CS250P: Computer Systems Architecture
Pipelining

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UCI

Large amount of material adapted from MIT 6.004, “Computation Structures”,
Morgan Kaufmann “Computer Organization and Design: The Hardware/Software Interface: RISC-V Edition”,
and CS 152 Slides by Isaac Scherson

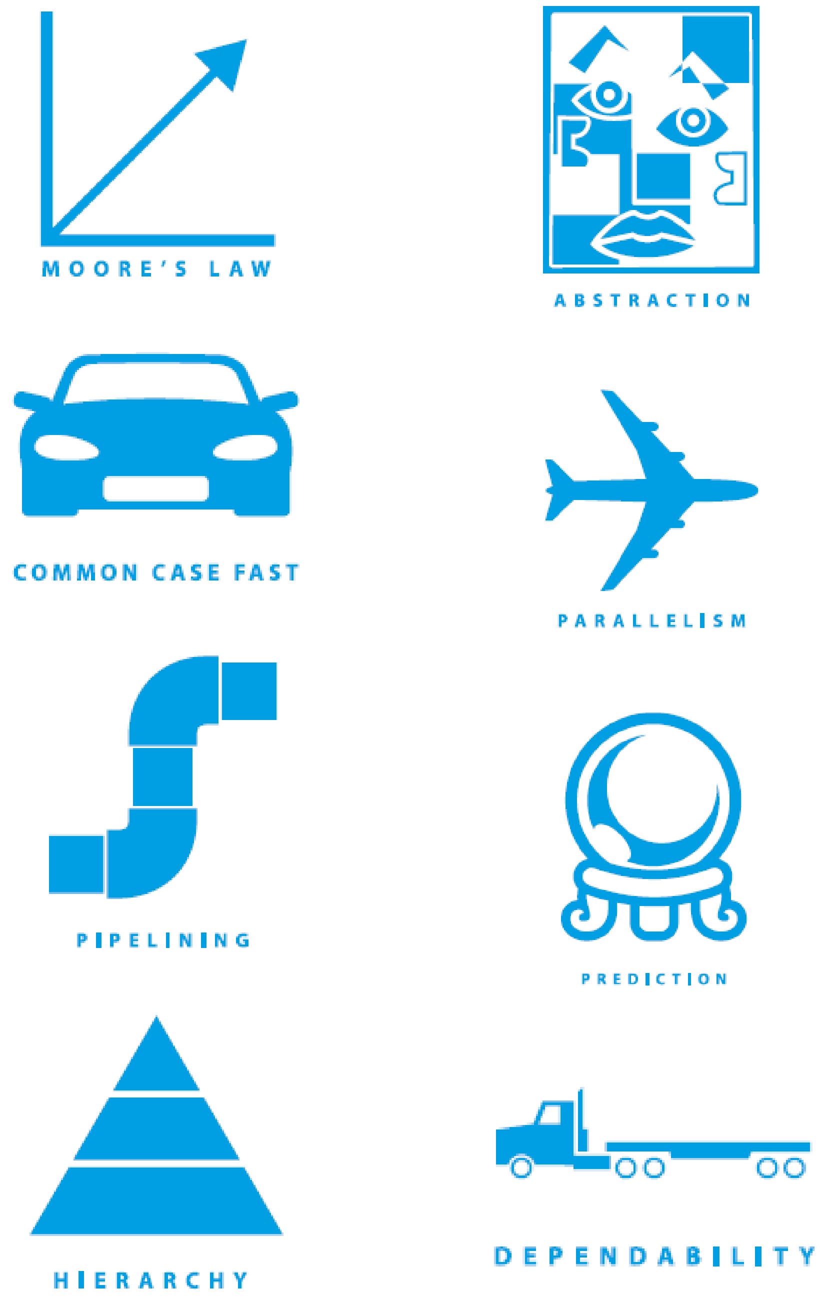
State of our understanding

- Complex logic has high propagation delay
  - Which leads to lower clock speed
- Naturally, we must trade-off complexity of the processor vs. clock speed
  - Is this true?

- Q1. Can we make complex processors run at higher clock speeds
- Q2. Will higher clock speeds actually lead to higher performance

Eight great ideas

- ❑ Design for Moore’s Law
- ✓ Use abstraction to simplify design
- ✓ Make the common case fast
- ❑ Performance via parallelism
- ❑ Performance via pipelining
- ❑ Performance via prediction
- ❑ Hierarchy of memories
- ❑ Dependability via redundancy



But before we start…

Performance Measures

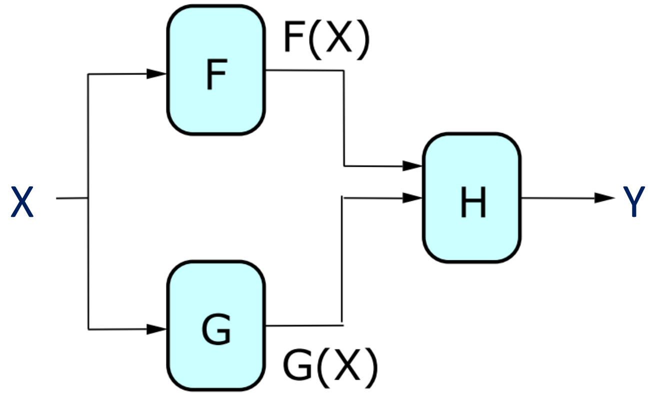
- ❑ Two metrics when designing a system

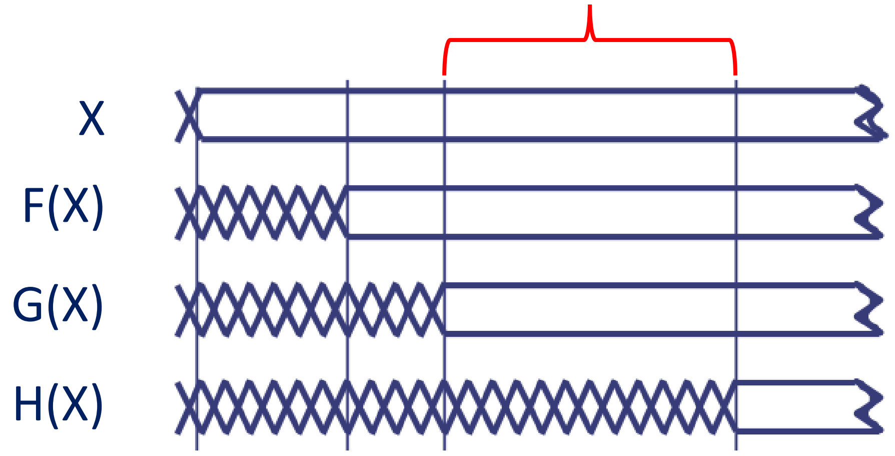
1. Latency: The delay from when an input enters the system until its associated output is produced
2. Throughput: The rate at which inputs or outputs are processed

