

Worksheet 5.1: Synchronization, Hardware Solutions to the Critical-Section Problem

Consider the following solution to the **Critical Section Problem** using the **test_and_set** hardware instruction.

```
for (iter = 1; iter<=2; iter++) {  
1  waiting[i] = true;  
2  key = true;  
   printf("\n Process %d is waiting", i);  
3  while (waiting[i] && key)  
4     key = test_and_set(&lock);  
5  waiting[i] = false;  
  
printf("\n Process %d enters CS", i);  
  
   /* critical section */  
  
6  j = (i + 1) % n;  
7  while ((j != i) && !waiting[j])  
8     j = (j + 1) % n;  
printf("\n j = %d", j);  
9  if (j == i)  
10     lock = false;  
11 else  
12     waiting[j] = false;  
  
   /* remainder section */  
  
}
```

1. Assume that there are six processes (P_0, P_1, \dots, P_5). Considering the print statements added to the above code, show the output printed by the code if the following sequence of events takes place (the order is very important):
 - P_5 executes Line 3 in its first iteration
 - P_4 executes Line 3 in its first iteration
 - P_0 executes Line 3 in its first iteration

Assume that the remainder section is so short that if P_x exits its critical section and P_y enters its critical section next, P_x will complete its remainder section and execute Line 3 in its second iteration before P_y exits its critical section. So, when P_y exits its critical section, P_x will be waiting to enter the critical section for the second time.

OUTPUT:

```
Process 5 is waiting  
Process 4 is waiting  
Process 0 is waiting  
Process 5 enters CS  
Process 0 enters CS  
Process 4 enters CS
```

2. Can the above solution cause starvation? If yes, give a scenario (sequence of events) that causes starvation. If not, explain why. Of course, you must answer this question for the general case where each process may request access to the critical section an arbitrary number of times, not only two times. **(Limit: 3 lines)**.

Answer: Yes, the above solution can cause starvation. If multiple processes continuously enter the critical section back-to-back, a particular process may keep getting bypassed. For instance, if P0 keeps getting selected after its remainder section before P1 or P2 can enter, P1 or P2 may starve.

3. If the total number of processes is n , what's the maximum number of other processes that a waiting process may wait for before entering the critical section?

Answer: If the total number of processes is n , the maximum number of other processes that a waiting process may wait for before entering the critical section is $n - 1$. This is because, in the worst case, all other processes might be ahead in the waiting queue.