Bitcoin:
Programming the Future of Money

Topics in Computer Science - ITCS 4010/5010, Spring 2025

Dr. Christian Kümmerle

Lecture 17

Bitcoin Script

Some figures are taken from:

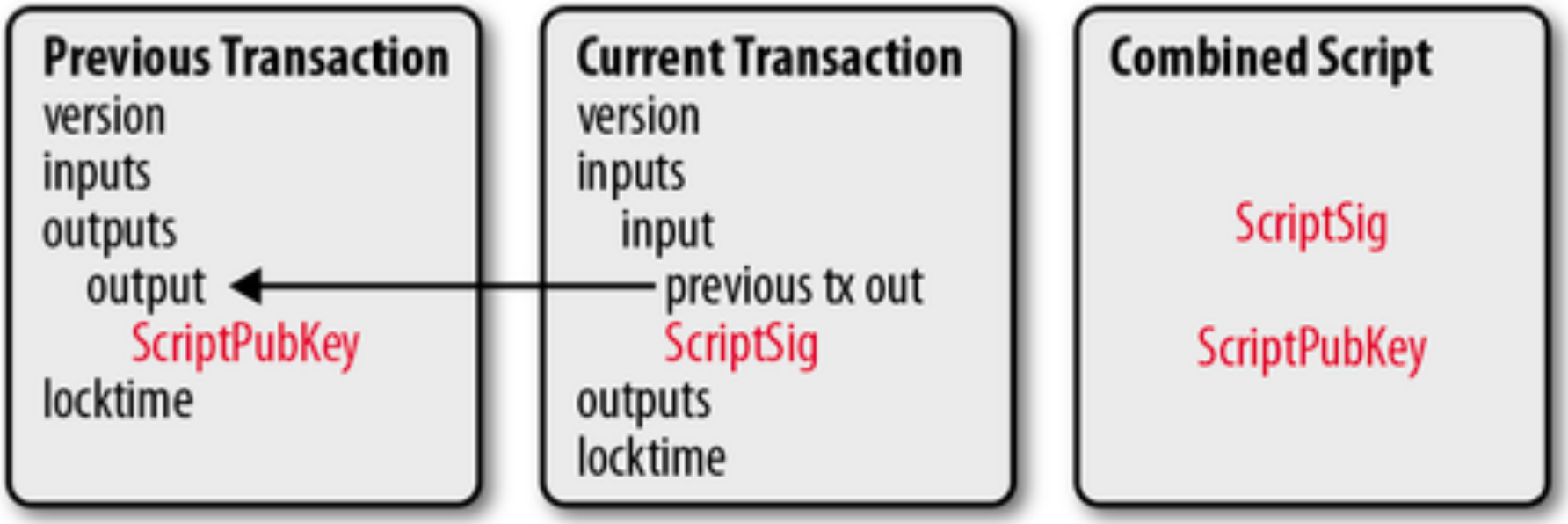
- “Mastering Bitcoin: Programming the Open Blockchain”, (Andreas Antonopoulos, David Harding), 3rd Edition, O’Reilly, 2023.

Bitcoin Script

RECAP: BITCOIN SCRIPT

- “Bitcoin Script” or “Script” is the internal programming language used for **prescribing conditions under which a output can be spent**, and for **providing flexible, yet secure validation rules** to satisfy the stated spending conditions.
- It is akin to the Forth programming language.
- Stack-based: Pushing and popping values of a stack.
- No ability to execute loops
- **Not a Turing-complete** programming language!
- Designed to be simple and operate without bugs -> Crucial for Security

