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## 3.1 Subroutines

CSU11022 – Introduction to Computing II

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School of Computer Science and Statistics

Programs can be **decomposed** into blocks of instructions, each performing some well-defined task

compute  $x^y$

find the length of a NULL-terminated string

convert a string from UPPER CASE to lower case

play a sound

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We would like to avoid repeating the same set of operations throughout our programs

write the instructions to perform some specific task **once**

**invoke** the set of instructions **many times** to perform the same task

Methods in the  
Java world!

Functions or Procedures  
elsewhere

```
address = string1;
ch = byte[address];
while (ch != NULL) {
    if (ch ≥ 'a' && char ≤ 'z') {
        ch = char & 0xFFFFFDF;
        byte[address] = ch;
    }
    address = address + 1;
    char = byte[address] ;
}
```

```
address = string2;
ch = byte[address];
while (ch != NULL) {
    if (ch ≥ 'a' && char ≤ 'z') {
        ch = ch & 0xFFFFFDF;
        byte[address] = ch;
    }
    address = address + 1;
    ch = byte[address];
}
```



Repetition!

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```
// UPPER CASE
void upr (address)
{
    ch = byte[address];
    while (ch != NULL) {
        if (ch ≥ 'a' && char ≤ 'z') {
            ch = ch & 0xFFFFFDF;
            byte[address] = ch;
        }
        address = address + 1;
        ch = byte[address] ;
    }
}
```

```
address = string1;
upr(address);
```

```
address = string2;
upr(address);
```

Define upr(...)

Invoke upr(...) twice

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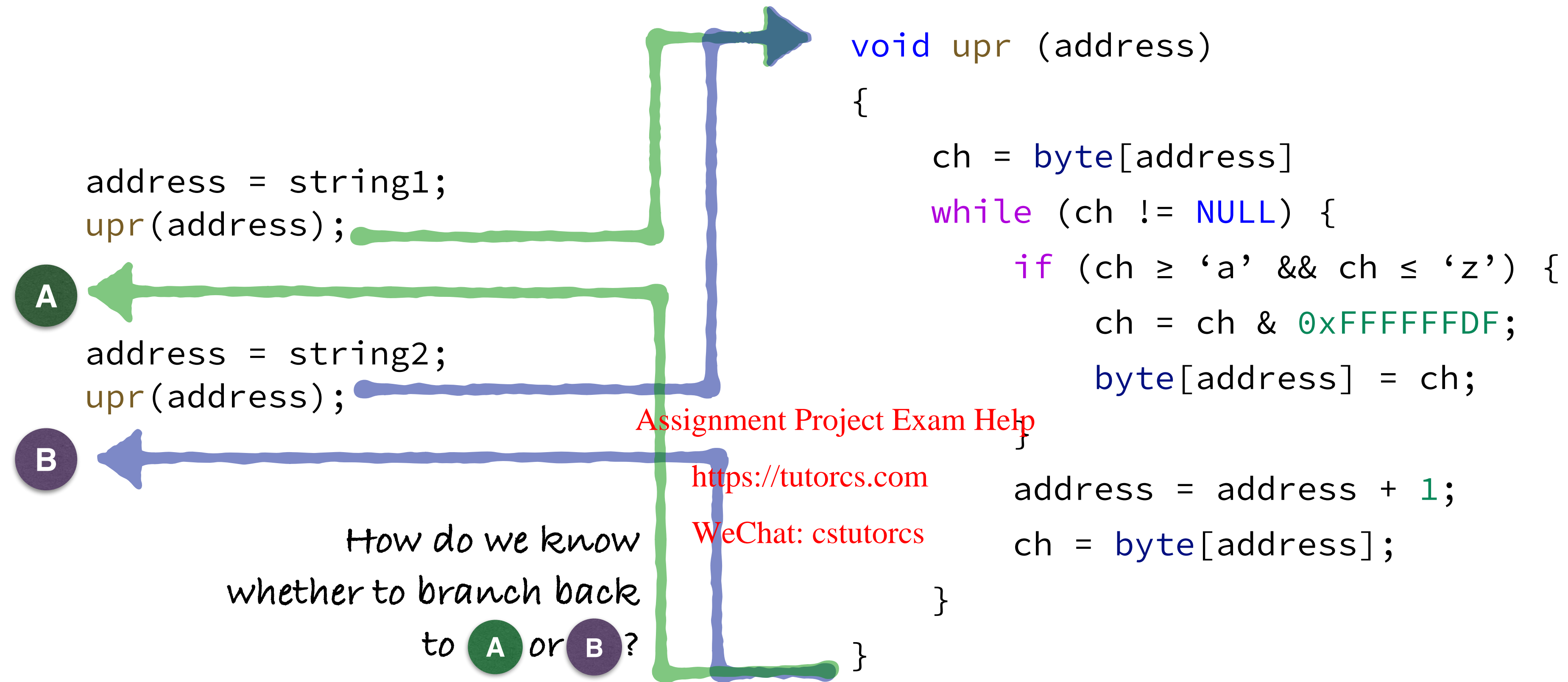
```
// UPPER CASE
void upr (address)
{
    ch = byte[address];
    while (ch != NULL) {
        if (ch ≥ 'a' && char ≤ 'z') {
            ch = ch & 0xFFFFFFDF;
            byte[address] = ch;
        }
        address = address + 1;
        ch = byte[address] ;
    }
}
```

upr(string1);

upr(string2);

Define upr(...)

Invoke upr(...) twice



Branching to a subroutine: branch to the address (or label) of the first instruction in the subroutine (simple flow control ... easy!)

Returning from a subroutine: must have remembered the address that we originally branched from (**return address**, **A** or **B** in the example above)

Main:

