

# Conceptual Design with ER Model

DSCI 551

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# Lecture Outline

- Steps in building a database application
- Conceptual design with ER model

# Steps in Building a DB Application

- Step 0: pick an application domain
  - E.g., course management
- Step 1: conceptual design
  - Decide on what to model in the application domain
    - E.g., instructors, students, courses, etc.
  - need a modeling language to express what you want
  - ER model is the most popular such language
  - output: an ER diagram of the app. domain

# Steps in Building a DB Application

- Step 2: pick a type of DBMS
  - Here we use relational DBMS
- Step 3: translate ER design to a relational schema
  - use a set of rules to translate ER to rel. schema
  - use a set of schema refinement rules to transform the above rel. schema into a **good** rel. schema
- At this point
  - you have a good relational schema on paper

# Steps in Building a DB Application

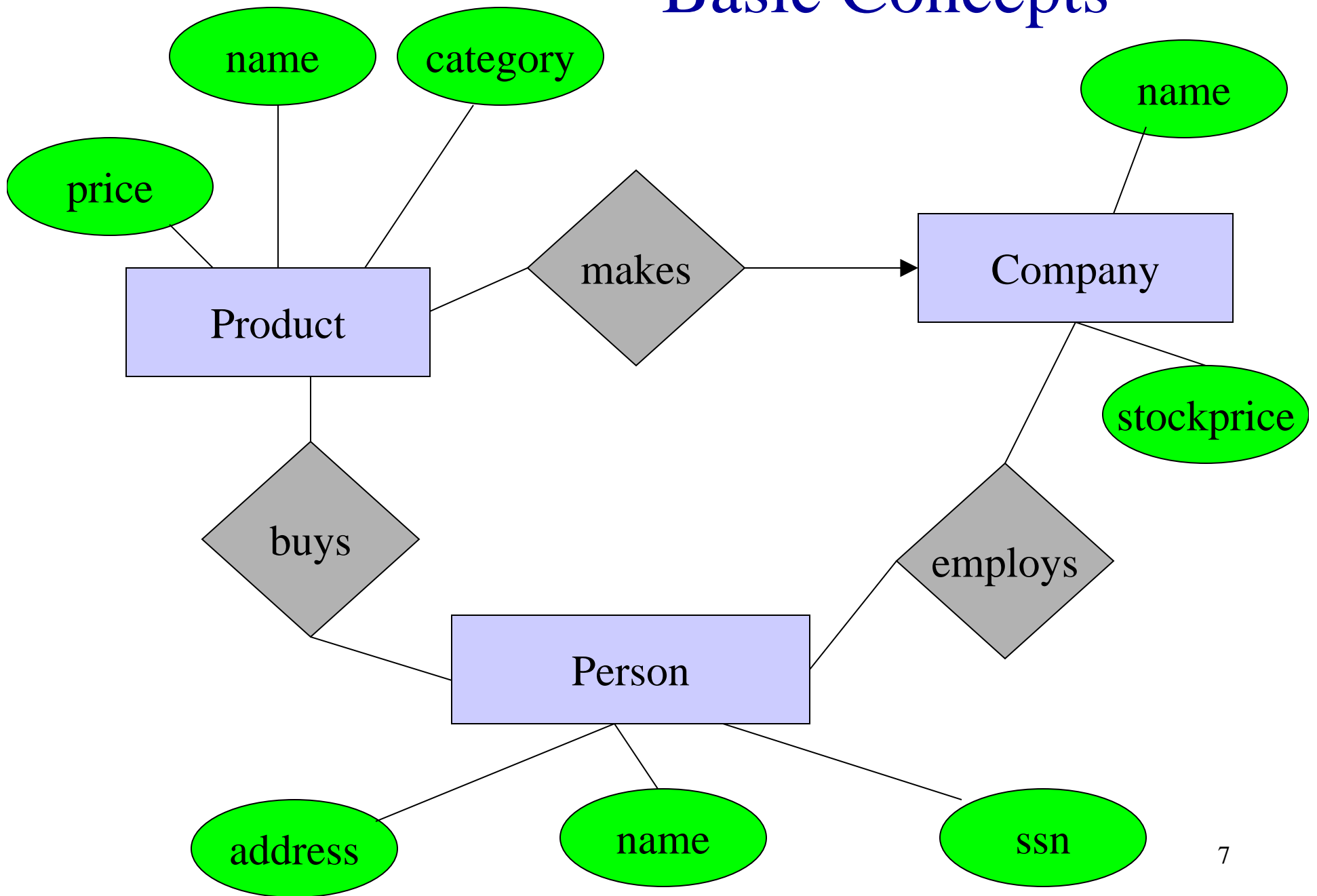
- Subsequent steps include
  - implement your relational DBMS using a "database programming language" called SQL
  - ordinary users cannot interact with the database directly
  - and the database also cannot do everything you want
  - hence write your application program in Php, C++, Java, Python, etc. to handle the interaction and take care of things that the database cannot do
- So, the first thing we should start with is to learn ER model ...

# ER Model

- Gives us a language to specify
  - what information the db must hold
  - what are the relationships among components of that information
- Proposed by Peter Chen in 1976
- What we will cover
  - basic stuff
  - subclasses
  - constraints
  - weak entity sets
  - design principles

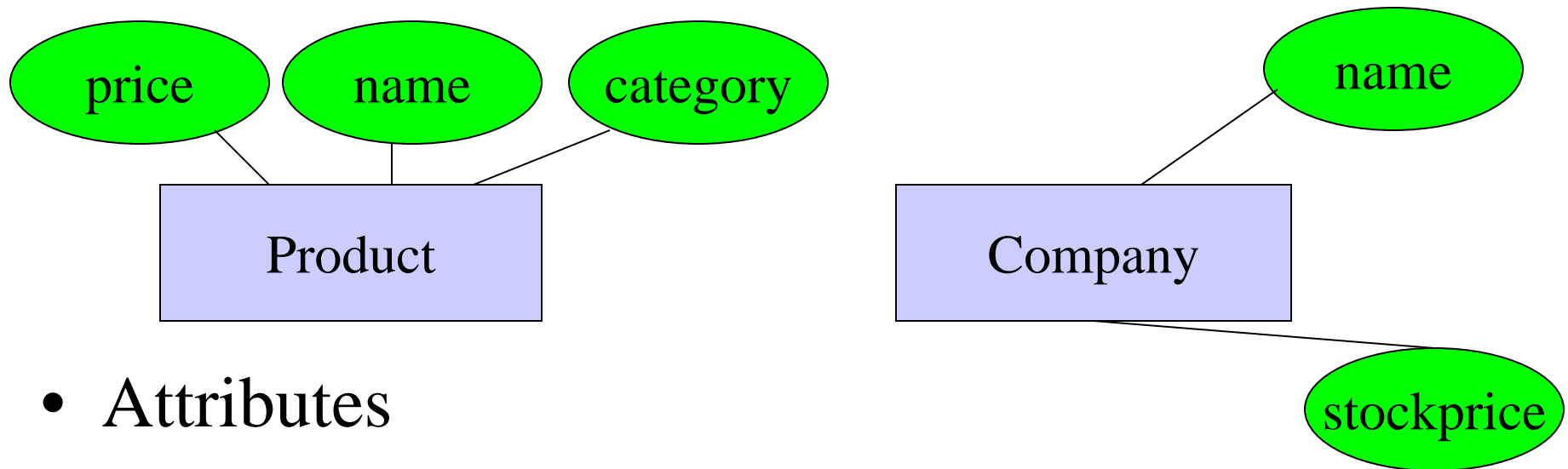


# Basic Concepts



# Entities and Attributes

- Entities
  - real-world objects distinguishable from other objects
  - described using a set of attributes

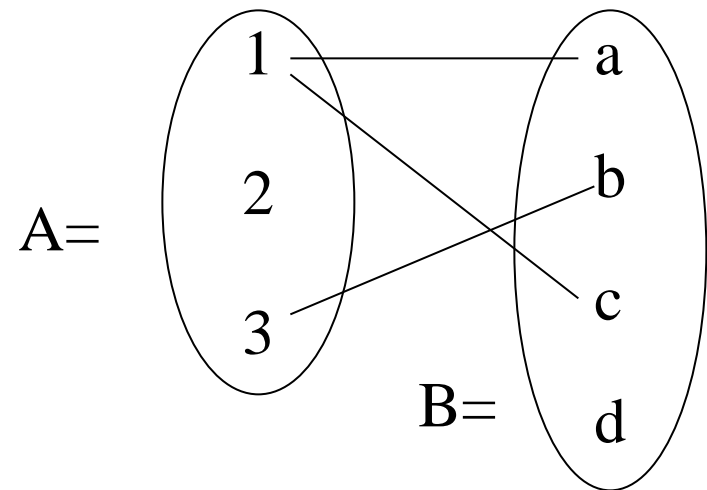


- Attributes
  - each has an atomic domain: string, integers, reals, etc.
- Entity set: a collection of similar entities

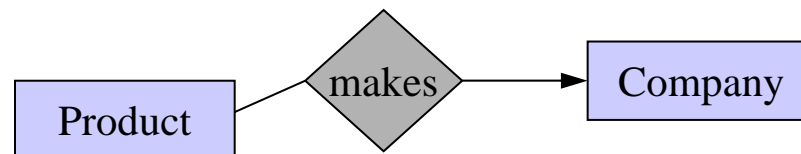


# Relationships

- A mathematical definition:
  - if  $A, B$  are sets, then a relationship  $R$  is a subset of  $A \times B$
- $A = \{1, 2, 3\}$ ,  $B = \{a, b, c, d\}$ ,  
 $R = \{(1, a), (1, c), (3, b)\}$



**makes** is a subset of **Product** x **Company**:

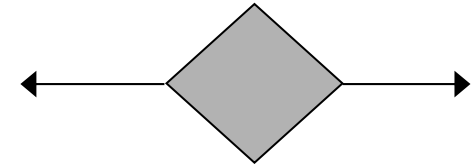
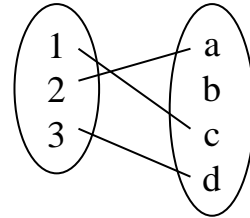


More about relationships ...