OUTPUT SCRIPT, INPUT SCRIPT AND COMBINED SCRIPT



BASIC ELEMENTS OF A BITCOIN SCRIPT

BASIC OPERATIONS OF A BITCOIN SCRIPT

EXAMPLE: OP_DUP

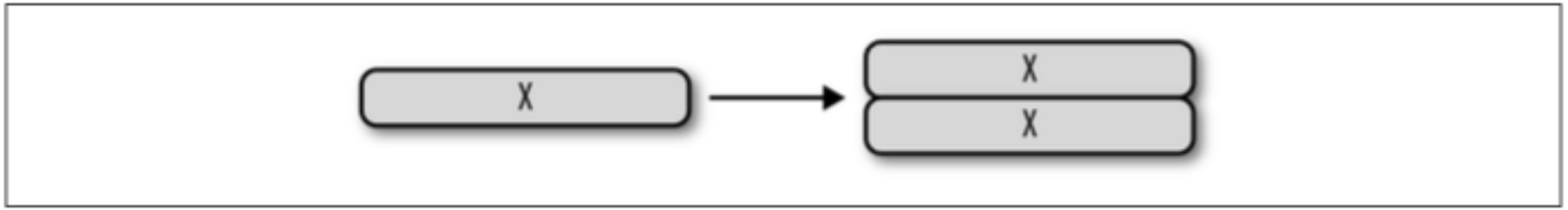


Figure 6-3. OP_DUP duplicates the top element

EXAMPLE: OP_HASH160

Figure 6-4. OP_HASH160 does a sha256 followed by ripemd160 to the top element

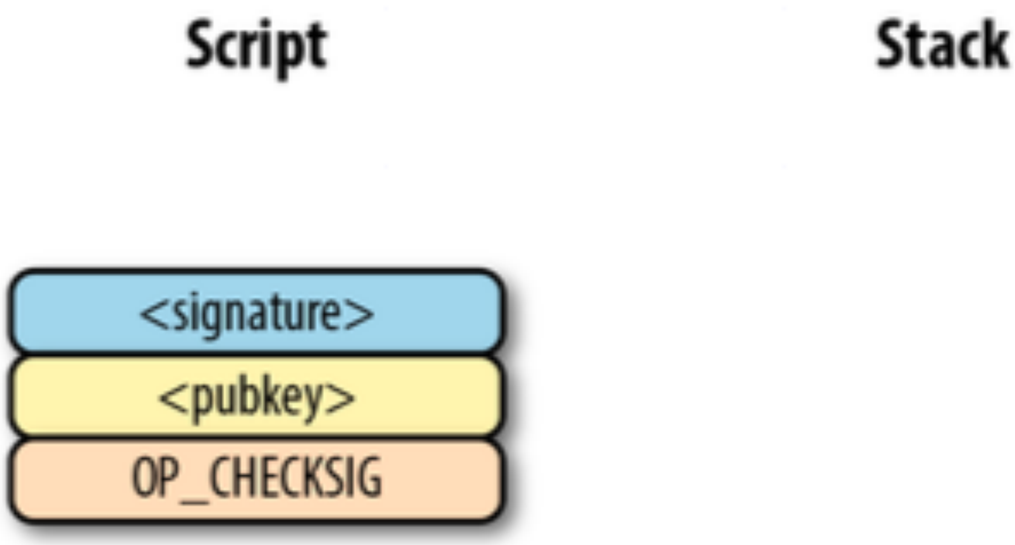
EXAMPLE: OP_CHECKSIG

Figure 6-5. OP_CHECKSIG checks if the signature for the pubkey is valid or not

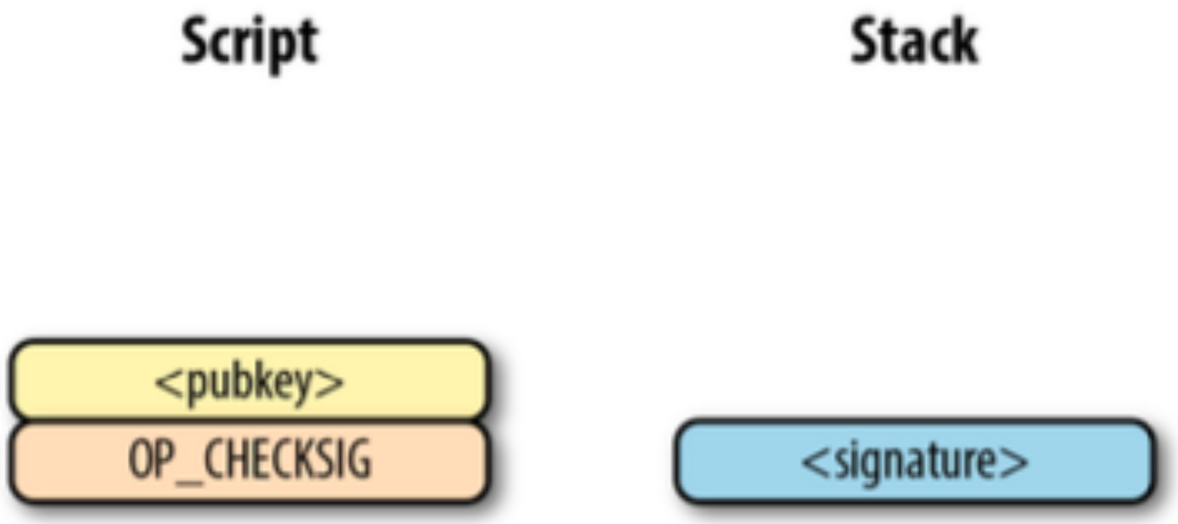
EXAMPLE: OUTPUT AND INPUT SCRIPT FOR P2PK

Figure 6-9. p2pk combined

EXAMPLE: OUTPUT AND INPUT SCRIPT FOR P2PK



EXAMPLE: OUTPUT AND INPUT SCRIPT FOR P2PK



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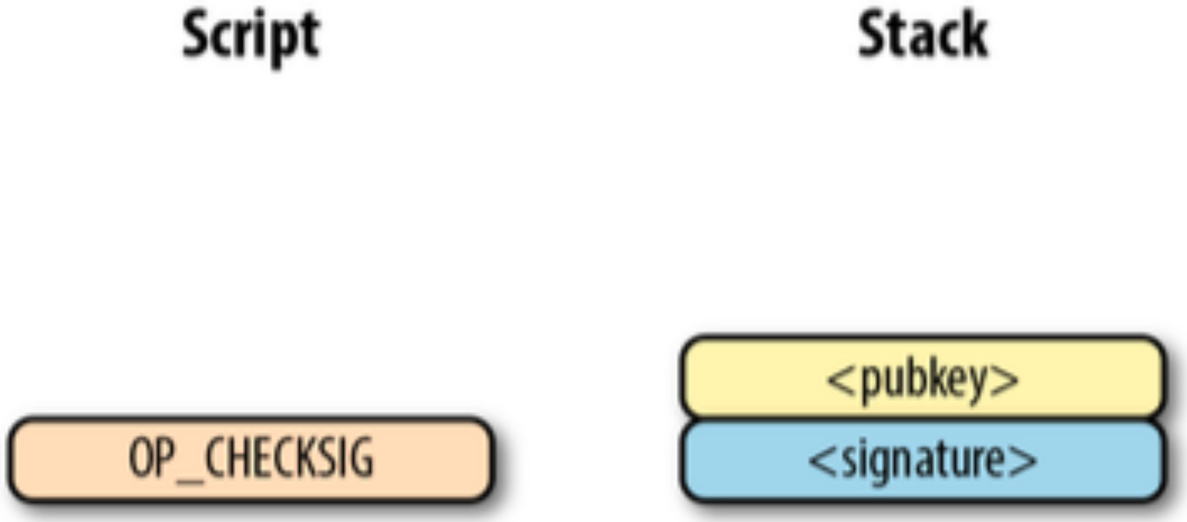


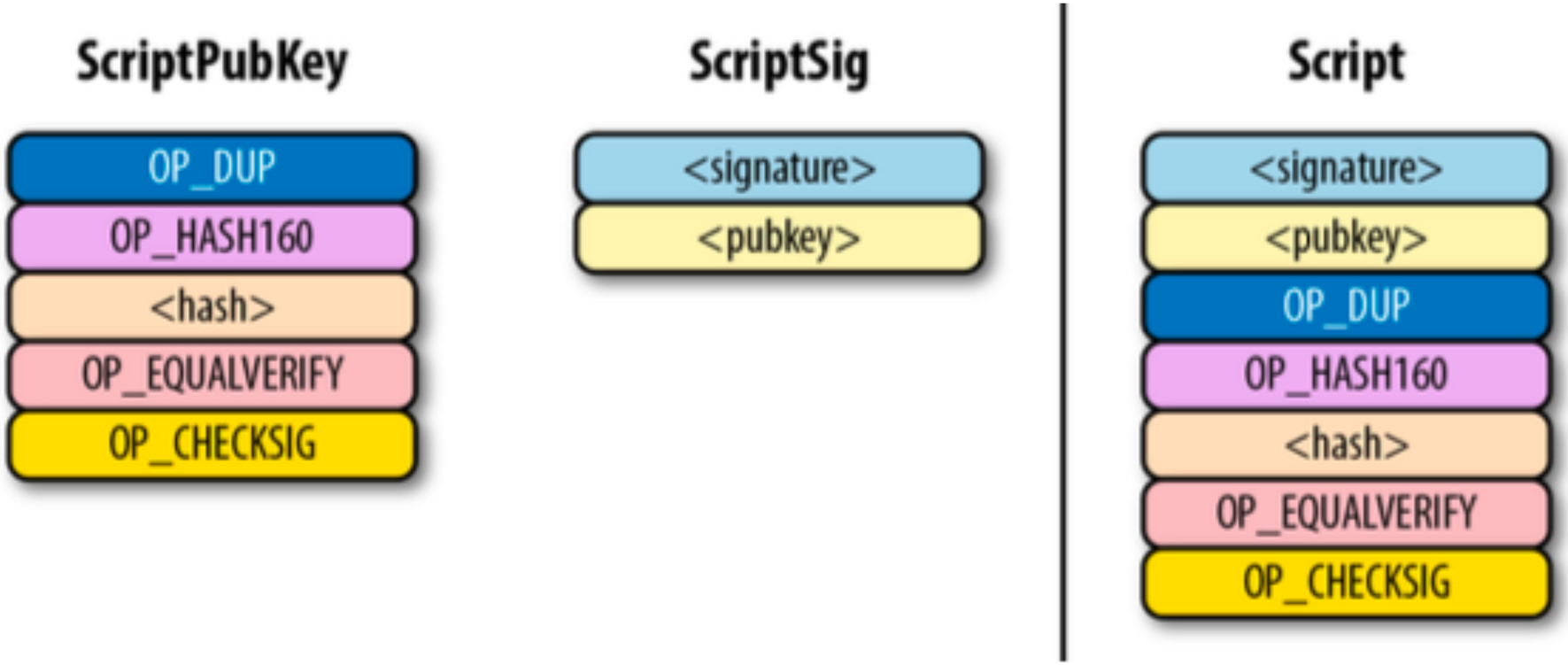
EXAMPLE: OUTPUT AND INPUT SCRIPT FOR P2PK

Outcome if signature and public key fit

EXAMPLE: OUTPUT AND INPUT SCRIPT FOR P2PK

Outcome if signature and public key do not fit

EXAMPLE: BITCOIN SCRIPT FOR P2PKH



Bitcoin Script execution rules:

- Input Script (from “ScriptSig” field of input) is executed (resulting in a stack)
- If executed without errors -> copy stack of input script, executed output script on it. If executed with errors -> Return FALSE
- Output Script (from “ScriptPubKey” field of output) is then executed.
- If resulting final stack only contains TRUE -> spending of output is valid.
- For SegWit outputs: “ScriptSig” of corresponding input empty, but corresponding “Witness” field of input used instead

EXAMPLE: SIMPLE ARITHMETIC SCRIPT

Input Script:

- 2

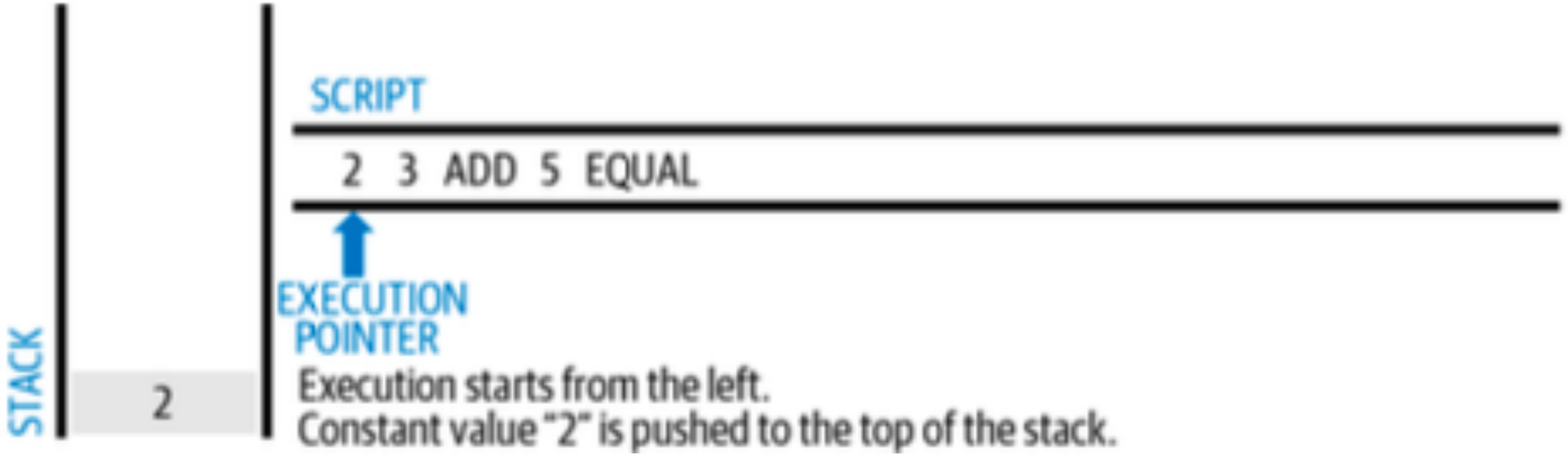
Output Script:

