

Know Your Bugs: Weapons for Efficient Debugging

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Why debugging?

Bugs are in every programs

- Industry Average:
*"about 15 - 50 errors per 1000 lines of delivered code"*¹

Bugs in High Performance Computing

- Even more difficult due to concurrency
- Can crash super-computers
- Can waste large amount of CPU-time

Famous bugs and consequences

- Ariane 5 rocket destroyed in 1996: 1 billion US \$
- Power blackout in US in 2003: 45 million people affected
- Medtronic heart device vulnerable to remote attack in 2008
- ...

¹Code Complete by Steve McConnell

Outline

2

Tools for Debugging

- Compilers
- GNU Debugger
- Valgrind



Tools for debugging

Compilers

- It's the first program to check your code
- [GCC](#), [Intel Compiler](#), [CLang](#), [MS Compiler](#), ...

Static code analyzers

- Check the program without executing it
- [Splint](#), [Cppcheck](#), [Coccinelle](#), ...

Debuggers

- Inspect/modify a program during its execution
- [GDB: the GNU Project Debugger](#) for serial and multi-thread programs
- Parallel debuggers (commercial): [RogueWave Totalview](#), [Allinea DDT](#)

Dynamics code analyzers and profilers

- Check the program without executing it
- [Valgrind](#), [Gcov](#), [Gprof](#), ...
- Commercial software: [Purify](#), [Intel Parallel Inspector](#), ..



Compilers 1/2

What does a compiler do?

- Translate source code to machine code
- 3 phases:
 - Lexical analysis: recognize "words" or tokens
 - Syntax analysis: build syntax tree according to language grammar
 - Semantic analysis: check rules of the language, variable declaration, types, etc.
- With this knowledge, a compiler can find many bugs
 - Pay attention to compiler warnings and errors of a program

A compiler can find out if your program makes sense according to the language. However, it cannot guess what you are trying to do.



Compilers 2/2

How to use the compiler

- Choose your compiler

	GCC	CLang	Intel Compiler
C	gcc	clang	icc
C++	g++	clang++	icpc
Fortran	gfortran		ifort

- Activate warning messages with the `-Wall` parameters
- Warnings can be enabled/disabled individually, cf documentation
- Compile with debug symbols with `-g` parameters

Example

```
$ gcc -g -Wall program.c -o program
program.c: In function 'main':
program.c:4:15: error: 'y' undeclared (first use in this function)
  int z = x + y;
               ^
program.c:4:15: note: each undeclared identifier is reported only once for each
program.c:4:7: warning: unused variable 'z' [-Wunused-variable]
  int z = x + y;
               ^
```



GNU Debugger 1/2



GDB is the GNU Debugger

- Allow to execute a program step by step
- Watch the value of variables
- Stop the execution on given condition
- Show the backtrace of an error
- Modify value of variables at runtime

Starting GDB

- Compile your program with the `-g` option
- Start program execution with GDB
`gdb --args myprogram arg1 arg2`
- Or open a core file (generated after a crash)
`gdb myprogram corefile`



GNU Debugger 2/2

Using GDB

- Command line tool
- Many graphical frontends available too: [DDD](#), [Qt Creator](#), ...
- Online documentation & tutorial:

<http://sourceware.org/gdb/current/onlinedocs/gdb/>

http://www.cs.swarthmore.edu/~newhall/unixhelp/howto_gdb.html

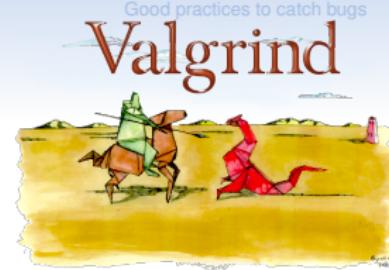
Main commands

- **help <command>**: get help about a command
- **run**: start execution
- **continue**: resume execute
- **next**: execute the next line
- **break**: set a breakpoint at a given line or function
- **backtrace**: show the backtrace
- **print**: print the value of a variable
- **quit**: quit GDB

Valgrind 1/2

Valgrind is a dynamic analysis tool

- Execute your program with dynamic checking tool:
Memcheck, Callgrind, Helgrind, etc.



