

Lab Assignment: Detect Loop in a Linked List

Objective

Implement a function in C to detect whether a given singly linked list contains a cycle (loop) using the Floyd's Cycle-Finding algorithm (also known as the Tortoise and Hare algorithm).

Problem Statement

Given the head of a singly linked list, determine if there exists a loop in the list. Return 1 (or true) if a loop exists, otherwise return 0 (or false). Use $O(n)$ time complexity and $O(1)$ auxiliary space.

Function Signature

```
int detectLoop(struct Node* head);
```

Approach (Floyd's Algorithm)

- Initialize two pointers, `slow` and `fast`, both pointing to `head`.
- Move `slow` by one node and `fast` by two nodes in each iteration.
- If at any point `slow == fast`, a loop exists—return 1.
- Continue until `fast` or `fast->next` becomes `NULL`, indicating no loop—return 0.

Example Cases

- **Loop Present:** Input: 1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5 → 2 (loop back) Output: 1 (true)
- **No Loop:** Input: 10 → 20 → 30 → 40 → 50 Output: 0 (false)