Dart and Flutter Reverse Engineering Reference

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Dart SDK

Dart language

Built-in types: int, double, bool, List, Set, String

Strings

Dart strings are created one of following ways:

- 1. Using String, e.g. String flag = 'flag{congrats}'
- 2. String are immutable, so if they need to be manipulated, use the StringBuffer class, and, if needed, convert to a String with toString().

```
void main() {
    final buffer = StringBuffer('Pico le Croco');
    buffer.write(' has big teeth');
    print(buffer);
    print(buffer.toString());
}
```

3. A string is also a sequence of Unicode UTF-16 code units, which are represented as integers. So, they can also be created from list of integers, or types derived from integers (e.g Uint8List). Note that if UTF-8 conversion is needed, there are encode () and decode () methods from the dart: convert library.

```
1 // String to bytes
2 String foo = 'Hello world';
3 List<int> bytes = foo.codeUnits;
4 // Bytes to String
5 String bar = String.fromCharCodes(bytes);
```

No primitive type for byte or char

Workaround #1: List<int>. But this will waste memory because int is 64 bits.

```
1 List <int> core = [7, 34, 49, 55...];
2 String s = String.fromCharCodes(core);
```

Workaround #2: Uint8List (note to import dart: typed_data). Best solution n terms of memory waste because it will be the same as **byte** [] + some small overhead.

```
import 'dart:type_data';

Uint8List flag = Uint8List.fromList([98, 101, ...]);
String s = String.fromCharCodes(flag);
```

SDK Contents

Dart SDK contains:

- Compiler(dart compile ...)
- · Profiling tools
- Package manager (dart pub ...)
- Standard libraries: I/O, networking...
- Runtime VM

SDK Commands

- Create a project: dart create -t console hello
- Compile: dart compile FORMAT source.dart
- Run: dart run EXE
- Disable reporting: dart --disable-analytics
- Version: dart --version
- Dart SDK archive

Flutter

Contents

- Widgets
- UI components
- Libraries: camera, geolocator
- Flutter CLI tool

Install

- Install it manually
- export PATH="\$PATH:pwd/flutter/bin"
- Personal Homedir: ~/softs/flutter
- Upgrade: flutter upgrade.

Check status with flutter doctor:

- Complains about ninja-build? I had to install manually and create a link in /usr/local/bin/ninja
- Complains about clang? sudo apt install clang
- Complains about *Unable to find bundled Java version* of Android Studio? In Android Studio dir, create a symlink: ln -s ./jbr ./jre

App Creation

- With Android Studio, create a Flutter app, or command line flutter create projectname
- Create a Flutter project app using Java, and for iOS, Android and Linux.
- To build RELEASE app, Android Studio > Build > Build APK or to build in command line flutter build apk
- To run an App in Linux, you can also just use flutter run

Implementation

• build(): don't put anything blocking in there! Can be called multiple times.

Platform Channels

Communication between the Dalvik layer and Flutter is perform through *Platform Channels*. Platform channels are implemented by Flutter and are the standard way to communication between a Flutter client application and its host (Android in our case). In particular, Flutter provides a class named MethodChannel to help *Dart* code call *Java or Kotlin* code.

```
private final Object func(MethodCall methodCall0, Result
          methodChannel$Result0) {
2
           SharedPreferences.Editor sharedPreferences$Editor0;
           if(l8.a6(methodCall0.method, "setConfig")) {
3
               String s = (String)methodCall0.argument("smsCount");
4
5
               if(s == null) {
6
                    return null;
7
               }
8
9
           }
10
```

Sentinel

The assembly code often uses a Sentinel.

A sentinel is a special value used to signify the end of a data structure, or the completion of a process. It acts as a signal or marker that indicates when a certain condition has been met, or when the data structure has reached its end. Sentinels are a general concept (not specific to Dart).

Example: in a linked list, a sentinel node can be used to indicate the end of the list. NB. Sentinels do not necessarily mark an end. They can mark *anything*: expired, free...

In Dart, sentinels are used for:

- Object ID 0. Indicates target of a reference has been omitted from the snapshot.
- · Class ID 0.