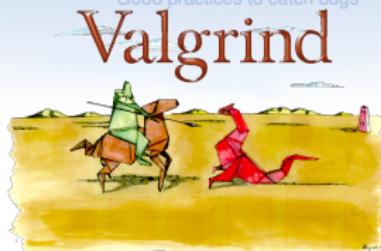
Memcheck: memory error detector

- Enable with `-tool=memcheck` (by default)
- Check for memory-related errors:
uninitialized values, out of bound access, stack overflow, memory leak, etc.
- For memory leaks, add option `-leak-check=full`
- <http://valgrind.org/docs/manual/mc-manual.html>

Callgrind: performance profiler

- Enable with `-tool=callgrind`
- Check the time you spend in each function of your code
- Visualize results with [KCachegrind](#)
- <http://valgrind.org/docs/manual/cl-manual.html>

Valgrind 2/2



Example

```
$ valgrind --tool=memcheck --leak-check=full --track-origins=yes ./program
[...]
==12534== Conditional jump or move depends on uninitialised value(s)
==12534==    at 0x40055E: main (program.c:11)
==12534== Uninitialised value was created by a stack allocation
==12534==    at 0x400536: main (program.c:5)
==12534==
==12534== Invalid write of size 8
==12534==    at 0x4005CE: main (program.c:19)
==12534== Address 0x5203f80 is 0 bytes after a block of size 8,000 alloc'd
==12534==    at 0x4C2BBA0: malloc (in /usr/lib/valgrind/vgpreload_memcheck-amd64
==12534==    by 0x400555: main (program.c:9)
==12534==
==12534==
==12534== HEAP SUMMARY:
==12534==     in use at exit: 8,000 bytes in 1 blocks
==12534== total heap usage: 1 allocs, 0 frees, 8,000 bytes allocated
==12534==
==12534== 8,000 bytes in 1 blocks are definitely lost in loss record 1 of 1
==12534==    at 0x4C2BBA0: malloc (in /usr/lib/valgrind/vgpreload_memcheck-amd64
==12534==    by 0x400555: main (program.c:9)
[...]
```

Outline

3

Common bugs

- Logic and syntax bugs
- Arithmetic bugs
- Memory related bugs
- Multi-thread programming bugs
- Performance bugs



Logic and syntax bugs

Due to careless programming

- Infinite loop / recursion
- Confusing syntax error,
e.g. use of `=` (affection) instead of `==` (equality)
- Hard to detect, because everything is right in your mind

What to do?

- Compile with warnings enabled
- Get some rest and/or an external advice

Integer overflow 1/2

Integer variables have limited size

	Size	Minimum	Maximum
signed short	16 bits	-2^{15}	$2^{15} - 1$
unsigned short	16 bits	0	$2^{16} - 1$
signed int	32 bits	-2^{31}	$2^{31} - 1$
unsigned int	32 bits	0	$2^{32} - 1$
signed long long int	64 bits	-2^{63}	$2^{63} - 1$
unsigned long long int	64 bits	0	$2^{64} - 1$

If the result of an operation cannot fit in the variable,
most-significant bits are discarded
⇒ we have an **Integer Overflow**

Integer overflow 2/2

Overflow example

```
unsigned char A = 200;  
  
unsigned char B = 60;  
  
// Overflow!  
unsigned char S = A + B;
```

	1 1 0 0 1 0 0 0	200
+	0 0 1 1 1 1 0 0	+ 60
	-----	-----
=	1 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0	= 4

→ No error at runtime!

What to do?

- Use the right integer type for your data
- In C/C++/Fortran, overflow needs to be checked manually
- CLang and GCC 5.X offer builtin functions to check for overflow
`__builtin_add_overflow`, `__builtin_sub_overflow`,
`__builtin_mul_overflow`, ...



Floating-Point Number bugs 1/2

Floating-Point Exceptions (FPE)

- Division by zero:

$$\frac{X}{0.0} = \infty$$

- Invalid operation:

$$\sqrt{-1.0} = NaN \text{ (Not A Number)}$$

- Overflow / Underflow:

$$e^{1e30} = \infty \qquad e^{-1e30} = 0.0$$

Loss of precision

- The order of the operations matters:

$$(10^{60} + 1.0) - 10^{60} = 0.0$$

$$(10^{60} - 10^{60}) + 1.0 = 1.0$$



Floating-Point Number bugs 2/2

Floating-Point Exceptions and Errors

- No error at runtime by default
- Errors can propagate through all the computation

What to do?

- Enable errors at runtime in C/C++

```
#define __GNU_SOURCE  
#include <fenv.h>  
  
int main()  
{  
    feenableexcept(FE_DIVBYZERO|FE_INVALID| FE_OVERFLOW);  
    ...
```

- Read "*What Every Computer Scientist Should Know About Floating-Point Arithmetic*" by David Goldberg



Memory allocation/deallocation

Dynamic memory management in C

- `void *p = malloc(size)` allocates memory
- `free(p)` de-allocates the corresponding memory
- In C++, equivalents are `new` and `delete` operations

Common mistakes

- Failed memory allocation
- Free non-allocated memory
- Free memory twice (double free error)

These mistakes might not trigger an error immediately

Later on, they can cause **crashes** and **undefined behavior**

What to do?