- ❑ The metric to prioritize depends on the application
  - Embedded system for airbag deployment? **Latency**
  - General-purpose processor? **Throughput**

Performance of Combinational Circuits

- For combinational logic
  - latency = t_{PD}
  - throughput = $1/t_{PD}$



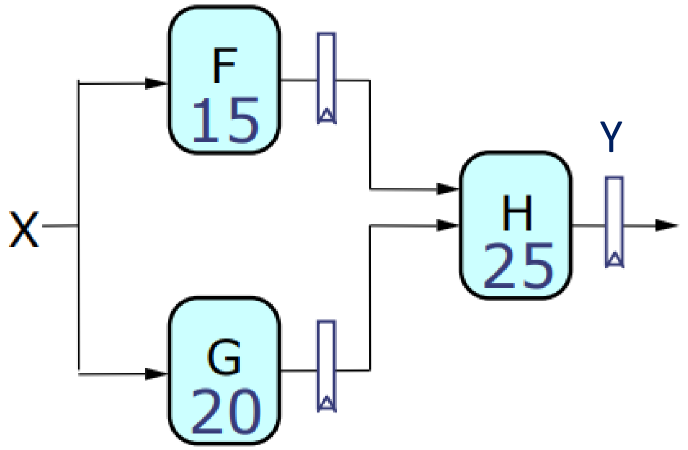


Is this an efficient way of using hardware?

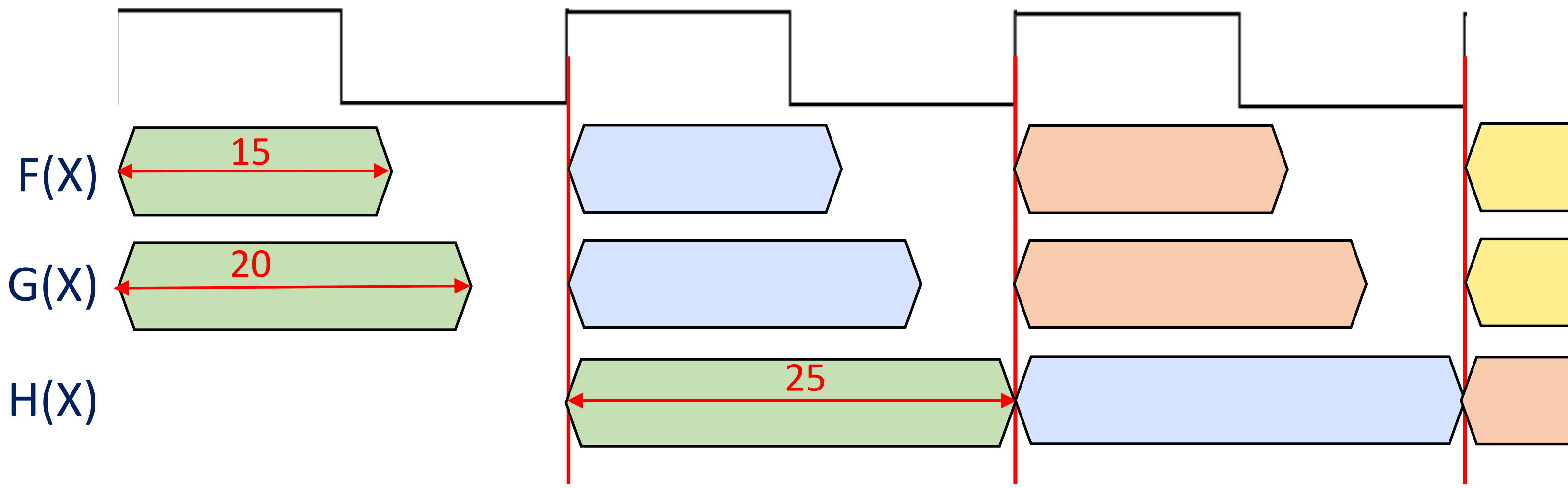
Pipelined Circuits

- Pipelining by adding registers to hold F and G's output
  - Now F & G can be working on input X_{i+1} while H is performing computation on X_i
  - A 2-stage pipeline!
  - For input X during clock cycle j, corresponding output is emitted during clock j+2.

