

2.1 Introduction

instruction set The vocabulary of commands understood by a given architecture.

To command a computer's hardware, you must speak its language. The words of a computer's language are called *instructions*, and its vocabulary is called an **instruction set**. In this chapter, you will see the instruction set of a real computer, both in the form written by people and in the form read by the computer. We introduce instructions in a top-down fashion. Starting from a notation that looks like a restricted programming language, we refine it step-by-step until you see the real language of a real computer. Chapter 3 continues our downward descent, unveiling the hardware for arithmetic and the representation of floating-point numbers.

You might think that the languages of computers would be as diverse as those of people, but in reality computer languages are quite similar, more like regional dialects than like independent languages. Hence, once you learn one, it is easy to pick up others.


The chosen instruction set comes from MIPS Technologies, and is an elegant example of the instruction sets designed since the 1980s. To demonstrate how easy it is to pick up other instruction sets, we will take a quick look at three other popular instruction sets.

1. ARMv7 is similar to MIPS. More than 9 billion chips with ARM processors were manufactured in 2011, making it the most popular instruction set in the world.
2. The second example is the Intel x86, which powers both the PC and the cloud of the PostPC Era.
3. The third example is ARMv8, which extends the address size of the ARMv7 from 32 bits to 64 bits. Ironically, as we shall see, this 2013 instruction set is closer to MIPS than it is to ARMv7.

This similarity of instruction sets occurs because all computers are constructed from hardware technologies based on similar underlying principles and because there are a few basic operations that all computers must provide. Moreover, computer designers have a common goal: to find a language that makes it easy to build the hardware and the compiler while maximizing performance and minimizing cost and energy. This goal is time honored; the following quote was written before you could buy a computer, and it is as true today as it was in 1947:

It is easy to see by formal-logical methods that there exist certain [instruction sets] that are in abstract adequate to control and cause the execution of any sequence of operations. . . . The really decisive considerations from the present point of view, in selecting an [instruction set], are more of a practical nature: simplicity of the equipment demanded by the [instruction set], and the clarity of its application to the actually important problems together with the speed of its handling of those problems.

Burks, Goldstine, and von Neumann, 1947

The “simplicity of the equipment” is as valuable a consideration for today’s computers as it was for those of the 1950s. The goal of this chapter is to teach an instruction set that follows this advice, showing both how it is represented in hardware and the relationship between high-level programming languages and this more primitive one. Our examples are in the C programming language;  **Section 2.15** shows how these would change for an object-oriented language like Java.

By learning how to represent instructions, you will also discover the secret of computing: the **stored-program concept**. Moreover, you will exercise your “foreign language” skills by writing programs in the language of the computer and running them on the simulator that comes with this book. You will also see the impact of programming languages and compiler optimization on performance. We conclude with a look at the historical evolution of instruction sets and an overview of other computer dialects.

We reveal our first instruction set a piece at a time, giving the rationale along with the computer structures. This top-down, step-by-step tutorial weaves the components with their explanations, making the computer’s language more palatable. **Figure 2.1** gives a sneak preview of the instruction set covered in this chapter.

stored-program concept

The idea that instructions and data of many types can be stored in memory as numbers, leading to the stored-program computer.

2.2

Operations of the Computer Hardware

Every computer must be able to perform arithmetic. The MIPS assembly language notation

```
add a, b, c
```

instructs a computer to add the two variables *b* and *c* and to put their sum in *a*.

This notation is rigid in that each MIPS arithmetic instruction performs only one operation and must always have exactly three variables. For example, suppose we want to place the sum of four variables *b*, *c*, *d*, and *e* into variable *a*. (In this section we are being deliberately vague about what a “variable” is; in the next section we’ll explain in detail.)

The following sequence of instructions adds the four variables:

```
add a, b, c    # The sum of b and c is placed in a
add a, a, d    # The sum of b, c, and d is now in a
add a, a, e    # The sum of b, c, d, and e is now in a
```

Thus, it takes three instructions to sum the four variables.

The words to the right of the sharp symbol (*#*) on each line above are *comments* for the human reader, so the computer ignores them. Note that unlike other programming languages, each line of this language can contain at most one

There must certainly be instructions for performing the fundamental arithmetic operations.

