GCC Optimizations

Optimization

Most of what you need to do with optimization can be summarized by:

1) If doing something seldom and only on small inputs, do whatever is simplest to code, understand, and debug
2) If doing things a lot, or on big inputs, make the primary algorithm's Big-O cost reasonable
3) **Let gcc do its magic from there**
4) Optimize explicitly as a last resort

GCC Optimization

- Today, we'll be comparing two levels of optimization in the gcc compiler:
  - `gcc –O0  // mostly just literal translation of C`
  - `gcc –O2  // enable nearly all reasonable optimizations`
  - (we also use –Og, like –O0 but more debugging friendly)

- There are other custom and more aggressive levels of optimization, e.g.:
  - `-O3     //more aggressive than O2, trade size for speed`
  - `-Os     //optimize for size`
  - `-Ofast  //disregard standards compliance (!!)`

- Exhaustive list of gcc optimization-related flags:
  - https://gcc.gnu.org/onlinedocs/gcc/Optimize-Options.html

GCC Optimizations

- Constant Folding
- Common Sub-expression Elimination
- Dead Code
- Strength Reduction
- Code Motion
- Tail Recursion
- Loop Unrolling

Constant Folding

Constant Folding pre-calculates constants at compile-time where possible.

```
int seconds = 60 * 60 * 24 * n_days;
```

Constant Folding

```
int fold(int param) {
    char arr[5];
    int a = 0x107;
    int b = a * sizeof(arr);
    int c = sqrt(2.0);
    return a * param + (a + 0x15 / c + strlen("Hello") * b - 0x37) / 4;
}
```

Constant Folding: Before (-O0)

```
00000000000011b9 <fold>:
    11b9:   55                      push   %rbp
    11ba:   48 89 e5                mov    %rsp,%rbp
    11bd:   41 54                   push   %r12
    11bf:   53                      push   %rbx
    11c0:   48 83 ec 30             sub    $0x30,%rsp
    11c4:   89 7d cc                mov    %edi,-0x34(%rbp)
    11c7:   c7 45 ec 07 01 00 00    movl   $0x107,-0x14(%rbp)
    11ce:   8b 45 ec                mov    -0x14(%rbp),%eax
    11d1:   48 98                   cltq
    11d3:   89 c2                   mov    %eax,%edx
    11d5:   89 d0                   mov    %edx,%eax
    11d7:   c1 e0 02                shl    $0x2,%eax
    11da:   01 d0                   add    %edx,%eax
    11dc:   89 45 e8                mov    %eax,-0x18(%rbp)
    11df:   48 8b 05 2a 0e 00 00    mov    0xe2a(%rip),%rax        # 2010 <_IO_stdin_used+0x10>
    11e6:   66 48 0f 6e c0          movq   %rax,%xmm0
    11eb:   e8 b0 fe ff ff          callq  10a0 <sqrt@plt>
    11f0:   f2 0f 2c c0             cvttsd2si %xmm0,%eax
    11f4:   89 45 e4                mov    %eax,-0x1c(%rbp)
    11f7:   8b 45 ec                mov    -0x14(%rbp),%eax
    11fa:   0f af 45 cc             imul   -0x34(%rbp),%eax
    11fe:   41 89 c4                mov    %eax,%r12d
    1201:   b8 15 00 00 00          mov    $0x15,%eax
    1206:   99                      cltd
    1207:   f7 7d e4                idivl  -0x1c(%rbp)
    120a:   89 c2                   mov    %eax,%edx
    120c:   8b 45 ec                mov    -0x14(%rbp),%eax
    120f:   01 d0                   add    %edx,%eax
    1211:   48 63 d8                movslq %eax,%rbx
    1214:   48 8d 3d ed 0d 00 00    lea    0xded(%rip),%rdi        # 2008 <_IO_stdin_used+0x8>
    121b:   e8 20 fe ff ff          callq  1040 <strlen@plt>
    1220:   8b 55 e8                mov    -0x18(%rbp),%edx
    1223:   48 63 d2                movslq %edx,%rdx
    1226:   48 0f af c2             imul   %rdx,%rax
    122a:   48 01 d8                add    %rbx,%rax
    122d:   48 83 e8 37             sub    $0x37,%rax
    1231:   48 c1 e8 02             shr    $0x2,%rax
    1235:   44 01 e0                add    %r12d,%eax
    1238:   48 83 c4 30             add    $0x30,%rsp
    123c:   5b                      pop    %rbx
    123d:   41 5c                   pop    %r12
    123f:   5d                      pop    %rbp
    1240:   c3                      retq
```

