

Digital Design with Chisel

Martin Schoeberl

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Second Edition

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Foreword

It is an exciting time to be in the world of digital design. With the end of Dennard Scaling and the slowing of Moore's Law, there has perhaps never been a greater need for innovation in the field. Semiconductor companies continue to squeeze out every drop of performance they can, but the cost of these improvements has been rising drastically. Chisel reduces this cost by improving productivity. If designers can build more in less time, while amortizing the cost of verification through reuse, companies can spend less on Non-Recurring Engineering (NRE). In addition, both students and individual contributors can innovate more easily on their own.

Chisel is unlike most languages in that it is embedded in another programming language, Scala. Fundamentally, Chisel is a library of classes and functions representing the primitives necessary to express synchronous, digital circuits. A Chisel design is really a Scala program that *generates* a circuit as it executes. To many, this may seem counterintuitive: "Why not just make Chisel a stand-alone language like VHDL or SystemVerilog?" My answer to this question is as follows: the software world has seen a substantial amount of innovation in design methodology in the past couple of decades. Rather than attempting to adapt these techniques to a new hardware language, we can simply *use* a modern programming language and gain those benefits for free.

A longstanding criticism of Chisel is that it is "difficult to learn." Much of this perception is due to the prevalence of large, complex designs created by experts to solve their own research or commercial needs. When learning a popular language like C++, one does not start by reading the source code of GCC. Rather, there are a plethora of courses, textbooks, and other learning materials that cater toward newcomers. In *Digital Design with Chisel*, Martin has created an important resource for anyone who wishes to learn Chisel.

Martin is an experienced educator, and it shows in the organization of this book. Starting with installation and primitives, he builds the reader's understanding like a building, brick-by-brick. The included exercises are the mortar that solidifies understanding, ensuring that each concept sets in the reader's mind. The book culminates with *hardware generators* like a roof giving the rest of the structure purpose. At the end, the reader is left with the knowledge to build a simple, yet useful design: a RISC processor.

In *Digital Design with Chisel*, Martin has laid a strong foundation for productive digital design. What you build with it is up to you.

Jack Koenig
Chisel and FIRRTL Maintainer
Staff Engineer, SiFive

Preface

This book is an introduction to digital design with the focus on using the hardware construction language Chisel. Chisel brings advances from software engineering, such as object-orientated and functional languages, into digital design.

This book addresses hardware designers and software engineers. Hardware designers, with knowledge of Verilog or VHDL, can upgrade their productivity with a modern language for their next ASIC or FPGA design. Software engineers, with knowledge of object-oriented and functional programming, can leverage their knowledge to program hardware, for example, FPGA accelerators executing in the cloud.

The approach of this book is to present small to medium-sized typical hardware components to explore digital design with Chisel.

Foreword for the Second Edition

As Chisel allows agile hardware design, so does open access and on-demand printing allow agile textbook publishing. Less than 6 months after the first edition of this book I am able to provide an improved and extended second edition.

Besides minor fixes, the main changes in the second edition are as follows. The testing section has been extended. The sequential building blocks chapter contains more example circuits. A new chapter on input processing explains input synchronization, shows how to design a debouncing circuit, and how to filter a noisy input signal. The example designs chapter has been extended to show different implementations of a FIFO. The FIFO variations also show how to use type parameters and inheritance in digital design.

Foreword for the Third Edition

Chisel has been moving forward in the last year, so it is time for a new edition of the Chisel book.

We changed all examples to the latest version of Chisel (3.4.1) and the recommended Scala version (2.12.12).

Acknowledgements

I want to thank everyone who has worked on Chisel for creating such a cool hardware construction language. Chisel is so joyful to use and therefore worth writing a book about. I am thankful to the whole Chisel community, which is so welcoming and friendly and never tired to answer questions on Chisel.

I would also like to thank my students in the last years of an advanced computer architecture course where most of them picked up Chisel for the final project. Thank you for moving out of your comfort zone and taking up the journey of learning and using a bleeding-edge hardware description language. Many of your questions have helped to shape this book.

1 Introduction

This book is an introduction to digital system design using a modern hardware construction language, [Chisel](#) [2]. In this book, we focus on a higher abstraction level than usual in digital design books, to enable you to build more complex, interacting digital systems in a shorter time.

This book and Chisel are targeting two groups of developers: (1) hardware designers and (2) software programmers. Hardware designers who are fluid in VHDL or Verilog and using other languages such as Python, Java, or Tcl to generate hardware can move to a single hardware construction language where hardware generation is part of the language. Software programmers may become interested in hardware design, e.g., as future chips from Intel will include programmable hardware to speed up programs. It is perfectly fine to use Chisel as your first hardware description language.

Chisel brings advances in software engineering, such as object-orientated and functional languages, into digital design. Chisel does not only allow to express hardware at the register-transfer level but allows you to write hardware generators.

Hardware is now commonly described with a hardware description language. The time of drawing hardware components, even with CAD tools, is over. Some high-level schematics can give an overview of the system but are not intended to describe the system. The two most common hardware description languages are Verilog and VHDL. Both languages are old, contain many legacies, and have a moving line of what constructs of the language are synthesizable to hardware. Do not get me wrong: VHDL and Verilog are perfectly able to describe a hardware block that can be synthesized into an [ASIC](#). For hardware design in Chisel, Verilog serves as an intermediate language for testing and synthesis.

This book is not a general introduction to hardware design and the fundamentals of it. For an introduction of the basics in digital design, such as how to build a gate out of CMOS transistors, refer to other digital design books. However, this book intends to teach digital design at an abstraction level that is current practice to describe ASICs or designs targeting [FPGAs](#).¹ As prerequisites for this book, we assume basic knowledge of [Boolean algebra](#) and the [binary number system](#). Furthermore, some programming ex-

¹As the author is more familiar with FPGAs than ASICs as target technology, some design optimizations shown in this book are targeting FPGA technology.

perience in any programming language is assumed. No knowledge of Verilog or VHDL is needed. Chisel can be your first programming language to describe digital hardware. As the build process in the examples is based on `sbt` and `make`, basic knowledge of the command-line interface (CLI, also called terminal or Unix shell) will be helpful.

Chisel itself is not a big language. The basic constructs fit on [one page](#) and can be learned within a few days. Therefore, this book is not a big book, as well. Chisel is for sure smaller than VHDL and Verilog, which carry many legacies. The power of Chisel comes from the embedding of Chisel within [Scala](#), which itself is an expressive language. Chisel inherits the feature from Scala being “a language that grows on you” [12]. However, Scala is not the topic of this book. We provide a short section on Scala for hardware designers. The textbook by Odersky et al. [12] provides a general introduction to Scala. This book is a tutorial in digital design and the Chisel language; it is not a Chisel language reference, nor is it a book on complete chip design.

All code examples shown in this book are extracted from complete programs that have been compiled and tested. Therefore, the code shall not contain any syntax errors. The code examples are available from the [GitHub repository](#) of this book. Besides showing Chisel code, we have also tried to show useful designs and principles of good hardware description style.

This book is optimized for reading on a laptop or tablet (e.g., an iPad). We include links to further reading in the running text, mostly to [Wikipedia](#) articles.

1.1 Installing Chisel and FPGA Tools

Chisel is a Scala library, and the easiest way to install Chisel and Scala is with `sbt`, the Scala build tool. Scala itself depends on the installation of [Java JDK 1.8](#). As Oracle has changed the license for Java, it may be easier to install OpenJDK from [AdoptOpenJDK](#).

1.1.1 macOS

Install the Java OpenJDK 8 from [AdoptOpenJDK](#). On Mac OS X, with the packet manager [Homebrew](#), `sbt` and `git` can be installed with:

```
$ brew install sbt git
```

Install [GTKWave](#) and [IntelliJ](#) (the community edition). When importing a project, select the JDK 1.8 you installed before (not Java 11!)

1.1.2 Linux/Ubuntu

Install Java and useful tools in Ubuntu with:

```
$ sudo apt install openjdk-8-jdk git make gtkwave
```

For Ubuntu, which is based on Debian, programs are usually installed from a Debian file (.deb). However, as of the time of this writing, sbt is not available as a ready to install package. Therefore, the installation process is a little bit more involved:

```
echo "deb https://dl.bintray.com/sbt/debian /" | \
  sudo tee -a /etc/apt/sources.list.d/sbt.list
sudo apt-key adv --keyserver hkp://keyserver.ubuntu.com:80 \
  --recv 2EE0EA64E40A89B84B2DF73499E82A75642AC823
sudo apt-get update
sudo apt-get install sbt
```

1.1.3 Windows

Install the Java OpenJDK from [AdoptOpenJDK](#). Chisel and Scala can also be installed and used under Windows. Install [GTKWave](#) and [IntelliJ](#) (the community edition). When importing a project, select the JDK 1.8 you installed before (not Java 11!) sbt can be installed with a Windows installer, see: [Installing sbt on Windows](#). Install a [git client](#).

1.1.4 FPGA Tools

To build hardware for an FPGA, you need a synthesize tool. The two major FPGA vendors, Intel² and Xilinx, provide free versions of their tools that cover small to medium-sized FPGAs. Those medium-sized FPGAs are large enough to build multicore RISC style processors. Intel provides the [Quartus Prime Lite Edition](#) and Xilinx the [Vivado Design Suite, WebPACK Edition](#). Both tools are available for Windows and Linux, but not for macOS.

1.2 Hello World

Each book on a programming language shall start with a minimal example, called the *Hello World* example. Following code is the first approach:

²former Altera

```
object HelloScala extends App{  
  println("Hello Chisel World!")  
}
```

Compiling and executing this short program with sbt

```
$ sbt run
```

leads to the expected output of a Hello World program:

```
[info] Running HelloScala  
Hello Chisel World!
```

However, is this Chisel? Is this hardware generated to print a string? No, this is plain Scala code and not a representative Hello World program for a hardware design.

1.3 Chisel Hello World

What is then the equivalent of a Hello World program for a hardware design? The minimal useful and visible design? A blinking LED is the hardware (or even embedded software) version of Hello World. If a LED blinks, we are ready to solve bigger problems!

Listing 1.1 shows a blinking LED, described in Chisel. It is not important that you understand the details of this code example. We will cover those in the following chapters. Just note that the circuit is usually clocked with a high frequency, e.g., 50 MHz, and we need a counter to derive timing in the Hz range to achieve a visible blinking. In the above example, we count from 0 up to 25000000-1 and then toggle the blinking signal (`blkReg := ~blkReg`) and restart the counter (`cntReg := 0.U`). That hardware then blinks the LED at 1 Hz.

1.4 An IDE for Chisel

This book makes no assumptions about your programming environment or editor you use. Learning the basics should be easy with just using sbt at the command line and an editor of your choice. In the tradition of other books, all commands that you shall type in a shell/terminal/CLI are preceded by a \$ character, which you shall not type in. As an example, here is the Unix `ls` command, which lists files in the current folder:

```
$ ls
```



```
class Hello extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val led = Output(UInt(1.W))  
  })  
  val CNT_MAX = (500000000 / 2 - 1).U;  
  
  val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(32.W))  
  val blkReg = RegInit(0.U(1.W))  
  
  cntReg := cntReg + 1.U  
  when(cntReg === CNT_MAX) {  
    cntReg := 0.U  
    blkReg := ~blkReg  
  }  
  io.led := blkReg  
}
```

Listing 1.1: A hardware Hello World in Chisel

That said, an integrated development environment (IDE), where a compiler is running in the background, can speed up coding. As Chisel is a Scala library, all IDEs that support Scala are also good IDEs for Chisel. It is possible in [IntelliJ](#) and [Eclipse](#) to generate a project from the sbt project configuration in `build.sbt`.

In IntelliJ you can create a new project from existing sources with: *File - New - Project from Existing Sources...* and then select the `build.sbt` file from the project.

In Eclipse you can create a project via

```
$ sbt eclipse
```

and import that project into Eclipse.³

[Visual Studio Code](#) is another option for a Chisel IDE. The [Scala Metals](#) extension provides Scala support. On the left bar select *Extensions* and search for *Metals* and install *Scala (Metals)*. To import an sbt based project open the folder with *File - Open*.

1.5 Source Access and eBook Features

This book is open source and hosted at GitHub: [chisel-book](#). All Chisel code examples, shown in this book, are included in the repository. The code compiles with a recent ver-

³This function needs the Eclipse plugin for sbt.

sion of Chisel, and many examples also include a test bench. We collect larger Chisel examples in the accompanying repository [chisel-examples](#). If you find an error or typo in the book, a GitHub pull request is the most convenient way to incorporate your improvement. You can also provide feedback or comments for improvements by filing an issue on GitHub or sending a plain, old school email.

This book is freely available as a PDF eBook and in classical printed form. The eBook version features links to further resources and [Wikipedia](#) entries. We use Wikipedia entries for background information (e.g., binary number system) that does not directly fit into this book. We optimized the format of the eBook for reading on a tablet, such as an iPad.

1.6 Further Reading

Here a list of further reading for digital design and Chisel:

- [Digital Design: A Systems Approach](#), by William J. Dally and R. Curtis Harting, is a modern textbook on digital design. It is available in two versions: using Verilog or VHDL as a hardware description language.

The official Chisel documentation and further documents are available online:

- The [Chisel](#) home page is the official starting point to download and learn Chisel.
- The [Chisel Tutorial](#) provides a ready setup project containing small exercises with testers and solutions.
- The [Chisel Wiki](#) contains a short users guide to Chisel and links to further information.
- The [Chisel Testers](#) are in their own repository that contains a Wiki documentation.
- The [Generator Bootcamp](#) is a Chisel course focusing on hardware generators, as a [Jupyter](#) notebook
- A [Chisel Style Guide](#) by Christopher Celio.
- The [chisel-lab](#) contains Chisel exercises for the course “Digital Electronics 2” at the Technical University of Denmark.

1.7 Exercise

Each chapter ends with a hands-on exercise. For the introduction exercise, we will use an FPGA board to get one LED blinking.⁴ As a first step clone (or fork) the [chisel-examples](#) repository from GitHub. The Hello World example is in the folder `hello-world`, set up as a minimal project. You can explore the Chisel code of the blinking LED in `src/main/scala/Hello.scala`. Compile the blinking LED with the following steps:

```
$ git clone https://github.com/schoeberl/chisel-examples.git
$ cd chisel-examples/hello-world/
$ sbt run
```

After some initial downloading of Chisel components, this will produce the Verilog file `Hello.v`. Explore this Verilog file. You will see that it contains two inputs `clock` and `reset` and one output `io.led`. When you compare this Verilog file with the Chisel module, you will notice that the Chisel module does not contain `clock` or `reset`. Those signals are implicitly generated, and in most designs, it is convenient not to need to deal with these low-level details. Chisel provides register components, and those are connected automatically to `clock` and `reset` (if needed).

The next step is to set up an FPGA project file for the synthesize tool, assign the pins, compile⁵ the Verilog code, and configure the FPGA with the resulting bitfile. We cannot provide the details of these steps. Please consult the manual of your Intel Quartus or Xilinx Vivado tool. However, the examples repository contains some ready to use Quartus projects in folder `quartus` for several popular FPGA boards (e.g., DE2-115). If the repository contains support for your board, start Quartus, open the project, compile it by pressing the *Play* button, and configure the FPGA board with the *Programmer* button and one of the LEDs should blink.

Gratulation! You managed to get your first design in Chisel running in an FPGA!

If the LED is not blinking, check the status of reset. On the DE2-115 configuration, the reset input is connected to SW0.

Now change the blinking frequency to a slower or a faster value and rerun the build process. Blinking frequencies and also blinking patterns communicate different “emotions”. E.g., a slow blinking LED signals that everything is ok, a fast blinking LED

⁴If you at the moment have no FPGA board available, continue to read as we will show you a simulation version at the end of the exercise.

⁵The real process is more elaborated with following steps: synthesizing the logic, performing place and route, performing timing analysis, and generating a bitfile. However, for the purpose of this introduction example we simply call it “compile” your code.

signals an alarm state. Explore which frequencies express best those two different emotions.

As a more challenging extension to the exercise, generate the following blinking pattern: the LED shall be on for 200 ms every second. For this pattern, you might decouple the change of the LED blinking from the counter reset. You will need a second constant where you change the state of the `blkReg` register. What kind of emotion does this pattern produce? Is it alarming or more like a sign-of-live signal?

If you do not have an FPGA board (yet), you can still run the blinking LED example. You will use the Chisel simulation. To avoid a too long simulation time change the clock frequency in the Chisel code from 50000000 to 50000. Execute following instruction to simulate the blinking LED:

```
$ sbt test
```

This will execute the tester that runs for one million clock cycles. The blinking frequency depends on the simulation speed, which depends on the speed of your computer. Therefore, you might need to experiment a little bit with the assumed clock frequency to see the simulated blinking LED.

2 Basic Components

In this section, we introduce the basic components for digital design: combinational circuits and flip-flops. These essential elements can be combined to build larger, more interesting circuits.

Digital systems in general built use binary signals, which means a single bit or signal can only have one of two possible values. These values are often called 0 and 1. However, we also use following terms: low/high, false/true, and de-asserted/asserted. These terms mean the same two possible values of a binary signal.

2.1 Signal Types and Constants

Chisel provides three data types to describe signals, combinational logic, and registers: `Bits`, `UInt`, and `SInt`. `UInt` and `SInt` extend `Bits`, and all three types represent a vector of bits. `UInt` gives this vector of bits the meaning of an unsigned integer and `SInt` of a signed integer.¹ Chisel uses [two's complement](#) as signed integer representation. Here is the definition for different types, an 8-bit `Bits`, an 8-bit unsigned integer, and a 10-bit signed integer:

```
Bits(8.W)
UInt(8.W)
SInt(10.W)
```

The width of a vector of bits is defined by a Chisel width type (`Width`). The following expression casts the Scala integer `n` to a Chisel width, which is used for the definition of the `Bits` vector:

```
n.W
Bits(n.W)
```

Constants can be defined by using a Scala integer and converting it to a Chisel type:

```
0.U // defines a UInt constant of 0
```

¹The type `Bits` in the current version of Chisel is missing operations and therefore not very useful for user code.

```
-3.S // defines a SInt constant of -3
```

Constants can also be defined with a width, by using the Chisel width type:

```
3.U(4.W) // An 4-bit constant of 3
```

If you find the notion of 3.U and 4.W a little bit funny, consider it as a variant of an integer constant with a type. This notation is similar to 3L, representing a long integer constant in C, Java, and Scala.

Possible pitfall: One possible error when defining constants with a dedicated width is missing the .W specifier for a width. E.g., 1.U(32) will *not* define a 32-bit wide constant representing 1. Instead, the expression (32) is interpreted as bit extraction from position 32, which results in a single bit constant of 0. Probably not what the original intention of the programmer was.

Chisel benefits from Scala's type inference and in many places type information can be left out. The same is also valid for bit widths. In many cases, Chisel will automatically infer the correct width. Therefore, a Chisel description of hardware is more concise and better readable than VHDL or Verilog.

For constants defined in other bases than decimal, the constant is defined in a string with a preceding h for hexadecimal (base 16), o for octal (base 8), and b for binary (base 2). The following example shows the definition of constant 255 in different bases. In this example we omit the bit width and Chisel infers the minimum width to fit the constants in, in this case 8 bits.

```
"hff".U           // hexadecimal representation of 255
"o377".U          // octal representation of 255
"b1111_1111".U    // binary representation of 255
```

The above code shows how to use an underscore to group digits in the string that represents a constant. The underscore is ignored.

To represent logic values, Chisel defines the type Bool. Bool can represent a *true* or *false* value. The following code shows the definition of type Bool and the definition of Bool constants, by converting the Scala Boolean constants true and false to Chisel Bool constants.

```
Bool()
true.B
false.B
```

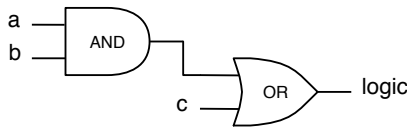


Figure 2.1: Logic for the expression $(a \ \& \ b) \ | \ c$. The wires can be a single bit or multiple bits. The Chisel expression, and the schematics are the same.

2.2 Combinational Circuits

Chisel uses [Boolean algebra](#) operators, as they are defined in C, Java, Scala, and several other programming languages, to described combinational circuits: `&` is the AND operator and `|` is the OR operator. Following line of code defines a circuit that combines signals `a` and `b` with *and* gates and combines the result with signal `c` with *or* gates.

```
val logic = (a & b) | c
```

Figure 2.1 shows the schematic of this combinational expression. Note that this circuit may be for a vector of bits and not only single wires that are combined with the AND and OR circuits.

In this example, we do not define the type nor the width of signal `logic`. Both are inferred from the type and width of the expression. The standard logic operations in Chisel are:

```
val and = a & b // bitwise and
val or  = a | b // bitwise or
val xor = a ^ b // bitwise xor
val not = ~a    // bitwise negation
```

The arithmetic operations use the standard operators:

```
val add = a + b // addition
val sub = a - b // subtraction
val neg = -a    // negate
val mul = a * b // multiplication
val div = a / b // division
val mod = a % b // modulo operation
```

The resulting width of the operation is the maximum width of the operators for addition and subtraction, the sum of the two widths for the multiplication, and usually the width

of the numerator for divide and modulo operations.²

A signal can also first be defined as a `Wire` of some type. Afterward, we can assign a value to the wire with the `:=` update operator.

```
val w = Wire(UInt())
```

```
w := a & b
```

A single bit can be extracted as follows:

```
val sign = x(31)
```

A subfield can be extracted from end to start position:

```
val lowByte = largeWord(7, 0)
```

Bit fields are concatenated with `Cat`.

```
val word = Cat(highByte, lowByte)
```

Table 2.2 shows the full list of operators (see also [builtin operators](#)). The Chisel operator precedence is determined by the evaluation order of the circuit, which follows the [Scala operator precedence](#). If in doubt, it is always a good praxis to use parentheses.³

Table 2.2 shows various functions defined on and for Chisel data types.

2.2.1 Multiplexer

A [multiplexer](#) is a circuit that selects between alternatives. In the most basic form, it selects between two alternatives. Figure 2.2 shows such a 2:1 multiplexer, or mux for short. Depending on the value of the select signal (`sel`) signal `y` will represent signal `a` or signal `b`.

A multiplexer can be built from logic. However, as multiplexing is such a standard operation, Chisel provides a multiplexer,

```
val result = Mux(sel, a, b)
```

²The exact details are available in the [FIRRTL specification](#).

³The operator precedence in Chisel is a side effect of the hardware elaboration when the tree of hardware nodes is created by executing the Scala operators. The Scala operator precedence is similar but not identical to Java/C. Verilog has the same operator precedence as C, but VHDL has a different one. Verilog has precedence ordering for logic operations, but in VHDL those operators have the same precedence and are evaluated from left to right.

| Operator | Description | Data types |
|-----------|---|--------------------------|
| * / % | multiplication, division, modulus | UInt, SInt |
| + - | addition, subtraction | UInt, SInt |
| === != | equal, not equal | UInt, SInt, returns Bool |
| > >= < <= | comparison | UInt, SInt, returns Bool |
| << >> | shift left, shift right (sign extend on SInt) | UInt, SInt |
| ~ | NOT | UInt, SInt, Bool |
| & ^ | AND, OR, XOR | UInt, SInt, Bool |
| ! | logical NOT | Bool |
| && | logical AND, OR | Bool |

Table 2.1: Chisel defined hardware operators.

| Function | Description | Data types |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| v.andR v.orR v.xorR | AND, OR, XOR reduction | UInt, SInt, returns Bool |
| v(n) | extraction of a single bit | UInt, SInt |
| v(end, start) | bitfield extraction | UInt, SInt |
| Fill(n, v) | bitstring replication, n times | UInt, SInt |
| Cat(a, b, ...) | bitfield concatenation | UInt, SInt |

Table 2.2: Chisel defined hardware functions, invoked on v.

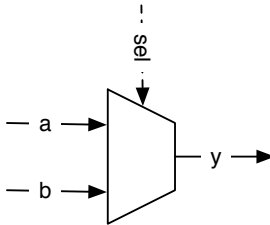


Figure 2.2: A basic 2:1 multiplexer.

where `a` is selected when the `sel` is `true`. `B`, otherwise `b` is selected. The type of `sel` is a Chisel `Bool`; the inputs `a` and `b` can be any Chisel base type or aggregate (bundles or vectors) as long as they are the same type.

With logical and arithmetical operations and a multiplexer, every combinational circuit can be described. However, Chisel provides further components and control abstractions for a more elegant description of a combinational circuit, which are described in a later chapter.

The second basic component needed to describe a digital circuit is a state element, also called register, which is described next.

2.3 Registers

Chisel provides a register, which is a collection of [D flip-flops](#). The register is implicitly connected to a global clock and is updated on the rising edge. When an initialization value is provided at the declaration of the register, it uses a synchronous reset connected to a global reset signal. A register can be any Chisel type that can be represented as a collection of bits. Following code defines an 8-bit register, initialized with 0 at reset:

```
val reg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))
```

An input is connected to the register with the `:=` update operator and the output of the register can be used just with the name in an expression:

```
reg := d
val q = reg
```

A register can also be connected to its input at the definition:

```
val nextReg = RegNext(d)
```

Figure [2.3](#) shows the circuit of our register definition with a clock, a synchronous reset to `0.U`, input `d`, and output `q`. The global signals `clock` and `reset` are implicitly connected to each register defined.

A register can also be connected to its input and a constant as initial value at the definition:

```
val bothReg = RegNext(d, 0.U)
```

To distinguish between signals representing combinational logic and registers, a common practice is to postfix register names with `Reg`. Another common practice, coming from Java and Scala, is to use [camelCase](#) for identifier consisting of several words. The

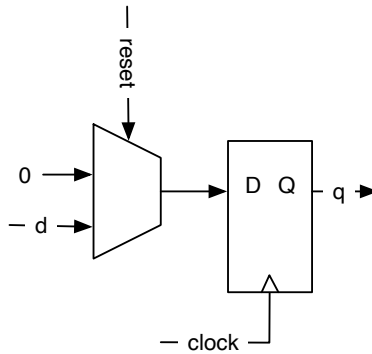


Figure 2.3: A D flip-flop based register with a synchronous reset to 0.

convention is to start functions and variables with a lower case letter and classes (types) with an upper case letter.

2.3.1 Counting

Counting is a fundamental operation in digital systems. One might count events. However, more often counting is used to define a time interval. Counting the clock cycles and triggering an action when the time interval has expired.

A simple approach is counting up to a value. However, in computer science, and digital design, counting starts at 0. Therefore, if we want to count till 10, we count from 0 to 9. The following code shows such a counter that counts till 9 and wraps around to 0 when reaching 9.

```
val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))

cntReg := Mux(cntReg === 9.U, 0.U, cntReg + 1.U)
```

2.4 Structure with Bundle and Vec

Chisel provides two constructs to group related signals: (1) a `Bundle` to group signals of different types and (2) a `Vec` to represent an indexable collection of signals of the same type. Bundles and Vecs can be arbitrarily nested.

A Chisel bundle groups several signals. The entire bundle can be referenced as a whole, or individual fields can be accessed by their name. We can define a bundle (collection of signals) by defining a class that extends `Bundle` and list the fields as `vals` within the constructor block.

```
class Channel() extends Bundle {  
  val data = UInt(32.W)  
  val valid = Bool()  
}
```

To use a bundle, we create it with `new` and wrap it into a `Wire`. The fields are accessed with the dot notation:

```
val ch = Wire(new Channel())  
ch.data := 123.U  
ch.valid := true.B  
  
val b = ch.valid
```

Dot notation is common in object-oriented languages, where `x.y` means `x` is a reference to an object and `y` is a field of that object. As Chisel is object-oriented, we use dot notation to access fields in a bundle. A bundle is similar to a struct in C, a record in VHDL, or a struct in SystemVerilog. A bundle can also be referenced as a whole:

```
val channel = ch
```

A Chisel `Vec` represents a collection of signals of the same type (a vector). Each element can be accessed by an index. A Chisel `Vec` is similar to array data structures in other programming languages.⁴ A `Vec` is created by calling the constructor with two parameters: the number of elements and the type of the elements. A combinational `Vec` needs to be wrapped into a `Wire`

```
val v = Wire(Vec(3, UInt(4.W)))
```

Individual elements are accessed with `(index)`.

```
v(0) := 1.U  
v(1) := 3.U  
v(2) := 5.U  
  
val idx = 1.U(2.W)
```

⁴The name `Array` is already used in Scala.

```
val a = v(idx)
```

A vector wrapped into a `Wire` is a multiplexer. We can also wrap a vector into a register to define an array of registers. Following example defines a register file for a processor; 32 registers each 32-bits wide, as for a classic 32-bit [RISC](#) processor, like the 32-bit version of [RISC-V](#).

```
val registerFile = Reg(Vec(32, UInt(32.W)))
```

An element of that register file is accessed with an index and used as a normal register.

```
registerFile(idx) := dIn
val dOut = registerFile(idx)
```

We can freely mix bundles and vectors. When creating a vector with a bundle type, we need to pass a prototype for the vector fields. Using our `Channel`, which we defined above, we can create a vector of channels with:

```
val vecBundle = Wire(Vec(8, new Channel()))
```

A bundle may as well contain a vector:

```
class BundleVec extends Bundle {
  val field = UInt(8.W)
  val vector = Vec(4, UInt(8.W))
}
```

When we want a register of a bundle type that needs a reset value, we first create a `Wire` of that bundle, set the individual fields as needed, and then passing this bundle to a `RegInit`:

```
val initVal = Wire(new Channel())

initVal.data := 0.U
initVal.valid := false.B

val channelReg = RegInit(initVal)
```

With combinations of `Bundles` and `Vecs` we can define our own data structures, which are powerful abstractions.

