The Hack VM II: Branching and memory
COMSM1302 Overview of Computer Architecture

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The same way as in assembly — with jumps, which we now call gotos as they need no longer correspond to only a single machine code instruction.

The syntax is:

- `label LABEL_NAME` declares a label at that point of the code.
- `goto LABEL_NAME` jumps to that label from anywhere in the code.[1]
- `if-goto LABEL_NAME` pops the stack and executes `goto LABEL_NAME` if the result is non-zero (i.e. if it is not `false`).

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We should use `if-goto` in the same way that we would use `D;JNE` in assembly. The differences are:

- The value we compare to zero is the top of the stack instead of D.
- We have proper logical operators `gt`, `eq`, `lt`, `and`, `or` and `not` built into the language to replace the various jump conditions.

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pointer and this

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Instead, we can use **`pointer`** and **`this`**, two special memory segments. The map from `this` addresses to physical RAM is not fixed in advance, but determined at run-time. We are guaranteed that:

`this 0` maps to RAM[`pointer 0`],
`this 1` maps to RAM[(`pointer 0`) + 1],
`this 2` maps to RAM[(`pointer 0`) + 2]

and so on.

Implementing arrays in Hack VM

We are guaranteed that `this` i maps to RAM[(`pointer 0`) + i] for all i.

We will still need to decide in advance which segments of physical memory will hold our array, just like with assembly. But if we have decided it will be stored in RAM[0x0800]–RAM[0x08FF] (say), then e.g.:

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push constant 2048
push local 0
add             // Stack now contains (local 0) + 0x0800
pop pointer 0 // this i now maps to (local 0) + 0x0800 + i
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will load the `local 0`'th element of the array onto the stack (counting from 0).

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Of course, if `local 0` is 256 or more then we'll run into problems!

Our high-level language will handle this memory allocation automatically, but for now we do it manually. Life is suffering.

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`that` behaves almost exactly like `this`. The only differences are that the map is from `that 0` to RAM[`pointer 1`], and that (unlike `this 0` and `pointer 0`) the map can be to any area of physical RAM.

We'll discuss memory mapping in more detail next video.

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  - The contents of `static` persist between function calls. (It will be used later for static and global variables in our high-level language.)
- **`temp`** behaves exactly like `local`, but is mapped to a much smaller area of memory. It's intended as "working space" for use by a compiler from a high-level language for compiling an individual instruction without needing to disrupt the contents of `local`.

Putting it all together: fill.asm as VM code

Recall our assembly program fill.asm, which filled every pixel of the screen black. While any key was held, the screen would instead be filled white.

We implement the same program in Hack VM as fill.vm, for comparison.

[See video for live coding and demonstration.]