```
@
@ Program to convert two strings to UPPERCASE
@ Assume the first string starts at the address in R1
@ Assume the second string starts at the address in R2
@
@                                     Assignment Project Exam Help
@                                     https://tutorcs.com
MOV     R0, R1      @ copy address of first string into R0
BL      upr         @ invoke upr subroutine

MOV     R0, R2      @ copy address of second string into R0
BL      upr         @ invoke upr subroutine (again)

End_Main:
BX      LR
```

# Implementing the UPRCASE subroutine

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```
@
@ upr subroutine
@ Converts a NULL-terminated string to upper case
@
@ Parameters:
@   R0:  string start address
@
upr:
.LwhUpr:
    LDRB    R4, [R0], #1      @ char = byte[address++]
    CMP     R4, #0            @ while ( char != 0 )
    BEQ     .LeWhUpr          @ {
                                @   if (char == 'a')
                                @   &&
                                @   char <= 'z')
                                @ {
                                @   char = char AND NOT 0x00000020
                                @   byte[address - 1] = char
                                @ }
                                @ }
    CMP     R4, #'a'
    BLO     .LeIfLwr
    CMP     R4, #'z'
    BHI     .LeIfLwr
    BIC     R4, #0x00000020
    STRB    R4, [R0, #-1]
.LeIfLwr:
    B       .LwhUpr
.LeWhUpr:
    BX      LR
```

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## 3.2 Subroutines – Unintended Side Effects

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# What's wrong with this program?

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Main:

BL subroutine1 @ invoke subroutine1

End\_Main:

BX LR

@ subroutine1

subroutine1:

ADD R0, R1, R2

BL subroutine2

ADD R3, R4, R5

BX LR

@ subroutine2

subroutine2:

BX LR

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@ <https://tutorcs.com> do something

@ WeChat: cstutorcs call subroutine2

@ do something else

@ return from subroutine1

@ just return from subroutine2

Save the contents of the link register on the system stack at the start of every subroutine

Restore the contents of the link register immediately before returning from every subroutine

@ subroutine1

subroutine1:

PUSH {LR}

ADD R0, R1, R2

BL subroutine2

ADD R3, R4, R5

POP {LR}

BX LR

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@ do something

@ call subroutine2

@ do something else

@ return from subroutine1

Implement this fix now in the sideeffects1 example from the CSU1102x GitLab repository. Verify that the fix works.

More efficiently, we could restore the saved LR to the PC, avoiding the need for the BX instruction (preferred)

```
@ subroutine1
```

```
subroutine1:
```

```
    PUSH    {LR}
```

```
    ADD     R0, R1, R2
```

```
    BL      subroutine2
```

```
    ADD     R3, R4, R5
```

```
    POP     {PC}
```

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@ do something

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@ call subroutine2

@ do something else

Implement this fix now in the sideeffects1 example from the CSU1102x GitLab repository. Verify that the fix works.

Imagine we are using our upr subroutine again ...

```
@
@ upr subroutine
@ Converts a NULL-terminated string to upper case
@
@ Parameters:
@   R0:  string start address
@
upr:
.LwhUpr:
    LDRB    R4, [R0], #1    @ char = byte[address++]
    CMP     R4, #0          @ while ( char != 0 )
    BEQ     .LeWhUpr        @ {
    CMP     R4, #'a'        @   if (char >= 'a'
    BLO     .LeIfLwr        @       &&
    CMP     R4, #'z'        @       char <= 'z')
    BHI     .LeIfLwr        @ {
    BIC     R4, #0x00000020  @   char = char AND NOT 0x00000020
    STRB    R4, [R0, #-1]   @   byte[address - 1] = char
.LeIfLwr:
    B       .LwhUpr        @ }
.LeWhUpr:
    @
    BX     LR
```

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... and then use the upr subroutine to convert two strings to UPPER CASE but this time our second string starts at an address in R4 ...