Burks, Goldstine, and von Neumann, 1947

MIPS operands

Name	Example	Comments
32 registers	\$s0-\$s7, \$t0-\$t9, \$zero, \$a0-\$a3, \$v0-\$v1, \$gp, \$fp, \$sp, \$ra, \$at	Fast locations for data. In MIPS, data must be in registers to perform arithmetic, register \$zero always equals 0, and register \$at is reserved by the assembler to handle large constants.
2 ³⁰ memory words	Memory[0], Memory[4], ..., Memory[4294967292]	Accessed only by data transfer instructions. MIPS uses byte addresses, so sequential word addresses differ by 4. Memory holds data structures, arrays, and spilled registers.

MIPS assembly language

Category	Instruction	Example	Meaning	Comments
Arithmetic	add	add \$s1,\$s2,\$s3	$\$s1 = \$s2 + \$s3$	Three register operands
	subtract	sub \$s1,\$s2,\$s3	$\$s1 = \$s2 - \$s3$	Three register operands
	add immediate	addi \$s1,\$s2,20	$\$s1 = \$s2 + 20$	Used to add constants
Data transfer	load word	lw \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\$s1 = \text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20]$	Word from memory to register
	store word	sw \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20] = \$s1$	Word from register to memory
	load half	lh \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\$s1 = \text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20]$	Halfword memory to register
	load half unsigned	lhu \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\$s1 = \text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20]$	Halfword memory to register
	store half	sh \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20] = \$s1$	Halfword register to memory
	load byte	lb \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\$s1 = \text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20]$	Byte from memory to register
	load byte unsigned	lbu \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\$s1 = \text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20]$	Byte from memory to register
	store byte	sb \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20] = \$s1$	Byte from register to memory
	load linked word	ll \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\$s1 = \text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20]$	Load word as 1st half of atomic swap
	store condition. word	sc \$s1,20(\$s2)	$\text{Memory}[\$s2 + 20] = \$s1; \$s1 = 0 \text{ or } 1$	Store word as 2nd half of atomic swap
Logical	load upper immed.	lui \$s1,20	$\$s1 = 20 * 2^{16}$	Loads constant in upper 16 bits
	and	and \$s1,\$s2,\$s3	$\$s1 = \$s2 \& \$s3$	Three reg. operands; bit-by-bit AND
	or	or \$s1,\$s2,\$s3	$\$s1 = \$s2 \$s3$	Three reg. operands; bit-by-bit OR
	nor	nor \$s1,\$s2,\$s3	$\$s1 = \sim (\$s2 \$s3)$	Three reg. operands; bit-by-bit NOR
	and immediate	andi \$s1,\$s2,20	$\$s1 = \$s2 \& 20$	Bit-by-bit AND reg with constant
	or immediate	ori \$s1,\$s2,20	$\$s1 = \$s2 20$	Bit-by-bit OR reg with constant
	shift left logical	sll \$s1,\$s2,10	$\$s1 = \$s2 \ll 10$	Shift left by constant
Conditional branch	shift right logical	srl \$s1,\$s2,10	$\$s1 = \$s2 \gg 10$	Shift right by constant
	branch on equal	beq \$s1,\$s2,25	if ($\$s1 == \$s2$) go to PC + 4 + 100	Equal test; PC-relative branch
	branch on not equal	bne \$s1,\$s2,25	if ($\$s1 \neq \$s2$) go to PC + 4 + 100	Not equal test; PC-relative
	set on less than	slt \$s1,\$s2,\$s3	if ($\$s2 < \$s3$) $\$s1 = 1$; else $\$s1 = 0$	Compare less than; for beq, bne
	set on less than unsigned	sltu \$s1,\$s2,\$s3	if ($\$s2 < \$s3$) $\$s1 = 1$; else $\$s1 = 0$	Compare less than unsigned
	set less than immediate	slti \$s1,\$s2,20	if ($\$s2 < 20$) $\$s1 = 1$; else $\$s1 = 0$	Compare less than constant
Unconditional jump	set less than immediate unsigned	sltiu \$s1,\$s2,20	if ($\$s2 < 20$) $\$s1 = 1$; else $\$s1 = 0$	Compare less than constant unsigned
	jump	j 2500	go to 10000	Jump to target address
	jump register	jr \$ra	go to \$ra	For switch, procedure return
	jump and link	jal 2500	$\$ra = PC + 4$; go to 10000	For procedure call

FIGURE 2.1 MIPS assembly language revealed in this chapter. This information is also found in Column 1 of the MIPS Reference Data Card at the front of this book.

instruction. Another difference from C is that comments always terminate at the end of a line.

