Using synthetic traffic generators

Using synthetic traffic generators to test memory systems.

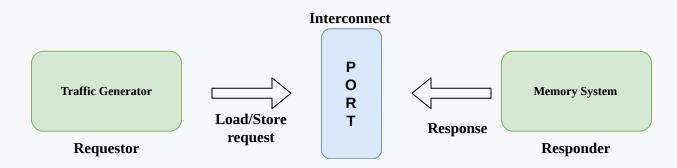


Synthetic Traffic Generation

Synthetic traffic generation is a technique for driving memory subsystems without requiring the simulation of processor models and running workload programs. We have to note the following about synthetic traffic generation.

- It can be used for the following: measuring maximum theoretical bandwidth, testing correctness of cache coherency protocol
- It can not be used for: measuring the execution time of workloads

Synthetic traffic could follow a certain pattern like sequential (linear), strided, and random. In this section we will look at tools in gem5 that facilitate synthetic traffic generation.





gem5: stdlib Components for Synthetic Traffic Generation

gem5's standard library has a collection of components for generating synthetic traffic. All such components inherit from AbstractGenerator, found in src/python/gem5/components/processors.

- These components simulate memory accesses. They are intended to replace a processor in a system that you configure with gem5.
- Examples of these components include [LinearGenerator] and [RandomGenerator].

We will see how to use LinearGenerator and RandomGenerator to stimulate a memory subsystem.

In the next slides we will look at LinearGenerator and RandomGenerator at a high level. We'll see how to write a configuration script that uses them.



Types of traffic generators

LinearGenerator

Python Here

```
class LinearGenerator(AbstractGenerator):
    def __init__(
        self,
        num_cores: int = 1,
        duration: str = "1ms",
        rate: str = "100GB/s",
        block_size: int = 64,
        min_addr: int = 0,
        max_addr: int = 32768,
        rd_perc: int = 100,
        data_limit: int = 0,
) -> None:
```

RandomGenerator

Python Here

```
class RandomGenerator(AbstractGenerator):
    def __init__(
        self,
        num_cores: int = 1,
        duration: str = "1ms",
        rate: str = "100GB/s",
        block_size: int = 64,
        min_addr: int = 0,
        max_addr: int = 32768,
        rd_perc: int = 100,
        data_limit: int = 0,
) -> None:
```



LinearGenerator/RandomGenerator: Knobs

• num_cores

The number of cores in your system

duration

Length of time to generate traffic

rate

- Rate at which to request data from memory
 - Note: This is NOT the rate at which memory will respond. This is the maximum rate at which requests will be made

block_size

 The number of bytes accessed with each read/write

• min_addr

 The lowest memory address for the generator to access (via reads/writes)

max_addr

 The highest memory address for the generator to access (via reads/writes)

• rd_perc

 The percentage of accesses that should be reads

data limit

- The maximum number of bytes that the generator can access (via reads/writes)
 - Note: if data_limit is set to 0, there will be no data limit.



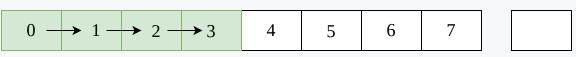
Traffic Patterns Visualized

Linear: We want to access addresses 0 through 4 so a linear access would mean accessing memory in the following order.

Random: We want to access addresses 0 through 4 so a random access would mean accessing memory in any order. (In this example, we are showing the order: 1, 3, 2, 0).

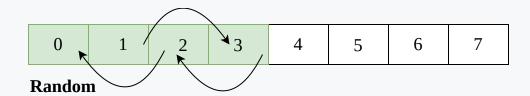
Memory

Linear



1 block = 1 byte

$$min_addr = 0$$
 $max_addr = 4$





Exercise: Measuring memory performance

In this exercise you will use different traffic patterns to better understand the performance characteristics of gem5's memory models.

