

COMP201

Computer Systems & Programming

Lecture #9 – C Generics – void *

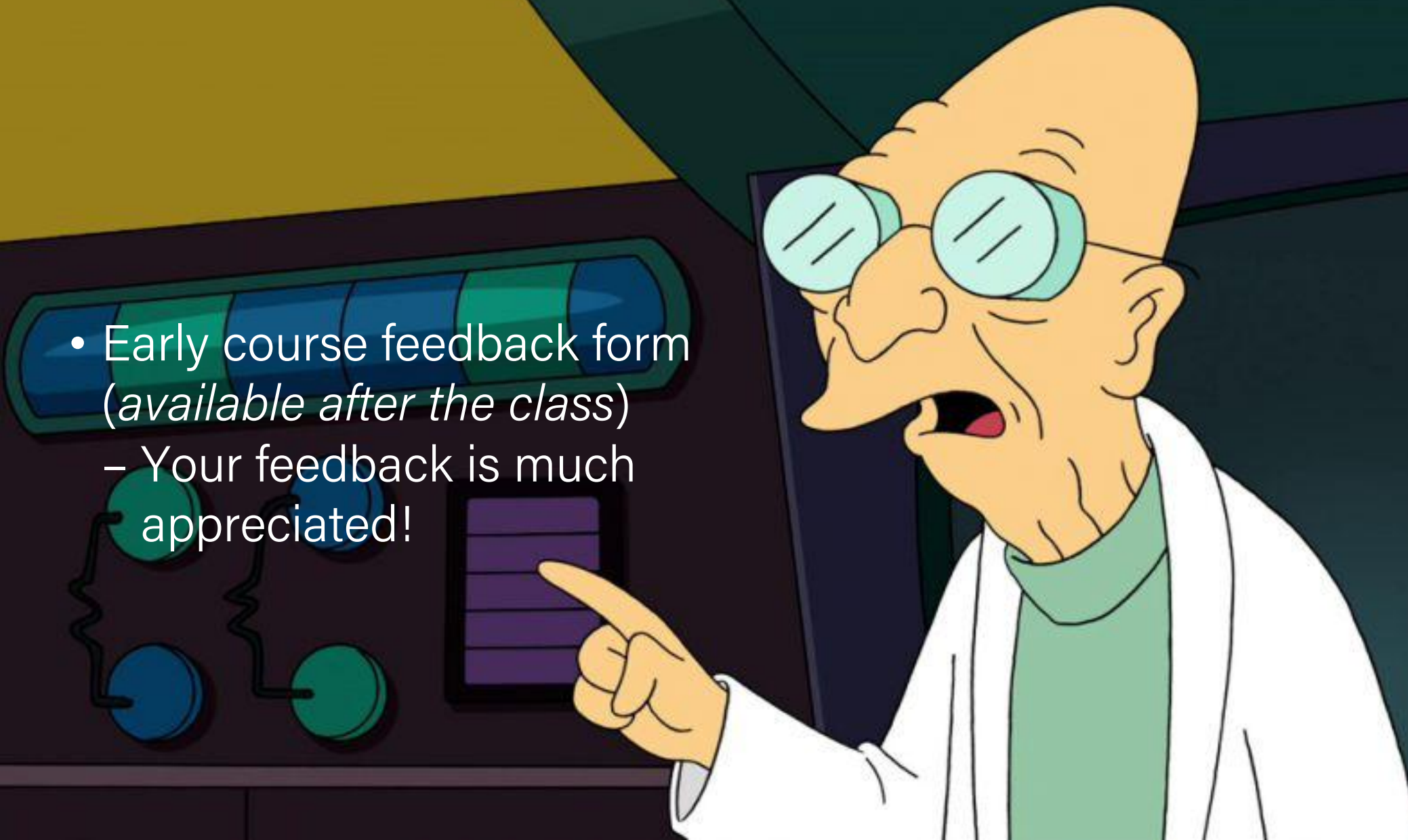



KOÇ
UNIVERSITY

Aykut Erdem // Koç University // Spring 2021

Good news, everyone!

- Early course feedback form
(*available after the class*)
 - Your feedback is much appreciated!





docs.google.com


COMP201 Early Course Feedback Form

Now that the first four weeks of COMP201 is over, I would like to get your feedback so that I continue improving this course and how it is taught and in turn help you improve your learning. Your input is collected ANONYMOUSLY and I will be the only one looking at your responses.

* Required

Your Level

- ☐ Freshman
- ☐ Sophomore
- ☐ Junior
- ☐ Senior



<https://forms.gle/eJzz3rdMeL8nNmj36>

Recap: Heap allocation interface:

```
void *malloc(size_t size);  
void *calloc(size_t nmemb, size_t size);  
void *realloc(void *ptr, size_t size);  
char *strdup(char *s);  
void free(void *ptr);
```

Heap **memory allocation** guarantee:

- NULL on failure, so check with `assert`
- Memory is contiguous; it is not recycled unless you call `free`
- `realloc` preserves existing data
- `calloc` zero-initializes bytes, `malloc` and `realloc` do not

Undefined behavior occurs:

- If you overflow (i.e., you access beyond bytes allocated)
- If you use after `free`, or if `free` is called twice on a location.
- If you `realloc/free` non-heap address

Recap: The Stack vs The Heap

Stack ("local variables")

- **Fast**
Fast to allocate/deallocate; okay to oversize
- **Convenient.**
Automatic allocation/ deallocation;
declare/initialize in one step
- **Reasonable type safety**
Thanks to the compiler
- ⚠ **Not especially plentiful**
Total stack size fixed, default 8MB
- ⚠ **Somewhat inflexible**
Cannot add/resize at runtime, scope dictated
by control flow in/out of functions

Heap (dynamic memory)

Recap: The Stack vs The Heap

Stack ("local variables")

- **Fast**
Fast to allocate/deallocate; okay to oversize
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Thanks to the compiler
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Total stack size fixed, default 8MB
- ⚠ **Somewhat inflexible**
Cannot add/resize at runtime, scope dictated
by control flow in/out of functions

Heap (dynamic memory)

- **Plentiful.**
Can provide more memory on demand!
- **Very flexible.**
Runtime decisions about how much/when
to allocate, can resize easily with realloc
- **Scope under programmer control**
Can precisely determine lifetime
- ⚠ **Lots of opportunity for error**
Low type safety, forget to allocate/free
before done, allocate wrong size, etc.,
Memory leaks (much less critical)

Recap: The Stack vs The Heap

- Generally, unless a situation requires dynamic allocation, stack allocation is preferred. Often both techniques are used together in a program.
- Heap allocation is a necessity when:
 - you have a very large allocation that could blow out the stack
 - you need to control the memory lifetime, or memory must persist outside of a function call
 - you need to resize memory after its initial allocation

COMP201 Topic 5: How can we use our knowledge of memory and data representation to write code that works with any data type?

Learning Goals

- Learn how to write C code that works with any data type.
- Learn about how to use `void *` and avoid potential pitfalls.

Plan for Today

- **Overview:** Generics
- Generic Swap
- Generics Pitfalls
- Generic Array Swap
- Generic Array Rotate

Disclaimer: Slides for this lecture were borrowed from
—Nick Troccoli's Stanford CS107 class

Lecture plan

- **Overview:** Generics
- Generic Swap
- Generics Pitfalls
- Generic Array Swap
- Generic Array Rotate

Generics

- We always strive to write code that is as general-purpose as possible.
- Generic code reduces code duplication and means you can make improvements and fix bugs in one place rather than many.
- Generics is used throughout C for functions to sort any array, search any array, free arbitrary memory, and more.
- How can we write generic code in C?

