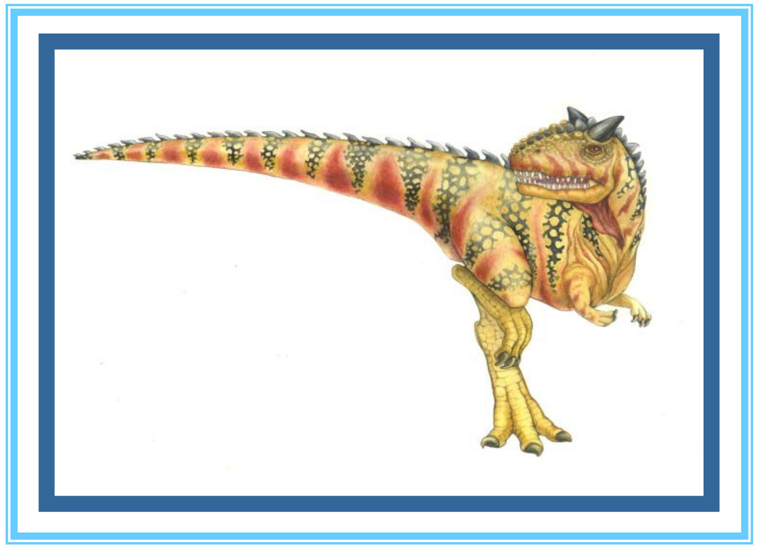
Chapter 4: Multithreaded Programming



Chapter 4: Multithreaded Programming

- Overview
- Multicore Programming
- Multithreading Models
- Thread Libraries
- Implicit Threading
- Threading Issues

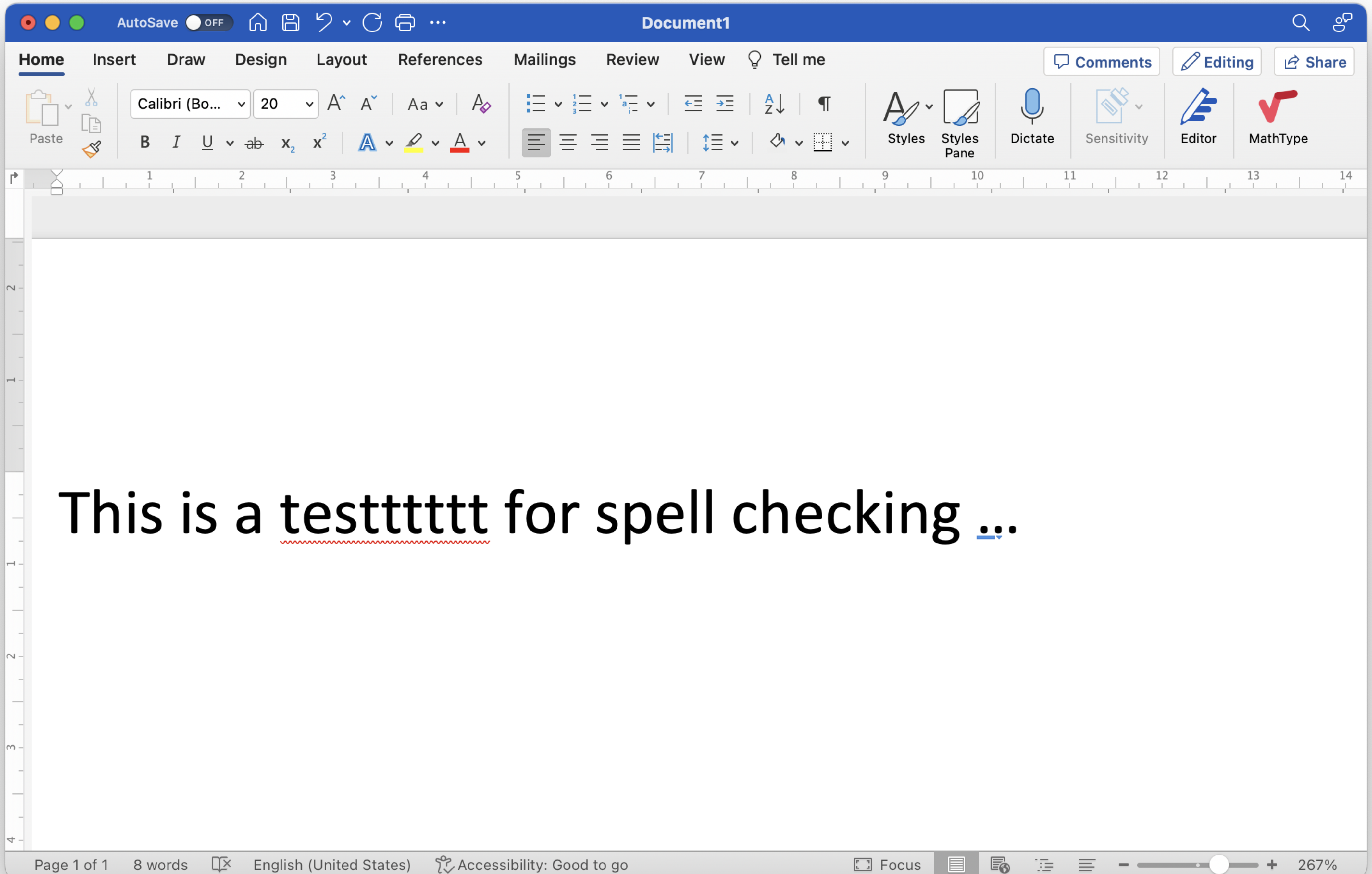
Objectives

- To introduce the notion of a thread—a fundamental unit of CPU utilization that forms the basis of multithreaded computer systems
- To discuss the APIs for the Pthreads, Windows, and Java thread libraries
- To explore several strategies that provide implicit threading
- To examine issues related to multithreaded programming
- To cover operating system support for threads in Windows and Linux