- Check return code (cf documentation)
- Use **Valgrind** with `-leak-check=full` to catch it



Memory leaks

Memory is allocated but never freed

- Allocated memory keeps growing until it fills the computer memory
- Can cause a crash of the program or of the full computer
- Very common in C programs, almost impossible in Fortran, Java

What to do?

- For each `malloc()`, there should be a corresponding `free()`
- Use [Valgrind](#) with `-leak-check=full` to catch it

Using undefined values

Undefined values

- Uninitialized variable
- Not allocated or already freed memory

Can cause **undefined/unpredictable behavior**

- Difficult to track
- Error might not occur immediately
- It can compute incorrect result

What to do?

- Compile with `-Wuninitialized` or `-Wall`
- Use **Valgrind**, it should show error

Conditional jump or move depends on
uninitialised value(s)



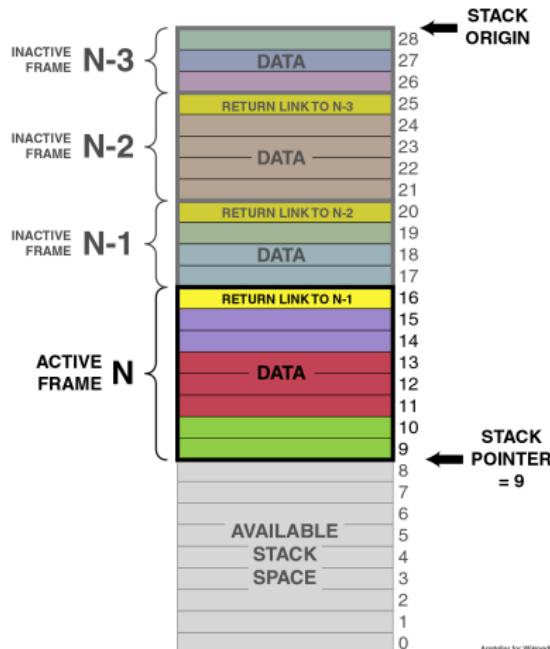
Stack overflow

Program stack

- Each function call creates a new frame
- Function parameters and local variables are allocated in the frame

Stack overflow

- Too many function calls usually not-ending recursive calls
- Oversized local data



Available for Wikipedia
Public Domain 2006

Buffer overflow

Buffer overflow

- Write data in a buffer with an insufficient size
- Overwrite other data (variable, function return address)
- Can be a major security issue
- Can make the stack trace unreadable

What to do?

- Use functions that check the buffer size:
`strcpy()` → `strncpy()`, `sprintf()` → `snprintf()`, etc.
- **GCC option `-fstack-protector` checks buffer overflow**



Out of bound access

Read/write of the bound of an array

- Mismatch in the bound of an array: $[0, N - 1]$ in C, $[1, N]$ in Fortran
- Out of bound reading can cause undefined behavior
- Out of bound writing can cause memory corruption

What to do?

- Use [Valgrind](#), it should show error
Invalid read/write of size X

Input/Output errors

Errors when reading/writing in files

- Usually have an external cause:
 - Disk full
 - Quota exceeded
 - Network interruption
- System call will return an error or hang

What to do?

- Always can check the return code
- Usually stop execution with an explicit message

Race condition 1/3

"Debugging programs containing race conditions is no fun at all."

Andrew S. Tanenbaum, *Modern Operating Systems*

Race condition

- A timing dependent error involving shared state
- It runs fine most of the time, and from time to time, something weird and unexplained appears



Race condition 2/3

Code example

```
void deposit(Account* account, double amount)
{
    account->balance += amount;
}
```



Race condition 2/3

Code example

```
void deposit(Account* account, double amount)
{
    READ  balance
    ADD   amount
    WRITE balance
}
```



Race condition 2/3

Code example

```
void deposit(Account* account, double amount)
{
    READ balance
    ADD amount
    WRITE balance
}
```

Concurrent execution

Thread 1 calls `deposit(A, 10)`

```
READ balance (0)
ADD 10
WRITE balance (10)
```

Thread 2 calls `deposit(A, 1000)`

```
READ balance (0)
ADD 1000
WRITE balance (1000)
```



Race condition 2/3

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Race condition 2/3

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READ  balance (0)
      ...
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READ  balance (0)
      ...
ADD   1000
WRITE balance (1000)
```



Race condition 2/3

Code example

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void deposit(Account* account, double amount)
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Race condition 2/3

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```
READ balance (0)
ADD 1000
WRITE balance (1000)
```

Result: *balance* is 10 instead of 1000

Without protection, any interleave combination is possible!



