



Transparency

Introduction to Computer Graphics

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Transparency

- So far, the objects we render are all opaque
 - Z-buffer will keep the closest objects from the camera for us
- What if the scene contains transparent objects
 - We would like to see occluded objects through the transparent one!

transparent
windows



Alpha Value

- The transparency of an object is defined by its color's **alpha** value (the 4th component of a color vector)
 - Previously, we set this to a fixed value of **1.0**, giving the object zero transparency (fully **opaque**)

```
void main()
{
    FragColor = vec4(fillColor, 1.0);
}
```

RGB A

----- in Shader example

```
void main()
{
    return vec4 RGBA
    vec3 texColor = texture2D(mapKd, iTexCoord).rgb;
    FragColor = vec4(iLightingColor * texColor, 1.0);
}
```

RGB A

----- in Textures example

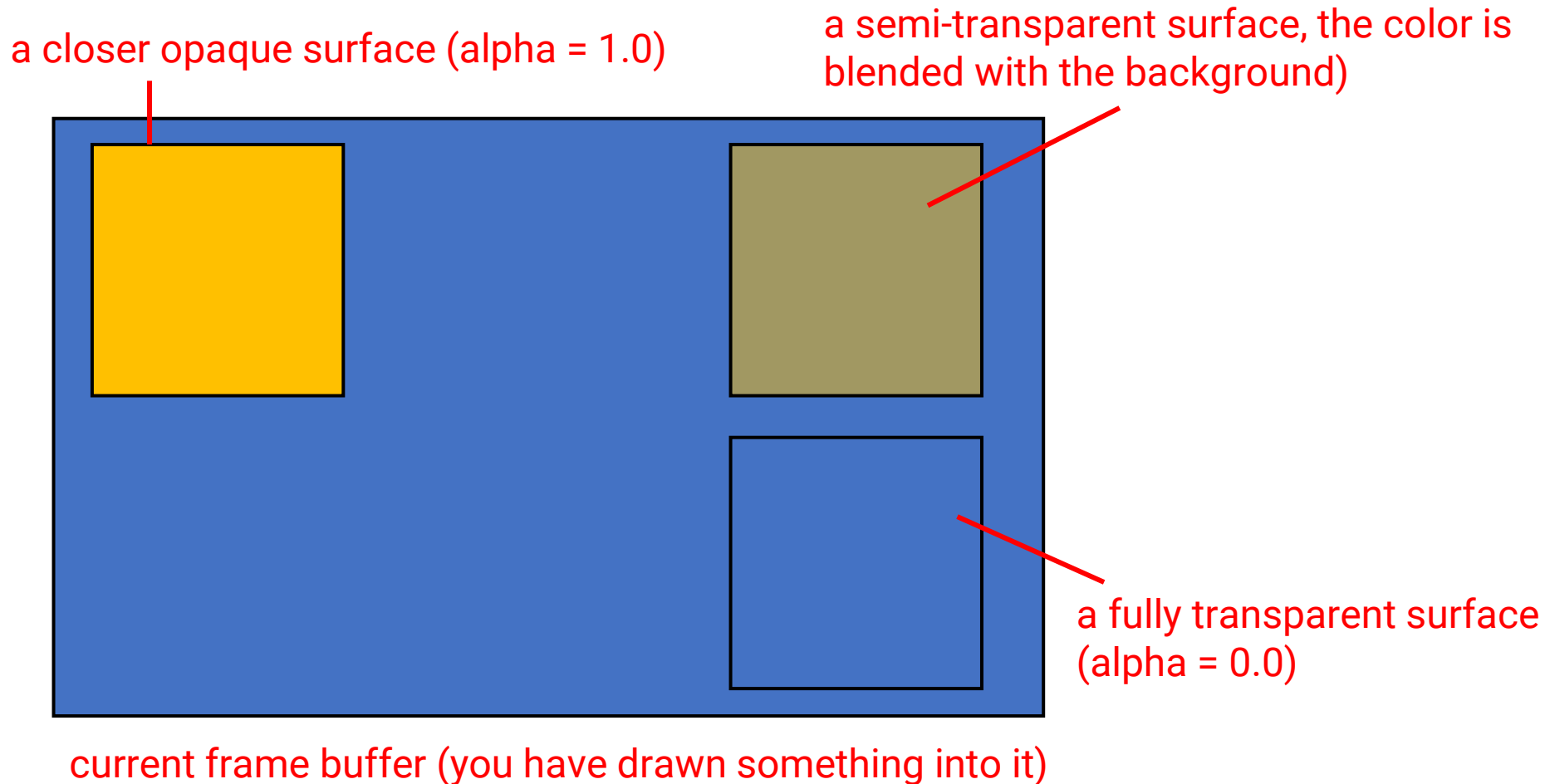
- On the other hand, an alpha value of **0.0** results in the object having complete transparency
- The values in between mean **semi-transparency**