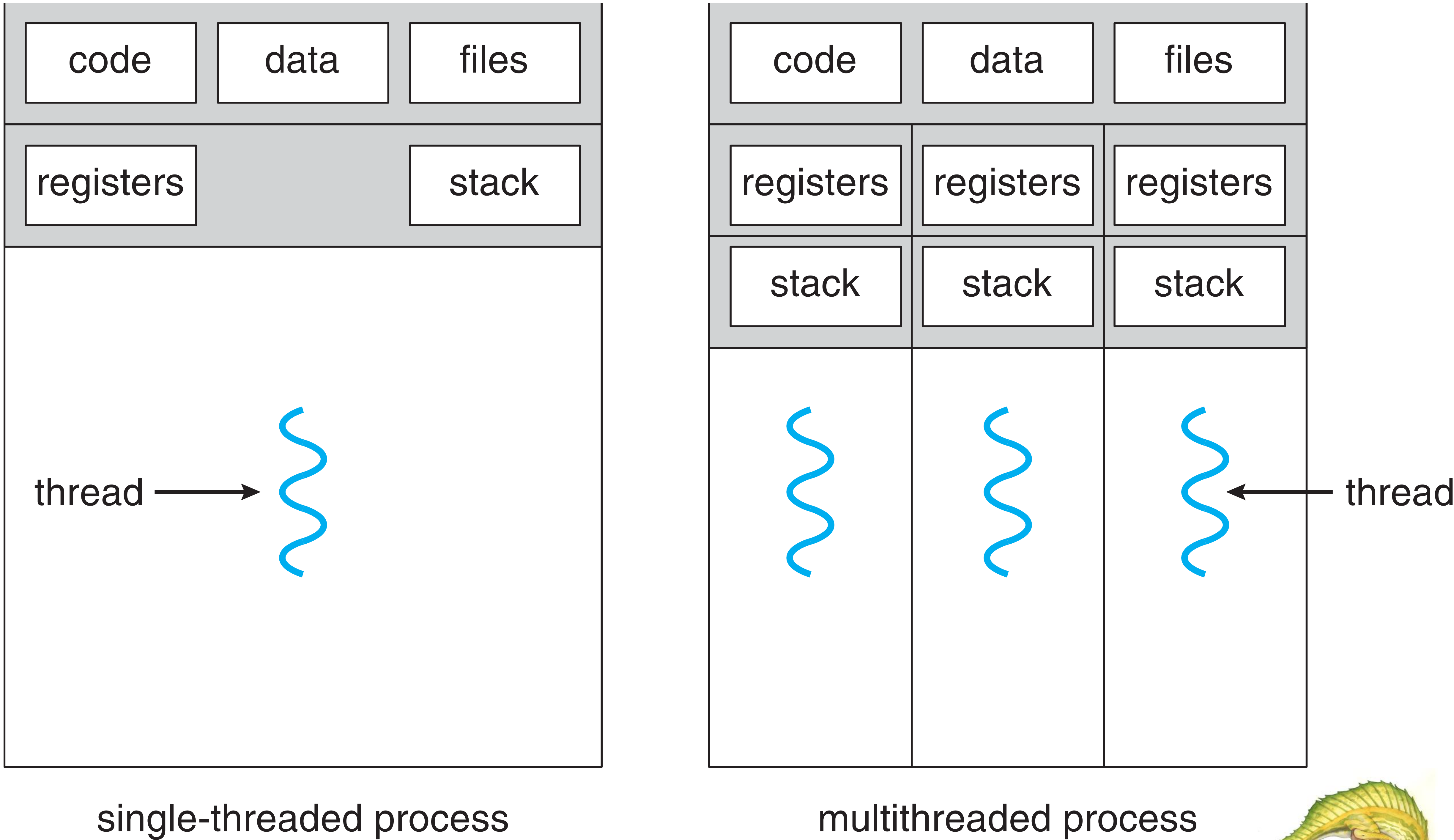
Motivation

- Most modern applications are multithreaded
- Threads run within application
- Multiple tasks with the application can be implemented by separate threads
  - Update display
  - Fetch data
  - Spell checking
  - Answer a network request
- Process creation is heavy-weight while thread creation is light-weight
- Can simplify code, increase efficiency
- Kernels are generally multithreaded

Microsoft Word Spell Checking



Single and Multithreaded Processes



```
Type as fast as you can, press q to quit
The pressed key is
```