Use a 32 GiB/s [SimpleMemory] with latency of 20ns. Linear and random traffic with a rate of 16, 32, and 64 GiB/s, and 100% and 50% read percentages. (You may not need to run everything.)

Questions

- When using the SimpleMemory model, how does the memory bandwidth change with different read-write ratios? Why or why not?
- When using DDR4 memory, how does the memory bandwidth change with different traffic read-write ratios? Why or why not?
- Compare the performance of DDR4 to LPDDR5. Which has better bandwidth? What about latency? (Or, is this the wrong way to measure latency?)
- Run with a single channel of DDR4 and compare that to the performance of 4 channels of LPDDR5. What is the bandwidth difference?



Step 1: Create a test board for SimpleMemory

Use the TestBoard instead of the SimpleBoard for this experiment. See TestBoard for hints.

Use the SingleChannelSimpleMemory for the memory system. Set the latency to be 20ns, the bandwidth to be 32GiB/s, the latency variance to be 0s (zero seconds), and the size to be 1GiB.

Use [NoCache] for the cache hierarchy.

Use a LinearGenerator with a rate of 16GiB/s as the "processor" (which is called generator in this case).



Step 1: Answer

```
board = TestBoard(
    clk_freq="3GHz", # ignored
    generator=LinearGenerator(num_cores=1, rate="16GiB/s"),
    memory=SingleChannelSimpleMemory(
        latency="20ns", bandwidth="32GiB/s",
        latency_var="0s", size="1GiB"),
    cache_hierarchy=NoCache(),
)
```

The generator and the memory have their own clock domains to the clk_freq parameter is ignored.

For the memory system, we are using a SingleChannelSimpleMemory with a latency of

20ns and a bandwidth of 32GiB/s. We set the latency variance to 0s and the size to 1 GiB (just needs to be bigger than the generator will generate).

The LinearGenerator is generating traffic at 16GiB/s and the SimpleMemory has a bandwidth of 32GiB/s.

We are using a NoCache cache hierarchy to simplify the experiment.

With NoCache, the memory system is directly connected to the processor.



Step 2: Run the experiment

Run your script in gem5!

Look at the results in the stats file.



Step 2: Answer

cd materials/02-Using-gem5/03-traffic-generators/
gem5 memory-test.py

Look in m5out/stats.txt for the results.

board.processor.cores.generator.readBW is 17180800000 (or 17.1808 GB/s).

Note that the bandwidth is given in GB (not GiB). I.e., 1 GB = 10^9 bytes.



Step 3: Vary the write percentage and read percentage

For this step, you can add arguments to your script with the [argparse] Python library. This way, you don't have to keep modifying your script.

Run the script with 16 GiB/s, 32 GiB/s, 64 GiB/s as the traffic rates and 100% reads and 50% reads for each traffic rate.

Measure the bandwidth in each case to see what the simulated model's performance is.



Step 3: Hint

You may also want to use simstats to get the bandwidth instead of reading stats.txt.

```
stats = simulator.get_simstats()
seconds = stats.simTicks.value / stats.simFreq.value
total_bytes = (
    stats.board.processor.cores[0].generator.bytesRead.value
    + stats.board.processor.cores[0].generator.bytesWritten.value
latency = (
    stats.board.processor.cores[0].generator.totalReadLatency.value
    / stats.board.processor.cores[0].generator.totalReads.value
print(f"Total bandwidth: {total_bytes / seconds / 2**30:0.2f} GiB/s")
print(f"Average latency: {latency / stats.simFreq.value * 1e9:0.2f} ns")
```



Step 3: Answer

Results for running with 16 GiB/s, 32 GiB/s, 64 GiB/s, and 100% reads and 50% reads.

Bandwidth Read Percentage Linear Speed (GiB/s) Random Speed (GiB/s)

16 GiB/s	100%	16.00	16.00
	50%	16.00	16.00
32 GiB/s	100%	31.99	31.99
	50%	31.99	31.99
64 GiB/s	100%	32.11	32.11
	50%	32.11	32.11

With the SimpleMemory you don't see any complex behavior in the memory model (but it is fast).