Alpha Blending

- For rasterization, transparency is difficult to resolve **because each polygon only has its own information**
 - It does not know which triangle locates behind, so it cannot determine the pixel color in its fragment shader
- Major idea
 - Render transparent objects **in an order w.r.t their distance to the camera** (farther objects first)
 - When rendering transparent objects, blend the surface color with the previous results in the color buffer

Alpha Blending (cont.)

- Concept of transparency in rasterization



Alpha Blending in OpenGL (cont.)

- OpenGL provides flexibility to composite the fragment color when rendering transparent objects

$$\bar{C}_{result} = \bar{C}_{source} * F_{source} + \bar{C}_{destination} * F_{destination}$$

blending equation

- \bar{C}_{source} : the source color vector (the color output by the fragment shader)
- $\bar{C}_{destination}$: the destination color vector (the color vector currently stored in the color buffer)
- F_{source} : the source factor value (set the impact of the alpha value on the source color)
- $F_{destination}$: the destination factor value (set the impact of the alpha value on the destination color)

Alpha Blending in OpenGL (cont.)

- Implementation transparency in OpenGL

Option	Value
GL_ZERO	Factor is equal to 0.
GL_ONE	Factor is equal to 1.
GL_SRC_COLOR	Factor is equal to the source color vector \bar{C}_{source} .
GL_ONE_MINUS_SRC_COLOR	Factor is equal to 1 minus the source color vector: $1 - \bar{C}_{source}$.
GL_DST_COLOR	Factor is equal to the destination color vector $\bar{C}_{destination}$.
GL_ONE_MINUS_DST_COLOR	Factor is equal to 1 minus the destination color vector: $1 - \bar{C}_{destination}$.
GL_SRC_ALPHA	Factor is equal to the <i>alpha</i> component of the source color vector \bar{C}_{source} .
GL_ONE_MINUS_SRC_ALPHA	Factor is equal to $1 - \textit{alpha}$ of the source color vector \bar{C}_{source} .
GL_DST_ALPHA	Factor is equal to the <i>alpha</i> component of the destination color vector $\bar{C}_{destination}$.
GL_ONE_MINUS_DST_ALPHA	Factor is equal to $1 - \textit{alpha}$ of the destination color vector $\bar{C}_{destination}$.
GL_CONSTANT_COLOR	Factor is equal to the constant color vector $\bar{C}_{constant}$.
GL_ONE_MINUS_CONSTANT_COLOR	Factor is equal to 1 - the constant color vector $\bar{C}_{constant}$.
GL_CONSTANT_ALPHA	Factor is equal to the <i>alpha</i> component of the constant color vector $\bar{C}_{constant}$.
GL_ONE_MINUS_CONSTANT_ALPHA	Factor is equal to $1 - \textit{alpha}$ of the constant color vector $\bar{C}_{constant}$.

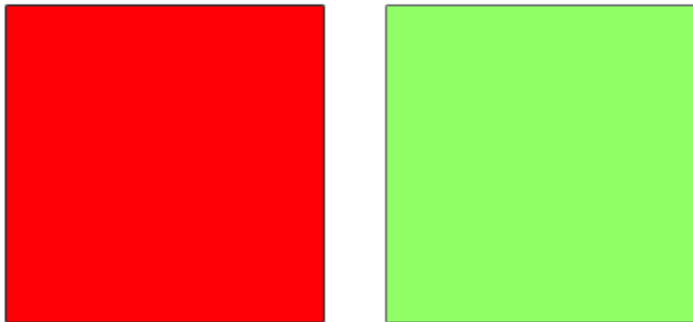
Alpha Blending in OpenGL (cont.)

