

Async Rust A 1-Hour Deep Dive

herbert.wolverson@ardanlabs.com



About Herbert Wolverson

- Ardan Labs Rust Trainer & Consultant
- Author of Hands-on Rust and Rust Brain Teasers
- Author of the Rust Roguelike Tutorial
- Lead developer, LibreQoS, bracket-lib.
- Contributor to many open source projects.





Effective Learning through 2D Game Development and Play







All code used in this presentation is available here:

https://github.com/thebracket/Ardan-1HourAsync



What We're Going to Cover

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- Threads vs. Async Together or Separate
- Async Runtimes (Executors)
- What does "block on" really mean and the Tokio macros
- Running Async Code
- Blocking, and Sending Blocking Tasks to Threads
- Inter-Task Communication: Channels
- Streams: Async Iterators
- Tokio + Axum: High-Performance Web Services with Dependency Injection and Ergonomic Development
- Tracing & Performance Metrics
- Q&A



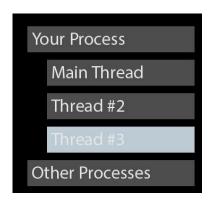


Threads and Asynchronous Code



System Threads

- Created with std::thread
- Map directly to Operating System Threads
- Heavy-weight:
 - Limited number (60,000 on my Linux system).
 - Each thread gets a full stack.
 - Each thread is scheduled by the Operating System as a full entity.
 - o Many thousands of threads don't scale.
- Acts like "normal" code it runs from end to end, the OS interrupts and switches threads when it decides to do so.
- Great for CPU intensive work, no need to "yield" control.







So Why not Use Threads for Everything?

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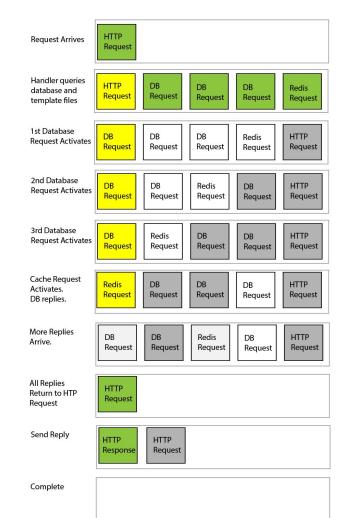
- With a simple model of one thread per network connection, a busy server could have thousands of threads.
- Each thread will spend most of its time idle:
 - Waiting for the Network
 - Waiting for Storage
 - Waiting for Database Queries
- Scheduler thread polling and RAM usage quickly adds up to a sluggish server.

- You can select from a group of sockets to see which are ready for you.
- This was an early form of async programming.
- Your async runtime is probably doing something similar for you!



Asynchronous

- Async can be single-threaded or run across multiple threads.
- Whenever you create an async *task* it is:
 - Lightweight (very little memory usage)
 - Cooperatively Scheduled by Your Runtime
 - Easy to Cancel
- Async queues run one task at a time.
- Tasks run until they yield, or await another task.
- Your runtime thread will still be scheduled by the Operating System.







Async and Threading - Why Not Both?



The larger/more powerful runtimes for Rust combine threading and async.

- Each CPU core gets a thread (or you can customize the number of threads).
- Each thread maintains a task list.
- Threads can "steal work" from one another
 if a core finds itself idle, it can reach into another queue and "steal" a job.
- The result? You are benefiting from network/storage/database latency, maximizing CPU utilization while not wasting time polling idle threads.

You can divide cores as needed:

- x cores running one more more async runtimes.
- *y* cores dedicated to commute.
- Communicate between the groups with high-performance channels.
- Result:
 - No I/O wait thread starvation on the tasks receiving work and sending results.
 - High-performance cores perform CPU intensive tasks.



Asynchronous Runtimes (Executors)



Rust is Agnostic - and Flexible

Many languages chose a predetermined async strategy.