Count number of key pressed in a second

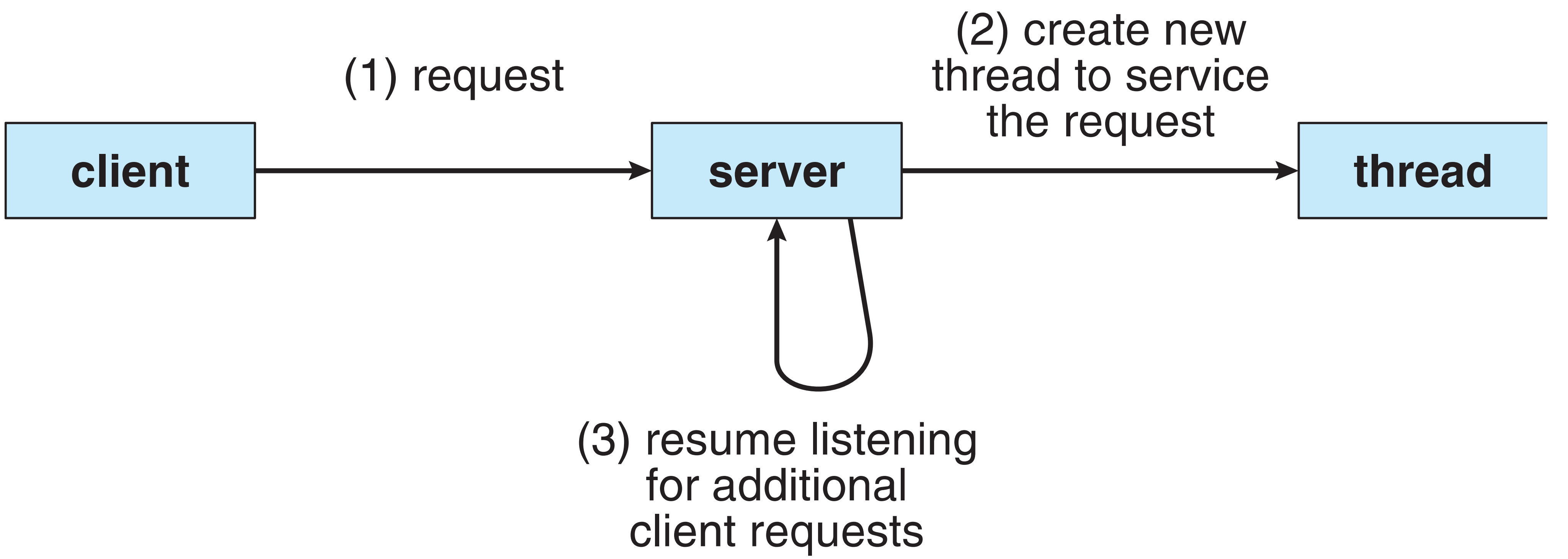
Keyhit Rating – No Thread

```
key_hit_count = 0
last_second_count = 0
t0 = current timestamp
While not stop:
      Check keyboard or timeout in 9,5 seconds
      If there is a key hit:
            increase key_hit_count by one
      t1 = current timestamp
      if t1 – t0 >= 1 second:
            key_hit_last_second = key_hit_count – last_second_count
            rate = key_hit_last_second / (t1 – t0)
            print rate
            last_second_count = key_hit_count
            t0 = t1
```

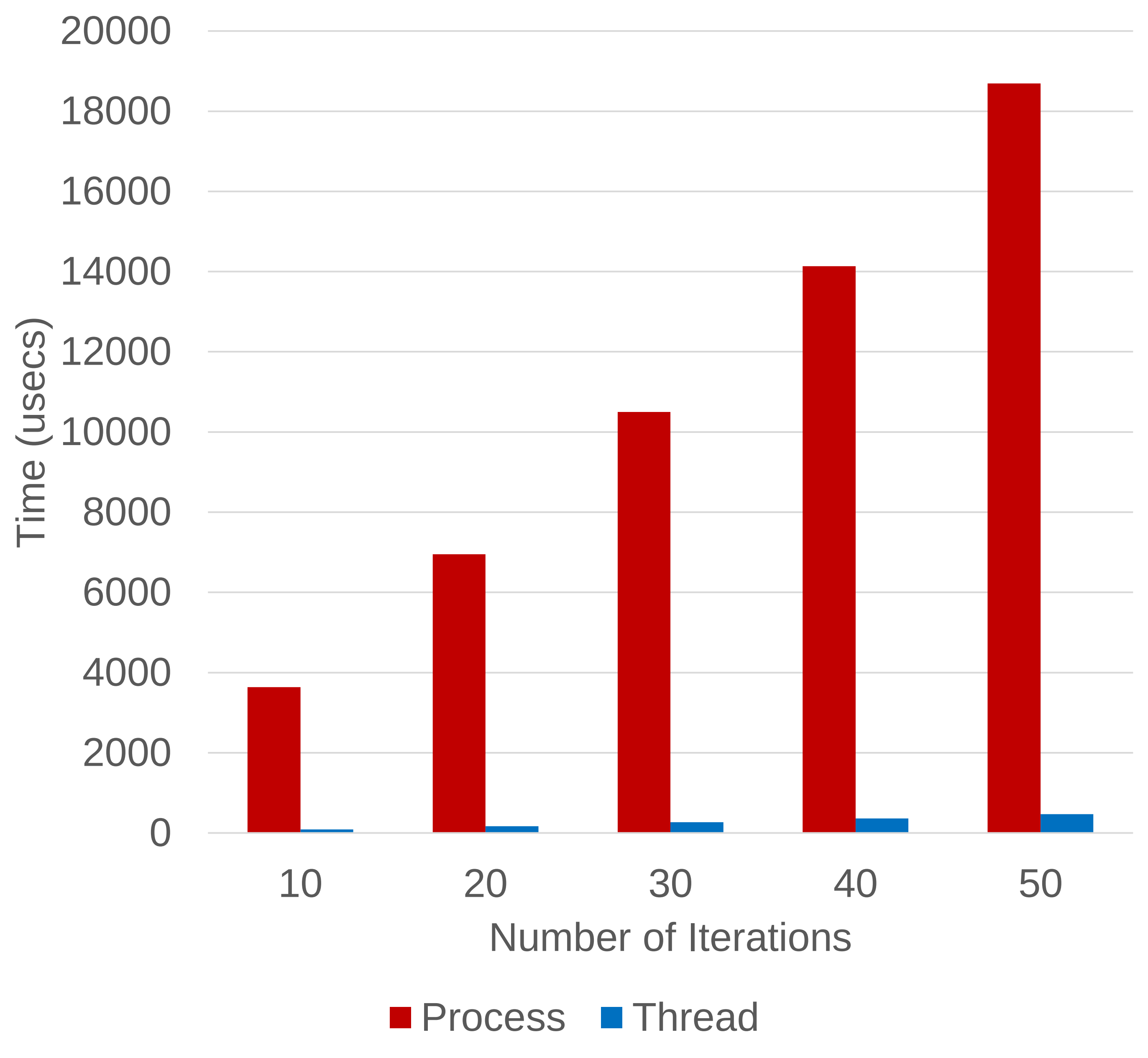
Keyhit Rating – Two Threads

```
Key_count_thread:
      While not stop:
            Wait for keyhit
            increase key_hit_count by one
Rating_thread:
      While not stop:
            sleep for 1 second
            key_hit_last_second = key_hit_count – last_second_count
            rate = key_hit_last_second / (t1 – t0)
            print rate
            last_second_count = key_hit_count
Main:
      key_hit_count = 0
      last_second_count = 0
      Start Rating_thread
      Start Key_count_thread
```

