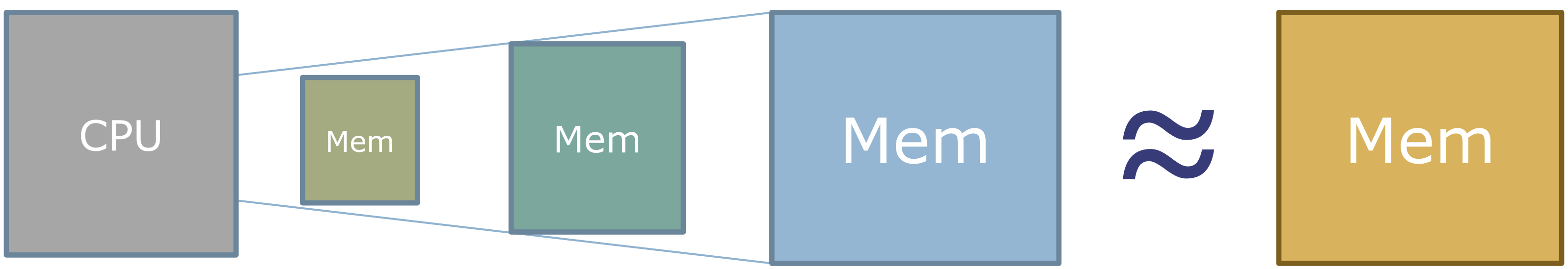
Caches

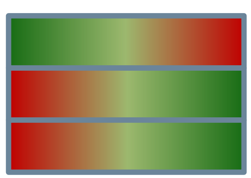
The Memory Hierarchy

Want large, fast, and cheap memory, but…

- Large memories are slow (e.g., Hard Disk)
- Fast memories are small and expensive (e.g., SRAM)

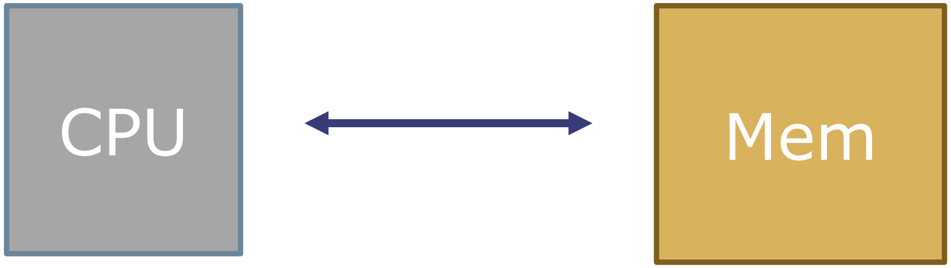
Solution: Use a hierarchy of memories with different tradeoffs to fake a large, fast, cheap memory



Speed:	Fastest		Slowest	Fast
Capacity:	Smallest		Largest	Large
Cost:	Highest		Lowest	Cheap

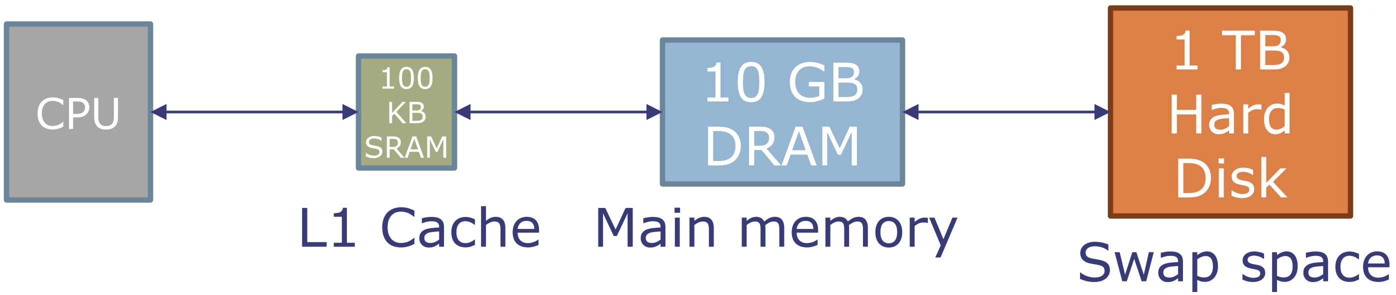
Memory Hierarchy Interface

- Programming model: Single memory, single address space



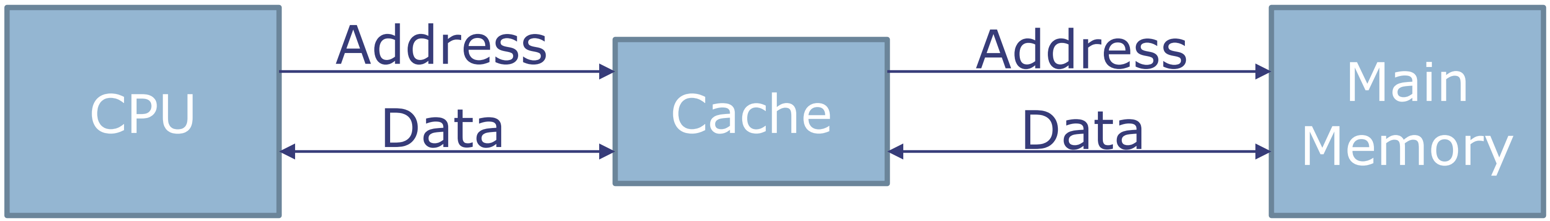
Memory Hierarchy Interface

- Programming model: Single memory, single address space
- Machine transparently stores data in fast or slow memory, depending on usage patterns