The natural number of operands for an operation like addition is three: the two numbers being added together and a place to put the sum. Requiring every instruction to have exactly three operands, no more and no less, conforms to the philosophy of keeping the hardware simple: hardware for a variable number of operands is more complicated than hardware for a fixed number. This situation illustrates the first of three underlying principles of hardware design:

Design Principle 1: Simplicity favors regularity.

We can now show, in the two examples that follow, the relationship of programs written in higher-level programming languages to programs in this more primitive notation.

Compiling Two C Assignment Statements into MIPS

This segment of a C program contains the five variables *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*, and *e*. Since Java evolved from C, this example and the next few work for either high-level programming language:

```
a = b + c;  
d = a - e;
```

The translation from C to MIPS assembly language instructions is performed by the *compiler*. Show the MIPS code produced by a compiler.

A MIPS instruction operates on two source operands and places the result in one destination operand. Hence, the two simple statements above compile directly into these two MIPS assembly language instructions:

```
add a, b, c  
sub d, a, e
```

EXAMPLE**ANSWER**

Compiling a Complex C Assignment into MIPS

A somewhat complex statement contains the five variables *f*, *g*, *h*, *i*, and *j*:

```
f = (g + h) - (i + j);
```

What might a C compiler produce?

EXAMPLE

ANSWER

The compiler must break this statement into several assembly instructions, since only one operation is performed per MIPS instruction. The first MIPS instruction calculates the sum of *g* and *h*. We must place the result somewhere, so the compiler creates a temporary variable, called *t0*:

```
add t0,g,h # temporary variable t0 contains g + h
```

Although the next operation is subtract, we need to calculate the sum of *i* and *j* before we can subtract. Thus, the second instruction places the sum of *i* and *j* in another temporary variable created by the compiler, called *t1*:

```
add t1,i,j # temporary variable t1 contains i + j
```


Finally, the subtract instruction subtracts the second sum from the first and places the difference in the variable *f*, completing the compiled code:

```
sub f,t0,t1 # f gets t0 - t1, which is (g + h) - (i + j)
```

Check Yourself

For a given function, which programming language likely takes the most lines of code? Put the three representations below in order.


1. Java
2. C
3. MIPS assembly language

Elaboration: To increase portability, Java was originally envisioned as relying on a software interpreter. The instruction set of this interpreter is called *Java bytecodes* (see  [Section 2.15](#)), which is quite different from the MIPS instruction set. To get performance close to the equivalent C program, Java systems today typically compile Java bytecodes into the native instruction sets like MIPS. Because this compilation is normally done much later than for C programs, such Java compilers are often called *Just In Time* (JIT) compilers. Section 2.12 shows how JITs are used later than C compilers in the start-up process, and Section 2.13 shows the performance consequences of compiling versus interpreting Java programs.

2.3 Operands of the Computer Hardware

Unlike programs in high-level languages, the operands of arithmetic instructions are restricted; they must be from a limited number of special locations built directly in hardware called *registers*. Registers are primitives used in hardware design that are also visible to the programmer when the computer is completed, so you can think of registers as the bricks of computer construction. The size of a register in the MIPS architecture is 32 bits; groups of 32 bits occur so frequently that they are given the name **word** in the MIPS architecture.

word The natural unit of access in a computer, usually a group of 32 bits; corresponds to the size of a register in the MIPS architecture.

One major difference between the variables of a programming language and registers is the limited number of registers, typically 32 on current computers, like MIPS. (See  [Section 2.21](#) for the history of the number of registers.) Thus, continuing in our top-down, stepwise evolution of the symbolic representation of the MIPS language, in this section we have added the restriction that the three operands of MIPS arithmetic instructions must each be chosen from one of the 32 32-bit registers.

The reason for the limit of 32 registers may be found in the second of our three underlying design principles of hardware technology:

Design Principle 2: Smaller is faster.

A very large number of registers may increase the clock cycle time simply because it takes electronic signals longer when they must travel farther.

Guidelines such as “smaller is faster” are not absolutes; 31 registers may not be faster than 32. Yet, the truth behind such observations causes computer designers to take them seriously. In this case, the designer must balance the craving of programs for more registers with the designer’s desire to keep the clock cycle fast. Another reason for not using more than 32 is the number of bits it would take in the instruction format, as [Section 2.5](#) demonstrates.

Chapter 4 shows the central role that registers play in hardware construction; as we shall see in this chapter, effective use of registers is critical to program performance.

