



Recap

- Overview: Generics
- Generic Swap
- Generics Pitfalls
- Generic Array Swap

Learning Goals

- Learn how to write C code that works with any data type.
- Learn how to pass functions as parameters
- Learn how to write functions that accept functions as parameters

Plan for Today

- Generics So Far
- Motivating Example: Bubble Sort
- Function Pointers
- Example: Generic Printing

Disclaimer: Slides for this lecture were borrowed from

—Nick Troccoli's Stanford CS107 class

Lecture Plan

- Generics So Far
- Motivating Example: Bubble Sort
- Function Pointers
- Example: Generic Printing

Generics So Far

- void * is a variable type that represents a generic pointer "to something".
- We cannot perform pointer arithmetic with or dereference a **void** *.
- We can use **memcpy** or **memmove** to copy data from one memory location to another.
- To do pointer arithmetic with a **void** *, we must first cast it to a **char** *.
- void * and generics are powerful but dangerous because of the lack of type checking, so we must be extra careful when working with generic memory.

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {
    char temp[nbytes];
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);
    memcpy(data2ptr, temp, nbytes);
}
```

We can use **void** * to represent a pointer to any data, and **memcpy/memmove** to copy arbitrary bytes.

Generic Array Swap

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);
}
```

We can cast to a **char** * in order to perform manual byte arithmetic with void * pointers.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);
}
```

```
int nums[] = {5, 2, 3, 4, 1};
size_t nelems = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);
swap_ends(nums, nelems, sizeof(nums[0]));
```

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);
}
```

```
short nums[] = {5, 2, 3, 4, 1};
size_t nelems = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);
swap_ends(nums, nelems, sizeof(nums[0]));
```

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);
}
```

```
char *strs[] = {"Hi", "Hello", "Howdy"};
size_t nelems = sizeof(strs) / sizeof(strs[0]);
swap_ends(strs, nelems, sizeof(strs[0]));
```

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);
}
```

```
mystruct structs[] = ...;
size_t nelems = ...;
swap_ends(structs, nelems, sizeof(structs[0]));
```



Demo: Void *s Gone Wrong



swap_ends.c

Void * Pitfalls

- void *s are powerful, but dangerous C cannot do as much checking!
- E.g. with **int**, C would never let you swap *half* of an int. With **void *s**, this can happen!

```
int x = 0xffffffff;
int y = 0xeeeeeee;
swap(&x, &y, sizeof(short));
// now x = 0xffffeeee, y = 0xeeeeffff!
printf("x = 0x%x, y = 0x%x\n", x, y);
```

memset

memset is a function that sets a specified amount of bytes at one address to a certain value.

```
void *memset(void *s, int c, size_t n);
```

It fills n bytes starting at memory location \mathbf{s} with the byte \mathbf{c} . (It also returns \mathbf{s}).

```
int counts[5];
memset(counts, 0, 3);  // zero out first 3 bytes at counts
memset(counts + 3, 0xff, 4)  // set 3rd entry's bytes to 1s
```

Why are void * pointers useful?

Because each parameter and return type must be a *single type* with a *single size*.

Why Are void * Pointers Useful?

- Each parameter and return type must be a single type with a single size.
- **Problem #1:** for a function parameter to accept multiple data types, it needs to be able to accept data of different sizes.
 - **Key Idea #1:** pointers are all the same size regardless of what they point to. To pass different sizes of data via a single parameter type, make the parameter be a pointer to the data instead.
- **Problem #2:** we still might pass either a char *, int *, etc. These are the same size, but still different declared types. What should the parameter type be?
 - **Key Idea #2:** A void * encompasses all these types it represents a "pointer to something". A char *, int *, etc. all implicitly cast to void *.
- **Solution:** to pass one of multiple types via a single parameter/return, that parameter/return's type can be **void ***, and we can pass a pointer to the data.