Lecture Plan

- **Overview:** Generics
- Generic Swap
- Generics Pitfalls
- Generic Array Swap
- Generic Array Rotate

Swap

You're asked to write a function that swaps two numbers.

```
void swap_int(int *a, int *b) {  
    int temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
    int y = 5;  
    swap_int(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```

Swap

You're asked to write a function that swaps two numbers.

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    int y = 5;  
    swap_int(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```

main()



| | | Stack | |
|---------|--------|-------|--|
| Address | | Value | |
| | | ... | |
| x | 0xff14 | 2 | |
| y | 0xff10 | 5 | |
| | | ... | |

Swap

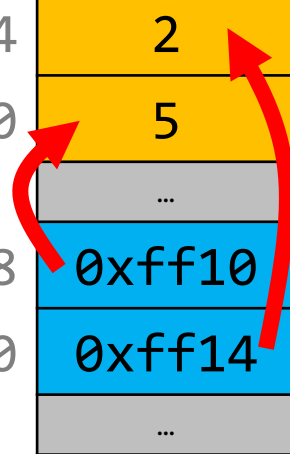
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int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
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    int y = 5;  
    swap_int(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```

main()

swap_int()

| | | Stack | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|
| | | Address | Value |
| x | 0xff14 | | ... |
| | | | 2 |
| y | 0xff10 | | 5 |
| | | | ... |
| b | 0xf18 | | 0xff10 |
| a | 0xf10 | | 0xff14 |
| | | | ... |



Swap

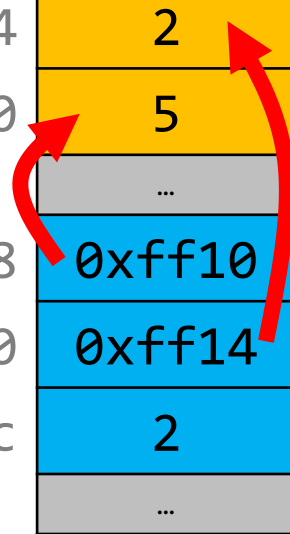
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}  
  
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int x = 2;  
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    swap_int(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```

main()

swap_int()

| | | Stack | |
|------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | Address | Value |
| x | 0xff14 | | 2 |
| | | | |
| y | 0xff10 | | 5 |
| | | | |
| | | | ... |
| b | 0xf18 | | 0xff10 |
| | | | |
| a | 0xf10 | | 0xff14 |
| | | | |
| temp | 0xf0c | | 2 |
| | | | |
| | | | ... |



Swap

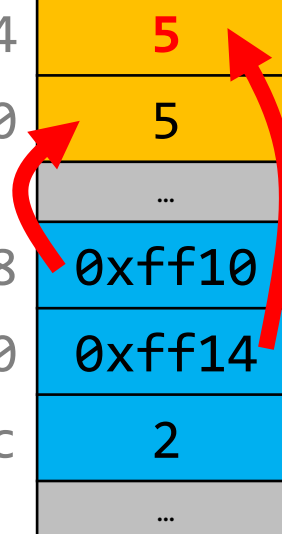
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    return 0;  
}
```

main()

swap_int()

| | | Stack | |
|------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | Address | Value |
| x | 0xff14 | | 5 |
| | | | |
| y | 0xff10 | | 5 |
| | | | |
| b | 0xf18 | | 0xff10 |
| | | | |
| a | 0xf10 | | 0xff14 |
| | | | |
| temp | 0xf0c | | 2 |
| | | | |



Swap

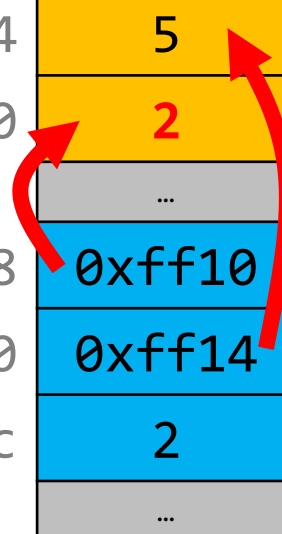
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}
```

main()

swap_int()

| | | Stack | |
|------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | Address | Value |
| x | 0xff14 | | 5 |
| | | | |
| y | 0xff10 | | 2 |
| | | | |
| b | 0xf18 | | 0xff10 |
| | | | |
| a | 0xf10 | | 0xff14 |
| | | | |
| temp | 0xf0c | | 2 |
| | | | |




Swap

You're asked to write a function that swaps two numbers.

```
void swap_int(int *a, int *b) {  
    int temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}  
  
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    int x = 2;  
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    swap_int(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
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    return 0;  
}
```

main()

| | | Stack | |
|--|---|---------|--------|
| | | Address | Value |
| |  | x | 0xff14 |
| | | y | 0xff10 |
| | | | ... |

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    return 0;  
}
```

main()




| | | Stack | |
|---------|--------|-------|--|
| Address | | Value | |
| | | ... | |
| x | 0xff14 | 5 | |
| y | 0xff10 | 2 | |
| | | ... | |

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    swap_int(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```

main()

| | | Stack | |
|--|---|---------|--------|
| | | Address | Value |
| |  | x | 0xff14 |
| | | y | 0xff10 |
| | | | ... |

“Oh, when I said ‘numbers’ I
meant shorts, not ints.”



Swap

```
void swap_short(short *a, short *b) {  
    short temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    short x = 2;  
    short y = 5;  
    swap_short(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```


Swap

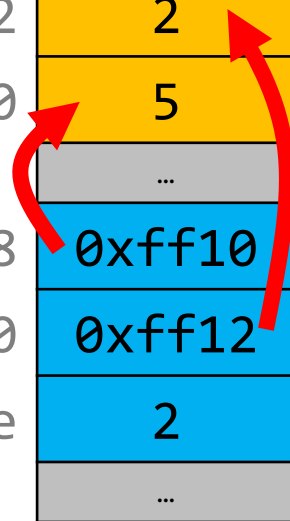
```
void swap_short(short *a, short *b) {  
    short temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    short x = 2;  
    short y = 5;  
    swap_short(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %d, y = %d\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```

main()

swap_short()

| | | Stack | |
|------|--------|---------|--------|
| | | Address | Value |
| x | 0xff12 | | ... |
| | | | 2 |
| y | 0xff10 | | 5 |
| | | | ... |
| b | 0xf18 | | 0xff10 |
| | | | 0xff12 |
| temp | 0xf0e | | 2 |
| | | | ... |



“You know what, I goofed.
We’re going to use strings.
Could you write something to
swap those?”