Running Channeled Memory

- Open gem5/src/python/gem5/components/memory/single_channel.py
- We see SingleChannel memories such as:

```
def SingleChannelDDR4_2400(
    size: Optional[str] = None,
) -> AbstractMemorySystem:
    """
    A single channel memory system using DDR4_2400_8x8 based DIMM.
    """
    return ChanneledMemory(DDR4_2400_8x8, 1, 64, size=size)
```

• We see the DRAMInterface=DDR4_2400_8x8, the number of channels=1, interleaving_size=64, and the size.



Step 4: Using DDR4 memory

Use the SingleChannelDDR4_2400 memory system with the LinearGenerator and RandomGenerator to see how the memory bandwidth changes with different traffic read-write ratios.

You may want to add another argument to the [argparse] to specify the memory system.

Note: You may not need to run all possibly combinations. Try to run the minimum to answer the questions.



Step 4: Answer

Results for running with 16 GiB/s, 32 GiB/s, and 100% reads and 50% reads.

Bandwidth Read Percentage Linear Speed (GiB/s) Random Speed (GiB/s)

16 GiB/s	100%	12.92	12.15
	50%	15.58	18.41
32 GiB/s	100%	12.05	12.92
	50%	15.93	16.99

As expected, because of read-to-write turn around, reading 100% is more efficient than 50% reads. Also as expected, the bandwidth is lower than the SimpleMemory (only about 75% utilization).

Somewhat surprising, the memory modeled has enough banks to handle random traffic efficiently.



Step 5: Run with LPDDR5

Note that we don't have a SingleChannelLPDDR5 memory system in the standard library. We will have to add it.

Import the *interface* from the <code>dram_interfaces</code> package and create a <code>SingleChannelLPDDR5</code> memory system.

You can use the [ChanneledMemory] class to create this new memory system.

See ChanneledMemory for hints.



Step 5: Answer

```
def get_memory(mem_type: str):
    if mem_type == "simple":
        return SingleChannelSimpleMemory(
            latency="20ns", bandwidth="32GiB/s", latency_var="0s", size="1GiB"
    )
    elif mem_type == "DDR4":
        return SingleChannelDDR4_2400()
    elif mem_type == "SC_LPDDR5":
        return ChanneledMemory(LPDDR5_6400_1x16_BG_BL32, 1, 64)
```

The last line will create a new memory system with LPDDR5 using a single channel.



Step 5: Answer Cont.

Bandwidth Read Percentage Linear Speed (GiB/s) Random Speed (GiB/s)

16 GiB/s	100%	11.10	11.15
	50%	8.76	10.42
32 GiB/s	100%	11.10	11.16
	50%	8.78	10.45

So, LPDDR5 doesn't perform quite as well as DDR4. Not only is the bandwidth lower, but the latency is higher.



Step 6: Run with multiple channels

Now, let's run with multiple channels of LPDDR5.

You can use the same ChanneledMemory interface to create a memory system with 4 channels.



Step 6: Answer

Bandwidth Read Percentage Linear Speed (GiB/s) Random Speed (GiB/s)

16 GiB/s	100%	16.00	16.00
	50%	16.00	16.00
32 GiB/s	100%	31.99	31.98
	50%	30.28	31.98
64 GiB/s	100%	44.31	43.75
	50%	38.23	56.60



Extra exercise

Creating a new generator.



Extending AbstractGenerator

gem5 has a lot of tools in its standard library, but if you want to simulate specific memory accesses patterns in your research, there might not be anything in the standard library to do this.

In this case, you would have to extend [AbstractGenerator] to create a concrete generator that is tailored to your needs.

To do this, we will go through an example called [HybridGenerator].

The goal of [HybridGenerator] is to simultaneously simulate both linear and random memory accesses.

To do this, we need LinearGeneratorCores (to simulate linear traffic) and RandomGeneratorCores (to simulate random traffic).