2.5 Chisel Generates Hardware

After seeing some initial Chisel code, it might look similar to classic programming languages such as Java or C. However, Chisel (or any other hardware description language) does define hardware components. While in a software program one line of code after the other is executed, in hardware all lines of code *execute in parallel*.

It is essential to keep in mind that Chisel code does generate hardware. Try to imagine, or draw on a sheet of paper, the individual blocks that are generated by your Chisel circuit description. Each creation of a component adds hardware; each assignment statement generates gates and/or flip-flops.

More technically, when Chisel executes your code it runs as a Scala program, and by executing the Chisel statements, it *collects* the hardware components and connects those nodes. This network of hardware nodes is the hardware, which can spill out Verilog code for ASIC or FPGA synthesis or can be tested with a Chisel tester. The network of hardware nodes is what is executed in fully parallel.

For a software engineer imagine this immense parallelism that you can create in hardware without needing to partition your application into threads and getting the locking correct for the communication.

2.6 Exercise

In the introduction you implemented a blinking LED on an FPGA board (from [chisel-examples](#)), which is a reasonable hardware *Hello World* example. It used only internal state, a single LED output, and no input. Copy that project into a new folder and extend it by adding some inputs to the `io Bundle` with `val sw = Input(UInt(2.W))`.

```
val io = IO(new Bundle {  
  val sw = Input(UInt(2.W))  
  val led = Output(UInt(1.W))  
})
```

For those switches, you also need to assign the pin names for the FPGA board. You can find examples of pin assignments in the Quartus project files of the ALU project (e.g., for the [DE2-115 FPGA board](#)).

When you have defined those inputs and the pin assignment, start with a simple test: drop all blinking logic from the design and connect one switch to the LED output; compile and configure the FPGA device. Can you switch the LED on an off with the switch? If yes, you have now inputs available. If not, you need to debug your FPGA configuration. The pin assignment can also be done with the GUI version of the tool.

Now use two switches and implement one of the basic combinational functions, e.g., AND two switches and show the result on the LED. Change the function. The next step involves three input switches to implement a multiplexer: one acts as a select signal, and the other two are the two inputs for the 2:1 multiplexer.

Now you have been able to implement simple combinational functions and test them in real hardware in an FPGA. As a next step, we will take a first look at how the build process works to generate an FPGA configuration. Furthermore, we will also explore a simple testing framework from Chisel, which allows you to test circuits without configuring an FPGA and toggle switches.

3 Build Process and Testing

To get started with more interesting Chisel code we first need to learn how to compile Chisel programs, how to generate Verilog code for execution in an FPGA, and how to write tests for debugging and to verify that our circuits are correct.

Chisel is written in Scala, so any build process that supports Scala is possible with a Chisel project. One popular build tool for Scala is [sbt](#), which stands for the Scala interactive build tool. Besides driving the build and test process, sbt also downloads the correct version of Scala and the Chisel libraries.

3.1 Building your Project with sbt

The Scala library that represents Chisel and the Chisel testers are automatically downloaded during the build process from a Maven repository. The libraries are referenced by `build.sbt`. It is possible to configure `build.sbt` with `latest.release` to always use the most actual version of Chisel. However, this means on each build the version is looked up from the Maven repository. This lookup needs an Internet connection for the build to succeed. Better use a dedicated version of Chisel and all other Scala libraries in your `build.sbt`. Maybe sometimes it is also good to be able to write hardware code and test it without an Internet connection. For example, it is cool to do hardware design on a plane.

3.1.1 Source Organization

`sbt` inherits the source convention from the [Maven](#) build automation tool. Maven also organizes repositories of open-source Java libraries.¹

Figure 3.1 shows the organization of the source tree of a typical Chisel project. The root of the project is the project home, which contains `build.sbt`. It may also include a `Makefile` for the build process, a `README`, and a `LICENSE` file. Folder `src` contains all source code. From there it is split between `main`, containing the hardware sources

¹That is also the place where you downloaded the Chisel library on your first build: <https://mvnrepository.com/artifact/edu.berkeley.cs/chisel3>.

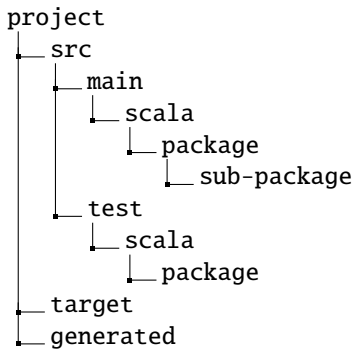


Figure 3.1: Source tree of a Chisel project (using sbt)

and test containing testers. Chisel inherits from Scala, which inherits from Java the organization of source in [packages](#). Packages organize your Chisel code into namespaces. Packages can also contain sub-packages. The folder `target` contains the class files and other generated files. I recommend to also use a folder for generated Verilog files, which is usually called `generated`.

To use the facility of namespaces in Chisel, you need to declare that a class/module is defined in a package, in this example in `mypack`:

```
package mypack

import chisel3._

class Abc extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle{})
}
```

Note that in this example we see the import of the `chisel3` package to use Chisel classes.

To use the module `Abc` in a different context (package name space), the components of package `mypack` need to be imported. The underscore (`_`) acts as wildcard, meaning that all classes of `mypack` are imported.

```
import mypack._

class AbcUser extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle{})
}
```

```
    val abc = new Abc()
}
```

It is also possible to not import all types from mypack, but use the fully qualified name mypack.Abc to refer to the module Abc in package mypack.

```
class AbcUser2 extends Module {
    val io = IO(new Bundle{})

    val abc = new mypack.Abc()
}
```

It is also possible to import just a single class and create an instance of it:

```
import mypack.Abc

class AbcUser3 extends Module {
    val io = IO(new Bundle{})

    val abc = new Abc()
}
```

3.1.2 Running sbt

A Chisel project can be compiled and executed with a simple sbt command:

```
$ sbt run
```

This command will compile all your Chisel code from the source tree and searches for classes that contain an object that includes a main method, or simpler that extends App. If there is more than one such object, all objects are listed and one can be selected. You can also directly specify the object that shall be executed as a parameter to sbt:

```
$ sbt "runMain mypacket.MyObject"
```

Per default sbt searches only the main part of the source tree and not the test part.² However, Chisel testers, as described here, contain a main, but shall be placed in the

²This is a convention from Java/Scala that the test folder contains unit tests and not objects with a main.

test part of the source tree. To execute a main in the tester tree use following sbt command:

```
$ sbt "test:runMain mypacket.MyTester"
```

Now that we know the basic structure of a Chisel project and how to compile and run it with sbt, we can continue with a simple testing framework.

3.1.3 Tool Flow

Figure 3.2 shows the tool flow of Chisel. The digital circuit is described in a Chisel class shown as `Hello.scala`. The Scala compiler compiles this class, together with the Chisel and Scala libraries, and generates the Java class `Hello.class` that can be executed by a standard [Java virtual machine \(JVM\)](#). Executing this class with a Chisel driver generates the so-called flexible intermediate representation for RTL (FIRRTL), an intermediate representation of digital circuits. In our example the file is `Hello.fir`. The FIRRTL compiler performs transformations on the circuit.

Treadle is a FIRRTL interpreter to simulate the circuit. Together with the Chisel tester it can be used to debug and test Chisel circuits. With assertions we can provide test results. Treadle can also generate waveform files (`Hello.vcd`) that can be viewed with a waveform viewer (e.g., the free viewer `GTKWave` or `Modelsim`).

One FIRRTL transformation, the Verilog emitter, generates Verilog code for synthesis (`Hello.v`). A circuit synthesize tool (e.g., Intel Quartus, Xilinx Vivado, or an ASIC tool) synthesizes the circuit. In an FPGA design flow, the tool generates the FPGA bitstream that is used to configure the FPGA, e.g., `Hello.bit`.

3.2 Testing with Chisel

Tests of hardware designs are usually called [test benches](#). The test bench instantiates the design under test (DUT), drives input ports, observes output ports, and compares them with expected values.

3.2.1 PeekPokeTester

Chisel provides test benches in the form of a `PeekPokeTester`. One strength of Chisel is that it can use the full power of Scala to write those test benches. One can, for example, code the expected functionality of the hardware in a software simulator and compare the simulation of the hardware with the software simulation. This method is very efficient when testing an implementation of a processor [6].

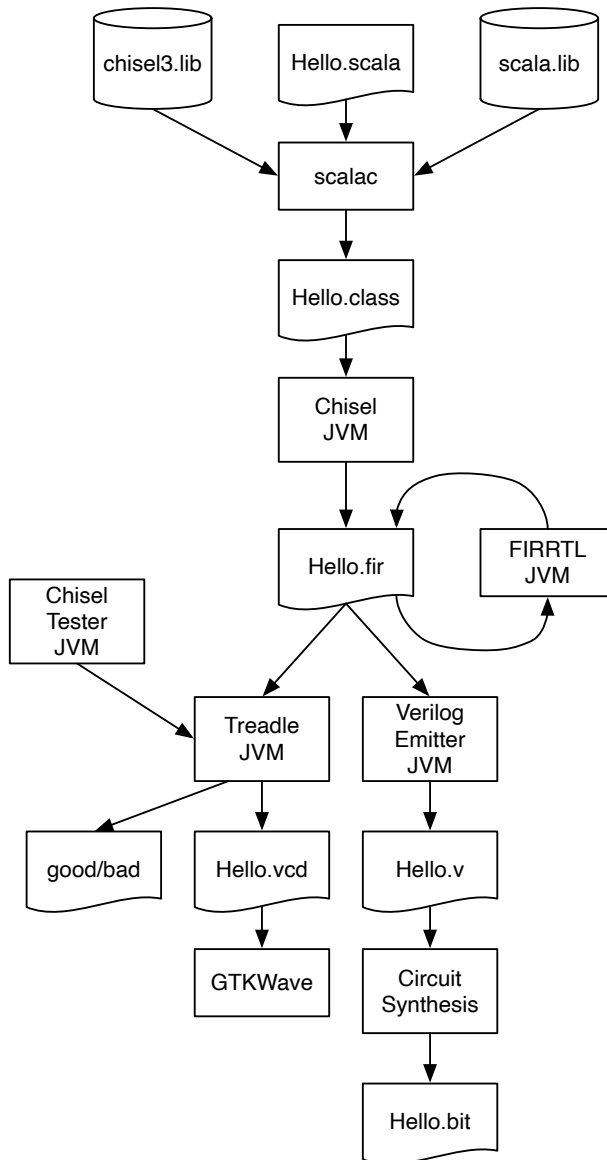


Figure 3.2: Tool flow of the Chisel ecosystem.

To use the `PeekPokeTester`, following packages need to be imported:

```
import chisel3._
import chisel3.iotesters._
```

Testing a circuit contains (at least) three components: (1) the device under test (often called DUT), (2) the testing logic, also called test bench, and (3) the tester objects that contains the main function to start the testing.

The following code shows our simple design under test. It contains two input ports and one output port, all with a 2-bit width. The circuit does a bit-wise AND to it returns on the output:

```
class DeviceUnderTest extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val a = Input(UInt(2.W))
    val b = Input(UInt(2.W))
    val out = Output(UInt(2.W))
  })

  io.out := io.a & io.b
}
```

The test bench for this DUT extends `PeekPokeTester` and has the DUT as a parameter for the constructor:

```
class TesterSimple(dut: DeviceUnderTest) extends
  PeekPokeTester(dut) {

  poke(dut.io.a, 0.U)
  poke(dut.io.b, 1.U)
  step(1)
  println("Result is: " + peek(dut.io.out).toString)
  poke(dut.io.a, 3.U)
  poke(dut.io.b, 2.U)
  step(1)
  println("Result is: " + peek(dut.io.out).toString)
}
```

A `PeekPokeTester` can set input values with `poke()` and read back output values with `peek()`. The tester advances the simulation by one step (= one clock cycle) with `step(1)`. We can print the values of the outputs with `println()`.

The test is created and run with the following tester main:

```
object TesterSimple extends App {
  chisel3.iotesters.Driver(() => new DeviceUnderTest()) { c =>
    new TesterSimple(c)
  }
}
```

When you run the test, you will see the results printed to the terminal (besides other information):

```
[info] [0.004] SEED 1544207645120
[info] [0.008] Result is: 0
[info] [0.009] Result is: 2
test DeviceUnderTest Success: 0 tests passed in 7 cycles
taking 0.021820 seconds
[info] [0.010] RAN 2 CYCLES PASSED
```

We see that 0 AND 1 results in 0; 3 AND 2 results in 2. Besides manually inspecting printouts, which is an excellent starting point, we can also express our expectations in the test bench itself with `expect()`, having the output port and the expected value as parameters. The following example shows testing with `expect()`:

```
class Tester(dut: DeviceUnderTest) extends PeekPokeTester(dut) {

  poke(dut.io.a, 3.U)
  poke(dut.io.b, 1.U)
  step(1)
  expect(dut.io.out, 1)
  poke(dut.io.a, 2.U)
  poke(dut.io.b, 0.U)
  step(1)
  expect(dut.io.out, 0)
}
```

Executing this test does not print out any values from the hardware, but that all tests passed as all expect values are correct.

```
[info] [0.001] SEED 1544208437832
test DeviceUnderTest Success: 2 tests passed in 7 cycles
taking 0.018000 seconds
[info] [0.009] RAN 2 CYCLES PASSED
```

A failed test, when either the DUT or the test bench contains an error, produces an error message describing the difference between the expected and actual value. In the following, we changed the test bench to expect a 4, which is an error:

```
[info] [0.002] SEED 1544208642263
[info] [0.011] EXPECT AT 2   io_out got 0 expected 4 FAIL
test DeviceUnderTest Success: 1 tests passed in 7 cycles
taking 0.022101 seconds
[info] [0.012] RAN 2 CYCLES FAILED FIRST AT CYCLE 2
```

In this section, we described the basic testing facility with Chisel for simple tests. However, in Chisel, the full power of Scala is available to write testers.

3.2.2 Using ScalaTest

[ScalaTest](#) is a testing tool for Scala (and Java), which we can use to run Chisel testers. To use it, include the library in your build.sbt with the following line:

```
libraryDependencies += "org.scalatest" %% "scalatest" % "3.0.5"
                        % "test"
```

Tests are usually found in src/test/scala and can be run with:

```
$ sbt test
```

A minimal test (a testing hello world) to test a Scala Integer addition:

```
import org.scalatest._

class ExampleSpec extends FlatSpec with Matchers {

  "Integers" should "add" in {
    val i = 2
    val j = 3
    i + j should be (5)
  }
}
```

Although Chisel testing is more heavyweight than unit testing of Scala programs, we can wrap a Chisel test into a ScalaTest class. For the Tester shown before this is:

```
class SimpleSpec extends FlatSpec with Matchers {
```



```

"Tester" should "pass" in {
  chisel3.iotesters.Driver(() => new DeviceUnderTest()) { c =>
    new Tester(c)
  } should be (true)
}
}

```

The main benefit of this exercise is to be able to run all tests with a simple `sbt test` (instead of a running main). You can run just a single test with `sbt`, as follows:

```
$ sbt "testOnly SimpleSpec"
```

3.2.3 Waveforms

Testers, as described above, work well for small designs and for [unit testing](#), as it is common in software development. A collection of unit tests can also serve for [regression testing](#).

However, for debugging more complex designs, one would like to investigate several signals at once. A classic approach to debug digital designs is displaying the signals in a waveform. In a waveform the signals are displayed over time.

Chisel testers can generate a waveform that includes all registers and all IO signals. In the following examples we show waveform testers for the `DeviceUnderTest` from the former example (the 2-bit AND function). For the following example we import following classes:

```

import chisel3.iotesters.PeekPokeTester
import chisel3.iotesters.Driver
import org.scalatest._

```

We start with a simple tester that pokes values to the inputs and advances the clock with `step`. We do not read any output or compare it with `expect`.

```

class WaveformTester(dut: DeviceUnderTest) extends
  PeekPokeTester(dut) {

  poke(dut.io.a, 0)
  poke(dut.io.b, 0)
  step(1)
  poke(dut.io.a, 1)
  poke(dut.io.b, 0)
  step(1)
}

```

```
poke(dut.io.a, 0)
poke(dut.io.b, 1)
step(1)
poke(dut.io.a, 1)
poke(dut.io.b, 1)
step(1)
}
```

Instead we call `Driver.execute` with parameters to generate waveform files (.vcd files).

```
class WaveformSpec extends FlatSpec with Matchers {
  "Waveform" should "pass" in {
    Driver.execute(Array("--generate-vcd-output", "on"), () =>
      new DeviceUnderTest() { c =>
        new WaveformTester(c)
      } should be (true)
    )
  }
}
```

You can view the waveform with the free viewer GTKWave or with ModelSim. Start GTKWave and select *File – Open New Window* and navigate to the folder where the Chisel tester put the .vcd file. Per default the generated files are in `test_run_dir` then the name of the tester appended with a number. Within this folder you should be able to find `DeviceUnderTest.vcd`. You can select the signals from the left side and drag them into the main window. If you want to save a configuration of signals you can do so with *File – Write Save File* and load it later with *File – Read Save File*.

Explicitly enumerating all possible input values does not scale. Therefore, we will use some Scala code to drive the DUT. Following tester enumerates all possible values for the 2 2-bit input signals.

```
class WaveformCounterTester(dut: DeviceUnderTest) extends
  PeekPokeTester(dut) {

  for (a <- 0 until 4) {
    for (b <- 0 until 4) {
      poke(dut.io.a, a)
      poke(dut.io.b, b)
      step(1)
    }
  }
}
```

We add a `ScalaTest` spec for this new tester

```
class WaveformCounterSpec extends FlatSpec with Matchers {

  "WaveformCounter" should "pass" in {
    Driver.execute(Array("--generate-vcd-output", "on"), () =>
      new DeviceUnderTest()) { c =>
        new WaveformCounterTester(c)
      } should be (true)
    }
  }
}
```

and execute it with

```
sbt "testOnly WaveformCounterSpec"
```

3.2.4 printf Debugging

Another form of debugging is the so-called “printf debugging”. This form comes from simply putting `printf` statements in C code to print variables of interest during the execution of the program. This `printf` debugging is also available during testing of Chisel circuits. The printing happens at the rising edge of the clock. A `printf` statement can be inserted just anywhere in the module definition, as shown in the `printf` debugging version of the DUT.

```
class DeviceUnderTestPrintf extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val a = Input(UInt(2.W))
    val b = Input(UInt(2.W))
    val out = Output(UInt(2.W))
  })

  io.out := io.a & io.b
  printf("dut: %d %d %d\n", io.a, io.b, io.out)
}
```

When testing this module with the counter based tester, which iterates over all possible values, we get following output, verifying that the AND function is correct:

```
Circuit state created
[info] [0.001] SEED 1579707298694
dut: 0 0 0
```

```
dut: 0 1 0
dut: 0 2 0
dut: 0 3 0
dut: 1 0 0
dut: 1 1 1
dut: 1 2 0
dut: 1 3 1
dut: 2 0 0
dut: 2 1 0
dut: 2 2 2
dut: 2 3 2
dut: 3 0 0
dut: 3 1 1
dut: 3 2 2
dut: 3 3 3
test DeviceUnderTestPrintf Success: 0 tests passed in 21 cycles
  taking 0.036380 seconds
[info] [0.024] RAN 16 CYCLES PASSED
```

Chisel printf supports [C and Scala style formatting](#).

3.3 Exercises

For this exercise, we will revisit the blinking LED from [chisel-examples](#) and explore Chisel testing.

3.3.1 A Minimal Project

First, let us find out what a minimal Chisel project is. Explore the files in the [Hello World](#) example. The `Hello.scala` is the single hardware source file. It contains the hardware description of the blinking LED (class `Hello`) and an `App` that generates the Verilog code.

Each file starts with the import of Chisel and related packages:

```
import chisel3._
```

Then follows the hardware description, as shown in [Listing 1.1](#). To generate the Verilog description, we need an application. A Scala object that extends `App` is an application that implicitly generates the main function where the application starts. The only action

of this application is to create a new `HelloWorld` object and pass it to the Chisel driver `execute` function. The first argument is an array of Strings, where build options can be set (e.g., the output folder). The following code will generate the Verilog file `Hello.v`.

```
object Hello extends App {
  (new chisel3.stage.ChiselStage).emitVerilog(new Hello())
}
```

Run the generation of the example manually with

```
$ sbt "runMain Hello"
```

and explore the generated `Hello.v` with an editor. The generated Verilog code may not be very readable, but we can find out some details. The file starts with a module `Hello`, which is the same name as our Chisel module. We can identify our LED port as output `io_led`. Pin names are the Chisel names with a prepended `io_`. Besides our LED pin, the module also contains clock and reset input signals. Those two signals are added automatically by Chisel.

Furthermore, we can identify the definition of our two registers `cntReg` and `blkReg`. We may also find the reset and update of those registers at the end of the module definition. Note, that Chisel generates a synchronous reset.

For sbt to be able to fetch the correct Scala compiler and the Chisel library, we need a `build.sbt`:

```
scalaVersion := "2.12.12"

scalacOptions := Seq("-deprecation", "-Xsource:2.11")

resolvers += Seq(
  Resolver.sonatypeRepo("snapshots"),
  Resolver.sonatypeRepo("releases")
)

libraryDependencies += "edu.berkeley.cs" %% "chisel-iotesters"
  % "1.5.1"
libraryDependencies += "edu.berkeley.cs" %% "chiseltest" %
  "0.3.1"
// Chisel 3.4.1 is loaded as a dependency on the testers
```

Note that in this example, we have a concrete Chisel version number to avoid checking on each run for a new version (which will fail if we are not connected to the Internet, e.g., when doing hardware design during a flight). Change the `build.sbt` configuration

to use the latest Chisel version by changing the library dependency to

```
libraryDependencies += "edu.berkeley.cs" %% "chisel3" %  
    "latest.release"
```

and rerun the build with `sbt`. Is there a newer version of Chisel available and will it be automatically downloaded?

For convenience, the project also contains a `Makefile`. It just contains the `sbt` command, so we do not need to remember it and can generate the Verilog code with:

```
make
```

Besides a `README` file, the example project also contains project files for different FPGA board. E.g., in [quartus/altde2-115](#) you can find the two project files to define a Quartus project for the DE2-115 board. The main definitions (source files, device, pin assignments) can be found in a plain text file [hello.qsf](#). Explore the file and find out which pins are connected to which signals. If you need to adapt the project to a different board, there is where the changes are applied. If you have Quartus installed, open that project, compile with the green *Play* button, and then configure the FPGA.

Note that the *Hello World* is a minimal Chisel project. More realistic projects have their source files organized in packages and contain testers. The next exercise will explore such a project.

3.3.2 A Testing Exercise

In the last chapter's exercise, you have extended the blinking LED example with some input to build an AND gate and a multiplexer and run this hardware in an FPGA. We will now use this example and test the functionality with a Chisel tester to automate testing and also to be independent of an FPGA. Use your designs from the previous chapter and add a Chisel tester to test the functionality. Try to enumerate all possible inputs and test the output with `except()`.

Testing within Chisel can speed up the debugging of your design. However, it is always a good idea to synthesize your design for an FPGA and run tests with the FPGA. There you can perform a reality check on the size of your design (usually in LUTs and flip-flops) and your performance of your design in maximum clocking frequency. As a reference point, a textbook style pipelined RISC processor may consume about 3000 4-bit LUTs and may run around 100 MHz in a low-cost FPGA (Intel Cyclone or Xilinx Spartan).

4 Components

A larger digital design is structured into a set of components, often in a hierarchical way. Each component has an interface with input and output wires, usually called ports. These are similar to input and output pins on an integrated circuit (IC). Components are connected by wiring up the inputs and outputs. Components may contain subcomponents to build the hierarchy. The outermost component, which is connected to physical pins on a chip, is called the top-level component.

Figure 4.1 shows an example design. Component C has three input ports and two output ports. The component itself is assembled out of two subcomponents: B and D, which are connected to the inputs and outputs of C. One output of A is connected to an input of B. Component D is at the same hierarchy level as component C and connected to it.

In this chapter, we will explain how components are described in Chisel and provide several examples of standard components. Those standard components serve two purposes: (1) they provide examples of Chisel code and (2) they provide a library of components ready to be reused in your design.

4.1 Components in Chisel are Modules

Hardware components are called modules in Chisel. Each module extends the class `Module` and contains a field `io` for the interface. The interface is defined by a `Bundle` that is wrapped into a call to `IO()`. The `Bundle` contains fields to represent input and output ports of the module. The direction is given by wrapping a field into either a call to `Input()` or `Output()`. The direction is from the view of the component itself.

Listing 4.1 shows the definition of the two example components A and B from Figure 4.1. Component A has two inputs, named `a` and `b`, and two outputs, named `x` and `y`. For the ports of component B we chose the names `in1`, `in2`, and `out`. All ports use an unsigned integer (`UInt`) with a bit width of 8. As this example code is about connecting components and building a hierarchy, we do not show any implementation within the components. The implementation of the component is written at the place where the comments states “function of X”. As we have no function associated with those example

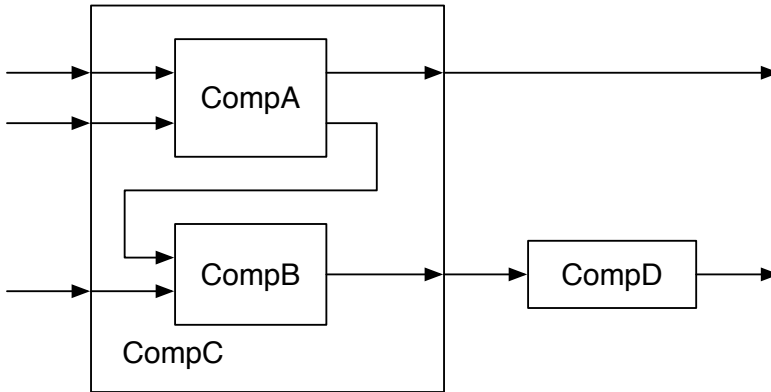


Figure 4.1: A design consisting of a hierarchy of components.

```
class CompA extends Module {
    val io = IO(new Bundle {
        val a = Input(UInt(8.W))
        val b = Input(UInt(8.W))
        val x = Output(UInt(8.W))
        val y = Output(UInt(8.W))
    })

    // function of A
}

class CompB extends Module {
    val io = IO(new Bundle {
        val in1 = Input(UInt(8.W))
        val in2 = Input(UInt(8.W))
        val out = Output(UInt(8.W))
    })

    // function of B
}
```

Listing 4.1: Definitions of component A and B


```
class CompC extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val in_a = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val in_b = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val in_c = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val out_x = Output(UInt(8.W))  
    val out_y = Output(UInt(8.W))  
  })  
  
  // create components A and B  
  val compA = Module(new CompA())  
  val compB = Module(new CompB())  
  
  // connect A  
  compA.io.a := io.in_a  
  compA.io.b := io.in_b  
  io.out_x := compA.io.x  
  // connect B  
  compB.io.in1 := compA.io.y  
  compB.io.in2 := io.in_c  
  io.out_y := compB.io.out  
}
```

Listing 4.2: Component C

components, we used generic port names. For a real design use descriptive port names, such as `data`, `valid`, or `ready`.

Component C, shown in Listing 4.2, has three input and two output ports. It is built out of components A and B. We show how A and B are connected to the ports of C and also the connection between an output port of A and an input port of B.

Components are created with `new`, e.g., `new CompA()`, and need to be wrapped into a call to `Module()`. The reference to that module is stored in a local variable, in this example `val compA = Module(new CompA())`.

With this reference, we can access the IO ports by dereferencing the `io` field of the module and the individual fields of the IO `Bundle`.

The simplest component in our design, shown in Listing 4.3, has just an input port, named `in`, and an output port named `out`.

The final missing piece of our example design is the top-level component, which itself is assembled out of components C and D, shown in Listing 4.4.

```
class CompD extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val in = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val out = Output(UInt(8.W))  
  })  
  
  // function of D  
}
```

Listing 4.3: Component D

```
class TopLevel extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val in_a = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val in_b = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val in_c = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val out_m = Output(UInt(8.W))  
    val out_n = Output(UInt(8.W))  
  })  
  
  // create C and D  
  val c = Module(new CompC())  
  val d = Module(new CompD())  
  
  // connect C  
  c.io.in_a := io.in_a  
  c.io.in_b := io.in_b  
  c.io.in_c := io.in_c  
  io.out_m := c.io.out_x  
  // connect D  
  d.io.in := c.io.out_y  
  io.out_n := d.io.out  
}
```

Listing 4.4: Top-level component

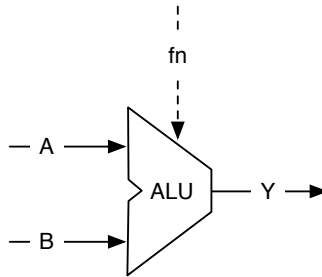


Figure 4.2: An arithmetic logic unit, or ALU for short.