Swap

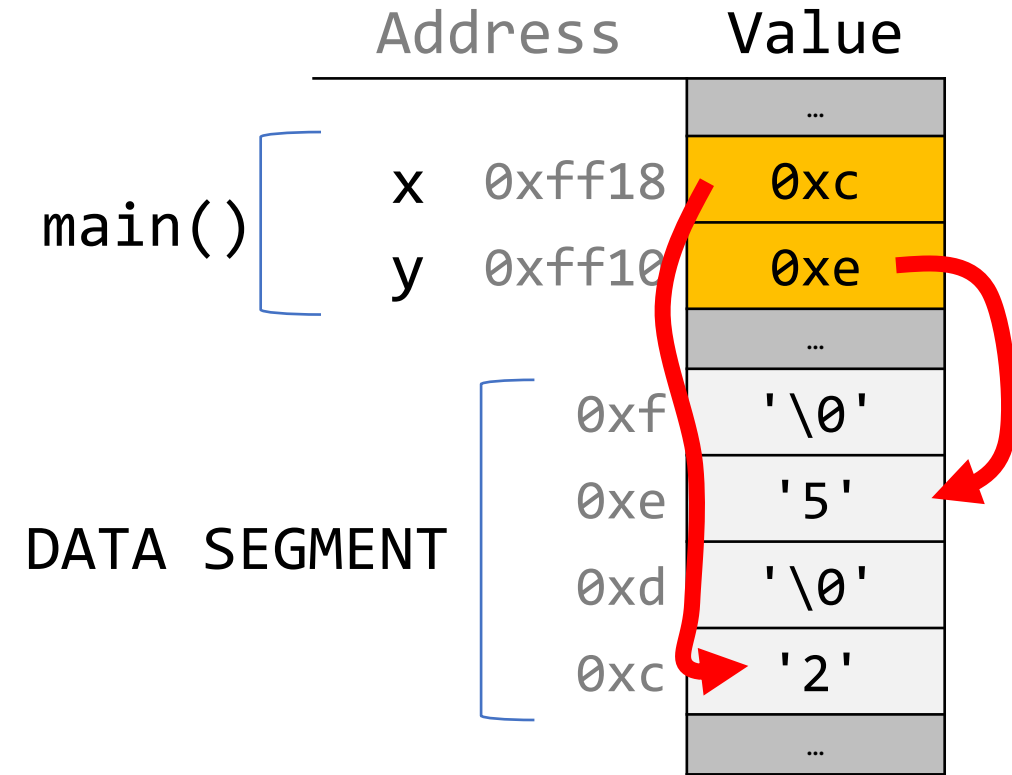
```
void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
    char *temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char *x = "2";  
    char *y = "5";  
    swap_string(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %s, y = %s\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```

Swap

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void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
    char *temp = *a;  
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}
```

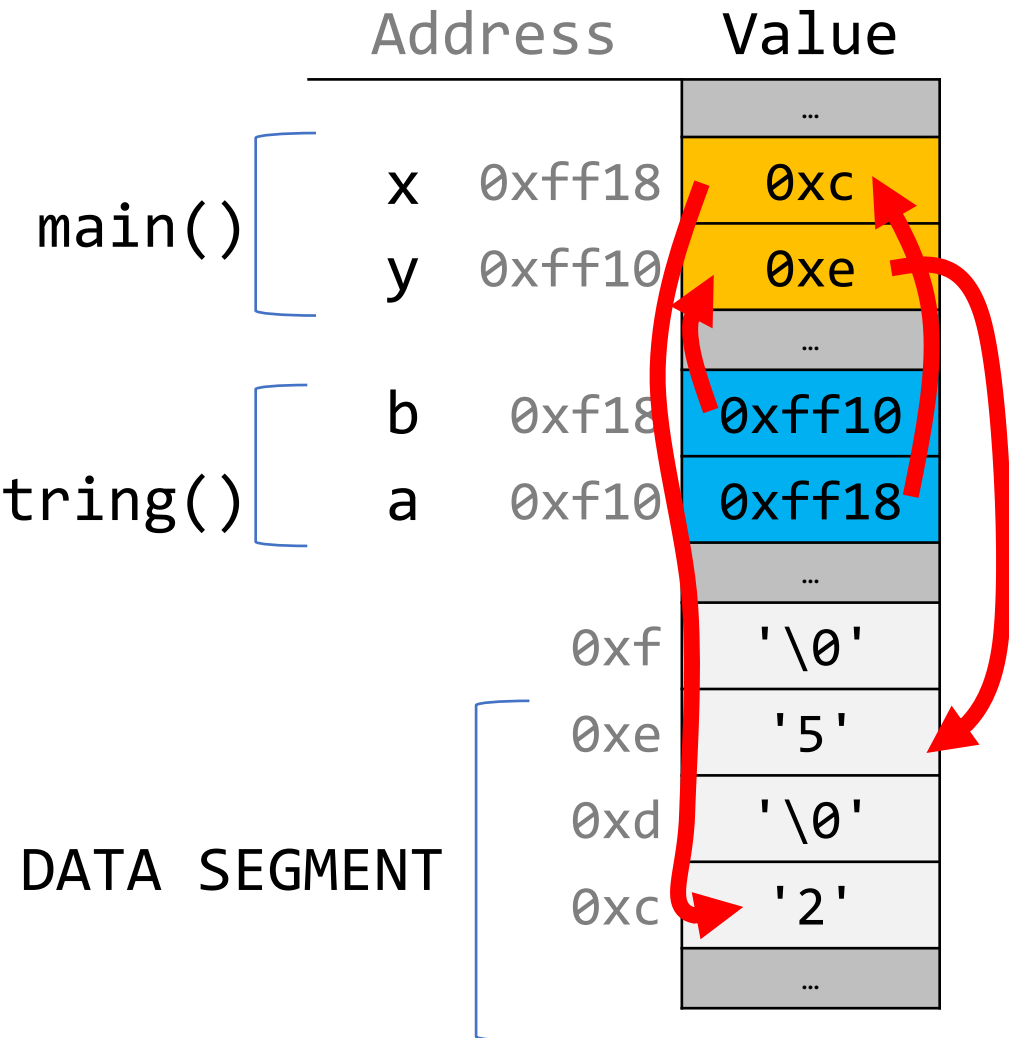
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Swap

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void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
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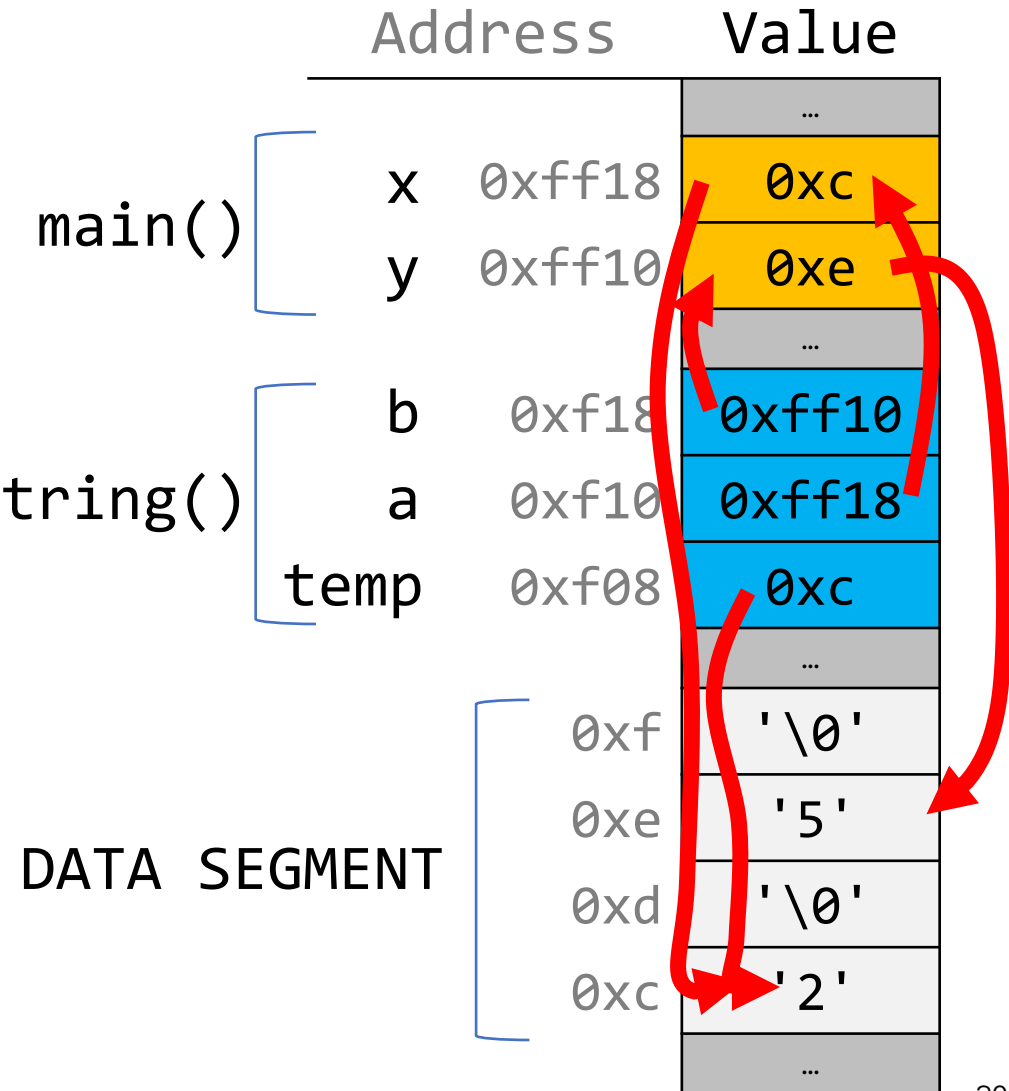
```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char *x = "2";  
    char *y = "5";  
    swap_string(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %s, y = %s\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```



Swap

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void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
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}
```