- Example

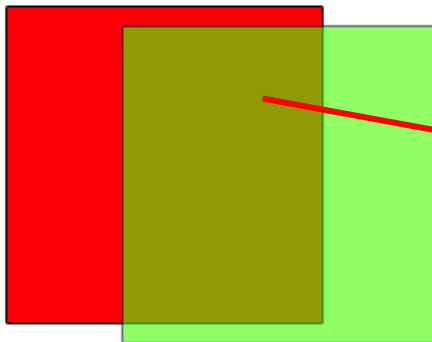
$$\bar{C}_{result} = \bar{C}_{source} * \boxed{F_{source}} + \bar{C}_{destination} * \boxed{F_{destination}}$$

GL_SRC_ALPHA

GL_ONE_MINUS_SRC_ALPHA



RGBA = (1.0, 0.0, 0.0, 1.0) (0.0, 1.0, 0.0, 0.6)



$$(0.0, 1.0, 0.0, 0.6) * 0.6 + \\ (1.0, 0.0, 0.0, 1.0) * (1 - 0.6)$$

$$= (0.4, 0.6, 0.0, 0.76)$$

Alpha Blending in OpenGL

- Implementation
 - In the CPU (OpenGL) program, turn on the following setting if you want to render a transparent object

```
glEnable(GL_BLEND);  
glBlendFunc(GL_SRC_ALPHA, GL_ONE_MINUS_SRC_ALPHA);
```

source factor

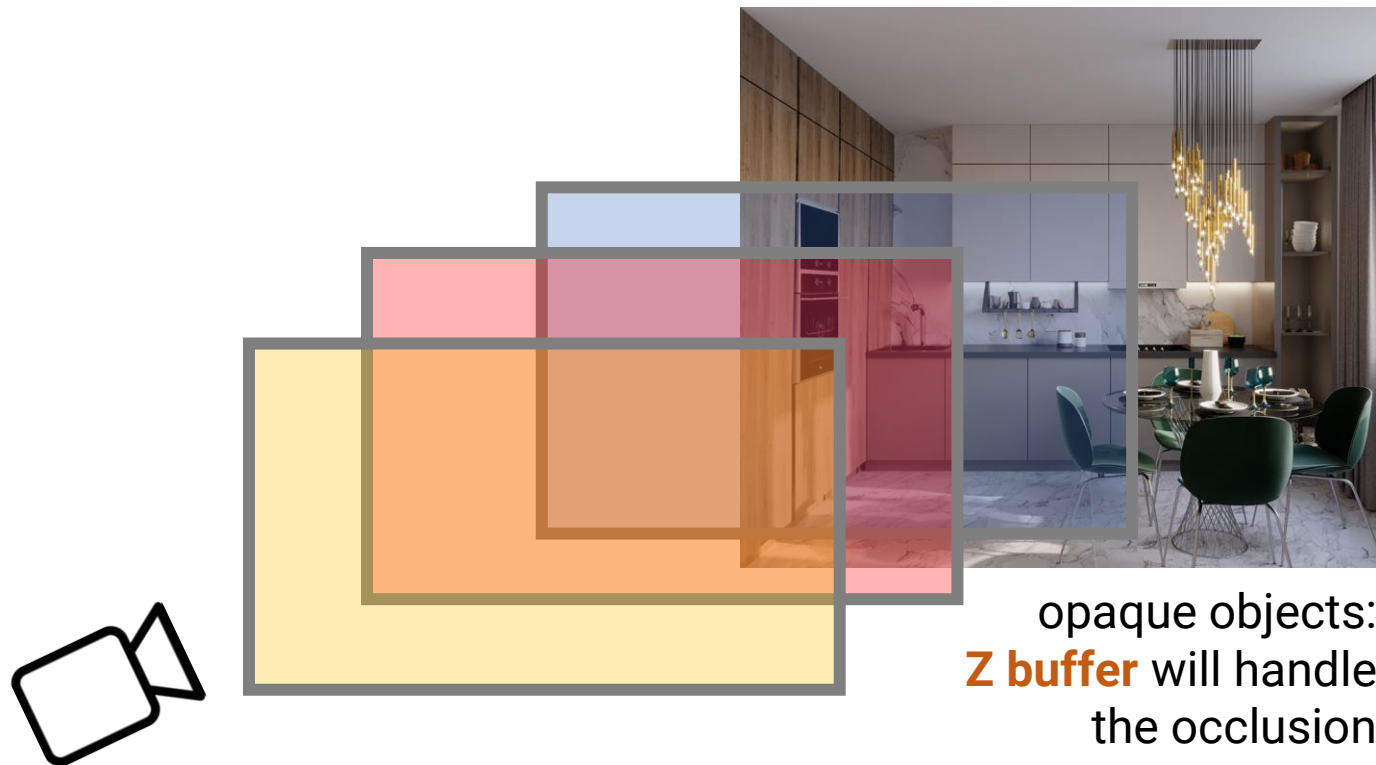
destination factor

- In the shader, set the transparency when outputting color

```
void main()  
{  
    vec3 texColor = texture2D(mapKd, iTexCoord).rgb;  
    FragColor = vec4(iLightingColor * texColor, 0.5);  
}
```