Multithreaded Server Architecture



Process/Thread Creation Overheads



Iterations	Process	Thread
10	3633.80	87.80
20	6947.80	168.20
30	10501.00	269.80
40	14135.00	359.40
50	18693.00	470.60

Benefits

- **Responsiveness –** may allow continued execution if part of process is blocked, especially important for user interfaces

- **Resource Sharing –** threads share resources of process, easier than shared memory or message passing

- **Economy –** cheaper than process creation, thread switching lower overhead than context switching

- **Scalability –** process can take advantage of multiprocessor architectures

Multicore Programming

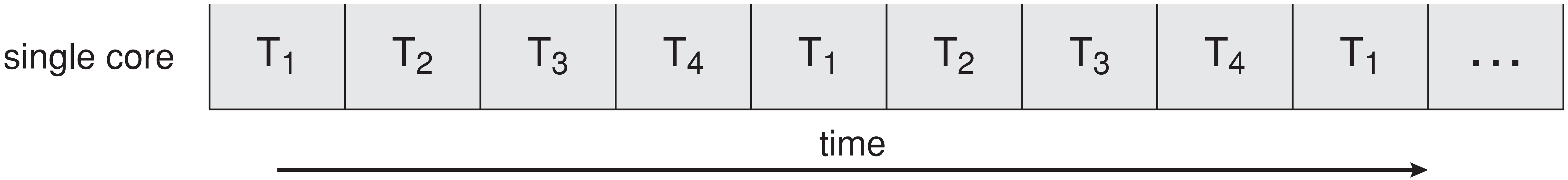
- **Multicore** or **multiprocessor** systems putting pressure on programmers, challenges include:
  - **Dividing activities**
  - **Balance**
  - **Data splitting**
  - **Data dependency**
  - **Testing and debugging**

- **Parallelism** implies a system can perform more than one task simultaneously
- **Concurrency** supports more than one task making progress
  - Single processor / core, scheduler providing concurrency
- Types of parallelism
  - **Data parallelism** – distributes subsets of the same data across multiple cores, same operation on each
  - **Task parallelism** – distributing threads across cores, each thread performing unique operation

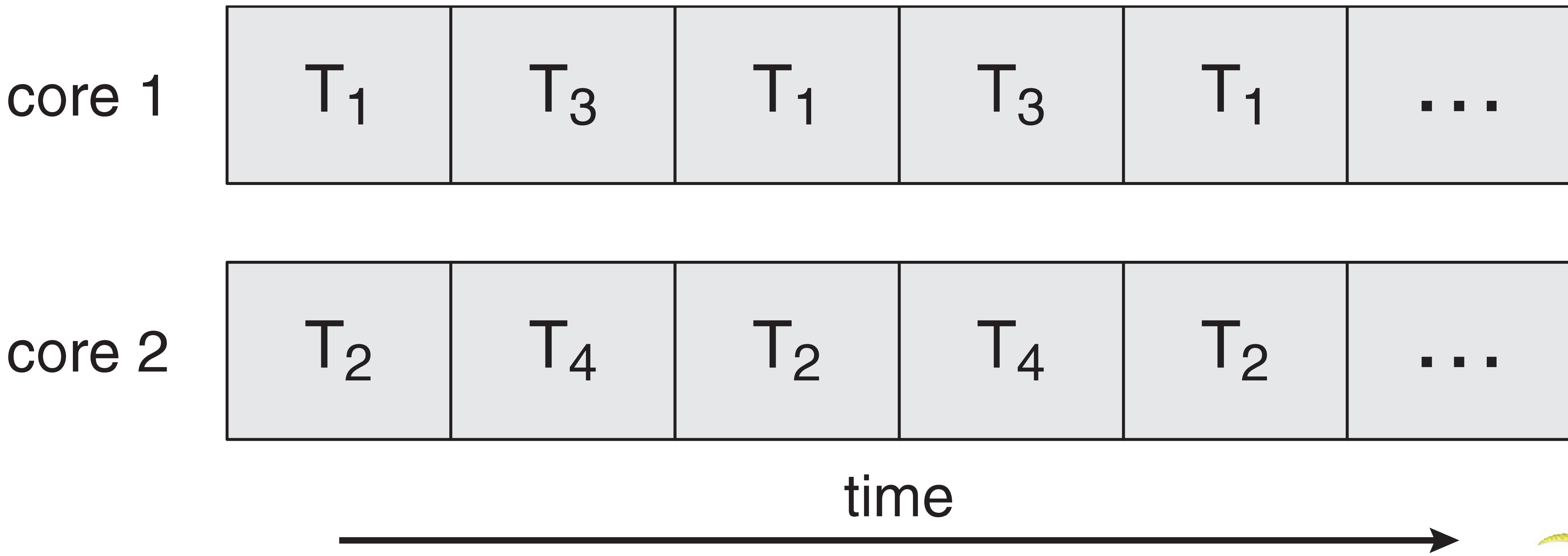
- As # of threads grows, so does architectural support for threading
  - CPUs have cores as well as **hardware threads**
  - Consider Oracle SPARC T4 with 8 cores, and 8 hardware threads per core