The following assembly code shows the use of a sentinel to indicate whether static fields have been initialized or not:

```
1 0x001b0980
                403740f9
                               ldr x0, [x26, 0x68]
                                                         ; 0xf4 ; "THR::
      field_table_values"
2 0x001b0984 00a445f9
                               ldr x0, [x0, 0xb48]
                                                         ; 0xda
                               ldr x16, [x27, 0x40]
                                                         ; 0xf5 ; "Load
3 0x001b0988
                702340f9
      Sentinel from PP"
4 0x001b098c 1f00106b
                               cmp w0, w16
5 0x001b0990
                81000054
                               b.ne 0x1b09a0
                                                         ; "compare
      sentinel and field_table_values"
6 0x001b0994 62234091
                                                         : "case where
                              add x2, x27, 8, lsl 12
      sentinel == field_table_value: we need to init the field"
7 0x001b0998 42e840f9 ldr x2, [x2, 0x1d0]
                                                         ; 0xdc ; "
      computing 0x81d0 offset from PP: anyIPv4 field"
8 0x001b099c 62f90494 bl fcn.InitLateStaticFieldStub_2eef24
                                                         ; "case where
9 0x001b09a0
                e00100f9
                               str x0, [x15]
      sentinel != field_table_value: field already initialized"
10 0x001b09a4 24000094 bl "fcn.serversocket_bind"
```

and corresponds to part of the following dart code: final server = await ServerSocket.bind
(InternetAddress.anyIPv4, 8080);

The corresponding Dart SDK source code is in runtime/vm/field_table.cc where a sentinel is placed at the top of the field table.

```
1 field.set_field_id(top_);
2 table_[top_] = Object::sentinel().ptr();
```

Note this is different from the public Sentinel class.

Versions

There are **Dart SDK versions** and **Flutter versions**.

Approximative Date	Dart SDK version	Flutter version
May 2023	3.0.1	
Feb 2024	3.3.0	3.19.1
March 2024	3.3.3	3.19.5

Dart output formats

Output formats

• Source code: it can be directly run using Dart VM's JIT compiler

- Kernel snapshot: Intermediate representation of Dart source code. Used for Flutter debug builds.
- JIT snapshot: JIT snapshots are an optimized intermediate representation of *bytecode*. Bytecode can be seen as intermediate machine code. The bytecode is compiled by Dart VM's JIT compiler. The bytecode is not portable, because it is specific to Dart VM's execution environment. JIT snapshots are typically used during development for example because they allow *Hot Reload* (make changes and see results without restarting the entire app). They are not used for production because slower than AOT snapshots.
- AOT snapshot: pre-compiled native machine code. The initial steps between JIT compilation and AOT compilation are shared, the end is different. The code requires a Dart runtime to run. Used for Flutter release builds. The command dartaotruntime contains the runtime.
- Self contained executable: This is the only executable format which can be run on systems without the Dart SDK installed. It embeds the Dart VM.

Compilation:

- Self contained exe: dart compile exe hello.dart
- AOT snapshot: dart compile aot-snapshot hello.dart(non stripped), dart compile aot-snapshot -S ./debuginfo filename.dart(stripped)
- JIT snapshot: dart compile jit-snapshot hello.dart
- Kernel snapshot: dart compile kernel hello.dart

Run:

- Source code: dart run hello.dart
- Self contained exe: ./hello.exe
- AOT snapshot: FLUTTER_DIR/flutter/bin/cache/dart-sdk/bin/dartaotruntime hello.aot
- JIT snapshot: dart run hello.jit
- Kernel snapshot: dart run hello.dill

		Requires an external Dart
Dart formats	Portable	Runtime VM to run
Source code	Yes	Yes
Self contained executable	No	No
AOT snapshot	No	Yes
JIT snapshot	No	Yes
Kernel snapshot	Yes	Yes

Dart output formats	Size	Exec time	Description
hello.dart	266 bytes	0m0,320s (40x)	Source code
hello.exe	5.8 M	0m0,008s	Self contained executable
hello.aot	863 K (14%)	0m0,008s	AOT snapshot
hello.jit	4.7 M (81%)	0m0,242s (30x)	JIT snapshot
hello.dill	936 bytes (0.01%)	0m0,245s (30x)	Kernel snapshot

Isolate

An *isolate* is an independent unit of execution that runs concurrently with other isolates within the same Dart process. Each isolate has it own memory heap, stack and event loop - contrary to OS threads which share the same memory space.