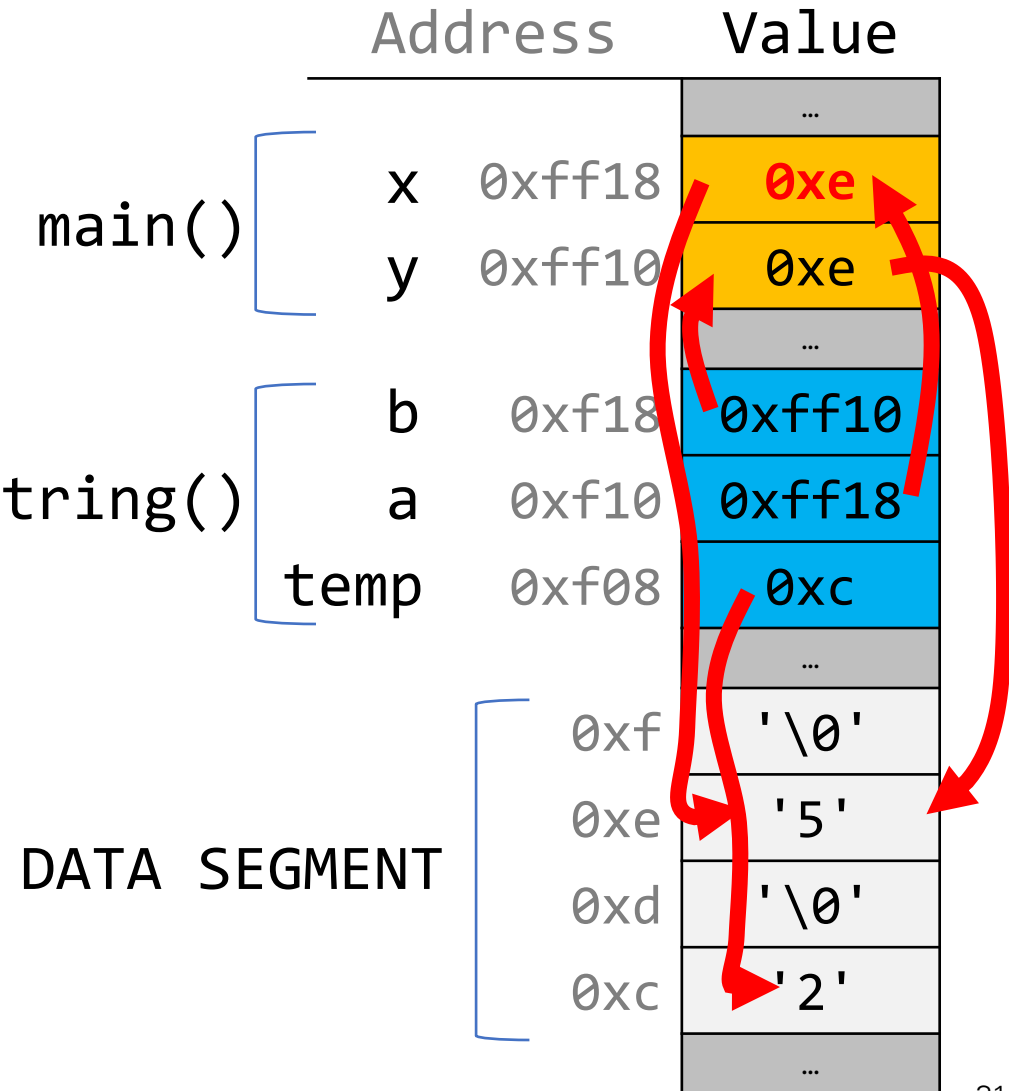
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Swap

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void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
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```

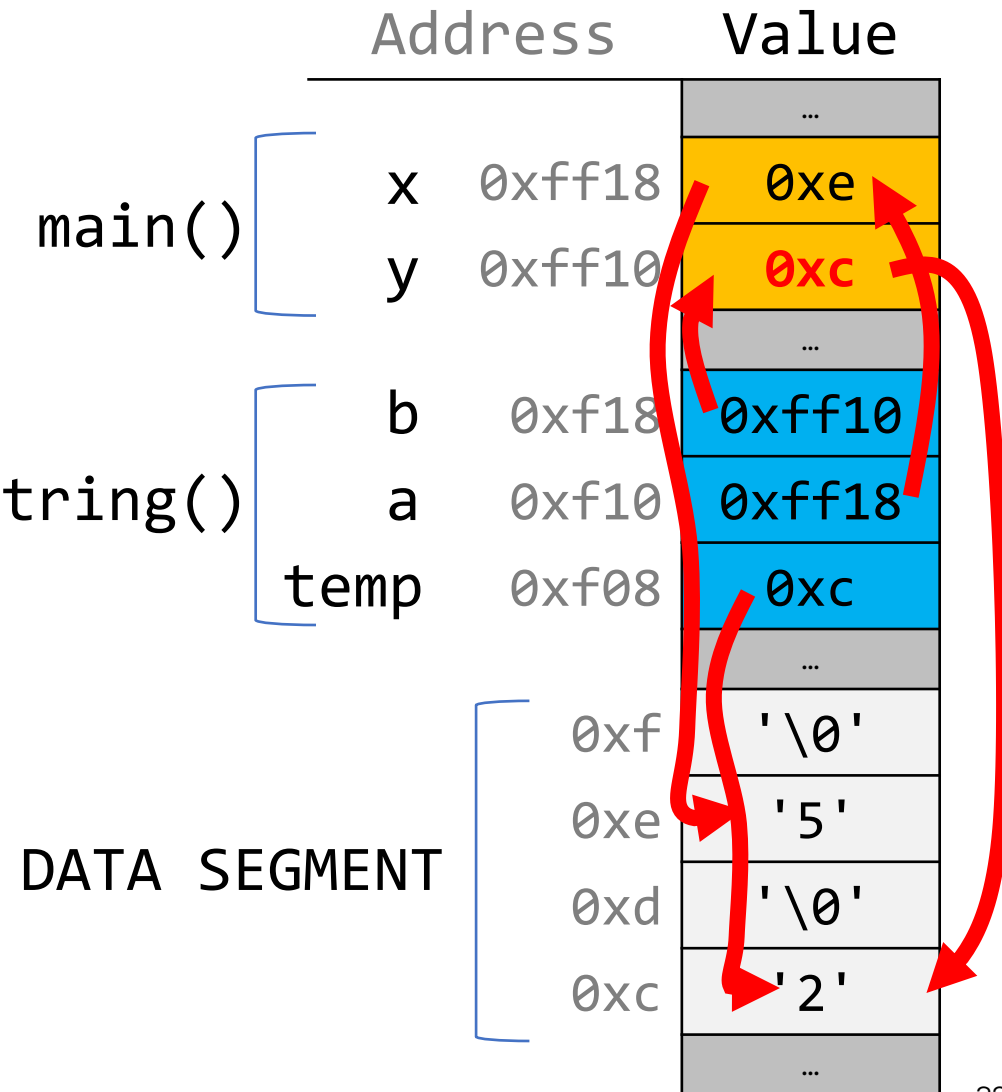
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    return 0;  
}
```



Swap

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void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
    char *temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
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}
```