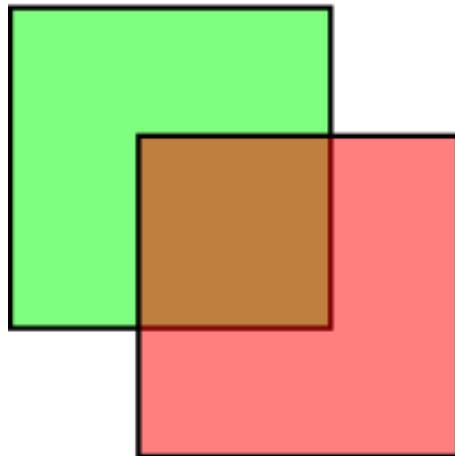
Rendering Algorithm for Transparency

- Render **opaque** objects first **in any order**
- Render **transparent** objects **in an order w.r.t their distance to the camera** (farther objects first)

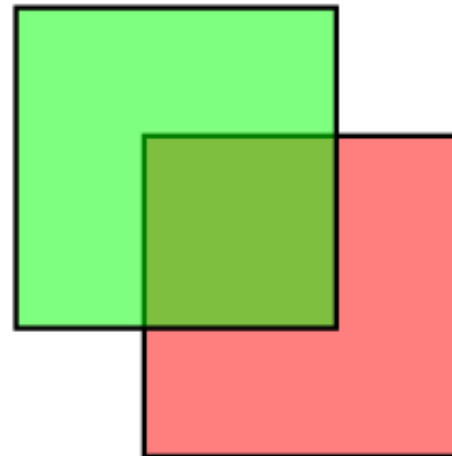


Rendering Algorithm for Transparency (cont.)

- Render **opaque** objects first
- Render **transparent** objects **in an order w.r.t their distance to the camera** (farther objects first)
- **The rendering order does matter!**