Race condition 3/3

Different kind of race conditions

- Data race: Concurrent accesses to a shared variable
- Atomicity bugs: Code does not enforce the atomicity for a group of memory accesses, *eg* Time of check to time of use
- Order bugs: Operations are not executed in order
Compilers and processors can actually re-order instructions

What to do?

- Protect critical sections: [Mutexes](#), [Semaphores](#), etc.
- Use atomic instructions and memory barriers (low level)
- Use compiler builtin for atomic operations² (higher level)

²https://gcc.gnu.org/onlinedocs/gcc-5.1.0/gcc/_005f_005fatomic-Builtins.html



Deadlock 1/3



[Deadlock](#), photograph by David Maitland

"I would love to have seen them go their separate ways, but I was exhausted. The frog was all the time trying to pull the snake off, but the snake just wouldn't let go."



Deadlock 2/3

Code example

```
void deposit(Account* account,
             double amount)
{
    lock(account->mutex);
    account->balance += amount;
    unlock(account->mutex);
}
```

```
void transfer(Account* accA,
              Account* accB,
              amount)
{
    lock(accA->mutex);
    lock(accB->mutex);
    accA->balance += amount;
    accB->balance -= amount;
    unlock(accA->mutex);
    unlock(accB->mutex);
}
```



Deadlock 3/3

Concurrent execution

Thread 1 calls `transfer(A, B, 10)`

```
lock (A->mutex);  
  
lock (B->mutex); // wait until  
                  B is unlocked  
  
...
```

Thread 2 calls `transfer(B, A, 20)`

```
lock (B->mutex);  
  
lock (A->mutex); // wait until  
                  A is unlocked  
  
...
```

What to do?

- Think before writing multithread code
- Use high level programming model: Open MP, Intel TBB, MPI, etc.
- Theoretical analysis
- Software for thread safety analysis



Deadlock 3/3

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lock (A->mutex);  
  
lock (B->mutex); // wait until  
                  B is unlocked  
  
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```

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Deadlock 3/3

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Thread 2 calls `transfer(B, A, 20)`

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...
```

We have a deadlock!

What to do?

- Think before writing multithread code
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Performance bugs

Bad Performance can be seen as a bug

- Bad algorithm: too high computation complexity
Example: *Insertion Sort* is $O(N^2)$, *Quick Sort* is $O(N \cdot \log(N))$
- Memory copies can be a problem,
specially with Object Oriented languages
- Some memory allocator have issues:
memory alignment constraints, multithread context

What to do?

- Try use existing proven libraries when possible:
eg Eigen library for linear algebra, C++ STL, Boost, etc.
- Use a profiler to see where your program spend most of its time
Valgrind with *Callgrind*, *GNU gprof*, many commercial tools ...
- ...



Outline

4 Good practices to catch bugs



Be a good programmer

Write good code

- Use explicit variable names, don't re-use variable
- Avoid global variables (problematic in multi-threads)
- Comment and document your code
- Keep your code simple, don't try to over-optimize

Use defensive programming

- Add assertions, cf `assert()`
- Always check return codes, cf manpages and documentation

Re-use existing libraries

- Use existing libraries when available/possible
- Probably better optimized and tested than your code

- ⇒ Code easier to understand and maintain
- ⇒ Catch bugs as soon as possible



Compilers and Tests

Use your compilers

- Enable (all) warnings of the compiler
- Vary the compilers and configurations
 - Different compilers (GCC, CLang, Intel Compiler, MS Compiler)
 - Various architectures (Windows/Linux, x86/x86_64/ARM)

Testing and Code Checking

- Write unit tests and regression tests
- Use coverage analysis tools
- Use static and dynamic code analysis tools
- Continuous integration:
 - Frequent compilation, testing, execution
 - Different configurations and platforms

- ⇒ Catch more warnings and errors
- ⇒ Better portability



Know your tools

Know the error messages

- Look in the documentation / online
- Compiler errors/warnings
- Runtime errors:

Segmentation fault, Floating point exception, Double free, etc.

- Valgrind errors:

Invalid read of size 4

Conditional jump or move depends on uninitialised value(s)
8 bytes in 1 blocks are definitely lost

...

Use the right tool

- Know your tools and when to use them
 - GDB: locate a crash
 - Valgrind: memory-related issue
 - ...



Debug with methodology

Find a minimal case to reproduce the bug

- Some bugs are intermittent
- Easier to debug
- Help you to understand the cause
- Allow to check that the bug is really fixed
- Bonus: make a regression test

Use a Control Version System (GIT, SVN, ...)

- Keep history, serve as a backup, allow to go back in time
- GIT has a nice feature of code bisection in history to find when a bug has been introduced

Thank you for your attention!



Laubame LD