Assuming latencies of 15, 20, 25…

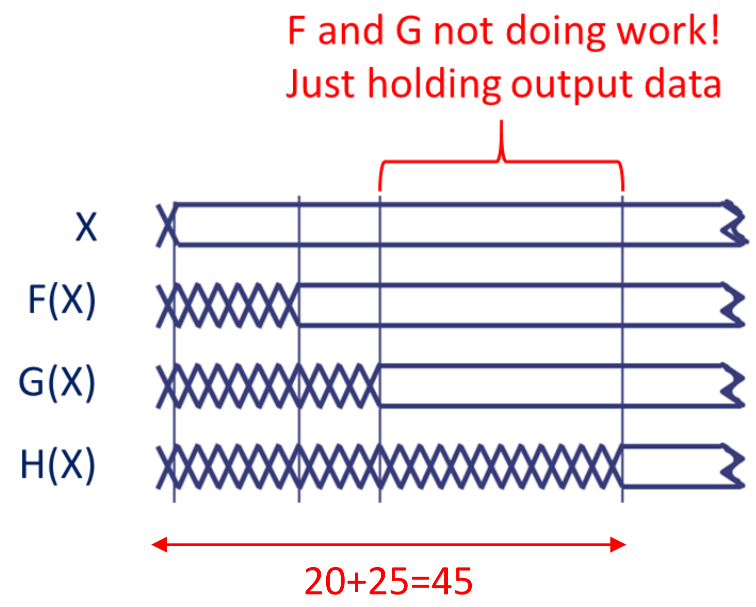


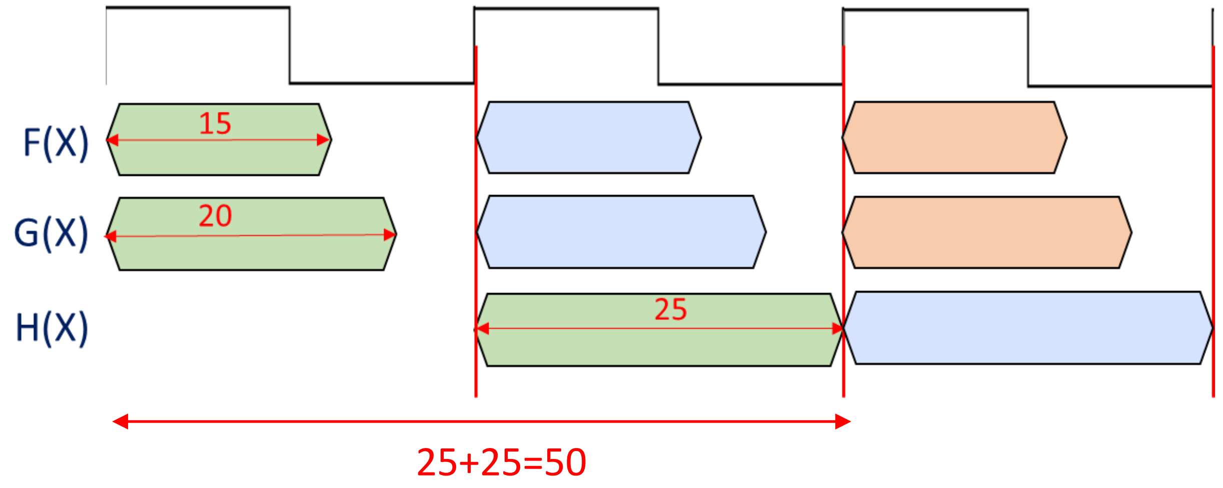
Assuming ideal registers



Source: MIT 6.004 2019 L12

Pipelined Circuits





	Latency	Throughput
Unpipelined	45	1/45
2-stage pipelined	50 (Worse!)	1/25 (Better!)

Source: MIT 6.004 2019 L12

Pipeline conventions

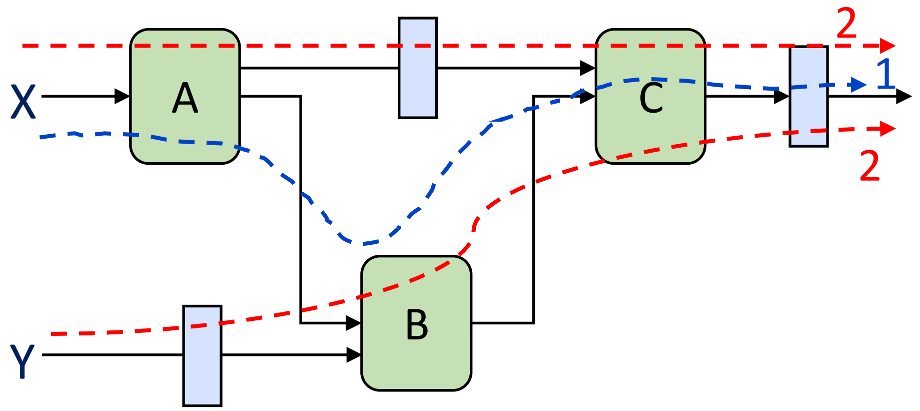
- Definition:
  - A well-formed K-Stage Pipeline ("K-pipeline") is an acyclic circuit having exactly K registers on every path from an input to an output.
  - A combinational circuit is thus a 0-stage pipeline.
- Composition convention:
  - Every pipeline stage, hence every K-Stage pipeline, has a register on its output (not on its input).
- Clock period:
  - The clock must have a period t_{CLK} sufficient to cover the longest register to register propagation delay plus setup time.

K-pipeline latency = K * t_{CLK} K-pipeline throughput = 1 / t_{CLK}

Source: MIT 6.004 2019 L12

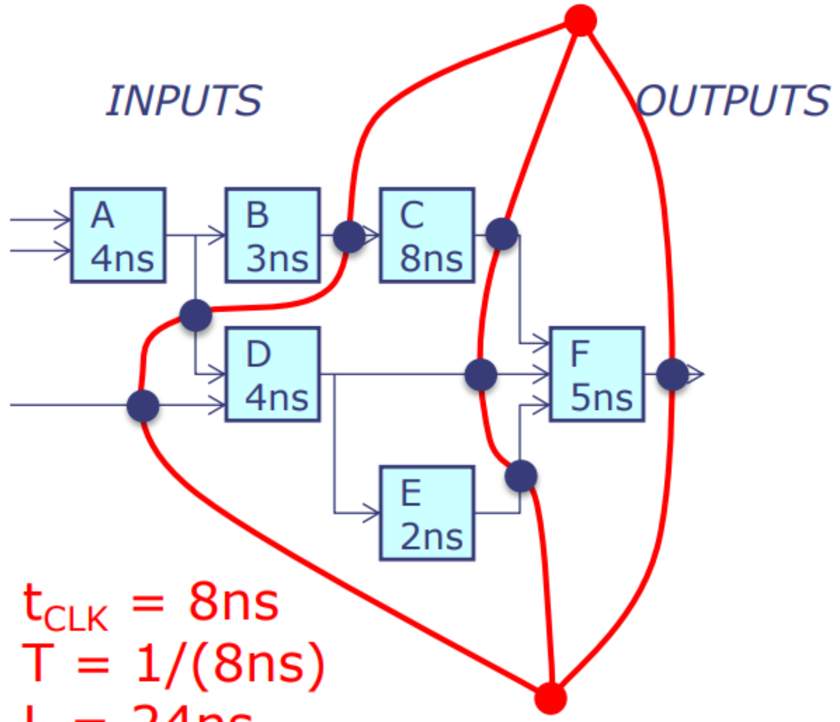
Ill-formed pipelines

- Is the following circuit a K-stage pipeline? No



- Problem:
  - Some paths have different number of registers
  - Values from different input sets get mixed! -> Incorrect results
    - $B(Y_{t-1}, A(X_t))$ <- Mixing values from t and t-1

A pipelining methodology



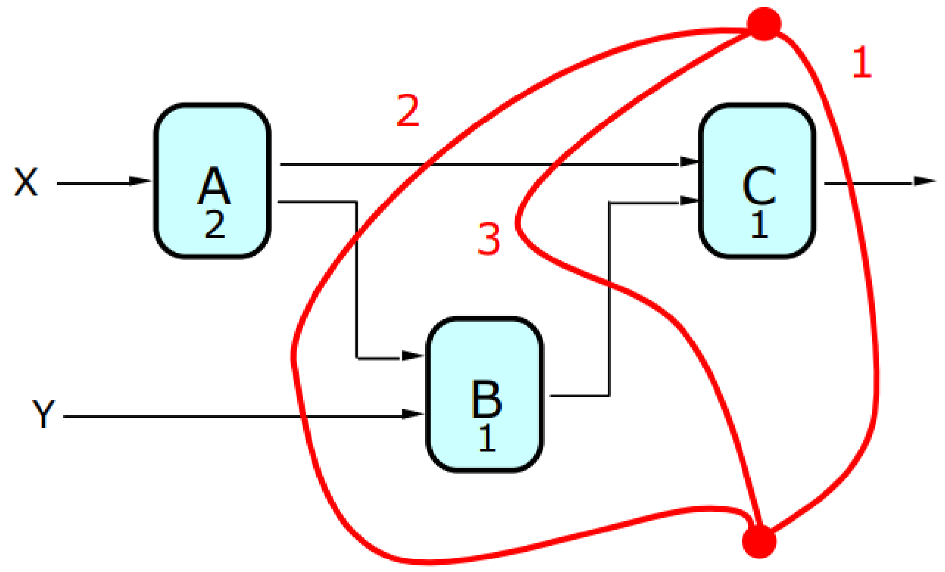
$t_{CLK} = 8ns$
$T = 1/(8ns)$
$L = 24ns$

- ❑ Step 1:
  - o Draw a line that crosses every output in the circuit, and mark the endpoints as terminal points.
- ❑ Step 2:
  - o Continue to draw new lines between the terminal points across various circuit connections, ensuring t hat every connection crosses each line in the same direction.
  - o These lines demarcate pipeline stages.
- ❑ Step 3:
  - o Add a pipeline register at every point where a separating line crosses a connection

Strategy: Try to break up high-latency elements, make each pipeline stage as low-latency as possible!

