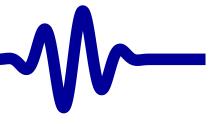


2. Registers

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Lesson Overview



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- What is a register (reg)?
- How do things change with time?
- Discover the system clock

Objectives

- Learn how to create combinatorial logic with registers
- Learn to create clocked (synchronous) logic
- Understand that registers can "remember" things
- Understand where your System Clock comes from
- Timing Checks, and why they are important



Registers



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Exercises

Why use registers?

- Wires have no memory
- Only registers can hold state (data)

Two basic types, both set with an always

1. Combinatorial: Like wires

```
always @(*)
A = B;
```

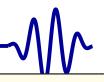
This form can be easier to read when the logic becomes complex

2. Synchronous: Only changes values on a clock

```
always @(posedge i_clk)
    A <= B;</pre>
```



Combinatorial Regs



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Exercises

```
always @(*) A = 9'h87;
```

- Registers can only be assigned in always blocks.
- Always blocks may consist of one statement, or
- Many statements between a begin and end pair



Combinatorial Regs

```
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```

```
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Exercises

This block

- Looks like software
- Acts like you would expect in a simulator
- Takes no time at all in hardware
 The hardware acts as if all statements were done at once

Only use "=" in a combinational always block



Latches



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Exercises

What happens here?

This is called a latch

- It requires memory
- May do one thing in simulation, another in hardware
- Most FPGA's don't support latches
- Can have subtle timing problems in hardware

Avoid using latches!



Last Assignment Wins



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Exercises

What happens here?

No latch is inferred

- This is a very useful pattern!
- o_R now has a default value
 This prevents a latch from being inferred
- No memory is required
- The last assignment gives o_R its final value



Flip Flops

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```

```
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Exercises

- Any registers set within an always @(posedge i_clk) block will transitions to their new values on the next clock edge only
 - Only put a bonafide clock edge should be used
 - Do not transition on anything you create in logic
- ${\scriptscriptstyle \square}$ Note that we are using <= for assignment
 - This is a non-blocking assignment
 - Most, if not all, clocked register should be set with <=



Blocking



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Exercises

This is a non-blocking assignment

```
always @(posedge i_clk)
    A <= A + 1'b1;</pre>
```

Blocking assignment

```
always @(posedge i_clk)

A = A + 1'b1;
```

- A blocking assignment's value may be referenced again before the clock edge
 - Creates the appearance of time passing within the block
 - It may also cause simulation-hardware mismatch
 - Use with caution
- In this case, both generate the same logic



Non-Blocking



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Exercises

What value will be given for A?

- Assume it starts at zero
- What will it be after one clock tick?

- The assignment only takes place on the clock edge
- Last assignment wins
- □ A is set to 1'b1



Blocking



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Exercises

Now what value will be given for A?

- Assume it starts at zero
- What will it be after one clock tick?

- Again, the assignment only takes place on the clock edge
- It appears as though it took several steps
- □ A is set to 6



Blocking



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Exercises

What if something depends upon A in another block?

Assume A=0 before the clock tick

- This result is simulation dependent!
- B may be set to 0, or it may be set to 6

Don't do this! Use <= within an always @(posedge i_clk)



Non-Blocking



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Dimmer

Exercises

Now what will B be set to?

 ${\scriptscriptstyle
m ullet}$ Assume A=0 before the clock tick

- A will be set to 1
- B will always be set to 0

Now simulation matches hardware



All in Parallel



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Exercises

- A design may contain multiple always blocks
- The hardware will execute all at once
- The simulator will execute one at a time

Rules: When using the simulator, ...

- Make sure your design can be synthesized
- Make sure it fits within your chosen device
 - This is not a synthesizer task
 - Requires using the synthesizer periodically
- Make sure it maintains an appropriate clock rate
 - We'll get to timing checks in a moment



Feedback



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Exercises

- Wires in a loop created circular logic
- Clocked registers in a loop creates feedback

Feedback is used commonly in control systems



Blinky



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Exercises

Let's make an LED blink!