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: A Quick Side Note about LinearGeneratorCores

LinearGeneratorCores simulate linear traffic.

When we have multiple LinearGeneratorCores, if we configure each one to have the same min_addr and max_addr , each one will start simulating memory accesses at the same min_addr and go up to the same max_addr . They will be accessing the same addresses at the same time.

We want [LinearGeneratorCore] to simulate a more reasonable accesses pattern.

Therefore, we will have each LinearGeneratorCore simulate accesses to a different chunk of memory. To do this, we will have to split up memory into equal-sized chunks and configure each LinearGeneratorCore to simulate accesses to one of these chunks.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: A Quick Side Note about LinearGeneratorCores Cont.

Here's a diagram that shows how each [LinearGeneratorCore] should access memory.

Linear Generator Core Memory Access Diagram



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Dividing Memory Address Range

When we create a HybridGenerator, we have to determine which LinearGeneratorCore gets what chunk of memory.

As previously discussed, we need to partition the memory address range into equally sized sections and configure each LinearGeneratorCore to simulate accesses to a different section.

To partition, we will use the partition_range() function in
gem5/src/python/gem5/components/processors/abstract_generator.py.

This function takes the range of min_addr to max_addr and partitions it into num_partitions equallength pieces.

For example, if $min_addr = 0$, $max_addr = 9$, and $num_partitions = 3$, then $partition_range$ would return <0,3>, <3,6>, <6,9>.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: A quick reminder about RandomGeneratorCores

We also have to consider the [RandomGeneratorCores].

It would be reasonable to assume that we should partition them like the LinearGeneratorCores, but this is not the case.

Even if each RandomGeneratorCore has the same min_addr and max_addr, since each one simulates a random memory access, each one will be simulating accesses to different (random) memory addresses.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Dividing Memory Address Range Cont.

In the end, this is how each core will simulate memory accesses.

Linear vs. Random memory accesses



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Choosing a Distribution of Cores

Now that we know how each core will access memory, next, we need to determine how many LinearGeneratorCores and RandomGeneratorCores we need.

There are many correct ways to do this, but we will use the following function to determine the number of LinearGeneratorCores.

```
def get_num_linear_cores(num_cores: int):
    """

    Returns the largest power of two that is smaller than num_cores
    """

if (num_cores & (num_cores - 1) == 0):
        return num_cores//2
    else:
        return 2 ** int(log(num_cores, 2))
```

The rest of the cores will be RandomGeneratorCores.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator Constructor

Let's start looking at the code!

Make sure you have the following file open.

```
materials/02-Using-gem5/03-running-in-
gem5/06-traffic-
gen/components/hybrid_generator.py
```

On the right, you'll see the constructor for HybridGenerator.

When we initialize HybridGenerator (via def __init__), we will be initializing an AbstractGenerator (via super() __init__) with the values on the right.

```
class HybridGenerator(AbstractGenerator):
    def __init__(
        self.
        num_cores: int = 2,
        duration: str = "1ms",
        rate: str = "1GB/s",
        block_size: int = 8,
        min_addr: int = 0,
        max_addr: int = 131072,
        rd_perc: int = 100,
        data_limit: int = 0,
    ) -> None:
        if num cores < 2:</pre>
            raise ValueError("num_cores should be >= 2!")
        super().__init__(
            cores=self._create_cores(
                num_cores=num_cores,
                duration=duration,
                rate=rate,
                block_size=block_size,
                min_addr=min_addr,
                max addr=max addr.
                rd_perc=rd_perc,
                data_limit=data_limit,
```



06-traffic-gen: Designing a HybridGenerator

Right now, our [HybridGenerator] class has a constructor, but we need to return a list of cores.

In gem5, the method that returns a list of cores is conventionally named [_create_cores].

If you look at our file, hybrid_generator.py, you'll see this method called _create_cores.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Initializing Variables

Let's define [_create_cores]!