Constant Folding: After (-O2)

```
00000000000011b0 <fold>:
    11b0:   69 c7 07 01 00 00       imul   $0x107,%edi,%eax
    11b6:   05 a5 06 00 00          add    $0x6a5,%eax
    11bb:   c3                      retq
```

What is the consequence of this for you as a programmer? What should you do differently or the same knowing that compilers can do this for you?

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Common Sub-Expression Elimination

Common Sub-Expression Elimination prevents the recalculation of the same thing many times by doing it once and saving the result.

```
int a = (param2 + 0x107);
int b = param1 * (param2 + 0x107) + a;
return a * (param2 + 0x107) + b * (param2 + 0x107);
```

Common Sub-Expression Elimination

Common Sub-Expression Elimination prevents the recalculation of the same thing many times by doing it once and saving the result.

```
int a = (param2 + 0x107);
int b = param1 * (param2 + 0x107) + a;
return a * (param2 + 0x107) + b * (param2 + 0x107);
// = 2 * a * a + param1 * a * a
```

```
0000000000011b0 <subexp>:  // param1 in %edi, param2 in %esi
    11b0:  lea    0x107(%rsi),%eax      // %eax stores a
    11b6:  imul   %eax,%edi             // param1 * a
    11b9:  lea    (%rdi,%rax,2),%esi    // 2 * a + param1 * a
    11bc:  imul   %esi,%eax             // a * (2 * a + param1 * a)
    11bf:  retq
```

Common Sub-Expression Elimination

Why should we bother saving repeated calculations in variables if the compiler has common subexpression elimination?

- The compiler may not always be able to optimize every instance. Plus, it can help reduce redundancy!
- Makes code more readable!

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Dead Code

Dead code elimination removes code that doesn't serve a purpose:

```
if (param1 < param2 && param1 > param2) {
    printf("This test can never be true!\n");
}

// Empty for loop
for (int i = 0; i < 1000; i++);

// If/else that does the same operation in both cases
if (param1 == param2) {
    param1++;
} else {
    param1++;
}

// If/else that more trickily does the same operation in both cases
if (param1 == 0) {
    return 0;
} else {
    return param1;
}
```