- This is great, so long as you are writing the type of application for which the async environment was designed.
- This can leads to jumping through hoops if your goals don't align with the language design.
- Most languages offer some tuning to mitigate this.



Rust:

- Implemented the plumbing for async in the language core (designed so that the core won't allocate memory) - and leaves the implementation to runtimes / executors.
- This gives flexible choice of runtimes you can even build your own.
- Runtimes are available for small embedded projects, all the way up to high-performance targets.
- 5 of TechEmpower's 10 fastest webservers are built on Rust.



Choosing a Runtime

- Tokio: a "do everything" high-performance runtime.
- Async-std: Also high in features, not as popular but more focused on standardization.
- Futures: A partial runtime, many useful utilities.
- **Smol**: A small runtime, kept simple.
- Pasts: A simple runtime that runs without the standard library and minimal memory allocations - works with embedded and WASM.



For this talk, we're going to use **Tokio**.

Tokio provides a broad ecosystem, and high performance. It pairs nicely with an existing stack of Hyper (for HTTP), Tower (for service management) and web servers (Axum and Actix being two popular ones).





Launching into Asynchronous Code



All Programs Start Synchronously

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- You can't run async functions outside of an async runtime.
- Most runtimes are started with a call to block_on(<<your async function>>)
- This grants flexibility:
 - For an all async app, you can use one runtime.
 - You can launch threads, and spawn runtimes inside them.
 - You can even spawn a runtime just to access a single async service.

Cargo.toml:

```
[dependencies]
futures = "0.3.28"
```

main.rs:

```
use futures::executor::block_on;
async fn do_work() {
    println!("Hello, async world!");
}

Println!("Hello, sync world");
    block_on(do_work());
}
```



Tokio Startup with Block On

Tokio also starts with block_on - and lets you tailor it to what you need (it also picks good

defaults).



```
fn main() {
   let rt = runtime::Builder::new_multi_thread()
       // YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPECIFY ANY OF THESE
        .worker threads(4) // 4 threads in the pool
        .thread_name_fn(thread_namer) // Name the threads.
                                    // This helper names them "my-pool-#" for debugging assistance.
        .thread stack size(3 * 1024 * 1024) // You can set the stack size
        .event_interval(61) // You can increase the I/O polling frequency
        .global queue interval(61) // You can change how often the global work thread is checked
        .max_blocking_threads(512) // You can limit the number of "blocking" tasks
        .max io events per tick(1024) // You can limit the number of I/O events per tick
       // YOU CAN REPLACE THIS WITH INDIVIDUAL ENABLES PER FEATURE
       .enable all()
       // Build the runtime
       .build()
        .unwrap();
   rt.block_on(hello());
```



Or: Quick-Start Tokio with a Macro

Tokio's #[tokio::main] macro lets you just write an async main function.

You can specify parameters (e.g. flavor="current_thread") to apply the same customization options.

You can even still spawn threads - and runtimes inside them.

```
#[tokio::main]
async fn main() {
   hello().await;
}
```







Writing Asynchronous Code



Hello Async/Await

- Decorating a function with async changes the return type to a Future: a handle for the task, and a link to the result when it becomes available.
- Futures don't run until you tell them to.
- The most common way to launch an async task is to await it.
- When you await a task:
 - Your task enters a paused state.
 - The task you are waiting for is added to the task list.
 - When the task finishes (it may, in turn, await) control returns to your function with the result available.



```
async fn hello() {
    println!("Hello from async");
}

#[tokio::main]
async fn main() {
    hello().await;
}
```



Joining: Simultaneous tasks, wait for all



You can use Tokio's join! macro to spawn several tasks at once, and wait for all of them.

- Results are returned in a tuple, one per task.
- Your task waits for all of the joined tasks to complete.