Dart programs have at least one isolate, to run the main "thread", and possibly more. For instance, the developer may decide to create more isolate to handle decompression of a large file.

Dart AOT Snapshot Format

ELF shared object

- 1. VM snapshot: contains base functionality of Dart VM + common libraries.
- 2. 1 or more Isolate snapshots (1 per isolate): freezes the status of the Dart VM before main() is called.

ELF segments of a snapshot:

- 1. Instructions. Code to be executed, contained in a .text segment
- 2. Data. Initial state of Dart heap, contained in a .rodata segment
- How to display dynamic symbols: objdump -T snapshot

AOT snapshot

```
1 +------ +
2 + Dart AOT Header +
3 + ------ +
4 + Cluster Information +
5 + ----- +
6 + Serialized Cluster 1 +
7 + ----- +
```

1. Header

- Magic number f5f5dcdc, 4 bytes
- Size, 8 bytes
- Snapshot kind, 8 bytes
- Version hash, 32 bytes
- · Features: Null terminated string

2. Cluster Info

- Base Object Count. DLEB128. Base objects are self-explanatory objects (e.g. *null*, *empty array*, *void*, *True*, *False*...). To my understanding, all these objects are included in *VM* snapshots, there are none in *Isolate* snapshots. For isolate snapshots, the count indicates the number of base objects *available to the snapshot*.
- Object Count. DLEB128. Number of objects in the snapshot.
- Cluster Count. DLEB128. Number of clusters in the snapshot. This can also be seen as the number of types.
- Code order length. DLEB128. To be explained

LEB128 is a variable length encoding of integers where each byte has its most significant bit set, except the last byte of the sequence. For example, in a sequence $0 \times E5 = 0 \times 8E = 0 \times 26$, $0 \times E5 = 0 \times 8E$ and $0 \times 8E$ have their most significant bit set so we know there are more bytes to process. But 0×26 has its most significant bit to 0, so we know it is the last one. Then, to decode the sequence, we reverse order of bytes, strip each most significant bit and read the value:

- Reverse order: 0x26 0x8E 0xE5
- In binary, this is: 00100110 10001110 11100101
- Strip the most significant bit: 0100110 0001110 1100101
- Read the value for 0b010011000011101100101: 624485

Dart uses a **custom version of LEB128** where its the opposite: only the last byte has its most significant bit set. Let's call this version *DLEB128* (for Dart LEB128).

3. Cluster Serialization

Clusters of the snapshot are serialized one by one. The serialization of a cluster consists in 3 steps:

- 1. Trace. (Trace)
- 2. Alloc. (WriteAlloc) In this stage, we parse all objects of the cluster and attribute reference identifiers to each of them (AssignRef). Then, basic serialization of some objects occur. For example, the serialization of Mint (medium integers) and SMI (small integers) occur at this stage.

3. Fill. (WriteFill). Completes the serialization of each object.

The code which handles the serialization of a snapshot is located in runtime/vm/app_snapshot.cc of Dart's SDK.

Туре	Class / Link	Cid
Mint	MintSerializationCluster	kMintCid
Code	CodeSerializationCluster	kCodeCid
Object Pool	ObjectPoolSerializationCluster	kObjectPoolCid

Name	Value
kIllegalCid	0
kClassCid	5
kFunctionCid	7
kCodeCid	18
kObjectPoolCid	22
kMintCid	60
kStringCid	92
kOneByteStringCid	93
kTwoByteStringCid	94

Note that when a *custom cluster* (new type) needs to be serialized, Dart assigns a CID to that cluster from a CID which isn't used in the snapshot.

Registers

Dedicated registers for Dart

- **PP** (Pool Pointer). Pointer on the beginning of the Object Pool.
- **THR**. Pointer on the running VM thread (dart::Thread object). With this pointer, you get relative offsets to several functions/concepts such as stack limit.
- Register for Stack Pointer is dedicated in Dart Aarch64 to x15

```
1 + ----- + ---- + ---- + ---- + 2 | PP | THR | SP | 3 + ----- + ---- + ---- +
```

```
      4 | x86-64 | r15 | r14 | rsp

      5 | Aarch32 | r5 | r10 | r13 |

      6 | Aarch64 | x27 | x26 | x15 |

      7 + -----+ + ----- + ----- +
```

Object Pool (PP)

The Object Pool is a table which stores and references frequently used objects, immediates and constants within a Dart program.