```
module blinky(i_clk, o_led);
    input wire i_clk;
    output wire o_led;

reg [26:0] counter;

always @(posedge i_clk)
    counter <= counter + 1'b1;

assign o_led = counter[26];
endmodule</pre>
```

Feel free to synthesize and try this

- The LED should blink at a steady rate
- Rate is determined by the 26 above



Broken Blinky



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Exercises

Here's a common beginner mistake

Don't make this mistake

- Notice that counter is only 1-bit
- This will blink at half the i_clk frequency
- Result is typically way too fast to see any changes
- LED may glow dimly
- Need to slow it down



Verilator



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Exercises

Simulating our design (blinky) now requires a clock:

- We'll need to toggle the clock input for anything to happen
- This operation is so common, it deserves its own function, tick ()



Verilator



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Exercises

We can now simplify our main loop a touch

```
int main(int argc, char **argv) {
    int last_led;
    // .... Setup
    last_led = tb->o_led;
    for (int k=0; k<(1<<20); k++) {
         // Toggle the clock
         tick(tb);
         // Now let's print the LEDs value
         // anytime it changes
         if (last_led != tb->o_led) {
              printf("k_{\sqcup} = {\sqcup} \%7d, {\sqcup}", k);
              printf("led_{\sqcup}=_{\sqcup}%d\n", tb->o_led);
         } last_led = tb->o_led;
```



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Exercises

Can we simulate this? Not easily

- \Box Counting to 2^{27} may take seconds in hardware, but ...
- It's extreme slow in simulation.
- Let's speed blinky up—just for simulation
- We can do this by adjusting the width of the counter

We'll use a parameter to do this

```
\begin{array}{lll} \textbf{parameter} & \texttt{WIDTH}\!=\!27; \\ \textbf{reg} & \texttt{[WIDTH}\!-\!1\!:\!0] & \texttt{counter}; \\ // & \dots & \\ \textbf{assign} & \texttt{o\_led} = \texttt{counter}[\texttt{WIDTH}\!-\!1]; \end{array}
```



Parameters



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Exercises

Parameters are very powerful! They allow us to

- Reconfigure a design, after it's been written
- Examples:
 - ZipCPU cache sizes can be adjusted by parameters
 - Internal memory sizes, implement the divide instruction or not, specify the type of multiply
 - Default serial port speed, number of GPIO pins supported by a GPIO controller, and more

Verilator argument -GWIDTH=12 sets the WIDTH parameter to 12

```
% verilator -Wall -GWIDTH=12 -cc blinky.v
```



Sim Result

```
W
```

```
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Dimmer Exercises

```
./blinky
      2047, led
      4095,
             led = 0
      6143, led = 1
   8191, led = 0
      10239, led
      12287, led
      14335, led
      16383, led = 0
      18431, led = 1
      20479, led = 0
k
  .... (Lines skipped for brevity)
```



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Exercises

This is easy. For more complex designs, we'll need a trace

That means writing to a trace file on every clock Steps

1. Add the --trace option to the Verilator command line

```
% verilator -Wall --trace -GWIDTH=12 \
        -cc blinky.v
```

Create a trace from your .cpp file

```
#include "verilated_vcd_c.h"
int main(int argc, char **argv) {
        unsigned tickcount = 0;
        // ...
```





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Exercises

Create the trace file within C++

```
// ...
int main(int argc, char **argv) {
        // ...
        // Generate a trace
        Verilated::traceEverOn(true);
        VerilatedVcdC* tfp = new VerilatedVcdC;
        tb->trace(tfp, 99);
        tfp ->open("blinkytrace.vcd");
        // ...
        for (int k=0; k<(1<<20); k++) {
                tick(++tickcount, tb, tfp);
                // ...
```





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Exercises

3. Write trace data on every clock

```
tick(int tickcount, Vblinky *tb,
void
                           VerilatedVcdC* tfp) {
        tb->eval();
         if (tfp) // dump 2ns before the tick
                  tfp ->dump(tickcount * 10 - 2);
         tb \rightarrow i_c lk = 1;
        tb->eval();
         if (tfp) // Tick every 10ns
                  tfp ->dump(tickcount * 10);
         tb \rightarrow i_c lk = 0;
         tb->eval():
         if (tfp) { // Trailing edge dump
                  tfp ->dump(tickcount * 10 + 5);
                  tfp -> flush();
```





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Exercises

Now, running blinky will generate a trace

$$%$$
 ./blinky

...