Although we could simply write instructions using numbers for registers, from 0 to 31, the MIPS convention is to use two-character names following a dollar sign to represent a register. [Section 2.8](#) will explain the reasons behind these names. For now, we will use `$s0`, `$s1`, ... for registers that correspond to variables in C and Java programs and `$t0`, `$t1`, ... for temporary registers needed to compile the program into MIPS instructions.

Compiling a C Assignment Using Registers

It is the compiler’s job to associate program variables with registers. Take, for instance, the assignment statement from our earlier example:

```
f = (g + h) - (i + j);
```

The variables `f`, `g`, `h`, `i`, and `j` are assigned to the registers `$s0`, `$s1`, `$s2`, `$s3`, and `$s4`, respectively. What is the compiled MIPS code?

EXAMPLE

ANSWER

The compiled program is very similar to the prior example, except we replace the variables with the register names mentioned above plus two temporary registers, \$t0 and \$t1, which correspond to the temporary variables above:

```
add $t0,$s1,$s2 # register $t0 contains g + h
add $t1,$s3,$s4 # register $t1 contains i + j
sub $s0,$t0,$t1 # f gets $t0 - $t1, which is (g + h)-(i + j)
```

Memory Operands

Programming languages have simple variables that contain single data elements, as in these examples, but they also have more complex data structures—arrays and structures. These complex data structures can contain many more data elements than there are registers in a computer. How can a computer represent and access such large structures?

Recall the five components of a computer introduced in Chapter 1 and repeated on page 61. The processor can keep only a small amount of data in registers, but computer memory contains billions of data elements. Hence, data structures (arrays and structures) are kept in memory.

data transfer instruction A command that moves data between memory and registers.

address A value used to delineate the location of a specific data element within a memory array.

As explained above, arithmetic operations occur only on registers in MIPS instructions; thus, MIPS must include instructions that transfer data between memory and registers. Such instructions are called **data transfer instructions**. To access a word in memory, the instruction must supply the memory **address**. Memory is just a large, single-dimensional array, with the address acting as the index to that array, starting at 0. For example, in Figure 2.2, the address of the third data element is 2, and the value of Memory [2] is 10.

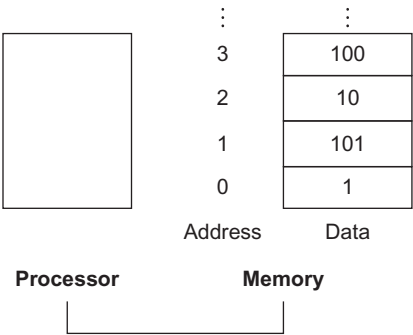


FIGURE 2.2 Memory addresses and contents of memory at those locations. If these elements were words, these addresses would be incorrect, since MIPS actually uses byte addressing, with each word representing four bytes. Figure 2.3 shows the memory addressing for sequential word addresses.

The data transfer instruction that copies data from memory to a register is traditionally called *load*. The format of the load instruction is the name of the operation followed by the register to be loaded, then a constant and register used to access memory. The sum of the constant portion of the instruction and the contents of the second register forms the memory address. The actual MIPS name for this instruction is *lw*, standing for *load word*.

Compiling an Assignment When an Operand Is in Memory

Let's assume that *A* is an array of 100 words and that the compiler has associated the variables *g* and *h* with the registers *\$s1* and *\$s2* as before. Let's also assume that the starting address, or *base address*, of the array is in *\$s3*. Compile this C assignment statement:

```
g = h + A[8];
```

Although there is a single operation in this assignment statement, one of the operands is in memory, so we must first transfer *A[8]* to a register. The address of this array element is the sum of the base of the array *A*, found in register *\$s3*, plus the number to select element 8. The data should be placed in a temporary register for use in the next instruction. Based on Figure 2.2, the first compiled instruction is

```
lw    $t0,8($s3) # Temporary reg $t0 gets A[8]
```

(We'll be making a slight adjustment to this instruction, but we'll use this simplified version for now.) The following instruction can operate on the value in *\$t0* (which equals *A[8]*) since it is in a register. The instruction must add *h* (contained in *\$s2*) to *A[8]* (contained in *\$t0*) and put the sum in the register corresponding to *g* (associated with *\$s1*):

```
add    $s1,$s2,$t0 # g = h + A[8]
```

The constant in a data transfer instruction (8) is called the *offset*, and the register added to form the address (*\$s3*) is called the *base register*.

EXAMPLE

ANSWER

In addition to associating variables with registers, the compiler allocates data structures like arrays and structures to locations in memory. The compiler can then place the proper starting address into the data transfer instructions.