Caches

- Cache: A small, interim storage component that transparently retains (caches) data from recently accessed locations



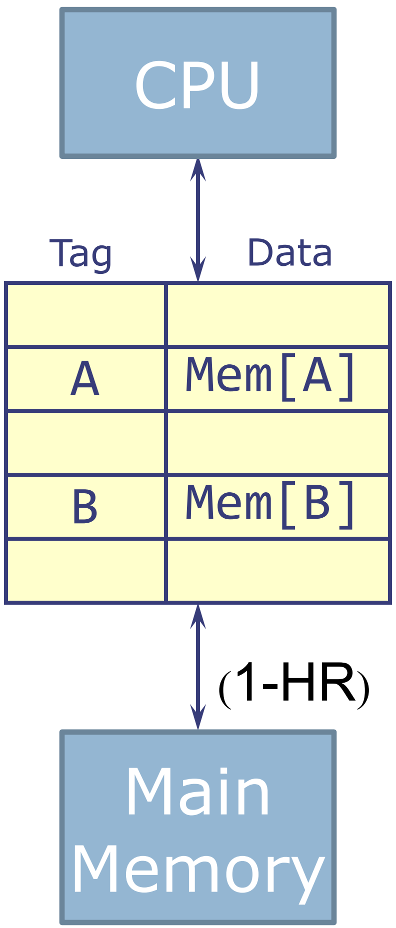
- Processor sends accesses to cache. Two options:
  - Cache hit: Data for this address in cache, returned quickly
  - Cache miss: Data not in cache
    - Fetch data from memory, send it back to processor
    - Retain this data in the cache (replacing some other data)
  - Processor must deal with variable memory access time

Why Caches Work

- Two predictable properties of memory accesses:
  - Temporal locality: If a location has been accessed recently, it is likely to be accessed (reused) soon
  - Spatial locality: If a location has been accessed recently, it is likely that nearby locations will be accessed soon
- Result:
  - High hit rate (low miss ratio)
  - Reduced Average Memory Access Time (AMAT):

$$AMAT = HitTime + MissRatio \times MissPenalty$$

Basic Cache Algorithm (Reads)



On reference to Mem[X], look for X among cache tags

HIT: X = Tag(i) for some cache line i

Return Data(i)

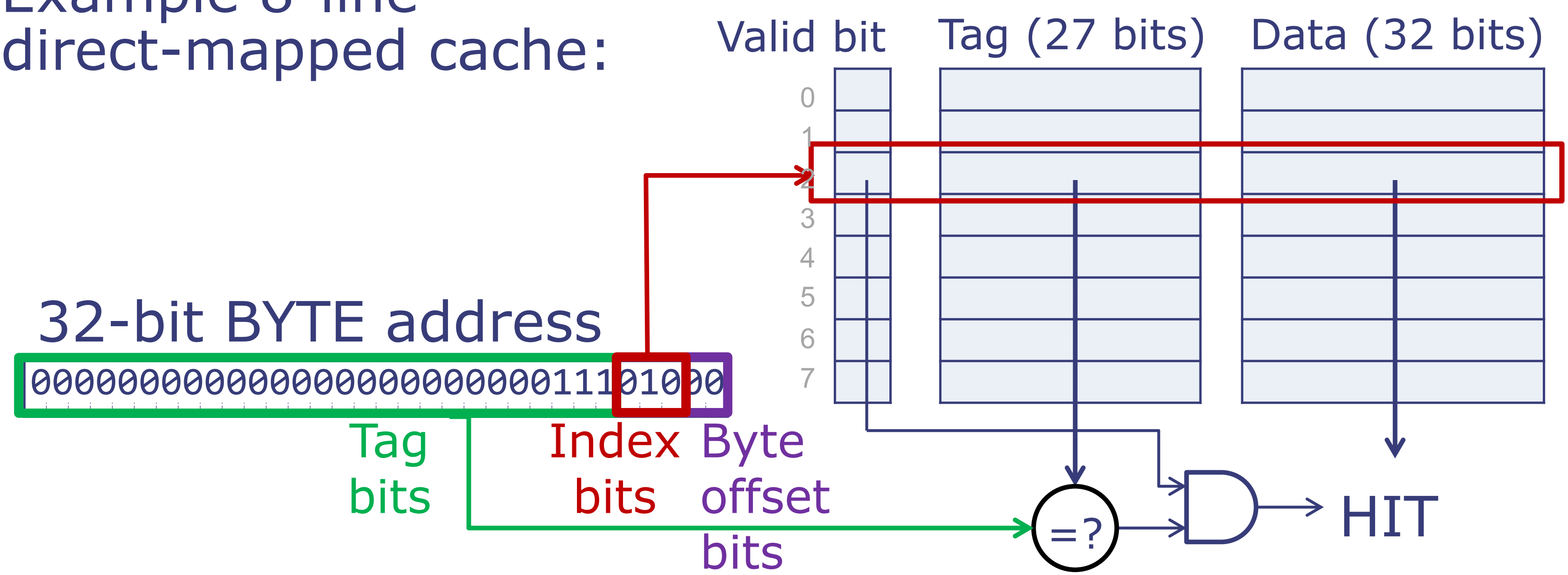
MISS: X not found in Tag of any cache line