Main:

```
@
@ Program to convert two strings to UPPERCASE
@ Assume the first string starts at the address in R1
@ Assume the second string starts at the address in R4
@
```

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```
MOV    R0, R1    @ copy address of first string into R0
BL     upr        @ invoke upr subroutine
```

```
MOV    R0, R4    @ copy address of second string into R0
BL     upr        @ invoke upr subroutine (again)
```

End\_Main:

```
BX     LR
```

We want (need?) to be able to write subroutines in isolation, independently from the rest of our program

When designing and writing subroutines, clearly and precisely define what effect the subroutine has

Effects outside this definition should be considered **unintended** and should be **hidden** by the subroutine

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In general, subroutines should save the contents of the registers they use at the start of the subroutine and should restore the saved contents before returning

**SOLUTION: PUSH register contents on the stack at the start of a subroutine, POP them off at the end**

```
@
@ upr subroutine
@ Converts a NULL-terminated string to upper case
@
@ Parameters:
@   R0:  string start address
@
```

```
upr:
```

```
    PUSH    {R0, R4, LR}
```

```
.LwhUpr:
```

```
    LDRB    R4, [R0], #1
```

```
    CMP     R4, #0
```

```
    BEQ     .LeWhUpr
```

```
    CMP     R4, #'a'
```

```
    BLO     .LeIfLwr
```

```
    CMP     R4, #'z'
```

```
    BHI     .LeIfLwr
```

```
    BIC     R4, #0x00000020
```

```
    STRB    R4, [R0, #-1]
```

```
.LeIfLwr:
```

```
    B       .LwhUpr
```

```
.LeWhUpr:
```

```
    POP     {R0, R4, PC}
```

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```
@ char = byte[address++]
```

```
@ while ( char != 0 )
```

```
@ {
```

```
@   if (char >= 'a'
```

```
@       &&
```

```
@       char <= 'z')
```

```
@ {
```

```
@   char = char AND NOT 0x00000020
```

```
@   byte[address - 1] = char
```

```
@ }
```

```
@ }
```

```
@
```



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## 3.3 Subroutines – Parameter Passing

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**Information must be passed to a subroutine using a fixed and well defined interface, known to both the subroutine and calling programs**

upr subroutine had single address parameter

```
address = string1;  
upr(address);
```

```
address = string2;  
upr(address);
```

```
. . .
```

```
upr(address)  
{  
    . . .  
}
```

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Simplest way to pass parameters to a subroutine is to use well defined registers, e.g. for upr subroutine, use R0 for the address of the string



Design and write an ARM Assembly Language subroutine that fills a sequence of words in memory with the same 32-bit value

Pseudo-code solution

```
fill (address, length, value)
{
    count = 0;
    while (count < length)
    {
        word[address] = value;
        address = address + 4;
        count = count + 1;
    }
}
```

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3 parameters

**address**    start address in memory

**length**    number of words to store

**value**    value to store

```
@ fill subroutine
@ Fills a contiguous sequence of words in memory with the same value
@
@ Parameters:
@     R0: address – address of first word to be filled
@     R1: length – number of words to be filled
@     R2: value – value to store in each word
```

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fill:

```
        PUSH    {R0-R2,R4,LR}
        MOV     R4, #0
.LwhFill:
        CMP     R4, R1                @ while (count < length)
        BHS     .LeWhFill             @ {
        STR     R2, [R0, R4, LSL #2]  @ word[address+(count*4)] = value;
        ADD     R4, #1                @ count = count + 1;
        B       .LwhFill              @ }
.LeWhFill:
        POP     {R0-R2,R4,PC}
```

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@ count = 0;

**In high level languages, the interface is defined by the programmer and the compiler implements and enforces it**

**In assembly language, the interface must be defined, implemented and enforced by the programmer**

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**ARM Architecture Procedure Call Standard (AAPCS)** is a technical document that dictates how a high-level language interface should be implemented in ARM Assembly Language (or machine code!!)

Enforcing the standard in your programs is your job!!

(based on AAPCS)

Registers	Use
R0 ... R3	Passing parameters to subroutines – avoid using for other variables – <b>corruptible (not saved/restored on stack)</b>
R4 ... R12	Local variables within subroutines – <b>preserved (saved/restored on stack)</b>
R13 (SP)	Stack Pointer – <b>preserved through proper use</b>
R14 (LR)	Link Register – <b>corrupted through subroutine call</b>
R15 (PC)	Program Counter

**Adhering to these guidelines will make it easier to write large programs with many subroutines**

Based on these guidelines, we could re-write fill (note that I was already adhering to the guidelines for passing parameters but I didn't need to save R0 or R1!!)

```
@ fill subroutine
@ Fills a contiguous sequence of words in memory with the same value
@
@ Parameters:
@     R0: address – address of first word to be filled
@     R1: length – number of words to be filled
@     R2: value – value to store in each word
```

