Recap: Memory Allocation, Pointers, Structs, Typedefs

K08 Δομές Δεδομένων και Τεχνικές Προγραμματισμού
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Computer memory

- Computers have memory, a device that allows storing and retrieving data
- Each **byte** of memory has an **address**
  - unique number associated with this byte
- Programs need to **allocate, deallocate, read** and **write** on memory
- In C the programmer has **direct access** to the memory
  - the only complicated part, in an otherwise very simplistic language
Allocating memory

C programs allocate memory in 2 ways:

• **Automatic**
  - by declaring variables

• **Manual**
  - by calling `malloc`
Allocating memory via variables

- Space for two `int` s is allocated the moment `foo` is called.
- The values 5, 17 are copied in the allocated memory.

```c
void foo() {
    int a = 5;
    int b = 17;
}

int main() {
    foo();
}
```

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a:</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>b:</td>
<td>17</td>
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Parameters

- Parameters are essentially just local variables
- Only difference: the argument provided by the caller is copied

```c
void foo(int a) {
    int b = 17;
}

int main() {
    foo(5);
}
```

a: 5

b: 17
Address-of operator &

- To see where a variable is stored, use the address-of operator &
- We can print it in hex

```c
void foo(int a) {
    int b = 17;

    printf("foo &a: %p
", &a);
    printf("foo &b: %p
", &b);
}
```

```c
printf("Memory address of a in hex: %p \n", &a);
```
Deallocating a variable's memory

- A variable's memory is **deallocated** when the function call **returns**.
- Deallocation simply means that such memory can be given to some **other variable**.

```c
void foo() {
    int a = 5;
    printf("foo &a: %p\n", &a);
}

void bar() {
    int a = 17;
    printf("bar &a: %p\n", &a);
}

int main() {
    foo();
    bar();
}
```
Deallocating a variable's memory

• Here, `foo` has **not returned** yet when `bar` is called

• Will we get the same result?

```c
void bar() {
    int a = 17;
    printf("bar &a: %p\n", &a);
}

void foo() {
    int a = 5;
    printf("foo &a: %p\n", &a);
    bar();
}

int main() {
    foo();
}
```
Global variables

They remain allocated until the program finishes

```c
int global = 5;

void foo() {
    printf("foo &global: %p\n", &global);
}

int main() {
    printf("main &global: %p\n", &global);
    foo();
    printf("main &global: %p\n", &global);
}
```
Pointers

• Pointers are just variables, nothing special

• They are allocated/deallocated the same way as all variables are
  - Their content has nothing to do with allocation/deallocation

```c
void foo() {
    int* p;
}
```

p:
• In a pointer we store **memory addresses**, e.g. the address of a variable

• Nothing special happens; we just store a **number** in a variable
  - we just think of \( p \) as “pointing to” \( a \)

```c
void foo() {
    int a;
    int* p = &a;

    printf("&a: %p\n", &a);
    printf("&p: %p\n", &p);
    printf(" p: %p\n", p);
}
```
Manual allocation

• Done by calling `malloc(size)` (actually easier to understand)

• Returns the **address** of the allocated memory
  - we need to **store** such address (in a pointer)

```c
int* p = malloc(sizeof(int));
```

```
p: ───>  
  |     |
  └────┘
  ```
Manual allocation

• The allocated memory is **not** the address of **any** variable

• In fact, the allocated memory is “far” from all variables
  - variables are allocated in the **stack**
  - `malloc` allocates memory in the **heap**
  - just fancy names for two different areas of memory

```c
int* a = malloc(sizeof(int));
printf("&a: %p\n", &a);
printf(" a: %p\n", a);
```
Program Memory

- Stack: Managed “automatically” (by compiler)
- Dynamic Data (Heap): Managed by programmer
- Static Data: Initialized when process starts
- Literals: Initialized when process starts
- Instructions: Initialized when process starts
Manual deallocation

• Call `free(address)`, for some address previously returned by `malloc`
  - typically stored in a pointer