You can use join_all from futures, or Tokio's JoinSet to join an arbitrary vector of futures.

```
async fn hello() {
   println!("Hello from async");
   // Use the tokio::join! macro
   let result: (i32, i32) = tokio::join!(double(2), double(3));
   println!("{result:?}");
   // You can still use futures join all
   let futures: Vec<impl Future<Output = ...>> = vec![double(2), double(3)];
   let result: Vec<i32> = futures::future::join all(iter: futures).await;
   println!("{result:?}");
   // Using Tokio JoinSet
   let mut set: JoinSet<i32> = JoinSet::new();
   for i: i32 in 0..10 {
       set.spawn(task: double(i));
   while let Some(res: Result<i32, JoinError>) = set.join next().await {
       println!("{res:?}");
```



Spawn: detached tasks

Calling tokio::spawn launches an async task detached. Your task remains active, and the spawned task joins the task queue.

If you are in a multi-threaded context, the task is likely to start on another thread.

```
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```

```
async fn ticker() {
    for i: i32 in 0..10 {
        println!("tick {i}");
async fn tocker() {
    for i: i32 in 0..10 {
        println!("tock {i}");
#[tokio::main]
▶ Run | Debug
async fn main() {
    let _ = tokio::join!(
        tokio::spawn(ticker()),
        tokio::spawn(tocker()),
```



Yielding Control

If your async function is doing too much, you can explicitly yield control to another task.

When it's your function's turn to run again, it will resume where it left off.

Yielding puts your task at the back of the work queue. If there are no other tasks, you'll keep running.

Yielding can be a good band-aid, but if you are doing enough to regularly slow down other tasks - you need blocking.



```
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```

```
async fn ticker() {
    for i: i32 in 0..10 {
        println!("tick {i}");
        tokio::task::yield now().await;
async fn tocker() {
    for i: i32 in 0..10 {
        println!("tock {i}");
        tokio::task::yield now().await;
#[tokio::main]
▶ Run | Debug
async fn main() {
    let _ = tokio::join!(
        tokio::spawn(ticker()),
        tokio::spawn(tocker()),
```

Select: Process Whichever Returns First



Tokio's select! Macro launches all of the listed futures - and waits for *any one* of them to return. The other futures are canceled.

This can be useful for:

- Adding timeouts to operations.
- Listening to multiple data sources (channels & streams), and responding to whichever has an event ready.
- Retrieving data from several sources, and using whichever one answers first (the DNS or NTP model).

```
use rand::Rng;
async fn sleep_random() {
    let mut rng = rand::thread_rng();
    let secs = rng.gen_range(0..5);
    tokio::time::sleep(tokio::time::Duration::from_secs(secs)).await;
#[tokio::main]
▶ Run I Debua
async fn main() {
    for _ in 0..10 {
        tokio::select!
              = sleep_random() => println!("Task 1 Returned"),
              = sleep_random() => println!("Task 2 Returned"),
              = sleep_random() => println!("Task 3 Returned"),
```



The Problem with Blocking

Async functions are cooperatively multitasked. So if you call a synchronous function that takes a while to run, you risk "blocking" the whole task system.

Calling std::thread::sleep can be really bad, you might put the whole runtime to sleep!

Fortunately, Tokio includes

tokio::time::sleep for async sleeping.



```
use std::time::Duration;
async fn hello_delay(task: u64, time: u64) {
    println!("Task {task} has started");
    std::thread::sleep(dur: Duration::from_millis(time));
    //tokio::time::sleep(Duration::from millis(time)).await;
    println!("Task {task} is done.");
#[tokio::main]
▶ Run | Debug
async fn main() {
    let mut futures: Vec<impl Future<Output = ...>> = Vec::new();
    for i: u64 in 0..5 {
        futures.push(hello_delay(task: i, time: 500 * i));
    futures::future::join_all(futures).await;
```



Spawning Blocking Tasks

Tokio includes a command named spawn_blocking for launching synchronous blocking tasks.

Blocking tasks run in a system thread, and don't pause the async runtime. You await the spawned task and your task is idle until it returns.