Let's start by declaring/defining some important variables.

First, we'll declare our list of cores.

Then, we'll define the number of LinearGeneratorCores and RandomGeneratorCores.

Add the following lines under the comment labeled (1).

```
core_list = []
num_linear_cores = get_num_linear_cores(num_cores)
num_random_cores = num_cores - num_linear_cores
```



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Partitioning Memory Address Range

Next, let's define the memory address range for each [LinearGeneratorCore].

If we want to give each LinearGeneratorCore an equal chunk of the given memory address range, we need to partition the range of min_addr to max_addr into num_linear_cores pieces.

To do this, we need to add the following line to our code under the comment labeled (2).

```
addr_ranges = partition_range(min_addr, max_addr, num_linear_cores)
```

addr_ranges will be a num_linear_cores long list of equal-length partitions from min_addr to max_addr.



06-traffic-gen: Partitioning Memory Address Range Cont.

For example, we have min_addr=0, max_addr=32768, and num_cores=16 (8 LinearGeneratorCores), then

```
addr_ranges=
[(0, 4096), (4096, 8192), (8192, 12288), (12288, 16384),
(16384, 20480), (20480, 24576), (24576, 28672), (28672, 32768)]
```

For the [i]'th LinearGeneratorCore, we take the [i]'th entry in [addr_ranges]. [min_addr] is the first value that entry, and [max_addr] is the second value in that entry.

In this example, LinearGeneratorCore 0 gets initialized with min_addr=0 and max_addr=4096, LinearGeneratorCore 1 gets initialized with min_addr=4096 and max_addr=8192, etc.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Creating a List of Cores: LinearGeneratorCore

Next, let's start creating our list of cores.

First, let's add all the [LinearGeneratorCores].

Add the lines on the right under the comment labeled (3).



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Creating a List of Cores Explained: LinearGeneratorCore

```
In the for loop, we create <code>[num_linear_cores]</code> LinearGeneratorCores and append each one to <code>our core_list</code>.
```

Each LinearGeneratorCore parameter is initialized with the same values from the constructor, except for min_addr and max_addr.

We change min_addr and max_addr so that each LinearGeneratorCore only simulates accesses to a section of the range of HybridGenerator's min_addr to max_addr.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Creating a List of Cores: RandomGeneratorCore

Now that we've added the

LinearGeneratorCores, let's add all the RandomGeneratorCores.

Add the lines on the right under the comment labeled (4).



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Creating a List of Cores Explained: RandomGeneratorCore

Once again, in the for loop, we create

num_linear_cores
RandomGeneratorCores and
append each one to our core_list.

Each [RandomGeneratorCore] parameter is initialized with the same values from the constructor, including [min_addr] and [max_addr].

min_addr and max_addr do not change because each RandomGeneratorCore should be able to access the entire range of HybridGenerator's min_addr to max_addr.



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Returning and Beginning Configuration

We're almost done with this file!

Let's return our core_list by adding the following line under the comment labeled (5).

return core_list

Now, open the file <u>materials/02-Using-gem5/03-running-in-gem5/06-traffic-gen/simple-traffic-generators.py</u>.

Let's replace our LinearGenerator With a HybridGenerator.

First, add the following line somewhere at the top of your code to import the HybridGenerator.

from components.hybrid_generator import HybridGenerator



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Configuring

In this section of code to the right, you should currently have a LinearGenerator.

Let's replace it with a [HybridGenerator].

Replace the following lines

```
generator = LinearGenerator(
    num_cores=1
)
```

with

```
generator = HybridGenerator(
    num_cores=6
)
```

```
cache_hierarchy = MyPrivateL1SharedL2CacheHierarchy()
memory = SingleChannelDDR3_1600()
generator = LinearGenerator(
   num_cores=1
)
motherboard = TestBoard(
   clk_freq="3GHz",
   generator=generator,
   memory=memory,
   cache_hierarchy=cache_hierarchy,
)
```



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Configuring Cont.

