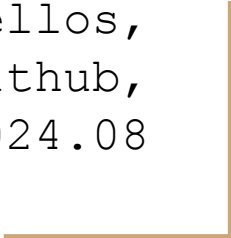


# The words in a Minimal Thread Code Forth

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version 1.0, 2024.08



the inner interpreter

```
: NEXT IP )+ W MOV W )+ ) JMP ;
```

“ Now Forth was complete. And I knew it.”

*Charles H. Moore,*

*“Forth - The Early Years”, PDP-11*

The **inner** interpreter is Forth's **heartbeat**.

The dictionary is the Forth's **DNA**.

# Notes

*In the following examples:*

*The names NEXT, NEST (aka DOCOL), UNNEST (aka SEMIS), are classic names for Forth inner interpreter.*

*Using reference ITC from FIG-Forth for PDP-11*

*Using PDP-11, Instruction Set Architecture (ISA)*

*By convention, stacks grows downward memory,*

*(X) indirect access, increment+ (pós)+, -decrement -(pré),*

*ISA order is: operator "from", "into"*

*The 'jump and link' concept was used by Charles H. Moore in 70's when --IP holds the address to next instruction--.*

# thread code models

STC: header | call word | sequence of “call words” | jmp EXIT

ITC: header | DOCOL | list of references to words | EXIT

DTC: header | call DOCOL | list of references to words | EXIT

MTC: header | list of references to words | EXIT

STC subroutine thread code, ITC indirect thread code

DTC direct thread code, MTC minimal thread code

*DOCOL is NEST and EXIT is UNNEST*

# the Minimal ( and direct) Thread Code

1. *Any primitive word contains only native machine code*
2. *Any compound word contains only a list of word references*
3. *All compound words have the references 'pushed and pulled' at the return stack*
4. *Any compound word should only access the return stack using >R  
R> R@*
5. *All primitives words must be before the compounds words in the dictionary*
6. *MTC is a reduced form of TachyonForth inner interpreter.  
(<https://sourceforge.net/projects/tachyon-forth/>)*



# the MTC dictionary

```
+-----+ start of memory
| internals |    system and support
+-----+
| primitives |    only "native code" words
+-----+ init
| compounds  |    only "list of references" words
+-----+ here
|             |
|             |    free memory
|             |
+-----+ end of memory
```

organize the dictionary,  
all primitives words  
must be before  
the compounds words  
in the dictionary

# the MTC dictionary

*primitive words: only native code*

```
+---+---+---+---+---+
| code | code | code | code | jump next |
+CFA---+---+---+---+---+
```

*compound words: only list references*

```
+---+---+---+---+---+
| 'HERE | 'STORE | 'CELL | 'ALLOT | 'EXIT |
+CFA---+---+---+---+---+
```

PS. Not showing the headers

*No need "DOCOL" at CFA of compound words !*



# the PDP-11 code of MTC

```
unnext:  MOV (RP)+, IP      // .pull
next:    MOV (IP)+, W
pick:    CMP W, _init_      // .pick
          BMI jump
nest:    MOV IP, -(RP)      // .push
          MOV W, IP
          JMP next
jump:    JMP (W)
```

from ITC FIG-Forth, 1.3.3.1:

```
SEMIS : MOV (RP)+, IP
NEXT  : MOV (IP)+, W
        JMP @(W)+
DOCOL : MOV IP, -(RP)
        MOV W, IP
        JMP NEXT
```

`_init_` is the starting  
address of the compound  
words at dictionary

# ITC, DTC and MTC

## In ITC and DTC

1. in compound words, CFA must reference the DOCOL routine ( or DOCON, DOVAR, DOLIT, DODOES, DODEFER, etc )
2. must jump twice for every compound word  
NEXT -> WORD -> DOCOL -> NEXT

## In MTC

1. in compound words, CFA could reference any word
2. test all word references and jump ONLY when it is below the "init" address, the starting of compound words in dictionary

MTC

inside words



# MTC, PDP-11

```
unnest:  MOV (RP)+, IP      // .pull
next:    MOV (IP)+, W
pick:    CMP W, init
         BMI jump
nest:    MOV IP, -(RP)      // .push
         MOV W, IP
         JMP next
jump:    JMP (W)            // .jump
```

pull, push, pick, jump

syntax: operator from, into

wp, word pointer, scratch

ip, link pointer, reserved

rp, return stack pointer, reserved

# MTC, Risc-V

```
unnest:  lw IP, 0(RP)
         addi RP, RP, 1 * #CELL
next:    lw W, 0(IP)
         addi IP, IP, 1 * #CELL
pick:    BMI W, _init_, jump
nest:    addi RP, RP, -1 * CELL
         sw 0(RP), IP
         add IP, W, zero
         jal zero, next
jump:    jalr zero, 0(W)
```

pull, push, pick, jump

syntax: operator into, from

do not use default link register

let assembler decide offsets for  
(jalr zero, zero, link)

# MTC, 6502

An implementation of Minimal Thread Code (and Direct Thread Code) for 6502 CPU is at the milliforth-6502,  
<https://github.com/agsb/milliforth-6502>

The scope of milliforth-6502 is to make a near sector size (512) Forth for 6502 CPU as sectorForth and milliForth did for x86.