You can configure the size of the blocking thread pool on runtime startup.

```
use tokio::task::spawn blocking;
fn is_prime(n: u32) -> bool {
    (2 ..= n/2).all(|i: u32| n % i != 0 )
async fn slow_counter() -> usize {
    spawn_blocking(move | | {
        (2 .. 100 000).filter(|&x: u32| is prime(x)).count()
    }).await.unwrap()
async fn ticker() {
    loop {
        println!("Still alive!");
        tokio::time::sleep(tokio::time::Duration::from_secs(1)).await;
#[tokio::main]
 ▶ Run | Debug
async fn main() {
    tokio::spawn(ticker());
    let counted primes: usize = slow counter().await;
    println!("{counted primes}");
```





Communicating with Channels



Inter-task Communication

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Let's create an asynchronous MPSC (Multi-Producer, Single Consumer) channel.

We'll send the producer to one task that periodically sends out tick messages.

We'll also spawn a consumer that sits and waits for messages.

Identical functionality is provided in the standard library for inter-thread communication.

```
num Message
    Tick,
async fn sender(tx: tokio::sync::mpsc::Sender<Message>) {
   loop {
        tx.send(Message::Tick).await.unwrap();
       tokio::time::sleep(tokio::time::Duration::from_secs(1)).await;
async fn receiver(mut rx: tokio::sync::mpsc::Receiver<Message>) {
   while let Some(message: Message) = rx.recv().await {
       match message {
            Message::Tick => println!("Tick"),
#[tokio::main]
Run | Debug
async fn main() {
   let (tx: Sender<Message>, rx: Receiver<Message>) = tokio::sync::mpsc::channel::<Message>(100)
   tokio::spawn(sender(tx));
   receiver(rx).await;
```



Listening to Multiple Channels

Let's create a second channel, and a second message producer on a different cadence.

Now we'll use select! to listen to both channels, and process whichever one has a message for us.

Channels queue data - up to the specified maximum length - you won't lose data.

```
num Message
   Tick(u32),
async fn sender(tx: tokio::sync::mpsc::Sender<Message>, n: u32) {
   loop {
        tx.send(Message::Tick(n)).await.unwrap();
        tokio::time::sleep(tokio::time::Duration::from secs(1)).await;
 sync fn receiver(
    mut rx: tokio::sync::mpsc::Receiver<Message>,
   mut rx2: tokio::sync::mpsc::Receiver<Message>
   loop {
        tokio::select! {
           Some(Message::Tick(n)) = rx.recv() => println!("Received message {n}"),
           Some(Message::Tick(n)) = rx2.recv() => println!("Received message {n}").
#[tokio::main]
async fn main() {
   let (tx, rx) = tokio::sync::mpsc::channel::<Message>(100);
   let (tx2, rx2) = tokio::sync::mpsc::channel::<Message>(100);
   tokio::spawn(sender(tx, n: 1));
   tokio::spawn(sender(tx: tx2, n: 2));
   receiver(rx, rx2).await;
```





Channels Between Threads and Tasks

You can mix-and-match channel communication between threads and tasks - or even async runtimes - by using standard library channels and obtaining a "handle" to the runtime.

Let's create a standard library channel, and pass the sender to a system thread along with a handle for connecting to a runtime from the outside.

The thread sends data into the channel.

This can work in either direction. It's useful for:

- System threads managing intensive/time critical tasks and notifying the runtime of updates.
- CPU intensive tasks can run on a dedicated thread pool, and receive tasks from (and send results to) the async system.

This is a great way to have the best of both worlds.

```
use std::time::Duration;
#[tokio::main]
▶ Run | Debug
async fn main() {
    let (tx, mut rx) = tokio::sync::mpsc::channel::<u32>(100);
    let handle = tokio::runtime::Handle::current();
    std::thread::spawn(move | {
        let mut n: i32 = 0;
        loop {
            std::thread::sleep(dur: Duration::from secs(1));
            let my tx = tx.clone();
            handle.spawn(async move {
                my_tx.send(n).await.unwrap();
            n += 1;
    while let Some(n) = rx.recv().await {
        println!("Received {n} from the system thread");
```



Asynchronous Iteration with Streams



Streams: Async Iterators

Iterators work by:

- Storing a type they will yield.
- Returning the next item with next() or None if the iterator is done.