# Multiplicity of E/R Relationships

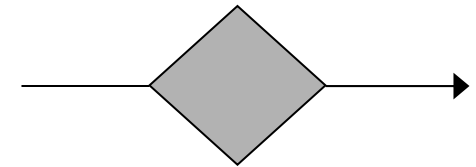
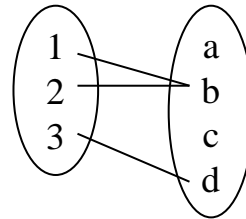
- one-one:

- One = at most one

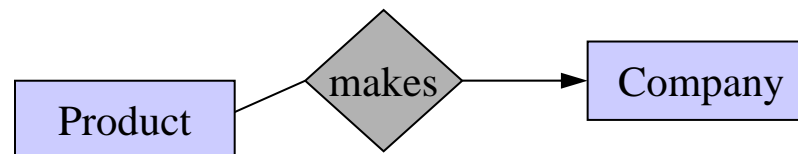
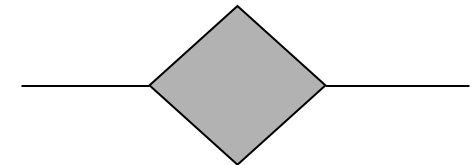
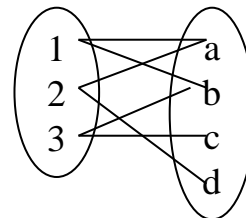


- many-one

- Here left side = many

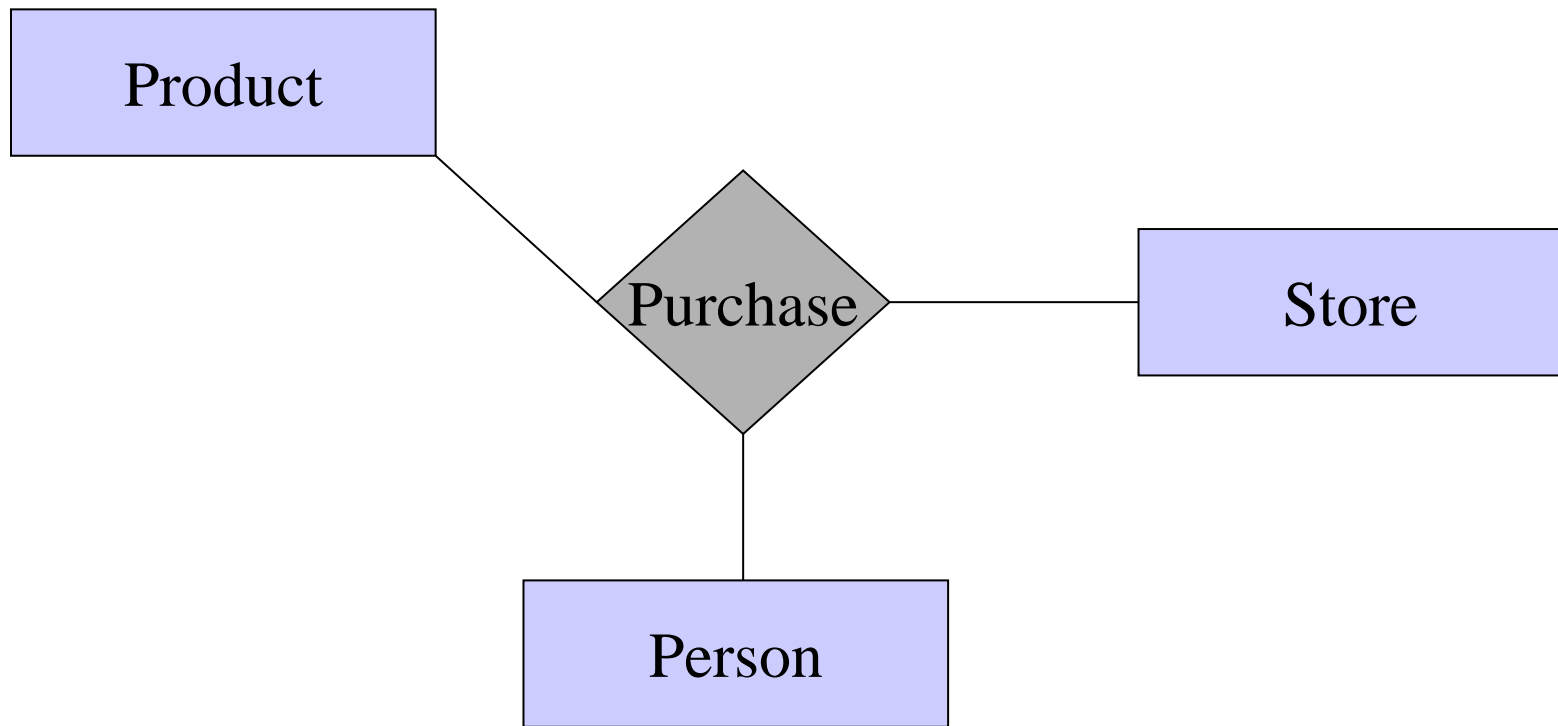


- many-many



# Multiway Relationships

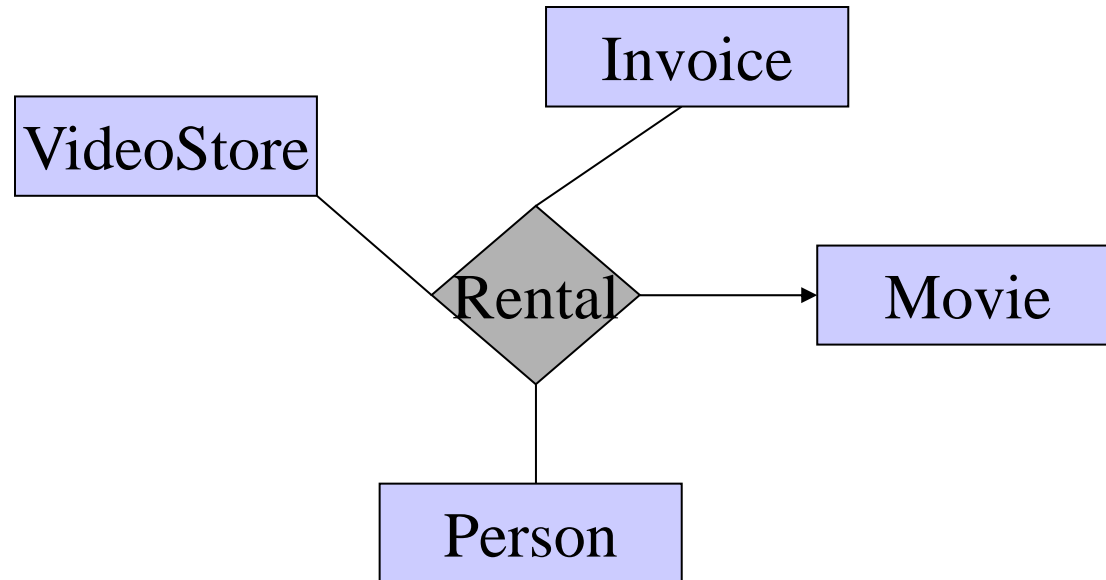
How do we model a purchase relationship between buyers, products and stores?



Can still model as a mathematical set (how ?)

# Arrows in Multiway Relationships

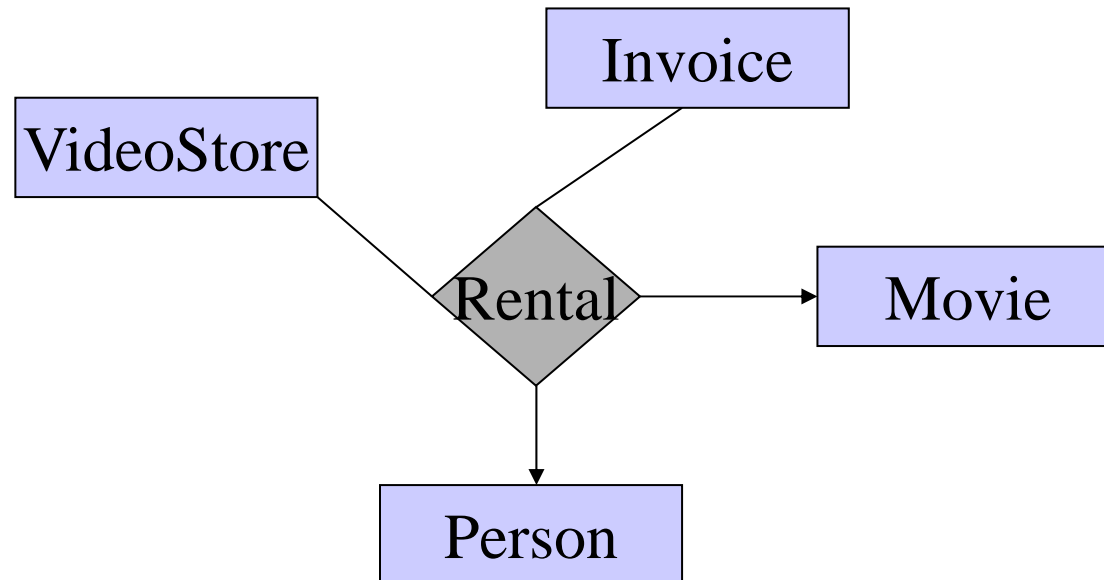
**Q:** what does the arrow mean?