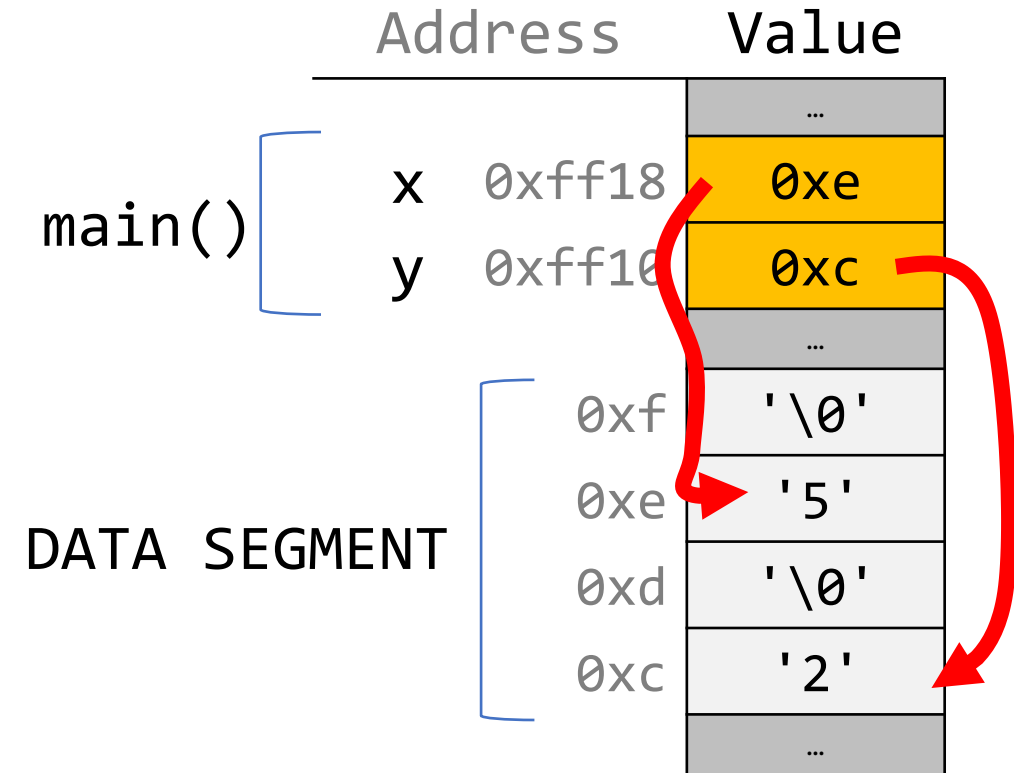
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}
```



Swap

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    char *temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

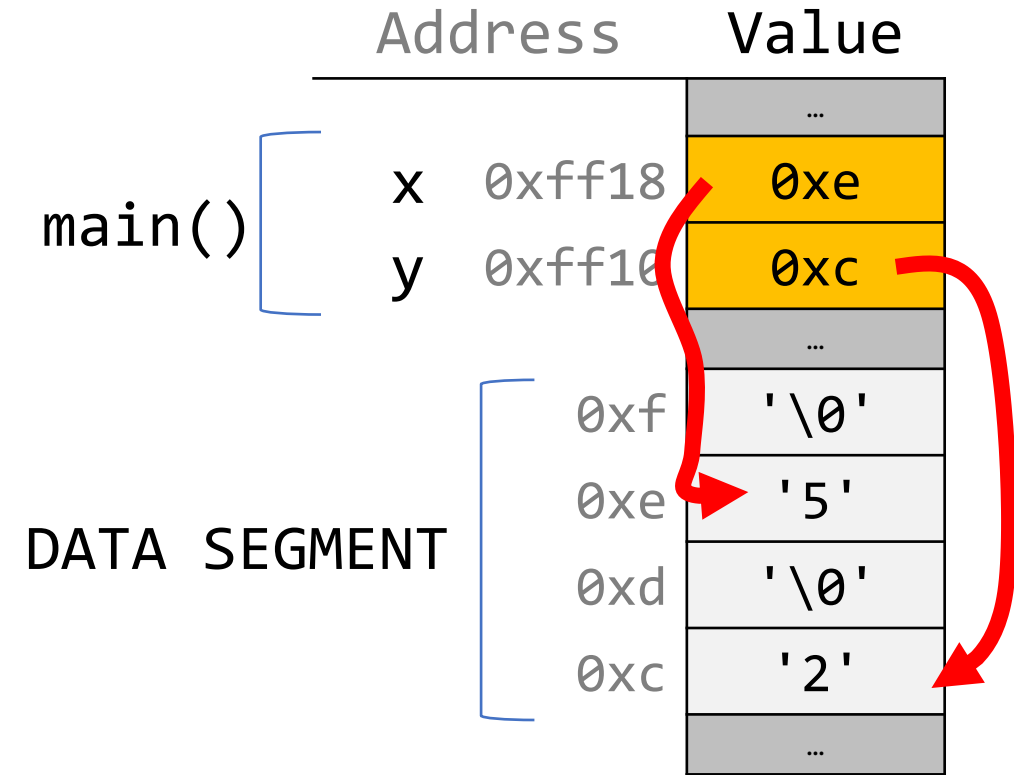
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    char *y = "5";  
    swap_string(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %s, y = %s\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```



Swap

```
void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
    char *temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