Source: MIT 6.004 2019 L12

Pipelining example

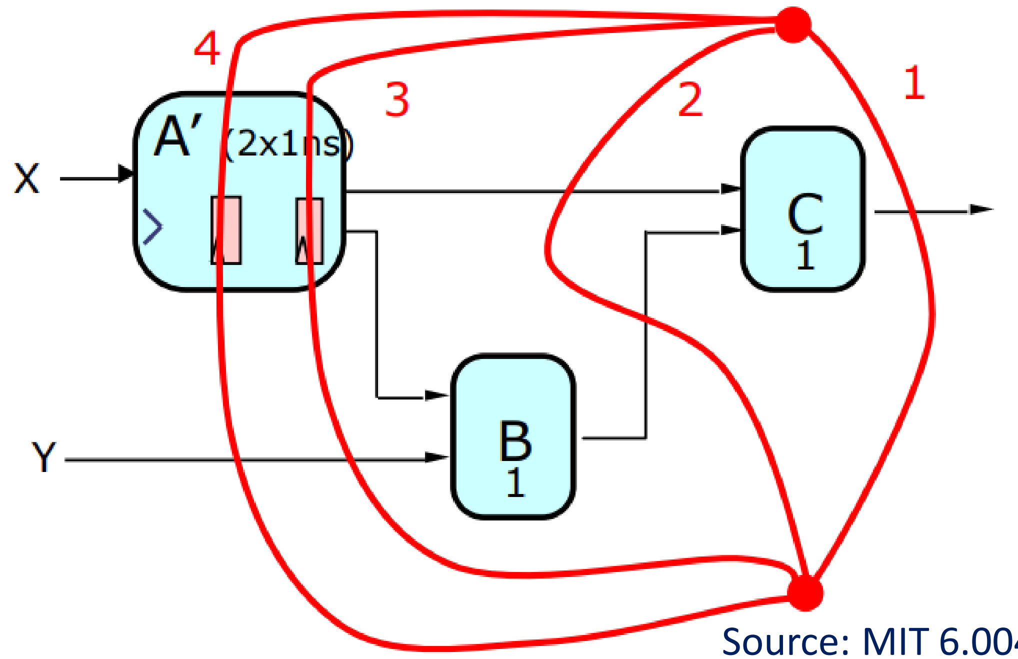


- 1-pipeline improves neither L nor T
- T improved by breaking long combinational path, allowing faster clock
- Too many stages cost L, not improving T
- Back-to-back registers are sometimes needed for well-formed pipelines

	LATENCY	THROUGHPUT
0-pipe:	4	1/4
1-pipe:	4	1/4
2-pipe:	4	1/2
3-pipe:	6	1/2

Hierarchical pipelining

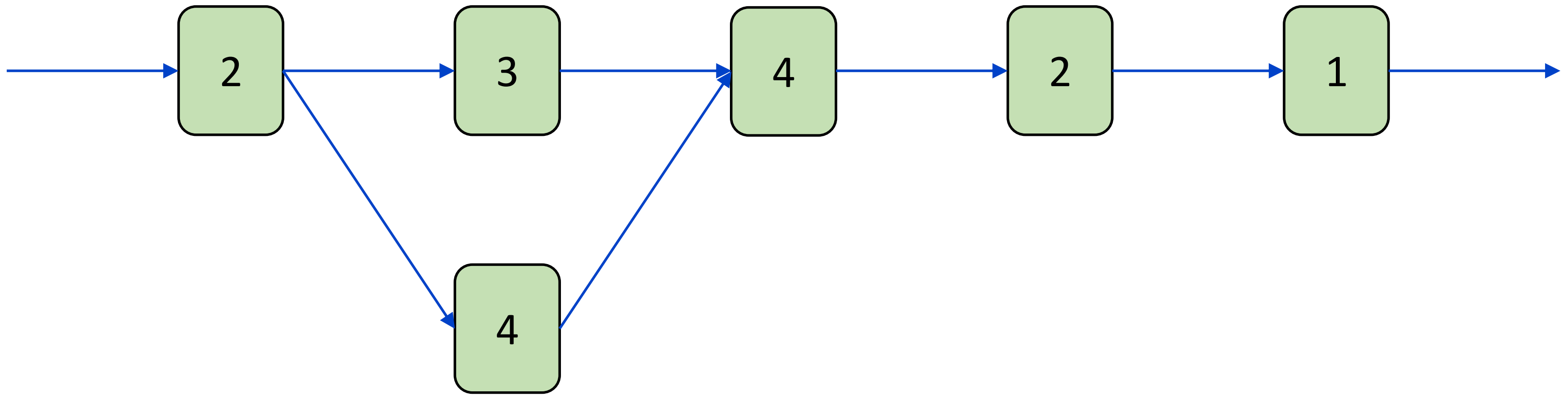
- Pipelined systems can be hierarchical
  - Replacing a slow combinational component with a k-pipe version may allow faster clock
- In the example:
  - 4-stage pipeline, T=1