Good component design is similar to the good design of functions or methods in software design. One of the main questions is how much functionality shall we put into a component and how large should a component be. The two extremes are tiny components, such an adder, and huge components, such as a full microprocessor,

Beginners in hardware design often start with tiny components. The problem is that digital design books use tiny components to show the principles. But the sizes of the examples (in those books, and also in this book) are small to fit into a page and to not distract by too many details.

The interface to a component is a little bit verbose (with types, names, directions, IO construction). As a rule of thumb, I would propose that the core of the component, the function, should be at least as long as the interface of the component.

For tiny components, such as a counter, Chisel provides a more lightweight way to describe them as functions that return hardware.

4.2 An Arithmetic Logic Unit

One of the central components for circuits that compute, e.g., a microprocessor, is an [arithmetic-logic unit](#), or ALU for short. Figure 4.2 shows the symbol of an ALU.

The ALU has two data inputs, labeled A and B in the figure, one function input `fn`, and an output, labeled Y. The ALU operates on A and B and provides the result at the output. The input `fn` selects the operation on A and B. The operations are usually some arithmetic, such as addition and subtraction, and some logical functions such as `and`, `or`, `xor`. That's why it is called ALU.

The function input `fn` selects the operation. The ALU is usually a combinational circuit without any state elements. An ALU might also have additional outputs to signal properties of the result, such as zero or the sign.

The following code shows an ALU with 16-bit inputs and outputs that supports: addition, subtraction, or, and and operation, selected by a 2-bit `fn` signal.

```
class Alu extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val a = Input(UInt(16.W))
    val b = Input(UInt(16.W))
    val fn = Input(UInt(2.W))
    val y = Output(UInt(16.W))
  })

  // some default value is needed
  io.y := 0.U

  // The ALU selection
  switch(io.fn) {
    is(0.U) { io.y := io.a + io.b }
    is(1.U) { io.y := io.a - io.b }
    is(2.U) { io.y := io.a | io.b }
    is(3.U) { io.y := io.a & io.b }
  }
}
```

In this example, we use a new Chisel construct, the `switch/is` construct to describe the table that selects the output of our ALU. To use this utility function, we need to import another Chisel package:

```
import chisel3.util._
```

4.3 Bulk Connections

For connecting components with multiple IO ports, Chisel provides the bulk connection operator `<>`. This operator connects parts of bundles in both directions. Chisel uses the names of the leaf fields for the connection. If a name is missing, it is not connected.

As an example, let us assume we build a pipelined processor. The fetch stage has a following interface:

```
class Fetch extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val instr = Output(UInt(32.W))
  })
}
```

```

    val pc = Output(UInt(32.W))
  })
  // ... Implementation of fetch
}

```

The next stage is the decode stage.

```

class Decode extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val instr = Input(UInt(32.W))
    val pc = Input(UInt(32.W))
    val aluOp = Output(UInt(5.W))
    val regA = Output(UInt(32.W))
    val regB = Output(UInt(32.W))
  })
  // ... Implementation of decode
}

```

The final stage of our simple processor is the execute stage.

```

class Execute extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val aluOp = Input(UInt(5.W))
    val regA = Input(UInt(32.W))
    val regB = Input(UInt(32.W))
    val result = Output(UInt(32.W))
  })
  // ... Implementation of execute
}

```

To connect all three stages we need just two `<>` operators. We can also connect the port of a submodule with the parent module.

```

val fetch = Module(new Fetch())
val decode = Module(new Decode())
val execute = Module(new Execute)

fetch.io <> decode.io
decode.io <> execute.io
io <> execute.io

```

4.4 Lightweight Components with Functions

Modules are the general way to structure your hardware description. However, there is some boilerplate code when declaring a module and when instantiating and connecting it. A lightweight way to structure your hardware is to use functions. Scala functions can take Chisel (and Scala) parameters and return generated hardware. As a simple example, we generate an adder:

```
def adder (x: UInt, y: UInt) = {  
  x + y  
}
```

We can then create two adders by simply calling the function `adder`.

```
val x = adder(a, b)  
// another adder  
val y = adder(c, d)
```

Note that this is a *hardware generator*. You are not executing any add operation during elaboration, but create two adders (hardware instances). The adder is an artificial example to keep it simple. Chisel has already an adder generation function, like `+` (that: `UInt`).

Functions, as lightweight hardware generators, can also contain state (including a register). Following example returns a one clock cycle delay element (a register). If a function has just a single statement, we can write it in one line and omit the curly braces `()`.

```
def delay(x: UInt) = RegNext(x)
```

By calling the function with the function itself as parameter, this generated a two clock cycle delay.

```
val delOut = delay(delay(delIn))
```

Again, this is a too short example to be useful, as `RegNext()` already is that function creating the register for the delay.

Functions can be declared as part of a `Module`. However, functions that shall be used in different modules are better placed into a Scala object that collects utility functions.

5 Combinational Building Blocks

In this chapter, we explore various combinational circuits, basic building blocks that we can use to construct more complex systems. In principle, all combinational circuits can be described with Boolean equations. However, more often, a description in the form of a table is more efficient. We let the synthesizer tool extract and minimize the Boolean equations. Two basic circuits, best described in a table form, are a decoder and an encoder.

5.1 Combinational Circuits

Before describing some standard combinational building blocks, we will explore how combinational circuits can be expressed in Chisel. The simplest form is a Boolean expression, which can be assigned a name:

```
val e = (a & b) | c
```

The Boolean expression is given a name (e) by assigning it to a Scala value. The expression can be reused in other expressions:

```
val f = ~e
```

Such an expression is considered fixed. A reassignment to e with = would result in a Scala compiler error: reassignment to val. A try with the Chisel operator :=, as shown below,

```
e := c & b
```

results in a runtime exception: Cannot reassign to read-only.

Chisel also supports describing combinational circuits with conditional updates. Such a circuit is declared as a `Wire`. Then you use conditional operations, such as `when`, to describe the logic of the circuit. The following code declares a `Wire` w of type `UInt` and assigns a default value of 0. The `when` block takes a Chisel `Bool` and reassigns 3 to w if cond is true.

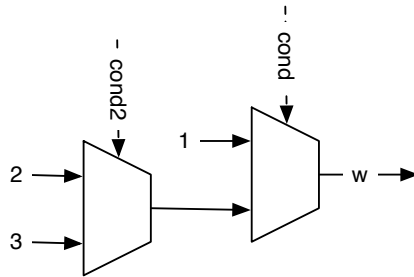


Figure 5.1: A chain of multiplexers.

```
val w = Wire(UInt())

w := 0.U
when (cond) {
  w := 3.U
}
```

The logic of the circuit is a multiplexer, where the two inputs are the constants `0` and `3` and the condition `cond` the select signal. Keep in mind that we describe hardware circuits and not a software program with conditional execution.

The Chisel condition construct `when` also has a form of *else*, it is called `otherwise`. With assigning a value under any condition we can omit the default value assignment:

```
val w = Wire(UInt())

when (cond) {
  w := 1.U
} .otherwise {
  w := 2.U
}
```

Chisel also supports a chain of conditionals (a `if/elseif/else` chain) with `.elsewhen`:

```
val w = Wire(UInt())

when (cond) {
  w := 1.U
} .elsewhen (cond2) {
  w := 2.U
}
```



```

} .otherwise {
  w := 3.U
}

```

This chain of `when`, `.elsewhen`, and `.otherwise` construct a chain of multiplexers. Figure 5.1 shows this chain of multiplexers. That chain introduce a priority, i.e., when `cond` is true, the other conditions are not evaluated.

Note the ‘.’ in `.elsewhen` that is needed to chain methods in Scala. Those `.elsewhen` branches can be arbitrary long. However, if the chain of conditions depends on a single signal, it is better to use the `switch` statement, which is introduced in the following subsection with a decoder circuit.

For more complex combinational circuits it might be practical to assign a default value to a `Wire`. A default assignment can be combined with the wire declaration with `WireDefault`.

```

val w = WireDefault(0.U)

when (cond) {
  w := 3.U
}
// ... and some more complex conditional assignments

```

One might question why using `when`, `.elsewhen`, and `otherwise` when Scala has `if`, `else if`, and `else`? Those statements are for conditional execution of Scala code, not generating Chisel (multiplexer) hardware. Those Scala conditionals have their use in Chisel when we write circuit generators, which take parameters to conditionally generate *different* hardware instances.

5.2 Decoder

A **decoder** converts a binary number of n bits to an m -bit signal, where $m \leq 2^n$. The output is one-hot encoded (where exactly one bit is one).

Figure 5.2 shows a 2-bit to 4-bit decoder. We can describe the function of the decoder with a truth table, such as Table 5.2.

A Chisel `switch` statement describes the logic as a truth table. The `switch` statement is not part of the core Chisel language. Therefore, we need to include the elements of the package `chisel.util`.

```
import chisel3.util._
```

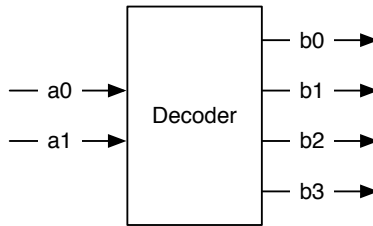


Figure 5.2: A 2-bit to 4-bit decoder.

| a | b |
|----|------|
| 00 | 0001 |
| 01 | 0010 |
| 10 | 0100 |
| 11 | 1000 |

Table 5.1: Truth table for a 2 to 4 decoder.

The following code introduces the `switch` statement of Chisel to describe a decoder:

```
result := 0.U

switch(sel) {
  is (0.U) { result := 1.U}
  is (1.U) { result := 2.U}
  is (2.U) { result := 4.U}
  is (3.U) { result := 8.U}
}
```

The above `switch` statement lists all possible values of the `sel` signal and assigns the decoded value to the `result` signal. Note that even if we enumerate all possible input values, Chisel still needs us to assign a default value, as we do by assigning 0 to `result`. This assignment will never be active and therefore optimized away by the backend tool. It is intended to avoid situations with incomplete assignments for combinational circuits (in Chisel a `Wire`) that will result in unintended latches in hardware description languages such as VHDL and Verilog. Chisel does not allow incomplete assignments.

In the example before we used unsigned integers for the signals. Maybe a clearer representation of an encode circuit uses the binary notation:

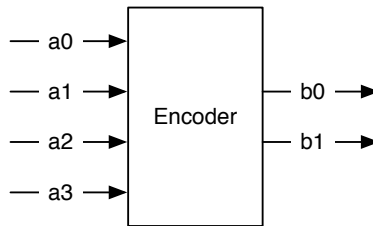


Figure 5.3: A 4-bit to 2-bit encoder.

```

switch (sel) {
  is ("b00".U) { result := "b0001".U}
  is ("b01".U) { result := "b0010".U}
  is ("b10".U) { result := "b0100".U}
  is ("b11".U) { result := "b1000".U}
}

```

A table gives a very readable representation of the decoder function but is also a little bit verbose. When examining the table, we see a regular structure: a 1 is shifted left by the number represented by `sel`. Therefore, we can express a decoder with the Chisel shift operation `<<`.

```
result := 1.U << sel
```

Decoders are used as a building block for a multiplexer by using the output as an enable with an AND gate for the multiplexer data input. However, in Chisel, we do not need to construct a multiplexer, as a `Mux` is available in the core library. Decoders can also be used for address decoding, and then the outputs are used as select signals, e.g., different IO devices connected to a microprocessor.

5.3 Encoder

An **encoder** converts a one-hot encoded input signal into a binary encoded output signal. The encoder does the inverse operation of a decoder.

Figure 5.3 shows a 4-bit one-hot input to a 2-bit binary output encoder, and Table 5.3 shows the truth table of the encode function. However, an encoder works only as expected when the input signal is one-hot coded. For all other input values, the output is undefined. As we cannot describe a function with undefined outputs, we use a default

| a | b |
|------|----|
| 0001 | 00 |
| 0010 | 01 |
| 0100 | 10 |
| 1000 | 11 |
| ???? | ?? |

Table 5.2: Truth table for a 4 to 2 encoder.

assignment that catches all undefined input patterns.

The following Chisel code assigns a default value of 00 and then uses the switch statement for the legal input values.

```
b := "b00".U
switch (a) {
  is ("b0001".U) { b := "b00".U }
  is ("b0010".U) { b := "b01".U }
  is ("b0100".U) { b := "b10".U }
  is ("b1000".U) { b := "b11".U }
}
```

5.4 Exercise

Describe a combinational circuit to convert a 4-bit binary input to the encoding of a [7-segment display](#). You can either define the codes for the decimal digits, which was the initial usage of a 7-segment display or additionally, define encodings for the remaining bit pattern to be able to display all 16 values of a single digit in [hexadecimal](#). When you have an FPGA board with a 7-segment display, connect 4 switches or buttons to the input of your circuit and the output to the 7-segment display.

6 Sequential Building Blocks

Sequential circuits are circuits where the output depends on the input *and* previous values. As we are interested in synchronous design (clocked designs), we mean synchronous sequential circuits when we talk about sequential circuits.¹ To build sequential circuits, we need elements that can store state: the so-called registers.

6.1 Registers

The fundamental elements for building sequential circuits are registers. A register is a collection of [D flip-flops](#). A D flip-flop captures the value of its input at the rising edge of the clock and stores it at its output. Alternatively, in other words: the register updates its output with the value of the input on the rising edge of the clock.

Figure 6.1 shows the schematic symbol of a register. It contains an input D and an output Q. Each register also contains an input for a clock signal. As this global clock signal is connected to all registers in a synchronous circuit, it is usually not drawn in our schematics. The little triangle on the bottom of the box symbolizes the clock input and tells us that this is a register. We omit the clock signal in the following schematics. The omission of the global clock signal is also reflected by Chisel where no explicit connection of a signal to the register's clock input is needed.

¹We can also build sequential circuits with asynchronous logic and feedback, but this is a specific niche topic and cannot be expressed in Chisel.

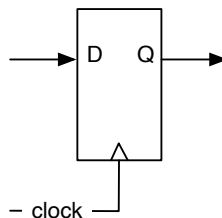


Figure 6.1: A D flip-flop based register.

In Chisel a register with input `d` and output `q` is defined with:

```
val q = RegNext(d)
```

Note that we do not need to connect a clock to the register, Chisel implicitly does this. A register's input and output can be arbitrary complex types made out of a combination of vectors and bundles.

A register can also be defined and used in two steps:

```
val delayReg = Reg(UInt(4.W))
```

```
delayReg := delayIn
```

First, we define the register and give it a name. Second, we connect the signal `delayIn` to the input of the register. Note also that the name of the register contains the string `Reg`. To easily distinguish between combinational circuits and sequential circuits, it is common practice to have the marker `Reg` as part of the name. Also, note that names in Scala (and therefore also in Chisel) are usually in [CamelCase](#). Variable names start with lowercase and classes start with upper case.

A register can also be initialized on reset. The reset signal is, as the clock signal, implicit in Chisel. We supply the reset value, e.g., zero, as a parameter to the register constructor `RegInit`. The input for the register is connected with a Chisel assignment statement.

```
val valReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
```

```
valReg := inVal
```

The default implementation of reset in Chisel is a synchronous reset.² For a synchronous reset no change is needed on a D flip-flop, just a multiplexer needs to be added³ to the input that selects between the initialization value under reset and the data value.

Figure 6.2 shows the schematics of a register with a synchronous reset where the reset drives the multiplexer. However, as synchronous reset is used quite often modern FPGAs flip-flops contain a synchronous reset (and set) input to not waste LUT resources for the multiplexer.

Sequential circuits change their value over time. Therefore, their behavior can be described by a diagram showing the signals over time. Such a diagram is called a wave-

²Support for asynchronous reset is currently under development

³Current FPGA flip-flops contain a synchronous reset input. Therefore, no additional resources are needed for the multiplexer.

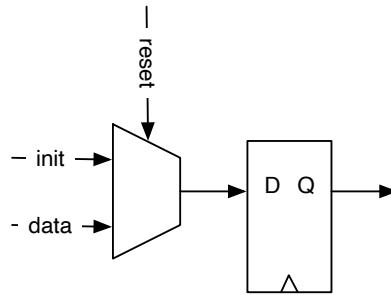


Figure 6.2: A D flip-flop based register with a synchronous reset.

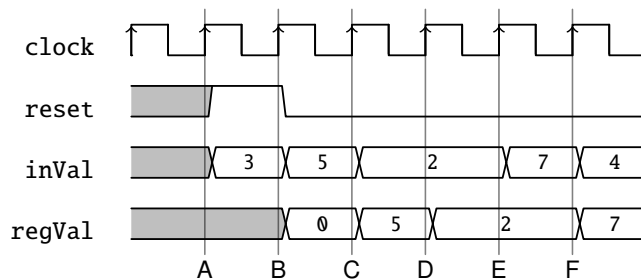


Figure 6.3: A waveform diagram for a register with a reset.

form or [timing diagram](#).

Figure 6.3 shows a waveform for the register with a reset and some input data applied to it. Time advances from left to right. On top of the figure, we see the clock that drives our circuit. In the first clock cycle, before a reset, the register content is undefined. In the second clock cycle reset is asserted high, and on the rising edge of this clock cycle (labeled B) the register takes the initial value 0. Input `inVal` is ignored. In the next clock cycle reset is 0, and the value of `inVal` is captured on the next rising edge (labeled C). From then on reset stays 0, as it should be, and the register output follows the input signal with one clock cycle delay.

Waveforms are an excellent tool to specify the behavior of a circuit graphically. Especially in more complex circuits where many operations happen in parallel and data moves pipelined through the circuit, timing diagrams are convenient. Chisel testers can also produce waveforms during testing that can be displayed with a waveform viewer and used for debugging.

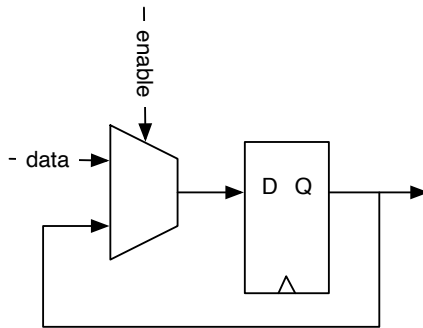


Figure 6.4: A D flip-flop based register with an enable signal.

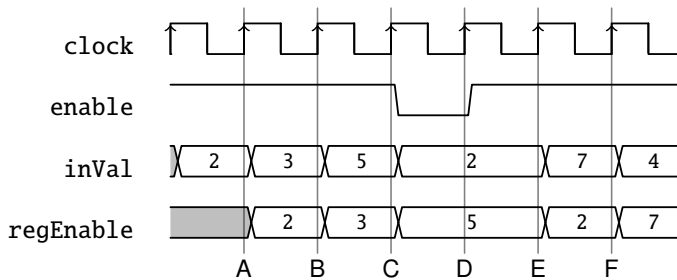


Figure 6.5: A waveform diagram for a register with an enable signal.

A typical design pattern is a register with an enable signal. Only when the enable signal is true (high), the register captures the input; otherwise, it keeps its old value. The enable can be implemented, similar to the synchronous reset, with a multiplexer at the input of the register. One input to the multiplexer is the feedback of the output of the register.

Figure 6.4 shows the schematics of a register with enable. As this is also a common design pattern, modern FPGA flip-flops contain a dedicated enable input, and no additional resources are needed.

Figure 6.5 shows an example waveform for a register with enable. Most of the time, enable is high (true) and the register follows the input with one clock cycle delay. Only in the fourth clock cycle enable is low, and the register keeps its value (5) at rising edge D.

A register with an enable can be described in a few lines of Chisel code with a condi-

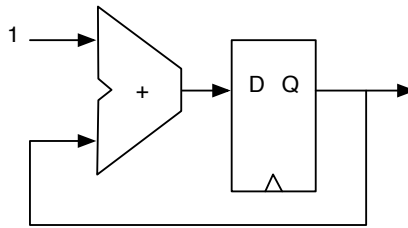


Figure 6.6: An adder and a register result in counter.

tional update:

```
val enableReg = Reg(UInt(4.W))

when (enable) {
  enableReg := inVal
}
```

A register with enable can also be reset:

```
val resetEnableReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))

when (enable) {
  resetEnableReg := inVal
}
```

A register can also be part of an expression. The following circuit detects the rising edge of a signal by comparing its current value with the one from the last clock cycle.

```
val risingEdge = din & !RegNext(din)
```

Now that we have explored all basic uses of a register, we put those registers to good use and build more interesting sequential circuits.

6.2 Counters

One of the most basic sequential circuits is a counter. In its simplest form, a counter is a register where the output is connected to an adder and the adder's output is connected to the input of the register. Figure 6.6 shows such a free-running counter.

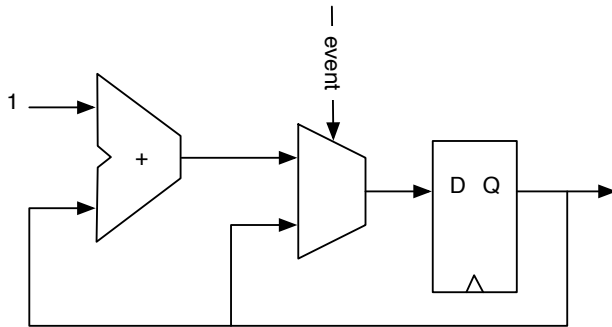


Figure 6.7: Counting events.

A free-running counter with a 4-bit register counts from 0 to 15 and then wraps around to 0 again. A counter shall also be reset to a known value.

```
val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
```

```
cntReg := cntReg + 1.U
```

When we want to count events, we use a condition to increment the counter, as shown in Figure 6.7 and in the following code.

```
val cntEventsReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
when(event) {
  cntEventsReg := cntEventsReg + 1.U
}
```

6.2.1 Counting Up and Down

To count up to a value and then restart with 0, we need to compare the counter value with a maximum constant, e.g., with a `when` conditional statement.

```
val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))

cntReg := cntReg + 1.U
when(cntReg === N) {
  cntReg := 0.U
}
```

We can also use a multiplexer for our counter:

```
val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))

cntReg := Mux(cntReg == N, 0.U, cntReg + 1.U)
```

If we are in the mood of counting down, we start by resetting the counter register with the maximum value and reset the counter to that value when reaching 0.

```
val cntReg = RegInit(N)

cntReg := cntReg - 1.U
when(cntReg == 0.U) {
    cntReg := N
}
```

As we are coding and using more counters, we can define a function with a parameter to generate a counter for us.

```
// This function returns a counter
def genCounter(n: Int) = {
    val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))
    cntReg := Mux(cntReg == n.U, 0.U, cntReg + 1.U)
    cntReg
}

// now we can easily create many counters
val count10 = genCounter(10)
val count99 = genCounter(99)
```

The last statement of the function `genCounter` is the return value of the function, in this example, the counting register `cntReg`.

Note, that in all the examples our counter had values between 0 and `N`, including `N`. If we want to count 10 clock cycles we need to set `N` to 9. Setting `N` to 10 would be a classic example of an [off-by-one error](#).

6.2.2 Generating Timing with Counters

Besides counting events, counters are often used to generate a notion of time (time as time on a wall clock). A synchronous circuit runs with a clock with a fixed frequency. The circuit proceeds in those clock ticks. There is no notion of time in a digital circuit other than counting clock ticks. If we know the clock frequency, we can generate circuits

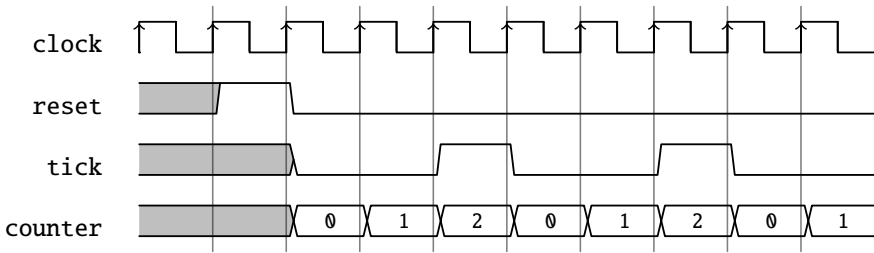


Figure 6.8: A waveform diagram for the generation of a slow frequency tick.

that generate timed events, such as blinking a LED at some frequency as we have shown in the Chisel “Hello World” example.

A common practice is to generate single-cycle *ticks* with a frequency f_{tick} that we need in our circuit. That tick occurs every n clock cycles, where $n = f_{clock}/f_{tick}$ and the tick is precisely one clock cycle long. This tick is *not* used as a derived clock, but as an enable signal for registers in the circuit that shall logically operate at frequency f_{tick} . Figure 6.8 shows an example of a tick generated every 3 clock cycles.

In the following circuit, we describe a counter that counts from 0 to the maximum value of $N - 1$. When the maximum value is reached, the tick is true for a single cycle, and the counter is reset to 0. When we count from 0 to $N - 1$, we generate one logical tick every N clock cycles.

```
val tickCounterReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
val tick = tickCounterReg === (N-1).U

tickCounterReg := tickCounterReg + 1.U
when (tick) {
    tickCounterReg := 0.U
}
```

This logical timing of one tick every n clock cycles can then be used to advance other parts of our circuit with this slower, logical clock. In the following code, we use just another counter that increments by 1 every n clock cycles.

```
val lowFrequCntReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
when (tick) {
    lowFrequCntReg := lowFrequCntReg + 1.U
}
```

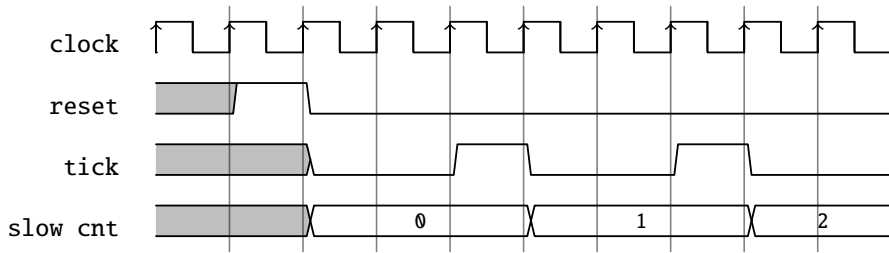


Figure 6.9: Using the slow frequency tick.

Figure 6.9 shows the waveform of the tick and the slow counter that increments every tick (n clock cycles).

Examples of the usage of this slower *logical* clock are: blinking an LED, generating the baud rate for a serial bus, generating signals for 7-segment display multiplexing, and subsampling input values for debouncing of buttons and switches.

Although width inference should size the registers, it is better to explicitly specify the width with the type at register definition or with the initialization value. Explicit width definition can avoid surprises when a reset value of `0.U` results in a counter with a width of a single bit.

6.2.3 The Nerd Counter

Many of us feel like being a [nerd](#), sometimes. For example, we want to design a highly optimized version of our counter/tick generation. A standard counter needs following resources: one register, one adder (or subtractor), and a comparator. We cannot do much about the register or the adder. If we count up, we need to compare against a number, which is a bit string. The comparator can be built out of inverters for the zeros in the bit string and a large AND gate. When counting down to zero, the comparator is a large NOR gate, which might be a little bit cheaper than the comparator against a constant in an ASIC. In an FPGA, where logic is built out of lookup tables, there is no difference between comparing against 0 or 1. The resource requirement is the same for the up and down counter.

However, there is still one more trick a clever hardware designer can pull off. Counting up or down needed a comparison against all counting bits, so far. What if we count from $N-2$ down to -1 ? A negative number has the most significant bit set to 1, and a positive number has this bit set to 0. We need to check this bit only to detect that our counter reached -1 . Here it is, the counter created by a nerd:

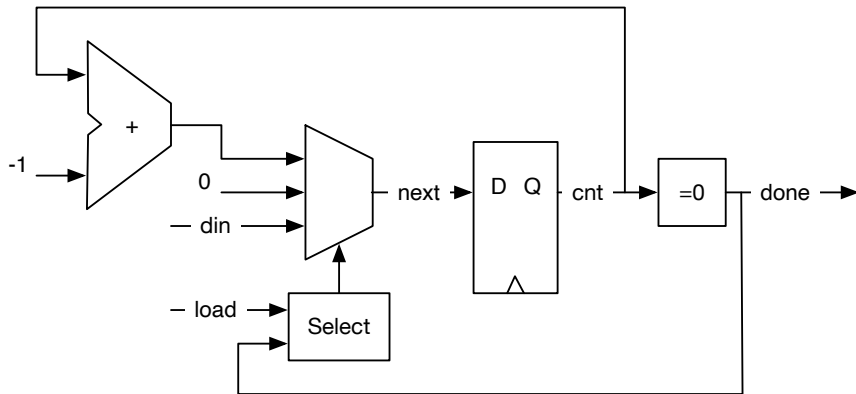


Figure 6.10: A one-shot timer.

```

val MAX = (N - 2).S(8.W)
val cntReg = RegInit(MAX)
io.tick := false.B

```

```

cntReg := cntReg - 1.S
when(cntReg(7)) {
  cntReg := MAX
  io.tick := true.B
}

```

6.2.4 A Timer

Another form of timer we can create, is a one-shot timer. A one-shot timer is like a kitchen timer: you set the number of minutes and press start. When the specified amount of time has elapsed, the alarm sounds. The digital timer is loaded with the time in clock cycles. Then it counts down until reaching zero. At zero the timer asserts *done*.