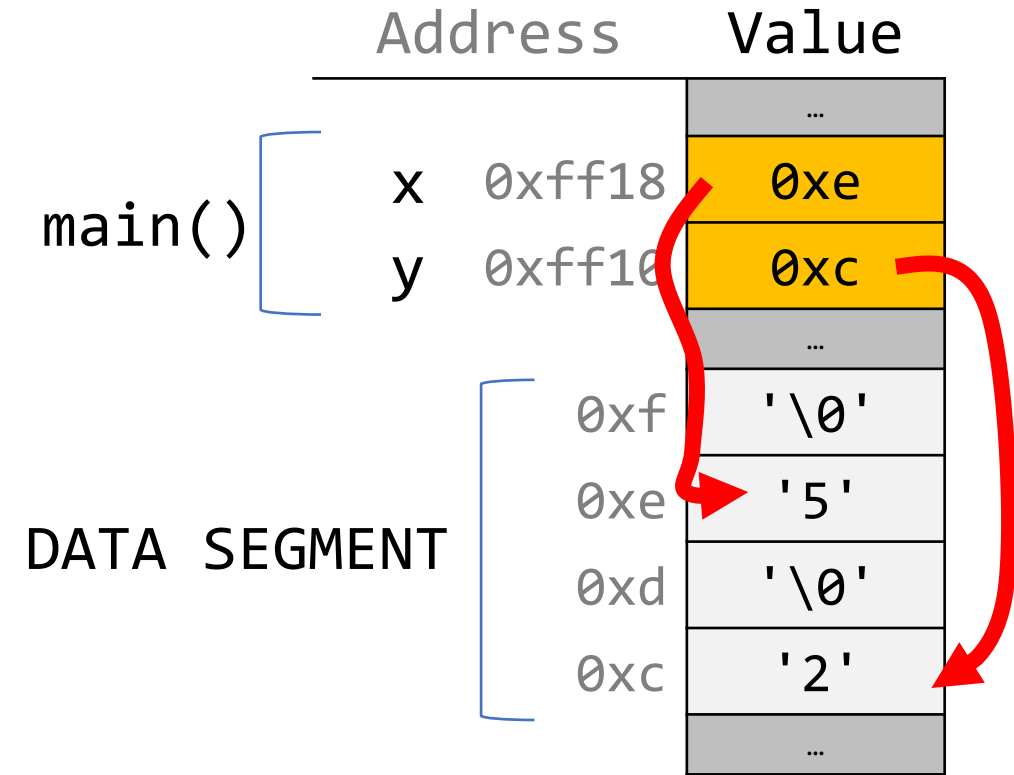
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    char *y = "5";  
    swap_string(&x, &y);  
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    printf("x = %s, y = %s\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```



Swap

```
void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
    char *temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    char *x = "2";  
    char *y = "5";  
    swap_string(&x, &y);  
    // want x = 5, y = 2  
    printf("x = %s, y = %s\n", x, y);  
    return 0;  
}
```



“Awesome! Thanks.”

“Awesome! Thanks. We also have 20 custom struct types. Could you write swap for those too?”



“Awesome! Thanks. We also have 20 custom struct types. Could you write swap for those too?”



A user-defined
structured data type in C
(will be covered next week)

Generic Swap

What if we could write *one* function to swap two values of any single type?

```
void swap_int(int *a, int *b) { ... }  
void swap_float(float *a, float *b) { ... }  
void swap_size_t(size_t *a, size_t *b) { ... }  
void swap_double(double *a, double *b) { ... }  
void swap_string(char **a, char **b) { ... }  
void swap_mystruct(mystruct *a, mystruct *b) { ... }  
...
```

Generic Swap

```
void swap_int(int *a, int *b) {  
    int temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
void swap_short(short *a, short *b) {  
    short temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
    char *temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```


Generic Swap

```
void swap_int(int *a, int *b) {  
    int temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
void swap_short(short *a, short *b) {  
    short temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

```
void swap_string(char **a, char **b) {  
    char *temp = *a;  
    *a = *b;  
    *b = temp;  
}
```

All 3:

- Take pointers to values to swap
- Create temporary storage to store one of the values
- Move data at **b** into where **a** points
- Move data in temporary storage into where **b** points

Generic Swap

```
void swap(pointer to data1, pointer to data2) {  
    store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    copy data2 to location of data1  
    copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

Generic Swap

```
void swap(pointer to data1, pointer to data2) {  
    store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    copy data2 to location of data1  
    copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

```
int temp = *data1ptr;
```

4 bytes

```
short temp = *data1ptr;
```

2 bytes

```
char *temp = *data1ptr;
```

8 bytes

Problem: each type may need a different size temp!

Generic Swap

```
void swap(pointer to data1, pointer to data2) {  
    store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    copy data2 to location of data1  
    copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

`*data1Ptr = *data2ptr;`

4 bytes

`*data1Ptr = *data2ptr;`

2 bytes

`*data1Ptr = *data2ptr;`

8 bytes

Problem: each type needs to copy a different amount of data!

Generic Swap

```
void swap(pointer to data1, pointer to data2) {  
    store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    copy data2 to location of data1  
    copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

`*data2ptr = temp;`

4 bytes

`*data2ptr = temp;`

2 bytes

`*data2ptr = temp;`

8 bytes

Problem: each type needs to copy a different amount of data!

C knows the size of temp, and knows how many bytes to copy, because of the variable types.

Is there a way to make a
version that doesn't care about
the variable types?

Generic Swap

```
void swap(pointer to data1, pointer to data2) {  
    store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    copy data2 to location of data1  
    copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
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Generic Swap

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Generic Swap

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```

Generic Swap

```
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}
```

Generic Swap

```
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}
```

If we don't know the data type, we don't know how many bytes it is. Let's take that as another parameter.

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

If we don't know the data type, we don't know how many bytes it is. Let's take that as another parameter.

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

Let's start by making space to store the temporary value. How can we make **nbytes** of temp space?

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    void temp; ???  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

Let's start by making space to store the temporary value. How can we make **nbytes** of temp space?

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

temp is **nbytes** of memory,
since each **char** is 1 byte!

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

Now, how can we copy in what **data1ptr** points to into **temp**?

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    temp = *data1ptr; ???  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

Now, how can we copy in what **data1ptr** points to into **temp**?

Generic Swap

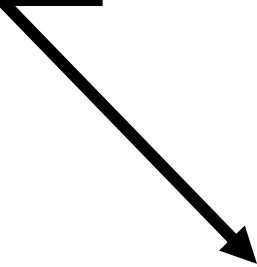
```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    temp = *data1ptr; ???  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

We can't dereference a **void *** (or set an array equal to something). C doesn't know what it points to! Therefore, it doesn't know how many bytes there it should be looking at.

memcpy

memcpy is a function that copies a specified amount of bytes at one address to another address.

```
void *memcpy(void *dest, const void *src, size_t n);
```



`const` is a type qualifier which indicates that the data is read only (will be covered next week)

memcpy

memcpy is a function that copies a specified amount of bytes at one address to another address.

```
void *memcpy(void *dest, const void *src, size_t n);
```

It copies the next *n* bytes that *src* points to to the location contained in *dest*. (It also returns **dest**). It does not support regions of memory that overlap.

memcpy must take **pointers** to the bytes to work with to know where they live and where they should be copied to.

```
int x = 5;  
int y = 4;  
memcpy(&x, &y, sizeof(x)); // like x = y
```

memmove

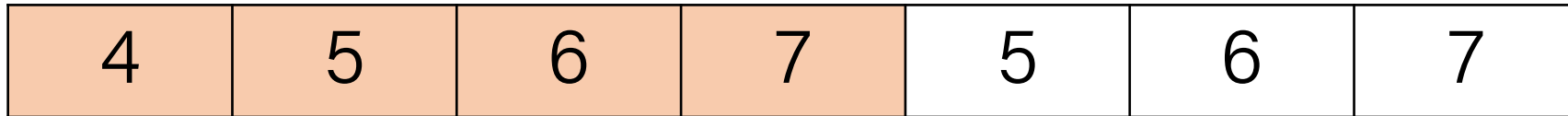
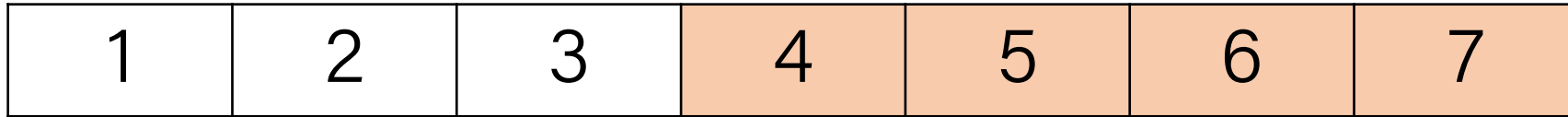
memmove is the same as memcpy, but supports overlapping regions of memory. (Unlike its name implies, it still “copies”).

```
void *memmove(void *dest, const void *src, size_t n);
```

It copies the next n bytes that src points to to the location contained in dest. (It also returns **dest**).

memmove

When might memmove be useful?



Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    temp = *data1ptr; ???  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

We can't dereference a **void ***. C doesn't know what it points to! Therefore, it doesn't know how many bytes there it should be looking at.

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    temp = *data1ptr; ???  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

How can **memcpy** or **memmove** help us here?

```
void *memcpy(void *dest, const void *src, size_t n);
```

```
void *memmove(void *dest, const void *src, size_t n);
```

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

We can copy the bytes ourselves into temp! This is equivalent to **temp = *data1ptr** in non-generic versions, but this works for *any* type of *any* size.

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

How can we copy data2 to the location of data1?

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    *data1ptr = *data2ptr; ???  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

How can we copy data2 to the location of data1?

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

How can we copy data2 to the location of data1?
memcpy!

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
}
```

How can we copy temp's data to the location of data2?

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
    memcpy(data2ptr, temp, nbytes);  
}
```

How can we copy temp's data to the location of data2? **memcpy!**

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
    memcpy(data2ptr, temp, nbytes);  
}
```

```
int x = 2;  
int y = 5;  
swap(&x, &y, sizeof(x));
```

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
    memcpy(data2ptr, temp, nbytes);  
}
```

```
short x = 2;  
short y = 5;  
swap(&x, &y, sizeof(x));
```

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
    memcpy(data2ptr, temp, nbytes);  
}
```

```
char *x = "2";  
char *y = "5";  
swap(&x, &y, sizeof(x));
```

Generic Swap

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes) {  
    char temp[nbytes];  
    // store a copy of data1 in temporary storage  
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data2 to location of data1  
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);  
    // copy data in temporary storage to location of data2  
    memcpy(data2ptr, temp, nbytes);  
}
```

```
mystruct x = {...};  
mystruct y = {...};  
swap(&x, &y, sizeof(x));
```

C Generics

- We can use **void *** and **memcpy** to handle memory as generic bytes.
- If we are given where the data of importance is, and how big it is, we can handle it!

```
void swap(void *data1ptr, void *data2ptr, size_t nbytes)
{
    char temp[nbytes];
    memcpy(temp, data1ptr, nbytes);
    memcpy(data1ptr, data2ptr, nbytes);
    memcpy(data2ptr, temp, nbytes);
}
```

Lecture Plan

- **Overview:** Generics
- Generic Swap
- **Generics Pitfalls**
- Generic Array Swap
- Generic Array Rotate

Void * Pitfalls

- **void** *s are powerful, but dangerous - C cannot do as much checking!
- E.g. with **int**, C would never let you swap *half* of an int. With **void** *s, this can happen! (*How? Let's find out!*)

Demo: Void *s Gone Wrong



swap.c

Void *Pitfalls

- Void * has more room for error because it manipulates arbitrary bytes without knowing what they represent. This can result in some strange memory Frankensteins!



<http://i.ytimg.com/vi/10gPoYjq3EA/hqdefault.jpg>

Mid-Lecture Check-In

We can now answer the following questions:

1. What variable type represents a “generic pointer”?
2. What variable type can we use to create a specific number of bytes of space on the stack?
3. How can we copy generic memory from one location to another?
4. What is the difference between **memcpy** and **memmove**?
5. What are the benefits of generic functions in C? What are the challenges?

Lecture Plan

- **Overview:** Generics
- Generic Swap
- Generics Pitfalls
- Generic Array Swap
- Generic Array Rotate

Swap Ends

You're asked to write a function that swaps the first and last elements in an array of numbers.

```
void swap_ends_int(int *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    int tmp = arr[0];  
    arr[0] = arr[nelems - 1];  
    arr[nelems - 1] = tmp;  
}
```

Wait – we just wrote a generic swap function. Let's use that!

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int nums[] = {5, 2, 3, 4, 1};  
    size_t nelems = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);  
    swap_ends_int(nums, nelems);  
    // want nums[0] = 1, nums[4] = 5  
    printf("nums[0] = %d, nums[4] = %d\n", nums[0], nums[4]);  
    return 0;  
}
```

Swap Ends

You're asked to write a function that swaps the first and last elements in an array of numbers.

```
void swap_ends_int(int *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

Wait – we just wrote a generic swap function. Let's use that!

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int nums[] = {5, 2, 3, 4, 1};  
    size_t nelems = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);  
    swap_ends_int(nums, nelems);  
    // want nums[0] = 1, nums[4] = 5  
    printf("nums[0] = %d, nums[4] = %d\n", nums[0], nums[4]);  
    return 0;  
}
```

Swap Ends

Let's write out what some other versions would look like (just in case).

```
void swap_ends_int(int *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

```
void swap_ends_short(short *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

```
void swap_ends_string(char **arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

```
void swap_ends_float(float *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

The code seems to be the same regardless of the type!

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of swap_ends that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

Is this generic? Does this work?

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of swap_ends that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

Is this generic? Does this work?

Unfortunately not. First, we no longer know the element size. Second, pointer arithmetic depends on the type of data being pointed to. With a void *, we lose that information!

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of swap_ends that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, sizeof(*arr));  
}
```

We need to know the element size, so let's add a parameter.

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of `swap_ends` that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, elem_bytes);  
}
```

We need to know the element size, so let's add a parameter.

Pointer Arithmetic

`arr + nelems - 1`

Let's say `nelems = 4`. How many bytes beyond `arr` is this?

If it's an array of...

Int?

Pointer Arithmetic

`arr + nelems - 1`

Let's say `nelems = 4`. How many bytes beyond `arr` is this?

If it's an array of...

Int: adds 3 places to `arr`, and `3 * sizeof(int) = 12 bytes`

Pointer Arithmetic

`arr + nelems - 1`

Let's say `nelems = 4`. How many bytes beyond `arr` is this?

If it's an array of...

Int: adds 3 places to `arr`, and `3 * sizeof(int) = 12 bytes`

Short?

Pointer Arithmetic

`arr + nelems - 1`

Let's say `nelems = 4`. How many bytes beyond `arr` is this?

If it's an array of...

Int: adds 3 places to `arr`, and `3 * sizeof(int) = 12 bytes`

Short: adds 3 places to `arr`, and `3 * sizeof(short) = 6 bytes`

Pointer Arithmetic

`arr + nelems - 1`

Let's say `nelems = 4`. How many bytes beyond `arr` is this?

If it's an array of...

Int: adds 3 places to `arr`, and `3 * sizeof(int) = 12` bytes

Short: adds 3 places to `arr`, and `3 * sizeof(short) = 6` bytes

Char *: adds 3 places to `arr`, and `3 * sizeof(char *) = 24` bytes

In each case, we need to know the element size to do the arithmetic.

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of `swap_ends` that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, arr + nelems - 1, elem_bytes);  
}
```

How many bytes past `arr` should we go to get to the last element?