• freed memory can be reused (this is what “deallocated” means)

```c
int* p1 = malloc(sizeof(int));
int* p2 = malloc(sizeof(int));
free(p2);
int* p3 = malloc(sizeof(int));

printf("p1: %p\n", p1);
printf("p2: %p\n", p2);
printf("p3: %p\n", p3);
```
Remember

1. C never looks at the **content** of a variable when deallocating its memory

```c
void foo() {
    int* p = malloc(sizeof(int));
}
```

2. `free` does not modify the content of any variable

```c
int* p = malloc(sizeof(int));
printf("p: %p\n", p);
free(p);
printf("p: %p\n", p);

p = NULL; // καλή πρακτική μετά το free
```
Accessing memory via pointers, operator *

When reading or writing to a variable:

- $a, p$, read/write to the memory \textit{allocated} for $a, p$
- $*p$ reads/writes to the memory \textit{stored} in $p$

```c
int a;
int* p;
p = &a; // στη μνήμη που δεσμεύτηκε για το $p$, γράψε τον αριθμό $&a$
*p = 16; // στη μνήμη που περιέχει το $p$ (δηλαδή στην $&a$), γράψε το
a = *p + 1;
```

![Diagram of memory access](image)
We have this situation:

Which commands produce each of the following?
**Pointer quiz**

• Which commands produce each of the following?

```c
*p = *q;    // αριστερά
p = q;      // δεξί
```
Pointers as function arguments

• Nothing special happens at all
  - We just receive a **number** as an argument

• This is very useful for accessing memory outside the function

```c
void foo(int a, int* p) {
    *p = a;
}

int main() {
    int a = 1;
    foo(52, &a);
}
```
Swap

Will this work?

```c
void swap(int a, int b) {
    int temp = a;
    a = b;
    b = temp;
}

int main() {
    int a = 1;
    int b = 5;
    swap(a, b);
}
```
void swap(int* p, int* q) {
    int* temp = p;
    p = q;
    q = temp;
}

int main() {
    int a = 1;
    int b = 5;
    swap(&a, &b);
}
void swap(int* p, int* q) {
    int temp = *p;
    *p = *q;
    *q = temp;
}

int main() {
    int a = 1;
    int b = 5;
    swap(&a, &b);
}
Returning pointers

• Again, nothing special happens, we just **return a number**

```c
int* foo() {
    int* p = malloc(sizeof(int));
    *p = 42;
    return p;
}

int main() {
    int* p = foo();
    printf("content of p: %d\n", *p);
    free(p);
}
```
Dangling Pointers

- A pointer \( p \) containing `deallocated` memory is dangerous!
  - it's not our memory anymore
  - using `*p` has `undefined` behaviour (typically it makes your PC explode)

- Think about deallocation rules **before returning a pointer**

```c
int* foo() {
    int a = 63;
    int* p = &a;
    return p;  // πού δείχνει ο p;
}

int* foo() {
    int* p = malloc(sizeof(int));
    *p = 42;
    free(p);
    return p;  // πού δείχνει ο p;
}
```
Structs

- A simple way of storing several pieces of data together
- Useful for creating custom types
- A struct has members, each member has a name

```c
struct point_2d {                    // ένα σημείο στον δισδιάστατο χώρο
    float x;
    float y;
};

int main() {
    struct point_2d point;          // μία μεταβλητή!
    point.x = 1.2;                   // έχει αρκετό χώρο
    point.y = 0.4;                   // για 2 floats
}
```
• Nothing special, just like any other type

```c
void foo() {
    // θα αποδεσμευθεί στο τέλος της κλήσης της foo
    struct point_2d point;

    // θα αποδεσμευθεί όταν κάνουμε free
    struct point_2d* p = malloc(sizeof(struct point_2d));
}
```
Structs, pointers

- When \( p \) is a pointer to a struct:
  
  \( p->\text{member} \) is just a synonym for \((p).\text{member}\)

```c
void foo(struct point_2d* p) {
    (*p).x = -1.2;
    p->y = 0.4;

    // Μπορούμε να αντιγράφουμε και ολόκληρο το struct!
    struct point_2d point = *p;
    point.x = point.y * 2;
    *p = point;
}
```
**typedef**