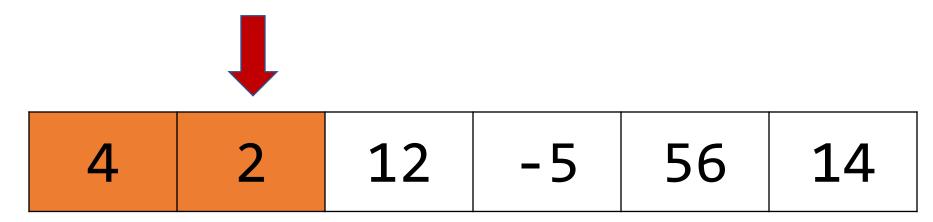
Lecture Plan

- Generics So Far
- Motivating Example: Bubble Sort
- Function Pointers
- Example: Generic Printing

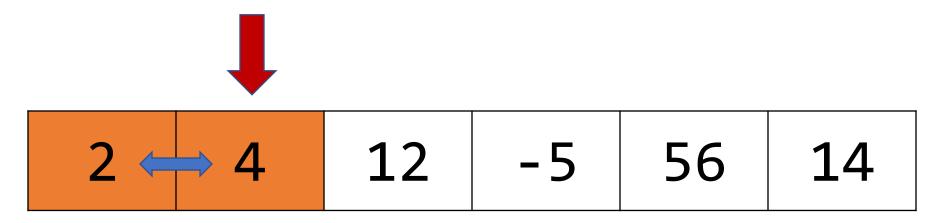
 Let's write a function to sort a list of integers. We'll use the bubble sort algorithm.



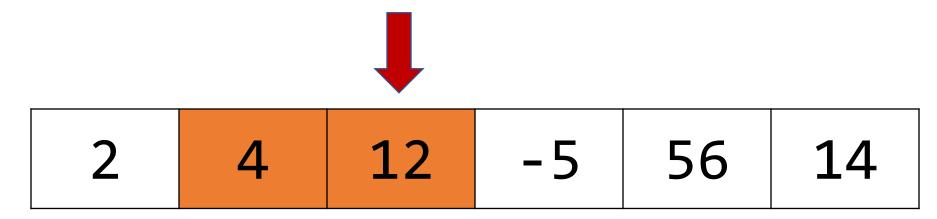
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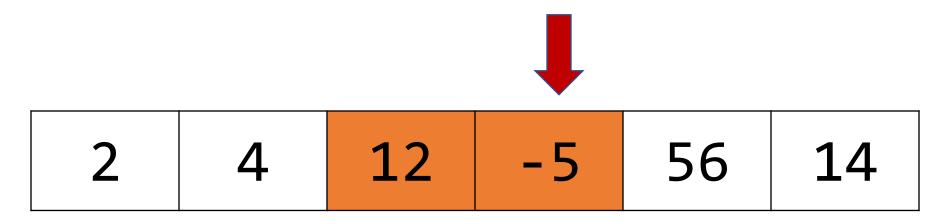
 Let's write a function to sort a list of integers. We'll use the bubble sort algorithm.



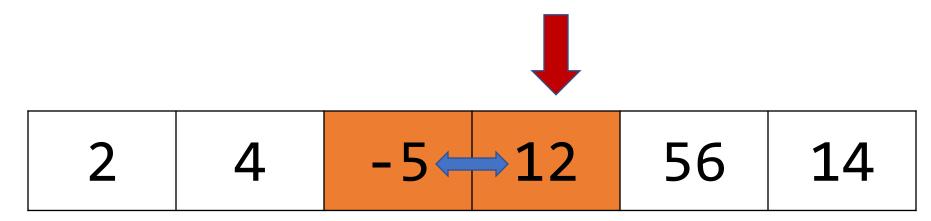
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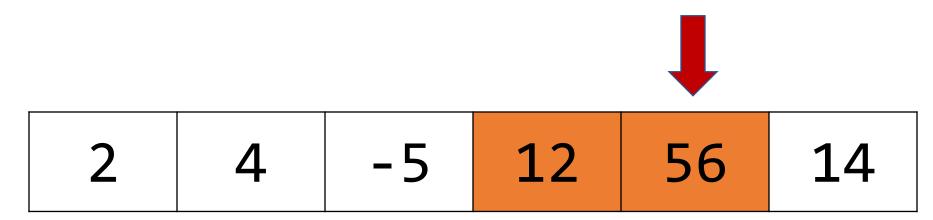
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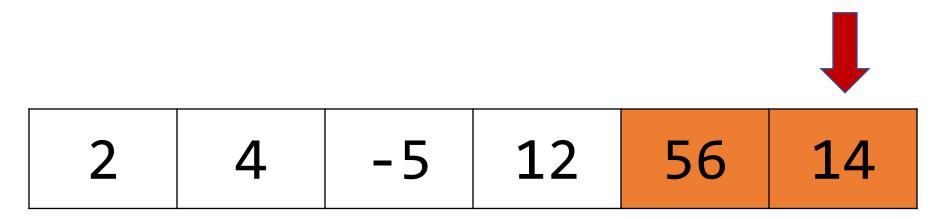
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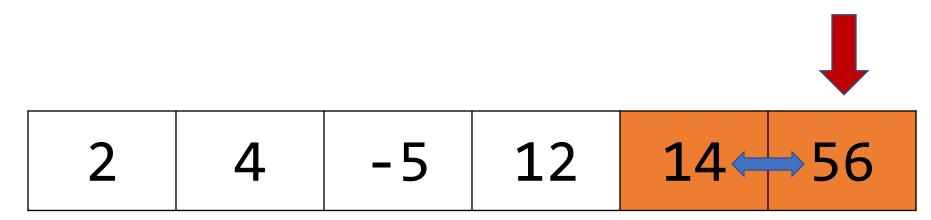
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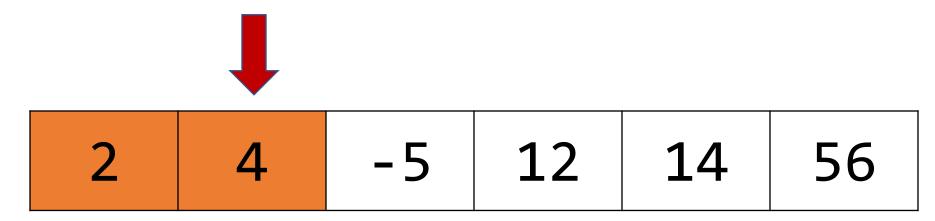
 Let's write a function to sort a list of integers. We'll use the bubble sort algorithm.