**A:** if I know the store, person, invoice, I know the movie too

# Arrows in Multiway Relationships

**Q:** what do these arrows mean?

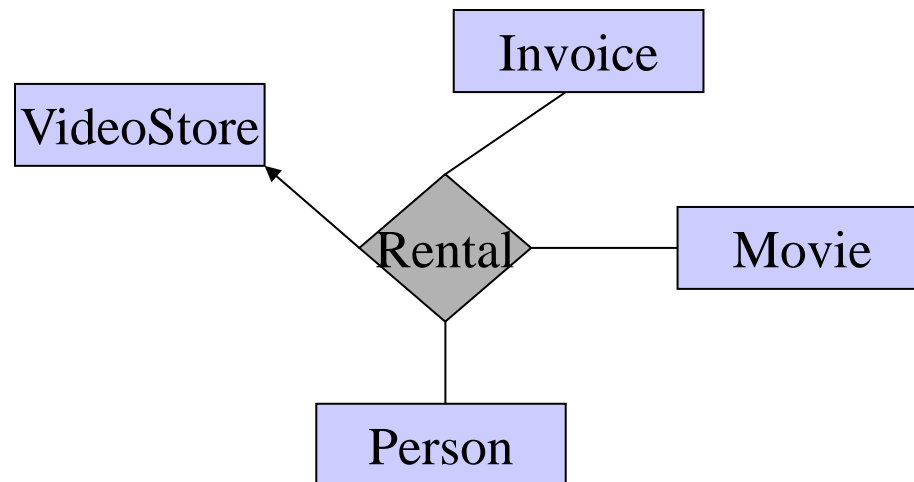


**A:** store, person, invoice determines movie  
and store, invoice, movie determines person

# Arrows in Multiway Relationships

**Q:** how do I say: “invoice determines store” ?

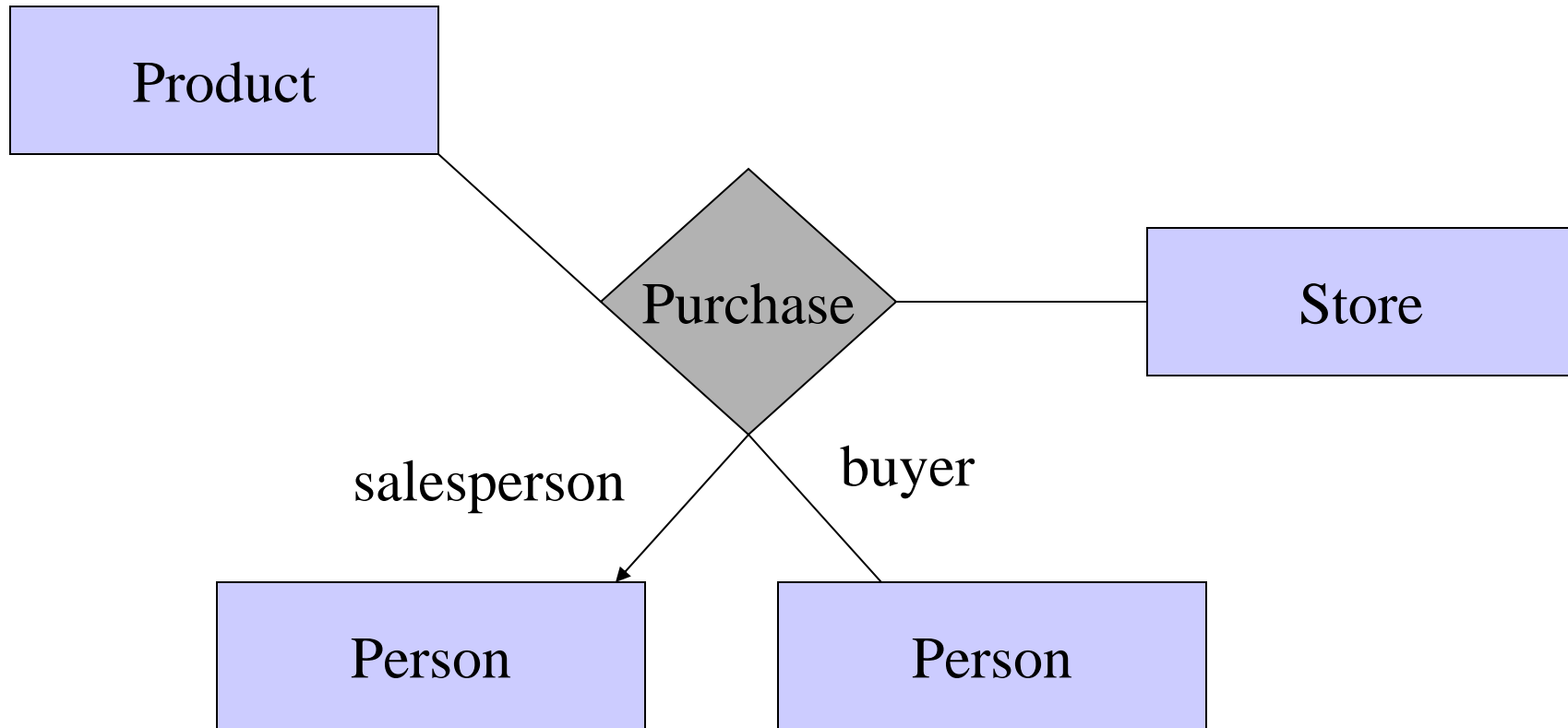
**A:** no good way; best approximation:



Relational model captures many-one relationships in functional dependencies, e.g., invoice  $\rightarrow$  store

# Roles in Relationships

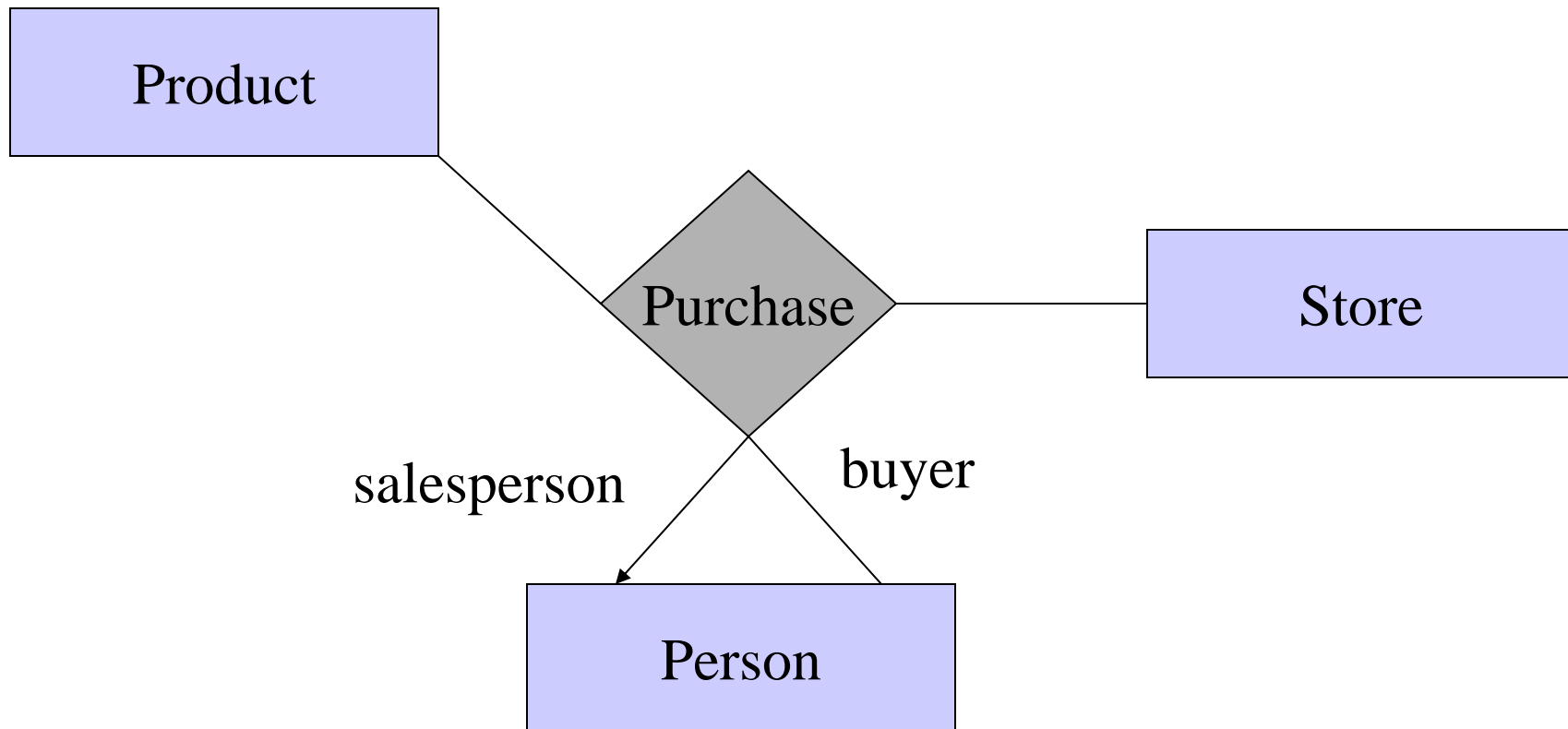
What if we need an entity set twice in one relationship?