`(nelems - 1) * elem_bytes`

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of swap_ends that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

How many bytes past arr should we go to get to the last element?

(nelems - 1) * elem_bytes

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of swap_ends that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

But C still can't do arithmetic with a `void*`. We need to tell it to not worry about it, and just add bytes. **How can we do this?**

Swap Ends

Let's write a version of swap_ends that works for any type of array.

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

But C still can't do arithmetic with a void*. We need to tell it to not worry about it, and just add bytes. **How can we do this?**

char * pointers already add bytes!

Swap Ends

You're asked to write a function that swaps the first and last elements in an array of numbers. Well, now it can swap for an array of anything!

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

Swap Ends

You're asked to write a function that swaps the first and last elements in an array of numbers. Well, now it can swap for an array of anything!

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

```
int nums[] = {5, 2, 3, 4, 1};  
size_t nelems = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);  
swap_ends(nums, nelems, sizeof(nums[0]));
```

Swap Ends

You're asked to write a function that swaps the first and last elements in an array of numbers. Well, now it can swap for an array of anything!

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

```
short nums[] = {5, 2, 3, 4, 1};  
size_t nelems = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);  
swap_ends(nums, nelems, sizeof(nums[0]));
```

Swap Ends

You're asked to write a function that swaps the first and last elements in an array of numbers. Well, now it can swap for an array of anything!

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

```
char *strs[] = {"Hi", "Hello", "Howdy"};  
size_t nelems = sizeof(strs) / sizeof(strs[0]);  
swap_ends(strs, nelems, sizeof(strs[0]));
```

Swap Ends

You're asked to write a function that swaps the first and last elements in an array of numbers. Well, now it can swap for an array of anything!

```
void swap_ends(void *arr, size_t nelems, size_t elem_bytes) {  
    swap(arr, (char *)arr + (nelems - 1) * elem_bytes, elem_bytes);  
}
```

```
mystruct structs[] = ...;  
size_t nelems = ...;  
swap_ends(structs, nelems, sizeof(structs[0]));
```


Demo: Void *s Gone Wrong



swap_ends.c

Void * Pitfalls

- **void** *s are powerful, but dangerous - C cannot do as much checking!
- E.g. with **int**, C would never let you swap *half* of an int. With **void** *s, this can happen!

```
int x = 0xffffffff;
int y = 0xeeeeeeeee;
swap(&x, &y, sizeof(short));
```

```
// now x = 0xfffffeeee, y = 0xeeeefffff!
printf("x = 0x%x, y = 0x%x\n", x, y);
```

Lecture Plan

- **Overview:** Generics
- Generic Swap
- Generics Pitfalls
- Generic Array Swap
- Generic Array Rotate

Demo: Array Rotation



rotate.c

Array Rotation

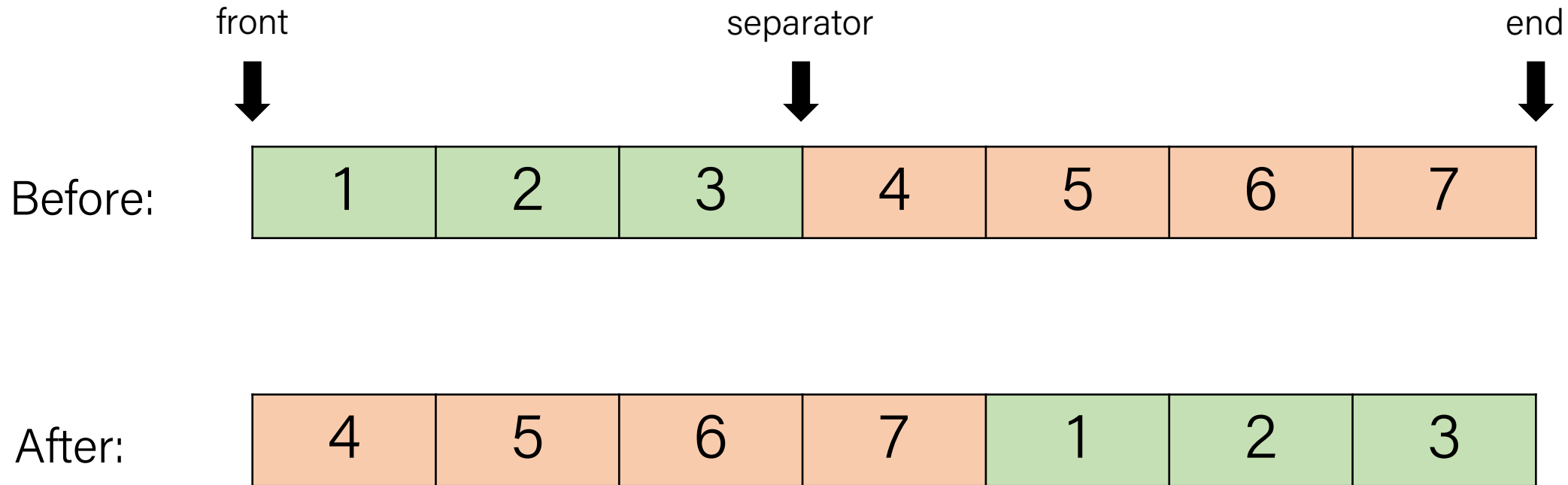
You're asked to provide an implementation for a function called **rotate** with the following prototype:

```
void rotate(void *front, void *separator, void *end);
```

The expectation is that **front** is the base address of an array, **end** is the past-the-end address of the array, and **separator** is the address of some element in between. **rotate** moves all elements in between **front** and **separator** to the end of the array, and all elements between **separator** and **end** move to the front.

Array Rotation

```
int array[7] = {1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7};  
rotate(array, array + 3, array + 7);
```



Array Rotation

A properly implemented **rotate** will prompt the following program to generate the provided output.

```
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {  
    int array[10] = {1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10};  
    print_int_array(array, 10); // intuitive implementation ☺  
    rotate(array, array + 5, array + 10);  
    print_int_array(array, 10);  
    rotate(array, array + 1, array + 10);  
    print_int_array(array, 10);  
    rotate(array + 4, array + 5, array + 6);  
    print_int_array(array, 10);  
    return 0;  
}
```

Output:

```
linuxpool :~/lect9$ ./rotate  
Array: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10  
Array: 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5  
Array: 7, 8, 9, 10, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6  
Array: 7, 8, 9, 10, 2, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6  
linuxpool:~/lect8$
```

Array Rotation

A properly implemented **rotate** will prompt the following program to generate the provided output.

And here's that properly implemented function!

```
void rotate(void *front, void *separator, void *end) {  
    int width = (char *)end - (char *)front;  
    int prefix_width = (char *)separator - (char *)front;  
    int suffix_width = width - prefix_width;  
  
    char temp[prefix_width];  
    memcpy(temp, front, prefix_width);  
    memmove(front, separator, suffix_width);  
    memcpy((char *)end - prefix_width, temp, prefix_width);  
}
```


Recap

- **void *** is a variable type that represents a generic pointer “to something”.
- We cannot perform pointer arithmetic with or dereference a **void ***.
- We can use **memcpy** or **memmove** to copy data from one memory location to another.
- To do pointer arithmetic with a **void ***, we must first cast it to a **char ***.
- **void *** and generics are powerful but dangerous because of the lack of type checking, so we must be extra careful when working with generic memory.

Recap

- **Overview:** Generics
- Generic Swap
- Generics Pitfalls
- Generic Array Swap
- Generic Array Rotation

Next time: Function Pointers