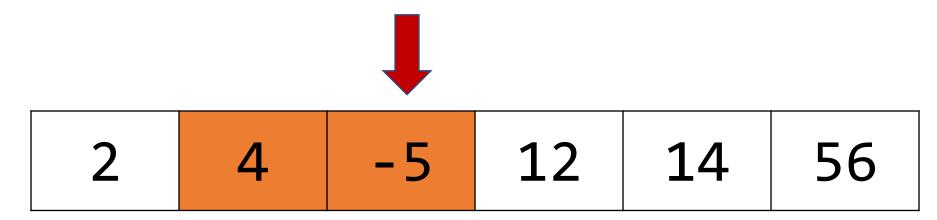
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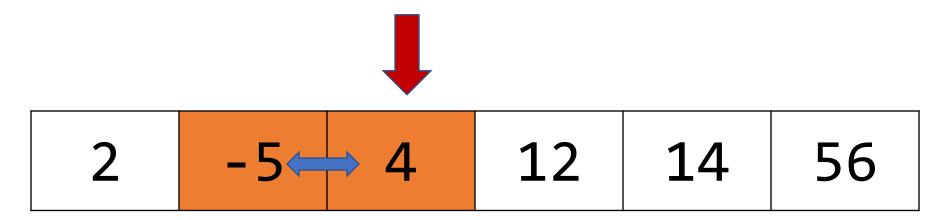
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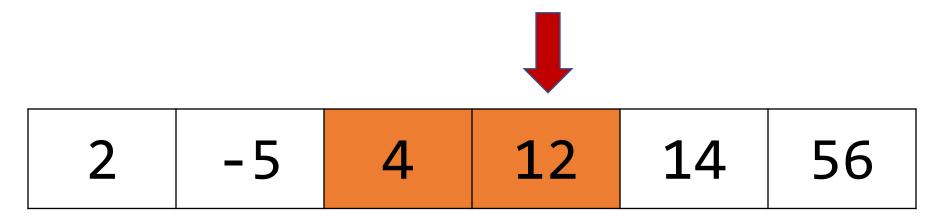
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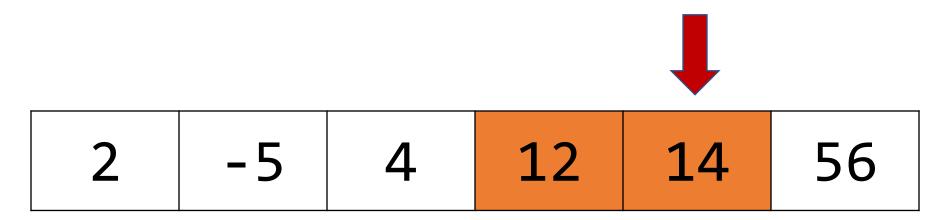
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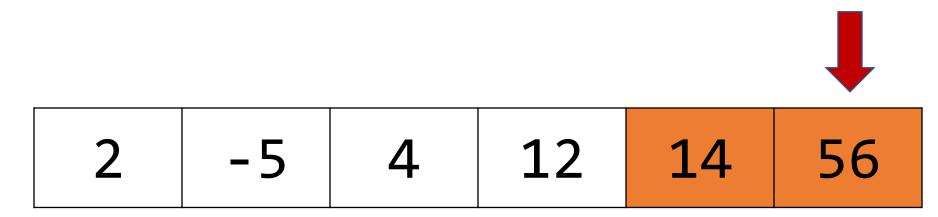
 Let's write a function to sort a list of integers. We'll use the bubble sort algorithm.



