1 The Data Link Layer

1.1 Data Link layer functions and services

1.1.1 Main functions

- Provide service interface to the network layer.
- Eliminate/reduce transmission errors.
- Regulate data flow: Slow receivers not swamped by fast senders.

1.1.2 Services provided

Principal service: Transfer data from the network layer on the source machine to the network layer on the destination machine.

The actual services that are offered vary from protocol to protocol. Three reasonable possibilities that we will consider in turn are:

- **Unacknowledged connectionless service:**
  - No logical connection is established beforehand or released
  - Source machine sends independent frames without having the destination machine acknowledge them. afterwards.
  - If a frame is lost due to noise on the line, no attempt is made to detector recover from that loss.
  - Appropriate when the error rate is very low and for real-time traffic.
- **Acknowledged connectionless service:**
  - No logical connections used.
  - Each frame sent is individually acknowledged so that the sender knows whether a frame has arrived correctly or been lost.
  - If it has not arrived within a specified time interval, it can be sent again.
  - This service is useful over unreliable channels, such as wireless systems.(i.e. Wi-Fi).
- **Acknowledged connection-oriented service:**
  - The source and destination machines establish a connection before any data are transferred.
  - Each frame is numbered, and the data link layer guarantees that each frame sent is indeed received.
  - it guarantees that each frame is received exactly once and that all frames are received in the right order.

- Appropriate over long, unreliable links (i.e. satellite channel, long-distance telephone circuit). If acknowledged connectionless service were used, lost acknowledgements could cause a frame to be sent and received several times.
- Divided in 3 phases:
  - **First phase:** The connection is established by having both sides initialize variables and counters needed to keep track of which frames have been received and which ones have not.
  - **Second phase:** One or more frames are actually transmitted.
  - **Third phase:** The connection is released, freeing up the variables, buffers, and other resources used to maintain the connection.

Providing acknowledgements in the data link layer is just an optimization, never a requirement. The network layer can always send a packet and wait for it to be acknowledged by its peer on the remote machine. This strategy,however, can be inefficient. Links usually have a strict maximum frame length imposed by the hardware, and known propagation delays. The network layer does not know these parameters. It might send a large packet that is broken up into 10 frames, of which 2 are lost on average. If individual frames are acknowledged and retransmitted, then errors can be corrected more directly and more quickly. On reliable channels, such as fiber, the overhead of a heavyweight data link protocol may be unnecessary, but on (inherently unreliable) wireless channels it is well worth the cost.

1.2 Framing

The physical layer accepts and sends a raw bit stream. If the channel is noisy the physical layer will add some redundancy to its signals to reduce the bit error rate to a tolerable level. However, the bit stream received by the data link layer is not guaranteed to be error free. It is up to the data link layer to detect and correct errors.

The approach is for the data link layer to break up the bit stream into discrete frames, compute a short token called a checksum for each frame, and include the checksum in the frame when it is transmitted. When a frame arrives at the destination,the checksum is recomputed. If it is different from the one contained in the frame, the data link layer knows that an error has occurred and takes steps to deal with it.

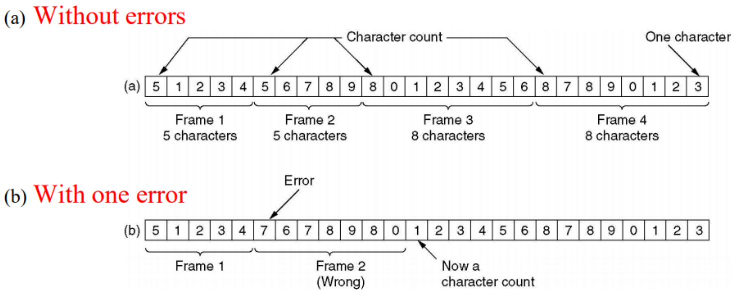
A good design must make it easy for a receiver to find the start of new frames while using little of the channel bandwidth. We will look at three methods:

1.2.1 Byte count

Uses a field in the header to specify the number of bytes in the frame. When the data link layer at the destination sees the byte count, it knows how many bytes follow and hence where the end of the frame is.

Issues

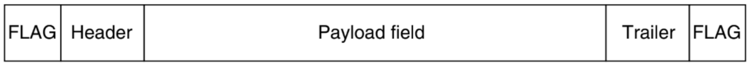
- The count can be garbled by a transmission error.
- A single bit flip, may trigger the destination to get out of synchronization.
- If an out-of-sync occurs it is unable to locate the correct start of the next frame.



This method is rarely used.

1.2.2 Flag bytes with byte stuffing

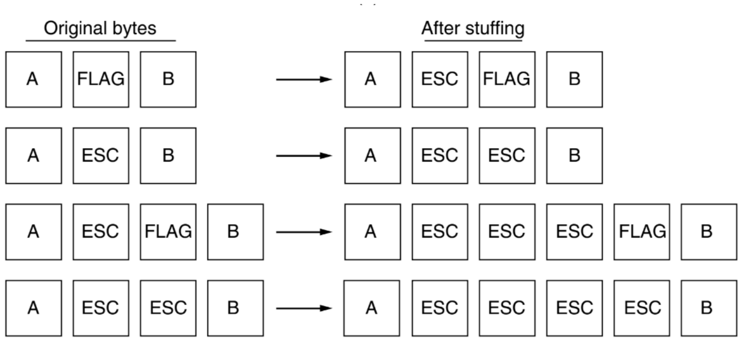
This method gets around the problem of resynchronization by having each frame start and end with special bytes (flag bytes).



However, this flag may occur in the middle of the data and induce the receiver in error by thinking the end of the frame was reached. This issue can be solved using **byte stuffing**.

Byte Stuffing

- Inserting a special escape byte (ESC) before each flag byte in the data.
- Makes framing flag bytes distinguishable from the ones in the data.
- Escape bytes present in the data also need to be escaped.



1.2.3 Flag bits with bit stuffing

1.3 Error detection

1.4 Automatic Repeat reQuest (ARQ)

1.5 Framing, Error detection and ARQ in common networks

1.6 Reliability in the Protocol Stack