Figure 6.10 shows the block diagram of a timer. The register can be loaded with the value of *din* by asserting *load*. When the *load* signal is de-asserted counting down is selected (by selecting $\text{cntReg} - 1$ as the input for the register). When the counter reaches 0, the signal *done* is asserted and the counter stops counting by selecting input of the multiplexer that provides 0.

Listing 6.1 shows the Chisel code for the timer. We use an 8-bit register *reg*, that is reset to 0. The boolean value *done* is the result of comparing *reg* with 0. For the input

```

val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))
val done = cntReg === 0.U

val next = WireDefault(0.U)
when (load) {
    next := din
} .elsewhen (!done) {
    next := cntReg - 1.U
}
cntReg := next

```

Listing 6.1: A one-shot timer

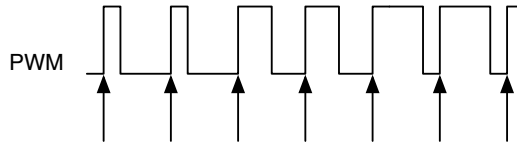


Figure 6.11: Pulse-width modulation.

multiplexer we introduce the wire `next` with a default value of `0`. The `when/elsewhen` block introduces the other two inputs with the select function. Signal `load` has priority over the decrement selection. The last line connects the multiplexer, represented by `next`, to the input of the register `reg`.

If we aim for a bit more concise code, we can directly assign the multiplexer values to the register `reg`, instead of using the intermediate wire `next`.

6.2.5 Pulse-Width Modulation

Pulse-width modulation (PWM) is a signal with a constant period and a modulation of the time the signal is *high* within that period.

Figure 6.11 shows a PWM signal. The arrows point to the start of the periods of the signal. The percentage of time the signal is high, is also called the *duty cycle*. In the first two periods the duty cycle is 25 %, in the next two 50 %, and in the last two cycles it is 75 %. The pulse width is modulated between 25 % and 75 %.

Adding a **low-pass filter** to a PWM signal results in a simple **digital-to-analog converter**. The low-pass filter can be as simple as a resistor and a capacitor.

The following code example will generate a waveform of 3 clock cycles high every 10 clock cycles.

```
def pwm(nrCycles: Int, din: UInt) = {  
  val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(unsignedBitLength(nrCycles-1).W))  
  cntReg := Mux(cntReg == (nrCycles-1).U, 0.U, cntReg + 1.U)  
  din > cntReg  
}  
  
val din = 3.U  
val dout = pwm(10, din)
```

We use a function for the PWM generator to provide a reusable, lightweight component. The function has two parameters: a Scala integer configuring the PWM with the number of clock cycles (`nrCycles`), and a Chisel wire (`din`) that gives the duty cycle (pulswidth) for the PWM output signal. We use a multiplexer in this example to express the counter. The last line of the function compares the counter value with the input value `din` to return the PWM signal. The last expression in a Chisel function is the return value, in our case the wire connected to the compare function.

We use the function `unsignedBitLength(n)` to specify the number of bits for the counter `cntReg` needed to represent unsigned numbers up to (and including) `n`.⁴ Chisel also has a function `signedBitLength` to provide the number of bits for a signed representation of a number.

Another application is to use PWM to dim an LED. In that case the eye serves as low-pass filter. We expand the above example to drive the PWM generation by a triangular function. The result is an LED with continuously changing intensity.

```
val FREQ = 100000000 // a 100 MHz clock input  
val MAX = FREQ/1000 // 1 kHz  
  
val modulationReg = RegInit(0.U(32.W))  
  
val upReg = RegInit(true.B)  
  
when (modulationReg < FREQ.U && upReg) {  
  modulationReg := modulationReg + 1.U  
} .elsewhen (modulationReg == FREQ.U && upReg) {  
  upReg := false.B  
} .elsewhen (modulationReg > 0.U && !upReg) {  
  modulationReg := modulationReg - 1.U
```

⁴The number of bits to represent an unsigned number n in binary is $\lfloor \log_2(n) \rfloor + 1$.

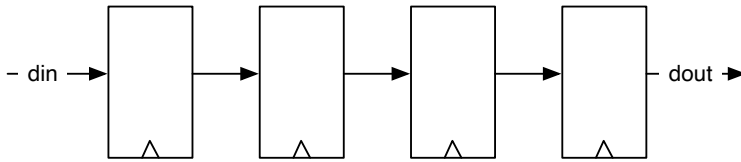


Figure 6.12: A 4 stage shift register.

```

} .otherwise { // 0
  upReg := true.B
}

// divide modReg by 1024 (about the 1 kHz)
val sig = pwm(MAX, modulationReg >> 10)

```

We use two registers for the modulation: (1) `modulationReg` for counting up and down and (2) `upReg` as a flag to determine if we shall count up or down. We count up to the frequency of our clock input (100 MHz in our example), which results in a signal of 0.5 Hz. The lengthy `when/.elsewhen/.otherwise` expression handles the up- or down-counting and the switch of the direction.

As our PWM counts only up to the 1000th of the frequency to generate a 1 kHz signal, we need to divide the modulation signal by 1000. As real division is very expensive in hardware, we simply shift by 10 to the right, which equates a division by $2^{10} = 1024$. As we have defined the PWM circuit as a function, we can simply instantiate that circuit with a function call. Wire `sig` represents the modulated PWM signal.

6.3 Shift Registers

A [shift register](#) is a collection of flip-flops connected in a sequence. Each output of a register (flip-flop) is connected to the input of the next register. Figure 6.12 shows a 4-stage shift register. The circuit *shifts* the data from left to right on each clock tick. In this simple form the circuit implements a 4-tap delay from `din` to `dout`.

The Chisel code for this simple shift register does: (1) create a 4-bit register `shiftReg`, (2) concatenate the lower 3 bits of the shift register with the input `din` for the next input to the register, and (3) uses the most significant bit (MSB) of the register as the output `dout`.

```
val shiftReg = Reg(UInt(4.W))
```

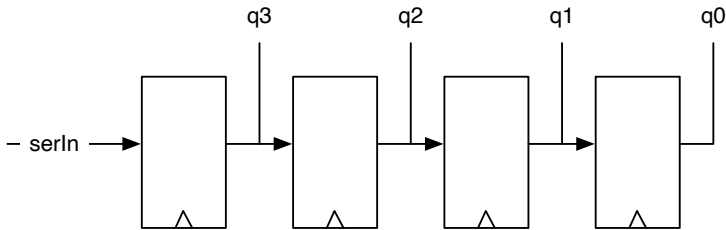


Figure 6.13: A 4-bit shift register with parallel output.

```
shiftReg := Cat(shiftReg(2, 0), din)
val dout = shiftReg(3)
```

Shift registers are often used to convert from serial data to parallel data or from parallel data to serial data. Section 11.2 shows a serial port that uses shift registers for the receive and send functions.

6.3.1 Shift Register with Parallel Output

A serial-in parallel-out configuration of a shift register transforms a serial input stream into parallel words. This may be used in a serial port (UART) for the receive function. Figure 6.13 shows a 4-bit shift register, where each flip-flop output is connected to one output bit. After 4 clock cycles this circuit converts a 4-bit serial data word to a 4-bit parallel data word that is available in `q`. In this example we assume that bit 0 (the least significant bit) is sent first and therefore arrives in the last stage when we want to read the full word.

In the following Chisel code we initialize the shift register `outReg` with 0. Then we shift in from the MSB, which means a right shift. The parallel result, `q`, is just the reading of the register `outReg`.

```
val outReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
outReg := Cat(serIn, outReg(3, 1))
val q = outReg
```

Figure 6.13 shows a 4-bit shift register with a parallel output function.

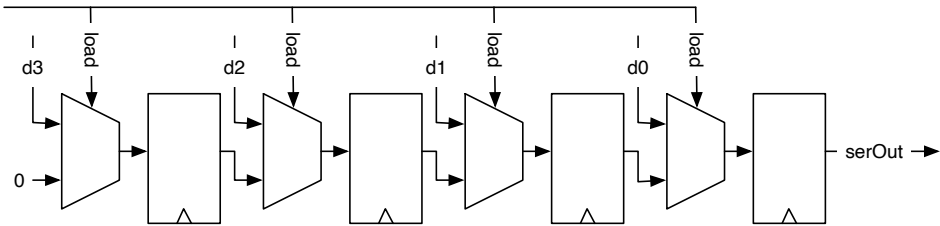


Figure 6.14: A 4-bit shift register with parallel load.

6.3.2 Shift Register with Parallel Load

A parallel-in serial-out configuration of a shift register transforms a parallel input stream of words (bytes) into a serial output stream. This may be used in a serial port (UART) for the transmit function.

Figure 6.14 shows a 4-bit shift register with a parallel load function. The Chisel description of that function is relatively straight forward:

```
val loadReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
when (load) {
  loadReg := d
} otherwise {
  loadReg := Cat(0.U, loadReg(3, 1))
}
val serOut = loadReg(0)
```

Note that we are now shifting to the right, filling in zeros at the MSB.

6.4 Memory

A memory can be built out of a collection of registers, in Chisel a `Reg` of a `Vec`. However, this is expensive in hardware, and larger memory structures are built as [SRAM](#). For an ASIC, a memory compiler constructs memories. FPGAs contain on-chip memory blocks, also called block RAMs. Those on-chip memory blocks can be combined for larger memories. Memories in an FPGA usually have one read and one write port, or two ports that can be switched between read and write at runtime.

FPGAs (and also ASICs) usually support synchronous memories. Synchronous memories have registers on their inputs (read and write address, write data, and write enable). That means the read data is available one clock cycle after setting the address.

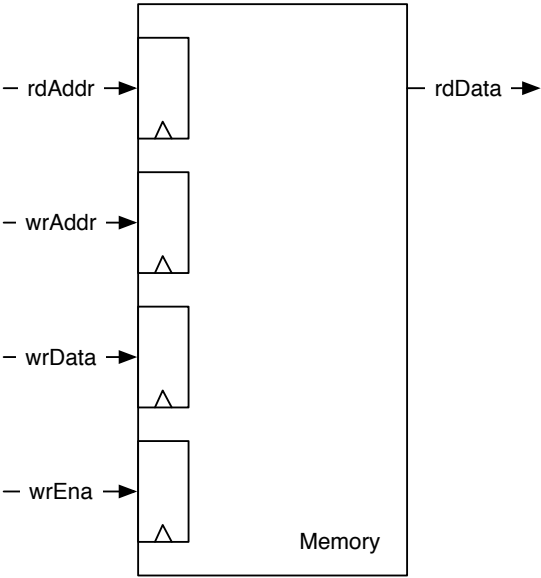


Figure 6.15: A synchronous memory.

```

class Memory() extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val rdAddr = Input(UInt(10.W))
    val rdData = Output(UInt(8.W))
    val wrEna = Input(Bool())
    val wrData = Input(UInt(8.W))
    val wrAddr = Input(UInt(10.W))
  })

  val mem = SyncReadMem(1024, UInt(8.W))

  io.rdData := mem.read(io.rdAddr)

  when(io.wrEna) {
    mem.write(io.wrAddr, io.wrData)
  }
}

```

Listing 6.2: 1 KiB of synchronous memory.

Figure 6.15 shows the schematics of such a synchronous memory. The memory is dual-ported with one read port and one write port. The read port has a single input, the read address (`rdAddr`) and one output, the read data (`rdData`). The write port has three inputs: the address (`wrAddr`), the data to be written (`wrData`), and a write enable (`wrEna`). Note that for all inputs, there is a register within the memory showing the synchronous behavior.

To support on-chip memory, Chisel provides the memory constructor `SyncReadMem`. Listing 6.2 shows a component `Memory` that implements 1 KiB of memory with byte-wide input and output data and a write enable.

An interesting question is which value is returned from a read when in the same clock cycle a new value is written to the same address that is read out. We are interested in the read-during-write behavior of the memory. There are three possibilities: the newly written value, the old value, or undefined (which might be a mix of some bits from the old value and some of the newly written data). Which possibility is available in an FPGA depends on the FPGA type and sometimes can be specified. Chisel documents that the read data is undefined.

If we want to read out the newly written value, we can build a forwarding circuit that detects that the addresses are equal and *forwards* the write data. Figure 6.16 shows

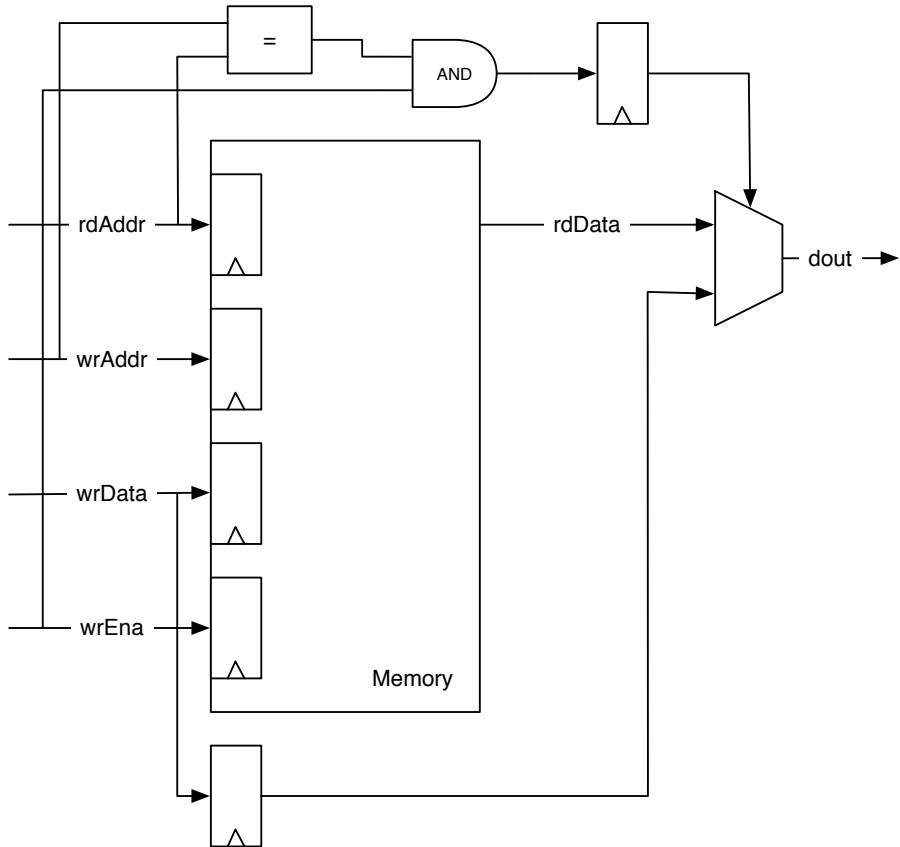


Figure 6.16: A synchronous memory with forwarding for a defined read-during-write behavior.

```
class ForwardingMemory() extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val rdAddr = Input(UInt(10.W))  
    val rdData = Output(UInt(8.W))  
    val wrEna = Input(Bool())  
    val wrData = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val wrAddr = Input(UInt(10.W))  
  })  
  
  val mem = SyncReadMem(1024, UInt(8.W))  
  
  val wrDataReg = RegNext(io.wrData)  
  val doForwardReg = RegNext(io.wrAddr === io.rdAddr &&  
    io.wrEna)  
  
  val memData = mem.read(io.rdAddr)  
  
  when(io.wrEna) {  
    mem.write(io.wrAddr, io.wrData)  
  }  
  
  io.rdData := Mux(doForwardReg, wrDataReg, memData)  
}
```

Listing 6.3: A memory with a forwarding circuit.

the memory with the forwarding circuit. Read and write addresses are compared and gated with the write enable to select between the forwarding path of the write data or the memory read data. The write data is delayed by one clock cycle with a register.

Listing 6.3 shows the Chisel code for a synchronous memory including the forwarding circuit. We need to store the write data into a register (`wrDataReg`) to be available in the next clock cycle in order to fit the synchronous memory that also provides the read value in the next clock cycle. We compare the two input addresses (`wrAddr` and `rdAddr`) and check if `wrEna` is true for the forwarding condition. That condition is also delayed by one clock cycle. A multiplexer selects between the forwarding (write) data or the read data from memory.

Chisel also provides `Mem`, which represents a memory with synchronous write and an asynchronous read. As this memory type is usually not directly available in an FPGA, the synthesise tool will build it out of flip-flops. Therefore, we recommend

using `SyncReadMem`.

6.5 Exercise

Use the 7-segment encoder from the last exercise and add a 4-bit counter as input to switch the display from 0 to F. When you directly connect this counter to the clock of the FPGA board, you will see all 16 numbers overlapped (all 7 segments will light up). Therefore, you need to slow down the counting. Create another counter that can generate a single-cycle *tick* signal every 500 milliseconds. Use that signal as enable signal for the 4-bit counter.

Construct a PWM waveform with a generator function and set the threshold with a function (triangular or a sine function). A triangular function can be created by counting up and down. A sinus function with the use of a lookup table that you can generate with a few lines of Scala code (see Section 10.3). Drive a LED on an FPGA board with that modulated PWM function. What frequency shall your PWM signal be? What frequency is the driver running?

Digital designs are often sketched as a circuit on paper. Not all details need to be shown. We use block diagrams, like in the figures in this book. It is an important skill to be able to fluently translate between a schematic representation of the circuit and a Chisel description. Sketch the block diagram for the following circuits:

```
val dout = WireDefault(0.U)

switch(sel) {
  is(0.U) { dout := 0.U }
  is(1.U) { dout := 11.U }
  is(2.U) { dout := 22.U }
  is(3.U) { dout := 33.U }
  is(4.U) { dout := 44.U }
  is(5.U) { dout := 55.U }
}
```

Here a little bit more complex circuit, containing a register:

```
val regAcc = RegInit(0.U(8.W))

switch(sel) {
  is(0.U) { regAcc := regAcc }
  is(1.U) { regAcc := 0.U }
  is(2.U) { regAcc := regAcc + din }
```



```
is(3.U) { regAcc := regAcc - din}  
}
```


7 Input Processing

Input signals from the external world into our synchronous circuit are usually not synchronous to the clock; they are asynchronous. An input signal may come from a source that does not have a clean transition from 0 to 1 or 1 to 0. An example is a bouncing button or switch. Input signals may be noisy with spikes that could trigger a transition in our synchronous circuit. This chapter describes circuits that deal with such input conditions.

The latter two issues, debouncing switches, and filtering noise, can also be solved with external, analog components. However, it is more (cost-)efficient to deal with those issues in the digital domain.

7.1 Asynchronous Input

Input signals that are not synchronous to the system clock are called asynchronous signals. Those signals may violate the setup and hold time of the input of a flip-flop. This violation may result in [Metastability](#) of the flip-flop. The Metastability may result in an output value between 0 and 1 or it may result in oscillation. However, after some time the flip-flop will stabilize at 0 or 1.

We cannot avoid Metastability, but we can contain its effects. A classic solution is to use two flip-flops at the input. The assumption is: when the first flip-flop becomes metastable, it will resolve to a stable state within the clock period so that the setup and hold times of the second flip-flop will not be violated.

Figure 7.1 shows the border between the synchronous circuit and the external world. The input synchronizer consists of two flip-flops. The Chisel code for the input synchronizer is a one-liner that instantiates two registers.

```
val btnSync = RegNext(RegNext(btn))
```

All asynchronous external signals need an input synchronizer.¹ We also need to synchronize an external reset signal. The reset signal shall pass through the two flip-flops

¹The exception is when the input signal is dependent on a synchronous output signal, and we know the maximum propagation delay. A classic example is the interfacing an asynchronous SRAM to a synchronous circuit, e.g., by a microprocessor.

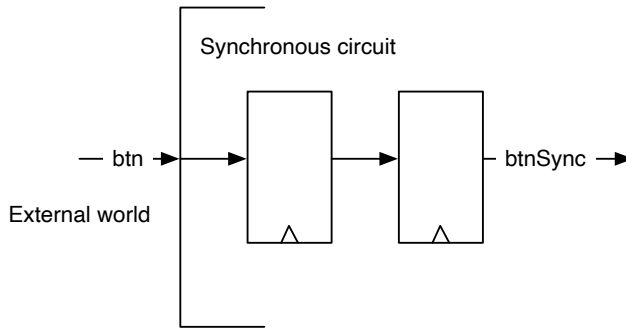


Figure 7.1: Input synchronizer.

before it is used as the reset signal for other flip-flops in the circuit. Concrete the de-assertion of the reset need to be synchronous to the clock.

7.2 Debouncing

Switches and buttons may need some time to transition between on and off. During the transition, the switch may bounce between those two states. If we use such a signal without further processing, we might detect more transition events than we want to. One solution is to use time to filter out this bouncing. Assuming a maximum bouncing time of t_{bounce} we will sample the input signals with a period $T > t_{bounce}$. We will only use the sampled signal further downstream.

When sampling the input with this long period, we know that on a transition from 0 to 1 only one sample may fall into the bouncing region. The sample before will safely read a 0, and the sample after the bouncing region will safely read a 1. The sample in the bouncing region will either be 0 or a 1. However, this does not matter as it then belongs either to the still 0 samples or to the already 1 samples. The critical point is that we have only one transition from 0 to 1.

Figure 7.2 shows the sampling for the debouncing in action. The top signal shows the bouncing input, and the arrows below show the sampling points. The distance between those sampling points needs to be longer than the maximum bouncing time. The first sample safely samples a 0, and the last sample in the figure samples a 1. The middle sample falls into the bouncing time. It may either be 0 or 1. The two possible outcomes are shown as debounce A and debounce B. Both have a single transition from 0 to 1. The only difference between these two outcomes is that the transition in version B is

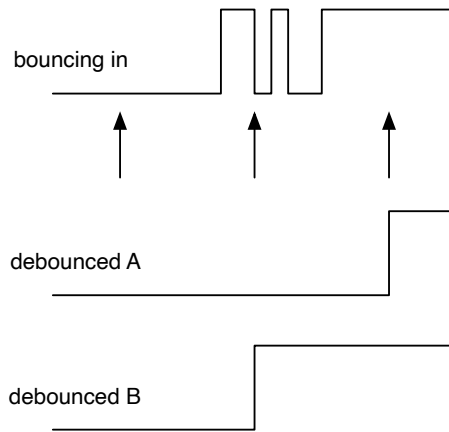


Figure 7.2: Debouncing an input signal.

one sample period later. However, this is usually a non-issue.

The Chisel code for the debouncing is a little bit more evolved than the code for the synchronizer. We generate the sample timing with a counter that delivers a single cycle tick signal, as we have done in Section 6.2.2.

```
val FAC = 1000000000/100

val btnDebReg = Reg(Bool())

val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(32.W))
val tick = cntReg === (FAC-1).U

cntReg := cntReg + 1.U
when (tick) {
  cntReg := 0.U
  btnDebReg := btnSync
}
```

First, we need to decide on the sampling frequency. The above example assumes a 100 MHz clock and results in a sampling frequency of 100 Hz (assuming that the bouncing time is below 10 ms). The maximum counter value is `FAC`, the division factor. We define a register `btnDebReg` for the debounced signal, without a reset value. The register

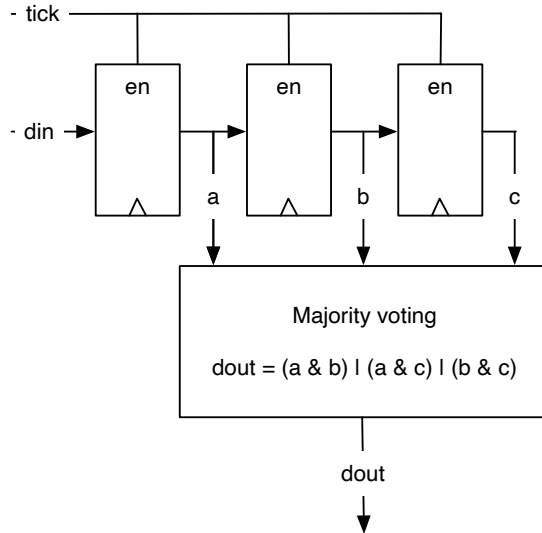


Figure 7.3: Majority voting on the sampled input signal.

`cntReg` serves as counter, and the `tick` signal is true when the counter has reached the maximum value. In that case, the `when` condition is true and (1) the counter is reset to 0 and (2) the debounce register stores the input sample. In our example, the input signal is named `btnSync` as it is the output from the input synchronizer shown in the previous section.

The debouncing circuit comes after the synchronizer circuit. First, we need to synchronize in the asynchronous signal, then we can further process it in the digital domain.

7.3 Filtering of the Input Signal

Sometimes our input signal may be noisy, maybe containing spikes that we might sample unintentionally with the input synchronizer and debouncing unit. One option to filter those input spikes is to use a majority voting circuit. In the simplest case, we take three samples and perform the majority vote. The [majority function](#), which is related to the median function, results in the value of the majority. In our case, where we use sampling for the debouncing, we perform the majority voting on the sampled signal. Majority voting ensures that the signal is stable for longer than the sampling period.

Figure 7.3 shows the circuit of the majority voter. It consists of a 3-bit shift register enabled by the `tick` signal we used for the debouncing sampling. The output of the three registers is feed into the majority voting circuit. The majority voting function filters any signal change shorter than the sample period.

The following Chisel code shows the 3-bit shift register, enabled by the `tick` signal and the voting function, resulting in the signal `btnClean`.

Note, that a majority voting is very seldom needed.

```
val shiftReg = RegInit(0.U(3.W))
when (tick) {
  // shift left and input in LSB
  shiftReg := Cat(shiftReg(1, 0), btnDebReg)
}
// Majority voiting
val btnClean = (shiftReg(2) & shiftReg(1)) | (shiftReg(2) &
  shiftReg(0)) | (shiftReg(1) & shiftReg(0))
```

To use the output of our carefully processed input signal, we first detect the rising edge with a `RegNext` delay element and then compare this signal with the current value of `btnClean` to enable the counter to increment.

```
val risingEdge = btnClean & !RegNext(btnClean)

// Use the rising edge of the debounced and
// filtered button to count up
val reg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))
when (risingEdge) {
  reg := reg + 1.U
}
```

7.4 Combining the Input Processing with Functions

To summarize the input processing, we show some more Chisel code. As the presented circuits might be tiny, but reusable building blocks, we encapsulate them in functions. Section 4.4 showed how we can abstract small building blocks in lightweight Chisel functions instead of full modules. Those Chisel functions create hardware instances, e.g., the function `sync` creates two flip-flops connected to the input and to each other. The function returns the output of the second flip-flop. If useful, those functions can be elevated to some utility class object.

```
def sync(v: Bool) = RegNext(RegNext(v))

def rising(v: Bool) = v & !RegNext(v)

def tickGen(fac: Int) = {
  val reg = RegInit(0.U(log2Up(fac).W))
  val tick = reg === (fac-1).U
  reg := Mux(tick, 0.U, reg + 1.U)
  tick
}

def filter(v: Bool, t: Bool) = {
  val reg = RegInit(0.U(3.W))
  when (t) {
    reg := Cat(reg(1, 0), v)
  }
  (reg(2) & reg(1)) | (reg(2) & reg(0)) | (reg(1) & reg(0))
}

val btnSync = sync(btn)

val tick = tickGen(fac)
val btnDeb = Reg(Bool())
when (tick) {
  btnDeb := btnSync
}

val btnClean = filter(btnDeb, tick)
val risingEdge = rising(btnClean)

// Use the rising edge of the debounced
// and filtered button for the counter
val reg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))
when (risingEdge) {
  reg := reg + 1.U
}
```

Listing 7.1: Summarizing input processing with functions.

7.5 Exercise

Build a counter that is incremented by an input button. Display the counter value in binary with the LEDs on an FPGA board. Build the complete input processing chain with: (1) an input synchronizer, (2) a debouncing circuit, (3) a majority voting circuit to suppress noise, and (4) an edge detection circuit to trigger the increment of the counter.

As there is no guarantee that modern button will always bounce, you can simulate the bouncing and the spikes by pressing the button manually in a fast succession and using a low sample frequency. Select, e.g., one second as sample frequency, i.e., if the input clock runs at 100 MHz, divide it by 100,000,000. Simulate a bouncing button by pressing several times in fast succession before settling to a stable press. Test your circuit without and with the debouncing circuit sampling at 1 Hz. With the majority voting, you need to press between one and two seconds for a reliable increment of the counter. Also, the release of the button is majority voted. Therefore, the circuit only recognizes the release when it is longer than 1–2 seconds.

8 Finite-State Machines

A finite-state machine (FSM) is a basic building block in digital design. An FSM can be described as a set of *states* and conditional (guarded) *state transitions* between states. An FSM has an initial state, which is set on reset. FSMs are also called synchronous sequential circuits.

An implementation of an FSM consists of three parts: (1) a register that holds the current state, (2) combinational logic that computes the next state that depends on the current state and the input, and (3) combinational logic that computes the output of the FSM.