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• Bubble sort repeatedly goes through the array, swapping any pairs of elem In general, bubble sort requires up to n - 1 passes to sort an array of length n, though it may end sooner if a pass doesn't swap anything.

 Let's write a function to sort a list of integers. We'll use the bubble sort algorithm.





• Bubble sort repeatedly goes through the array, swapping any pairs of Only two more passes are needed to arrive at the above. The first exchanges the 2 and the -5, and the second leaves everything as is.

Integer Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort_int(int *arr, int n) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {</pre>
            if (arr[i - 1] > arr[i]) {
                 swapped = true;
                 swap int(&arr[i - 1], &arr[i]);
        if (!swapped) {
            return;
```

How can we make this function generic, to sort an array of *any type*?

Integer Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort_int(int *arr, int n) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {</pre>
            if (arr[i - 1] > arr[i]) {
                 swapped = true;
                 swap int(&arr[i - 1], &arr[i]);
        if (!swapped) {
            return;
```

Let's start by making the parameters and swap generic.

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, int n, int elem_size_bytes) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {</pre>
            if (arr[i - 1] > arr[i]) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(&arr[i - 1], &arr[i], elem_size_bytes);
        if (!swapped) {
                                     Let's start by making the
            return;
                                     parameters and swap generic.
```

Key Idea: Locating i-th Elem

A common generics idiom is getting a pointer to the i-th element of a generic array. From last lecture, we know how to locate the **last** element:

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);
}
```

How can we generalize this to get the location of the i-th element?

```
void *ith_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_bytes;
```

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, int n, int elem_size_bytes) {
   while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
       for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {
           void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;
            if (*p_prev_elem > *p_curr_elem) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
        if (!swapped) {
                                       Let's start by making the
            return;
                                       parameters and swap generic.
```

40

```
void bubble sort(void *arr, int n, int elem size bytes) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {</pre>
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p curr elem = (char *)arr + i * elem size bytes;
            if (*p_prev_elem > *p_curr_elem) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
        if (!swapped) {
            return;
```

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, int n, int elem_size_bytes) {
   while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;
            if (*p_prev_elem > *p_curr_elem) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
                              Wait a minute...this doesn't work! We can't
        if (!swapped) {
                              dereference void *s OR compare any element
            return;
                               with >, since they may not be numbers!
```

A Generics Conundrum

- We've hit a snag there is no way to generically compare elements.
 They could be any type and have complex ways to compare them.
- How can we write code to compare any two elements of the same type?
- That's not something that bubble sort can ever know how to do.
 BUT our caller should know how to do this, because they're supplying the data....let's ask them!

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```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, int n, int elem_size_bytes) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p curr elem = (char *)arr + i * elem size bytes;
            if (*p_prev_elem > *p_curr_elem) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
                         bubble_sort (inner voice): hey,
        if (!swapped) {
                         you, person who called us. Do
            return;
                         you know how to compare the
                         items at these two addresses?
```

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, int n, int elem_size_bytes) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p curr elem = (char *)arr + i * elem size bytes;
            if (*p_prev_elem > *p_curr_elem) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
                                   Caller: yeah, I know how to compare them.
        if (!swapped) {
                                   You don't know what data type they are, but I
            return;
                                   do. I have a function that can do the
```

comparison for you and tell you the result.

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, int n, int elem_size_bytes,
                                      function compare_fn) {
   while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {</pre>
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;
            if (compare_fn(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem)) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
                               How can we compare these elements?
        if (!swapped) {
                               They can pass us this function as a
            return;
```

parameter. The function's job is to tell us

how two elements compare.