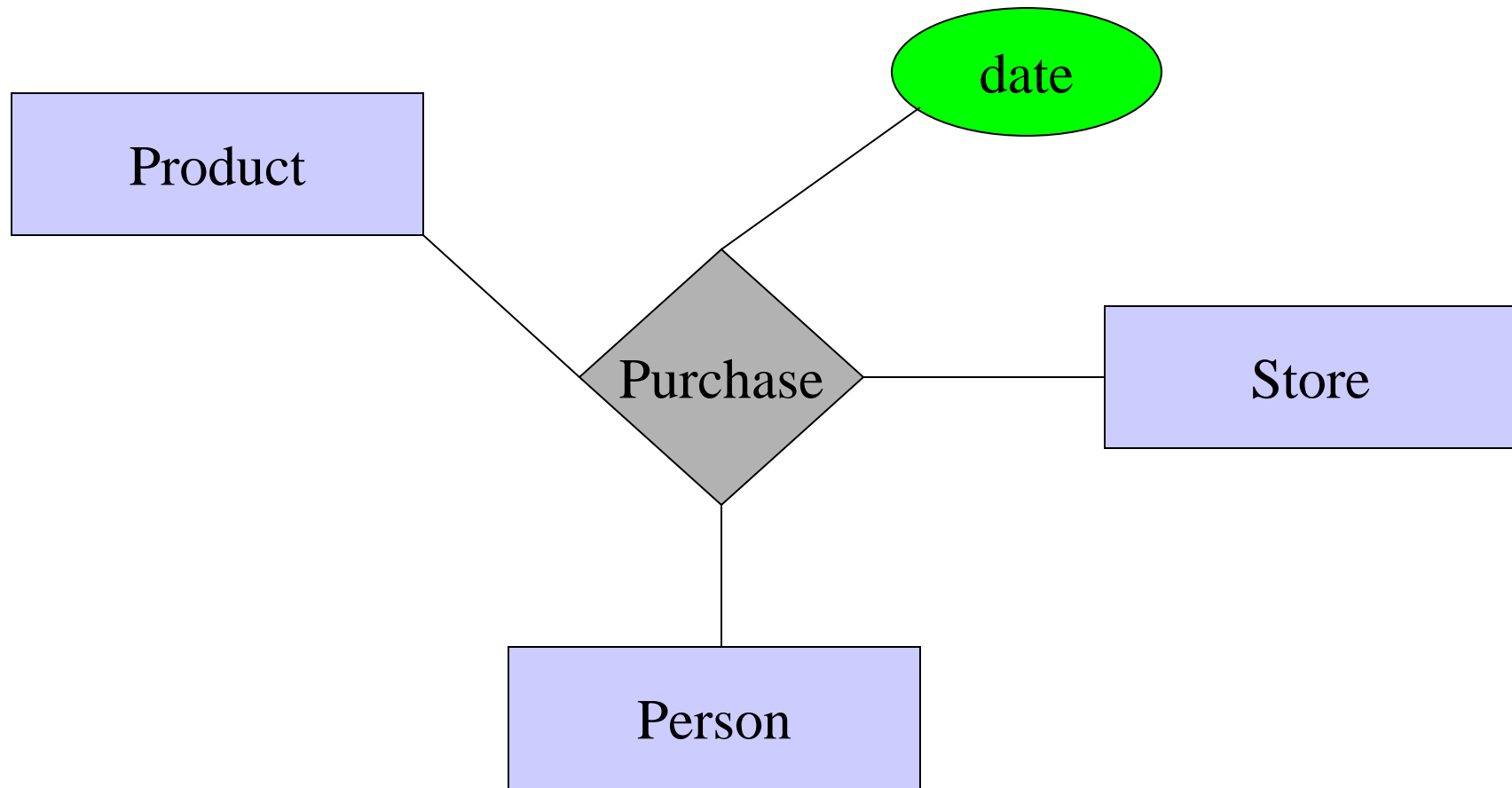


# Roles in Relationships

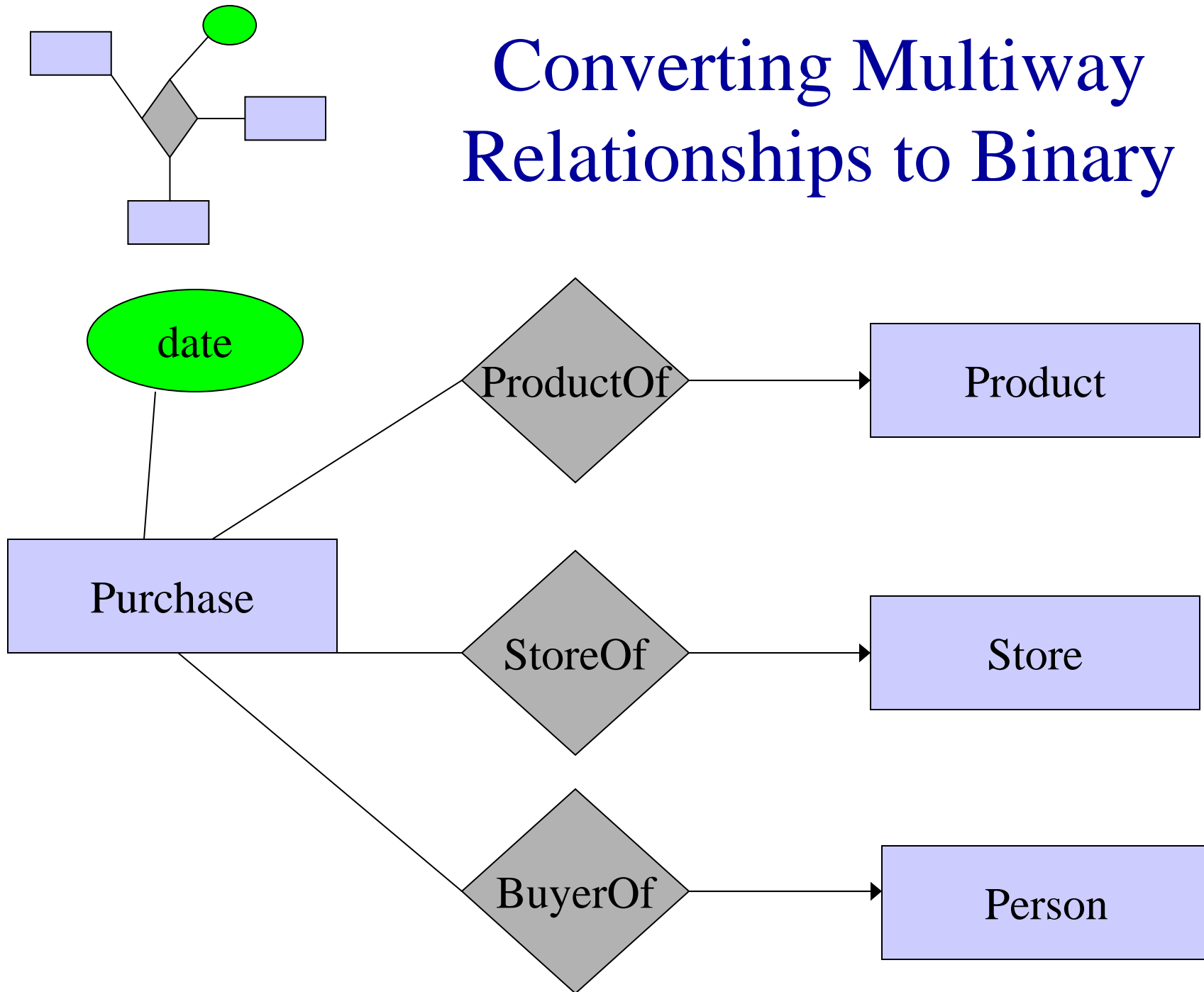
What if we need an entity set twice in one relationship?



# Attributes on Relationships



# Converting Multiway Relationships to Binary

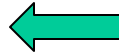


# Relationships: Summary

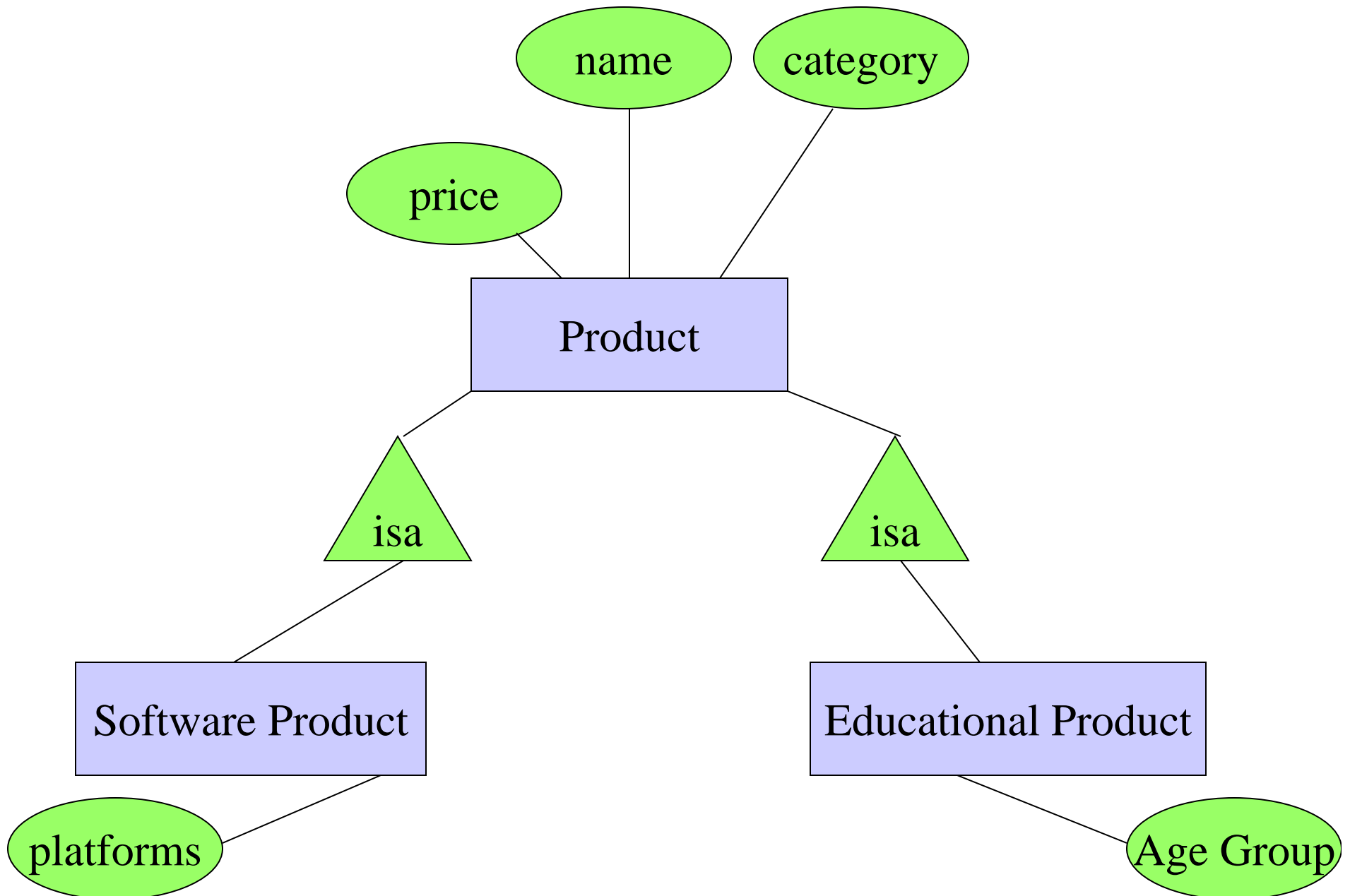
- Modeled as a mathematical set
- Binary and multiway relationships
- Converting a multiway one into many binary ones
- Constraints on the degree of the relationship
  - many-one, one-one, many-many
  - limitations of arrows
- Attributes of relationships
  - not necessary, but useful

# Roadmap

- What we will cover
  - basic stuff
  - subclasses
  - constraints
  - weak entity sets
  - design principles



# Subclasses in ER Diagrams



# Subclasses in ER Diagrams

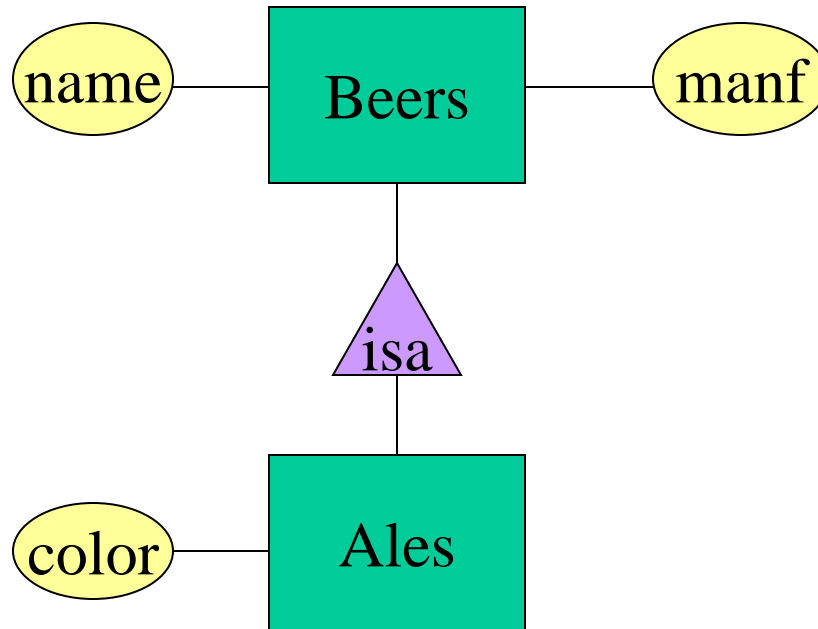
- Assume subclasses form a tree.
  - I.e., no multiple inheritance.
- Isa triangles indicate the subclass relationship.
  - Point to the superclass.

# Subclasses

- Subclass = special case = fewer entities = more properties.
- Example: Ales are a kind of beer.
  - Not every beer is an ale, but some are.
  - Let us suppose that in addition to all the *properties* (attributes and relationships) of beers, ales also have the attribute *color*.