Read Mem[X]
Return Mem[X]
Select a line k to hold Mem[X]
Write Tag(k)=X, Data(k) = Mem[X]

Q: How do we "search" the cache?

Direct-Mapped Caches

- Each word in memory maps into a single cache line
- Access (for cache with 2^W lines):
  - Index into cache with W address bits (the index bits)
  - Read out valid bit, tag, and data
  - If valid bit == 1 and tag matches upper address bits, HIT
- Example 8-line direct-mapped cache:



Example: Direct-Mapped Caches

64-line direct-mapped cache → 64 indices → 6 index bits

Read Mem[0x400C]

0100 0000 0000 1100

TAG: 0x40
INDEX: 0x3
BYTE OFFSET: 0x0

HIT, DATA 0x42424242

Would 0x4008 hit?

INDEX: 0x2 → tag mismatch
→ MISS

	Valid bit	Tag (24 bits)	Data (32 bits)
0	1	0x000058	0xDEADBEEF
1	1	0x000058	0x00000000
2	1	0x000058	0x00000007
3	1	0x000040	0x42424242
4	0	0x000007	0x6FBA2381
	⋮	⋮	⋮
63	1	0x000058	0xF7324A32

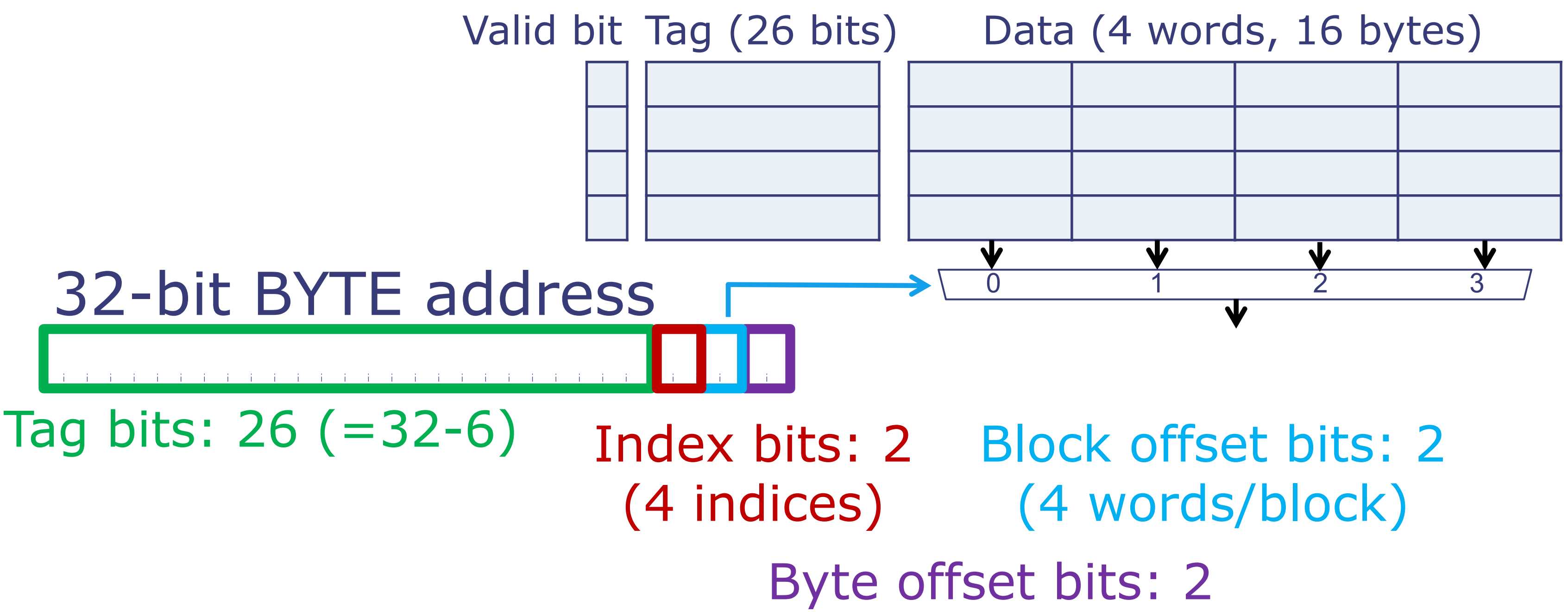
Part of the address (index bits) is encoded in the location
Tag + Index bits unambiguously identify the data's address