```
void bubble sort(void *arr, int n, int elem size bytes,
                 bool (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)) {
   while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {</pre>
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;
            if (compare_fn(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem)) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
                               How can we compare these elements?
        if (!swapped) {
                               They can pass us this function as a
            return;
```

how two elements compare.

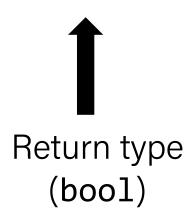
parameter. The function's job is to tell us

A function pointer is the variable type for passing a function as a parameter. Here is how the parameter's type is declared.

bool (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)

A function pointer is the variable type for passing a function as a parameter. Here is how the parameter's type is declared.

```
bool (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)
```



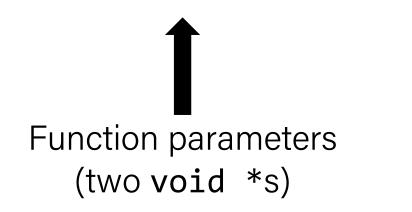
A function pointer is the variable type for passing a function as a parameter. Here is how the parameter's type is declared.

bool (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)

Function pointer name (compare_fn)

A function pointer is the variable type for passing a function as a parameter. Here is how the parameter's type is declared.

bool (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)



Here's the general variable type syntax:

```
[return type] (*[name])([parameters])
```

```
void bubble sort(void *arr, int n, int elem size bytes,
                 bool (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)) {
   while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            void *p prev elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem size bytes;
            void *p curr elem = (char *)arr + i * elem size bytes;
            if (compare_fn(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem)) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
        if (!swapped) {
            return;
```

```
bool integer_compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    int nums[] = \{4, 2, -5, 1, 12, 56\};
    int nums count = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);
    bubble sort(nums, nums count, sizeof(nums[0]), integer compare);
                             bubble_sort is generic and works for any type.
```

But the **caller** knows the specific type of data being sorted and provides a comparison function specifically for that data type.

```
bool string_compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
    ...
}
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    char *classes[] = {"COMP100", "COMP132", "COMP201", "COMP202"};
    int arr_count = sizeof(classes) / sizeof(classes[0]);
    bubble_sort(classes, arr_count, sizeof(classes[0]), string_compare);
    ...
```

bubble_sort is generic and works for any type. But the **caller** knows the specific type of data being sorted and provides a comparison function specifically for that data type.

Bubble Sort

- Bubble Sort is written as a generic library function to be imported into potentially many programs to be used with many types. It must have a single function signature but work with any type of data.
- Its comparison function type is part of its function signature the comparison function signature must use one set of types but accept any data of any size. How do we do this?
 - The function will instead accept pointers to the data via void * parameters
 - This means that the functions must be written to handle parameters which are pointers to the data to be compared

```
void bubble sort(void *arr, int n, int elem size bytes,
                 bool (*compare fn)(void *a, void *b)) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            void *p prev elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem size bytes;
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;
            if (compare_fn(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem)) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p prev elem, p curr el
                                             Caller's stack fram
        if (!swapped) {
            return;
                                                          2
                                             bubble_sort
                                                                           p prev elem p curr elem
                                                                     arr
```

This means that functions with generic parameters must always take pointers to the data they care about.

We can use the following pattern:

- 1) Cast the void *argument(s) and set typed pointers equal to them.
- 2) Dereference the typed pointer(s) to access the values.
- 3) Perform the necessary operation.

(steps 1 and 2 can often be combined into a single step)

```
bool integer compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
     // 1) cast arguments to int *s
     int *num1ptr = (int *)ptr1;
     int *num2ptr = (int *)ptr2;
     // 2) dereference typed points to access values
     int num1 = *num1ptr;
                                This function is created by the caller
     int num2 = *num2ptr;
                                 specifically to compare integers,
                                 knowing their addresses are necessarily
     // 3) perform operation
                                 disguised as void *so that bubble_sort
     return num1 > num2;
                                 can work for any array type.
```

```
bool integer compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
     // 1) cast arguments to int *s
     int *num1ptr = (int *)ptr1;
     int *num2ptr = (int *)ptr2;
     // 2) dereference typed
                                 points to access values
     int num1 = *num1ptr;
                                  However, the type of the comparison
     int num2 = *num2ptr;
                                  function that e.g. bubble sort
                                  accepts must be generic, since we
     // 3) perform operation
                                  are writing one bubble_sort function
     return num1 > num2;
                                  to work with any data type.
```