In principle, every digital circuit that contains a register or other memory elements to store state can be described as a single FSM. However, this might not be practical, e.g., try to describe your laptop as a single FSM. In the next chapter, we describe how to build larger systems out of smaller FSMs by combining them into communicating FSMs.

8.1 Basic Finite-State Machine

Figure 8.1 shows the schematics of an FSM. The register contains the current state. The next state logic computes the next state value (*next_state*) from the current state and the input (*in*). On the next clock tick, state becomes *next_state*. The output logic

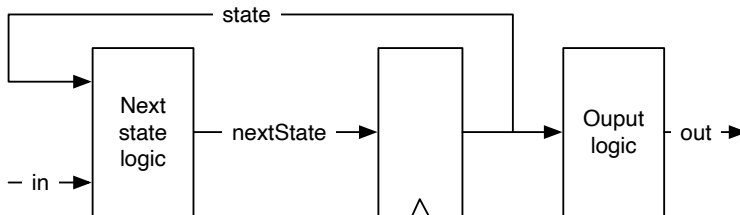


Figure 8.1: A finite state machine (Moore type).

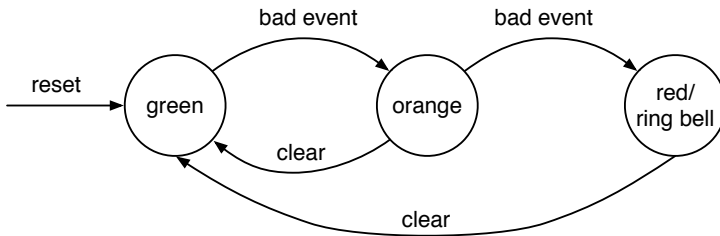


Figure 8.2: The state diagram of an alarm FSM.

computes the output (out). As the output depends on the current state only, this state machine is called a [Moore machine](#).

A [state diagram](#) describes the behavior of such an FSM visually. In a state diagram, individual states are depicted as circles labeled with the state names. State transitions are shown with arrows between states. The guard (or condition) when this transition is taken is drawn as a label for the arrow.

Figure 8.2 shows the state diagram of a simple example FSM. The FSM has three states: *green*, *orange*, and *red*, indicating a level of alarm. The FSM starts at the *green* level. When a *bad event* happens the alarm level is switched to *orange*. On a second bad event, the alarm level is switched to *red*. In that case, we want to ring a bell; *ring bell* is the only output of this FSM. We add the output to the *red* state. The alarm can be reset with a *clear* signal.

Although a state diagram may be visually pleasing and the function of an FSM can be grasped quickly, a state table may be quicker to write down. Table 8.1 shows the state table for our alarm FSM. We list the current state, the input values, the resulting next state, and the output value for the current state. In principle, we would need to specify all possible inputs for all possible states. This table would have $3 \times 4 = 12$ rows. We simplify the table by indicating that the *clear* input is a don't care when a *bad event* happens. That means *bad event* has priority over *clear*. The output column has some repetition. If we have a larger FSM and/or more outputs, we can split the table into two, one for the next state logic and one for the output logic.

Finally, after all the design of our warning level FSM, we shall code it in Chisel. Listing 8.1 shows the Chisel code for the alarm FSM. Note, that we use the Chisel type `Bool` for the inputs and the output of the FSM. To use `Enum` and the `switch` control instruction, we need to import `chisel3.util...`

The complete Chisel code for this simple FSM fits into one page. Let us step through the individual parts. The FSM has two input and a single output signal, captured in a

```
import chisel3._
import chisel3.util._

class SimpleFsm extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle{
    val badEvent = Input(Bool())
    val clear = Input(Bool())
    val ringBell = Output(Bool())
  })

  // The three states
  val green :: orange :: red :: Nil = Enum(3)

  // The state register
  val stateReg = RegInit(green)

  // Next state logic
  switch (stateReg) {
    is (green) {
      when(io.badEvent) {
        stateReg := orange
      }
    }
    is (orange) {
      when(io.badEvent) {
        stateReg := red
      } .elsewhen(io.clear) {
        stateReg := green
      }
    }
    is (red) {
      when (io.clear) {
        stateReg := green
      }
    }
  }

  // Output logic
  io.ringBell := stateReg === red
}
```

Listing 8.1: The Chisel code for the alarm FSM.

Table 8.1: State table for the alarm FSM.

| State | Input | | Next state | Ring bell |
|--------|-----------|-------|------------|-----------|
| | Bad event | Clear | | |
| green | 0 | 0 | green | 0 |
| green | 1 | - | orange | 0 |
| orange | 0 | 0 | orange | 0 |
| orange | 1 | - | red | 0 |
| orange | 0 | 1 | green | 0 |
| red | 0 | 0 | red | 1 |
| red | 0 | 1 | green | 1 |

Chisel Bundle:

```
val io = IO(new Bundle{
  val badEvent = Input(Bool())
  val clear = Input(Bool())
  val ringBell = Output(Bool())
})
```

Quite some work has been spent in optimal state encoding. Two common options are binary or one-hot encoding. However, we leave those low-level decisions to the synthesize tool and aim for readable code.¹ Therefore, we use an enumeration type with symbolic names for the states:

```
val green :: orange :: red :: Nil = Enum(3)
```

The individual state values are described as a list where the individual elements are concatenated with the `::` operator; `Nil` represents the end of the list. An `Enum` instance is *assigned* to the list of states. The register holding the state is defined with the *green* state as the reset value:

```
val stateReg = RegInit(green)
```

The meat of the FSM is in the next state logic. We use a Chisel switch on the state register to cover all states. Within each `is` branch we code the next state logic, which depends on the inputs, by assigning a new value for our state register:

¹In the current version of Chisel the `Enum` type represents states in binary encoding. If we want a different encoding, e.g., one-hot encoding, we can define Chisel constants for the state names.

```
switch (stateReg) {
  is (green) {
    when(io.badEvent) {
      stateReg := orange
    }
  }
  is (orange) {
    when(io.badEvent) {
      stateReg := red
    } .elsewhen(io.clear) {
      stateReg := green
    }
  }
  is (red) {
    when (io.clear) {
      stateReg := green
    }
  }
}
```

Last, but not least, we code our *ringing bell* output to be true when the state is *red*.

```
io.ringBell := stateReg === red
```

Note that we did *not* introduce a `next_state` signal for the register input, as it is common practice in Verilog or VHDL. Registers in Verilog and VHDL are described in a special syntax and cannot be assigned (and reassigned) within a combinational block. Therefore, the additional signal, computed in a combinational block, is introduced and connected to the register input. In Chisel a register is a base type and can be freely used within a combinational block.

8.2 Faster Output with a Mealy FSM

On a Moore FSM, the output depends only on the current state. That means that a change of an input can be seen as a change of the output *earliest* in the next clock cycle. If we want to observe an immediate change, we need a combinational path from the input to the output. Let us consider a minimal example, an edge detection circuit. We have seen this Chisel one-liner before:

```
val risingEdge = din & !RegNext(din)
```

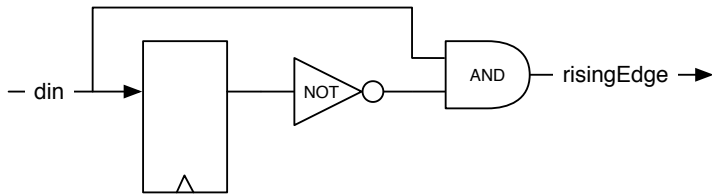


Figure 8.3: A rising edge detector (Mealy type FSM).

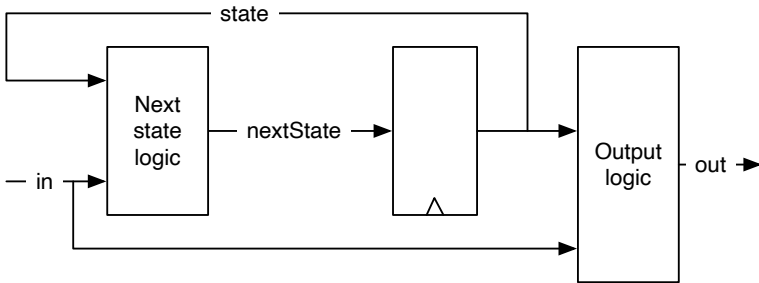


Figure 8.4: A Mealy type finite state machine.

Figure 8.3 shows the schematic of the rising edge detector. The output becomes 1 for one clock cycle when the current input is 1 and the input in the last clock cycle was 0. The state register is just a single D flip-flop where the next state is just the input. We can also consider this as a delay element of one clock cycle. The output logic *compares* the current input with the current state.

When the output depends also on the input, i.e., there is a combinational path between the input of the FSM and the output, this is called a [Mealy machine](#).

Figure 8.4 shows the schematic of a Mealy type FSM. Similar to the Moore FSM, the register contains the current state, and the next state logic computes the next state value (`next_state`) from the current state and the input (`in`). On the next clock tick, `state` becomes `next_state`. The output logic computes the output (`out`) from the current state *and* the input to the FSM.

Figure 8.5 shows the state diagram of the Mealy FSM for the edge detector. As the state register consists just of a single D flip-flop, only two states are possible, which we name zero and one in this example. As the output of a Mealy FSM does not only depend on the state, but also on the input, we cannot describe the output as part of the

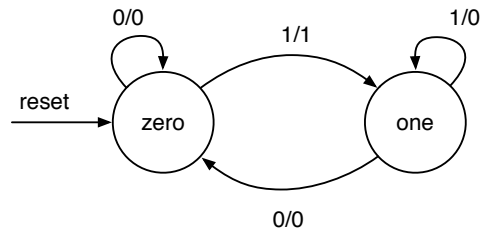


Figure 8.5: The state diagram of the rising edge detector as Mealy FSM.

state circle. Instead, the transitions between the states are labeled with the input value (condition) *and* the output (after the slash). Note also that we draw self transitions, e.g., in state zero when the input is 0 the FSM stays in state zero, and the output is 0. The rising edge FSM generates the 1 output only on the transition from state zero to state one. In state one, which represents that the input is now 1, the output is 0. We only want a single (cycle) puls for each rising edge of the input.

Listing 8.2 shows the Chisel code for the rising edge detection with a Mealy machine. As in the previous example, we use the Chisel type `Bool` for the single-bit input and output. The output logic is now part of the next state logic; on the transition from zero to one, the output is set to `true.B`. Otherwise, the default assignment to the output (`false.B`) counts.

One can ask if a full-blown FSM is the best solution for the edge detection circuit, especially, as we have seen a Chisel one-liner for the same functionality. The hardware consumptions is similar. Both solutions need a single D flip-flop for the state. The combinational logic for the FSM is probably a bit more complicated, as the state change depends on the current state and the input value. For this function, the one-liner is easier to write and easier to read, which is more important. Therefore, the one-liner is the preferred solution.

We have used this example to show one of the smallest possible Mealy FSMs. FSMs shall be used for more complex circuits with three and more states.

8.3 Moore versus Mealy

To show the difference between a Moore and Mealy FSM, we redo the edge detection with a Moore FSM.

Figure 8.6 shows the state diagram for the rising edge detection with a Moore FSM. The first thing to notice is that the Moore FSM needs three states, compared to two

```
import chisel3._
import chisel3.util._

class RisingFsm extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle{
    val din = Input(Bool())
    val risingEdge = Output(Bool())
  })

  // The two states
  val zero :: one :: Nil = Enum(2)

  // The state register
  val stateReg = RegInit(zero)

  // default value for output
  io.risingEdge := false.B

  // Next state and output logic
  switch (stateReg) {
    is(zero) {
      when(io.din) {
        stateReg := one
        io.risingEdge := true.B
      }
    }
    is(one) {
      when(!io.din) {
        stateReg := zero
      }
    }
  }
}
```

Listing 8.2: Rising edge detection with a Mealy FSM.

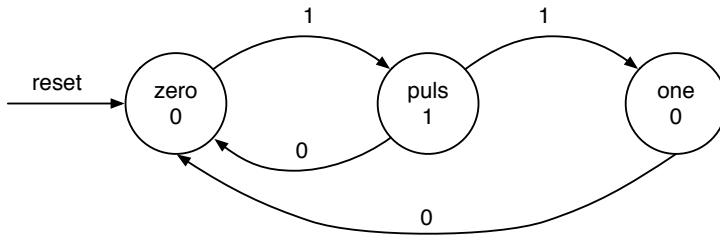


Figure 8.6: The state diagram of the rising edge detector as Moore FSM.

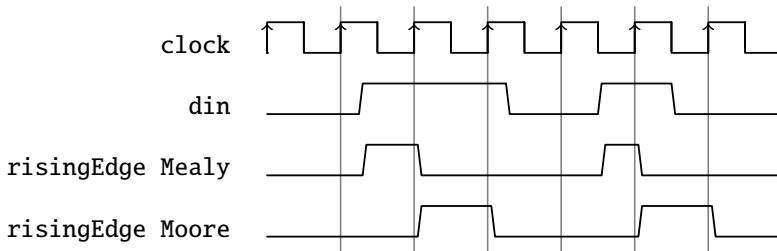


Figure 8.7: Mealy and a Moore FSM waveform for rising edge detection.

states in the Mealy version. The state `puls` is needed to produce the single-cycle `puls`. The FSM stays in state `puls` just one clock cycle and then proceeds either back to the start state `zero` or to the `one` state, waiting for the input to become 0 again. We show the input condition on the state transition arrows and the FSM output within the state representing circles.

Listing 8.3 shows the Moore version of the rising edge detection circuit. It uses double the number of D flip-flops than the Mealy or direct coded version. The resulting next state logic is therefore also larger than the Mealy or direct coded version.

Figure 8.7 shows the waveform of a Mealy and a Moore version of the rising edge detection FSM. We can see that the Mealy output closely follows the input rising edge, while the Moore output rises after the clock tick. We can also see that the Moore output is one clock cycle wide, where the Mealy output is usually less than a clock cycle.

From the above example, one is tempted to find Mealy FSMs the *better* FSMs as they need less state (and therefore logic) and react faster than a Moore FSM. However, the combinational path within a Mealy machine can cause trouble in larger designs. First, with a chain of communicating FSM (see next chapter), this combinational path can become lengthy. Second, if the communicating FSMs build a circle, the result is

```
import chisel3._
import chisel3.util._

class RisingMooreFsm extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle{
    val din = Input(Bool())
    val risingEdge = Output(Bool())
  })

  // The three states
  val zero :: puls :: one :: Nil = Enum(3)

  // The state register
  val stateReg = RegInit(zero)

  // Next state logic
  switch (stateReg) {
    is(zero) {
      when(io.din) {
        stateReg := puls
      }
    }
    is(puls) {
      when(io.din) {
        stateReg := one
      } .otherwise {
        stateReg := zero
      }
    }
    is(one) {
      when(!io.din) {
        stateReg := zero
      }
    }
  }

  // Output logic
  io.risingEdge := stateReg === puls
}
```

Listing 8.3: Rising edge detection with a Moore FSM.

a combinational loop, which is an error in synchronous design. Due to a cut in the combinational path with the state register in a Moore FSM, all the above issues do not exist for communicating Moore FSMs.

In summary, Moore FSMs combine better for communicating state machines; they are *more robust* than Mealy FSMs. Use Mealy FSMs only when the reaction within the same cycle is of utmost importance. Small circuits such as the rising edge detection, which are practically Mealy machines, are fine as well.

8.4 Exercise

In this chapter, you have seen many examples of very small FSMs. Now it is time to write some *real* FSM code. Pick a little bit more complex example and implement the FSM and write a test bench for it.

A classic example for a FSM is a traffic light controller (see [3, Section 14.3]). A traffic light controller has to ensure that on a switch from red to green there is a phase in between where both roads in the intersection have a no-go light (red and orange). To make this example a little bit more interesting, consider a priority road. The minor road has two car detectors (on both entries into the intersection). Switch to green for the minor road only when a car is detected and then switch back to green for the priority road.

9 Communicating State Machines

A problem is often too complex to describe it with a single FSM. In that case, the problem can be divided into two or more smaller and simpler FSMs. Those FSMs then communicate with signals. One FSMs output is another FSMs input, and the FSM watches the output of the other FSM. When we split a large FSM into simpler ones, this is called factoring FSMs. However, often communicating FSMs are directly designed from the specification, as often a single FSM would be infeasible large.

9.1 A Light Flasher Example

To discuss communicating FSMs, we use an example from [3, Chapter 17], the light flasher. The light flasher has one input `start` and one output `light`. The specification of the light flasher is as follows:

- when `start` is high for one clock cycle, the flashing sequence starts;
- the sequence is to flash three times;
- where the `light` goes *on* for six clock cycles, and the `light` goes *off* for four clock cycles between flashes;
- after the sequence, the FSM switches the `light off` and waits for the next `start`.

The FSM for a direct implementation¹ has 27 states: one initial state that is waiting for the input, 3×6 states for the three *on* states and 2×4 states for the *off* states. We do not show the code for this simple-minded implementation of the light flasher.

The problem can be solved more elegantly by factoring this large FSM into two smaller FSMs: the master FSM implements the flashing logic, and the timer FSM implements the waiting. Figure 9.1 shows the composition of the two FSMs.

The timer FSM counts down for 6 or 4 clock cycles to produce the desired timing. The timer specification is as follows:

¹The state diagram is shown in [3, p. 376].

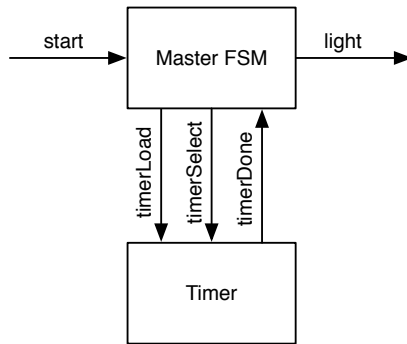


Figure 9.1: The light flasher split into a Master FSM and a Timer FSM.

- when `timerLoad` is asserted, the timer loads a value into the down counter, independent of the state;
- `timerSelect` selects between 5 or 3 for the load;
- `timerDone` is asserted when the counter completed the countdown and remains asserted;
- otherwise, the timer counts down.

Following code shows the timer FSM of the light flasher:

```
val timerReg = RegInit(0.U)
timerDone := timerReg === 0.U

// Timer FSM (down counter)
when(!timerDone) {
  timerReg := timerReg - 1.U
}
when (timerLoad) {
  when (timerSelect) {
    timerReg := 5.U
  } .otherwise {
    timerReg := 3.U
  }
}
```



```
val off :: flash1 :: space1 :: flash2 :: space2 :: flash3 ::
  Nil = Enum(6)
val stateReg = RegInit(off)

val light = WireDefault(false.B) // FSM output

// Timer connection
val timerLoad = WireDefault(false.B) // start timer with a
  load
val timerSelect = WireDefault(true.B) // select 6 or 4 cycles
val timerDone = Wire(Bool())

timerLoad := timerDone

// Master FSM
switch(stateReg) {
  is(off) {
    timerLoad := true.B
    timerSelect := true.B
    when (start) { stateReg := flash1 }
  }
  is (flash1) {
    timerSelect := false.B
    light := true.B
    when (timerDone) { stateReg := space1 }
  }
  is (space1) {
    when (timerDone) { stateReg := flash2 }
  }
  is (flash2) {
    timerSelect := false.B
    light := true.B
    when (timerDone) { stateReg := space2 }
  }
  is (space2) {
    when (timerDone) { stateReg := flash3 }
  }
  is (flash3) {
    timerSelect := false.B
    light := true.B
    when (timerDone) { stateReg := off }
  }
}
```

Listing 9.1: Master FSM of the light flasher.

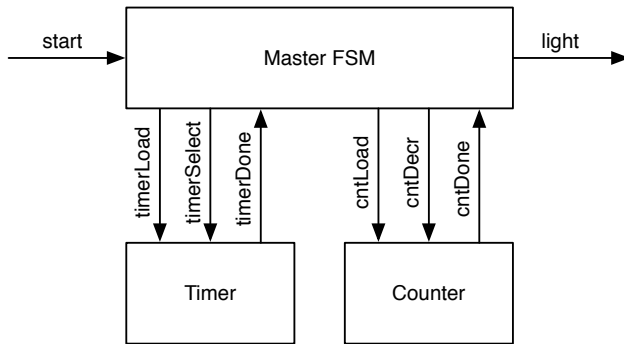


Figure 9.2: The light flasher split into a Master FSM, a Timer FSM, and a Counter FSM.

Listing 9.1 shows the master FSM.

This solution with a master FSM and a timer has still redundancy in the code of the master FSM. States `flash1`, `flash2`, and `flash3` are performing the same function, states `space1` and `space2` as well. We can factor out the number of remaining flashes into a second counter. Then the master FSM is reduced to three states: `off`, `flash`, and `space`.

Figure 9.2 shows the design with a master FSM and two FSMs that count: one FSM to count clock cycles for the interval length of *on* and *off*; the second FSM to count the remaining flashes.

Following code shows the down counter FSM:

```

val cntReg = RegInit(0.U)
cntDone := cntReg === 0.U

// Down counter FSM
when(cntLoad) { cntReg := 2.U }
when(cntDecr) { cntReg := cntReg - 1.U }

```

Note, that the counter is loaded with 2 for 3 flashes, as it counts the *remaining* flashes and is decremented in state `space` when the timer is done. Listing 9.2 shows the master FSM for the double refactored flasher.

Besides having a master FSM that is reduced to just three states, our current solution is also better configurable. No FSM needs to be changed if we want to change the length of the *on* or *off* intervals or the number of flashes.

In this section, we have explored communicating circuits, especially FSM, that only

```
val off :: flash :: space :: Nil = Enum(3)
val stateReg = RegInit(off)

val light = WireDefault(false.B) // FSM output

// Timer connection
val timerLoad = WireDefault(false.B) // start timer with a
    load
val timerSelect = WireDefault(true.B) // select 6 or 4 cycles
val timerDone = Wire(Bool())
// Counter connection
val cntLoad = WireDefault(false.B)
val cntDecr = WireDefault(false.B)
val cntDone = Wire(Bool())

timerLoad := timerDone

switch(stateReg) {
  is(off) {
    timerLoad := true.B
    timerSelect := true.B
    cntLoad := true.B
    when (start) { stateReg := flash }
  }
  is (flash) {
    timerSelect := false.B
    light := true.B
    when (timerDone & !cntDone) { stateReg := space }
    when (timerDone & cntDone) { stateReg := off }
  }
  is (space) {
    cntDecr := timerDone
    when (timerDone) { stateReg := flash }
  }
}
```

Listing 9.2: Master FSM of the double refactored light flasher.

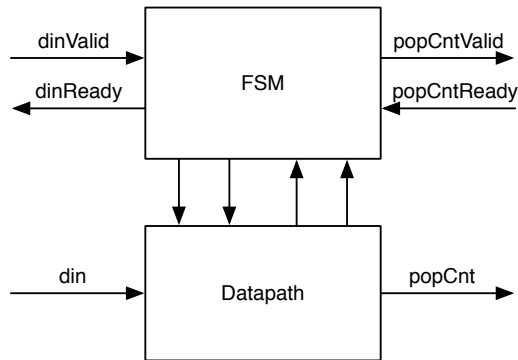


Figure 9.3: A state machine with a datapath.

exchange control signals. However, circuits can also exchange data. For the coordinated exchange of data, we use handshake signals. The next section describes the ready-valid interface for flow control of unidirectional data exchange.

9.2 State Machine with Datapath

One typical example of communicating state machines is a state machine combined with a datapath. This combination is often called a finite state machine with datapath (FSMD). The state machine controls the datapath, and the datapath performs the computation. The FSM input is the input from the environment and the input from the datapath. The data from the environment is fed into the datapath, and the data output comes from the datapath. Figure 9.3 shows an example of the combination of the FSM with the datapath.

9.2.1 Popcount Example

The FSMD shown in Figure 9.3 serves as an example that computes the popcount, also called the [Hamming weight](#). The Hamming weight is the number of symbols different from the zero symbol. For a binary string, this is the number of ‘1’s.

The popcount unit contains the data input `din` and the result output `popCnt`, both connected to the datapath. For the input and the output we use a ready-valid handshake. When data is available, valid is asserted. When a receiver can accept data it asserts ready. When both signals are asserted the transfer takes place. The handshake signals

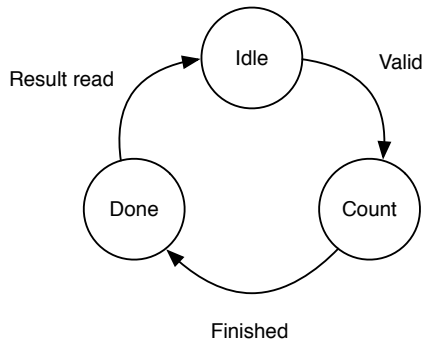


Figure 9.4: State diagram for the popcount FSM.

are connected to the FSM. The FSM is connected with the datapath with control signals towards the datapath and with status signals from the datapath.

As a next step, we can design the FSM, starting with a state diagram, shown in Figure 9.4. We start in state *Idle*, where the FSM waits for input. When data arrives, signaled with a *valid* signal, the FSM advances to state *Load* to load a shift register. The FSM proceeds to the next state *Count*, there the number of ‘1’s is counted sequentially. We use a shift register, an adder, an accumulator register, and a down counter to perform the computation. When the down counter reaches zero, we are finished and the FSM moves to state *Done*. There the FSM signals with a *valid* signal that the popcount value is ready to be consumed. On a *ready* signal from the receiver, the FSM moves back to the *Idle* state, ready to compute the next popcount.

The top level component, shown in Listing 9.3 instantiates the FSM and the datapath components and connects them with bulk connections.

Figure 9.5 shows the datapath for the popcount circuit. The data is loaded into the *shf* register. On the load also the *cnt* register is reset to 0. To count the number of ‘1’s, the *shf* register is shifted right, and the least significant bit is added to *cnt* each clock cycle. A counter, not shown in the figure, counts down until all bits have been shifted through the least significant bit. When the counter reaches zero, the popcount has finished. The FSM switches to state *Done* and signals the result by asserting *popCntReady*. When the result is read, signaled by asserting *popCntValid* the FSW switches back to *Idle*.

On a load signal, the *regData* register is loaded with the input, the *regPopCount* register reset to 0, and the counter register *regCount* set to the number of shifts to be performed.

Otherwise, the *regData* register is shifted to the right, the least significant bit of the

```
class PopCount extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val dinValid = Input(Bool())  
    val dinReady = Output(Bool())  
    val din = Input(UInt(8.W))  
    val popCntValid = Output(Bool())  
    val popCntReady = Input(Bool())  
    val popCnt = Output(UInt(4.W))  
  })  
  
  val fsm = Module(new PopCountFSM)  
  val data = Module(new PopCountDataPath)  
  
  fsm.io.dinValid := io.dinValid  
  io.dinReady := fsm.io.dinReady  
  io.popCntValid := fsm.io.popCntValid  
  fsm.io.popCntReady := io.popCntReady  
  
  data.io.din := io.din  
  io.popCnt := data.io.popCnt  
  data.io.load := fsm.io.load  
  fsm.io.done := data.io.done  
}
```

Listing 9.3: The top level of the popcount circuit.

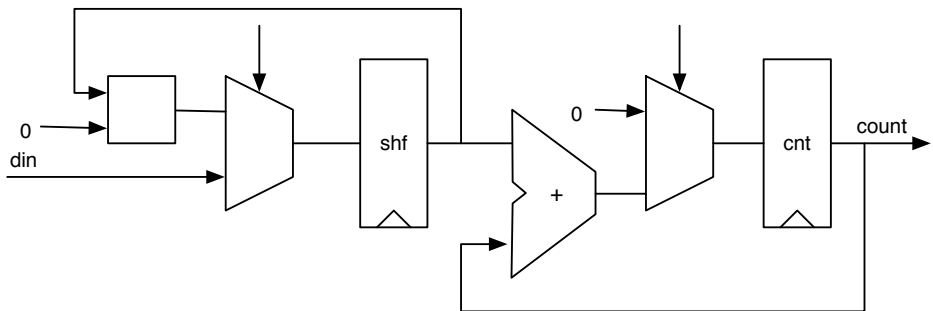


Figure 9.5: Datapath for the popcount circuit.

```
class PopCountDataPath extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val din = Input(UInt(8.W))
    val load = Input(Bool())
    val popCnt = Output(UInt(4.W))
    val done = Output(Bool())
  })

  val dataReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))
  val popCntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))
  val counterReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))

  dataReg := 0.U ## dataReg(7, 1)
  popCntReg := popCntReg + dataReg(0)

  val done = counterReg === 0.U
  when (!done) {
    counterReg := counterReg - 1.U
  }

  when(io.load) {
    dataReg := io.din
    popCntReg := 0.U
    counterReg := 8.U
  }

  // debug output
  printf("%x %d\n", dataReg, popCntReg)

  io.popCnt := popCntReg
  io.done := done
}
```

Listing 9.4: Datapath of the popcount circuit.

```
class PopCountFSM extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val dinValid = Input(Bool())
    val dinReady = Output(Bool())
    val popCntValid = Output(Bool())
    val popCntReady = Input(Bool())
    val load = Output(Bool())
    val done = Input(Bool())
  })

  val idle :: count :: done :: Nil = Enum(3)
  val stateReg = RegInit(idle)

  io.load := false.B

  io.dinReady := false.B
  io.popCntValid := false.B

  switch(stateReg) {
    is(idle) {
      io.dinReady := true.B
      when(io.dinValid) {
        io.load := true.B
        stateReg := count
      }
    }
    is(count) {
      when(io.done) {
        stateReg := done
      }
    }
    is(done) {
      io.popCntValid := true.B
      when(io.popCntReady) {
        stateReg := idle
      }
    }
  }
}
```

Listing 9.5: The FSM of the popcount circuit.