Selection of Index Bits

- Why do we chose low order bits for index?
  - Allows consecutive memory locations to live in the cache simultaneously
  - Reduces likelihood of replacing data that may be accessed again in the near future
  - Helps take advantage of locality

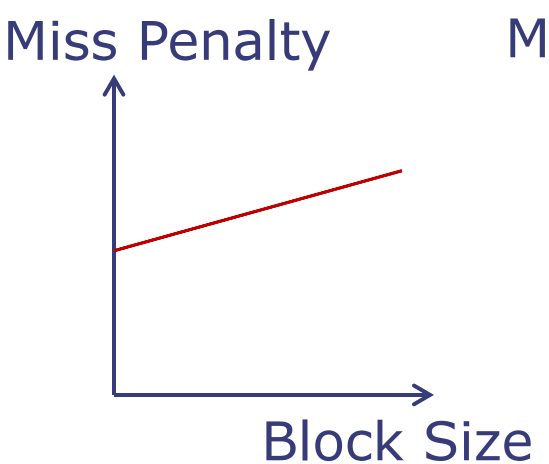
Block Size

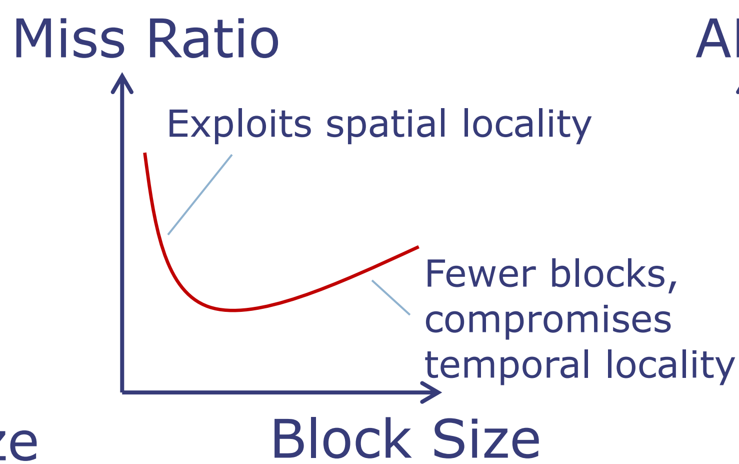
- Take advantage of spatial locality: Store multiple words per data line
  - Always fetch entire block (multiple words) from memory
  - Another advantage: Reduces size of tag memory!
  - Potential disadvantage: Fewer indices in the cache
- Example: 4-block, 16-word direct-mapped cache

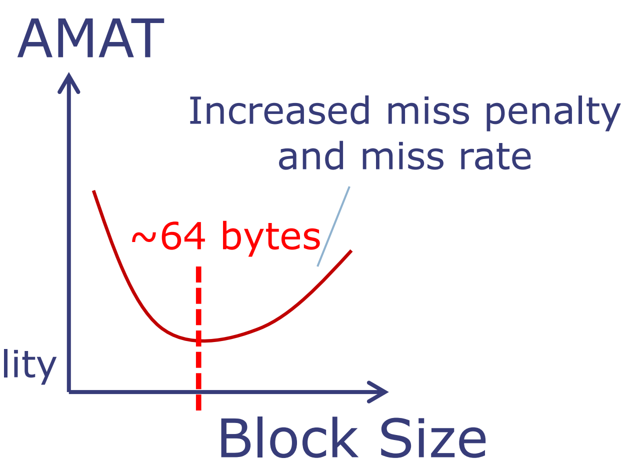


Block Size Tradeoffs

- Larger block sizes…
  - Take advantage of spatial locality
  - Incur larger miss penalty since it takes longer to transfer the block from memory
  - Can increase the average hit time and miss ratio
- AMAT = HitTime + MissPenalty*MissRatio







Direct-Mapped Cache Problem: Conflict Misses

Loop A: Code at 1024, data at 37

Word Address	Cache Line index	Hit/ Miss
1024	0	HIT
37	37	HIT
1025	1	HIT
38	38	HIT
1026	2	HIT
39	39	HIT
1024	0	HIT
37	37	HIT
…		

Loop B: Code at 1024, data at 2048

Word Address	Cache Line index	Hit/ Miss
1024	0	MISS
2048	0	MISS
1025	1	MISS
2049	1	MISS
1026	2	MISS
2050	2	MISS
1024	0	MISS
2048	0	MISS
…		

Assume:

- 1024-line DM cache
- Block size = 1 word

Consider looping code, in steady state

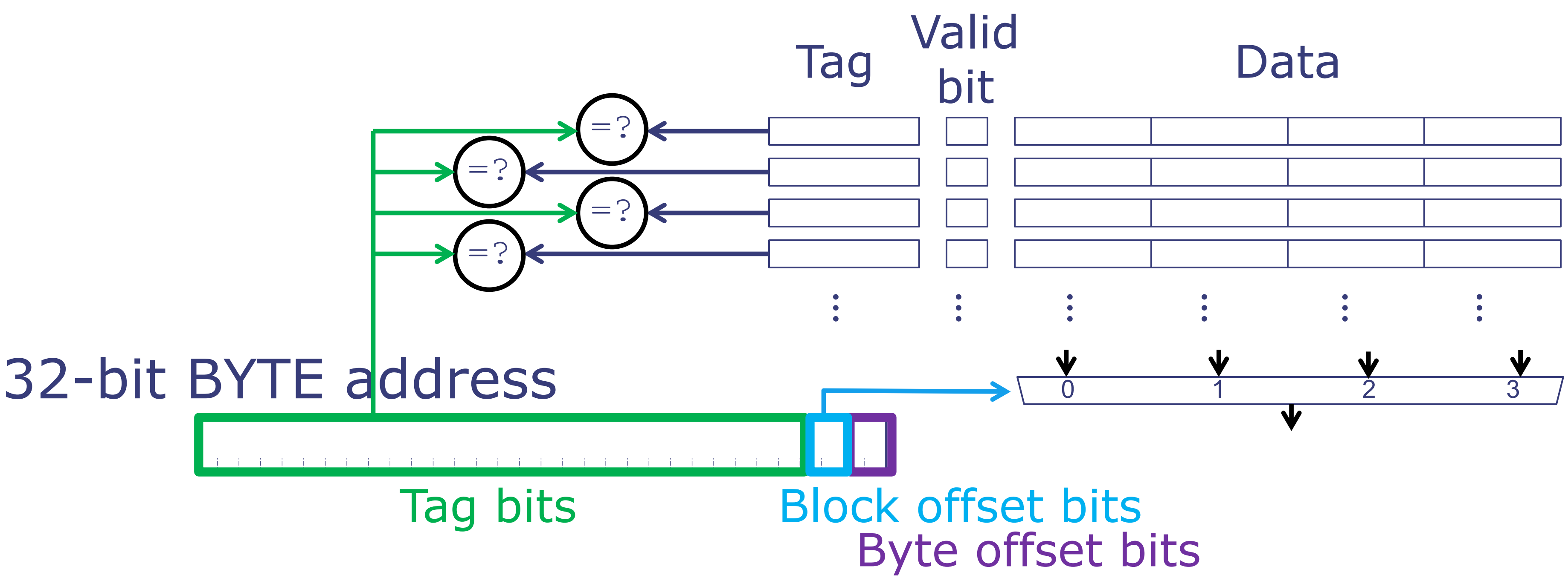
Assume WORD, not BYTE, addressing

Inflexible mapping (each address can only be in one cache location) → Conflict misses (multiple addresses map to same cache index)!

Fully-Associative Cache

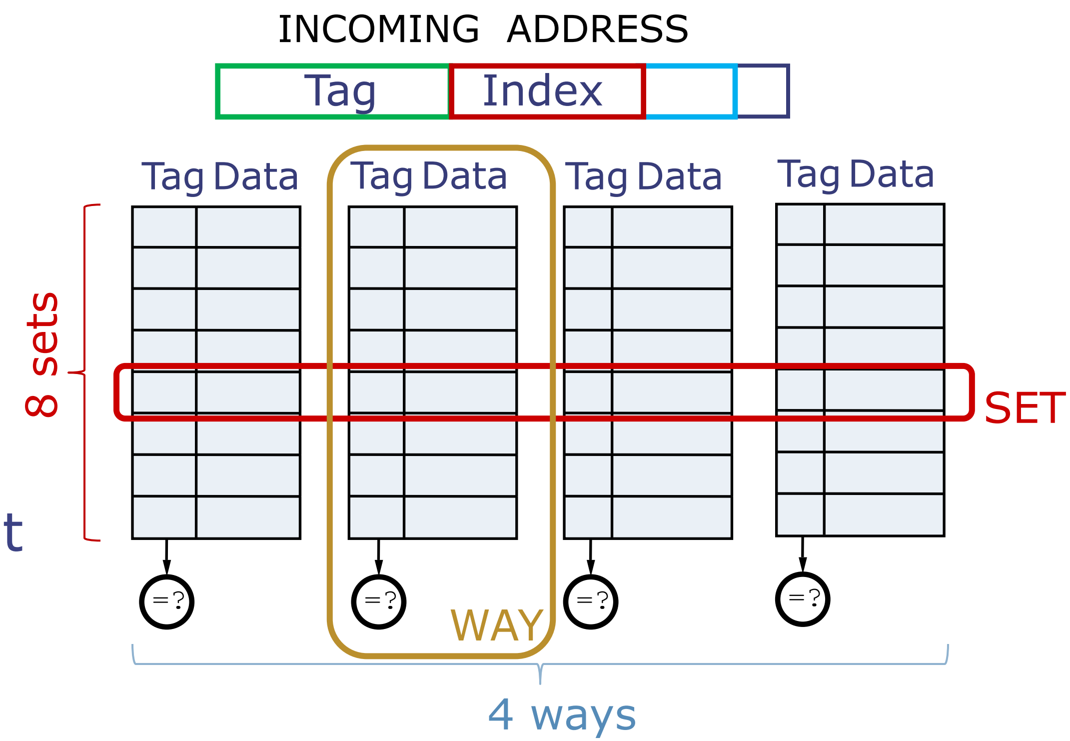
Opposite extreme: Any address can be in any location