Concurrency vs. Parallelism

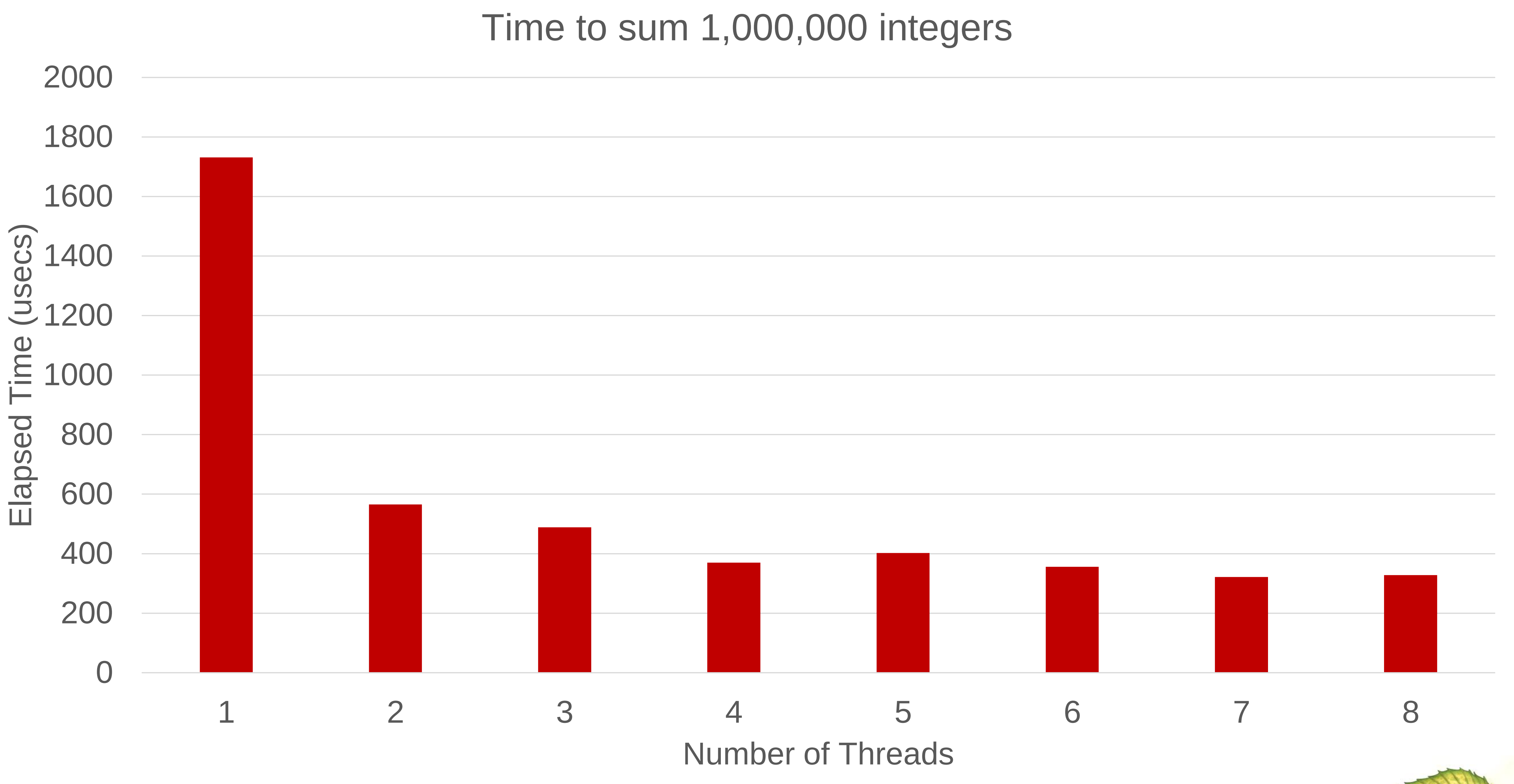
- **Concurrent execution on single-core system:**



- **Parallelism on a multi-core system:**



Multi-Threading Performance



User Threads and Kernel Threads

- **User threads** - management done by user-level threads library
- Three primary thread libraries:
  - POSIX **Pthreads**
  - Win32 threads
  - Java threads