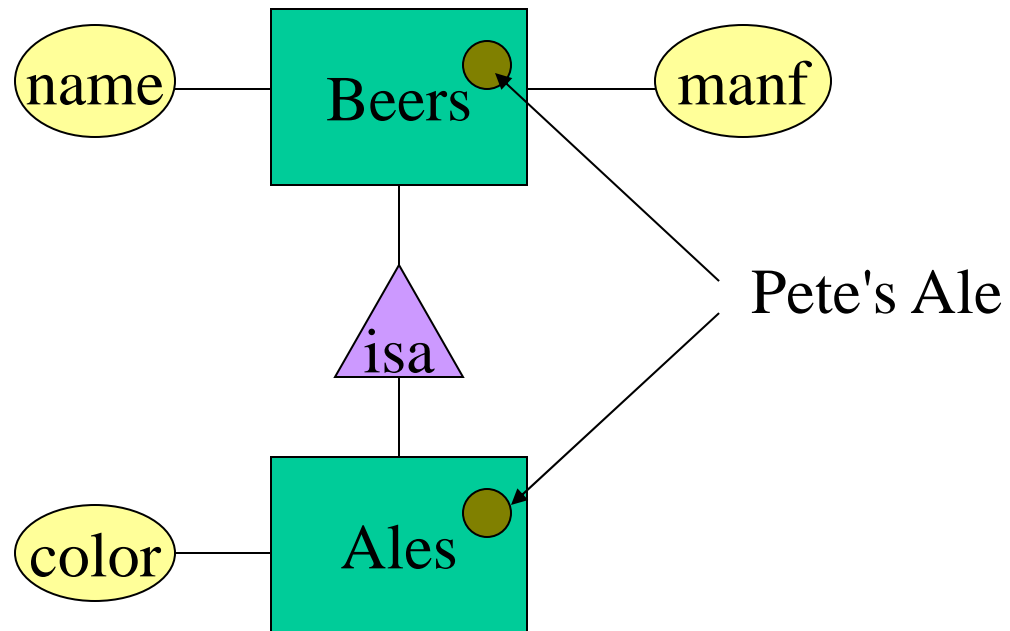
# Example




# ER vs. Object Oriented Subclasses

- In the object-oriented world, objects are stored in one class only.
  - Subclasses inherit all properties from superclasses.
  - All properties of the object are stored together.
- In contrast, in the E/R view, entities may have components in all subclasses to which they belong.
  - Matters when we convert to relations.

# Example



# Roadmap

- What we will cover
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  - constraints 
  - weak entity sets
  - design principles

# Constraints

- A constraint = an assertion about the data in the database that must be true at all times
- Part of the database schema
- Very important in database design
  - To ensure data integrity

# Modeling Constraints

Finding constraints is part of the modeling process.

Commonly used constraints:

**Keys:** social security number uniquely identifies a person.

**Single-value constraints:** a person can have only one spouse.

**Referential integrity constraints:** if you work for a company, it must exist in the database.

**Domain constraints:** peoples' ages are between 0 and 150.

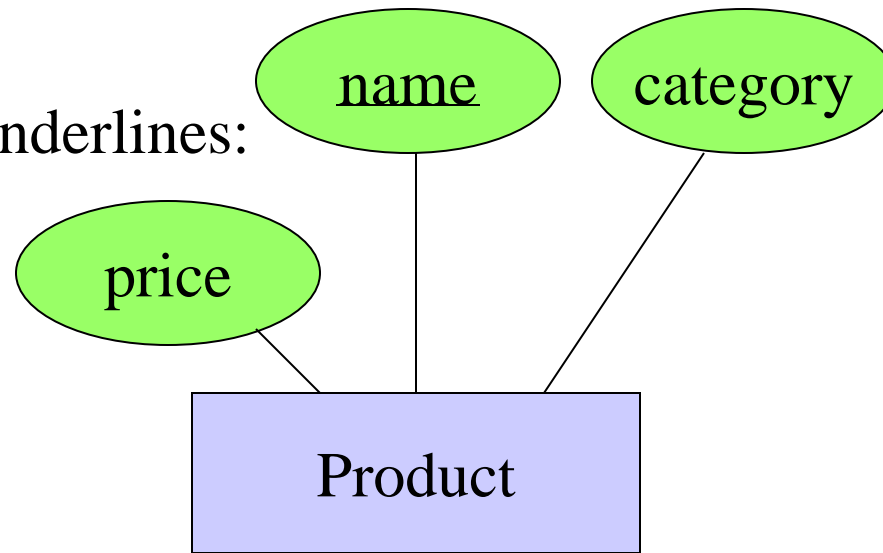
**General constraints:** all others (e.g., at most 50 students can enroll in a class)

# Why Constraints are Important?

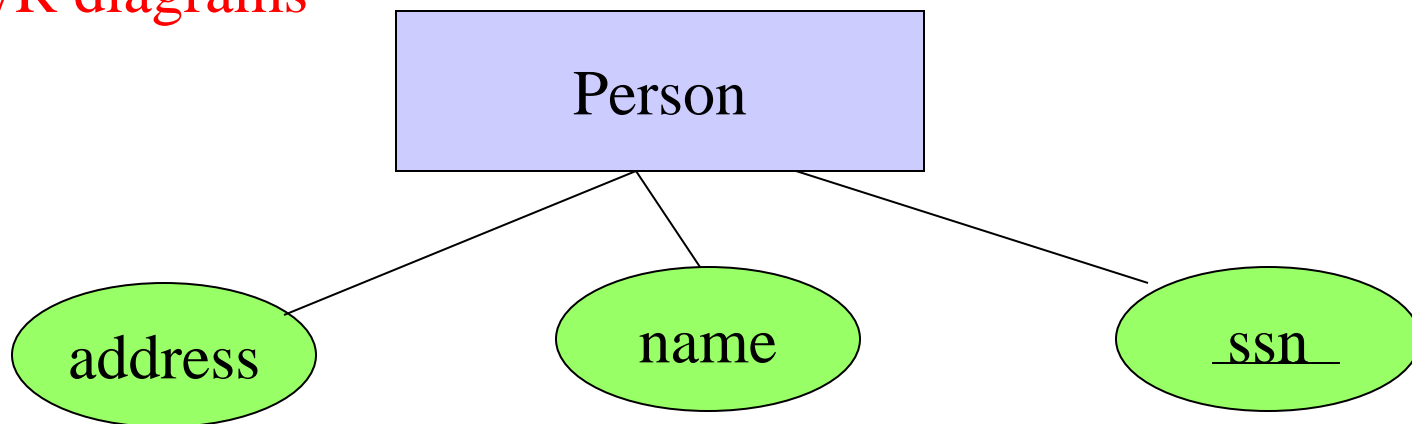
- Give more semantics to the data
  - help us better understand it
- Allow us to refer to entities (e.g., using keys)
- Enable efficient storage
  - E.g., store ages as tiny integer (1 byte for example)
- Enable efficient lookup
  - E.g., creating an index on key

# Keys in E/R Diagrams

Indicated by underlines:



No formal way  
to specify multiple  
keys in E/R diagrams

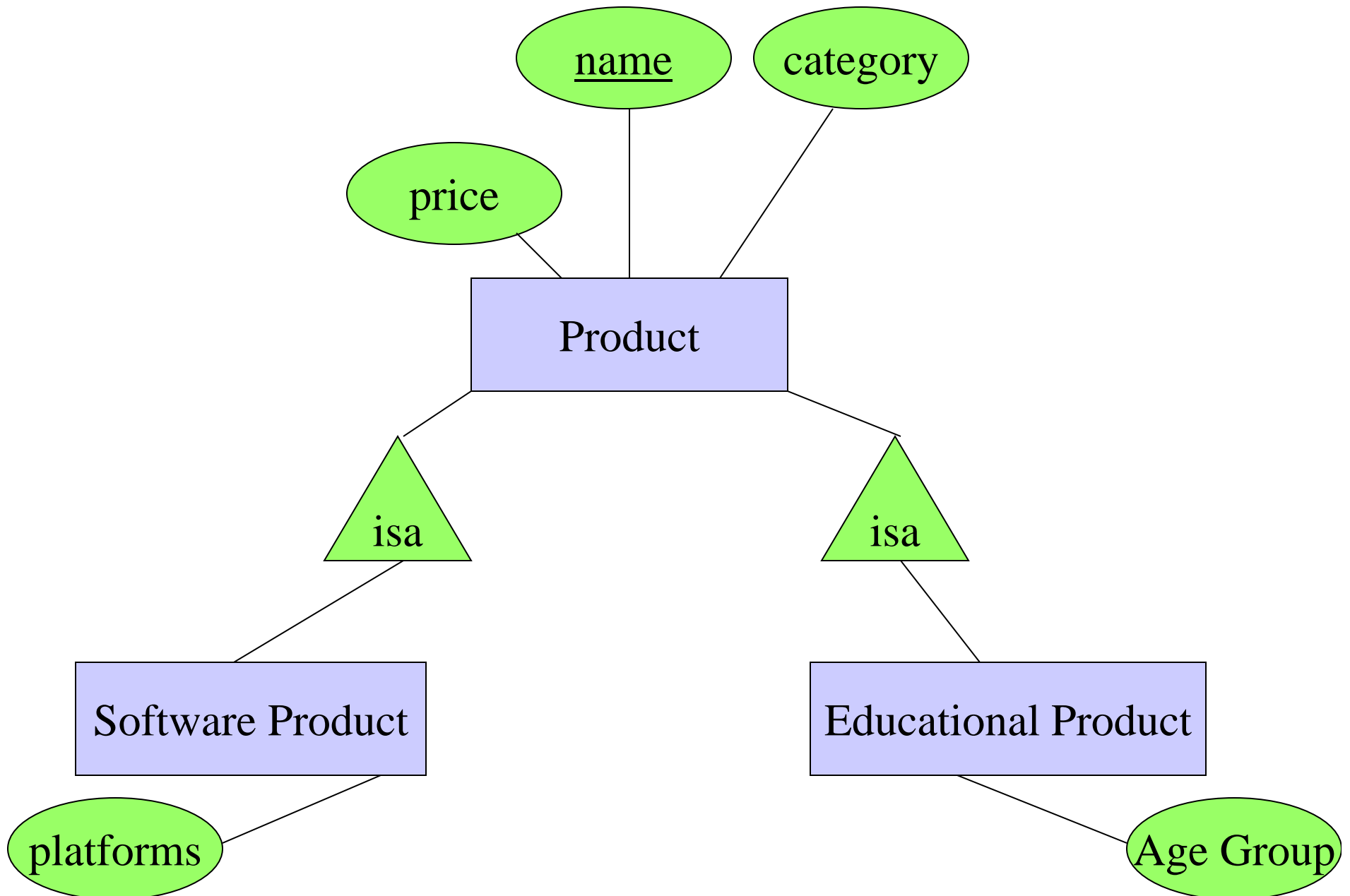




# More about Keys

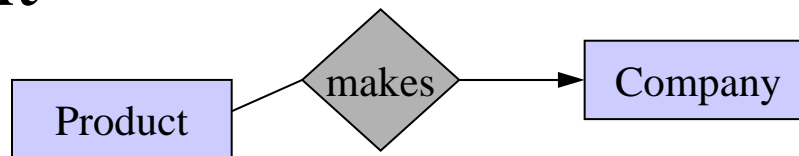
- Every entity set must have a key
  - why?
- A key can consist of more than one attribute
- There can be more than one key for an entity set
  - one key will be designated as primary key
- Requirement for key in an isa hierarchy
  - Root entity set has all attributes needed for a key

# Subclasses in ER Diagrams



# Single Value Constraint

- An entity has **at most** one value for a given attribute or relationship
- An attribute of an entity set has a single value or NULL
  - i.e., the value may be missing
- A many-one relationship also implies a single value constraint