- No cache index!
- Flexible (no conflict misses)
- Expensive: Must compare tags of all entries in parallel to find matching one



N-way Set-Associative Cache

- Use multiple direct-mapped caches in parallel to reduce conflict misses
  - Nomenclature:
    - # Rows = # Sets
    - # Columns = # Ways
    - Set size = #ways = "set associativity" (e.g., 4-way → 4 lines/set)
  - Each address maps to only one set, but can be in any way within the set
  - Tags from all ways are checked in parallel

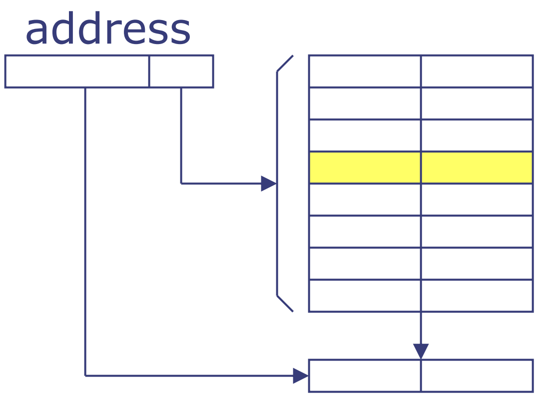


- Fully-associative cache: Extreme case with a single set and as many ways as cache lines

Associativity Implies Choices

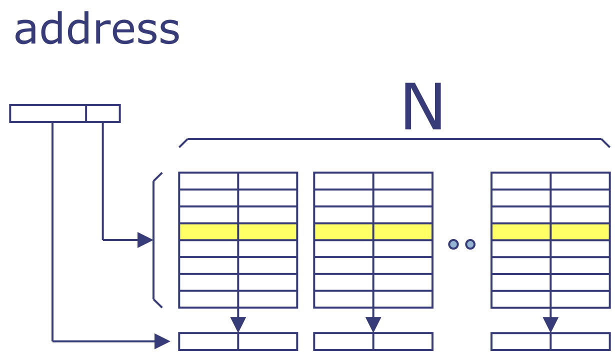
Issue: Replacement Policy

Direct-mapped



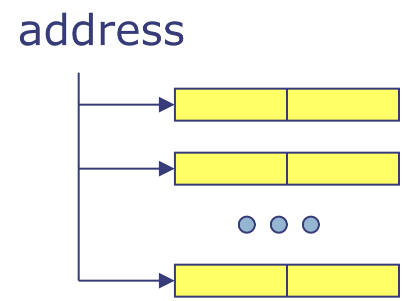
- Compare addr with only one tag
- Location A can be stored in exactly one cache line

N-way set-associative



- Compare addr with N tags simultaneously
- Location A can be stored in exactly one set, but in any of the N cache lines belonging to that set

Fully associative



- Compare addr with each tag simultaneously
- Location A can be stored in any cache line

Replacement Policies

- Optimal policy: Replace the line that is accessed furthest in the future
  - Requires knowing the future…
- Idea: Predict the future from looking at the past
  - If a line has not been used recently, it's often less likely to be accessed in the near future (a locality argument)
- Least Recently Used (LRU): Replace the line that was accessed furthest in the past
  - Works well in practice
  - Need to keep ordered list of N items $\rightarrow$ N! orderings $\rightarrow O(\log_2 N!) = O(N \log_2 N)$ "LRU bits" + complex logic
  - Caches often implement cheaper approximations of LRU
- Other policies:
  - First-In, First-Out (least recently replaced)
  - Random: Choose a candidate at random
    - Not very good, but does not have adversarial access patterns

Write Policy

Write-through: CPU writes are cached, but also written to main memory immediately (stalling the CPU until write is completed). Memory always holds current contents