- 3 OP_ADD 5 OP_EQUAL

Combined Script:

- 3 OP_ADD 5 OP_EQUAL

EXAMPLE: SIMPLE ARITHMETIC SCRIPT



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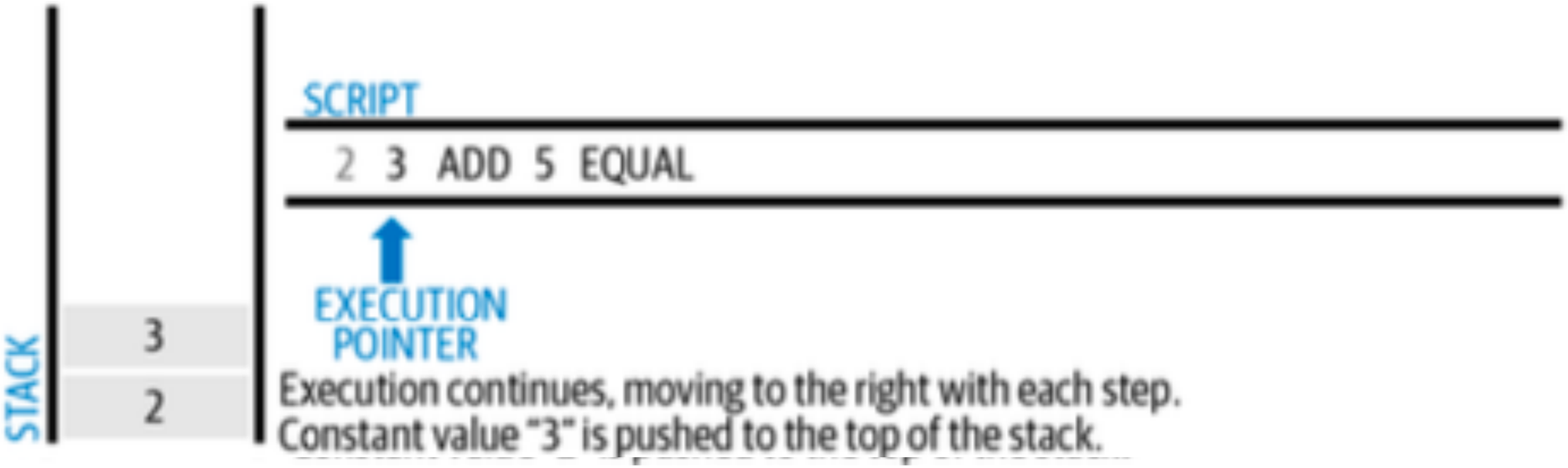

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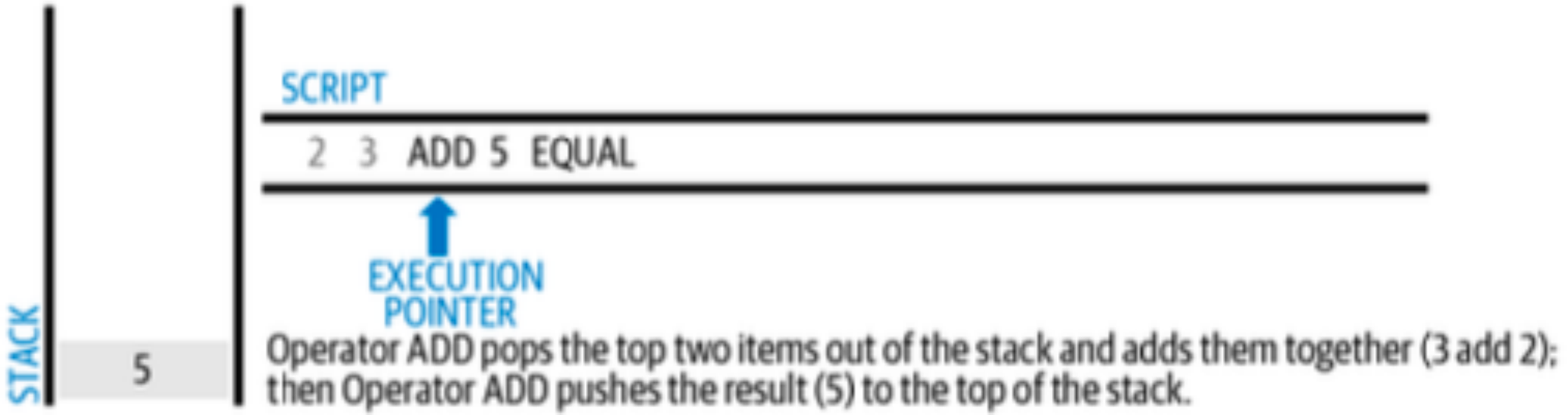

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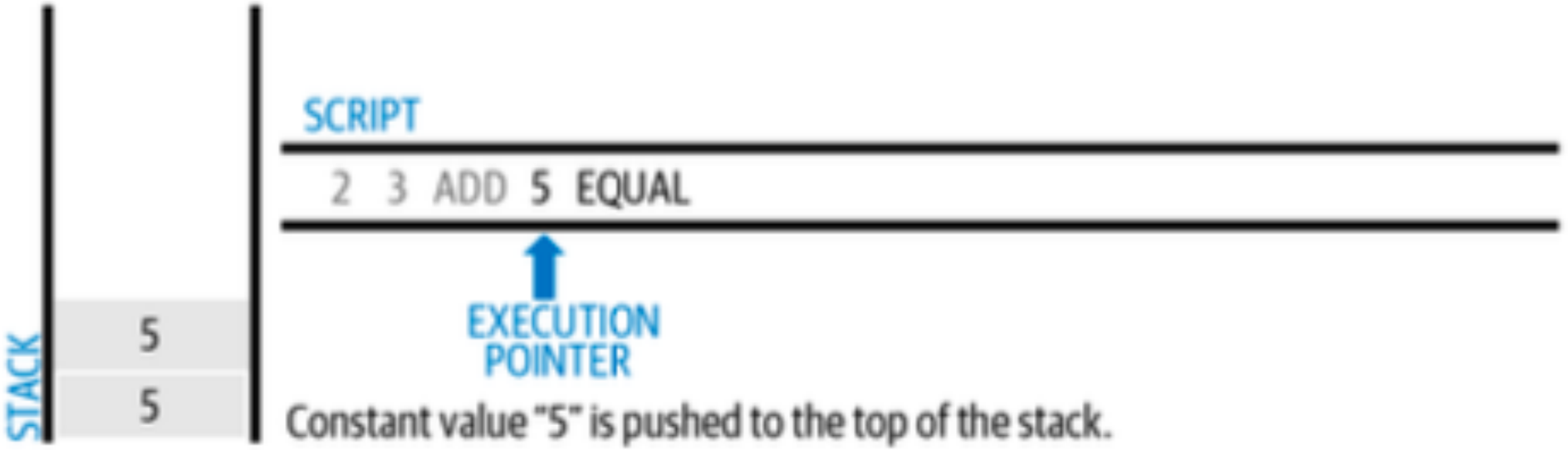