The original milliForth: <https://github.com/fuzzballcat/milliForth>

The inspirational sectorForth:  
<https://github.com/cesarblum/sectorforth/>

```

header "exit","exit"

_unnest: // .pull
    lw s6, 0(s5)
    addi s5, s5, 1*CELL
    // jal zero, _next

_next:    // .next
    lw s9, 0(s6)
    addi s6, s6, CELL

pick:    // .pick
    bmi s9, _init_, _jump
    // jal zero, _nest

_nest:   // .push
    addi s5, s5, -1*CELL
    sw s6, 0(s5)
    add s6, s9, zero
    jal zero, _next

```

```

_jump: // .jump
    // insert debug info
    jalr zero, s9, 0

_link: // .link
    // alternative
    // insert debug info
    jal zero, _unnest

// not optimized :)

```

## A **inner** example with RISC-V

RISC-V, R32i, word is 32 bit cell, inner interpreter  
less than 12 instructions for Forth inner interpreter

### Minimum Thread Code

s5, return stack (RS), ~ reserved  
s6, next reference (IP), ~ reserved  
s9, word reference (W), ~ free for use outside  
zero, r0 register, is always zero, hardware wired  
CELL is cell size in bytes

# Notes

How allow further words been defined using native code, as like primitives ? MTC propose two primitives:

:\$ "colon\_code", does a jump to (IP)

;\$ "semis\_code", does a jump to NEXT

A primitive "colon\_code" to execute native code, by doing a jump to address in IP.

A primitive "semis\_code" to return to MTC engine, by doing a jump to NEXT.



# Compare

NEXT        (ITC, INSIDE CODE, EXECUTE FORTH WORD WHOSE CODE ADDRESS IS ON IP)

MOV    (IP)+, W

JMP    @(W)+

EXEC        (ITC, PRIMITIVE, EXECUTE FORTH WORD WHOSE CODE ADDRESS IS ON STACK)

MOV    (S)+, W

JMP    @(W)+

COLON\_CODE (MTC, PRIMITIVE, EXECUTE NATIVE CODE WHOSE CODE ADDRESS IS IN IP)

JMP    (IP)

SEMIS\_CODE (MTC, PRIMITIVE, RETURN TO MTC ENGINE)

JMP    NEXT



# Easy summary

In ITC and DTC, as the inner interpreter

Always jumps to address at first cell (CFA) of word definition,

In compounds words, the CFA must be DOCOL (or DOVAR, DOCON, DOLIT, etc)

In MTC, as the inner interpreter

Only jumps when CFA is a reference to primitive word.

All primitives words must be before the compounds words in the dictionary,

In compounds words, the CFA could be any word.

Uses less memory in dictionary, without DOCOL at each word.

# conclusion

## When reinvent the wheel ?

*MTC is a faster inner interpreter;*

*MTC needs little changes at thread code;*

*MTC uses less memory and less jumps;*

*MTC shortens the dictionary;*

*MTC effective as DTC and ITC;*

# why wheels ?

"Forth is free to reinvent the wheel, and I think that is a marvelous concept.

No one should ever be afraid to reinvent the wheel, and we do it every day."

Chuck Moore, transcription, 2:41:56,  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoyDNlcnpgc&t=9051s\\_](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoyDNlcnpgc&t=9051s_)



Why PDP-11 ?

the **Pi**DP-11 is a replica of the PDP-11/70, with a Raspberry Pi running the simh simulator for PDP-11/70, in a Linux Debian.

: NEXT IP )+ W MOV W )+ ) JMP ;

IP )+ W MOV is W = (IP), IP++

W )+ ) JMP is PC = W, W++

<https://github.com/agsb>

# references

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<https://sourceforge.net/projects/tachyon-forth/>



# myself

Myself,

Geologist, Master in Geophysics,

I use computers for data acquisition and calculations,

and an electronics and circuits hobbyist.

I discovered Forth in 1980, in Byte Magazine, in the UFRJ-BR library,

and rediscovered Forth in 2019, with the Forth2020 forum.

My projects at <https://github.com/agsb>

# Primitive Sequences of Forth

docol	call
docon	lit @
dovar	lit
douser	useraddr
dodefer	lit @ exec
dofield	lit +
dodoes	lit call

Lit places the next cell of dictionary at top of data stack

Call is a jump to subroutine in native code

Exec is a jump to native code

# call or link

from PDP-11 ISA

```
JSR Ri, Src    // Jump into subroutine
     $-(SP) \leftarrow Ri; Ri \leftarrow +PC; PC \leftarrow Src;$ 
RTS            // Return from subroutine
     $PC \leftarrow Ri; Ri \leftarrow (SP)+;$ 
```

push and pull // same, only use SP, as many CPUs ISA:

```
CALL Src
     $-(SP) \leftarrow Ri; Ri \leftarrow +PC; PC \leftarrow Src;$ 
RETURN
     $PC \leftarrow Ri; Ri \leftarrow (SP)+;$ 
```

link and jump // same, do not use SP, in RISC-V ISA:

```
JAL Ri, Src
     $-(SP) \leftarrow Ri; Ri \leftarrow +PC; PC \leftarrow Src;$ 
JR Ri
     $PC \leftarrow Ri; Ri \leftarrow (SP)+;$ 
```

In 30/08/2024, by Facebook,

Chris Curl and Peter Jakacki, point me that MTC is a reduced form of TachyonForth inner interpreter.

I'm glad to find same idea alone.

That's all, folks.