Source: MIT 6.004 2019 L12

Sample pipelining problem

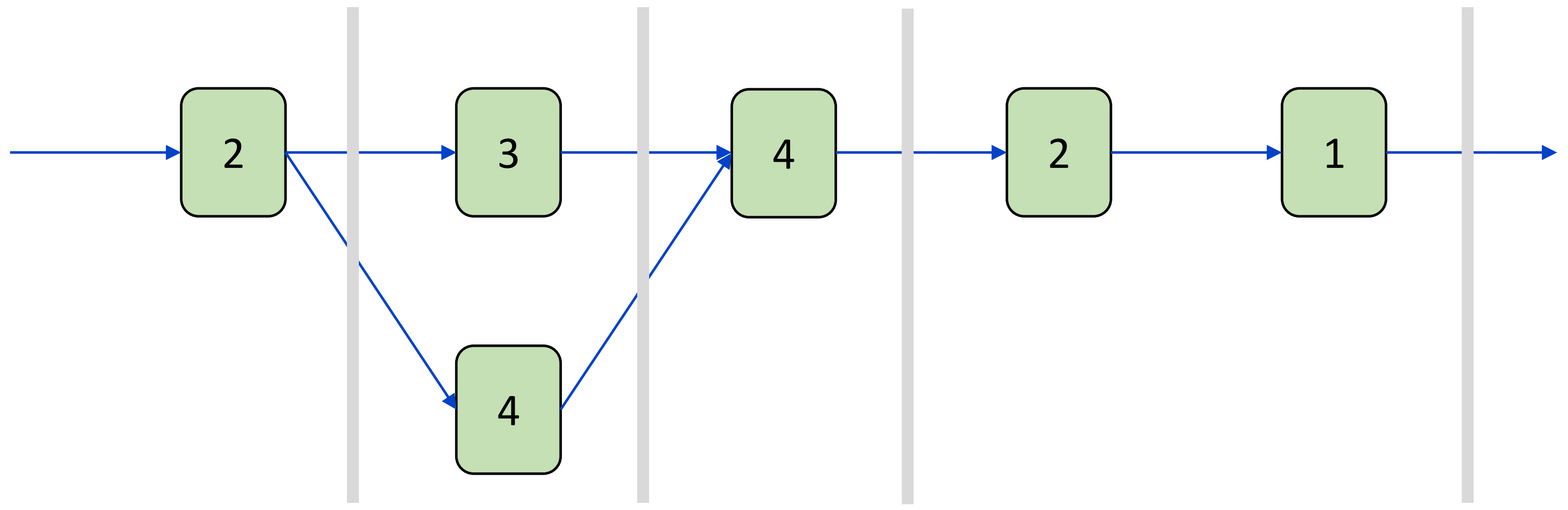
- Pipeline the following circuit for maximum throughput while minimizing latency.
    - Each module is labeled with its latency



What is the best latency and throughput achievable?

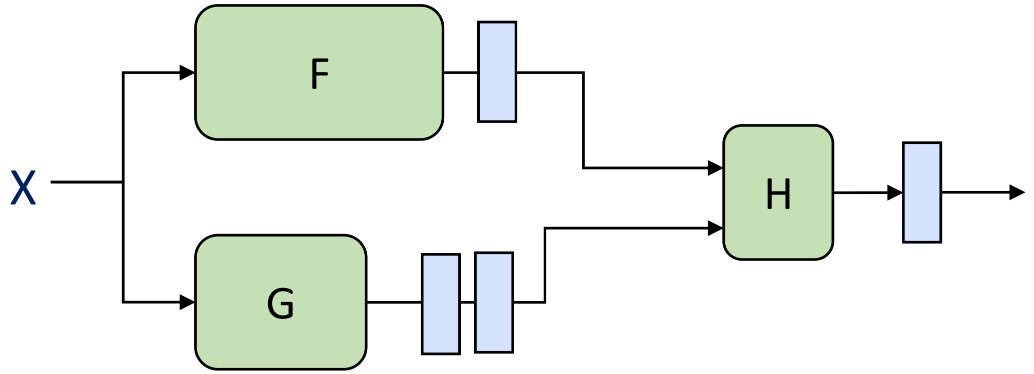
Sample pipelining problem

- $t_{CLK} = 4$
- T = ¼
- L = 4*4 = 16



Aside: When pipelines are not deterministic

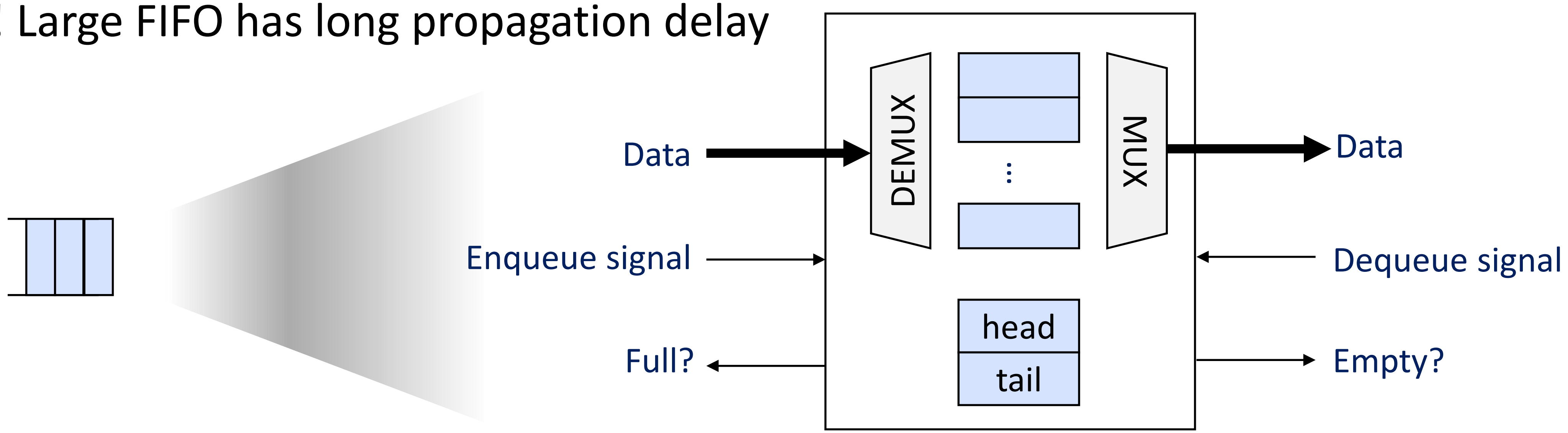
- Lock-step pipelines are great when modules are deterministic
  - Good for carefully scheduled circuits like a well-optimized microprocessor
- What if the latency of F is non-deterministic?
  - At some cycles, F's pipeline register may hold invalid value
  - Pipeline register must be tagged with a valid flag
  - How many pipeline registers should we add to G? Max possible latency?
  - What if F and G are both non-deterministic? How many registers?



Aside: FIFOs (First-In First-Out)

- Queues in hardware
  - Static size (because it's hardware)
  - User checks whether full or empty before enqueue or dequeue
  - Enqueue/dequeue in single cycle regardless of size or occupancy

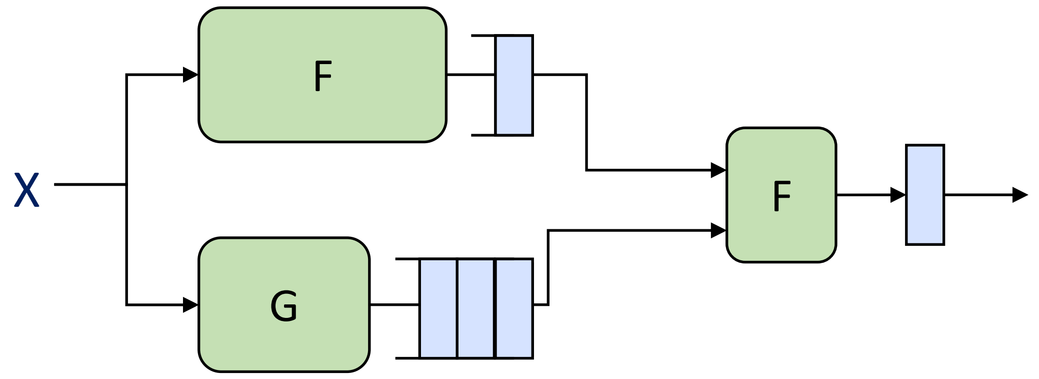
  - MUX! Large FIFO has long propagation delay