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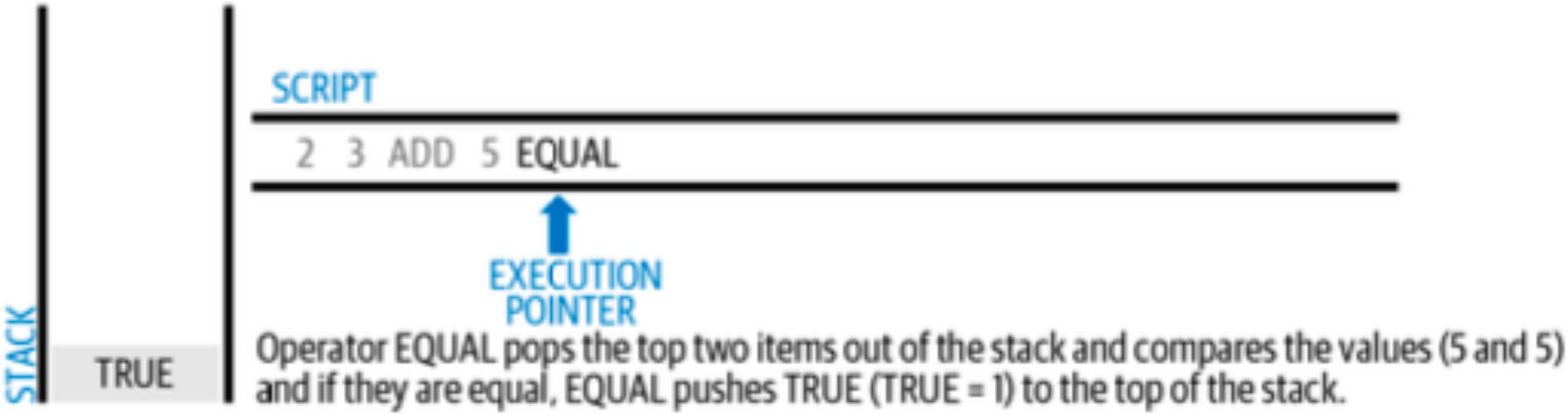


Note: Having such an output script would enable **anyone** to spend the UTXO (by simply providing input script “2”)!

EXAMPLE: SPENDING A P2PKH UTXO

Input Script:

- <Signature> <Public Key>

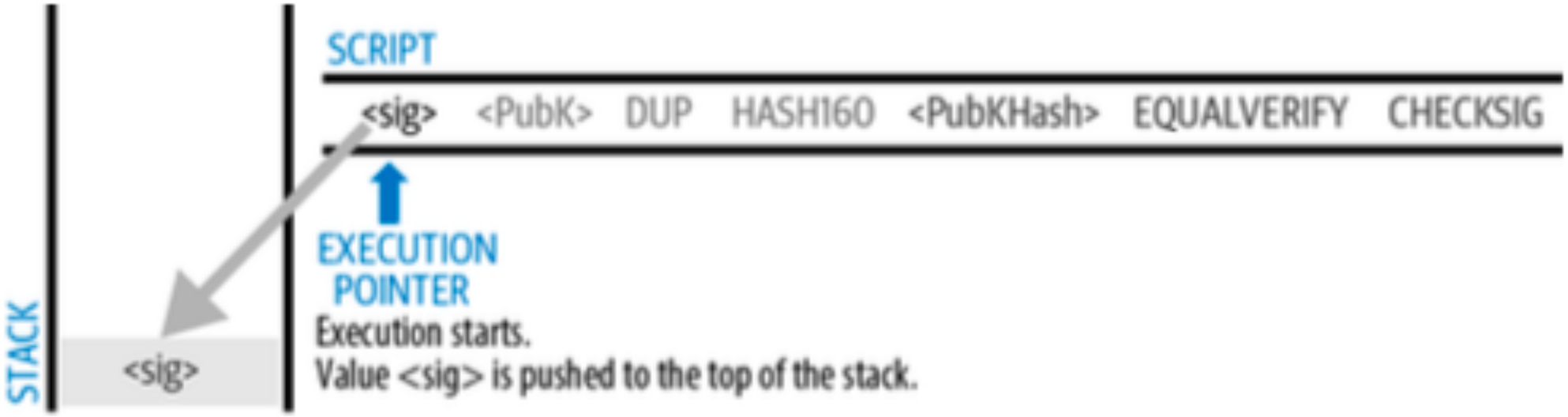
Output Script:

- OP_DUP OP_HASH160 <Key Hash> OP_EQUALVERIFY OP_CHECKSIG

Combined Script:

- <Signature> <Public Key> OP_DUP OP_HASH160 <Key Hash> OP_EQUALVERIFY OP_CHECKSIG

EXAMPLE: SPENDING A P2PKH UTXO



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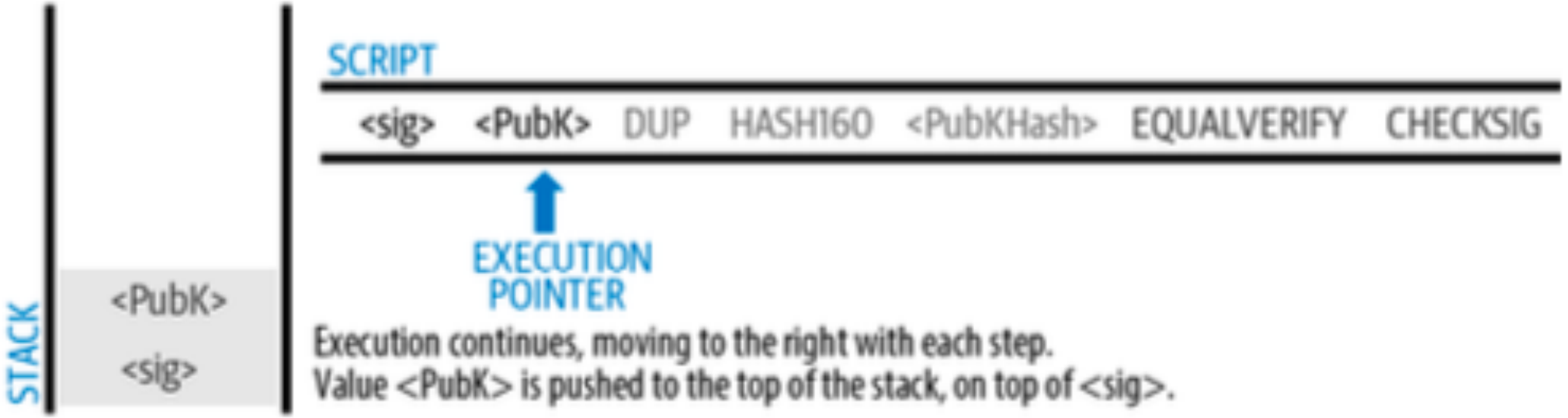

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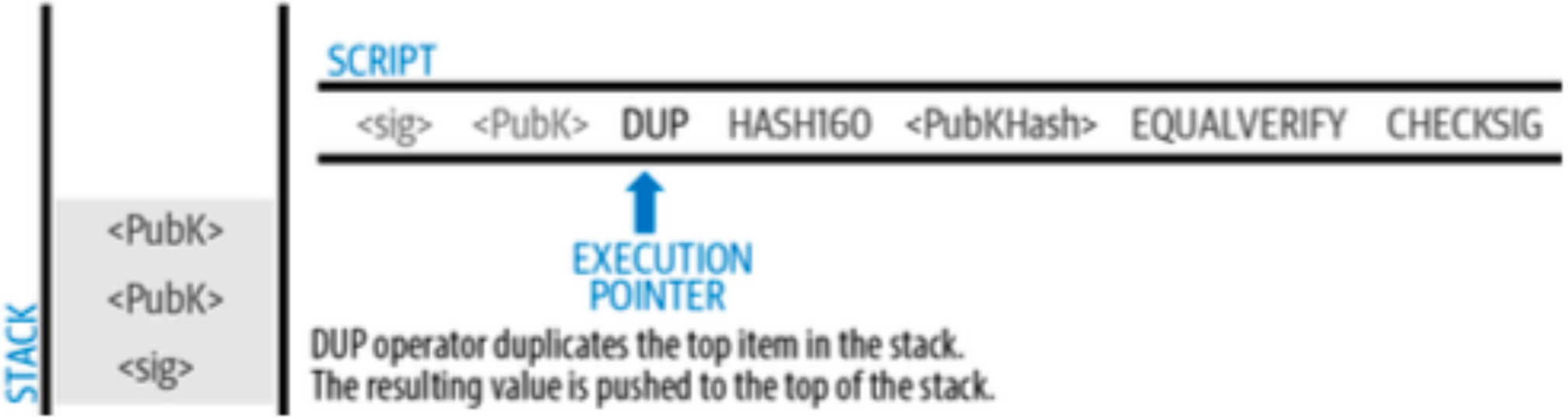