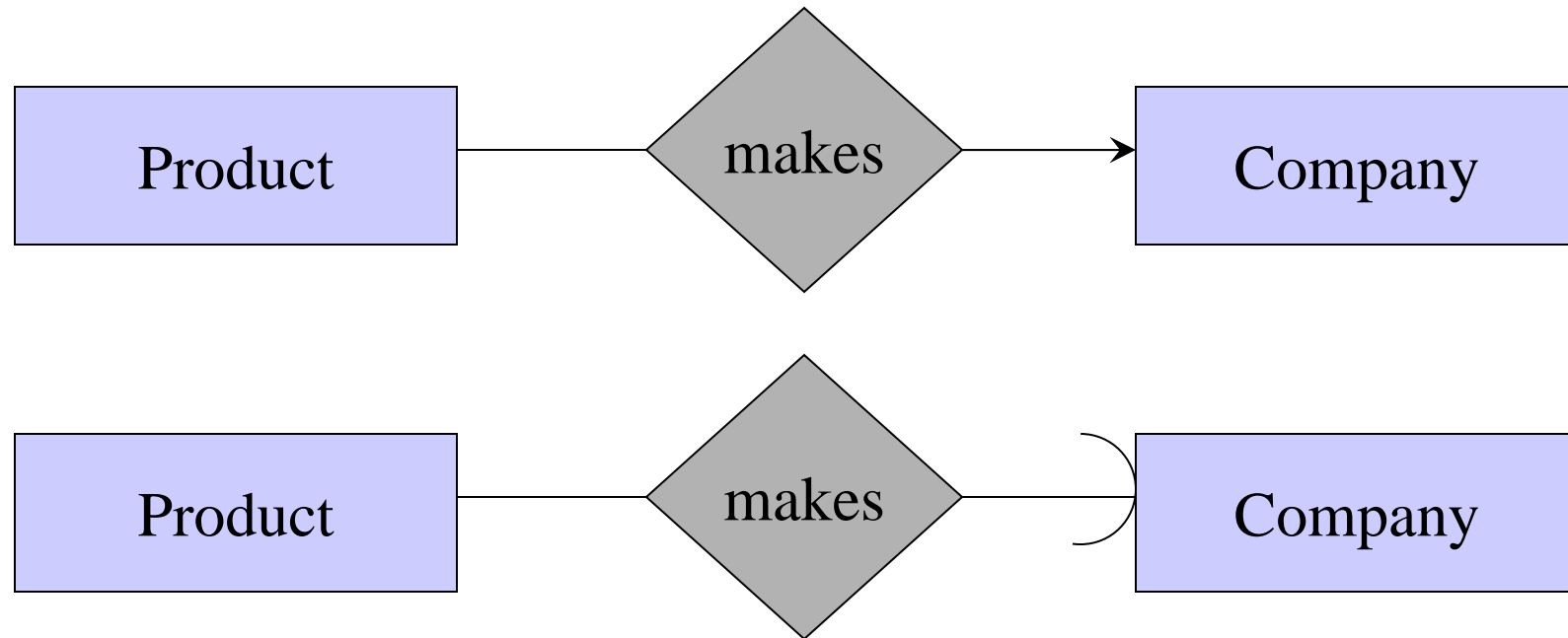
# Referential Integrity Constraint

- Ref. int. constraint: **exactly one** value exists in a given role
- An attribute has a non-null, single value
  - this can be considered a kind of ref. int. constraint
- However, we more commonly use such constraints to refer to relationships

# Referential Integrity Constraints


- In some formalisms we may refer to other object but get garbage instead
  - e.g. a dangling pointer in C/C++
- The Referential Integrity Constraint on relationships explicitly requires a reference to exist

# Referential Integrity Constraints



- This will be even clearer once we get to relational databases

# Roadmap

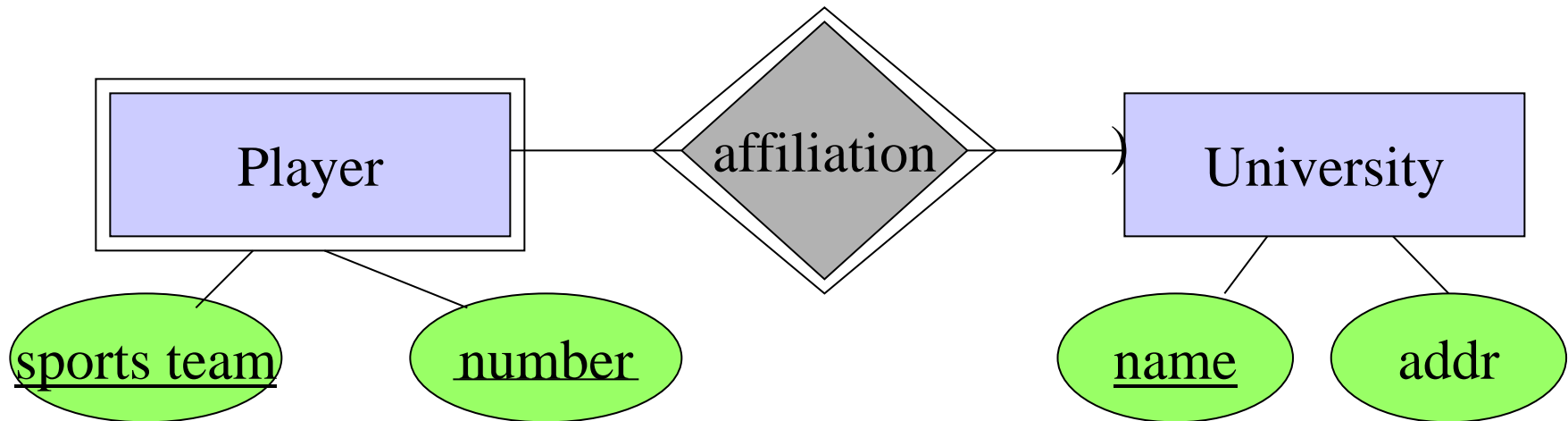
- What we will cover
  - basic stuff
  - subclasses
  - constraints
  - weak entity sets 
  - design principles

# Weak Entity Sets

Entity sets are weak when (some or all of) their **key** attributes come from other entity sets to which they are related.

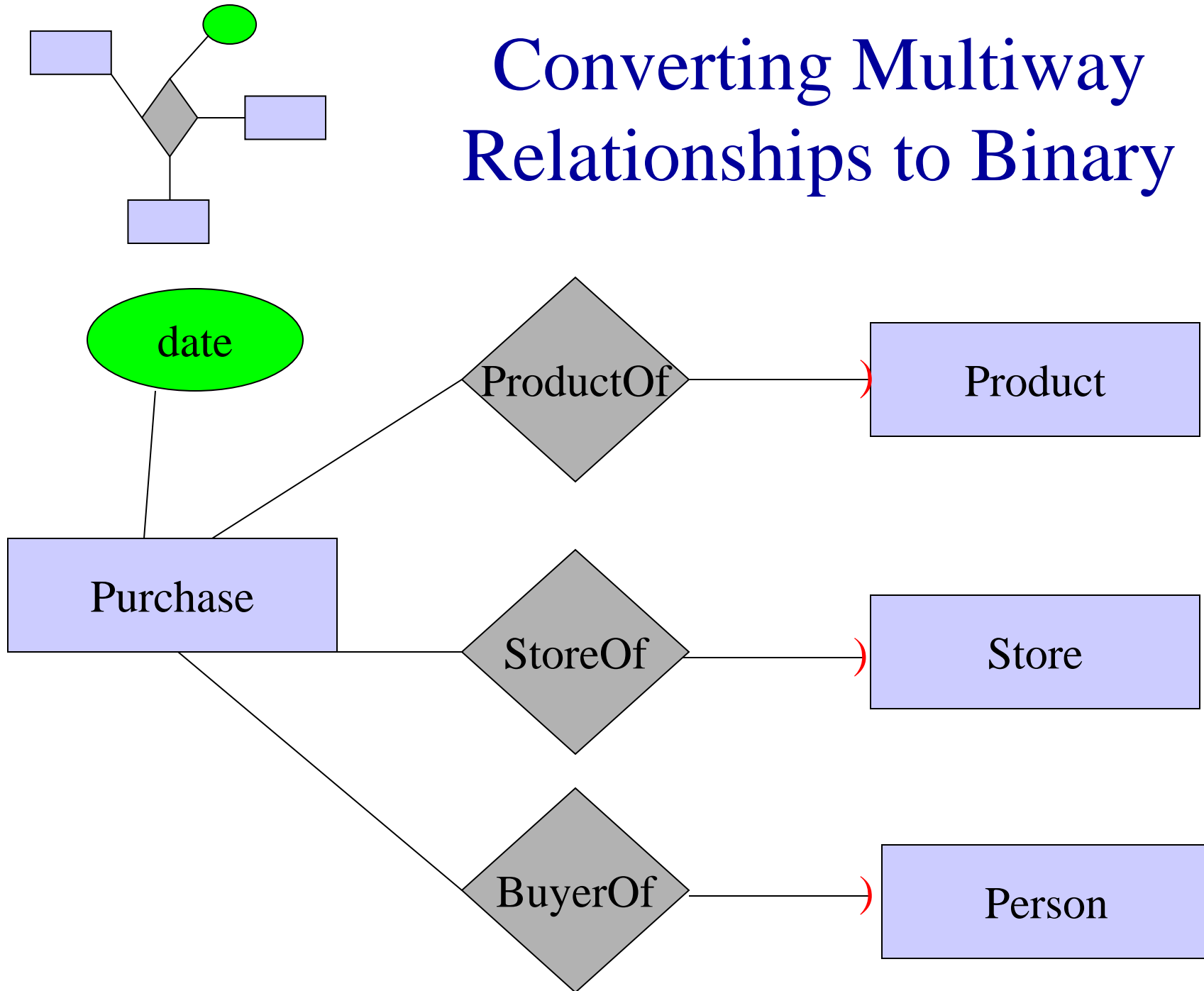
This happens when:

- part-of relationships
- splitting n-ary relationships to binary.