Example of x86-64 assembly code loading a string from the object pool and printing it:

```
1 mov r11, qword [r15 + 0x168f]
2 mov qword [rsp], r11
3 call sym.printToConsole
```

```
• For Aarch32: LDR R1, [R5, #433h]
```

- For Aarch64: LDR X16, [X27, #433h]
- Forx86_64: mov rbx, qword ptr ds:[r15+433h]

THR offsets

- stack limit: used to check for stack overflow, and also for interrupts
- field_table_value: array with values of static fields of the current isolate
- top: allocation top of TLAB (thread local allocation buffer)
- null object

In runtime/vm/compiler/runtime_offsets_extracted.h:

x86-64 assembly using null object

```
1 mov r11, qword [r14 + 0x68]; store null object in r11
2 mov qword [rsp], r11; push r11 on the stack
3 call sym.new_Random; call constructor for Random()
```

Aarch32 assembly checking for stack overflow

```
1 ; push frame pointer (r11) and link register on the stack
2 PUSH
          {R11, LR}
3 ; move frame pointer to the bottom of the stack
            R11, SP, #0
            SP, SP, #8
5 SUB
6 MOV
            R0, #2Ch
7 ; check stack overflow
8 ; r10 holds the current VM thread pointer
9 LDR R12, [R10, #1Ch]
           SP, R12
10 CMP
11 BLLS
           sub_32FCF4
```

Aarch64 assembly checking for stack overflow

x86-64 assembly checking for stack overflow

```
i; push base pointer on the stack
push rbp
i; the new value for the base pointer is the stack pointer
mov rbp, rsp
i; allocate 16 bytes
sub rsp, 10h
i; r14 holds the current Dart VM thread pointer
cmp rsp, qword [r14 + 0x38]
if stack pointer is <= [r14 + 0x38]: jump stack overflow error
jbe 0x9e850</pre>
```

Recap of important registers

Architecture	Register	Use
arm7eabi	r5	Object Pool
	r10	Pointer to running VM thread
	r11	Frame Pointer
	r13	Stack Pointer
	r14	Link Register
	r15	Program Counter
arm64	X15	Custom Stack Pointer. SP
	X26	Pointer to running VM thread. THR
	X27	Object Pool. PP
	X28	HEAP_BITS.
	X29	Frame Pointer. FP .
	X30	Link Register. LR .
x86_64	r10	Arguments descriptor register
_	r12	Code register
	r14	Pointer to running VM thread
	r15	Object Pool

Encoding of Small Integers (SMI)

Dart represents integers differently depending on their size:

- **Small Integers (SMI)**. Those are integers which can fit on 31 bits (for 32-bit architectures) or 63 bits (for 64-bit architecture). They are represented with their least significant bit set to 0. The value is encoded on the remaining bits.
- Medium Integers (Mint). Those which need more bits than 31/63.

Note that not all small integers are represented as SMI. To my understanding, small integer which use the

built-in **int** type are represented "normally". Only those which trigger the creation of an object, such as *list* of *integers*, are held as an SMI.

Source code	Representation in assembly
int i = 2	standard: mov rax, #2
List < int > tab = [1, 2]	SMI

x86-64 example

Assembly code for a byte array:

```
; size of array = 0x1c / 2 = 14
       r10d, 1Ch
2 mov
3 call
            stub _iso_stub_AllocateArrayStub
4 ...
5 mov
            r11d, A0h
                                            ; P
            qword ptr ds:[rax+17h], r11
6
  mov
7 mov
            r11d, D2h
                                            ; i
            qword ptr ds:[rax+1Fh], r11
8 mov
9 mov
            r11d, C6h
                                            ; C
10 mov
            qword ptr ds:[rax+27h], r11
            r11d, DEh
                                            ; 0
11 mov
```