- Simply gives a **new name** to an existing type

```c
typedef int Intetzer; // English style
typedef int Integker; // Γκρικ στάιλ

int main() {
    Intetzer a = 1;
    Integker b = 2;
    a = b; // και τα δύο είναι απλά ints
}
```
typedef, common uses

Simplify structs

```c
struct point_2d {
    float x;
    float y;
};
typedef struct point_2d Point2d;

int main() {
    Point2d point; // δε χρειάζεται το "struct point_2d"
}
```

Even simpler:

```c
typedef struct {
    float x;
    float y;
} Point2d;
```
typedef, common uses

“Hide” pointers

```c
// list.h
struct list { 
    ... 
};
typedef struct list* List;

List list_create();
void list_destroy(List list);
```

```c
// main.c
#include "list.h"

int main() {
    List list = list_create(); // ποιος "pointer";
    list_destroy(list);
}
```
Function pointers

• Receive a **function** as argument

• A **typedef** is **highly** recommended

```c
// Για μια συνάρτηση σαν αυτή
int foo(int a) {
    ...
}

// Δηλώνουμε τον τύπο ως εξής (το foo αλλάζει σε (*TypeName))
typedef int (*MyFunc)(int a);

int main() {
    // Και μετά μπορούμε να αποθηκεύουμε το "foo" σε μια μεταβλητή f
    MyFunc f = foo;
    f(40); // το ίδιο με foo(40)
}
```
Function pointers

typedef int (*MyFunc)(int a);

int foo1(int a) {
    return a + 1;
}

int foo2(int a) {
    return 2*a;
}

int bar(MyFunc f) {
    printf("f(0) = %d\n", f(0));
}

int main() {
    bar(foo1);
    bar(foo2);
}
Void pointers

• All pointers are just numbers!

• A variable with type `void*` can store any pointer

```c
int* int_p;
float* float_p;
Point2d* point_p;
MyFunc func_p;

void* p;

p = int_p;
p = float_p;
p = point_p;
p = func_p;

int_p = p;
float_p = p;
point_p = p;
func_p = p;
```
Generic functions

- `void*` allows to define operations on data of any type

```c
void swap(void* p, void* q, int size) {
    void* temp = malloc(size);  // allocate size bytes
    memcpy(temp, p, size);      // αντιγραφή size bytes από το p στο temp
    memcpy(p, q, size);
    memcpy(q, temp, size);
    free(temp);
}

int main() {
    int a = 1;
    int b = 5;
    swap(&a, &b, sizeof(int));

    float c = 4.3;
    float d = 1.2;
    swap(&c, &d, sizeof(float));
}
```
Generic functions

Combine with **function pointers** for full power!

typedef void* Pointer; // απλούστερο

// Δείκτης σε συνάρτηση που συγκρίνει 2 στοιχεία a και b και επιστρέφει
// < 0  αν a < b
// 0  αν a == b
// > 0  αν a > b

typedef int (*CompareFunc)(Pointer a, Pointer b);

Pointer max(Pointer a, Pointer b, CompareFunc comp) {
    if(comp(a, b) > 0)
        return a;
    else
        return b;
}
#include <string.h>

int compare_ints(Pointer a, Pointer b) {
    int* ia = a;
    int* ib = b;
    return *ia - *ib;
}

int compare_strings(Pointer a, Pointer b) {
    return strcmp(a, b);
}

int main() {
    int a1 = 1;
    int a2 = 5;
    int* max_a = max(&a1, &a2, compare_ints);

    char* s1 = "zzz";
    char* s2 = "aaa";
    char* max_s = max(s1, s2, compare_strings);

    printf("max of a1,a2: %d\n", *max_a);
    printf("max of s1,s2: %s\n", max_s);
}
Readings

- Π. Σταματόπουλος, Σημειώσεις Εισαγωγής στον Προγραμματισμό.