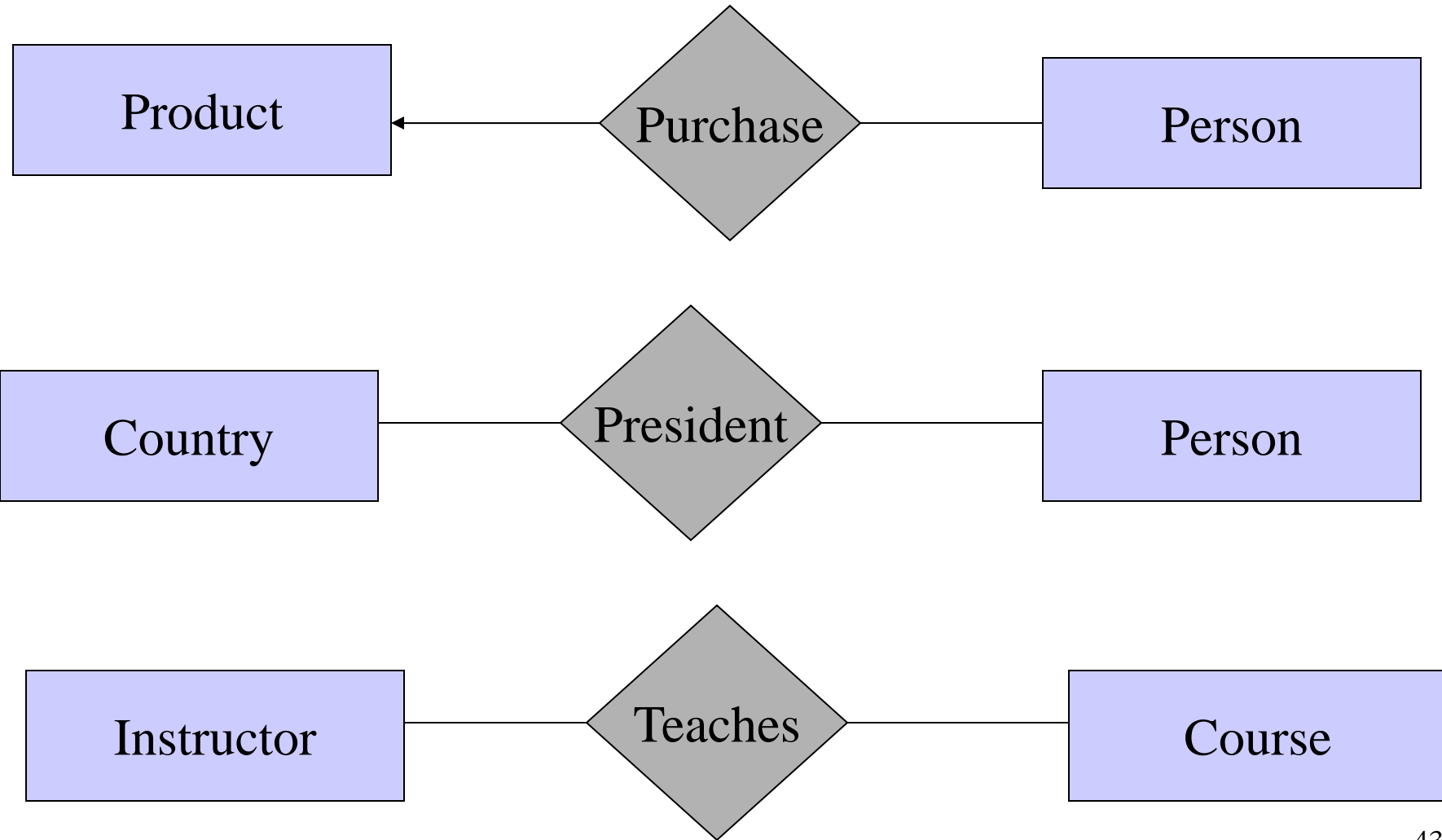


# Converting Multiway Relationships to Binary

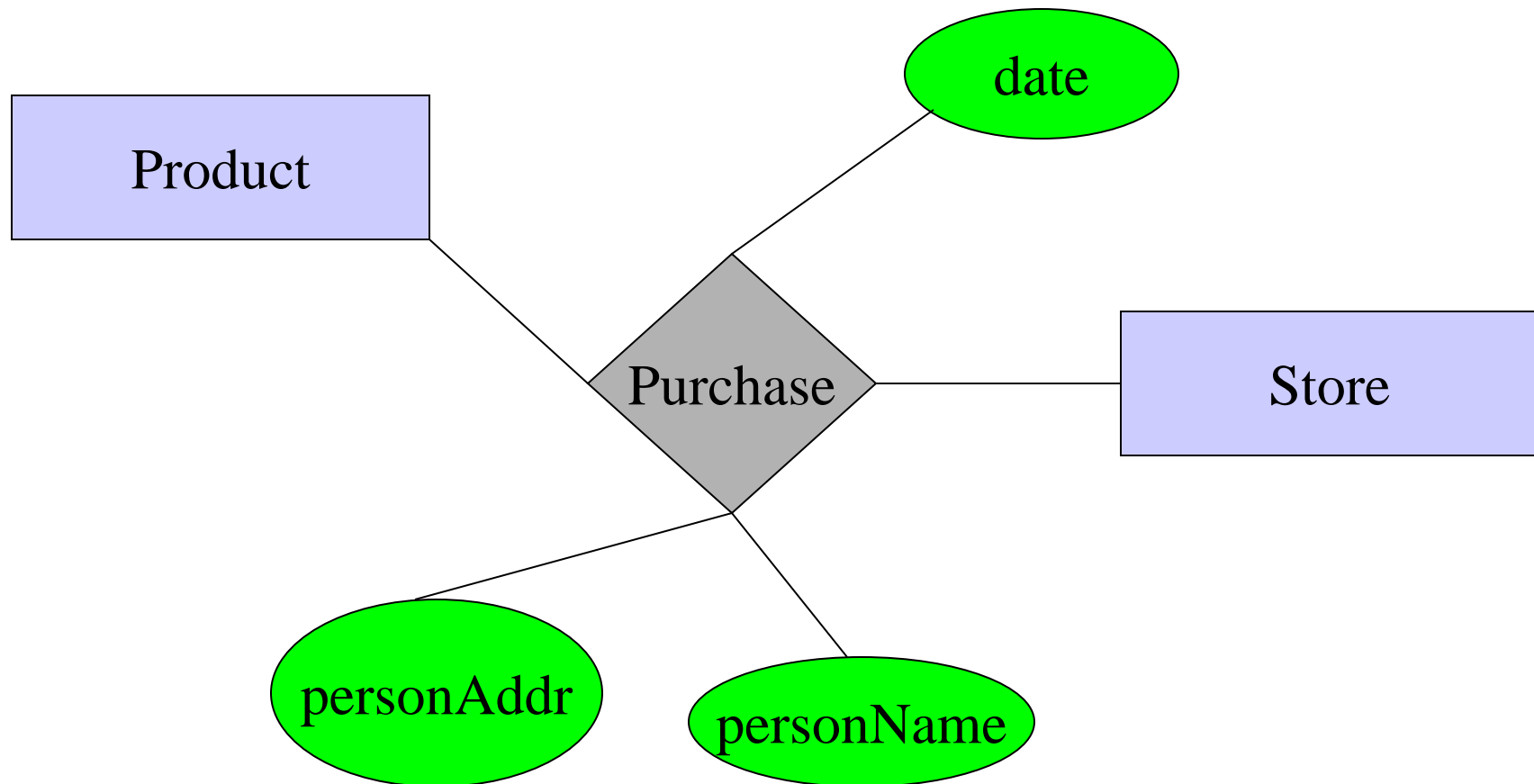


Now, about design techniques ...

# Design Principle 1: Be Faithful



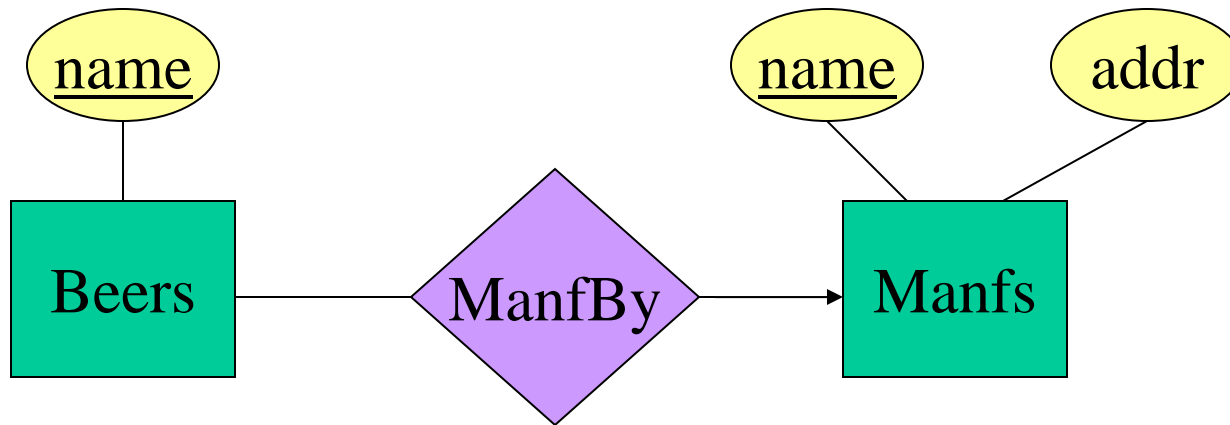
# Design Principle 2: Avoid Redundancy



# Avoiding Redundancy

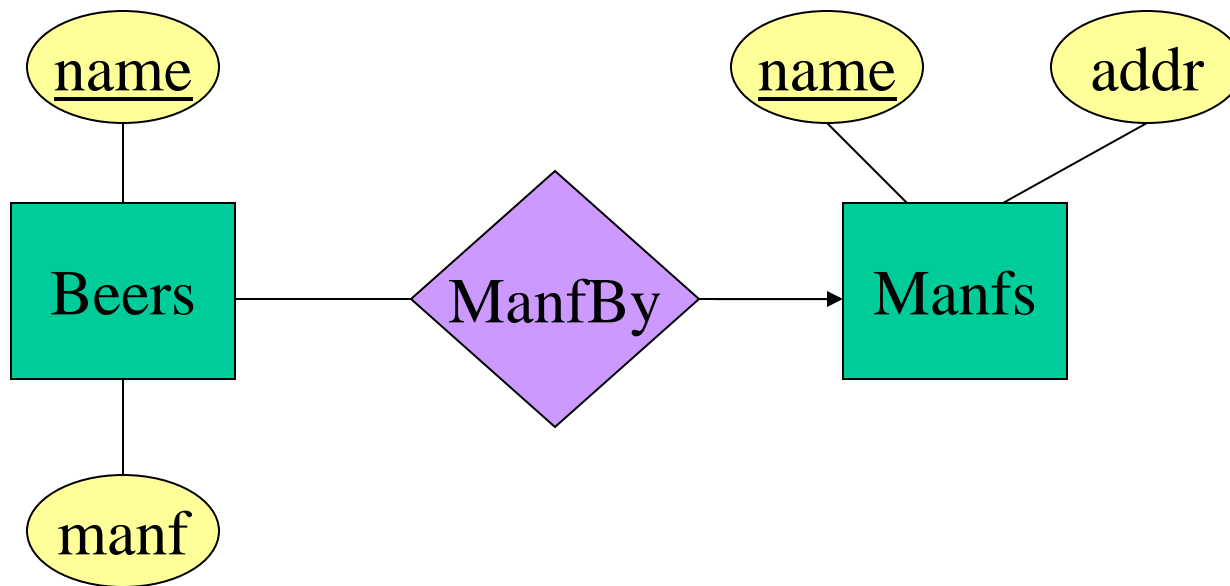
- Redundancy occurs when we say the same thing in more than one way.
- Redundancy wastes space and (more importantly) encourages inconsistency.
  - Multiple instances of the same fact may become inconsistent if we change one and forget to change the other, related version.