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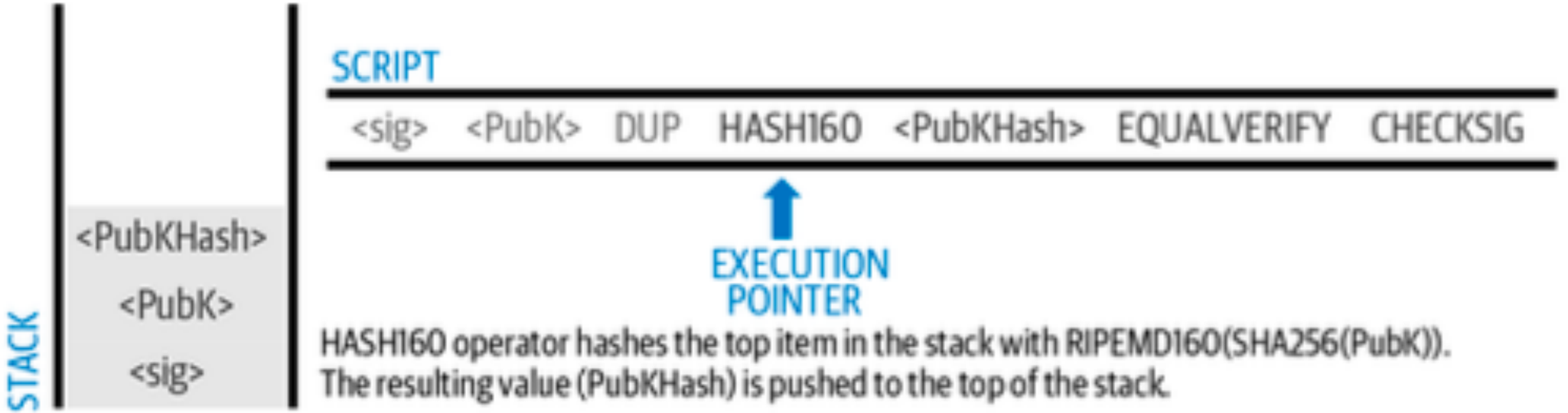

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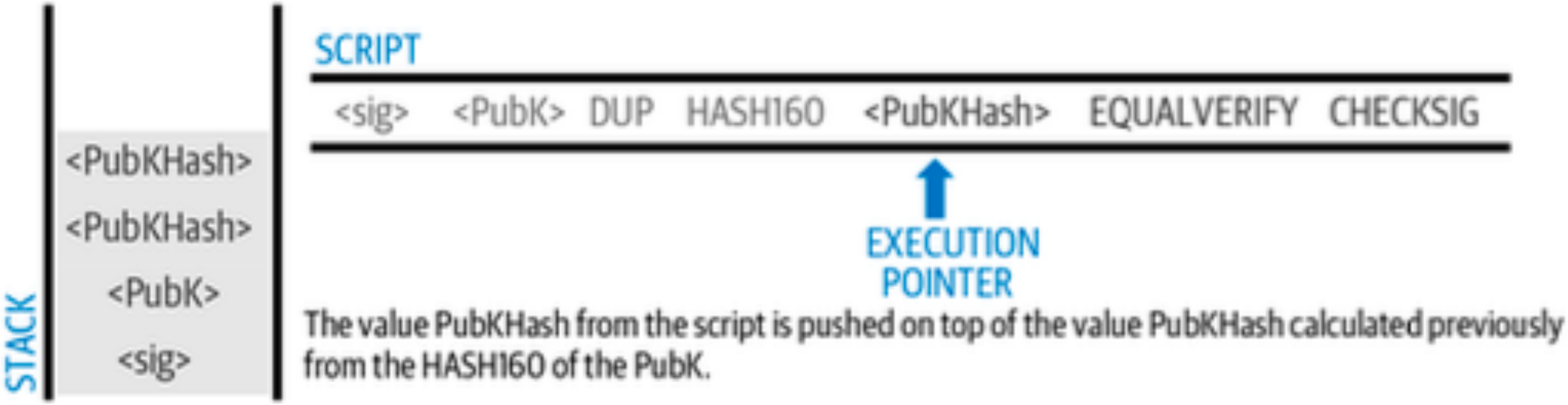

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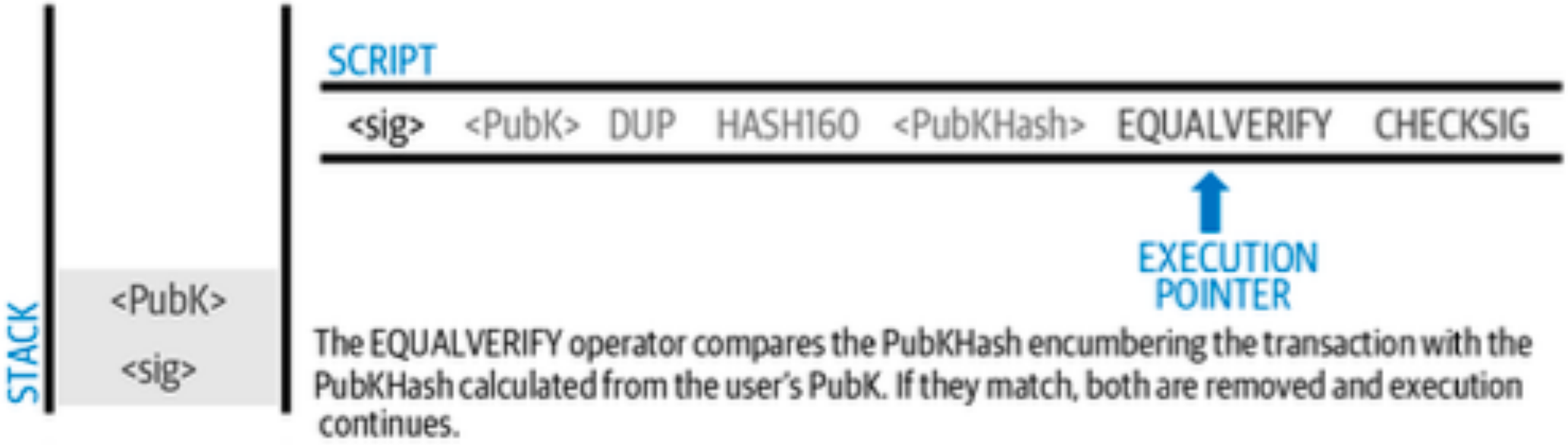

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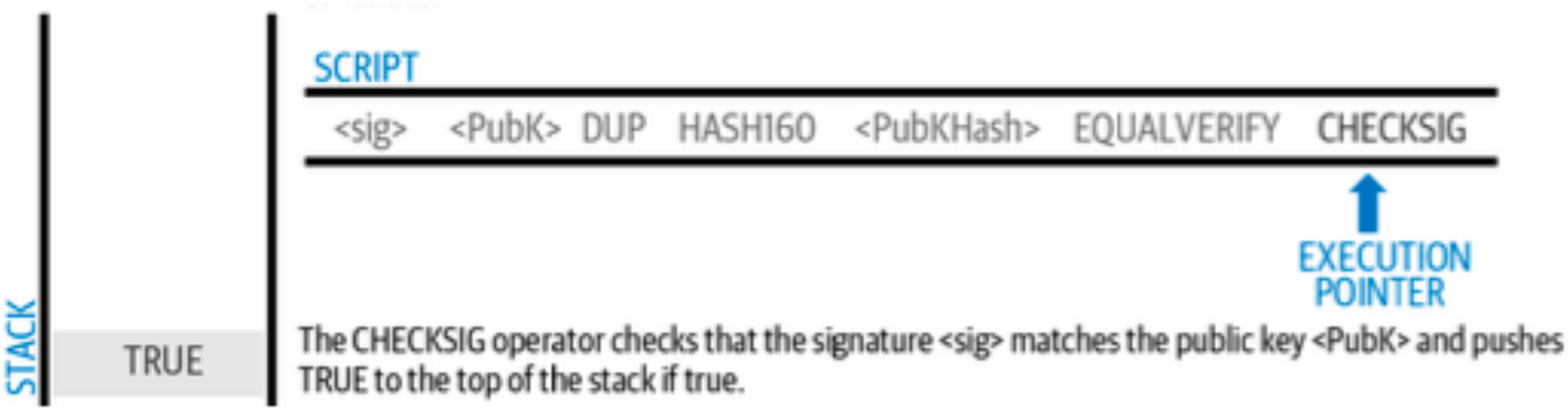


The final state of the stack will only be TRUE if the signature matches the public key. Otherwise, UTXO is not spendable.

SCRIPTED MULTISIGATURES: P2MS

Input Script:

- E.g., <Signature 2> <Signature k>

Output Script:

- t <Public Key 1> <Public Key 2> ... <Public Key k> k OP_CHECKMULTISIG

Combined Script:

- <Signature 2> <Signature k> t <Public Key 1> <Public Key 2> ... <Public Key k> k OP_CHECKMULTISIG

P2MS UTXOs are rare and limited. They are only able to encode t-of-k multi signatures with t and k smaller than 3.