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```
fill:
    PUSH    {R4, LR}
    MOV     R4, #0
.LwhFill:
    CMP     R4, R1
    BHS     .LeWhFill
    STR     R2, [R0, R4, LSL #2]
    ADD     R4, #1
    B       .LwhFill
.LeWhFill:
    POP     {R4, PC}

    @ count = 0;
    @ while (count < length)
    @ {
    @     word[address+(count*4)] = value;
    @     count = count + 1;
    @ }
    @
```



Recall the fill interface ... this is all we need to invoke fill

```
@ fill subroutine
@ Fills a contiguous sequence of words in memory with the same value
@
@ Parameters:
@     R0: address – address of first word to be filled
@     R1: length – number of words to be filled
@     R2: value – value to store in each word
```

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Note that we only need to know the interface.

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**We don't need to know how `fill` is implemented!**

To invoke fill assuming R5 contains the start address, R9 the length to fill and R8 the value to fill memory with ...

```
MOV    R0, R5    @ address parameter
MOV    R1, R9    @ length parameter
MOV    R2, R8    @ value parameter

BL     fill      @ invoke fill
```

1 move parameters into place

2 Invoke subroutine

Design and write an ARM Assembly Language subroutine that counts the number of set bits in a word

```
@ count1s subroutine
@ Counts the number of set bits (1s) in a word
@ Parameters:
@   R0: wordval – word in which 1s will be counted
@ Return:
@   R0: count of set bits (1s) in wordval
count1s:
    PUSH    {R4, LR}      @ save registers
    MOV     R4, R0        @ copy wordval parameter to local variable
    MOV     R0, #0        @ count = 0;
.LwhCount1s:
    CMP     R4, #0        @ while (wordval != 0)
    BEQ     .LeWhCount1s  @ {
    MOVS    R4, R4, LSR #1 @ wordval = wordval >> 1; (update carry)
    ADC     R0, R0, #0     @ count = count + 0 + carry;
    B       .LwhCount1s   @ }
.LeWhCount1s:
    POP     {R4, PC}      @ restore registers
```

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Use R0 for returning values from subroutines

Registers	Use
R0 ... R3	Passing parameters to subroutines or returning values from subroutines – avoid using for other variables – <b>corruptible</b>
R4 ... R12	Local variables within subroutines – <b>preserved (saved/restored on stack)</b>
R13 (SP)	Stack Pointer – <b>preserved through proper use</b>
R14 (LR)	Link Register – <b>corrupted through subroutine call</b>
R15 (PC)	Program Counter

R0 used to pass wordval parameter **and** return result value from count1s subroutine (an implementation decision – real AAPCS compilers would also do this!)

Recall the count1s interface

```
@ count1s subroutine
@ Counts the number of set bits (1s) in a word
@ Parameters:
@   R0: wordval – word in which 1s will be counted
@ Return:
@   R0: count of set bits (1s) in wordval
```

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Note again that we only need to know the interface ... we don't need to know how count1s is implemented

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Call count1s, assuming R7 contains the word value to be passed to count1s

```
...      ...
MOV      R0, R7      @ prepare the parameter
BL       count1s      @ call count1s
ADD      R5, R5, R0   @ do something useful with the result
...      ...
```

## Good practice to save ...

any registers used for local variables (R4 ... R12)

the link register (LR / R14)

(and optionally, registers used for parameters)

but not registers used for return values

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## ... on the system stack at the start of every subroutine

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Restore exactly the same saved registers at the end of every subroutine

Avoids unintended side effects and simplifies subroutine interface design



**Remember: a subroutine must pop off everything that was pushed on to the stack before it returns**





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## 3.4 Subroutines – Recursion

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Subroutines can invoke themselves – recursion

Example: Design, write and test a subroutine to compute  $x^n$

$$x^n = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ x & \text{if } n = 1 \\ (x^2)^{n/2} & \text{if } n \text{ is even} \\ x \cdot (x^2)^{(n-1)/2} & \text{if } n \text{ is odd} \end{cases}$$

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$$x^5 = x \times x \times x \times x \times x$$

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$$x^5 = x \times (x \times x) \times (x \times x)$$

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$$x^5 = x \times (x \times x)^2$$

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$$x^5 = x \times (x^2)^2$$



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 $x^5 = x^{1+(2 \times 2)}$   
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Subroutines can invoke themselves – recursion

Example: Design, write and test a subroutine to compute  $x^n$

$$x^n = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n = 0 \\ x & \text{if } n = 1 \\ (x^2)^{n/2} & \text{if } n \text{ is even} \\ x \cdot (x^2)^{(n-1)/2} & \text{if } n \text{ is odd} \end{cases}$$

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$$x^9 = x \times (x^2)^{(9-1)/2}$$

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$$x^9 = x \times (x^2)^4$$

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$$x^9 = x \times ((x^2)^2)^{4/2}$$

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$$x^9 = x \times ((x^2)^2)^2$$