This is what it should look like now.

```
cache_hierarchy = MyPrivateL1SharedL2CacheHierarchy()
memory = SingleChannelDDR3_1600()
generator = HybridGenerator(
    num_cores=6
)
motherboard = TestBoard(
    clk_freq="3GHz",
    generator=generator,
    memory=memory,
    cache_hierarchy=cache_hierarchy,
)
```



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Running

Now, that we've created a HybridGenerator, let's run the program again!

Make sure you're in the following directory.

materials/02-Using-gem5/03-running-in-gem5/06-traffic-gen/

Now run with the following command.

```
gem5 --debug-flags=TrafficGen --debug-end=1000000 \
simple-traffic-generators.py
```



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Output

After running the command, you should see something like below.

```
7451: system.processor.cores5.generator: RandomGen::getNextPacket: r to addr 80a8, size 8
7451: system.processor.cores5.generator: Next event scheduled at 14902
7451: system.processor.cores4.generator: RandomGen::getNextPacket: r to addr 10a90, size 8
7451: system.processor.cores4.generator: Next event scheduled at 14902
7451: system.processor.cores3.generator: LinearGen::getNextPacket: r to addr 18000, size 8
7451: system.processor.cores3.generator: Next event scheduled at 14902
7451: system.processor.cores2.generator: LinearGen::getNextPacket: r to addr 10000, size 8
7451: system.processor.cores2.generator: Next event scheduled at 14902
7451: system.processor.cores1.generator: LinearGen::getNextPacket: r to addr 8000, size 8
7451: system.processor.cores1.generator: Next event scheduled at 14902
7451: system.processor.cores0.generator: LinearGen::getNextPacket: r to addr 0, size 8
7451: system.processor.cores0.generator: Next event scheduled at 14902
```

As you can see, cores 0, 1, 2, and 3 are LinearGeneratorCores, and cores 4 and 5 are RandomGeneratorCores!

06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Statistics

Now, let's look at some of the statistical differences between our LinearGeneratorCores and RandomGeneratorCores.

Run the following command to see the miss rate for each core's l1 data cache.

```
grep ReadReq.missRate::processor m5out/stats.txt
```

On the next slide, you'll see the expected output (with some text removed for readability).



06-traffic-gen: HybridGenerator: Statistics Cont.

```
system.cache_hierarchy.l1dcaches0.ReadReq.missRate::processor.cores0.generator system.cache_hierarchy.l1dcaches1.ReadReq.missRate::processor.cores1.generator 0.132345 0.133418 system.cache_hierarchy.l1dcaches2.ReadReq.missRate::processor.cores2.generator 0.133641 system.cache_hierarchy.l1dcaches3.ReadReq.missRate::processor.cores3.generator 0.132971 system.cache_hierarchy.l1dcaches4.ReadReq.missRate::processor.cores4.generator 0.876426 system.cache_hierarchy.l1dcaches5.ReadReq.missRate::processor.cores5.generator 0.875055
```

Cores 0, 1, 2, and 3 (LinearGeneratorCores) have a miss rate of **0.13309375** (~13.3%) on average.

Cores 4 and 5 (RandomGeneratorCores) have a miss rate of **0.8757405** (~87.5%) on average.

This is because LinearGeneratorCores access memory linearly. Therefore, they exhibit more locality which in turn results in less misses in the l1dcache.

On the other hand, since the RandomGeneratorCores access memory randomly, the caches can't take advantage of locality in the same way.

Summary

Overall, we discussed two different types of traffic generators: Linear and Random.

LinearGenerators simulate linear memory accesses, and [RandomGenerators] simulate random memory accesses.

We looked into how to configure a board that uses these traffic generators.

We also extended the [AbstractGenerator] class to create a [HybridGenerator], which simulates linear and random memory accesses simultaneously.

Finally, we saw some of the statistical differences between LinearGeneratorCores and RandomGeneratorCores.