You can view it with GTKwave

% gtkwave blinkytrace.vcd

G GTKWave

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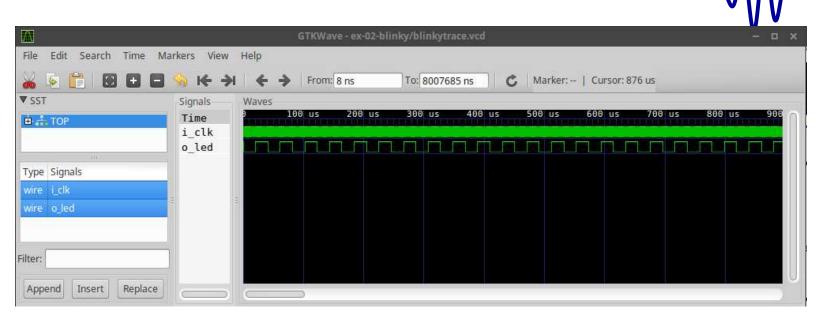
Stretch

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Exercises



This is how logic debugging is done

- The simulator trace shows you every register's value
- ...at every clock tick
- You can zoom in to find any bugs



Strobe



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Exercises

How is this design different from blinky?

```
module strobe(i_clk, o_led);
    input wire i_clk;
    output wire o_led;

reg [26:0] counter;

always @(posedge i_clk)
    counter <= counter + 1'b1;

assign o_led = &counter[26:24];
endmodule</pre>
```





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Exercises

Can we get an LED to blink once per second?

When CLOCK_RATE_HZ/2 ticks have passed, the LED will toggle

- This structure is known as an integer clock divider
- It offers an exact division





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Exercises

Can we get an LED to blink once per second?

```
parameter CLOCK_RATE_HZ = 100_000_000;
parameter [31:0] INCREMENT
            = (1 < < 30)/(CLOCK_RATE_HZ/4);
input
       wire i clk;
output
       wire    o_led;
       [31:0] counter;
reg
initial counter = 0;
always @(posedge i_clk)
        counter <= counter + INCREMENT:</pre>
assign o_led = counter[31];
```

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Exercises

- After CLOCK_RATE_HZ clock edges, the counter will roll over
- The divide by four above, on both numerator and denominator, is just to keep this within 32-bit arithmetic

$$INCREMENT = \frac{2^{32}}{CLOCK_RATE_HZ}$$

- This is called a fractional clock divider
 - The division isn't exact
 - It's often good enough



Stretch

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Dimmer Exercises

```
module stretch(i_clk, i_event, o_led);
       input wire i_clk, i_event;
       output wire o_led;
       reg [26:0] counter;
       always @(posedge i_clk)
        if (i_event)
               counter \leq 0:
        else if (! (&counter))
               counter <= counter + 1:
        assign o_led = !counter[26];
endmodule
```

FPGA signals are often too fast to see



Stretch

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Too Slow

Dimmer Exercises

FPGA signals are often too fast to see

- This slows them down to eye speed
- Only works for a single event though
- Multiple events would overlap, and be no longer distinct



Too Slow

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```
module tooslow(i_clk, o_led);
        input wire i_clk;
        output wire
                        o_led;
                                NBITS = 1024;
        parameter
                [NBITS - 1:0]
        reg
                                counter;
        always @(posedge i_clk)
                counter \le counter + 1;
        assign o_{led} = counter[NBITS-1];
endmodule
```

This is guaranteed to fail a timing check

- It's now time to learn how to check timing
- This design should fail, for reasonable clock speeds



Too Slow

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Exercises

Follow your chip vendor's instructions to do a timing check

- Use your system clock frequency
 - For now, that's the clock frequency coming into your board
 - We'll adjust it later
- Make sure this design fails
 - The carry chain takes time to propagate
 - Extra long carry chains take extra long
 - If the propagation doesn't complete before the next clock
 ... your design will fail (like this one)
- From now on, always check timing for a design
 - Before loading it onto a board
 - Every now and then while simulating



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```
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□ Dimmer

Exercises

Can you tell me what this will do?

```
// Filename:
              dimmer.v
// Project:
              Verilog Tutorial Example file
              LED project to adjust the brightness
// Purpose:
       Unlike the other projects in this directory,
       a Verilator script, nor a Makefile.
Hopefully you have learned by this
       point in time to create them yourself.
If not, please look back
       at the other similar files and copy and paste
              Dan Gisselquist , Ph.D.
// Creator:
               Gisselquist Technology, LLC
```



Exercises



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Dimmer

- Implement blinky on your hardware
- Implement one of the two PPS designs
 - Using a stopwatch, verify the blink rate of 1Hz
 - Make the blinks shorter, but at the same frequency
- Implement the dimmer