Chapter 3 - RTOS

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For complex systems with many parallel things going on, an RTOS is critical.

In an IoT device you might have:

1. A task that reads data from the pins (task = thread)
2. A task that manages the WiFi connection
3. A task that sends data to the cloud

An RTOS helps to simplify multiple parallel independent tasks like those. It manages things so that:

1. everyone gets a turn
2. things happen at the right time
3. shared resources are used properly

Two major schemes:

1. preemptive multitasking (CPU completely controls when a task runs and can stop/start)
2. cooperative multitasking – each thread needs to yield control

The WICED RTOS’s are cooperative so your tasks need to be good citizens

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WICED Studio supports ThreadX and FreeRTOS.

ThreadX:

1. built into the device ROM
2. license is included if you are using WICED chips

Built in abstraction layer means they both look the same to the user

Show RTOS documentation (Components > RTOS)

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Potential problems with RTOS:

1. deadlocks
2. resource conflicts with shared resources
3. inter-process communication

To solve these issues, we use:

1. Semaphores
2. Queues
3. Mutexes
4. Timers

Note that the first three are ways for a thread to yield control

The process to use each is basically:

1. Create a (global) data structure
2. Intialize
3. Access the Data Structure
4. Deinit

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Creating a thread

Thread function looks just like the main application\_start function - typically has an infinite loop – it will keep running its task over and over

Point out that the delay causes thread to yield. Should include unless some other mechanism is used

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Usually have while(1) loop but don’t have to have it in a thread (or even application\_start)

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Semaphore

like a ship’s signal flag

one (or more) threads can set the flag, one (or more) threads can get the flag

counting semaphore:

set will increment flag

get will decrement flag

if count = 0 the get will suspend thread until someone sets it or until an optional timeout

use WICED\_WAIT\_FOREVER if you don’t want a timeout

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Mutex - Mutual exclusion

Use when 2 resources want to access the same shared resource (e.g. memory, I2C, UART, LEDs, etc.)

Lock > Use Resource > Unlock

If someone else has already locked the mutex, the thread will suspend until it is unlocked

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Queue

Like a Semaphore, but with a message passed

Use Push to Queue and Pop from Queue

The message in the queue must be a multiple of 4 bytes

The queue can be as many messages deep as you want

During a pop, if nothing is in the queue, the thread will suspend until there is (or until a timeout)

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Timer

A timer is just a function that executes at a specified interval

Unlike a thread, the timer function should NOT have a while(1) loop – it will be called again each time the timer expires.

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Exercises – 90 minutes

Debugger is exercise 06