```
power (x, n)
{
    if (n == 0)
    {
        result = 1;
    }
    else if (n == 1)
    {
        result = x;
    }
    else if (n & 1 == 0) // n is even
    {
        result = power (x * x, n >> 1);
    }
    else // n is odd
    {
        result = x * power (x * x, n >> 1)
    }
}
```

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```
@
@ power subroutine
@ Computes  $x^n$ 
@
@ Parameters:
@   R0:  x
@   R1:  n
@
@ Return:
@   R0:   $x^n$ 
@
```

power:

```
    PUSH    {R4-R6, LR}
    MOV     R4, R0
    MOV     R5, R1
```

```
@ save registers
@ Move parameters to local registers
@ Doing this makes managing registers in subroutines
@ *much* simpler. When we call a subroutine from the
@ body of this subroutine, the parameter registers
@ (R0-R3) will already be free for us to use because
@ we have moved the original parameters to other
@ registers.
```

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```
CMP    R5, #0           @ if (n == 0) {
BNE    .LpowerNe0

MOV    R0, #1           @   result = 1;

B      .LpowerEndIf     @ }
.LpowerNe0:
CMP    R5, #1           @ Assignment Project Exam Help
BNE    .LpowerNe1       @ https://tutorcs.com
                          @ WeChat: cstutorcs
MOV    R0, R4           @   result = x;

B      .LpowerEndIf     @ }
.LpowerNe1:
```

# Example – power (3)

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.LpowerNe1:

AND R6, R5, #1 @ else if (n & 1 == 0) { // n is even

CMP R6, #0

BNE .LpowerNeEven

MUL R0, R4, R4 @ result = power (x \* x, n >> 1);

MOV R1, R5, LSR #1 @ // using LSR by 1 bit to implement division by 2

BL power

B .LpowerEndIf

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@ } <https://tutorcs.com>

.LpowerNeEven:

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MUL R0, R4, R4

MOV R1, R5, LSR #1

BL power

MUL R0, R4, R0

@ else {

@ result = x \* power (x \* x, n >> 1);

.LpowerEndIf:

@ }

POP {R4-R6, PC}

@ return result;



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## 3.5 Subroutines – Passing Parameters on the Stack

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School of Computer Science and Statistics

If there are insufficient registers to pass parameters to a subroutine, the system stack can be used

Commonly used by high-level languages

Number of parameters is limited only by the remaining space on the stack

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## General approach

Calling program pushes parameters onto the stack

Subroutine accesses parameters on the stack, relative to the stack pointer

Calling program pops parameters off the stack after the subroutine has returned



Re-write the fill subroutine to pass parameters on the stack (instead of registers)

Pseudo-code reminder

```
fill (address, length, value)
{
    count = 0;
    while (count < length)
    {
        word[address] = value;
        address = address + 4;
        count = count + 1;
    }
}
```

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```
@ fill subroutine
@ Fills a contiguous sequence of words in memory with the same value
@ Parameters
@     [sp+0]: value – value to store in each word (1st Top Of Stack)
@     [sp+4]: length – number of words to be filled (2nd Top Of Stack)
@     [sp+8]: address – address of first word to be filled (3rd Top Of Stack)
fill:
    PUSH    {R4-R7,lr}           @ save registers

    LDR     R4, [SP, #28]         @ load address parameter (not popping)
    LDR     R5, [SP, #24]         @ load length parameter (not popping)
    LDR     R6, [SP, #20]         @ load value parameter (not popping)

    MOV     R7, #0               @ count = 0;
.LwhFill:
    CMP     R7, R5               @ while (count < length)
    BHS     .LeWhFill:           @ {
    STR     R6, [R4, R7, LSL #2] @ word[address + count * 4] = value;
    ADD     R7, #1               @ count = count + 1;
    B       .LwhFill:           @ }
.LeWhFill:
    POP     {R4-R7,pc}           @ restore registers
```