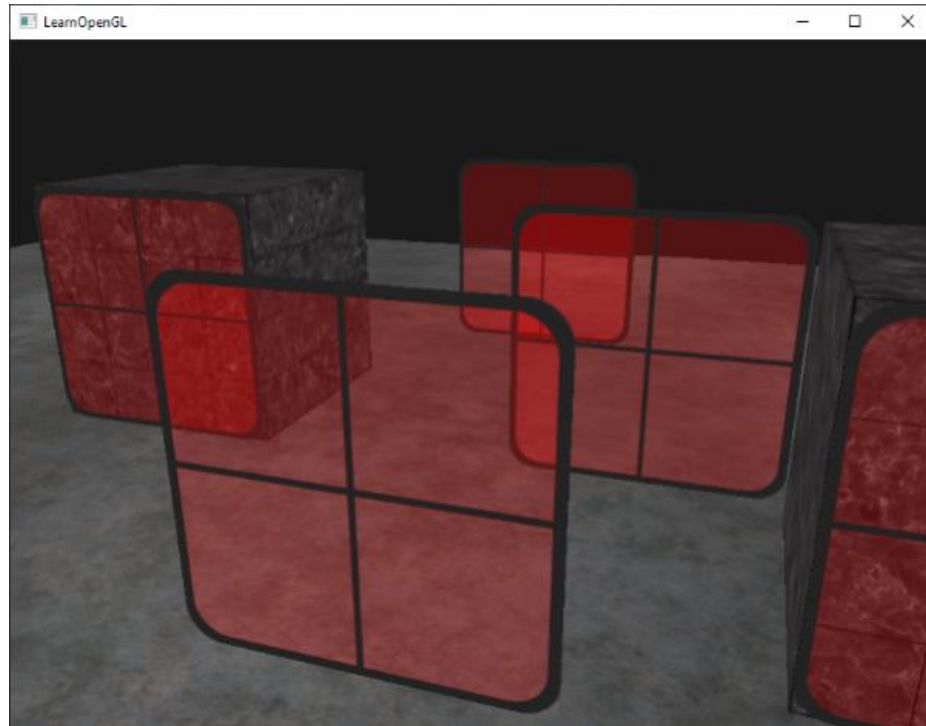
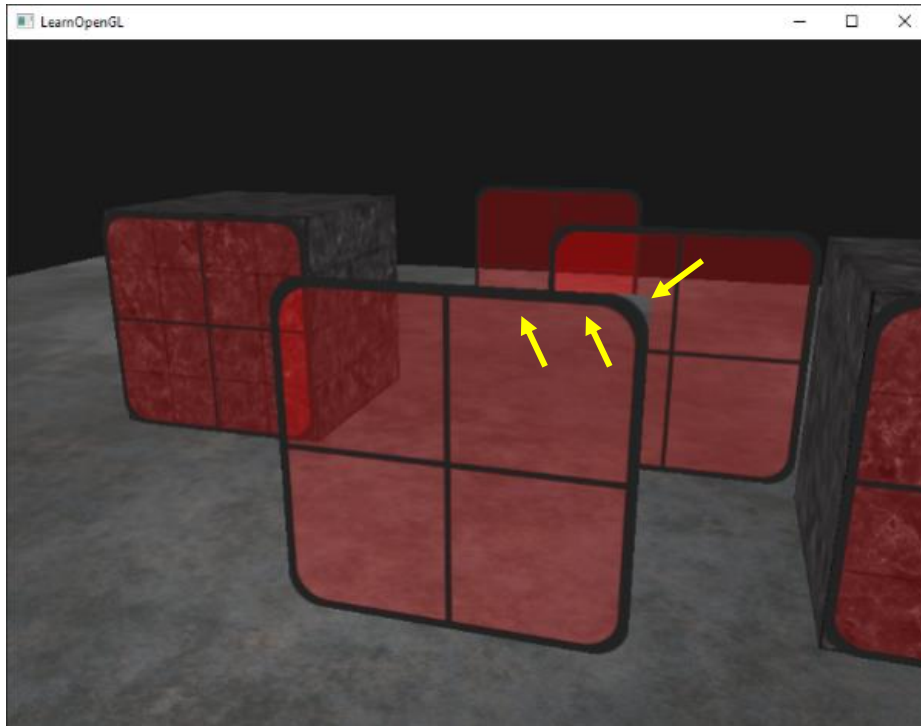
red on top



green on top

Rendering Algorithm for Transparency (cont.)

- Render opaque objects first
- Render transparent objects **in an order w.r.t their distance to the camera** (farther objects first)



Rendering Algorithm for Transparency (cont.)

- However, in practice you will find it only works correctly for very simple geometry (such as planar objects)



Why?

- Non-planar objects have **back faces**
- The triangles in an object can appear in any order
- If a front face is rendered before the back faces behind it, **it will blend with the background**
- If a front face is rendered after the back faces behind it, **it will blend with the back faces**

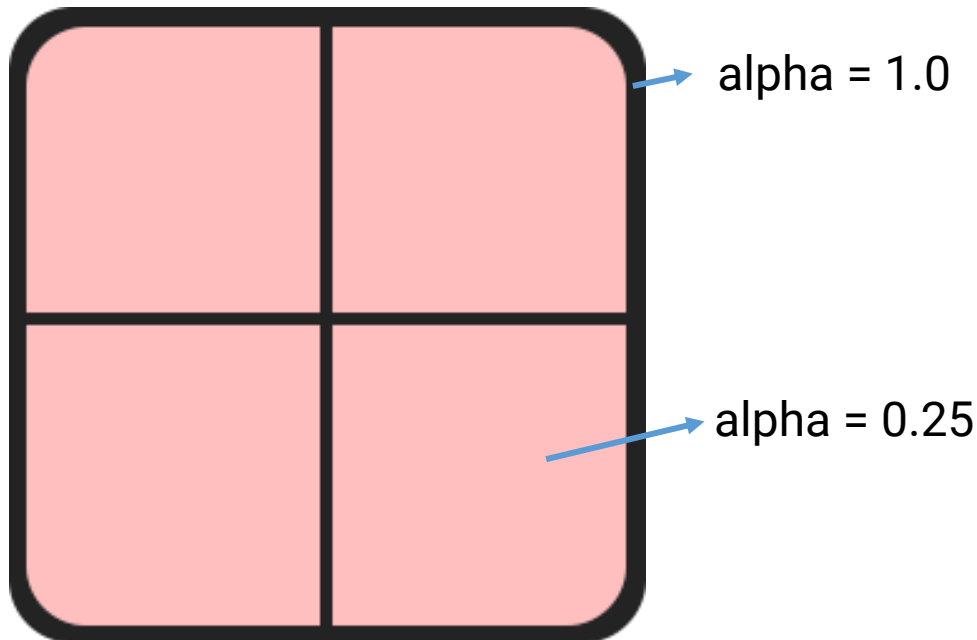
we have to sort all triangles!