Streams are the same, but next() is an async call.

This gives some benefits:

- Iterating a huge data-set yields on each element, ensuring smooth task flow.
- Streams become self-pacing. Other parts of the data pipeline are awaiting too - so the stream advances at the speed of the slowest item, completely idle while paused.

```
se tokio stream::StreamExt:
truct MyStream {
  counter: u32,
mpl tokio stream::Stream for MyStream {
  type Item = u32;
   fn poll next(
      mut self: std::pin::Pin<&mut Self>,
       cx: &mut std::task::Context<'_>
       self.counter += 1;
       for _ in 0..1000 {
       if self.counter < 100 {
           std::task::Poll::Ready(Some(self.counter))
           std::task::Poll::Ready(None)
sync fn ticker() {
   loop {
       tokio::task::yield_now().await;
   let mut stream: MyStream = MyStream { counter: 0 };
   while stream.next().await.is_some() {
ftokio::main]
sync fn main() {
   tokio::spawn(ticker());
   streamer().await;
```



Streams as Generators

You can use a stream as a generator - it doesn't have to be streaming pre-existing content.

Each call to poll_next() generates a new item.

You can use this for anything from random number generation - when you need random numbers, subscribe to the stream - to unique identifiers or iterative math.

```
use tokio_stream::StreamExt;
struct Doubler {
   counter: u32,
impl tokio stream::Stream for Doubler {
   type Item = u32;
   fn poll next(
       mut self: std::pin::Pin<&mut Self>,
        _cx: &mut std::task::Context<'_>
     -> std::task::Poll<Option<Self::Item>> {
        self.counter *= 2;
       if self.counter < u32::MAX/2 {</pre>
           std::task::Poll::Ready(Some(self.counter))
        } else {
            std::task::Poll::Ready(None)
#[tokio::main]
Run | Debua
async fn main() {
   let mut stream: Doubler = Doubler { counter: 1 };
   while let Some(n) = stream.next().await {
       println!("{n}");
```



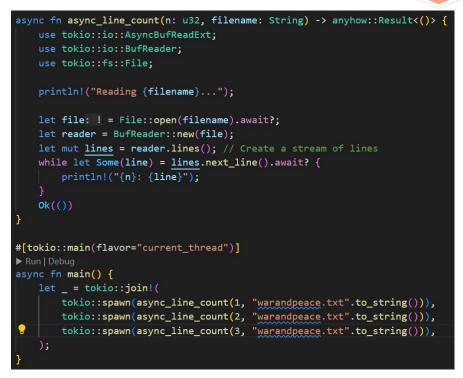


Convert a Reader into a Stream

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Tokio's stream helpers can convert readers into streams (and vice versa).

So you can open a file, stream the content, and File IO becomes self-pacing - and no need to read the whole file at once







Tracing & Metrics



Simple Trace Logging

The tracing crate has become the standard way for async and synchronous libraries to issue log messages.

The program receiving the messages needs a tracing subscriber.

Subscribers can print to the console, write to log files, write structured data to databases, send it to analytics.

The default "fmt" provider prints to the console.

```
#[tokio::main]
▶ Run | Debug
async fn main() {
    // Start configuring a `fmt` subscriber
   let subscriber = tracing_subscriber::fmt()
       // Use a more compact, abbreviated log format
        .compact()
        // Display source code file paths
        .with_file(true)
        // Display source code line numbers
        .with_line_number(true)
        // Display the thread ID an event was recorded on
        .with thread ids(true)
       // Don't display the event's target (module path)
        .with target(false)
        // Build the subscriber
        .finish();
    // Set the subscriber as the default
    tracing::subscriber::set global default(subscriber).unwrap();
    // Log some events
    tracing::info!("Starting up");
    tracing::warn!("Are you sure this is a good idea?");
    tracing::error!("This is an error!");
```



2023-07-29T15:26:10.436640Z INFO ThreadId(01) tracing_log\src\main.rs:22: Starting up
2023-07-29T15:26:10.436934Z WARN ThreadId(01) tracing_log\src\main.rs:23: Are you sure this is a good idea?
2023-07-29T15:26:10.437174Z ERROR ThreadId(01) tracing_log\src\main_rs:24: This is an error!