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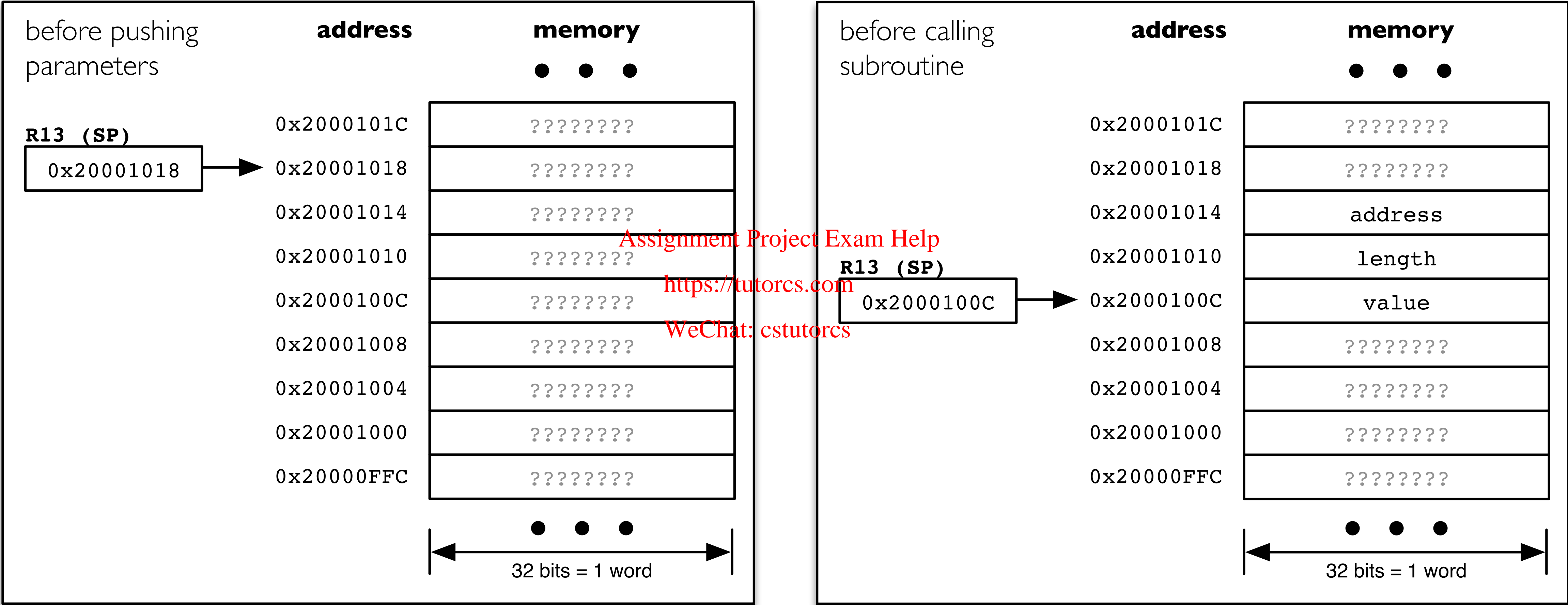
Imagine we want to fill memory starting at the address in R5 with the value in R8 and filling the number of words in R9:

```
PUSH    {R5}           ; Push address parameter on stack
PUSH    {R9}           ; Push length parameter on stack
PUSH    {R8}           ; Push value parameter on stack

BL      fill           ; Call fillmem subroutine

ADD     SP, SP, #12     ; Efficiently pop parameters off stack
```

The order of the parameters is important! If we want to control the order of the parameters on the stack, we can't push in one go!



Why not push the three parameters onto the stack using a single PUSH instruction?

Important that **calling program** restores the system stack to its original state

Pop off the three parameters

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Quickly and simply done by adding 12 (3\*4 word-size values) to SP