Since 8-bit *bytes* are useful in many programs, virtually all architectures today address individual bytes. Therefore, the address of a word matches the address of one of the 4 bytes within the word, and addresses of sequential words differ by 4. For example, Figure 2.3 shows the actual MIPS addresses for the words in Figure 2.2; the byte address of the third word is 8.

In MIPS, words must start at addresses that are multiples of 4. This requirement is called an **alignment restriction**, and many architectures have it. (Chapter 4 suggests why alignment leads to faster data transfers.)

Hardware/ Software Interface

alignment restriction

A requirement that data be aligned in memory on natural boundaries.

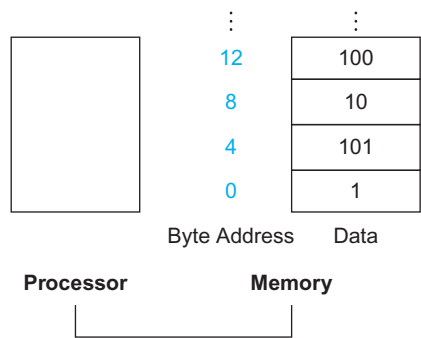


FIGURE 2.3 Actual MIPS memory addresses and contents of memory for those words. The changed addresses are highlighted to contrast with Figure 2.2. Since MIPS addresses each byte, word addresses are multiples of 4: there are 4 bytes in a word.

Computers divide into those that use the address of the leftmost or “big end” byte as the word address versus those that use the rightmost or “little end” byte. MIPS is in the *big-endian* camp. Since the order matters only if you access the identical data both as a word and as four bytes, few need to be aware of the endianness. (Appendix A shows the two options to number bytes in a word.)

Byte addressing also affects the array index. To get the proper byte address in the code above, *the offset to be added to the base register \$s3 must be 4×8 , or 32*, so that the load address will select `A[8]` and not `A[8/4]`. (See the related pitfall on page 160 of Section 2.19.)

The instruction complementary to load is traditionally called *store*; it copies data from a register to memory. The format of a store is similar to that of a load: the name of the operation, followed by the register to be stored, then offset to select the array element, and finally the base register. Once again, the MIPS address is specified in part by a constant and in part by the contents of a register. The actual MIPS name is `sw`, standing for *store word*.

**Hardware/
Software
Interface**

As the addresses in loads and stores are binary numbers, we can see why the DRAM for main memory comes in binary sizes rather than in decimal sizes. That is, in gibibytes (2^{30}) or tebibytes (2^{40}), not in gigabytes (10^9) or terabytes (10^{12}); see Figure 1.1.

Compiling Using Load and Store

Assume variable `h` is associated with register `$s2` and the base address of the array `A` is in `$s3`. What is the MIPS assembly code for the C assignment statement below?

```
A[12] = h + A[8];
```

Although there is a single operation in the C statement, now two of the operands are in memory, so we need even more MIPS instructions. The first two instructions are the same as in the prior example, except this time we use the proper offset for byte addressing in the load word instruction to select `A[8]`, and the add instruction places the sum in `$t0`:

```
lw    $t0,32($s3) # Temporary reg $t0 gets A[8]
add   $t0,$s2,$t0 # Temporary reg $t0 gets h + A[8]
```

The final instruction stores the sum into `A[12]`, using 48 (4×12) as the offset and register `$s3` as the base register.

```
sw    $t0,48($s3) # Stores h + A[8] back into A[12]
```

Load word and store word are the instructions that copy words between memory and registers in the MIPS architecture. Other brands of computers use other instructions along with load and store to transfer data. An architecture with such alternatives is the Intel x86, described in Section 2.17.

Many programs have more variables than computers have registers. Consequently, the compiler tries to keep the most frequently used variables in registers and places the rest in memory, using loads and stores to move variables between registers and memory. The process of putting less commonly used variables (or those needed later) into memory is called *spilling* registers.

The hardware principle relating size and speed suggests that memory must be slower than registers, since there are fewer registers. This is indeed the case; data accesses are faster if data is in registers instead of memory.

Moreover, data is more useful when in a register. A MIPS arithmetic instruction can read two registers, operate on them, and write the result. A MIPS data transfer instruction only reads one operand or writes one operand, without operating on it.

Thus, registers take less time to access *and* have higher throughput than memory, making data in registers both faster to access and simpler to use. Accessing registers also uses less energy than accessing memory. To achieve highest performance and conserve energy, an instruction set architecture must have a sufficient number of registers, and compilers must use registers efficiently.