x86-64 control for SMI/Mint case

In some cases, the compiler has some extra work: it does not know if the XOR result fits in a small or a medium integer. Consequently, it writes code for both cases. It tests if the result fits in a SMI by doubling it and checking if there's an overflow. If there's no overflow, this is a SMI. If it overflow, it must be stored in a Mint.

```
1 ; rdx contains XOR result: core[i] ^ 0x43
2 mov rax, rdx
3 ; compute rax * 2
4 add rax, rax
5 ; no overflow: SMI case, overflow: Mint case.
6 jno no_overflow
7 ; Mint case: create Mint containing XOR result value
         stub _iso_stub_AllocateMintSharedWithoutFPURegsStub
8 call
9 mov
            qword ptr ds:[rax+7], rdx
  . . .
11 no_overflow:
12 mov rdx, rcx
i3 ; get address of core[i]
14 lea r13, qword ptr ds:[rdx+8*rdi+17h]
15 ; store XOR result in core[i]
16 mov
        qword ptr ds:[r13], rax
```

Calling convention (ABI)

In Dart, all arguments are pushed on the stack (push r11).

```
1 mov r11, qword [r15 + 0x1d3f]
2 push r11
3 mov r11, qword [r15 + 0x1d47]
4 push r11
5 call fcn.string_concat
```

	arg 1	arg 2	arg 3	arg 4	•••
Standard calling convention x86-64	rdi	rsi	rdx	r8	
Dart calling convention	push on the stack				

Aarch32:

```
1 ldr lr, [r5, 0xe9f]; "stage2: "
2 ldr sb, [r5, 0xea3]; "ph0wn{"
3 stm sp, {sb, lr}; push them on the stack
4 bl fcn.concat; concatenate strings
```

Aarch64 (see use of X15 as stack pointer):

Function prologue

Example in x86-64:

```
1 ; push base pointer on the stack
2 push rbp
3 ; the new value for the base pointer is the stack pointer
4 mov rbp, rsp
5 ; allocate 16 bytes
6 sub rsp, 10h
7 ; r14 holds the current Dart VM thread pointer
8 cmp rsp, qword [r14 + 0x38]
9 ; if stack pointer is <= [r14 + 0x38]: jump stack overflow error
10 jbe 0x9e850</pre>
```

For Aarch32:

```
1 ; push frame pointer (r11) and link register on the stack
2 PUSH
          {R11, LR}
3 ; move frame pointer to the bottom of the stack
4 ADD R11, SP, #0
5 SUB
            SP, SP, #8
           R0, #2Ch
6 MOV
7 ; check stack overflow
  ; r10 holds the current VM thread pointer
9 LDR
            R12, [R10, #1Ch]
10 CMP
            SP, R12
           sub_32FCF4
11 BLLS
```

For Aarch64:

Dart SDK source code ref

	URL
ClassId enumeration	sdk/runtime/vm/class_id.h
Heap snapshot info	See heap_snapshot.md
ObjectPool class	runtime/vm/object.h
ObjectPool serialization	runtime/vm/app_snapshot.cc see ObjectPoolSerializationCluster
Offsets to THR for various functions	runtime/vm/compiler/runtime_offsets_extracted.h
Register enumeration	runtime/vm/constants_arm.h, runtime/vm/constants_arm64.h, runtime/vm/constants_x64.h
Snapshot class	runtime/vm/snapshot.h
Snapshot serialization	sdk/runtime/vm/app_snapshot.ccinSerializationCluster
Snapshot Kind	sdk/runtime/vm/snapshot.h

	URL
Serialization of integers	runtime/vm/app_snapshot.cc
Stub compiler code	runtime/vm/compiler/stub_code_compiler.cc
Class Smi	runtime/vm/object.h
Cluster Info serialization	runtime/vm/app_snapshot.cc
Read/Write Uint	runtime/vm/kernel_binary.h
Read/Write LEB128	runtime/vm/datastream.hL173

Assembly memento

Aarch64 Memento

- Store Unsigned Register: STUR src, [destination]
- Signed BitField Insert Zeroes: e.g SBFIZ X0, X5, #1, #1Fh copies the lower 31 bits of X5 at position 1 in X0 (=> x2)
- Load Unsigned Register: LDUR dst, [value]
- Sign Extended BitField Extract: e.g SBFX X1, X0, #1, #31 extracts bits 1 to 31 with sign extension and copies to X1 (/2)
- EOR can only be done on a register, not on an immediate value:

```
1 MOVZ X16, #37h ; load XOR Key 0x43 in register X16
2 EOR X5, X1, X16 ; XOR byte with register X16
```