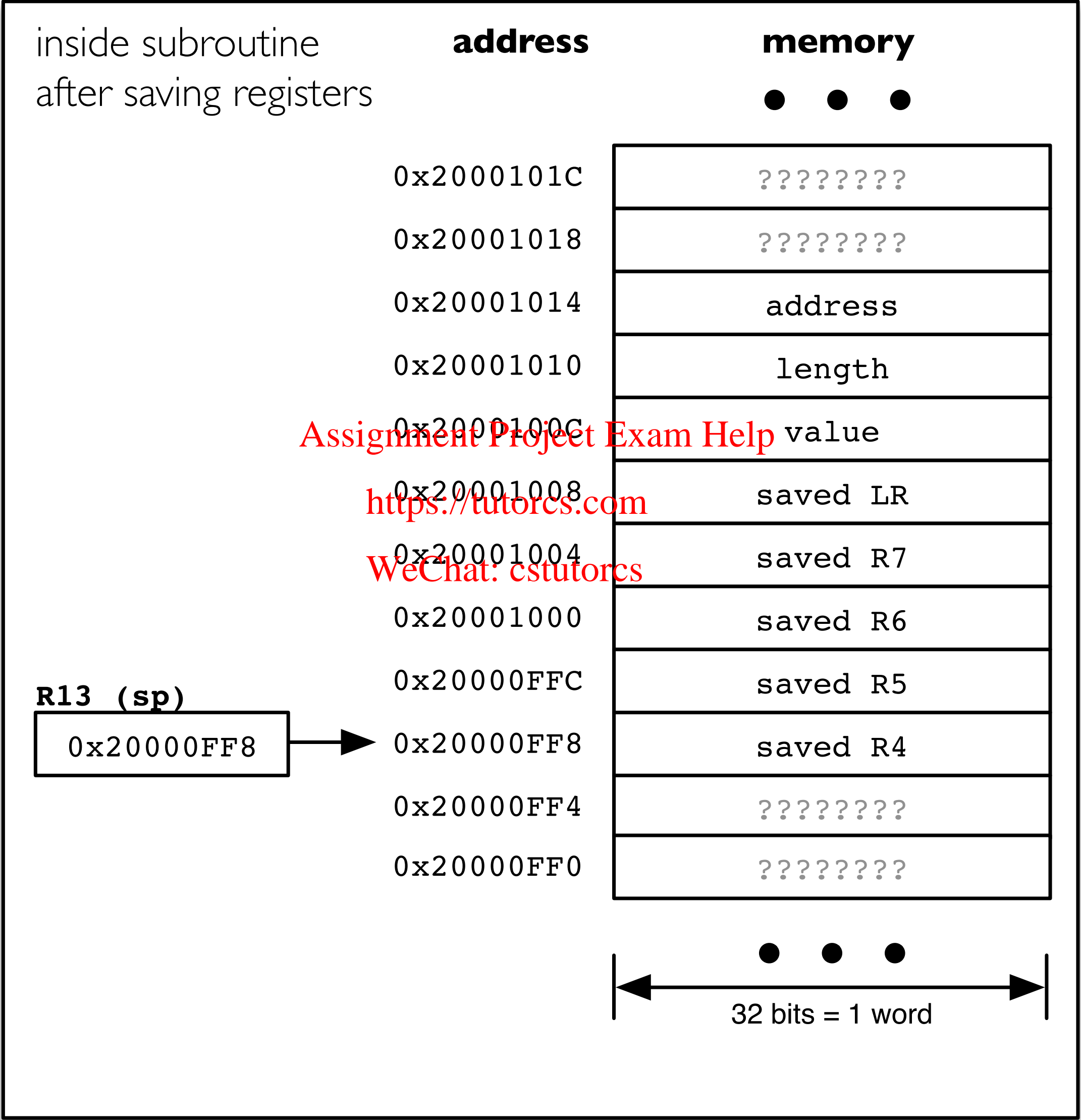
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Subroutine doesn't pop parameters off the stack (why?)

Accesses them in-place, using offsets relative to the stack pointer

Subroutine saves some registers to the stack

compensate by adding additional offset (+20) to parameter offsets





What happens the fill example if we change the list of registers that we save?  
(Or worse, manipulate the stack during the execution of the subroutine)

```
@ fill subroutine
@ Fills a contiguous sequence of words in memory with the same value
@ Parameters
@      [sp+0]: value – value to store in each word (1st Top Of Stack)
@      [sp+4]: length – number of words to be filled (2nd Top Of Stack)
@      [sp+8]: address – address of first word to be filled (3rd Top Of Stack)
fill
    PUSH    {R4-R7,lr}           @ save registers
                                   @ load address parameter (not popping)
                                   @ load length parameter (not popping)
                                   @ load value parameter (not popping)

    LDR     R4, [SP, #8+20]
    LDR     R5, [SP, #4+20]
    LDR     R6, [SP, #0+20]

.LwhFill:
    CMP     R5, #0               @ while (count > 0)
    BEQ     .LeWhFill:          @ {
    SUB     R5, R5, #1           @ count = count - 1;
    STR     R6, [R4, R7, LSL #2] @ word[address + count * 4] = value;
    B       .LwhFill:          @ }
.LeWhFill:
    POP     {R4-R6,pc}          @ restore registers
```

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Offsets to parameters on the stack may change at design time or at runtime

What happens the fill example if we change the list of registers that we save?  
(Or worse, manipulate the stack during the execution of the subroutine)

```
@ fill subroutine
@ Fills a contiguous sequence of words in memory with the same value
@ Parameters
@      [sp+0]: value – value to store in each word (1st Top Of Stack)
@      [sp+4]: length – number of words to be filled (2nd Top Of Stack)
@      [sp+8]: address – address of first word to be filled (3rd Top Of Stack)
fill
    PUSH    {R4-R6,lr}           @ save registers
                                   @ load address parameter (not popping)
                                   @ load length parameter (not popping)
                                   @ load value parameter (not popping)

    LDR     R4, [SP, #8+16]
    LDR     R5, [SP, #4+16]
    LDR     R6, [SP, #0+16]

.LwhFill:
    CMP     R5, #0               @ while (count > 0)
    BEQ     .LeWhFill:          @ {
    SUB     R5, R5, #1           @ count = count - 1;
    STR     R6, [R4, R7, LSL #2] @ word[address + count * 4] = value;
    B       .LwhFill:          @ }
.LeWhFill:
    POP     {R4-R6,pc}          @ restore registers
```

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Offsets to parameters on the stack may change at design time or at runtime