```
bool integer_compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
     return *(int *)ptr1 > *(int *)ptr2;
                                    Caller's stack fram
                                    bubble_sort
                                                             p_pre_elem p_curr_elem
                                     . . .
                                    Cmp fn stack frame
                                                                  ptr2
                                                         ptr1
```

Comparison Functions

- Function pointers are used often in cases like this to compare two values of the same type. These are called **comparison functions**.
- The standard comparison function in many C functions provides even more information. It should return:
 - < 0 if first value should come before second value
 - > 0 if first value should come after second value
 - 0 if first value and second value are equivalent
- This is the same return value format as strcmp!

int (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)

Comparison Functions

```
int integer_compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
    return *(int *)ptr1 - *(int *)ptr2;
}
```

```
void bubble sort(void *arr, int n, int elem size bytes,
                 int (*compare fn)(void *a, void *b)) {
   while (true) {
       bool swapped = false;
        for (int i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            void *p prev elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem size bytes;
            void *p curr elem = (char *)arr + i * elem size bytes;
            if (compare_fn(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem) > 0) {
                swapped = true;
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
        if (!swapped) {
            return;
```

Comparison Functions

- Exercise: how can we write a comparison function for bubble sort to sort strings in alphabetical order?
- The common prototype provides even more information. It should return:
 - < 0 if first value should come before second value
 - > 0 if first value should come after second value
 - 0 if first value and second value are equivalent

```
int (*compare_fn)(void *a, void *b)
```

String Comparison Function

```
int string compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
      // cast arguments and dereference
     char *str1 = *(char **)ptr1:
     char *str2 = *(char **)ptr2
                                     Caller's stack fram
     // perform operation
     return strcmp(str1, str2);
                                     bubble_sort
                                                              p_prev_elem p_curr_elem
                                     Cmp fn stack frame
                                                         ptr1
                                                                  ptr2
```

Function Pointer Pitfalls

- If a function takes a function pointer as a parameter, it will accept it if it fits the specified signature.
- This is dangerous! E.g. what happens if you pass in a string comparison function when sorting an integer array?

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- Function pointers can be used in a variety of ways. For instance, you could have:
 - A function to compare two elements of a given type
 - A function to print out an element of a given type
 - A function to free memory associated with a given type
 - And more...

- Function pointers can be used in a variety of ways. For instance, you could have:
 - A function to compare two elements of a given type
 - A function to print out an element of a given type
 - A function to free memory associated with a given type
 - And more...

Demo: Generic Printing



print_array.c

Common Utility Callback Functions

• Comparison function – compares two elements of a given type.

Printing function – prints out an element of a given type

• There are many more! You can specify any functions you would like passed in when writing your own generic functions.

Demo: Count Matches



count_matches.c

Count Matches

- Let's write a generic function count_matches that can count the number of a certain type of element in a generic array.
- It should take in as parameters information about the generic array, and a function parameter that can take in a pointer to a single array element and tell us if it's a match.

Count Matches

```
int count matches(void *base, int nelems, int elem size bytes,
                  bool (*match fn)(void *)) {
    int match count = 0;
    for (int i = 0; i < nelems; i++) {
        void *curr p = (char *)base + i * elem size bytes;
        if (match fn(curr p)) {
            match count++;
    return match count;
```

Function Pointers As Variables

In addition to parameters, you can make normal variables that are functions.

```
int do something(char *str) {
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    int (*func_var)(char *) = do_something;
    func_var("testing");
    return 0;
```

Generic C Standard Library Functions

- qsort I can sort an array of any type! To do that, I need you to provide me
 a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to
 sort.
- bsearch I can use binary search to search for a key in an array of any type!
 To do that, I need you to provide me a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to search.
- **1find** I can use linear search to search for a key in an array of any type! To do that, I need you to provide me a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to search.
- **1search** I can use linear search to search for a key in an array of any type! I will also add the key for you if I can't find it. In order to do that, I need you to provide me a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to search.

Generic C Standard Library Functions

• **scandir** – I can create a directory listing with any order and contents! To do that, I need you to provide me a function that tells me whether you want me to include a given directory entry in the listing. I also need you to provide me a function that tells me the correct ordering of two given directory entries.

Recap

- We can pass functions as parameters to pass logic around in our programs.
- Comparison functions are one common class of functions passed as parameters to generically compare the elements at two addresses.
- Functions handling generic data must use pointers to the data they care about, since any parameters must have one type and one size.

Generics Overview

- We use void * pointers and memory operations like memcpy and memmove to make data operations generic.
- We use **function pointers** to make logic/functionality operations generic.

Recap

- Generics So Far
- Motivating Example: Bubble Sort
- Function Pointers
- Example: Generic Printing

Next time: const, Structures