Counting cycles: Benefits of an elastic pipeline

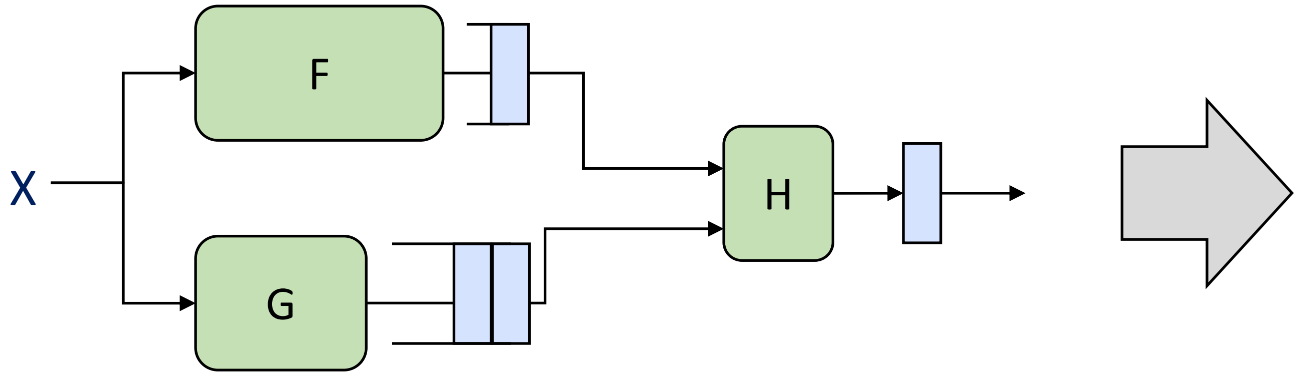
- Assume F and G are multi-cycle, internally pipelined modules
  - If we don't know how many pipeline stages F or G has, how do we ensure correct results?
- Elastic pipeline allows correct results regardless of latency
  - If L(F) == L(G), enqueued data available at very next cycle (acts like single register)
  - If L(F) == L(G) + 1, FIFO acts like two pipelined registers
  - What if we made a 4-element FIFO, but L(F) == L(G) + 4?
    - G will block! Results will still be correct!
    - … Just slower! How slow?

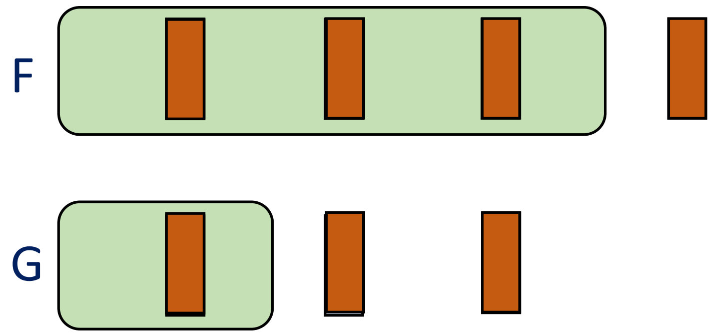
L <- Latency in cycles



Measuring pipeline performance

- Latency of F is 3, Latency of G is 1, and we have a 2-element FIFO
  - What would be the performance of this pipeline?





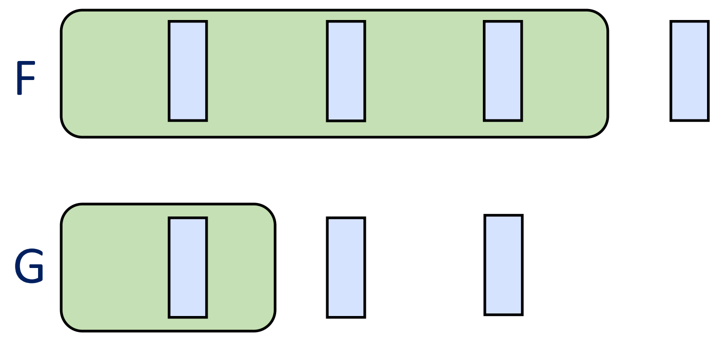
*Animation

- One pipeline “bubble” every four cycles
  - Duty cycle of ¾!

Aside: Little’s law

- $L = \lambda W$
  - L: Number of requests in the system
  - λ: Throughput
  - W: Latency
  - Imagine a DMV office! L: Number of booths. (Not number of chairs in the room)
- In our pipeline example
  - L = 3 (limited by pipeline depth of G)
  - W = 4 (limited by pipeline depth of F)
  - As a result: λ = ¾!

How do we improve performance?
Larger FIFO, or
Replicate G! (round-robin use of G1 and G2)



CS250P: Computer Systems Architecture Processor Microarchitecture – Pipelining

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Course outline

- ❑ Part 1: The Hardware-Software Interface
    - What makes a ‘good’ processor?
    - Assembly programming and conventions
- ❑ Part 2: Recap of digital design
    - Combinational and sequential circuits
    - How their restrictions influence processor design
- ❑ Part 3: Computer Architecture
    - Simple and pipelined processors
    - Computer Arithmetic
    - Caches and the memory hierarchy
- ❑ Part 4: Computer Systems
    - Operating systems, Virtual memory

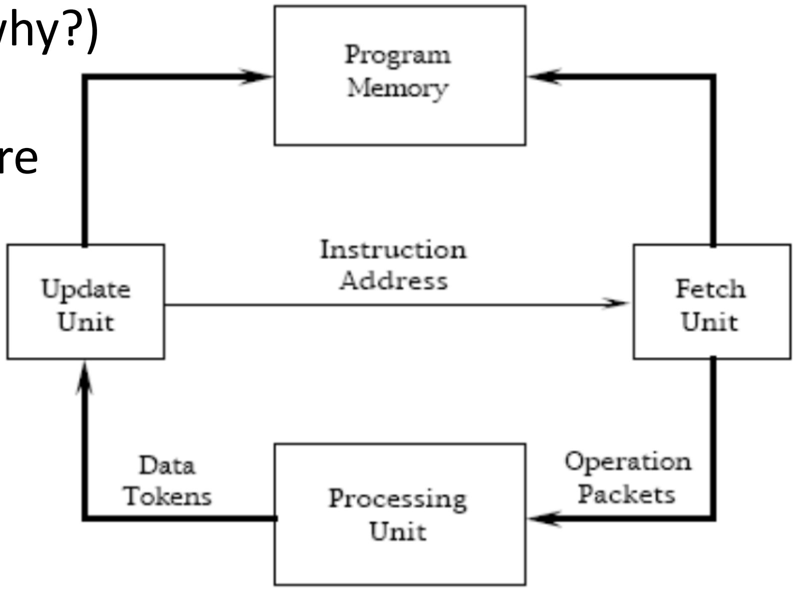
How to build a computing machine?