MORE FLEXIBLE SCRIPT PATTERNS: P2SH

Input Script:

- E.g., <Signature 2> <Signature k> <Redeem Script>

Output Script:

- OP_HASH160 <20-byte hash of redeem script> OP_EQUAL

Redeem Script:

- t <Public Key 1> <Public Key 2> ... <Public Key k> k OP_CHECKMULTISIG

Features of P2SH:

- Easy to implement: We have “address” format, unlike for P2MS
- More flexible script patterns possible.
- Burden of data storage of script shifted from output to input script (i.e., to future spends)

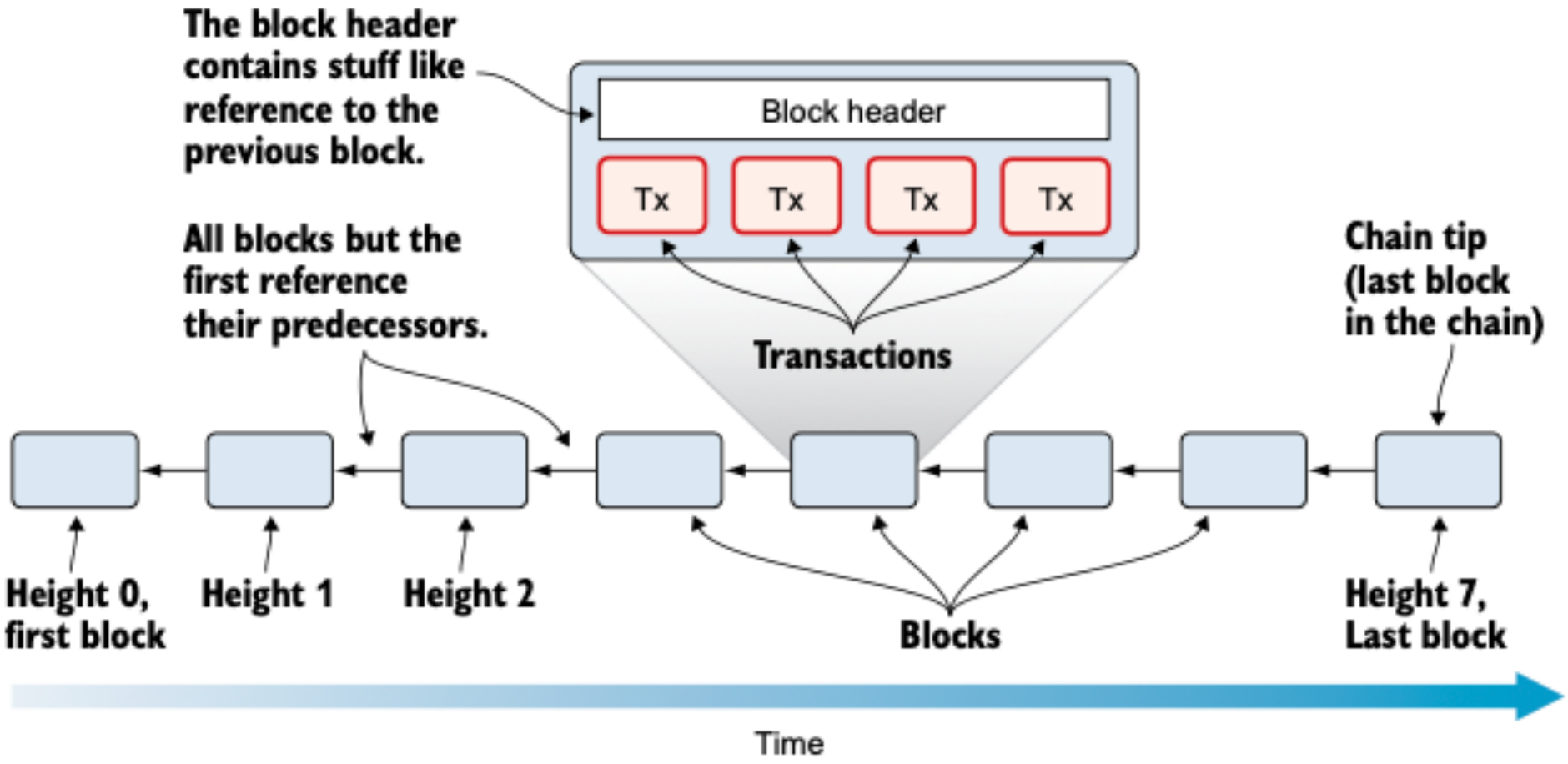
Note:

- The evaluation of P2SH scripts is slightly different than the one of other scripts due to the existence of the redeem script. This is specified in BIP0016.
- In particular, the rules are:
  - Validation fails if there are any operations other than "push data" operations in the ScriptSig.
  - Normal validation is done: an initial stack is created from the signatures and <RedeemScript>, and the hash of the script is computed and validation fails immediately if it does not match the hash in the outpoint.
  - <RedeemScript> is popped off the initial stack, and the transaction is validated again using the popped stack and the deserialized <RedeemScript> as the ScriptPubKey

- See Chapter 8 on “Pay-to-Script-Hash” in Programming Bitcoin for a detailed discussion

Bitcoin Blocks

STRUCTURE OF THE BITCOIN BLOCKCHAIN



A BLOCK HEADER EXAMPLE

```
020000208ec39428b17323fa0ddec8e887b4a7c53b8c0a0
a220cfd0000000000000000005b0750fce0a889502d4050
8d39576821155e9c9e3f5c3157f961db38fd8b25be1e77a
759e93c0118a4ffd71d
```

- 02000020 - version, 4 bytes, LE
- 8ec3...00 - previous block, 32 bytes, LE
- 5b07...be - merkle root, 32 bytes, LE
- 1e77a759 - timestamp, 4 bytes, LE
- e93c0118 - bits, 4 bytes
- a4ffd71d - nonce, 4 bytes

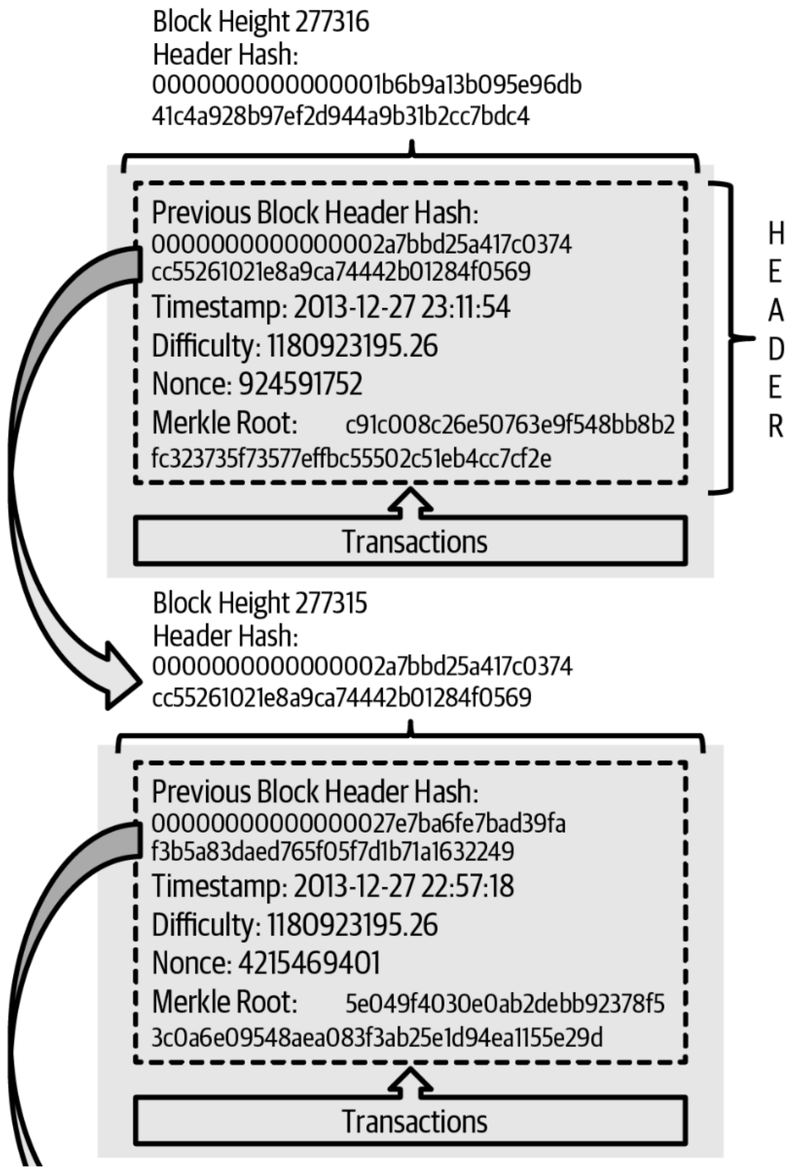
A Bitcoin block header and its breakdown.