Aarch32 Memento

- LSL: Logical Shift Legt
- TST R0, #1: tests R0 & 1
- ASR: Arithmetic Shift Right
- PUSH {R11, LR}: push both frame pointer and link register on the stack
- stm sp, {sb, lr}:same?
- EOR

x86-64 Memento

• LEA: Load Effective Address, works on addresses (no access to memory)

- SAR: Shift Arithmetic Right
- XOR register, immediate
- jno: Jump No Overflow

Tools

	Blutter	Darter	Doldrum	Flutter Spy	JEB	reFlutter
Supported versions	Android ARM64	? Old	<= 2.12 (a few forks for 2.13)			
Dumps the Object Pool	Yes	Yes	No	No	Only strings	No
Retrieves Function Names and offsets	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Unix / Bash commands

```
• ldd FILE.aot
```

- readelf -h FILE.aot | grep Entry
- strings FILE.aot | grep xxx
- bgrep -t hex 'deadbeef'file bgrep
- binwalk -R '\xde\xad\xbe\xef'file

GDB

```
1 $ gdb ./caesar.aot
2 Reading symbols from ./caesar.aot...
3 (gdb) info file
4 ...
5 warning: Cannot find section for the entry point of caesar.aot
```

Disassembler Memento

JEB:

- Customize default relocation address in Options/Backend properties/ root/parsers/native/disas/*
- View opcodes: Edit > Rendering Options > Show bytes count (6)

Radare:

- Search for a given instruction: /x OPCODE, or /ad eor~0x37
- Entry point: ie
- Locate main (only if non-stripped): iM
- Modify instruction delimiter for search: e asm.cmt.token=X
- · Define a function: af

reFlutter example

- Install reFlutter Python package
- Source Python environment
- reflutter w0rdle.apk
- Select option "Display absolute code offset for functions"
- Get Uber-APK-Signer
- Sign the apk: java -jar uber-apk-signer-1.3.0.jar --apk release.RE.apk
- adb install release.RE-aligned-debugSigned.apk
- Run it
- Retrieve the dump in /data/data/com.ph@wnctf.wordle/dump.dart

Blutter example

Example of Object Pool dump:

```
pool heap offset: 0x481540
[pp+0x10] Stub: Subtype3TestCache (0x17203c)
[pp+0x18] Stub: Subtype7TestCache (0x171e5c)
[pp+0x20] Stub: AllocateArray (0x174424)
[pp+0x28] Sentinel
[pp+0x30] List(5) [0x1, 0, 0, 0, Null]
[pp+0x38] List(5) [0x1, 0, 0, 0, Null]
...
```

Example of assembly output:

```
1 _ _winningMessage(/* No info */) {
2    // ** addr: 0x3c71a0, size: 0x454
```

References

- ("Flutter," n.d.): Flutter reference website
- ("Dart," n.d.): Dart reference website
- (Lipke 2020)
- (Loura 2020): object serialization
- ("Reverse Engineering a Flutter App by Recompiling Flutter Engine" 2021): using reFlutter
- (Egorov 2022)
- (Software 2022): JEB support for Dart
- (Apvrille 2022a): blog post
- (Batteux 2022): how the Object Pool is serialized in an AOT snapshot.
- (Nikiforov 2022)
- (Ortega 2022): MoneyMonger
- (Apvrille 2022b): Flutter header parser script
- (Apvrille 2023a): Dart AOT snapshot ImHex pattern,
- (Apvrille 2023b): calling convention
- (Apvrille 2023d): Small Integers
- (Apvrille 2023c): Fluhorse
- (Alexander 2023)
- (Falliere 2023): list of Dart snapshot version hashes
- (Apvrille 2023e): presentation at BlackAlps 2023
- (Apvrille 2023f): download link for CTF challenge stage 3
- (Team 2023): how to recompile Dart SDK and patch it for dynamic analysis
- (Apvrille 2024)
- Blutter
- Doldrum
- Darter
- Flutter Spy: Bash tool to extract information from Flutter Android apps.
- ImHex
- reFlutter: instruments libflutter. so to dump memory of addresses of objects and re-compile the Flutter application. The patched application is run and dumps information of code it visits.

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