Dead Code: Before (-O0)

```
00000000000011a9 <dead_code>:
    11a9:55                         push   %rbp
    11aa:48 89 e5                   mov    %rsp,%rbp
    11ad:48 83 ec 20                sub    $0x20,%rsp
    11b1:89 7d ec                   mov    %edi,-0x14(%rbp)
    11b4:89 75 e8                   mov    %esi,-0x18(%rbp)
    11b7:8b 45 ec                   mov    -0x14(%rbp),%eax
    11ba:3b 45 e8                   cmp    -0x18(%rbp),%eax
    11bd:7d 19                      jge    11d8 <dead_code+0x2f>
    11bf:8b 45 ec                   mov    -0x14(%rbp),%eax
    11c2:3b 45 e8                   cmp    -0x18(%rbp),%eax
    11c5:7e 11                      jle    11d8 <dead_code+0x2f>
    11c7:48 8d 3d 36 0e 00 00       lea    0xe36(%rip),%rdi        # 2004 <_IO_stdin_used+0x4>
    11ce:b8 00 00 00 00             mov    $0x0,%eax
    11d3:e8 68 fe ff ff             callq  1040 <printf@plt>
    11d8:c7 45 fc 00 00 00 00       movl   $0x0,-0x4(%rbp)
    11df:eb 04                      jmp    11e5 <dead_code+0x3c>
    11e1:83 45 fc 01                addl   $0x1,-0x4(%rbp)
    11e5:81 7d fc e7 03 00 00       cmpl   $0x3e7,-0x4(%rbp)
    11ec:7e f3                      jle    11e1 <dead_code+0x38>
    11ee:8b 45 ec                   mov    -0x14(%rbp),%eax
    11f1:3b 45 e8                   cmp    -0x18(%rbp),%eax
    11f4:75 06                      jne    11fc <dead_code+0x53>
    11f6:83 45 ec 01                addl   $0x1,-0x14(%rbp)
    11fa:eb 04                      jmp    1200 <dead_code+0x57>
    11fc:83 45 ec 01                addl   $0x1,-0x14(%rbp)
    1200:83 7d ec 00                cmpl   $0x0,-0x14(%rbp)
    1204:75 07                      jne    120d <dead_code+0x64>
    1206:b8 00 00 00 00             mov    $0x0,%eax
    120b:eb 03                      jmp    1210 <dead_code+0x67>
    120d:8b 45 ec                   mov    -0x14(%rbp),%eax
    1210:c9                         leaveq
    1211:c3                         retq
```

Dead Code: After (-O2)

```
00000000000011b0 <dead_code>:
    11b0:   8d 47 01                lea    0x1(%rdi),%eax
    11b3:   c3                      retq
```

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Strength Reduction

Strength reduction changes divide to multiply, multiply to add/shift, and mod to AND to avoid using instructions that cost many cycles (multiply and divide).

```
int a = param2 * 32;
int b = a * 7;
int c = b / 2;
int d = param2 % 2;

for (int i = 0; i <= param2; i++) {
    c += param1[i] + 0x107 * i;
}
return c + d;
```

Shifting into Shifts

- `int a = param2 * 32;`

  Becomes:

- `int a = param2 * 32;`

- `int b = a * 7;`

  Becomes:

- `int b = a + (a << 2) + (a << 1);`

- `int c = b / 2;`

  Becomes

- `int c = b >> 1`

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Code Motion

Code motion moves code outside of a loop if possible.

```
for (int i = 0; i < n; i++) {
  sum += arr[i] + foo * (bar + 3);
}
```

Common subexpression elimination deals with expressions that appear multiple times in the code. Here, the expression appears once, but is calculated each loop iteration, even though none of its values change during the loop.

Code Motion

Code motion moves code outside of a loop if possible.

```
int temp = foo * (bar + 3);
for (int i = 0; i < n; i++) {
  sum += arr[i] + temp;
}
```

Moving it out of the loop allows the computation to happen only once.

Practice: GCC Optimization

```
int char_sum(char *s) {
    int sum = 0;
    for (size_t i = 0; i < strlen(s); i++) {
        sum += s[i];
    }
    return sum;
}
```

What is the bottleneck? What (if anything) can GCC do?

Practice: GCC Optimization

```
int char_sum(char *s) {
    int sum = 0;
    for (size_t i = 0; i < strlen(s); i++) {
        sum += s[i];
    }
    return sum;
}
```

What is the bottleneck? What (if anything) can GCC do?

strlen is called every loop iteration – code motion can pull it out of the loop

Tail Recursion

Tail recursion is an example of where GCC can identify recursive patterns that can be more efficiently implemented iteratively.

```
long factorial(int n) {
  if (n <= 1) {
      return 1;
  }
  else return n * factorial(n - 1);
}
```

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Loop Unrolling

Loop Unrolling: Do **n** loop iterations' worth of work per actual loop iteration, so we save ourselves from doing the loop overhead (test and jump) every time, and instead incur overhead only every n-th time.

```
for (int i = 0; i <= n - 4; i += 4) {
     sum += arr[i];
     sum += arr[i + 1];
     sum += arr[i + 2];
     sum += arr[i + 3];
} // after the loop handle any leftovers
```