Structured Logging with Tracing

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Changing log output to easily parsable JSON is easy. Change the subscriber builder.



```
{"timestamp":"2023-07-29T15:30:12.066733Z","level":"INFO","fields":{"message":"Starting up"},"target":"tracing_json"}
{"timestamp":"2023-07-29T15:30:12.066967Z","level":"WARN","fields":{"message":"Are you sure this is a good idea?"},"target":"tracing_json"}
{"timestamp":"2023-07-29T15:30:12.067099Z","level":"ERROR","fields":{"message":"This is an error!"},"target":"tracing_json"}
```

Instrumenting Spans

The tracing system includes instrumentation.

Enable span events in your output.

Decorate functions to trace with #[instrument]

You now have call-time information and parameters logged. You can change what it logged with parameters to the macro.

You can also manually create spans inside your code

```
se tracing subscriber::fmt::format::FmtSpan;
#[tracing::instrument]
async fn hello() {
    println!("Hello World");
    tokio::time::sleep(tokio::time::Duration::from secs(1)).await;
#[tokio::main]
▶ Run | Debua
async fn main() -> anyhow::Result<()> {
    // Applications that receive events need to subscribe
    //let subscriber = tracing subscriber::FmtSubscriber::new();
    // Start configuring a `fmt` subscriber
    let subscriber = tracing subscriber::fmt()
        // Use a more compact, abbreviated log format
        // Display source code file paths
        .with file(true)
        // Display source code line numbers
        .with line number(true)
        // Display the thread ID an event was recorded on
        .with thread ids(true)
        // Don't display the event's target (module path)
        .with target(false)
        // Add span events
        .with span events(FmtSpan::ENTER | FmtSpan::CLOSE)
        // Build the subscriber
        .finish();
    // Set the subscriber as the default
    tracing::subscriber::set_global_default(subscriber)?;
    hello().await:
```





2023-07-29T15:34:03.688526Z **INFO ThreadId(01) hello:** tracing_spans\src\main.rs:3: **enter** 2023-07-29T15:34:03.688764Z **INFO ThreadId(01) hello:** tracing_spans\<u>s</u>rc\main.rs:3: **close time.busy=802µs time.idle=1.01s**

Tokio-Console: It's like "htop" for async

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Install Tokio Console with cargo install

tokio-console

Subscribe to the console with:

console_subscriber::init();

```
connection: http://127.0.0.1:6669/ (CONNECTED)
views: \mathbf{t} = \text{tasks}, \mathbf{r} = \text{resources}
controls: o esc = return to task list, a = auit
ID: 2 II
                                                                    Current wakers: 1 (clones: 312, drops: 311)
Name: burn
                                                                   Woken: 1752 times, last woken: 5.48629762s ago
Taraet: tokio::task
Location: console-subscriber/examples/app.rs:40:22
Total Time: 15m05s
Busy: 239.64ms (0.03%)
Scheduled: 38.53ms (0.00%)
Idle: 15m04s (99.97%)
-Poll Times Percentiles— Poll Times Histogram-
p10: 40.19µs
p25: 52.48µs
p50: 87.55us
p75: 401.41us
p90: 659.46us
p95: 851.97µs
 p99: 1.47ms
                             027.39us
-Sched Times Percentiles Scheduled Times Histogram-
p10: 13.63µs
p25: 18.18µs
p50: 26.37µs
p75: 38.40µs
p90: 80.38µs
p95: 145.41µs
p99: 247.81us
                             07.81us
Fields—
 kind=task
```

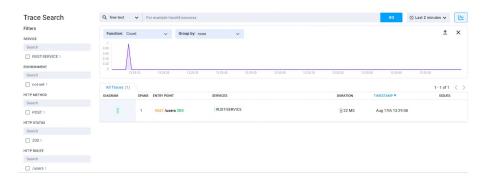


OpenTelemetry & More

With the tracing_opentelemetry crate, you can connect to an *OpenTelemetry* system - and send your spans, trace points, etc.