## Workaround – at start of subroutine

Save contents of a “scratch” register (e.g. R12) and LR

Copy  $SP + 8$  to “scratch” register

Continue to push data onto the stack as required

Access parameters relative to “scratch” register

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fill

PUSH {R12, LR}

ADD r12, SP, #8

PUSH {R4-R6}

LDR R4, [r12, #8]

LDR R5, [r12, #4]

LDR R6, [r12, #0]

<remainder of subroutine as before>

POP {R4-R6}

POP {R12, PC}

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@ save R12, LR

@ scratch = SP + 8

@ save registers

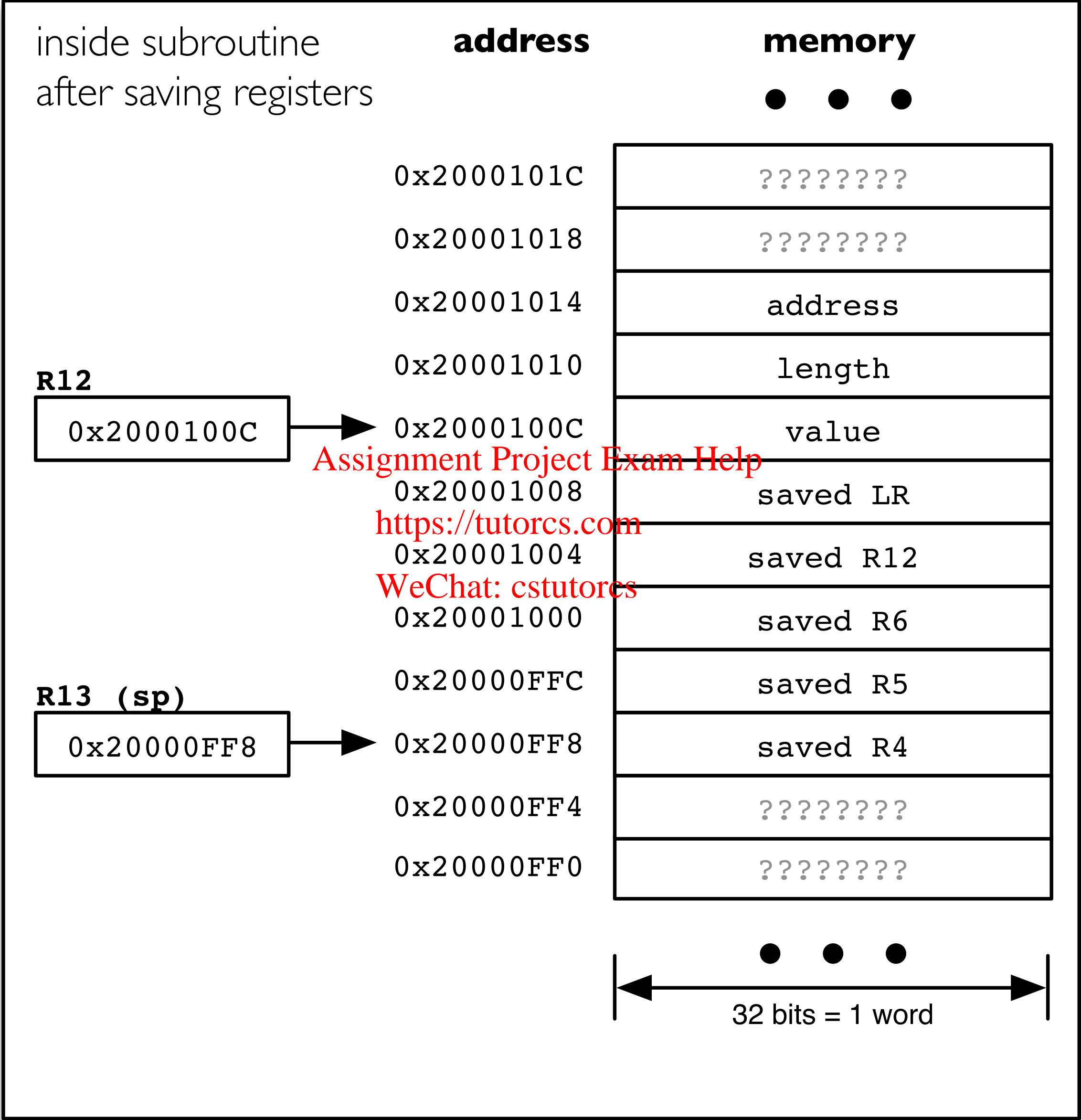
@ load address parameter

@ load length parameter

@ load value parameter

@ restore registers

@ restore R12, PC



Use R0–R3 for parameters and return values

Avoid using R0–R3 for local variables

No need to save/restore on system stack

Use R4–R12 for local variables

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Save and restore on system stack

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Always save link register LR at start of subroutine

Restore link register LR to PC to return from subroutine

When passing parameters on the stack, use a register (e.g. R12) as a pointer to the parameter block