Direct Memory Access (DMA) Controller

Direct Memory Access (DMA) transfers the block of data between the *memory* and *peripheral devices* of the system, **without the participation** of the **processor**. The unit that controls the activity of accessing memory directly is called a **DMA controller**.

Direct Memory Access Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages:

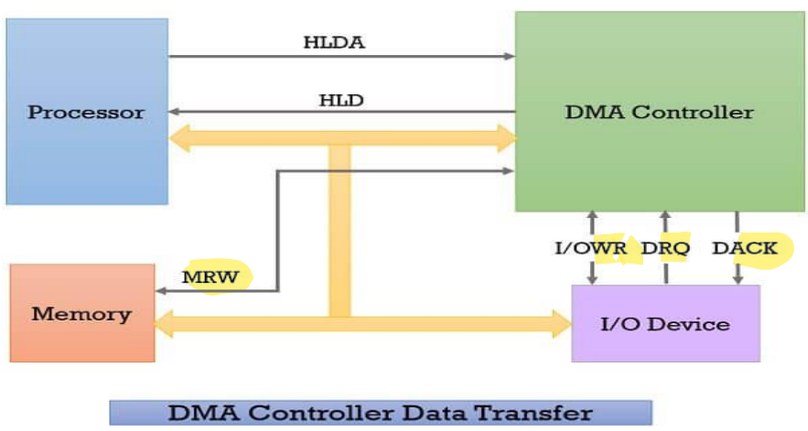
1. Transferring the data without the involvement of the processor will **speed up** the read-write task.
2. DMA **reduces the clock cycle** requires to read or write a block of data.
3. Implementing DMA also **reduces the overhead** of the processor.

Disadvantages

1. As it is a hardware unit, it would **cost** to implement a DMA controller in the system.
2. Cache **coherence** problem can occur while using DMA controller.

Direct Memory Access Controller & it's Working

DMA controller is a **hardware unit** that allows I/O devices to access memory directly without the participation of the processor. Here, we will discuss the working of the DMA controller. Below we have the diagram of DMA controller that explains its working:



1. Whenever an I/O device wants to transfer the data to or from memory, it sends the DMA request (**DRQ**) to the DMA controller. DMA controller accepts this DRQ and asks the CPU to hold for a few clock cycles by sending it the Hold request (**HLD**).
2. CPU receives the Hold request (HLD) from DMA controller and relinquishes the bus and sends the Hold acknowledgement (**HLDA**) to DMA controller.
3. After receiving the Hold acknowledgement (HLDA), DMA controller acknowledges I/O device **(DACK)** that the data transfer can be performed and DMA controller takes the charge of the system bus and transfers the data to or from memory.
4. When the data transfer is accomplished, the DMA raise an **interrupt** to let know the processor that the task of data transfer is finished and the processor can take control over the bus again and start processing where it has left.

Direct Memory Access Diagram

After exploring the working of DMA controller, let us discuss the block diagram of the DMA controller. Below we have a block diagram of DMA controller.

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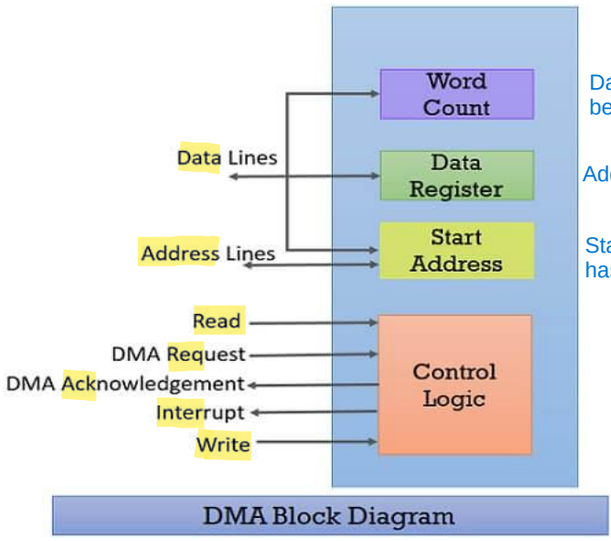

Data/word Count register: how many word to be written/read?

Address of I/O device is stored in Data register

Starting address where data block of memory has to read/write

Whenever a processor is requested to read or write a block of data, i.e. transfer a block of data, it instructs the DMA controller by sending the following information.

1. The first information is whether the data has to be read from memory or the data has to be written to the memory. It passes this information via **read or write control lines** that is between the processor and DMA controllers **control logic unit**.
2. The processor also provides the **starting address** of/ for the data block in the memory, from where the data block in memory has to be read or where the data block has to be written in memory. DMA controller stores this in its **address register**. It is also called the **starting address register**.
3. The processor also sends the **word count**, i.e. how many words are to be read or written. It stores this information in the **data count** or the **word count** register.
4. The most important is the **address of I/O device** that wants to read or write data. This information is stored in the **data register.**