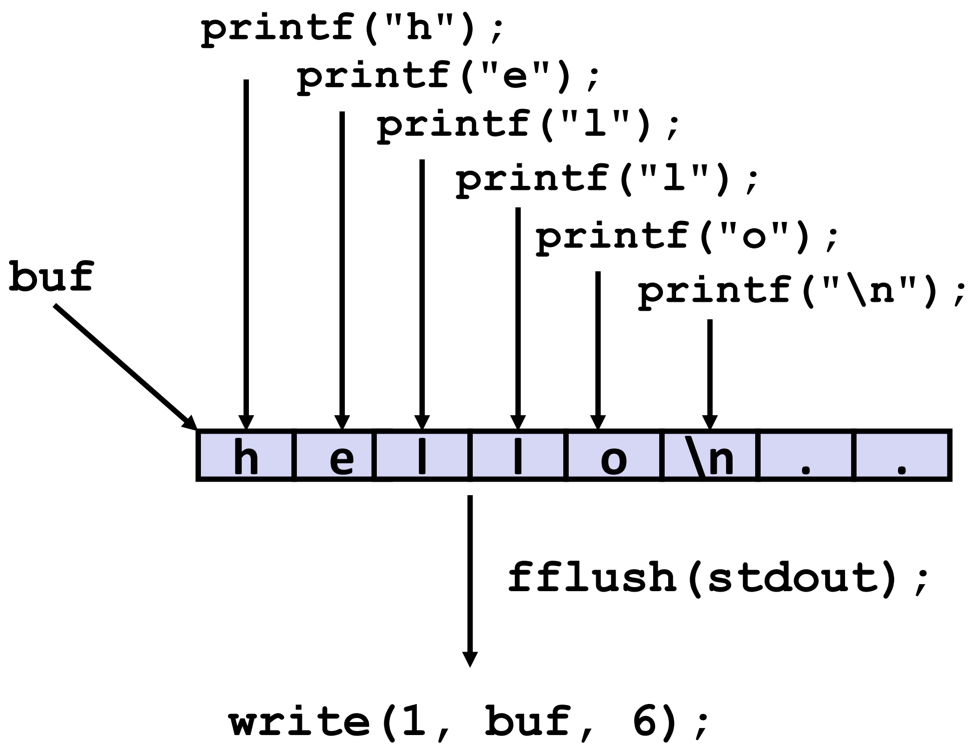
- **Applications often read/write one character at a time**
  - `getc, putc, ungetc`
  - `gets, fgets`
    - Read line of text one character at a time, stopping at newline
- **Implementing as Unix I/O calls expensive**
  - `read` and `write` require Unix kernel calls
    - > 10,000 clock cycles
- **Solution: Buffered read**
  - Use Unix `read` to grab block of bytes
  - User input functions take one byte at a time from buffer
    - Refill buffer when empty

Buffer



Buffering in Standard I/O

- **Standard I/O functions use buffered I/O**



- **Buffer flushed to output fd on "\n", call to `fflush` or `exit`, or return from `main`.**

Standard I/O Buffering in Action

- You can see this buffering in action for yourself, using the always fascinating Linux `strace` program:

```
#include <stdio.h>

int main()
{
    printf("h");
    printf("e");
    printf("l");
    printf("l");
    printf("o");
    printf("\n");
    fflush(stdout);
    exit(0);
}
```

```
linux> strace ./hello
execve("./hello", ["hello"], [/* ... */]).
...
write(1, "hello\n", 6)                    = 6
...
exit_group(0)                             = ?
```

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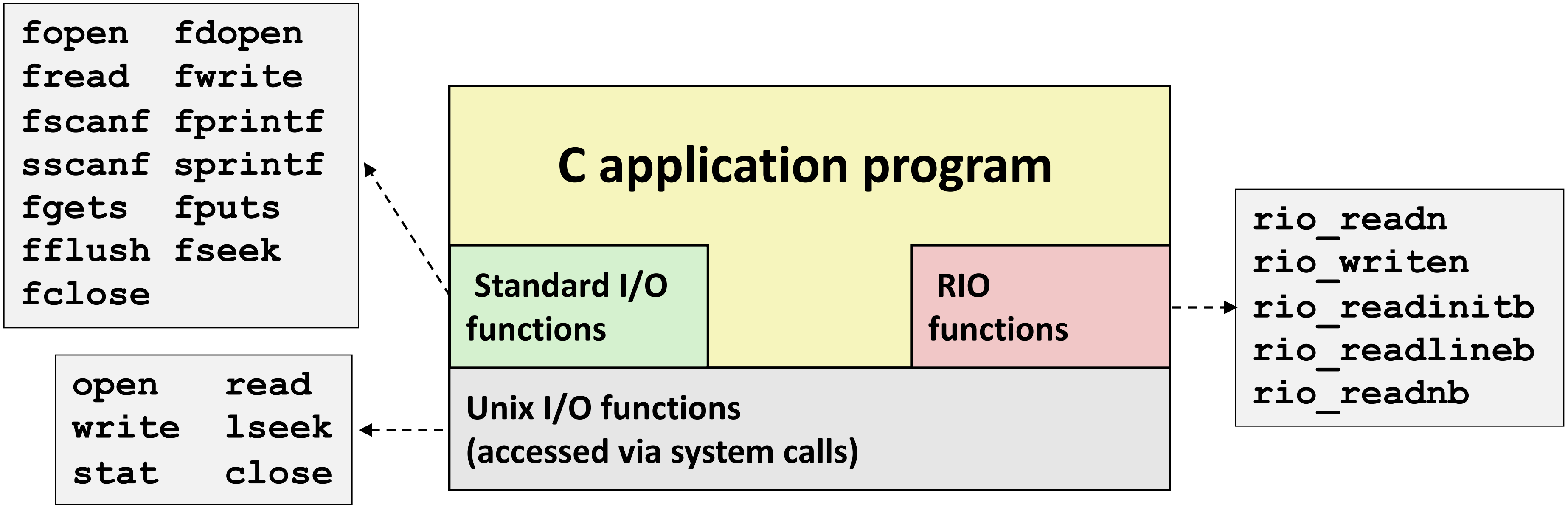
Unix I/O vs. Standard I/O vs. RIO

- Standard I/O and RIO are implemented using low-level Unix I/O



- Which ones should you use in your programs?

Pros and Cons of Unix I/O

- **Pros**
  - Unix I/O is the most general and lowest overhead form of I/O
    - All other I/O packages are implemented using Unix I/O functions
  - Unix I/O provides functions for accessing file metadata
  - Unix I/O functions are async-signal-safe and can be used safely in signal handlers

- **Cons**
  - Dealing with short counts is tricky and error prone
  - Efficient reading of text lines requires some form of buffering, also tricky and error prone
  - Both of these issues are addressed by the standard I/O and RIO packages

Pros and Cons of Standard I/O

- **Pros:**
  - Buffering increases efficiency by decreasing the number of **`read`** and **`write`** system calls
  - Short counts are handled automatically
- **Cons:**
  - Provides no function for accessing file metadata
  - Standard I/O functions are not async-signal-safe, and not appropriate for signal handlers
  - Standard I/O is not appropriate for input and output on network sockets

Choosing I/O Functions

- **General rule: use the highest-level I/O functions you can**
  - Many C programmers are able to do all of their work using the standard I/O functions
  - But, be sure to understand the functions you use!

- **When to use standard I/O**
  - When working with disk or terminal files
- **When to use raw Unix I/O**
  - Inside signal handlers, because Unix I/O is async-signal-safe
  - In rare cases when you need absolute highest performance