# Example: Good



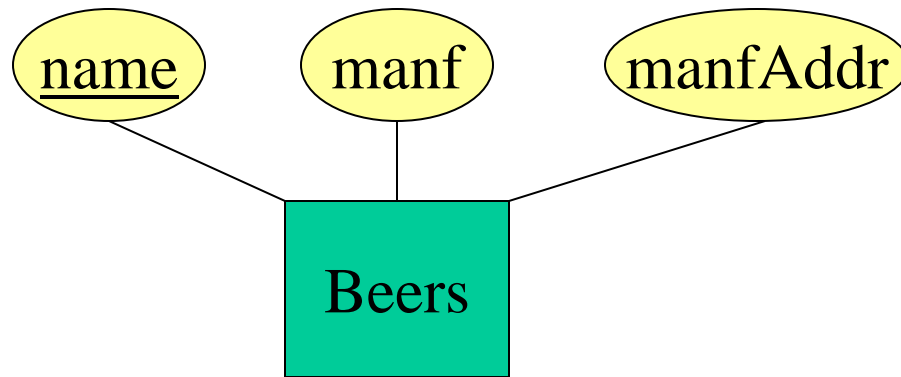
This design gives the address of each manufacturer exactly once.

# Example: Bad



This design states the manufacturer of a beer twice: as an attribute and as a related entity.

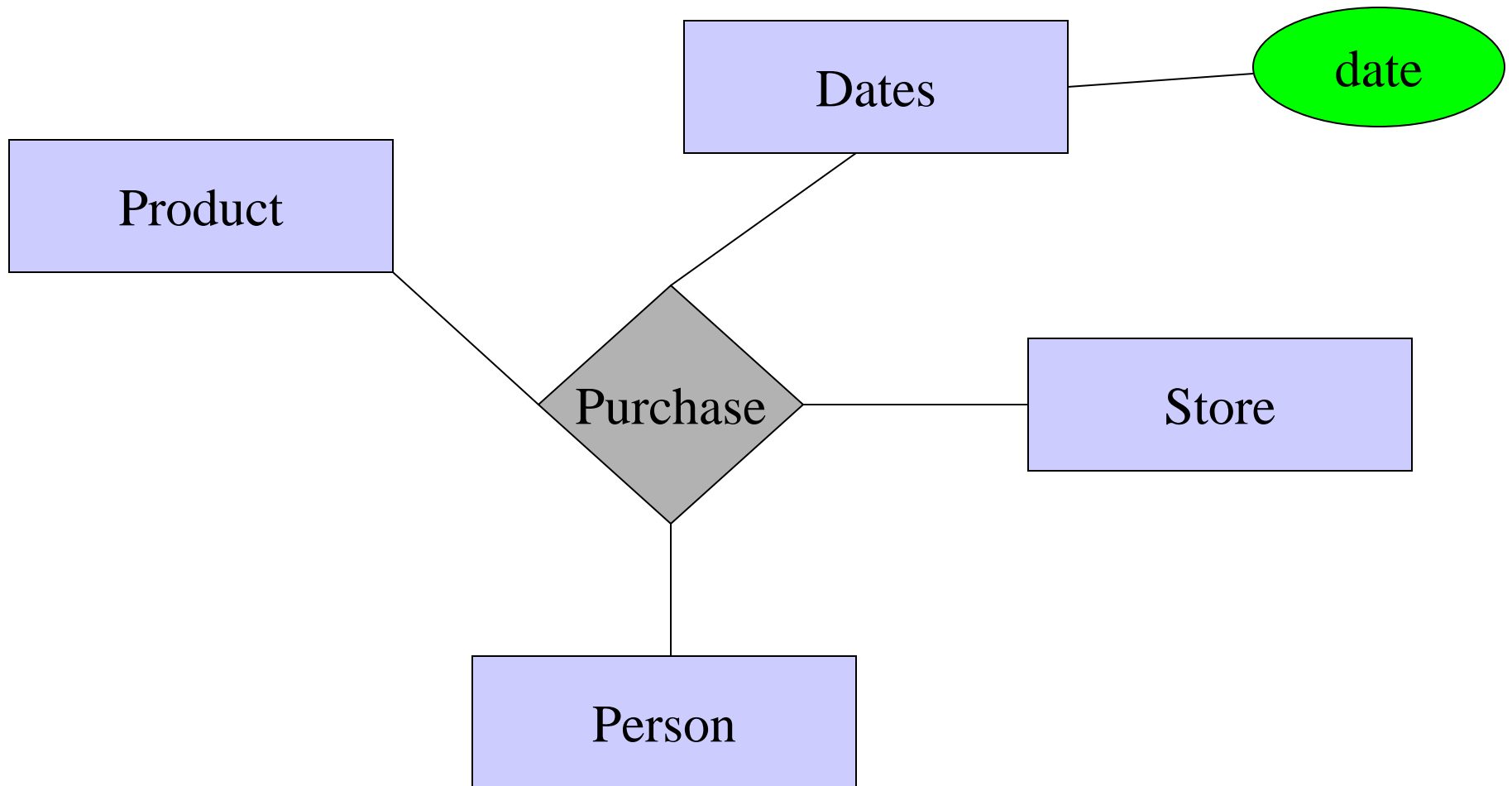
# Example: Bad



This design repeats the manufacturer's address once for each beer; loses the address if there are temporarily no beers for a manufacturer.



# Design Principle 3: KISS



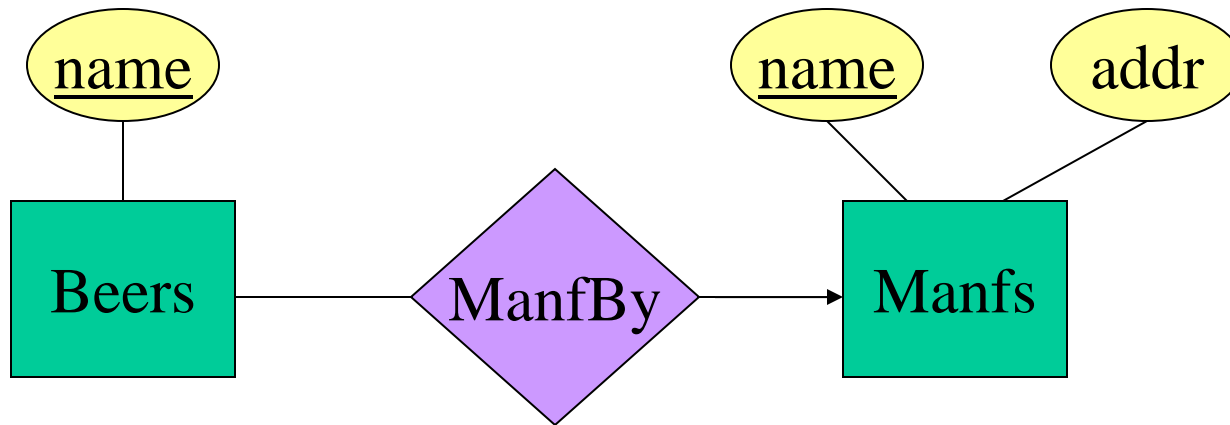
## More on Design Techniques

1. Don't use an entity set when an attribute will do.
2. Limit the use of weak entity sets.

# Entity Sets Versus Attributes

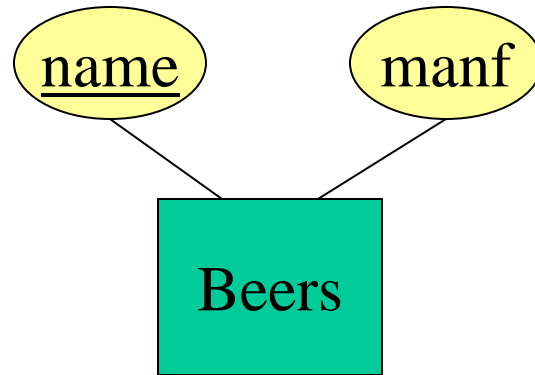
- An entity set should satisfy at least one of the following conditions:
  - It is more than the name of something; it has at least one nonkey attribute.
  - or
  - It is the “many” in a many-one or many-many relationship. (why?)

# Example: Good



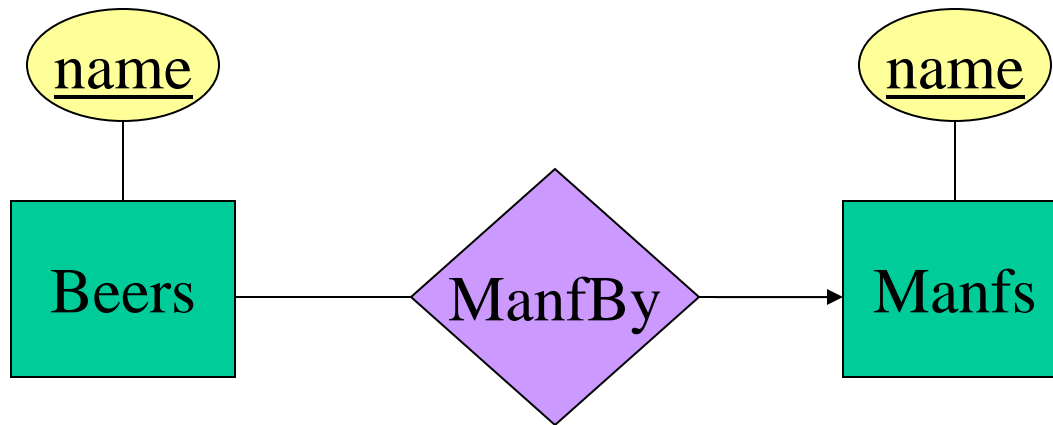
- *Manfs* deserves to be an entity set because of the nonkey attribute *addr*.
- *Beers* deserves to be an entity set because it is the “many” of the many-one relationship *ManfBy*.

# Example: Good



There is no need to make the manufacturer an entity set, if we record nothing about manufacturers besides their name.

# Example: Bad



Since the manufacturer is nothing but a name, and is not at the “many” end of any relationship, it should not be an entity set.

# Don't Overuse Weak Entity Sets

- Beginning database designers often doubt that anything could be a key by itself.
  - They make all entity sets weak, supported by all other entity sets to which they are linked.
- In reality, we usually create unique ID's for entity sets.
  - Examples include social-security numbers, automobile VIN's etc.

# When Do We Need Weak Entity Sets?

- The usual reason is that there is no global authority capable of creating unique ID's.
- Example: it is unlikely that there could be an agreement to assign unique player numbers across all football teams in the world.



# ER Review

- Basic stuff
  - entity, attribute, entity set
  - relationship: binary, multiway, converting from multiway
  - relationship roles, attributes on relationships
- Subclasses (is-a)
- Constraints
  - multiplicity of relationships
    - many-one, one-one, many-many
    - limitations of arrows
  - keys, single-valued, ref integrity, domain & general constraints

# ER Review

- Weak entity set
- Design principles
  - be faithful
  - avoid redundancy
  - KISS