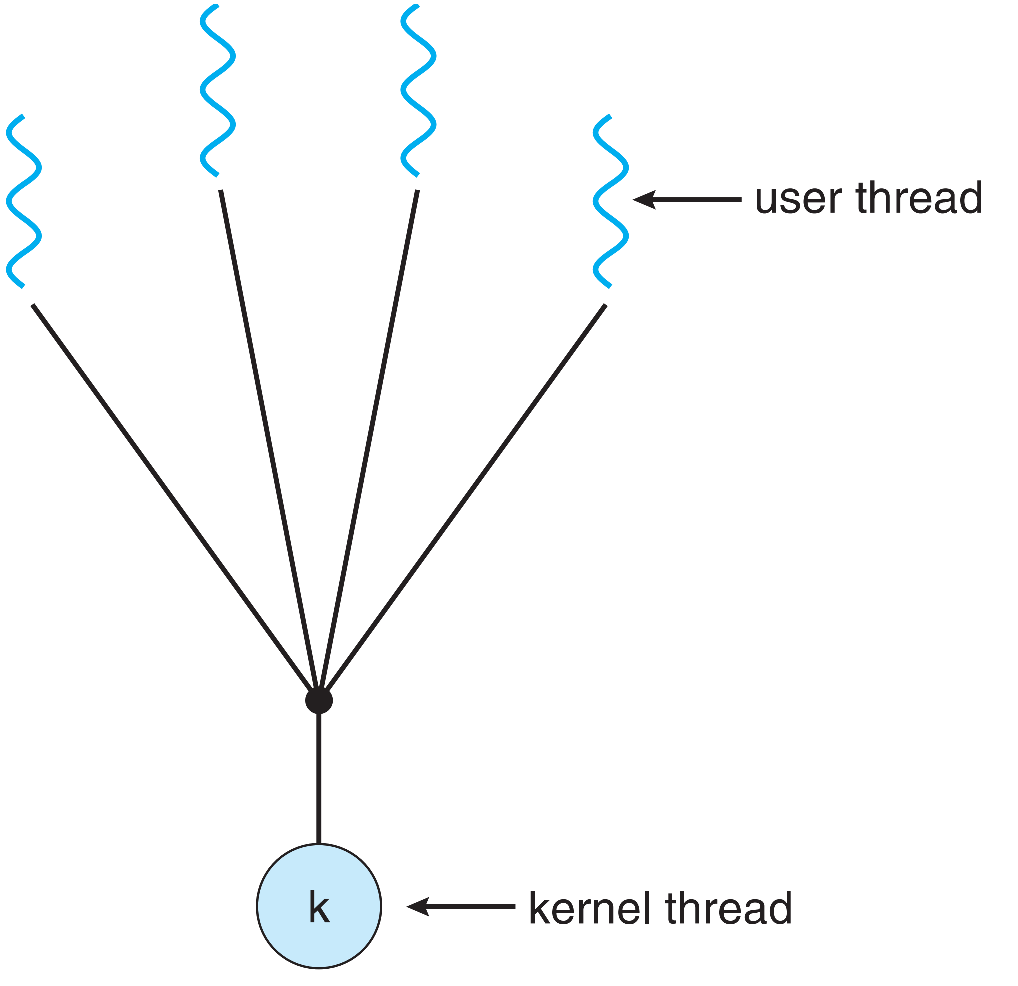
- **Kernel threads** - Supported by the Kernel
- Examples – virtually all general purpose operating systems, including:
  - Windows
  - Solaris
  - Linux
  - Tru64 UNIX
  - Mac OS X

Multithreading Models

- Many-to-One
- One-to-One
- Many-to-Many

Many-to-One

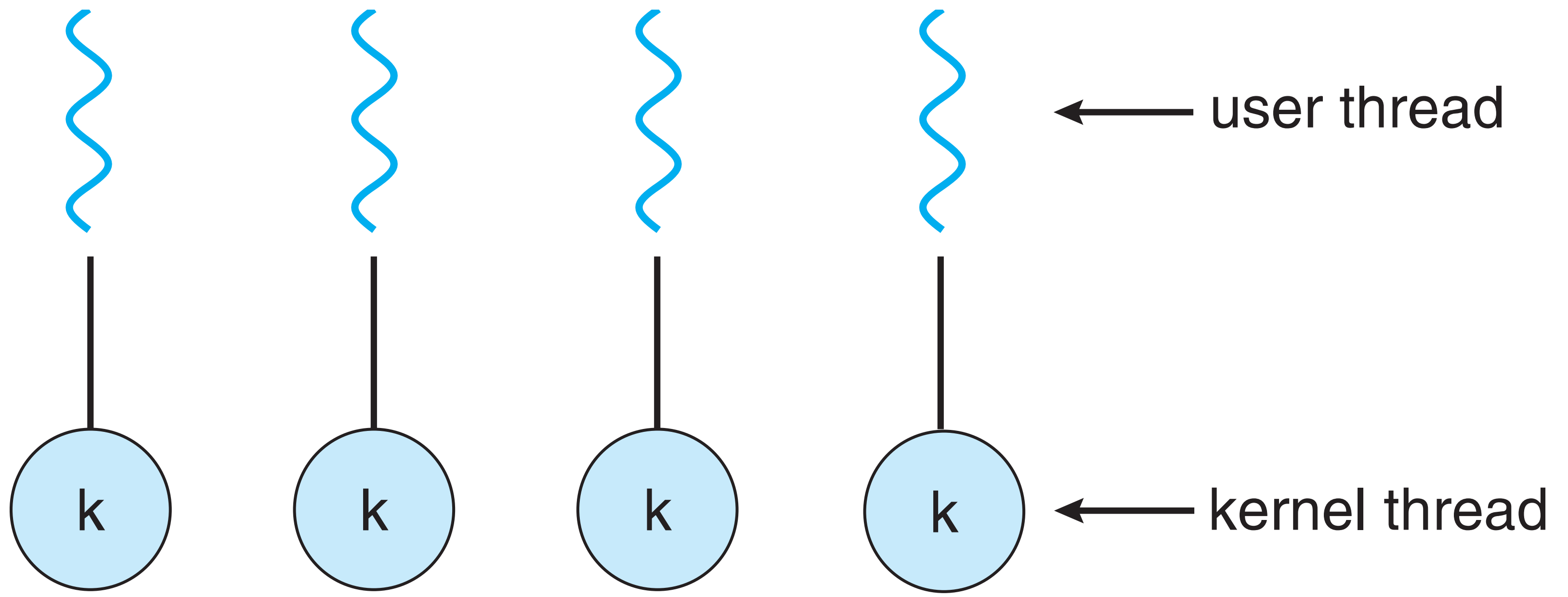
- Many user-level threads mapped to single kernel thread
- One thread blocking causes all to block
- Multiple threads may not run in parallel on muticore system because only one may be in kernel at a time
- Few systems currently use this model
- Examples:
  - **Solaris Green Threads**
  - **GNU Portable Threads**