STRUCTURE OF A BITCOIN BLOCK

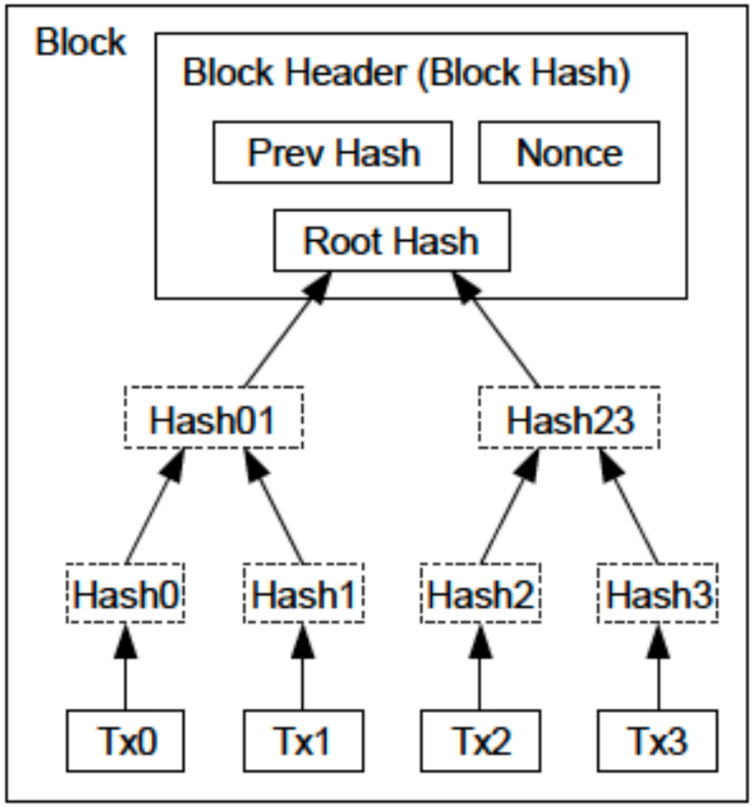
Block			
Field	**Size**	**Format**	**Description**
Version ↘	4 bytes	little-endian	The version number for the block.
Previous Block ↘	32 bytes	natural byte order	The block hash of a previous block this block is building on top of.
Merkle Root ↘	32 bytes	natural byte order	A fingerprint for all of the transactions included in the block.
Time ↘	4 bytes	little-endian	The current time as a Unix timestamp.
Bits ↘	4 bytes	little-endian	A compact representation of the current target.
Nonce ↘	4 bytes	little-endian	
Transaction Count	compact	compact size	How many upcoming transactions are included in the block.
Transactions	variable	transaction data	All of the raw transactions included in the block concatenated together.

In grey background: This part is called the **block header** of a Bitcoin block.

A BLOCK IN THE BITCOIN BLOCKCHAIN



Two Bitcoin blockchain blocks

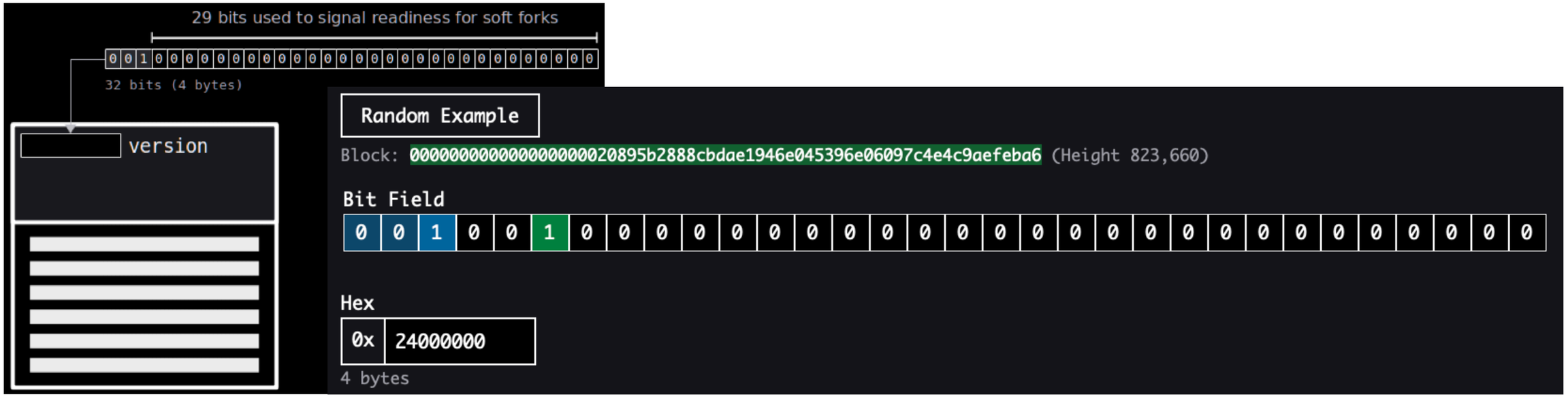


Transactions Hashed in a Merkle Tree

Schematic structure of a Bitcoin blockchain block

BITCOIN BLOCK: VERSION FIELD

- Length: 4 bytes
- Contains information about which Bitcoin protocol update (“soft fork”) the miner of the block is expressing support for.
- BIP 9: Standardizes how to miner can express support for multiple proposals, if first 3 bits of first byte are 001.
- Can also be used freely as part of “nonce” to alter the resulting block header hash.



BITCOIN BLOCK: PREVIOUS BLOCK

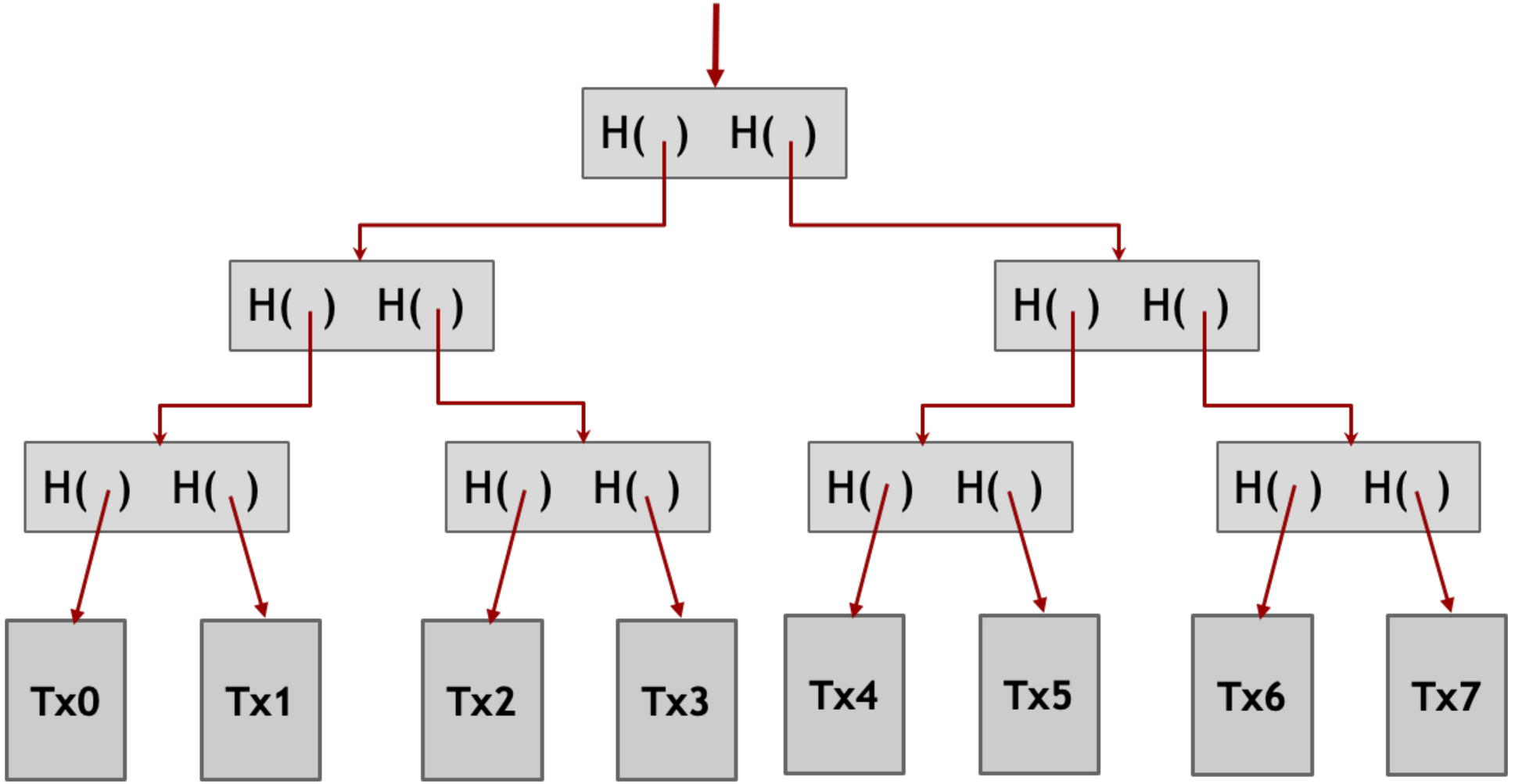
- Length: 32 bytes
- Hash of previous block in the Bitcoin blockchain.
- Contains information about the mining difficulty.