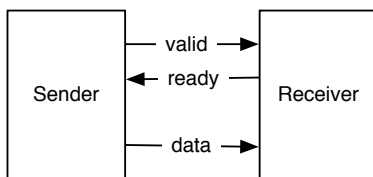


Figure 9.6: The ready-valid flow control.

regData register added to the regPopCount register, and the counter decremented until it is 0. When the counter is 0, the output contains the popcount. Listing 9.4 shows the Chisel code for the datapath of the popcount circuit.

The FSM starts in state idle. On a valid signal for the input data (dinValid) it switches to the count state and waits till the datapath has finished counting. When the popcount is valid, the FSM switches to state done and waits till the popcount is read (signaled by popCntReady). Listing 9.5 shows the code of the FSM.

9.3 Ready-Valid Interface

Communication of subsystems can be generalized to the movement of data and handshaking for flow control. In the popcount example, we have seen a handshaking interface for the input and the output data using valid and ready signals.

The ready-valid interface [3, p. 480] is a simple flow control interface consisting of data and a valid signal at the sender side (producer) and a ready signal at the receiver side (consumer). Figure 9.6 shows the ready-valid connection. The sender asserts valid when data is available, and the receiver asserts ready when it is ready to receive one word of data. The transmission of the data happens when both signals, valid and ready, are asserted. If either of the two signals is not asserted, no transfer takes place.

Figure 9.7 shows a timing diagram of the ready-valid transaction where the receiver signals ready (from clock cycle 1 on) before the sender has data. The data transfer happens in clock cycle 3. From clock cycle 4 on neither the sender has data nor the receiver is ready for the next transfer. When the receiver can receive data in every clock cycle, it is called an “always ready” interface and ready can be hardcoded to true.

Figure 9.8 shows a timing diagram of the ready-valid transaction where the sender signals valid (from clock cycle 1 on) before the receiver is ready. The data transfer happens in clock cycle 3. From clock cycle 4 on neither the sender has data nor the receiver is ready for the next transfer. Similar to the “always ready” interface we can envision an always valid interface. However, in that case the data will probably not

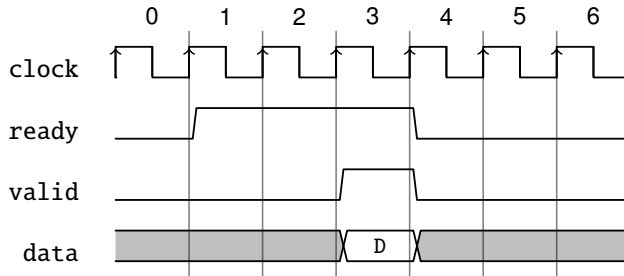


Figure 9.7: Data transfer with a ready-valid interface, early ready

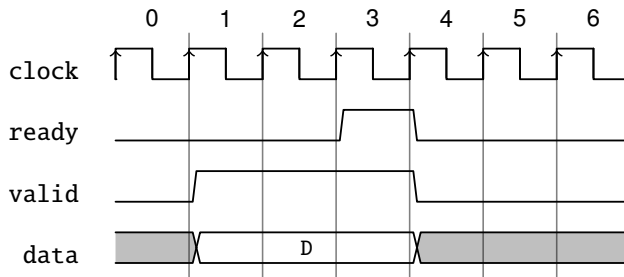


Figure 9.8: Data transfer with a ready-valid interface, late ready

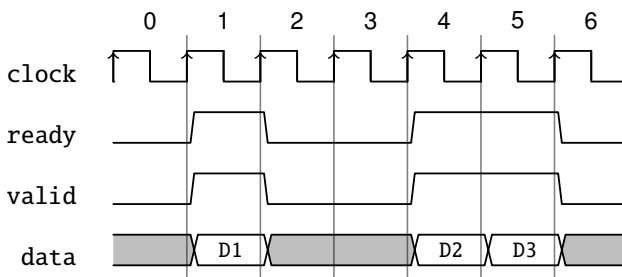


Figure 9.9: Single cycle ready/valid and back-to-back transfers

change on signaling ready and we would simply drop the handshake signals.

Figure 9.9 shows further variations of the ready-valid interface. In clock cycle 1 both signals (ready and valid) become asserted just for a single clock cycle and the data transfer of D1 happens. Data can be transferred back-to-back (in every clock cycle) as shown in clock cycles 4 and 5 with the transfer of D2 and D3.

To make this interface composable neither ready nor valid is allowed to depend combinational on the other signal. As this interface is so common, Chisel defines the `DecoupledIO` bundle, similar to the following:

```
class DecoupledIO[T <: Data](gen: T) extends Bundle {
  val ready = Input(Bool())
  val valid = Output(Bool())
  val bits  = Output(gen)
}
```

The `DecoupledIO` bundle is parameterized with the type for the data. The interface defined by Chisel uses the field `bits` for the data.

One question remains if the ready or valid may be de-asserted after being active and no data transfer has happened. For example a receiver might be ready for some time and not receiving data, but due to some other events may become not ready. The same can be envisioned with the sender, having data valid only some clock cycles and becoming non-valid without a data transfer. If this behavior is allowed or not is not part of the ready-valid interface, but needs to be defined by the concrete usage of the interface.

Chisel places no requirements on the signaling of ready and valid when using the class `DecoupledIO`. However, the class `IrrevocableIO` places following restrictions on the sender:

A concrete subclass of `ReadyValidIO` that promises to not change the value of bits after a cycle where `valid` is high and `ready` is low. Additionally, once `valid` is raised it will never be lowered until after `ready` has also been raised.

Note that this is a convention that cannot be enforced by using the class `IrrevocableIO`.

AXI uses one ready-valid interface for each of the following parts of the bus: read address, read data, write address, and write data. AXI restricts the interface that once `ready` or `valid` is asserted it is not allowed to get de-asserted until the data transfer happened.

10 Hardware Generators

The strength of Chisel is that it allows us to write so-called hardware generators. With older hardware description languages, such as VHDL and Verilog, we usually use another language, e.g., Java or Python, to generate hardware. The author has often written small Java programs to generate VHDL tables. In Chisel, the full power of Scala (and Java libraries) is available at hardware construction. Therefore, we can write our hardware generators in the same language and execute them as part of the Chisel circuit generation.

10.1 A Little Bit of Scala

This subsection gives a very brief introduction into Scala. It should be enough to write hardware generators for Chisel. For an in-depth introduction into Scala I recommend the textbook by Odersky et al. [12].

Scala has two types of variables: `vals` and `vars`. A `val` gives an expression a name and cannot be reassigned a value. This following snippet shows the definition of an integer value called `zero`. If we try to reassign a value to `zero`, we get a compile error.

```
// A value is a constant
val zero = 0
// No new assignment is possible
// The following will not compile
zero = 3
```

In Chisel we use `vals` only to name hardware components. Note that the `:=` operator is a Chisel operator and not a Scala operator.

Scala also provides the more classic version of a variable as `var`. Following code defines an integer variable and reassigns it a new value:

```
// We can change the value of a var variable
var x = 2
x = 3
```

We will need Scala vars to write hardware *generators*, but never need it to use it to name a hardware *component*.

You may have wondered what type those variables have. As we assigned an integer constant in the above example, the type of the variable is *inferred*; it is a Scala Int type. In most cases the Scala compiler is able to infer the type. However, if we are in the mood of being more explicit, we can explicitly state the type as follows:

```
val number: Int = 42
```

Simple loops are written as follows:

```
// Loops from 0 to 9
// Automatically creates loop value i
for (i <- 0 until 10) {
  println(i)
}
```

We use a loop for circuit generators. The following loop connects individual bits of a shift register.

```
val shiftReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))

shiftReg(0) := inVal

for (i <- 1 until 8) {
  shiftReg(i) := shiftReg(i-1)
}
```

Conditions are expressed with `if` and `else`. Note that this condition is evaluated at Scala runtime during circuit generation. This construct does *not* create a multiplexer.

simple simpel

```
for (i <- 0 until 10) {
  if (i%2 == 0) {
    println(i + " is even")
  } else {
    println(i + " is odd")
  }
}
```

10.2 Configure with Parameters

Chisel components and functions can be configured with parameters. Parameters can be as simple as an integer constant, but can also be a Chisel hardware type.

10.2.1 Simple Parameters

The basic way to parameterize a circuit is to define a bit width as a parameter. Parameters can be passed as arguments to the constructor of the Chisel module. Following example is a toy example of a module that implements an adder with a configurable bit width. The bit width `n` is a parameter (of Scala type `Int`) of the component passed into the constructor that can be used in the IO bundle.

```
class ParamAdder(n: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle{
    val a = Input(UInt(n.W))
    val b = Input(UInt(n.W))
    val c = Output(UInt(n.W))
  })

  io.c := io.a + io.b
}
```

Parameterized versions of the adder can be created as follows:

```
val add8 = Module(new ParamAdder(8))
val add16 = Module(new ParamAdder(16))
```

10.2.2 Functions with Type Parameters

Having the bit width as a configuration parameter is just the starting point for hardware generators. A very flexible configuration is the usage of types. That feature allows for Chisel to provide a multiplexer (`Mux`) that can accept any types for the multiplexing. To show how to use types for the configuration, we build a multiplexer that accepts arbitrary types. Following function defines the multiplexer:

```
def myMux[T <: Data](sel: Bool, tPath: T, fPath: T): T = {
  val ret = WireDefault(fPath)
  when (sel) {
    ret := tPath
  }
```

```
    }  
    ret  
}
```

Chisel allows parameterizing functions with types, in our case with Chisel types. The expression in the square brackets [T <: Data] defines a type parameter T set is Data or a subclass of Data. Data is the root of the Chisel type system.

Our multiplexer function has three parameters: the boolean condition, one parameter for the true path, and one parameter for the false path. Both path parameters are of type T, an information that is provided at function call. The function itself is straight forward: we define a wire with the default value of fPath and change the value if the condition is true to the tPath. This condition is a classic multiplexer function. At the end of the function, we return the multiplexer hardware.

We can use our multiplexer function with simple types such as UInt:

```
val resA = myMux(selA, 5.U, 10.U)
```

The types of the two multiplexer paths need to be the same. Following wrong usage of the multiplexer results in a runtime error:

```
val resErr = myMux(selA, 5.U, 10.S)
```

We define our type as a Bundle with two fields:

```
class ComplexIO extends Bundle {  
  val d = UInt(10.W)  
  val b = Bool()  
}
```

We can define Bundle constants by first creating a Wire and then setting the subfields. Then we can use our parameterized multiplexer with this complex type.

```
val tVal = Wire(new ComplexIO)  
tVal.b := true.B  
tVal.d := 42.U  
val fVal = Wire(new ComplexIO)  
fVal.b := false.B  
fVal.d := 13.U  
  
// The multiplexer with a complex type  
val resB = myMux(selB, tVal, fVal)
```

In our initial design of the function, we used WireDefault to create a wire with the

type `T` with a default value. If we need to create a wire just of the Chisel type without using a default value, we can use `fPath.cloneType` to get the Chisel type. Following function shows the alternative way to code the multiplexer.

```
def myMuxAlt[T <: Data](sel: Bool, tPath: T, fPath: T): T = {
    val ret = Wire(fPath.cloneType)
    ret := fPath
    when (sel) {
        ret := tPath
    }
    ret
}
```

10.2.3 Modules with Type Parameters

We can also parameterize modules with Chisel types. Let us assume we want to design a network-on-chip to move data between different processing cores. However, we do not want to hardcode the data format in the router interface; we want to *parameterize* it. Similar to the type parameter for a function, we add a type parameter `T` to the Module constructor. Furthermore, we need to have one constructor parameter of that type. Additionally, in this example, we also make the number of router ports configurable.

```
class NocRouter[T <: Data](dt: T, n: Int) extends Module {
    val io = IO(new Bundle {
        val inPort = Input(Vec(n, dt))
        val address = Input(Vec(n, UInt(8.W)))
        val outPort = Output(Vec(n, dt))
    })

    // Route the payload according to the address
    // ...
}
```

To use our router, we first need to define the data type we want to route, e.g., as a Chisel Bundle:

```
class Payload extends Bundle {
    val data = UInt(16.W)
    val flag = Bool()
}
```

We create a router by passing an instance of the user-defined Bundle and the number of ports to the constructor of the router:

```
val router = Module(new NocRouter(new Payload, 2))
```

10.2.4 Parameterized Bundles

In the router example, we used two different vectors of fields for the input of the router: one for the address and one for the data, which was parameterized. A more elegant solution would be to have a Bundle that itself is parametrized. Something like:

```
class Port[T <: Data](dt: T) extends Bundle {  
  val address = UInt(8.W)  
  val data = dt.cloneType  
}
```

The Bundle has a parameter of type T, which is a subtype of Chisel's Data type. Within the bundle, we define a field data by invoking cloneType on the parameter. However, when we use a constructor parameter, this parameter becomes a public field of the class. When Chisel needs to clone the type of the Bundle, e.g., when it is used in a Vec, this public field is in the way. A solution (workaround) to this issue is to make the parameter field private:

```
class Port[T <: Data](private val dt: T) extends Bundle {  
  val address = UInt(8.W)  
  val data = dt.cloneType  
}
```

With that new Bundle, we can define our router ports

```
class NocRouter2[T <: Data](dt: T, n: Int) extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val inPort = Input(Vec(n, dt))  
    val outPort = Output(Vec(n, dt))  
  })  
  
  // Route the payload according to the address  
  // ...  
}
```

and instantiate that router with a Port that takes a Payload as a parameter:

```
val router = Module(new NocRouter2(new Port(new Payload), 2))
```

10.3 Generate Combinational Logic

In Chisel, we can easily generate logic by creating a logic table with a Chisel Vec from a Scala Array. We might have data in a file, that we can read in during hardware generation time for the logic table. Listing 10.1 shows how to use the Scala Source class from the Scala standard library to read the file “data.txt”, which contains integer constants in a textual representation.

A few words on the maybe a bit intimidating expression:

```
val table = VecInit(array.map(_ .U(8.W)))
```

A Scala Array can be implicitly converted to a sequence (Seq), which supports the mapping function map. map invokes a function on each element of the sequence and returns a sequence of the return value of the function. Our function `_.U(8.W)` represents each Int value from the Scala array as a `_` and performs the conversion from a Scala Int value to a Chisel UInt literal, with a size of 8-bits. The Chisel object `VecInit` creates a Chisel Vec from a sequence Seq of Chisel types.

We can use the full power of Scala to generate our logic (tables). E.g., generate a table of fixpoint constants to represent a trigonometric function, compute constants for digital filters, or writing a small assembler in Scala to generate code for a microprocessor written in Chisel. All those functions are in the same code base (same language) and can be executed during hardware generation.

A classic example is the conversion of a binary number into a [binary-coded decimal](#) (BCD) representation. BCD is used to represent a number in a decimal format using 4 bits for each decimal digit. For example, decimal 13 is in binary 1101 and BCD encoded as 1 and 3 in binary: 00010011. BCD allows displaying numbers in decimal, a more user-friendly number representation than hexadecimal.

When using a classic hardware description language, such as Verilog or VHDL, we would use another script or programming language to generate such a table. We can write a Java program that computes the table to convert binary to BCD. That Java program prints out VHDL code that can be included in a project. The Java program is about 100 lines of code; most of the code generating VHDL strings. The key part of the conversion is just two lines.

With Chisel, we can compute this table directly as part of the hardware generation. Listing 10.2 shows the table generation for the binary to BCD conversion.

```
import chisel3._
import scala.io.Source

class FileReader extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val address = Input(UInt(8.W))
    val data = Output(UInt(8.W))
  })

  val array = new Array[Int](256)
  var idx = 0

  // read the data into a Scala array
  val source = Source.fromFile("data.txt")
  for (line <- source.getLines()) {
    array(idx) = line.toInt
    idx += 1
  }

  // convert the Scala integer array
  // into a vector of Chisel UInt
  val table = VecInit(array.map(_ .U(8.W)))

  // use the table
  io.data := table(io.address)
}
```

Listing 10.1: Reading a text file to generate a logic table.

```
import chisel3._

class BcdTable extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val address = Input(UInt(8.W))
    val data = Output(UInt(8.W))
  })

  val table = Wire(Vec(100, UInt(8.W)))

  // Convert binary to BCD
  for (i <- 0 until 100) {
    table(i) := (((i/10)<<4) + i%10).U
  }

  io.data := table(io.address)
}
```

Listing 10.2: Binary to binary-coded decimal conversion.

10.4 Use Inheritance

Chisel is an object-oriented language. A hardware component, the Chisel Module is a Scala class. Therefore, we can use inheritance to factor a common behavior out into a parent class. We explore how to use inheritance with an example.

In Section 6.2 we have explored different forms of counters, which may be used for a low-frequency tick generation. Let us assume we want to explore those different versions, e.g., to compare their resource requirement. We start with an abstract class to define the ticking interface:

```
abstract class Ticker(n: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle{
    val tick = Output(Bool())
  })
}
```

Listing 10.3 shows a first implementation of that abstract class with a counter, counting up, for the tick generation.

We can test all different versions of our *ticker* logic with a single test bench. We *just*

```
class UpTicker(n: Int) extends Ticker(n) {  
  
  val N = (n-1).U  
  
  val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))  
  
  cntReg := cntReg + 1.U  
  when(cntReg === N) {  
    cntReg := 0.U  
  }  
  
  io.tick := cntReg === N  
}
```

Listing 10.3: Tick generation with a counter.

need to define the test bench to accept subtypes of `Ticker`. Listing 10.4 shows the Chisel code for the tester. The `TickerTester` has several parameters: (1) the type parameter `[T <: Ticker]` to accept a `Ticker` or any class that inherits from `Ticker`, (2) the design under test, being of type `T` or a subtype thereof, and (3) the number of clock cycles we expect for each tick. The tester waits for the first occurrence of a tick (the start might be different for different implementations) and then checks that tick repeats every n clock cycles.

With a first, easy implementation of the ticker, we can test the tester itself, probably with some `println` debugging. When we are confident that the simple ticker and the tester are correct, we can proceed and explore two more versions of the ticker. Listing 10.5 shows the tick generation with a counter counting down to 0. Listing 10.6 shows the nerd version of counting down to -1 to use less hardware by avoiding the comparator.

We can test all three versions of the ticker by using `ScalaTest` specifications, creating instances of the different versions of the ticker and passing them to the generic test bench. Listing 10.7 shows the specification. We run only the ticker tests with:

```
sbt "testOnly TickerSpec"
```

```
import chisel3.iotesters.PeekPokeTester
import org.scalatest._

class TickerTester[T <: Ticker](dut: T, n: Int) extends
  PeekPokeTester(dut: T) {

  // -1 is the notion that we have not yet seen the first tick
  var count = -1
  for (i <- 0 to n * 3) {
    if (count > 0) {
      expect(dut.io.tick, 0)
    }
    if (count == 0) {
      expect(dut.io.tick, 1)
    }
    val t = peek(dut.io.tick)
    // On a tick we reset the tester counter to N-1,
    // otherwise we decrement the tester counter
    if (t == 1) {
      count = n-1
    } else {
      count -= 1
    }

    step(1)
  }
}
```

Listing 10.4: A tester for different versions of the ticker.

```
class DownTicker(n: Int) extends Ticker(n) {  
  
    val N = (n-1).U  
  
    val cntReg = RegInit(N)  
  
    cntReg := cntReg - 1.U  
    when(cntReg === 0.U) {  
        cntReg := N  
    }  
  
    io.tick := cntReg === N  
}
```

Listing 10.5: Tick generation with a down counter.

```
class NerdTicker(n: Int) extends Ticker(n) {  
  
    val N = n  
  
    val MAX = (N - 2).S(8.W)  
    val cntReg = RegInit(MAX)  
    io.tick := false.B  
  
    cntReg := cntReg - 1.S  
    when(cntReg(7)) {  
        cntReg := MAX  
        io.tick := true.B  
    }  
}
```

Listing 10.6: Tick generation by counting down to -1.

```
class TickerSpec extends FlatSpec with Matchers {

  "UpTicker 5" should "pass" in {
    chisel3.iotesters.Driver(() => new UpTicker(5)) { c =>
      new TickerTester(c, 5)
    } should be (true)
  }

  "DownTicker 7" should "pass" in {
    chisel3.iotesters.Driver(() => new DownTicker(7)) { c =>
      new TickerTester(c, 7)
    } should be (true)
  }

  "NerdTicker 11" should "pass" in {
    chisel3.iotesters.Driver(() => new NerdTicker(11)) { c =>
      new TickerTester(c, 11)
    } should be (true)
  }
}
```

Listing 10.7: ScalaTest specifications for the ticker tests.

10.5 Hardware Generation with Functional Programming

Scala supports functional programming, so does Chisel then. We can use functions to represent hardware and combine those hardware components with functional programming (by using a so-called “higher-order function”). Let us start with a simple example, the sum of a vector:

```
def add(a: UInt, b: UInt) = a + b
```

```
val sum = vec.reduce(add)
```

First we define the hardware for the adder in function `add`. The vector (Chisel type `Vec`) is located in `vec`. The Scala method `reduce()` combines all elements of a collection with a binary operation, producing a single value. The `reduce()` method reduces the sequence starting from the left. It takes the first two elements and performs the operation. The result is then combined with the next element, until a single result is left.

The function to combine to elements is provided as parameter to `reduce`, in our case `add`, which returns an adder. The resulting hardware is a chain of adders computing the sum of the elements of vector `vec`.

Instead of defining the (simple) `add` function, we can provide the addition as anonymous function and use the Scala wildcard “`_`” to represent the two operands.

```
val sum = vec.reduce(_ + _)
```

With this one liner we have generated the chain of adders. For the sum function a chain is not the ideal configuration, a tree will have a shorter combinational delay. If we do not trust the synthesizer tool to rearrange our adder chain, we can use Chisel’s `reduceTree` method to generate a tree of adders:

```
val sum = vec.reduceTree(_ + _)
```

As a more elaborate example we build a circuit to find the minimum value in `vec`. To express this circuit we use an anonymous function, called *function literal* in Scala. The syntax for a function literal is parameters in parentheses, followed by a `=>`, followed by the function body:

```
(param) => function body
```

The function literal for the minimum function uses two parameters `x` and `y` and returns a multiplexer (`Mux`) that compares the two parameters and returns the smaller value.

```
val min = vec.reduceTree((x, y) => Mux(x < y, x, y))
```

Let us extend this circuit to return not only the minimal value from the `vec`, but also the position (index) in the `vec`. To return two values we define the `Bundle Two` to hold the value and the index. We declare the `vecTwo Vec` that can hold these bundles and connect them in a loop to the original input and the index within the `Vec`.

As before we use an function literal in the `reduceTree` method of the `vecTwo`, comparing the value field within the bundle and returning the complete bundle from the multiplexer. Value `res` points to the bundle containing the minimum value and the position.

```
class Two extends Bundle {
  val v = UInt(W)
  val idx = UInt(8.W)
}

val vecTwo = Wire(Vec(n, new Two()))
for (i <- 0 until n) {
  vecTwo(i).v := vec(i)
  vecTwo(i).idx := i.U
}

val res = vecTwo.reduceTree((x, y) => Mux(x.v < y.v, x, y))
```

As a final variation we using more Scala features to avoid creating the bundle to return the value and index. Scala has the notion of a [tuple](#) that are immutable sequence of values of different types. The following code shows the application of a chain of functions to the original sequence. Chaining functions is a typical pattern in functional programming. This pattern can also be seen as a pipeline of operations.

The first function (`zipWithIndex`) transforms the original sequence to a sequence of tuples, where the second element is the index value. In general a `zip` function merges two sequences (zips them) into a single one containing the two elements as tuples. The next function maps our tuple of a Chisel `UInt` and a Scala `Int` to two Chisel `UInts`. The `reduce` function provides the generation of the minimum finding. We compare the first element of the tuple in two multiplexers and returning a tuple containing the minimum value and the position as Chisel `UInt` types.

```
val resFun = vec.zipWithIndex
  .map ((x) => (x._1, x._2.U))
  .reduce((x, y) => (Mux(x._1 < y._1, x._1, y._1), Mux(x._1 <
    y._1, x._2, y._2)))
```

Note that the whole functional expression uses a Scala `Vector` to hold intermediate re-

sults, but returns hardware (connected multiplexers) consisting of Chisel types only. As we use a Scala Vector here, we cannot use `reduceTree`, which is available on Chisel's `Vec` only.

```
val scalaVector = vec.zipWithIndex
  .map((x) => MixedVecInit(x._1, x._2.U(8.W)))
val resFun2 = VecInit(scalaVector)
  .reduceTree((x, y) => Mux(x(0) < y(0), x, y))
```

11 Example Designs

In this section, we explore some small size digital designs, such as a FIFO buffer, which are used as building blocks for a larger design. As another example, we design a serial interface (also called UART), which itself may use the FIFO buffer.

11.1 FIFO Buffer

We can decouple a write (sender) and a reader (receiver) by a buffer between the writer and reader. A common buffer is a first-in, first-out (FIFO) buffer. Figure 11.1 shows a writer, the FIFO, and a reader. Data is put into the FIFO by the writer on `din` with an active `write` signal. Data is read from the the FIFO by the reader on `dout` with an active `read` signal.

A FIFO is initially empty, signaled by the `empty` signal. Reading from an empty FIFO is usually undefined. When data is written and never read a FIFO will become `full`. Writing to a full FIFO is usually ignored and the data are lost. In other words, the signals `empty` and `full` serve as handshake signals

Several different implementations of a FIFO are possible: E.g., using on-chip memory and read and write pointers or simply a chain of registers with a tiny state machine. For small buffers (up to tens of elements) a FIFO organized with individual registers connected into a chain of buffers is a simple implementation with a low resource requirement. The code of the bubble FIFO is available in the [chisel-examples](#) repository.¹

¹For completeness, the Chisel book repository contains a copy of the FIFO code as well.

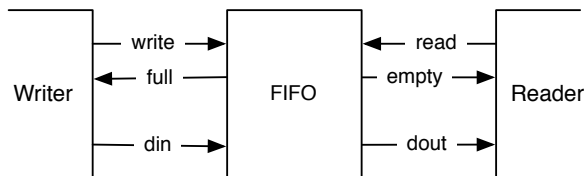


Figure 11.1: A writer, a FIFO buffer, and a reader.

We start by defining the IO signals for the writer and the reader side. The size of the data is configurable with `size`. The write data are `din` and a write is signaled by `write`. The signal `full` performs the [flow control](#) at the writer side.

```
class WriterIO(size: Int) extends Bundle {  
  val write = Input(Bool())  
  val full = Output(Bool())  
  val din = Input(UInt(size.W))  
}
```

The reader side provides data with `dout` and the read is initiated with `read`. The `empty` signal is responsible for the flow control at the reader side.

```
class ReaderIO(size: Int) extends Bundle {  
  val read = Input(Bool())  
  val empty = Output(Bool())  
  val dout = Output(UInt(size.W))  
}
```

[Listing 11.1](#) shows a single buffer. The buffer has a enqueueing port `enq` of type `WriterIO` and a dequeueing port `deq` of type `ReaderIO`. The state elements of the buffer is one register that holds the data (`dataReg`) and one state register for the simple FSM (`stateReg`). The FSM has only two states: either the buffer is `empty` or `full`. If the buffer is `empty`, a write will register the input data and change to the `full` state. If the buffer is `full`, a read will consume the data and change to the `empty` state. The IO ports `full` and `empty` represent the buffer state for the writer and the reader.

[Listing 11.2](#) shows the complete FIFO. The complete FIFO has the same IO interface as the individual FIFO buffers. `BubbleFifo` has as parameters the size of the data word and depth for the number of buffer stages. We can build a depth stages bubble FIFO out of depth `FifoRegisters`. We crate the stages by filling them into a Scala Array. The Scala array has no hardware meaning, it *just* provides us with a container to have references to the created buffers. In a Scala for loop we connect the individual buffers. The first buffer's enqueueing side is connected to the enqueueing IO of the complete FIFO and the last buffer's dequeueing side to the dequeueing side of the complete FIFO.

The presented idea of connecting individual buffers to implement a FIFO queue is called a bubble FIFO, as the data bubbles through the queue. This is simple, and a good solution when the data rate is considerable slower than the clock rate, e.g., as a decouple buffer for a serial port, which is presented in the next section.