One-to-One

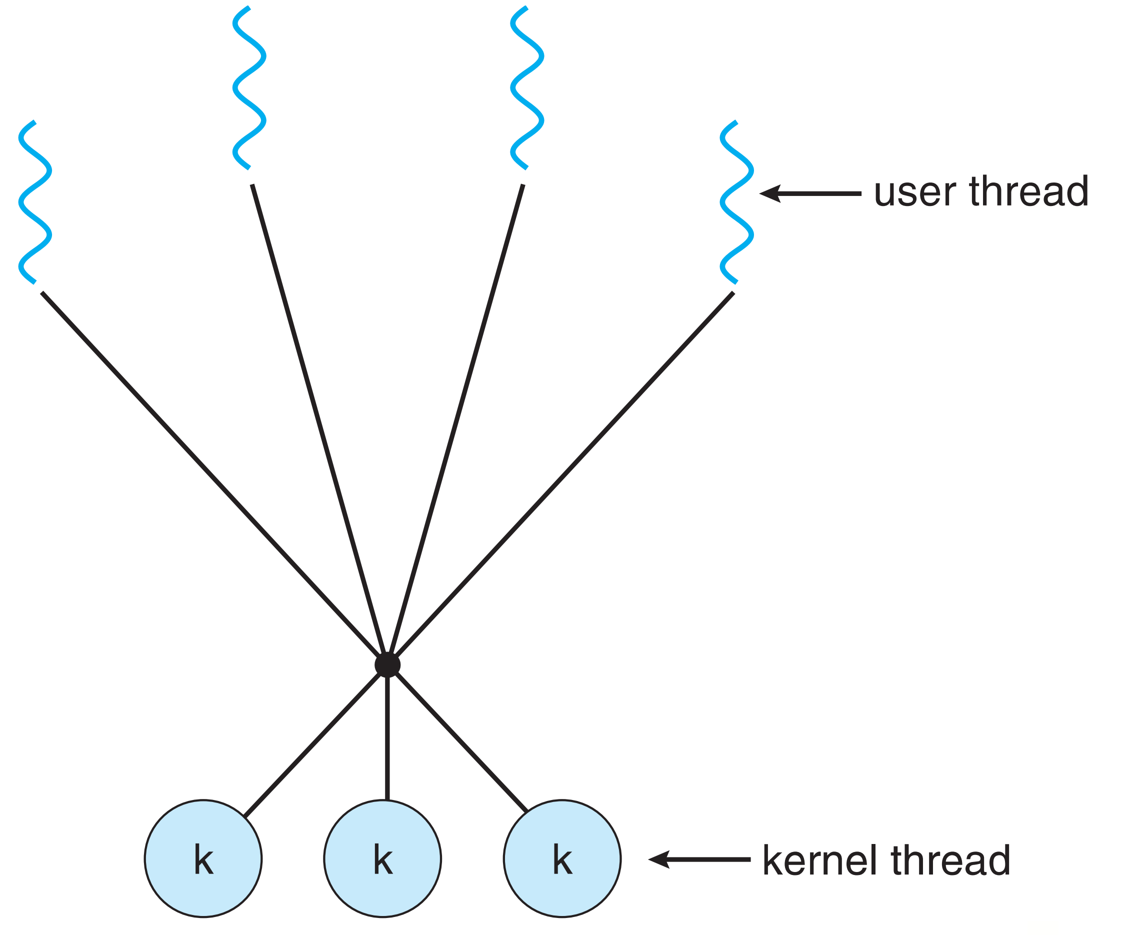
- Each user-level thread maps to kernel thread
- Creating a user-level thread creates a kernel thread
- More concurrency than many-to-one
- Number of threads per process sometimes restricted due to overhead