You can then view your distributed telemetry in the various OpenTelemetry tools. Here's a screenshot of Aspecto.









Pinning



What is Pinning?

Rust's memory model strictly ensures that references must still exist, won't move, and won't be dropped while still in use.

That's *great* for avoiding common memory bugs.

It's *tricky* in a highly asynchronous environment, tasks may depend upon other tasks - which typically move around quite a bit.



Pinning lets you tell Rust that a variable needs to stick around - in the same place - until you unpin it.

- A stream that relies upon another stream will typically pin its access to the previous stream.
- A select operation may need to pin entries for the same reason.
- Asynchronously calling yourself recursion
 requires pinning the iterations.



Pinning and Select

(Code from the Tokio examples)

Of you want to create multiple futures as variables, and operate on them - you need to make sure that they will remain valid.

Tokio's pin! macro makes this straightforward.



```
use tokio::{pin, select};
async fn my_async_fn() {
    // async logic here
#[tokio::main]
async fn main() {
    pin! {
        let future1 = my_async_fn();
        let future2 = my_async_fn();
    select! {
          = &mut future1 => {}
          = &mut future2 => {}
```



Pinning and Recursion

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Async recursion is difficult, because you need to pin the futures in turn.

The async_recursion crate offers an easy way.

This won't compile:

Let the crate do its magic for you:

```
use async_recursion::async_recursion;

#[async_recursion]
async fn fib(n : u32) -> u32 {
    match n {
        0 | 1 => 1,
        _ => fib(n-1).await + fib(n-2).await
    }
}
```



Adapting a Stream In-Flight

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Tokio supports *adapters* - streams that read other streams, mutate them, and output the new stream.

This can be a great way to modify data in-flight, and take advantage of stream self-pacing and yielding/awaiting.

Unfortunately, using a parent stream requires some pinning gymnastics. Use the pin_project_lite crate to make it easier.

```
_project! {
  struct ToUpper {
      #[pin]
      stream: tokio_stream::wrappers::LinesStream<BufReader<tokio::fs::File>>,
mpl ToUpper {
  fn new(stream: tokio_stream::wrappers::LinesStream<BufReader<tokio::fs::File>>) -> Self {
      Self { stream }
mpl tokio stream::Stream for ToUpper {
  type Item = std::io::Result<String>;
  fn poll_next(self: std::pin::Pin<&mut Self>, cx: &mut std::task::Context<'_>) -> std::task::Poll<Option<Self::Item>>
      self.project().stream.poll_next(cx).map(|opt: Option<Result<String, Error>>| {
          opt.map(|res: Result<String, Error>| {
              res.map(op: |line: String| {
                  line.to_uppercase() + "\n"
```



Async Traits

Ardan labs

Traits can't - yet (it's being stabilized) - contain async functions by default.

This won't compile:

```
trait MyTrait {
    async fn f() {}
}
```

Examples taken from the async_trait crate documentation.



Using the async_trait crate does the hard work for you:

```
use async_trait::async_trait;
trait Advertisement {
struct Modal;
impl Advertisement for Modal {
    async fn run(&self) {
        self.render_fullscreen().await;
        for _ in 0..4u16 {
            remind_user_to_join_mailing_list().await;
        self.hide_for_now().await;
```

Questions?



All code used in this presentation is available here:

https://github.com/thebracket/Ardan-1HourAsync