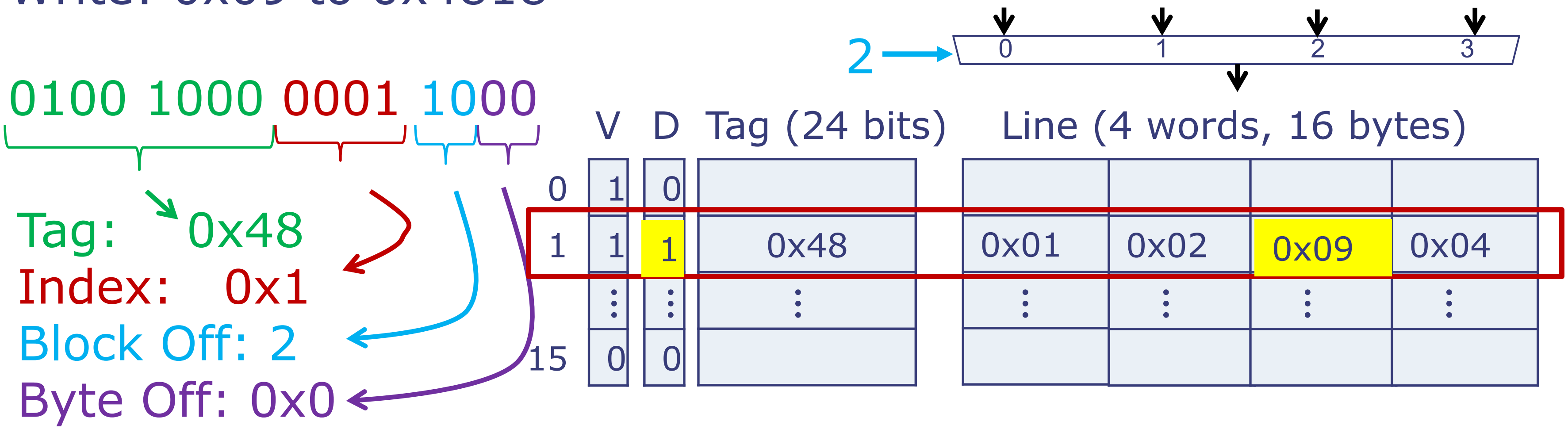
- Simple, slow, wastes bandwidth

Write-back: CPU writes are cached, but not written to main memory until we replace the line. Memory contents can be "stale"

- Fast, low bandwidth, more complex
- Commonly implemented in current systems

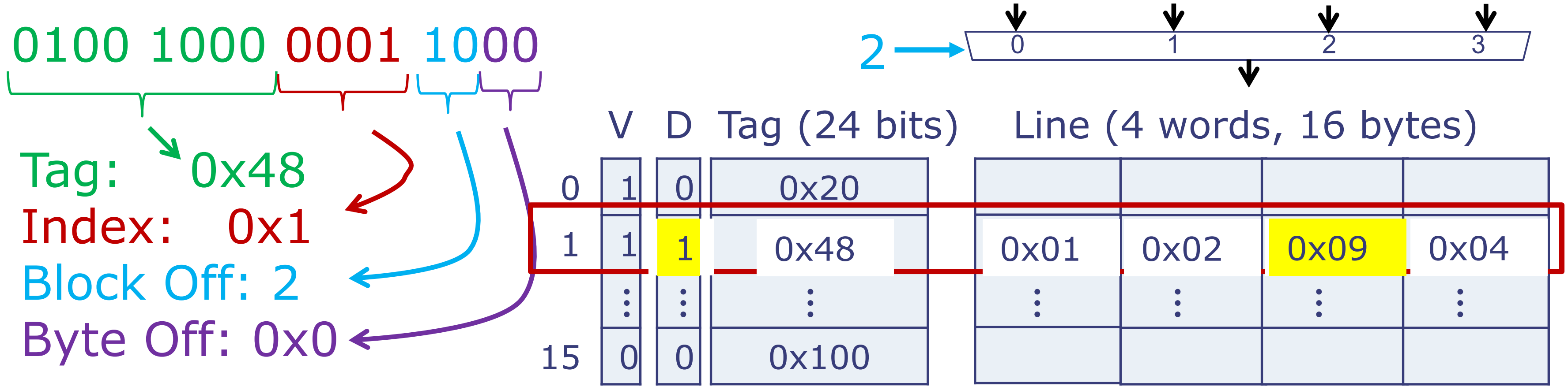
Example: Cache Write-Hit

16-line direct-mapped cache → 4 index bits
Block size = 4 → 2 block offset bits
Write Policy = Write Back
Write: 0x09 to 0x4818



D=1: cache contents no longer match main memory so write back line to memory upon replacement

Example: Cache Write-Miss



Write: 0x09 to 0x4818

1. Tags don't match -> Miss
   - D=1: Write cache line 1 (tag = 0x280: addresses 0x28010-0x2801C) back to memory
   - If D=0: Don't need to write line back to memory.