Rendering Algorithm for Transparency (cont.)

- Transparency for arbitrary objects
 - Sorting all triangles is too expensive!
 - There are some papers addressing this issue; however, with large overhead
 - *Order-Independent transparency for Programmable deferred shading Pipelines* (Pacific Graphics 2015)
 - Techniques using **depth peeling**
 - In practice, game designers will limit the maximal number of transparent **triangles** in a scene

Alpha Value in Texture

- To represent spatially-varying transparency, some textures have an embedded **alpha channel** in addition to the red, green, and blue channels



Alpha Testing

- A special case in that we only have two types of alpha values in a texture
 - Fully opaque (alpha = 1.0)
 - Fully transparent (alpha = 0.0)



Alpha Testing in OpenGL

- In the fragment shader

```
#version 330 core
out vec4 FragColor;

in vec2 TexCoords;

uniform sampler2D texture1;

void main()
{
    vec4 texColor = texture(texture1, TexCoords);
    if(texColor.a < 0.1)
        discard;
    FragColor = texColor;
}
```

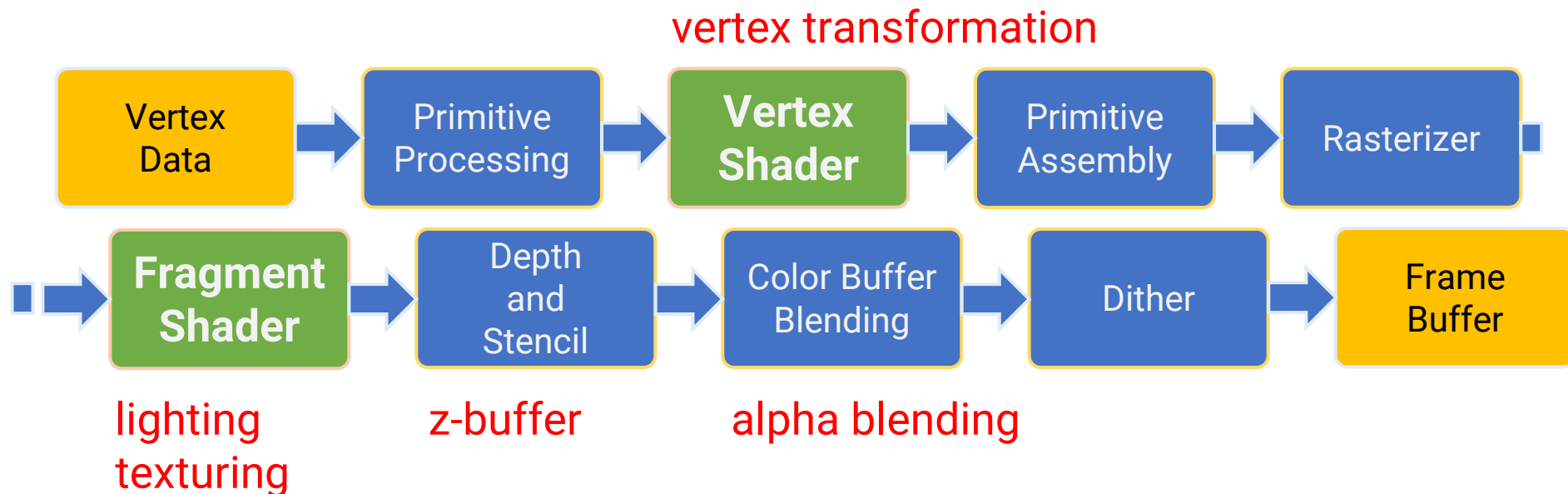
- **Cut follow-up computation for this fragment**
- **Avoid writing Z-buffer in fully-transparent part**

Alpha Testing in OpenGL (cont.)



Review: GPU Graphics Pipeline

- We have introduced the most parts of the GPU rendering pipeline



Any Questions?