EXAMPLE

ANSWER

Hardware/ Software Interface

Constant or Immediate Operands

Many times a program will use a constant in an operation—for example, incrementing an index to point to the next element of an array. In fact, more than half of the MIPS arithmetic instructions have a constant as an operand when running the SPEC CPU2006 benchmarks.

Using only the instructions we have seen so far, we would have to load a constant from memory to use one. (The constants would have been placed in memory when the program was loaded.) For example, to add the constant 4 to register `$s3`, we could use the code

```
lw $t0, AddrConstant4($s1)    # $t0 = constant 4
add $s3,$s3,$t0                # $s3 = $s3 + $t0 ($t0 == 4)
```

assuming that `$s1 + AddrConstant4` is the memory address of the constant 4.

An alternative that avoids the load instruction is to offer versions of the arithmetic instructions in which one operand is a constant. This quick add instruction with one constant operand is called *add immediate* or *addi*. To add 4 to register `$s3`, we just write

```
addi    $s3,$s3,4              # $s3 = $s3 + 4
```

Constant operands occur frequently, and by including constants inside arithmetic instructions, operations are much faster and use less energy than if constants were loaded from memory.

The constant zero has another role, which is to simplify the instruction set by offering useful variations. For example, the move operation is just an add instruction where one operand is zero. Hence, MIPS dedicates a register `$zero` to be hard-wired to the value zero. (As you might expect, it is register number 0.) Using frequency to justify the inclusions of constants is another example of the great idea of making the **common case fast**.




COMMON CASE FAST

Check Yourself

Given the importance of registers, what is the rate of increase in the number of registers in a chip over time?

1. Very fast: They increase as fast as Moore's law, which predicts doubling the number of transistors on a chip every 18 months.
2. Very slow: Since programs are usually distributed in the language of the computer, there is inertia in instruction set architecture, and so the number of registers increases only as fast as new instruction sets become viable.

Elaboration: Although the MIPS registers in this book are 32 bits wide, there is a 64-bit version of the MIPS instruction set with 32 64-bit registers. To keep them straight, they are officially called MIPS-32 and MIPS-64. In this chapter, we use a subset of MIPS-32.  **Appendix E** shows the differences between MIPS-32 and MIPS-64. Sections 2.16 and 2.18 show the much more dramatic difference between the 32-bit address ARMv7 and its 64-bit successor, ARMv8.

Elaboration: The MIPS offset plus base register addressing is an excellent match to structures as well as arrays, since the register can point to the beginning of the structure and the offset can select the desired element. We'll see such an example in Section 2.13.

Elaboration: The register in the data transfer instructions was originally invented to hold an index of an array with the offset used for the starting address of an array. Thus, the base register is also called the *index register*. Today's memories are much larger and the software model of data allocation is more sophisticated, so the base address of the array is normally passed in a register since it won't fit in the offset, as we shall see.

Elaboration: Since MIPS supports negative constants, there is no need for subtract immediate in MIPS.

2.4 Signed and Unsigned Numbers

First, let's quickly review how a computer represents numbers. Humans are taught to think in base 10, but numbers may be represented in any base. For example, 123 base 10 = 1111011 base 2.

Numbers are kept in computer hardware as a series of high and low electronic signals, and so they are considered base 2 numbers. (Just as base 10 numbers are called *decimal* numbers, base 2 numbers are called *binary* numbers.)

A single digit of a binary number is thus the “atom” of computing, since all information is composed of **binary digits** or *bits*. This fundamental building block can be one of two values, which can be thought of as several alternatives: high or low, on or off, true or false, or 1 or 0.

Generalizing the point, in any number base, the value of i th digit d is

$$d \times \text{Base}^i$$

where i starts at 0 and increases from right to left. This representation leads to an obvious way to number the bits in the word: simply use the power of the base for that bit. We subscript decimal numbers with *ten* and binary numbers with *two*. For example,

1011_{two}

represents

$$\begin{aligned} & (1 \times 2^3) + (0 \times 2^2) + (1 \times 2^1) + (1 \times 2^0)_{\text{ten}} \\ = & (1 \times 8) + (0 \times 4) + (1 \times 2) + (1 \times 1)_{\text{ten}} \\ = & 8 + 0 + 2 + 1_{\text{ten}} \\ = & 11_{\text{ten}} \end{aligned}$$

binary digit Also called **binary bit**. One of the two numbers in base 2, 0 or 1, that are the components of information.