2. Load line (tag = 0x48: addresses 0x4810-0x481C) from memory

3. Write 0x09 to 0x4818 (block offset 2), set D=1.

Summary: Cache Tradeoffs

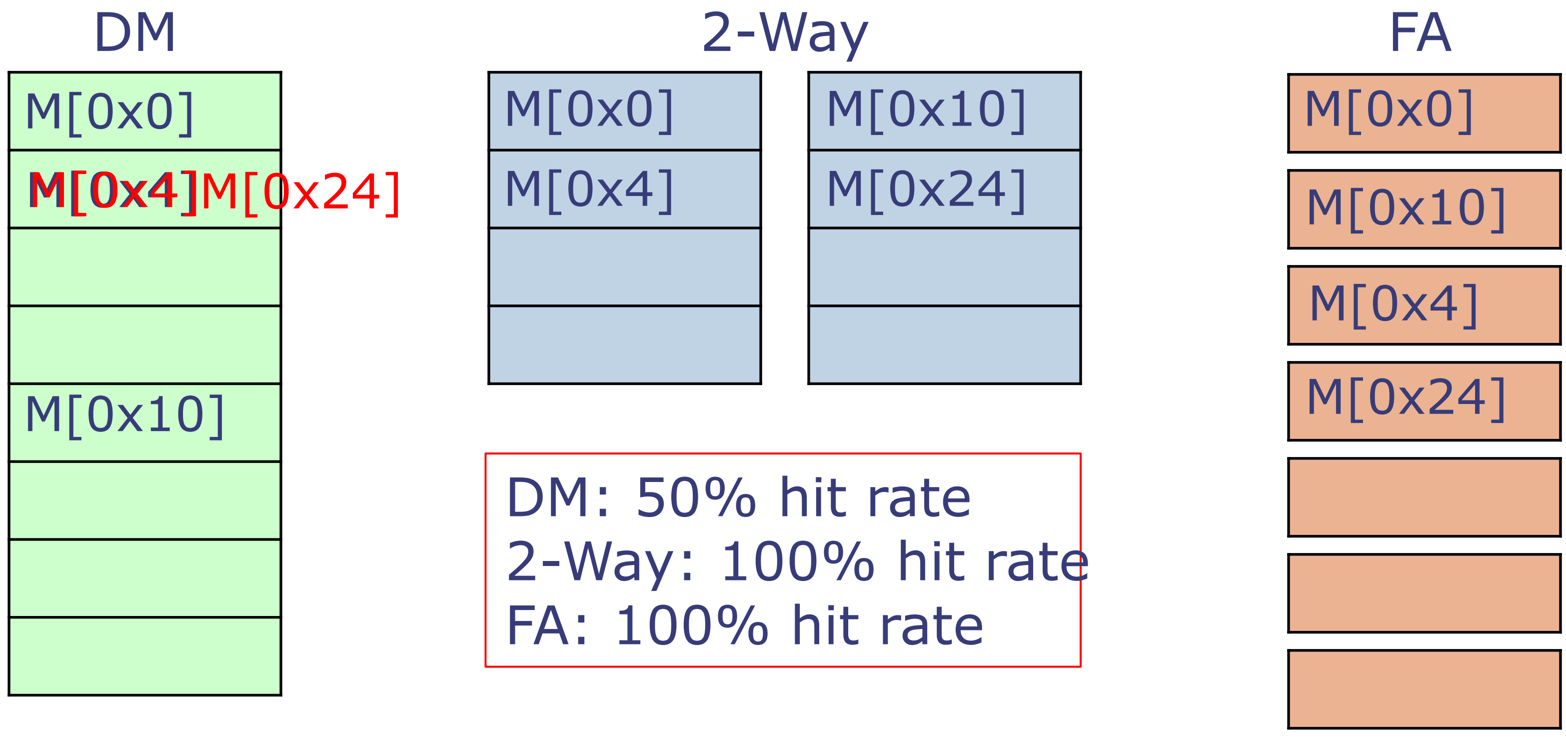
$$AMAT = HitTime + MissRatio \times MissPenalty$$

- Cache size
- Block size
- Associativity
- Replacement policy
- Write policy

Example: Comparing Hit Rates

3 Caches: DM, 2-Way, FA: each has 8 words, block size=1, LRU

Access following addresses repeatedly: 0x0, 0x10, 0x4, 0x24



DM: 50% hit rate
2-Way: 100% hit rate
FA: 100% hit rate

0x0 = 0b000000
DM index = 000
2-Way index = 00

0x10 = 0b01
DM index = 1
2-Way index

0x4 = 0b000100
DM index = 001
2-Way index = 01

0x24 = 0b100100
DM index = 001
2-Way index = 01

Example 2: Comparing Hit Rates

Access: 0x0, 0x4, 0x8, 0xC, 0x10, 0x14, 0x18, 0x1C, 0x20 repeatedly

DM

M[0x0] M[0x20]
M[0x4]
M[0x8]
M[0xC]
M[0x10]
M[0x14]
M[0x18]
M[0x1C]

2-Way

M[0x0] M[0x20] M[0x10]	M[0x10] M[0x0] M[0x20]
M[0x4]	M[0x14]
M[0x8]	M[0x18]
M[0xC]	M[0x1C]

FA

M[0x0] M[0x20]
M[0x4] M[0x0]
M[0x8] M[0x4]
M[0xC] M[0x8]
M[0x10] M[0xC]
M[0x14] M[0x10]
M[0x18] M[0x14]
M[0x1C] M[0x18]

DM: Hit rate = 7/9

2-Way: Hit rate = 6/9

FA: Hit rate = 0%

Example 3: Comparing Hit Rates

Access: 0x0, 0x4, 0x8, 0xC, 0x20, 0x24, 0x28, 0x2C, 0x10 repeatedly

DM

M[0x0] M[0x20]
M[0x4] M[0x24]
M[0x8] M[0x28]
M[0xC] M[0x2C]
M[0x10]

2-Way

M[0x0] M[0x10] M[0x20]	M[0x20] M[0x0] M[0x10]
M[0x4]	M[0x24]
M[0x8]	M[0x28]
M[0xC]	M[0x2C]

FA

M[0x0]	M[0x10]
M[0x4]	M[0x0]
M[0x8]	M[0x4]
M[0xC]	M[0x8]
M[0x20]	M[0xC]
M[0x24]	M[0x20]
M[0x28]	M[0x24]
M[0x2C]	M[0x28]

DM: Hit rate = 1/9

2-Way: Hit rate = 6/9

FA: Hit rate = 0%

Thank you!

Next lecture: Operating Systems