Height	Block Hash
866,107	00000000000000000001af6280b98be52c4787b7b3520672bf0afd92ca89dad4
866,106	00000000000000000002d15114d27ccf790bdcb86e61c5f04b49f6098ebd832f
866,105	00000000000000000026f69db132bb21945fa2af4aa11bb5eb0b7211eaf533f
866,104	00000000000000000000fa53ea9f98a694ce28acefb3d1d12d82e15177843b45
866,103	00000000000000000010cecf6ea4d7c05b1912b69a3da87c8120f38302aa85f

Five examples

BITCOIN BLOCK: MERKLE ROOT

- Length: 32 bytes
- Encodes all transactions of block in one 32-byte hash.
- Can be used for simplified verification of transactions.

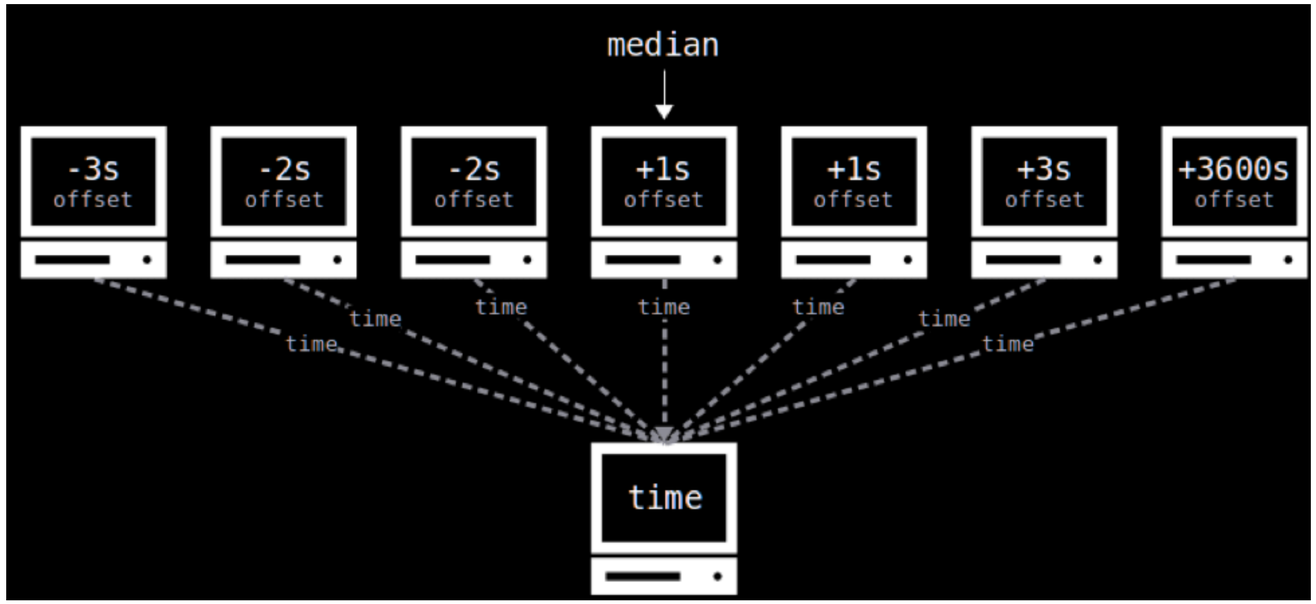


BITCOIN BLOCK: TIME(STAMP)

- Length: 4 bytes, little-endian.
- Indicates the time when the block was mined (in Unix time)
- Note: **There can be successive blocks with reverse order of timestamps!**
- **Rules:**
  - Must be greater than median time of last 11 blocks.
  - Less than “network adjusted time” + 2 hours.

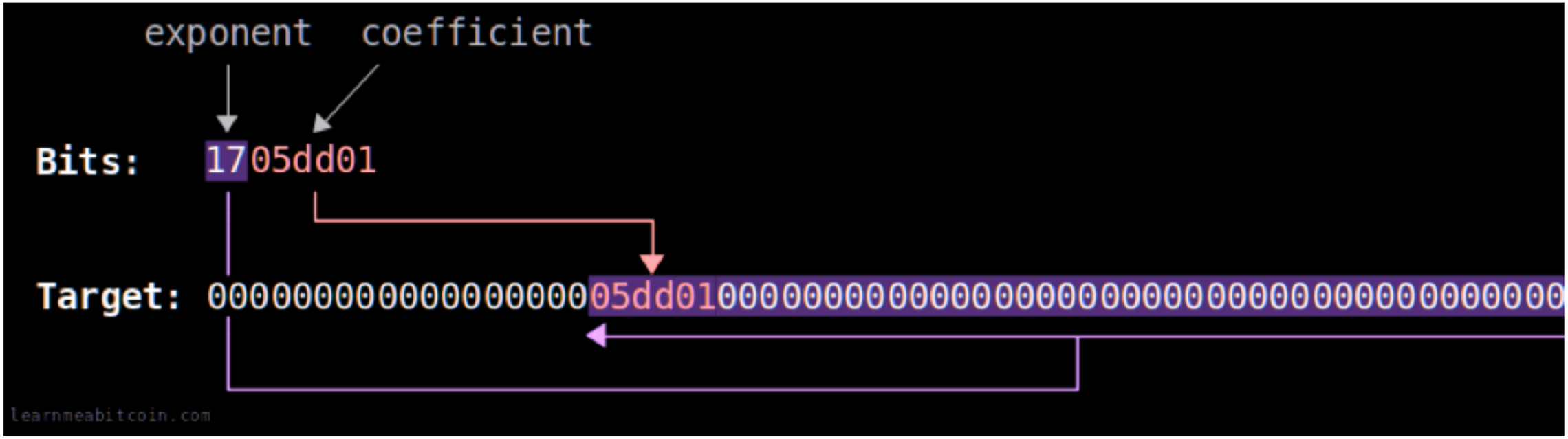
Usages:

- Compute difficulty target adjustment.
- To enforce transaction locktime.



BITCOIN BLOCK: BITS

- Length: 4 bytes
- Encodes **target for difficulty adjustment** in the mining process.
- Exponent (first byte): How many leading zeros.
- Coefficient (following 3 bytes): Specifies exact target value.



BITCOIN BLOCK: NONCE

- Length: 4 bytes, little-endian
- Is increased by miner successively to change the block hash.

BITCOIN BLOCK: TRANSACTION COUNT AND TRANSACTIONS

- We already learned what they are like!

COINBASE TRANSACTION

- Corresponds to transaction paying out the miner reward to the miner of the block.
- Currently 3.15 BTC / block (since April 2024).
- Must be first transaction in the block.
- TXID: Must be all zeros.
- Input index number (VOUT): Set to maximal value.
- Does NOT have anything to do with the company Coinbase!

```
01000000010000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000ffffffff0804233fa04e028b12ffffffff013049
0b2a010000004341047eda6bd04fb27cab6e7c28c99b94977f073e912f25d1ff7165d9c95cd9bbe6da7e7ad7f2acb09e0ced91705f7616af53
bee51a238b7dc527f2be0aa60469d140ac00000000

Transaction: 18a16d322b235f636ab90e62e79a9f20a0b9c14e8da51e9dc0974f99f82ee444
```

Example Coinbase Transaction