However, when the data rate approaches the clock frequency, the bubble FIFO has two limitations: (1) As each buffer's state has to toggle between *empty* and *full*, which

```
class FifoRegister(size: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val enq = new WriterIO(size)
    val deq = new ReaderIO(size)
  })

  val empty :: full :: Nil = Enum(2)
  val stateReg = RegInit(empty)
  val dataReg = RegInit(0.U(size.W))

  when(stateReg === empty) {
    when(io.enq.write) {
      stateReg := full
      dataReg := io.enq.din
    }
  }.elsewhen(stateReg === full) {
    when(io.deq.read) {
      stateReg := empty
      dataReg := 0.U // just to better see empty slots in the
                     waveform
    }
  }.otherwise {
    // There should not be an otherwise state
  }

  io.enq.full := (stateReg === full)
  io.deq.empty := (stateReg === empty)
  io.deq.dout := dataReg
}
```

Listing 11.1: A single stage of the bubble FIFO.

```
class BubbleFifo(size: Int, depth: Int) extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val enq = new WriterIO(size)  
    val deq = new ReaderIO(size)  
  })  
  
  val buffers = Array.fill(depth) { Module(new  
    FifoRegister(size)) }  
  for (i <- 0 until depth - 1) {  
    buffers(i + 1).io.enq.din := buffers(i).io.deq.dout  
    buffers(i + 1).io.enq.write := ~buffers(i).io.deq.empty  
    buffers(i).io.deq.read := ~buffers(i + 1).io.enq.full  
  }  
  io.enq <> buffers(0).io.enq  
  io.deq <> buffers(depth - 1).io.deq  
}
```

Listing 11.2: A FIFO is composed of an array of FIFO bubble stages.

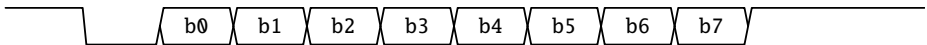


Figure 11.2: One byte transmitted by a UART.

means the maximum throughput of the FIFO is 2 clock cycles per word. (2) The data needs to bubble through the complete FIFO, therefore, the latency from the input to the output is at least the number of buffers. I will present other possible implementations of FIFOs in Section 11.3.

11.2 A Serial Port

A serial port (also called [UART](#) or [RS-232](#)) is one of the easiest options to communicate between your laptop and an FPGA board. As the name implies, data is transmitted serially. An 8-bit byte is transmitted as follows: one start bit (0), the 8-bit data, least significant bit first, and then one or two stop bits (1). When no data is transmitted, the output is 1. Figure 11.2 shows the timing diagram of one byte transmitted.

We design our UART in a modular way with minimal functionality per module. We present a transmitter (TX), a receiver (RX), a buffer, and then usage of those base com-

ponents.

First, we need an interface, a port definition. For the UART design, we use a ready/-valid handshake interface, with the direction as seen from the transmitter.

```
class Channel extends Bundle {
  val data = Input(Bits(8.W))
  val ready = Output(Bool())
  val valid = Input(Bool())
}
```

The convention of a ready/valid interface is that the data is transferred when both ready and valid are asserted.

Listing 11.3 shows a bare-bone serial transmitter (Tx). The IO ports are the txd port, where the serial data is sent and a Channel where the transmitter can receive the characters to serialize and send. To generate the correct timing, we compute a constant for by computing the time in clock cycles for one serial bit.

We use three registers: (1) register to shift the data (serialize them) (shiftReg), (2) a counter to generate the correct baud rate (cntReg), and (3) a counter for the number of bits that still need to be shifted out. No additional state register of FSM is needed, all state is encoded in those three registers.

Counter cntReg is continuously running (counting down to 0 and reset to the start value when 0). All action is only done when cntReg is 0. As we build a minimal transmitter, we have only the shift register to store the data. Therefore, the channel is only ready when cntReg is 0 and no bits are left to shift out.

The IO port txd is directly connected to the least significant bit of the shift register.

When there are more bits to shift out (bitsReg \neq 0.U), we shift the bits to the right and fill with 1 from the top (the idle level of a transmitter). If no more bits need to be shifted out, we check if the channel contains data (signaled with the valid port). If so, the bit string to be shifted out is constructed with one start bit (0), the 8-bit data, and two stop bits (1). Therefore, the bit count is set to 11.

This very minimal transmitter has no additional buffer and can accept a new character only when the shift register is empty and at the clock cycle when cntReg is 0. Accepting new data only when cntReg is 0 also means that the ready flag is also de-asserted when there would be space in the shift register. However, we do not want to add this “complexity” to the transmitter but delegate it to a buffer.

Listing 11.4 shows a single byte buffer, similar to the FIFO register for the bubble FIFO. The input port is a Channel interface, and the output is the Channel interface with flipped directions. The buffer contains the minimal state machine to indicate empty or full. The buffer driven handshake signals (in.ready and out.valid depend on the state

```
class Tx(frequency: Int, baudRate: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val txd = Output(Bits(1.W))
    val channel = new Channel()
  })

  val BIT_CNT = ((frequency + baudRate / 2) / baudRate -
    1).asUInt()

  val shiftReg = RegInit(0x7ff.U)
  val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(20.W))
  val bitsReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))

  io.channel.ready := (cntReg === 0.U) && (bitsReg === 0.U)
  io.txd := shiftReg(0)

  when(cntReg === 0.U) {

    cntReg := BIT_CNT
    when(bitsReg != 0.U) {
      val shift = shiftReg >> 1
      shiftReg := Cat(1.U, shift(9, 0))
      bitsReg := bitsReg - 1.U
    }.otherwise {
      when(io.channel.valid) {
        // two stop bits, data, one start bit
        shiftReg := Cat(Cat(3.U, io.channel.data), 0.U)
        bitsReg := 11.U
      }.otherwise {
        shiftReg := 0x7ff.U
      }
    }
  }

  }.otherwise {
    cntReg := cntReg - 1.U
  }
}
```

Listing 11.3: A transmitter for a serial port.

```
class Buffer extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val in = new Channel()  
    val out = Flipped(new Channel())  
  })  
  
  val empty :: full :: Nil = Enum(2)  
  val stateReg = RegInit(empty)  
  val dataReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))  
  
  io.in.ready := stateReg === empty  
  io.out.valid := stateReg === full  
  
  when(stateReg === empty) {  
    when(io.in.valid) {  
      dataReg := io.in.data  
      stateReg := full  
    }  
  }.otherwise { // full  
    when(io.out.ready) {  
      stateReg := empty  
    }  
  }  
  io.out.data := dataReg  
}
```

Listing 11.4: A single-byte buffer with a ready/valid interface.

```
class BufferedTx(frequency: Int, baudRate: Int) extends Module {  
  val io = IO(new Bundle {  
    val txd = Output(Bits(1.W))  
    val channel = new Channel()  
  })  
  val tx = Module(new Tx(frequency, baudRate))  
  val buf = Module(new Buffer())  
  
  buf.io.in <> io.channel  
  tx.io.channel <> buf.io.out  
  io.txd <> tx.io.txd  
}
```

Listing 11.5: A transmitter with an additional buffer.

register.

When the state is `empty`, and data on the input is valid, we register the data and switch to state `full`. When the state is `full`, and the downstream receiver is ready, the downstream data transfer happens, and we switch back to state `empty`.

With that buffer we can extend our bare-bone transmitter. Listing 11.5 shows the combination of the transmitter `Tx` with a single-buffer in front. This buffer now relaxes the issue that `Tx` was ready only for single clock cycles. We delegated the solution of this issue to the buffer module. An extension of the single word buffer to a real FIFO can easily be done and needs no change in the transmitter or the single byte buffer.

Listing 11.6 shows the code for the receiver (`Rx`). A receiver is a little bit tricky, as it needs to reconstruct the timing of the serial data. The receiver waits for the falling edge of the start bit. From that event, the receiver waits 1.5 bit times to position itself into the middle of bit 0. Then it shifts in the bits every bit time. You can observe these two waiting times as `START_CNT` and `BIT_CNT`. For both times, the same counter (`cntReg`) is used. After 8 bits are shifted in, `valReg` signals an available byte

Listing 11.7 shows the usage of the serial port transmitter by sending a friendly message out. We define the message in a Scala string (`msg`) and converting it to a Chisel `Vec` of `UInt`. A Scala string is a sequence that supports the `map` method. The `map` method takes as argument a function literal, applies this function to each element, and builds a sequence of the function's return values. If the function literal shall have only one argument, as it is in this case, the argument can be represented by `_`. Our function literal calls the Chisel method `.U` to convert the Scala `Char` to a Chisel `UInt`. The sequence is then passed to `VecInit` to construct a Chisel `Vec`. We index into the vector `text` with

```

class Rx(frequency: Int, baudRate: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val rxd = Input(Bits(1.W))
    val channel = Flipped(new Channel())
  })

  val BIT_CNT = ((frequency + baudRate / 2) / baudRate - 1).U
  val START_CNT = ((3 * frequency / 2 + baudRate / 2) /
    baudRate - 1).U

  // Sync in the asynchronous RX data
  // Reset to 1 to not start reading after a reset
  val rxReg = RegNext(RegNext(io.rxd, 1.U), 1.U)

  val shiftReg = RegInit('A'.U(8.W))
  val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(20.W))
  val bitsReg = RegInit(0.U(4.W))
  val valReg = RegInit(false.B)

  when(cntReg /= 0.U) {
    cntReg := cntReg - 1.U
  }.elsewhen(bitsReg /= 0.U) {
    cntReg := BIT_CNT
    shiftReg := Cat(rxReg, shiftReg >> 1)
    bitsReg := bitsReg - 1.U
    // the last shifted in
    when(bitsReg == 1.U) {
      valReg := true.B
    }
    // wait 1.5 bits after falling edge of start
  }.elsewhen(rxReg == 0.U) {
    cntReg := START_CNT
    bitsReg := 8.U
  }

  when(valReg && io.channel.ready) {
    valReg := false.B
  }

  io.channel.data := shiftReg
  io.channel.valid := valReg
}

```

Listing 11.6: A receiver for a serial port.

```
class Sender(frequency: Int, baudRate: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val txd = Output(Bits(1.W))
  })

  val tx = Module(new BufferedTx(frequency, baudRate))

  io.txd := tx.io.txd

  val msg = "Hello World!"
  val text = VecInit(msg.map(_.U))
  val len = msg.length.U

  val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(8.W))

  tx.io.channel.data := text(cntReg)
  tx.io.channel.valid := cntReg /= len

  when(tx.io.channel.ready && cntReg /= len) {
    cntReg := cntReg + 1.U
  }
}
```

Listing 11.7: Sending “Hello World!” via the serial port.

```

class Echo(frequency: Int, baudRate: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val txd = Output(Bits(1.W))
    val rxd = Input(Bits(1.W))
  })

  val tx = Module(new BufferedTx(frequency, baudRate))
  val rx = Module(new Rx(frequency, baudRate))
  io.txd := tx.io.txd
  rx.io.rxd := io.rxd
  tx.io.channel <> rx.io.channel
}

```

Listing 11.8: Echoing data on the serial port.

the counter `cntReg` to provide the individual characters to the buffered transmitter. With each ready signal we increase the counter until the full string is sent out. The sender keeps valid asserted until the last character has been sent out.

Listing 11.8 shows the usage of the receiver and the transmitter by connecting them together. This connection generates an Echo circuit where each received character is sent back (echoed).

11.3 FIFO Design Variations

In this section we will implement different variations of a FIFO queue. To make these implementations interchangeable we will use inheritance, as introduced in Section 10.4.

11.3.1 Parameterizing FIFOs

We define an abstract FIFO class with a Chisel type as parameter to be able to buffer any Chisel data type. In the abstract class we also test that the parameter depth has a useful value.

```

abstract class Fifo[T <: Data](gen: T, depth: Int) extends
  Module {
  val io = IO(new FifoIO(gen))
}

```

```
    assert(depth > 0, "Number of buffer elements needs to be  
        larger than 0")  
}
```

In Section 11.1 we defined our own types for the interface with common names for signals, such as `write`, `full`, `din`, `read`, `empty`, and `dout`. The input and the output of such a buffer consists of data and two signals for handshaking (e.g., we write into the FIFO when it is not full).

However, we can generalize this handshaking to the so called ready-valid interface. E.g, we can enqueue an element (write into the FIFO) when the FIFO is ready. We signal this at the writer side with `valid`. As this ready-valid interface is so common, Chisel provides a definition of this interface in `DecoupledIO` as follows:²

```
class DecoupledIO[T <: Data](gen: T) extends Bundle {  
    val ready = Input(Bool())  
    val valid = Output(Bool())  
    val bits  = Output(gen)  
}
```

With the `DecoupledIO` interface we define the interface for our FIFOs: a `FifoIO` with an `enq` enqueue and a `deq` dequeue port consisting of read-valid interfaces. The `DecoupledIO` interface is defined from the writer's (producer's) view point. Therefore, enqueue port of the FIFO needs to flip the signal directions.

```
class FifoIO[T <: Data](private val gen: T) extends Bundle {  
    val enq = Flipped(new DecoupledIO(gen))  
    val deq = new DecoupledIO(gen)  
}
```

With the abstract base class and an interface we can specialize for different FIFO implementations optimized for different parameters (speed, area, power, or just simplicity).

11.3.2 Redesigning the Bubble FIFO

We can redefine our bubble FIFO from Section 11.1 using standard ready-valid interfaces and being parametrizable with a Chisel data type.

Listing 11.9 shows the refactored bubble FIFO with ready-valid interface. Note what we put the `Buffer` component inside from `BubbleFifo` as private class. This helper class

²This is a simplification, as `DecoupledIO` actually extends an abstract class.

```
class BubbleFifo[T <: Data](gen: T, depth: Int) extends
  Fifo(gen: T, depth: Int) {

  private class Buffer() extends Module {
    val io = IO(new FifoIO(gen))

    val fullReg = RegInit(false.B)
    val dataReg = Reg(gen)

    when (fullReg) {
      when (io.deq.ready) {
        fullReg := false.B
      }
    } .otherwise {
      when (io.enq.valid) {
        fullReg := true.B
        dataReg := io.enq.bits
      }
    }
  }

  io.enq.ready := !fullReg
  io.deq.valid := fullReg
  io.deq.bits := dataReg
}

private val buffers = Array.fill(depth) { Module(new
  Buffer()) }
for (i <- 0 until depth - 1) {
  buffers(i + 1).io.enq <> buffers(i).io.deq
}

io.enq <> buffers(0).io.enq
io.deq <> buffers(depth - 1).io.deq
}
```

Listing 11.9: A bubble FIFO with a ready-valid interface.

is only needed for this component and therefore we hide it and avoid polluting the name space. The buffer class has also been simplified. Instead of an FSM we use only a single bit, `fullReg`, to note the state of the buffer: full or empty.

The bubble FIFO is simply, easy to understand, and uses minimal resources. However, as each buffer stage has to toggle between empty and full, the maximum bandwidth of this FIFO is two clock cycles per word.

One could consider to look at both interface sides in the buffer to be able to accept a new word when the producer valid and the consumer is ready. However, this introduces a combinational path from the consumer handshake to the producer handshake, which violates the semantics of the ready-valid protocol.

11.3.3 Double Buffer FIFO

One solution is stay ready even when the buffer register if full. To be able to accept a data word from the producer, when the consumer is not ready we need a second buffer, we call it the shadow register. When the the buffer is full, new data is stored in the shadow register and ready is de-asserted. When the consumer becomes ready again, data is transferred from the data register to the consumer and from the shadow register into the data register.

```
class DoubleBufferFifo[T <: Data](gen: T, depth: Int) extends
  Fifo(gen: T, depth: Int) {

  private class DoubleBuffer[T <: Data](gen: T) extends Module {
    val io = IO(new FifoIO(gen))

    val empty :: one :: two :: Nil = Enum(3)
    val stateReg = RegInit(empty)
    val dataReg = Reg(gen)
    val shadowReg = Reg(gen)

    switch(stateReg) {
      is (empty) {
        when (io.enq.valid) {
          stateReg := one
          dataReg := io.enq.bits
        }
      }
      is (one) {
        when (io.deq.ready && !io.enq.valid) {
          stateReg := empty
        }
      }
    }
  }
}
```

```
    }
    when (io.deq.ready && io.enq.valid) {
        stateReg := one
        dataReg := io.enq.bits
    }
    when (!io.deq.ready && io.enq.valid) {
        stateReg := two
        shadowReg := io.enq.bits
    }
}
is (two) {
    when (io.deq.ready) {
        dataReg := shadowReg
        stateReg := one
    }
}
}

io.enq.ready := (stateReg === empty || stateReg === one)
io.deq.valid := (stateReg === one || stateReg === two)
io.deq.bits := dataReg
}

private val buffers = Array.fill((depth+1)/2) { Module(new
    DoubleBuffer(gen)) }

for (i <- 0 until (depth+1)/2 - 1) {
    buffers(i + 1).io.enq <> buffers(i).io.deq
}
io.enq <> buffers(0).io.enq
io.deq <> buffers((depth+1)/2 - 1).io.deq
}
```

Listing 11.10: A FIFO with double buffer elements.

Listing 11.10 shows the double buffer. As each buffer element can store two entries we need only half of the buffer elements ($\text{depth}/2$). The `DoubleBuffer` contains two registers, `dataReg` and `shadowReg`. The consumer is served always from `shadowReg`. The double buffer has three states: `empty`, `one`, and `two`, which signal the fill level of the double buffer. The buffer is ready to accept new data when is it in state `empty` or `one`. The has valid data when it is in state `one` or `two`.

If we run the FIFO at full speed and the consumer is always ready the steady state of the double buffers are one. Only when the consumer de-asserts ready, the queue fills up and the buffers enter state two. However, compared to a single bubble FIFO, a restart of the queue takes only half the number of clock cycles for the same buffer capacity. Similar the fall through latency is half of the bubble FIFO.

11.3.4 FIFO with Register Memory

When you come with a software engineering background you may have been wondering that we built hardware queues out of many small individual small buffer elements, all executing in parallel and handshaking with upstream and downstream elements. For small buffers this is probably the most efficient implementation.

A queue in software is usually used by a sequential code in a single thread. Or as a queue to decouple a producer and consumer thread. In this setting a fixed size FIFO queue is usually implemented as a [circular buffer](#). Two pointers point into read and write positions in a memory set aside for the queue. When the pointers reach the end of the memory, they are set back to the begin of that memory. The difference between the two pointers is the number of elements in the queue. When the two pointers point to the same address, the queue is either empty or full. To distinguish between empty and full we need another flag.

We can implement such a memory based FIFO queue in hardware as well. For small queues, we can use a register file (i.e., a `Reg(Vec())`). Listing 11.11 shows a FIFO queue implemented with memory and read and write pointers.

```
class RegFifo[T <: Data](gen: T, depth: Int) extends Fifo(gen:
  T, depth: Int) {

  def counter(depth: Int, incr: Bool): (UInt, UInt) = {
    val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(log2Ceil(depth).W))
    val nextVal = Mux(cntReg === (depth-1).U, 0.U, cntReg + 1.U)
    when (incr) {
      cntReg := nextVal
    }
    (cntReg, nextVal)
  }

  // the register based memory
  val memReg = Reg(Vec(depth, gen))

  val incrRead = WireDefault(false.B)
```

```

val incrWrite = WireDefault(false.B)
val (readPtr, nextRead) = counter(depth, incrRead)
val (writePtr, nextWrite) = counter(depth, incrWrite)

val emptyReg = RegInit(true.B)
val fullReg = RegInit(false.B)

when (io.enq.valid && !fullReg) {
  memReg(writePtr) := io.enq.bits
  emptyReg := false.B
  fullReg := nextWrite === readPtr
  incrWrite := true.B
}

when (io.deq.ready && !emptyReg) {
  fullReg := false.B
  emptyReg := nextRead === writePtr
  incrRead := true.B
}

io.deq.bits := memReg(readPtr)
io.enq.ready := !fullReg
io.deq.valid := !emptyReg
}

```

Listing 11.11: A FIFO with a register based memory.

As there are two pointers that behave the same, being incremented on an action and wrap around at the end of the buffer, we define a function `counter` that implements those wrapping counters. With `log2Ceil(depth).W` we compute the bit length of the counter. The next value is either an increment by 1 or a wrap around to 0. The counter is incremented only when the input `incr` is `true.B`.

Furthermore, as we need also the possible next value (increment or 0 on wrap around), we return this value from the counter function as well. In Scala we can return a so called *tuple*, which is simply a container to hold more than one value. The syntax to create such a duple is simply wrapping the comma separated values in parentheses:

```
val t = (v1, v2)
```

We can deconstruct such a tuple by using the parenthesis notation on the left hand side of the assignment:

```
val (x1, x2) = t
```

For the memory we use a register of a vector (`Reg(Vec(depth, gen))`) of Chisel data type `gen`. We define two signals to increment the read and write pointer and create the read and write pointers with the function `counter`. When both pointers are equal, the buffer is either empty or full. We define two flags for the notion of empty and full.

When the producer asserts `valid` and the FIFO is not full we: (1) write into the buffer, (2) ensure `emptyReg` is de-asserted, (3) mark the buffer full if the write pointer will catch up with the read pointer in the next clock cycle (compare the current read pointer with the next write pointer), and (4) signal the write counter to increment.

When the consumer is ready and the FIFO is not empty we: (1) ensure that the `fullReg` is de-asserted, (2) mark the buffer empty if the read pointer will catch up with the write pointer in the next clock cycle, and (3) signal the read counter to increment.

The output of the FIFO is the memory element at the read pointer address. The `ready` and `valid` flags are simply derived from the full and empty flags.

11.3.5 FIFO with On-Chip Memory

The last version of the FIFO used a register file to represent the memory, which is a good solution for a small FIFO. For larger FIFOs it is better to use on-chip memory. Listing 11.12 shows a FIFO using a synchronous memory for storage.

```
class MemFifo[T <: Data](gen: T, depth: Int) extends Fifo(gen:
  T, depth: Int) {

  def counter(depth: Int, incr: Bool): (UInt, UInt) = {
    val cntReg = RegInit(0.U(log2Ceil(depth).W))
    val nextVal = Mux(cntReg === (depth-1).U, 0.U, cntReg + 1.U)
    when (incr) {
      cntReg := nextVal
    }
    (cntReg, nextVal)
  }

  val mem = SyncReadMem(depth, gen)

  val incrRead = WireDefault(false.B)
  val incrWrite = WireDefault(false.B)
  val (readPtr, nextRead) = counter(depth, incrRead)
  val (writePtr, nextWrite) = counter(depth, incrWrite)
```

```

val emptyReg = RegInit(true.B)
val fullReg = RegInit(false.B)

val idle :: valid :: full :: Nil = Enum(3)
val stateReg = RegInit(idle)
val shadowReg = Reg(gen)

when (io.enq.valid && !fullReg) {
  mem.write(writePtr, io.enq.bits)
  emptyReg := false.B
  fullReg := nextWrite === readPtr
  incrWrite := true.B
}

val data = mem.read(readPtr)

// Handling of the one cycle memory latency
// with an additional output register
switch(stateReg) {
  is(idle) {
    when(!emptyReg) {
      stateReg := valid
      fullReg := false.B
      emptyReg := nextRead === writePtr
      incrRead := true.B
    }
  }
  is(valid) {
    when(io.deq.ready) {
      when(!emptyReg) {
        stateReg := valid
        fullReg := false.B
        emptyReg := nextRead === writePtr
        incrRead := true.B
      } otherwise {
        stateReg := idle
      }
    } otherwise {
      shadowReg := data
      stateReg := full
    }
  }
}

```

```
    }
    is(full) {
      when(io.deq.ready) {
        when(!emptyReg) {
          stateReg := valid
          fullReg := false.B
          emptyReg := nextRead === writePtr
          incrRead := true.B
        } otherwise {
          stateReg := idle
        }
      }
    }
  }
}

io.deq.bits := Mux(stateReg === valid, data, shadowReg)
io.enq.ready := !fullReg
io.deq.valid := stateReg === valid || stateReg === full
}
```

Listing 11.12: A FIFO with a on-chip memory.

The handling of read and write pointer is identical to the register memory FIFO. However, a synchronous on-chip memory delivers the result of a read in the next clock cycle, where the read of the register file was available in the same clock cycle.

Therefore, we need some additional FSM and a shadow register to handle this latency. We read the memory out and provide the value of the top of the queue to the output port. If that value is not consumed, we need to store it in the shadow register `shadowReg` while reading the next value from the memory. The state machine consists of three states to represent: (1) an empty FIFO, (2) a valid data read out from the memory, and (3) head of the queue in the shadow register and valid data (the next element) from the memory.

The memory based FIFO can efficiently hold larger amounts of data in the queue and has a short fall through latency. In the last design, the output of the FIFO may come directly from the memory read. If this data path is in the critical path of the design, we can easily pipeline our design by combining two FIFOs. Listing 11.13 shows such a combination. On the output of the memory based FIFO we add a single stage double buffer FIFO to decouple the memory read path from the output.

```
class CombFifo[T <: Data](gen: T, depth: Int) extends Fifo(gen:
    T, depth: Int) {

    val memFifo = Module(new MemFifo(gen, depth))
    val bufferFIFO = Module(new DoubleBufferFifo(gen, 2))
    io.enq <> memFifo.io.enq
    memFifo.io.deq <> bufferFIFO.io.enq
    bufferFIFO.io.deq <> io.deq
}
```

Listing 11.13: Combining a memory based FIFO with double-buffer stage.

11.4 Exercises

This exercise section is a little bit longer as it contains two exercises: (1) exploring the bubble FIFO and implement a different FIFO design; and (2) exploring the UART and extending it. Source code for both exercises is included in the [chisel-examples](#) repository.

11.4.1 Explore the Bubble FIFO

The FIFO source also includes a tester that provokes different read and write behavior and generates a waveform in the [value change dump \(VCD\)](#) format. The VCD file can be viewed with a waveform viewer, such as [GTKWave](#). Explore the [FifoTester](#) in the repository. The repository contains a Makefile to run the examples, for the FIFO example just type:

```
$ make fifo
```

This make command will compile the FIFO, run the test, and starts GTKWave for waveform viewing. Explore the tester and the generated waveform.

In the first cycles, the tester writes a single word. We can observe in the waveform how that word bubbles through the FIFO, therefore the name *bubble FIFO*. This bubbling also means that the latency of a data word through the FIFO is equal to the depth of the FIFO.

The next test fills the FIFO until it is full. A single read follows. Notice how the empty word bubbles from the reader side of the FIFO to the writer side. When a bubble FIFO is full, it takes a latency of the buffer depth for a read to affect the writer side.

The end of the test contains a loop that tries to write and read at maximum speed. We can see the bubble FIFO running at maximum bandwidth, which is two clock cycles per word. A buffer stage has always to toggle between empty and full for a single word transfer.

A bubble FIFO is simple and for small buffers has a low resource requirement. The main drawbacks of an n stage bubble FIFO are: (1) maximum throughput is one word every two clock cycles, (2) a data word has to travel n clock cycles from the writer end to the reader end, and (3) a full FIFO needs n clock cycles for the restart.

These drawbacks can be solved by a FIFO implementation with a [circular buffer](#). The circular buffer can be implemented with a memory and read and write pointers. Implement a FIFO as a circular buffer with four elements, using the same interface, and explore the different behavior with the tester. For an initial implementation of the circular buffer use, as a shortcut, a vector of registers (`Reg(Vec(4, UInt(size.W)))`).

11.4.2 The UART

For the UART example, you need an FPGA board with a serial port and a serial port for your laptop (usually with a USB connection). Connect the serial cable between the FPGA board and the serial port on your laptop. Start a terminal program, e.g., Hyperterm on Windows or `gtkterm` on Linux:

```
$ gtkterm &
```

Configure your port to use the correct device, with a USB UART this is often something like `/dev/ttyUSB0`. Set the baud rate to 115200 and no parity or flow control (handshake). With the following command you can create the Verilog code for the UART:

```
$ make uart
```

Then use your synthesize tool to synthesize the design. The repository contains a Quartus project for the DE2-115 FPGA board. With Quartus use the play button to synthesize the design and then configure the FPGA. After configuration, you should see a greeting message in the terminal.

Extend the blinking LED example with a UART and write 0 and 1 to the serial line when the LED is off and on. Use the `BufferedTx`, as in the Sender example.

With the slow output of characters (two per second), you can write the data to the UART transmit register and can ignore the read/valid handshake. Extend the example by writing repeated numbers 0-9 as fast as the baud rate allows. In this case, you have to extend your state machine to poll the UART status to check if the transmit buffer is free.

The example code contains only a single buffer for the Tx. Feel free to add the FIFO that you have implemented to add buffering to the transmitter and receiver.

11.4.3 FIFO Exploration

Write a simple FIFO with 4 buffer elements in dedicated registers. Use 2-bit read and write counters, which can just overflow. As a further simplification consider the situation when the read and write pointers are equal as empty FIFO. This means you can maximally store 3 elements. This simplification avoids the counter function from the example in Listing 11.11 and the handling of the empty or full with the same pointer values. We do not need empty or full flags, as this can be derived from the pointer values alone. How much simpler is this design?

The presented different FIFO designs have different design tradeoffs relative to following properties: (1) maximum throughput, (2) fall through latency, (3) resource requirement, and (4) maximum clock frequency. Explore all FIFO variations in different sizes by synthesizing them for an FPGA; the source is available at [chisel-examples](#). Where are the sweet spots for FIFOs of 4 words, 16 words, and 256 words?

