Chapter 4. Pointers

Programming Concepts in Scientific Programming

EPFL, Master class

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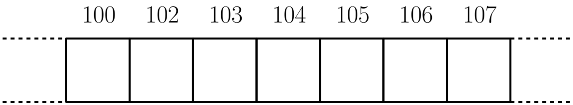
Pointers and the Computer Memory

Addresses

```
int x = 1;
int y = 2;
std::cout << &x << "\n";
```



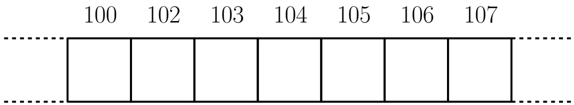
Debug this program (breakpoint on line 3)

```
(gdb) x/2wx &x
(gdb) x/2wx &y
(gdb) x/2wx &x
(gdb) x/2wx &y
```

Want to know more ? ⇒ (gdb) help x

Pointers and the Computer Memory
Addresses

```
int total_sum = 10;
```



Getting an adress: &

```
std::cout << &total_sum << "\n";
```

Pointers and the Computer Memory

Pointer Variables

Using the *star* in types:

```
double *p_x;
```

Example of use

```
// x stores a double precision number
double x = 3;
// p_x stores the address of a double
double *p_x = &x;
```

Try it with CLion !

```
double x = 3;
double *p_x = &x;

std::cout << p_x << std::endl;
```

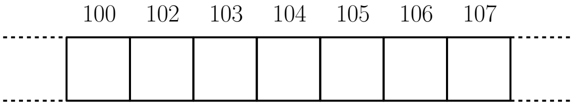
Debug this program (breakpoint on line 6)

Hit this command in gdb:

```
(gdb) x/3wx &x
```

Try it with CLion !

What is the memory structure ?



String of characters

Declare an array of characters:

```c
char name[250] = "yopla";
```

However, I can write:

```c
char *ptr = name;
```

because an array of characters is actually a pointer!

Main: argv structure

Considering this code:

```
int main(int argc, char ** argv){
  int p = atoi(argv[1]);
  double z = atoi(argv[2]);
}
```

If I launch the executable like this:

```
> ./exec 10 8.985985
```

What is the memory structure in that case ?

Aliasing/de-reference

```
double y = 3.0;
double *p_x = &y;
```

```
// This changes the value of y
*p_x = 1.0;
```

Warnings on the Use of Pointers

What is the problem with this code ?

```
double *p_x;

*p_x = 1.0;
```

Warnings on the Use of Pointers

```
// p_x stores the address of a double
// not yet specified
double *p_x;

// trying to assign 1.0 in an unspecified
// memory location
*p_x = 1.0;
```

Dynamic Allocation of Memory

```
int *x = new int;

*x = 10;

delete x;
```

Dynamic Allocation of Memory

Vectors

```
double *x = new double[10];
double *y = new double[10];

for (int i = 0; i < 10; i++) {
  x[i] = double(i);
  y[i] = 2.0 * x[i];
}

delete[] x;
delete[] y;
```

Matrices

```
int rows = 5, cols = 3;
double **A = new double *[rows];

for (int i = 0; i < rows; i++) {
  A[i] = new double[cols];
}

// you can access the values of the array with
A[2][4] = 5;

// At the end: deallocate the memory
for (int i = 0; i < rows; i++) {
  delete[] A[i];
}
delete[] A;
```

ROW MAJOR format

```
double *p_a = new double[rows * cols];

double **A = new double *[rows];
for (int i = 0; i < rows; i++) {
  A[i] = &p_a[i * rows];
  A[i] = p_a + i * rows;
}

// you can access the values of the array with
A[2][4] = 5;
// or with
p_a[2 * rows + 4] = 5;

// At the end: de-allocate the memory
delete[] A;
delete[] p_a;
```

ROW MAJOR format

- ROW MAJOR: C, C++
- COLUMN MAJOR: Matlab and Fortran

Tips

- Pointer Aliasing: e.g. coding
  - $C = A \cdot B$
  - $A = A \cdot B$
- Dynamic Allocation: check non-null pointer:

```
int *p_x = new int;
assert(p_x != NULL);
```

- Every new Has a delete