- Examples
  - Windows NT/XP/2000
  - Linux
  - Solaris 9 and later



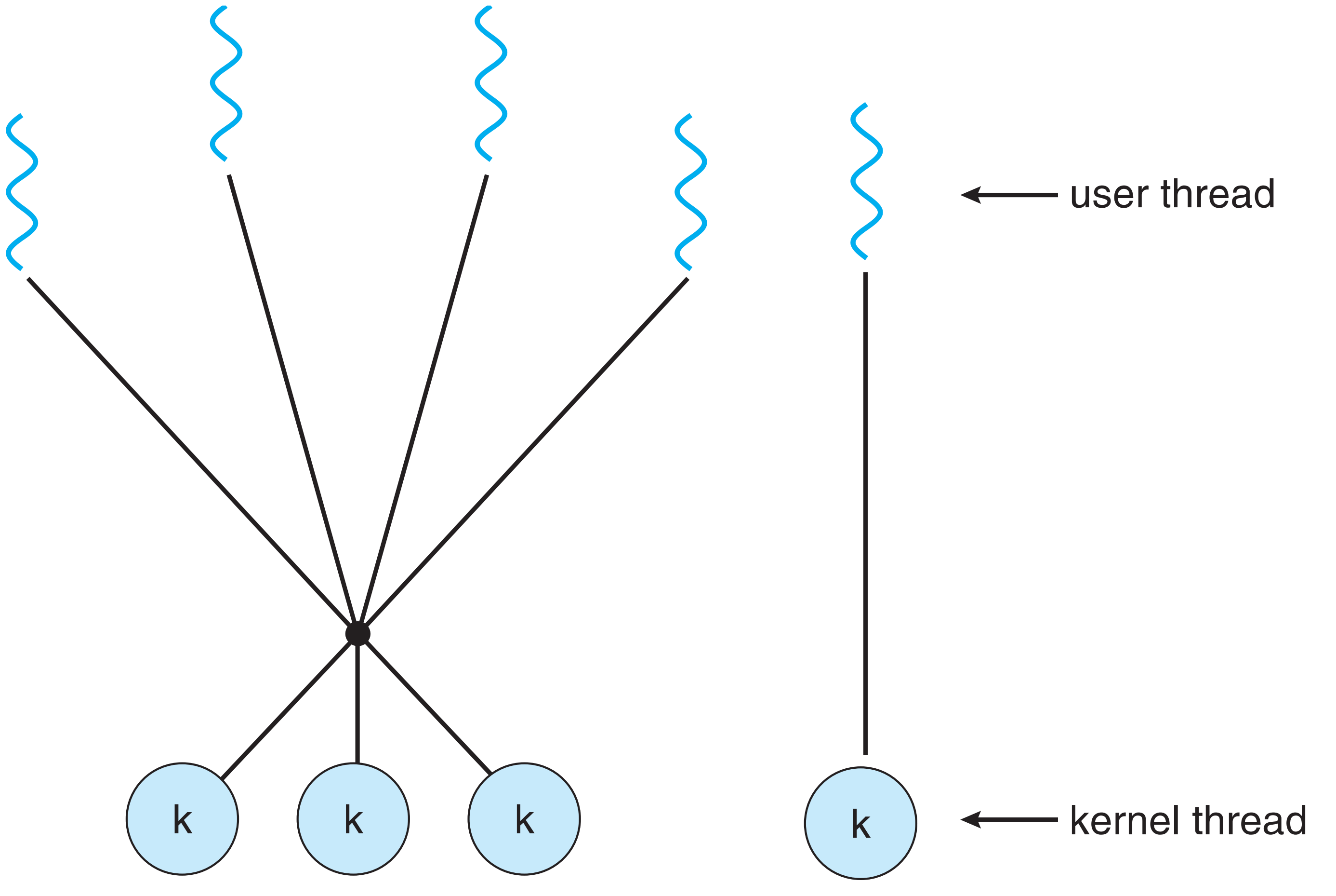
Many-to-Many Model

- Allows many user level threads to be mapped to many kernel threads
- Allows the operating system to create a sufficient number of kernel threads
- Solaris prior to version 9
- Windows NT/2000 with the ThreadFiber package



Two-level Model

- Similar to M:M, except that it allows a user thread to be **bound** to kernel thread
- Examples
  - IRIX
  - HP-UX
  - Tru64 UNIX
  - Solaris 8 and earlier



Thread Libraries

- **Thread library** provides programmer with API for creating and managing threads

- Two primary ways of implementing
  - Library entirely in user space
  - Kernel-level library supported by the OS

Pthreads

- May be provided either as user-level or kernel-level
- A POSIX standard (IEEE 1003.1c) API for thread creation and synchronization
- **Specification**, not **implementation**
- API specifies behavior of the thread library, implementation is up to development of the library
- Common in UNIX operating systems (Solaris, Linux, Mac OS X)

Implicit Threading

- Growing in popularity as numbers of threads increase, program correctness more difficult with explicit threads
- Creation and management of threads done by compilers and run-time libraries rather than programmers

- Three methods explored
  - Thread Pools
  - OpenMP
  - Grand Central Dispatch

- Other methods include Microsoft Threading Building Blocks (TBB), **`java.util.concurrent`** package

Thread Pools

- Create a number of threads in a pool where they await work
- Advantages:
  - Usually slightly faster to service a request with an existing thread than create a new thread
  - Allows the number of threads in the application(s) to be bound to the size of the pool
  - Separating task to be performed from mechanics of creating task allows different strategies for running task
    - i.e.Tasks could be scheduled to run periodically
- Windows API supports thread pools:

```
DWORD WINAPI PoolFunction(AVOID Param) {
    /*
     * this function runs as a separate thread.
     */
}
```

Threading Issues

- Semantics of **fork()** and **exec()** system calls
- Signal handling
  - Synchronous and asynchronous

Semantics of fork() and exec()

- Does **`fork()`** duplicate only the calling thread or all threads?
  - Some UNIXes have two versions of fork

- **`Exec()`** usually works as normal – replace the running process including all threads

Signal Handling

- **Signals** are used in UNIX systems to notify a process that a particular event has occurred.

- A **signal handler** is used to process signals
  1. Signal is generated by particular event
  2. Signal is delivered to a process
  3. Signal is handled by one of two signal handlers:
     1. default
     2. user-defined

- Every signal has **default handler** that kernel runs when handling signal
  - **User-defined signal handler** can override default
  - For single-threaded, signal delivered to process

- Where should a signal be delivered for multi-threaded?
  - Deliver the signal to the thread to which the signal applies
  - Deliver the signal to every thread in the process
  - Deliver the signal to certain threads in the process
  - Assign a specific thread to receive all signals for the process

Thread Cancellation

- Terminating a thread before it has finished
- Thread to be canceled is **target thread**
- Two general approaches:
  - **Asynchronous cancellation** terminates the target thread immediately
  - **Deferred cancellation** allows the target thread to periodically check if it should be cancelled

- Pthread code to create and cancel a thread:

```
pthread_t tid;

/* create the thread */
pthread_create(&tid, 0, worker, NULL);

. . .

/* cancel the thread */
pthread_cancel(tid);
```