- ❑ Pretend the computers we know and love have never existed
- ❑ We want to build an automatic computing machine to solve mathematical problems
- ❑ Starting from (almost) scratch, where you have transistors and integrated circuits but no existing microarchitecture
  - No PC, no register files, no ALU
- ❑ How would you do it? Would it look similar to what we have now?

Aside: Dataflow architecture

- Instead of traversing over instructions to execute, all instructions are independent, and are each executed whenever operands are ready
  - Programs are represented as graphs (with dependency information)

Did not achieve market success, (why?) but the ideas are now everywhere e.g., Out-of-Order microarchitecture



A “static” dataflow architecture

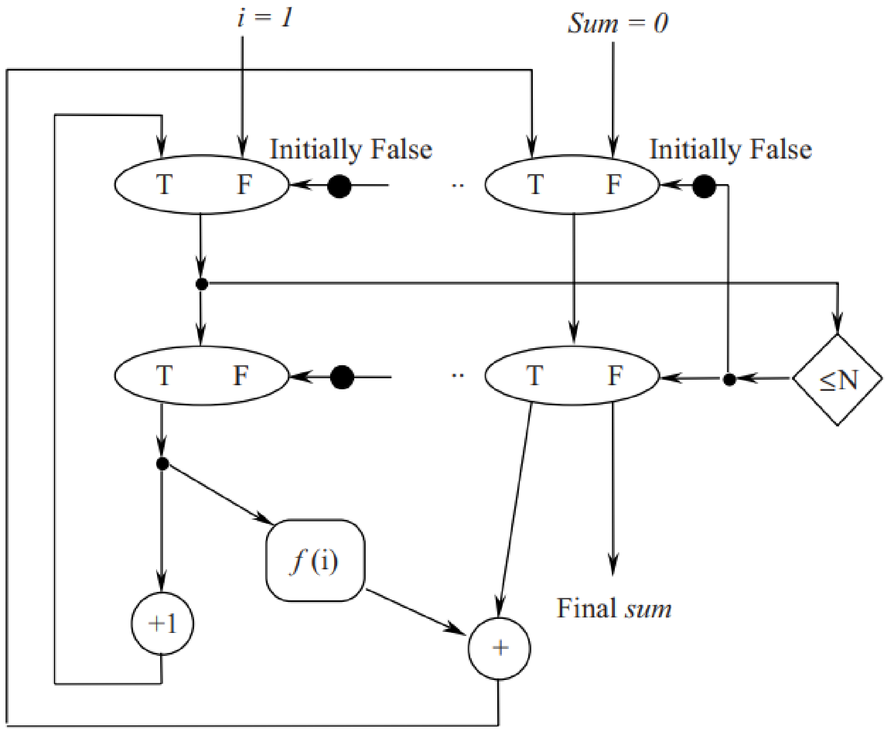
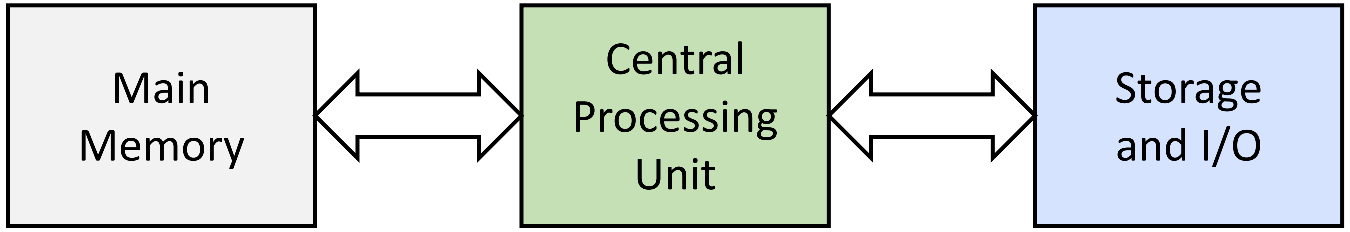


Figure 2. A dataflow graph representation of $sum = \sum_{i=1}^{N} f(i)$.

The von Neumann Model

- Almost all modern computers are based on the von Neumann model
  - John von Neumann, 1945
- Components
  - Main memory, where both data and programs are held
  - Processing unit, which has a program counter and ALU
  - Storage and I/O to communicate with the outside world

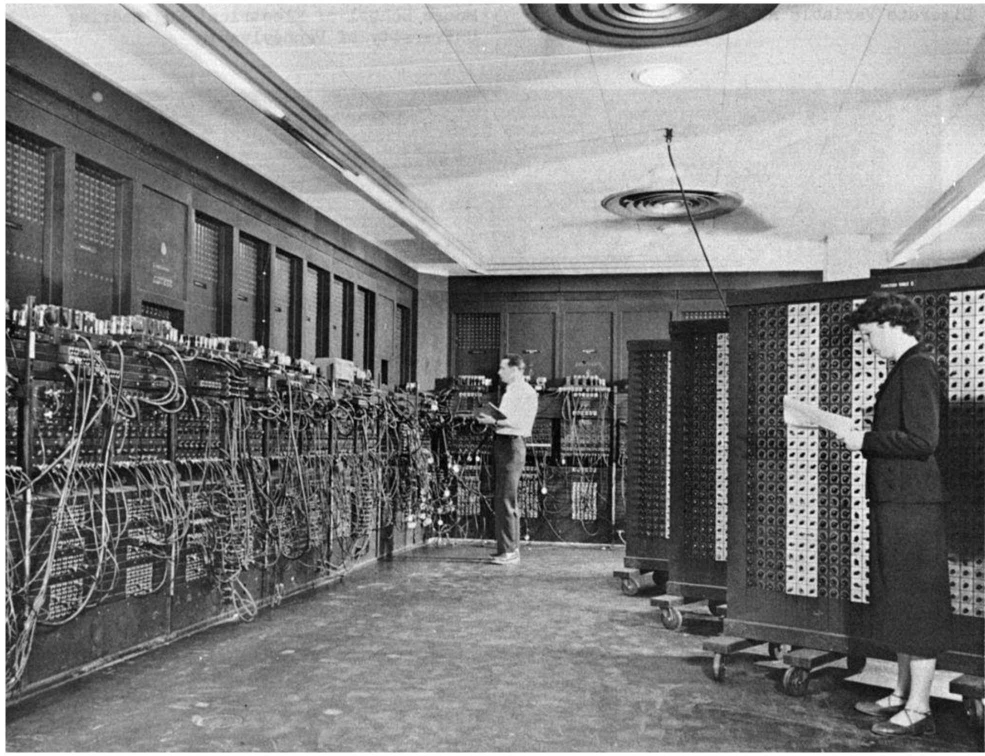
Key idea!