12 Design of a Processor

As one of the last chapters in this book, we present a medium size project: the design, simulation, and testing of a microprocessor. To keep this project manageable, we design a simple accumulator machine. The processor is called **Leros** [8] and is available in open source at <https://github.com/leros-dev/leros>. We would like to mention that this is an advanced example and some computer architecture knowledge is needed to follow the presented code examples.

Leros is designed to be simple, but still a good target for a C compiler. The description of the instructions fits on one page, see Table 12.1. In that table A represents the accumulator, PC is the program counter, i is an immediate value (0 to 255), Rn a register n (0 to 255), o a branch offset relative to the PC, and AR an address register for memory access.

12.1 Start with an ALU

A central component of a processor is the **arithmetic logic unit**, or ALU for short. Therefore, we start with the coding of the ALU and a test bench. First, we define an Enum to represent the different operations of the ALU:

```
object Types {  
  val nop :: add :: sub :: and :: or :: xor :: ld :: shr :: Nil  
    = Enum(8)  
}
```

An ALU usually has two operand inputs (call them a and b), an operation op (or opcode) input to select the function and an output y. Listing 12.1 shows the ALU.

We first define shorter names for the three inputs. The switch statement defines the logic for the computation of res. Therefore, it gets a default assignment of 0. The switch statement enumerates all operations and assigns the expression accordingly. All operations map directly to a Chisel expression. In the end, we assign the result res to the ALU output y

For the testing, we write the ALU function in plain Scala, as shown in Listing 12.2.

| Opcode | Function | Description |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---|
| add | $A = A + R_n$ | Add register R_n to A |
| addi | $A = A + i$ | Add immediate value i to A |
| sub | $A = A - R_n$ | Subtract register R_n from A |
| subi | $A = A - i$ | Subtract immediate value i from A |
| shr | $A = A \gg \gg 1$ | Shift A logically right |
| load | $A = R_n$ | Load register R_n into A |
| loadi | $A = i$ | Load immediate value i into A |
| and | $A = A \text{ and } R_n$ | And register R_n with A |
| andi | $A = A \text{ and } i$ | And immediate value i with A |
| or | $A = A \text{ or } R_n$ | Or register R_n with A |
| ori | $A = A \text{ or } i$ | Or immediate value i with A |
| xor | $A = A \text{ xor } R_n$ | Xor register R_n with A |
| xori | $A = A \text{ xor } i$ | Xor immediate value i with A |
| loadhi | $A_{15-8} = i$ | Load immediate into second byte |
| loadh2i | $A_{23-16} = i$ | Load immediate into third byte |
| loadh3i | $A_{31-24} = i$ | Load immediate into fourth byte |
| store | $R_n = A$ | Store A into register R_n |
| jal | $PC = A, R_n = PC + 2$ | Jump to A and store return address in R_n |
| ldaddr | $AR = A$ | Load address register AR with A |
| loadind | $A = \text{mem}[AR+(i \ll 2)]$ | Load a word from memory into A |
| loadindbu | $A = \text{mem}[AR+i]_{7-0}$ | Load a byte unsigned from memory into A |
| storeind | $\text{mem}[AR+(i \ll 2)] = A$ | Store A into memory |
| storeindb | $\text{mem}[AR+i]_{7-0} = A$ | Store a byte into memory |
| br | $PC = PC + o$ | Branch |
| brz | if $A == 0$ $PC = PC + o$ | Branch if A is zero |
| brnz | if $A \neq 0$ $PC = PC + o$ | Branch if A is not zero |
| brp | if $A \geq 0$ $PC = PC + o$ | Branch if A is positive |
| brn | if $A < 0$ $PC = PC + o$ | Branch if A is negative |
| scall | scall A | System call (simulation hook) |

Table 12.1: Leros instruction set.

```
class Alu(size: Int) extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val op = Input(UInt(3.W))
    val a = Input(SInt(size.W))
    val b = Input(SInt(size.W))
    val y = Output(SInt(size.W))
  })

  val op = io.op
  val a = io.a
  val b = io.b
  val res = WireDefault(0.S(size.W))

  switch(op) {
    is(add) {
      res := a + b
    }
    is(sub) {
      res := a - b
    }
    is(and) {
      res := a & b
    }
    is(or) {
      res := a | b
    }
    is(xor) {
      res := a ^ b
    }
    is (shr) {
      // the following does NOT result in an unsigned shift
      // res := (a.asUInt >> 1).asSInt
      // work around
      res := (a >> 1) & 0x7fffffff.S
    }
    is(ld) {
      res := b
    }
  }

  io.y := res
}
```

Listing 12.1: The Leros ALU.

```
def alu(a: Int, b: Int, op: Int): Int = {  
  op match {  
    case 1 => a + b  
    case 2 => a - b  
    case 3 => a & b  
    case 4 => a | b  
    case 5 => a ^ b  
    case 6 => b  
    case 7 => a >>> 1  
    case _ => -123 // This shall not happen  
  }  
}
```

Listing 12.2: The Leros ALU function written in Scala.

While this duplication of hardware written in Chisel by a Scala implementation does not detect errors in the specification; it is at least some sanity check. We use some corner case values as the test vector:

```
// Some interesting corner cases  
val interesting = Array(1, 2, 4, 123, 0, -1, -2, 0x80000000,  
  0x7fffffff)
```

We test all functions with those values on both inputs:

```
def test(values: Seq[Int]) = {  
  for (fun <- add to shr) {  
    for (a <- values) {  
      for (b <- values) {  
        poke(dut.io.op, fun)  
        poke(dut.io.a, a)  
        poke(dut.io.b, b)  
        step(1)  
        expect(dut.io.y, alu(a, b, fun.toInt))  
      }  
    }  
  }  
}
```


Full, exhaustive testing for 32-bit arguments is not possible, which was the reason we selected some corner cases as input values. Beside testing against corner cases, it is also useful to test against random inputs:

```
val randArgs = Seq.fill(100)(scala.util.Random.nextInt)
test(randArgs)
```

You can run the tests within the Leros project with

```
$ sbt "test:runMain leros.AluTester"
```

and shall produce a success message similar to:

```
[info] [0.001] SEED 1544507337402
test Alu Success: 70567 tests passed in 70572 cycles taking
3.845715 seconds
[info] [3.825] RAN 70567 CYCLES PASSED
```

12.2 Decoding Instructions

From the ALU, we work backward and implement the instruction decoder. However, first, we define the instruction encoding in its own Scala class and a *shared* package. We want to share the encoding constants between the hardware implementation of Leros, an assembler for Leros, and an instruction set simulator of Leros.

```
package leros.shared {
```

```
object Constants {
  val NOP = 0x00
  val ADD = 0x08
  val ADDI = 0x09
  val SUB = 0x0c
  val SUBI = 0x0d
  val SHR = 0x10
  val LD = 0x20
  val LDI = 0x21
  val AND = 0x22
  val ANDI = 0x23
  val OR = 0x24
  val ORI = 0x25
  val XOR = 0x26
```

```
val XORI = 0x27
val LDHI = 0x29
val LDH2I = 0x2a
val LDH3I = 0x2b
val ST = 0x30
// ...
```

For the decode component, we define a Bundle for the output, which is later fed partially into the ALU.

```
class DecodeOut extends Bundle {
  val ena = Bool()
  val func = UInt()
  val exit = Bool()
}
```

Decode takes as input an 8-bit opcode and delivers the decoded signals as output. Those driving signals are assigned a default value with WireDefault.

```
class Decode() extends Module {
  val io = IO(new Bundle {
    val din = Input(UInt(8.W))
    val dout = Output(new DecodeOut)
  })

  val f = WireDefault(nop)
  val imm = WireDefault(false.B)
  val ena = WireDefault(false.B)

  io.dout.exit := false.B
```

The decoding itself is just a large switch statement on the part of the instruction that represents the opcode (in Leros for most instructions the upper 8 bits.)

```
switch(io.din) {
  is(ADD.U) {
    f := add
    ena := true.B
  }
  is(ADDI.U) {
    f := add
    imm := true.B
    ena := true.B
  }
}
```

```

}
is(SUB.U) {
  f := sub
  ena := true.B
}
is(SUBI.U) {
  f := sub
  imm := true.B
  ena := true.B
}
is(SHR.U) {
  f := shr
  ena := true.B
}
// ...

```

12.3 Assembling Instructions

To write programs for Leros we need an assembler. However, for the very first test, we can hard code a few instructions, and put them into a Scala array, which we use to initialize the instruction memory.

```

val prog = Array[Int](
  0x0903, // addi 0x3
  0x09ff, // -1
  0x0d02, // subi 2
  0x21ab, // ldi 0xab
  0x230f, // and 0xf
  0x25c3, // or 0xc3
  0x0000
)

def getProgramFix() = prog

```

However, this is a very inefficient approach to test a processor. Writing an assembler with an expressive language like Scala is not a big project. Therefore, we write a simple assembler for Leros, which is possible within about 100 lines of code. We define a function `getProgram` that calls the assembler. For branch destinations, we need a symbol table, which we collect in a `Map`. A classic assembler runs in two passes: (1) collect the values for the symbol table and (2) assemble the program with the symbols collected

in the first pass. Therefore, we call `assemble` twice with a parameter to indicate which pass it is.

```
def getProgram(prog: String) = {
  assemble(prog)
}

// collect destination addresses in first pass
val symbols = collection.mutable.Map[String, Int]()

def assemble(prog: String): Array[Int] = {
  assemble(prog, false)
  assemble(prog, true)
}
```

The `assemble` function starts with reading in the source file¹ and defining two helper functions to parse the two possible operands: (1) an integer constant (allowing decimal or hexadecimal notation) and (2) to read a register number.

```
def assemble(prog: String, pass2: Boolean): Array[Int] = {

  val source = Source.fromFile(prog)
  var program = List[Int]()
  var pc = 0

  def toInt(s: String): Int = {
    if (s.startsWith("0x")) {
      Integer.parseInt(s.substring(2), 16)
    } else {
      Integer.parseInt(s)
    }
  }

  def regNumber(s: String): Int = {
    assert(s.startsWith("r"), "Register numbers shall start with 'r'")
    s.substring(1).toInt
  }
}
```

Listing 12.3 shows the core of the assembler for Leros. A Scala match expression

¹This function does not actually read the source file, but for this discussion we can consider it as the reading function.

covers the core of the assembly function.

12.4 Exercise

This exercise assignment in one of the last Chapters is in a very free form. You are at the end of your learning tour through Chisel and ready to tackle design problems that you find interesting.

One option is to reread the chapter and read along with all the source code in the [Leros repository](#), run the test cases, fiddle with the code by breaking it and see that tests fail.

Another option is to write your implementation of Leros. The implementation in the repository is just one possible organization of a pipeline. You could write a Chisel simulation version of Leros with just a single pipeline stage, or go crazy and superpipeline Leros for the highest possible clocking frequency.

A third option is to design your processor from scratch. Maybe the demonstration of how to build the Leros processor and the needed tools has convinced you that processor design and implementation is no magic art, but the engineering that can be very joyful.

```
for (line <- source.getLines()) {
  if (!pass2) println(line)
  val tokens = line.trim.split(" ")
  val Pattern = "(.*)"
  val instr = tokens(0) match {
    case "/" => // comment
    case Pattern(1) => if (!pass2) symbols +=
      (1.substring(0, 1.length - 1) -> pc)
    case "add" => (ADD << 8) + regNumber(tokens(1))
    case "sub" => (SUB << 8) + regNumber(tokens(1))
    case "and" => (AND << 8) + regNumber(tokens(1))
    case "or" => (OR << 8) + regNumber(tokens(1))
    case "xor" => (XOR << 8) + regNumber(tokens(1))
    case "load" => (LD << 8) + regNumber(tokens(1))
    case "addi" => (ADDI << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "subi" => (SUBI << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "andi" => (ANDI << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "ori" => (ORI << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "xori" => (XORI << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "shr" => (SHR << 8)
    case "loadi" => (LDI << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "loadhi" => (LDHI << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "loadh2i" => (LDH2I << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "loadh3i" => (LDH3I << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "store" => (ST << 8) + regNumber(tokens(1))
    case "ldaddr" => (LDADDR << 8)
    case "ldind" => (LDIND << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "ldindbu" => (LDINDBU << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "stind" => (STIND << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "stindb" => (STINDB << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "br" => (BR << 8) + (if (pass2) symbols(tokens(1))
      else 0)
    case "brz" => (BRZ << 8) + (if (pass2)
      symbols(tokens(1)) else 0)
    case "brnz" => (BRNZ << 8) + (if (pass2)
      symbols(tokens(1)) else 0)
    case "brp" => (BRP << 8) + (if (pass2)
      symbols(tokens(1)) else 0)
    case "brn" => (BRN << 8) + (if (pass2)
      symbols(tokens(1)) else 0)
    case "in" => (IN << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "out" => (OUT << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    case "scall" => (SCALL << 8) + toInt(tokens(1))
    // ...
    case "" => // println("Empty line")
    case t: String => throw new Exception("Assembler error:
      unknown instruction: " + t)
    case _ => throw new Exception("Assembler error")
  }
}
```

13 Contributing to Chisel

Chisel is an open-source project under constant development and improvement. Therefore, you can also contribute to the project. Your contribution can be twofold: (1) publish your Chisel circuits in open-source and as a library or (2) contribute enhancements to Chisel itself. Here we describe first, how to publish a library and second, how to set up your environment for Chisel library development and how to contribute to Chisel.

13.1 Publishing a Chisel Library

When you develop a circuit in open-source and share it on e.g., GitHub, this is a very educational act, as others can learn describing hardware in Chisel from your code example. However, sharing just the source code forces others to copy your code into their project. This leads to at least two problems: (1) *Two copies are never the same*¹. This means that changes will happen to the source and they are not in sync anymore. (2) It is cumbersome to update the copy when the original design has been improved with a bug fix or a new feature.

A better approach is to publish that open-source circuit as a library. Compiled Chisel code are simply Java class files. And those class files are platform independent. Therefore, this is an ideal way to share Chisel libraries. Java (and Scala) have a long tradition and good infrastructure to support public sharing of libraries with unique group identifiers and version control. That is also the way Chisel itself, and some support libraries are published.

This section describes the steps needed to publish a Chisel library. As the tools you use for publishing may change quickly, consider finding the latest information on the Internet. A good block entry on the topic can be found [here](#).

13.1.1 Using a Library

A Chisel library can be used in your project by adding it to `build.sbt`. Here as an example a collection of Chisel circuits in [ip-contributions](#):

¹I learned this phrase from Doug Locke during discussion sessions developing the safety-critical specification for Java

```
libraryDependencies += "edu.berkeley.cs" % "ip-contributions" % "0.4.0"
```

The `ip-contributions` library contains also the UART and the FIFOs, described in this book. Modern IDEs let you automatically download the source code of the library for inspection, when configured in `build.sbt`.

If you have a Chisel circuit that you would like to share, consider contributing it to `ip-contributions`. Contribution starts with a git pull request of your addition. This will start a friendly review process.

13.1.2 Prerequisite

[Maven Central](#) is one of the largest repository hosting software libraries. Publishing to Maven Central is easiest via [Sonatype](#). Sonatype offers free hosting of open-source projects via the [Sonatype Repository](#). Following initial steps are needed before publishing a library:

1. Create a Sonatype account, a [JIRA account](#)
2. You need a unique `groupId`, which is usually a domain name in reverse order, e.g., `edu.berkeley.cs`. You can also use your GitHub account as a `groupId`, e.g., mine is `io.github.schoeberl`. You register this `groupId` by opening an [issue](#). This is a manual process where you get a request to prove that you *own* the requested `groupId`. When using the GitHub domain name, you are requested to setup a repository to show your ownership.
3. Create `sonatype.sbt` in `$HOME/.sbt/1.0` with your Sonatype login information:

```
credentials += Credentials(  
  "Sonatype Nexus Repository Manager",  
  "oss.sonatype.org",  
  "<user name>",  
  "<password>"  
)
```

4. All artefacts must be signed with a [PGP](#) key pair. You can use the open-source [GNU Privacy Guard](#). You can create, list, and upload your public PGP key with:

```
gpg --gen-key  
gpg --list-keys  
gpg --keyserver keyserver.ubuntu.com --send-keys keyID
```


13.1.3 Library Setup

Per library you need to setup following once:

1. Install sbt plugins in `project/plugins.sbt`:

```
addSbtPlugin("org.xerial.sbt" % "sbt-sonatype" % "2.3")
addSbtPlugin("com.jsuereth" % "sbt-pgp" % "2.0.2")
```

2. Add information of the library into `build.sbt`. Here as an example the relevant section of [build.sbt](#) in `ip-contributions`:

```
name := "ip-contributions"

version := "0.4.0"

// groupId, SCM, license information
organization := "edu.berkeley.cs"
homepage := Some(url("https://github.com/freechipsproject/ip-contributions"))
scmInfo := Some(ScmInfo(url("https://github.com/freechipsproject/ip-contributions"),
  "git@github.com/freechipsproject/ip-contributions"))
developers := List(Developer("schoeberl", "schoeberl", "martin@jopdesign.com",
  url("https://github.com/schoeberl")))
licenses += ("Unlicense", url("https://unlicense.org/"))
publishMavenStyle := true

// disable publish with Scala version
crossPaths := false

publishTo := Some(
  if (isSnapshot.value)
    Opts.resolver.sonatypeSnapshots
  else
    Opts.resolver.sonatypeStaging
)
```

13.1.4 Regular Publishing

All is now setup to sign and publish the library to Sonatype with:

```
sbt publishSigned
```

In my setup the sign from sbt does not work, so I have to copy out the pgp command to sign, something similar to:

```
pgp --detach-sign --armor --use-agent --output path-to.asc path-to-0.1.pom
```

and repeat `sbt publishSigned`.

You can already use that library from Sonatype, e.g., for an internal project. However, to release your library to Maven Central run:

```
sbt sonatypeRelease
```

A few minutes later it should be visible on [Maven Central Repository Search](#).

13.2 Contributing to Chisel

The following is an advanced topic and I propose you first start following the discussion of the project issues on GitHub.

13.2.1 Setup the Development Environment

Chisel consists of several different repositories; all hosted at the [freechips organization at GitHub](#).

Fork the repository, which you like to contribute, into your personal GitHub account. You can fork the repository by pressing the Fork button in the GitHub web interface. Then from that fork, clone your fork of the repository². In our example, we change `chisel3`, and the clone command for my local fork is:

```
$ git clone git@github.com:schoeberl/chisel3.git
```

To compile Chisel 3 and publish as a local library execute:

```
$ cd chisel3
$ sbt compile
$ sbt publishLocal
```

Watch out during the `publish local` command for the version string of the published library, which contains the string `SNAPSHOT`. If you use the tester and the published version is not compatible with the Chisel `SNAPSHOT`, fork and clone the [chisel-tester](#) repo as well and publish it locally.

²Note that on a breaking firrtl/Chisel change you might need to also fork and clone firrtl

To test your changes in Chisel, you probably also want to set up a Chisel project, e.g., by forking/cloning an [empty Chisel project](#), renaming it, and removing the `.git` folder from it.

Change the `build.sbt` to reference the locally published version of Chisel. Furthermore, at the time of this writing, the head of Chisel source uses Scala 2.12, but Scala 2.12 has troubles with [anonymous bundles](#). Therefore, you need to add the following Scala option: `"-Xsource:2.11"`. The `build.sbt` should look similar to:

```
scalaVersion := "2.12.6"

scalacOptions := Seq("-Xsource:2.11")

resolvers += Seq(
  Resolver.sonatypeRepo("snapshots"),
  Resolver.sonatypeRepo("releases")
)

libraryDependencies +=
  "edu.berkeley.cs" %% "chisel3" % "3.2-SNAPSHOT"
libraryDependencies +=
  "edu.berkeley.cs" %% "chisel-iotesters" % "1.3-SNAPSHOT"
```

Compile your Chisel test application and take a close look if it picks up the local published version of the Chisel library (there is also a SNAPSHOT version published, so if, e.g., the Scala version is different between your Chisel library and your application code, it picks up the SNAPSHOT version from the server instead of your local published library.)

See also [some notes at the Chisel repo](#).

13.2.2 Testing

When you change the Chisel library, you should run the Chisel tests. In an sbt based project, this is usually run with:

```
$ sbt test
```

Furthermore, if you add functionality to Chisel, you should also provide tests for the new features.

13.2.3 Contribute with a Pull Request

In the Chisel project, no developer commits directly to the main repository. A contribution is organized via a [pull request](#) from a branch in a forked version of the library. For further information, see the documentation at GitHub on [collaboration with pull requests](#). The Chisel group started to document [contribution guidelines](#).

13.3 Exercise

Invent a new operator for the UInt type, implement it in the Chisel library, and write some usage/test code to explore the operator. It does not need to be a useful operator; just anything will be good, e.g., a ? operator that delivers the lefthand side if it is different from 0 otherwise the righthand side. Sounds like a multiplexer, right? How many lines of code did you need to add?³

As simple as this was, please be not tempted to fork the Chisel project and add your little extensions. Changes and extension shall be coordinated with the main developers. This exercise was just a simple exercise to get you started.

If you are getting bold, you could pick one of the [open issues](#) and try to solve it. Then contribute with a pull request to Chisel. However, probably first watch the style of development in Chisel by watching the GitHub repositories. See how changes and pull requests are handled in the Chisel open-source project.

³A quick and dirty implementation needs just two lines of Scala code.

14 Summary

This book presented an introduction to digital design using the hardware construction language Chisel. We have seen several simple to medium-sized digital circuits described in Chisel. Chisel is embedded in Scala and therefore inherits the powerful abstraction of Scala. As this book is intended as an introduction, we have restricted our examples to simple uses of Scala. A next logical step is to learn a few basics of Scala and apply them to your Chisel project.

I would be happy to receive feedback on the book, as I will further improve it and will publish new editions. You can contact me at <mailto:masca@dtu.dk>, or with an issue request on the GitHub repository. I am also happily accepting pull requests for the book repository for any fixes and improvements.

Source Access

This book is available in open source. The repository also contains slides for a Chisel course and all Chisel examples: <https://github.com/schoeberl/chisel-book>

A collection of medium-sized examples, which most are referenced in the book, is also available in open source. This collection also contains projects for various popular FPGA boards: <https://github.com/schoeberl/chisel-examples>

A Chisel Projects

Chisel is not (yet) used in many projects. Therefore, open-source Chisel code to learn the language and the coding style is rare. Here we list several projects we are aware of that use Chisel and are in open source.

Rocket Chip is a [RISC-V](#) [13] processor-complex generator that comprises the Rocket microarchitecture and TileLink interconnect generators. Originally developed at UC Berkeley as the first chip-scale Chisel project [1], Rocket Chip is now commercially supported by [SiFive](#).

Sodor is a collection of RISC-V implementations intended for educational use. It contains 1, 2, 3, and 5 stages pipeline implementations. All processors use a simple scratchpad memory shared by instruction fetch, data access, and program loading via a debug port. Sodor is mainly intended to be used in simulation.

Patmos is an implementation of a processor optimized for real-time systems [10]. The Patmos repository includes several multicore communication architectures, such as a time-predictable memory arbiter [7], a network-on-chip [9] a shared scratchpad memory with an ownership [11]. At the time of this writing, Patmos is still described in Chisel 2.

FlexPRET is an implementation of a precision timed architecture [14]. FlexPRET implements the RISC-V instruction set and has been updated to Chisel 3.1.

Lipsi is a tiny processor intended for utility functions on a system-on-chip [6]. As the code base of Lipsi is very small, it can serve as an easy starting point for processor design in Chisel. Lipsi also showcases the productivity of Chisel/Scala. It took me 14 hours to describe the hardware in Chisel and run it on an FPGA, write an assembler in Scala, write a Lipsi instruction set simulator in Scala for co-simulation, and write a few test cases in Lipsi assembler.

OpenSoC Fabric is an open-source NoC generator written in Chisel [5]. It is intended to provide a system-on-chip for large-scale design exploration. The NoC itself is a state-of-the-art design with wormhole routing, credits for flow control, and virtual channels. OpenSoC Fabric is still using Chisel 2.

DANA is a neural network accelerator that integrates with the RISC-V Rocket processor using the Rocket Custom Coprocessor (RoCC) interface [4]. DANA supports inference and learning.

Chiselwatt is an implementation of the POWER Open ISA. It includes instruction to run Micropython.

If you know an open-source project that uses Chisel, please drop me a note so I can include it in a future edition of the book.

B Chisel 2

This book covers version 3 of Chisel. Moreover, Chisel 3 is recommended for new designs. However, there is still Chisel 2 code out in the wild, which has not yet been converted to Chisel 3. There is documentation available on how to convert a Chisel 2 project to Chisel 3:

- [Chisel2 vs. Chisel3](#) and
- [Towards Chisel 3](#)

However, you might get involved in a project that still uses Chisel 2, e.g., the [Patmos](#) [10] processor. Therefore, we provide here some information on Chisel 2 coding for those who have started with Chisel 3.

First, all documentation on Chisel 2 has been removed from the web sites belonging to Chisel. We have rescued those PDF documents and put them on GitHub at <https://github.com/schoeberl/chisel2-doc>. You can use the Chisel 2 tutorial by switching to the Chisel 2 branch:

```
$ git clone https://github.com/ucb-bar/chisel-tutorial.git
$ cd chisel-tutorial
$ git checkout chisel2
```

The main visible difference between Chisel 3 and 2 are the definitions of constants, bundles for IO, wires, memories, and probably older forms of register definitions.

Chisel 2 constructs can be used, to some extent, in a Chisel 3 project by using the compatibility layer using as package Chisel instead of chisel3. However, using this compatibility layer should only be used in a transition phase. Therefore, we do not cover it here.

Here are two examples of basic components, the same that have been presented for Chisel 3. A module containing combinational logic:

```
import Chisel._

class Logic extends Module {
  val io = new Bundle {
```

```
    val a = UInt(INPUT, 1)
    val b = UInt(INPUT, 1)
    val c = UInt(INPUT, 1)
    val out = UInt(OUTPUT, 1)
  }

  io.out := io.a & io.b | io.c
}
```

Note that the Bundle for the IO definition is *not* wrapped into an IO() class. Furthermore, the direction of the different IO ports is defined as part of the type definition, in this example as INPUT and OUTPUT as part of UInt. The width is given as the second parameter.

The 8-bit register example in Chisel 2:

```
import Chisel._

class Register extends Module {
  val io = new Bundle {
    val in = UInt(INPUT, 8)
    val out = UInt(OUTPUT, 8)
  }

  val reg = Reg(init = UInt(0, 8))
  reg := io.in

  io.out := reg
}
```

Here you see a typical register definition with a reset value passed in as a UInt to the named parameter init. This form is still valid in Chisel 3, but the usage of RegInit and RegNext is recommended for new Chisel 3 designs. Note also here the constant definition of an 8-bit wide 0 as UInt(0, 8).

Chisel based testing C++ code and Verilog code are generated by calling chiselMainTest and chiselMain. Both “main” functions take a String array for further parameters.

```
import Chisel._

class LogicTester(c: Logic) extends Tester(c) {

  poke(c.io.a, 1)
  poke(c.io.b, 0)
```

```

    poke(c.io.c, 1)
    step(1)
    expect(c.io.out, 1)
}

object LogicTester {
  def main(args: Array[String]): Unit = {
    chiselMainTest(Array("--genHarness", "--test",
      "--backend", "c",
      "--compile", "--targetDir", "generated"),
      () => Module(new Logic())) {
      c => new LogicTester(c)
    }
  }
}

import Chisel._

object LogicHardware {
  def main(args: Array[String]): Unit = {
    chiselMain(Array("--backend", "v"), () => Module(new
      Logic()))
  }
}

```

A memory with sequential registered read and write ports is defined in Chisel 2 as:

```

val mem = Mem(UInt(width = 8), 256, seqRead = true)
val rdData = mem(Reg(next = rdAddr))
when(wrEna) {
  mem(wrAddr) := wrData
}

```


C Acronyms

Hardware designers and computer engineers like to use acronyms. However, it needs time to get used to them. Here is a list of common terms related to digital design and computer architecture.

ADC analog-to-digital converter

ALU arithmetic and logic unit

ASIC application-specific integrated circuit

CFG control flow graph

Chisel constructing hardware in a Scala embedded language

CISC complex instruction set computer

CPI clock cycles per instruction

CRC cyclic redundancy check

DAC digital-to-analog converter

DFF D flip-flop, data flip-flop

DMA direct memory access

DRAM dynamic random access memory

EMC electromagnetic compatibility

ESD electrostatic discharge

FF flip-flop

FIFO first-in, first-out

FPGA field-programmable gate array

HDL hardware description language
HLS high-level synthesis
IC instruction count
IDE integrated development environment
ILP instruction level parallelism
IO input/output
ISA instruction set architecture
JDK Java development kit
JIT just-in-time
JVM Java virtual machine
LC logic cell
LRU least-recently used
MMIO memory-mapped IO
MUX multiplexer
OO object oriented
OOO out-of order
OS operating system
RISC reduced instruction set computer
SDRAM synchronous DRAM
SRAM static random access memory
TOS top-of stack
UART universal asynchronous receiver/transmitter
VHDL VHSIC hardware description language
VHSIC very high speed integrated circuit
WCET Worst-Case Execution Time

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