Key Idea: Stored-Program Computer

- Very early computers were programmed by manually adjusting switches and knobs of the individual programming elements
  - (e.g., ENIAC, 1945)
- von Neumann Machines instead had a general-purpose CPU, which loaded its instructions also from memory
  - Express a program as a sequence of coded instructions, which the CPU fetches, interprets, and executes
  - "Treating programs as data"

Similar in concept to a universal Turing machine (1936)


ENIAC, Source: US Army photo

Example: Harvard Mark 1

- Built 1944 (near the end of WW2) using switches, relays, shafts, etc
  - Used to crunch numbers for Manhattan project
  - Programmed by John von Neumann and others

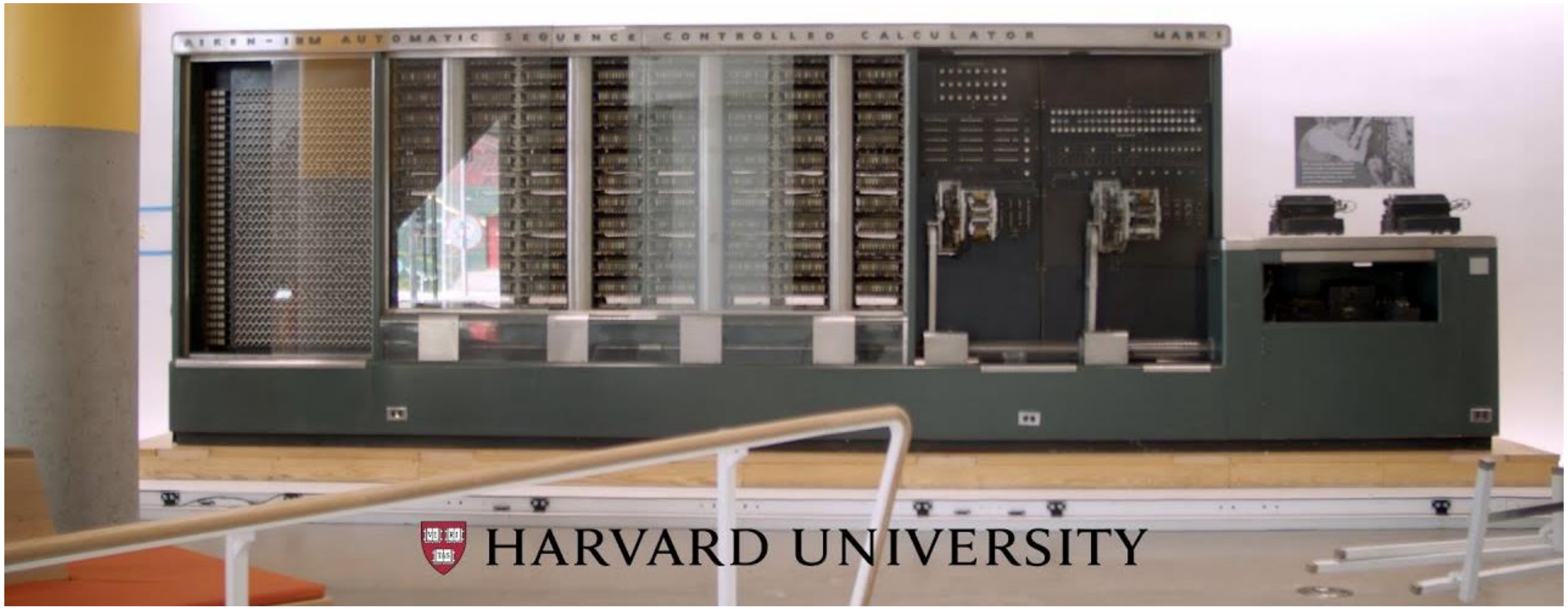
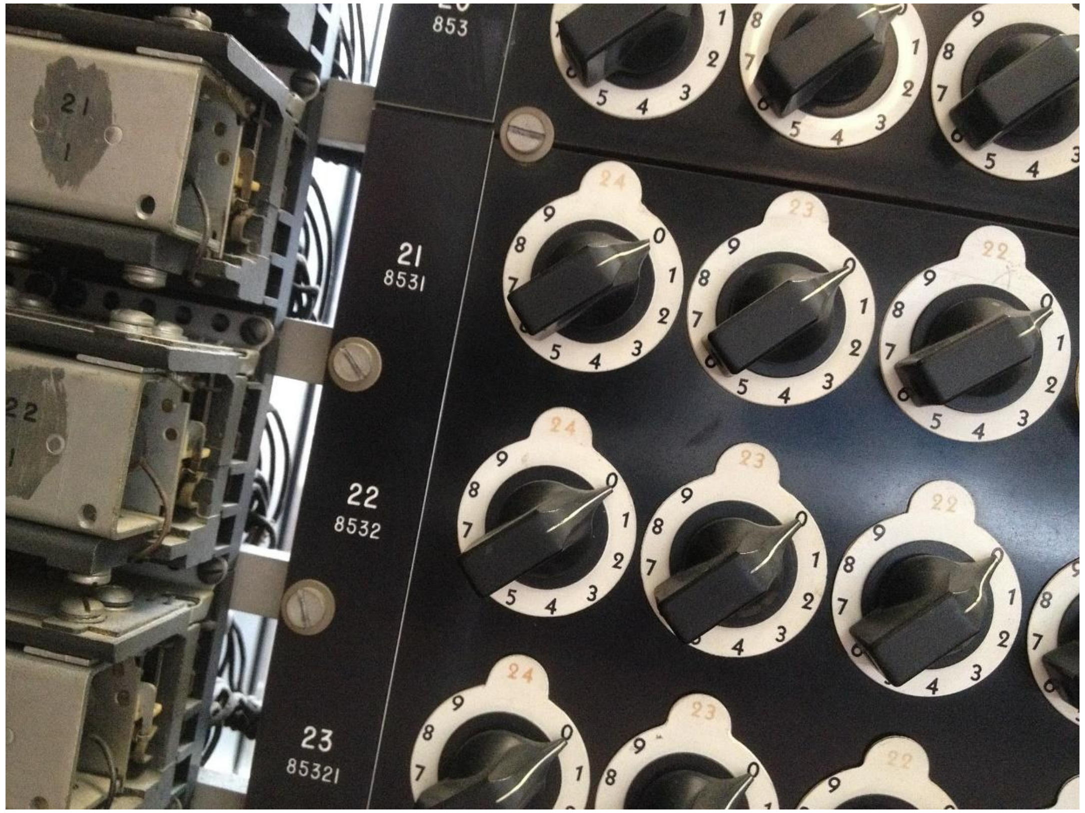


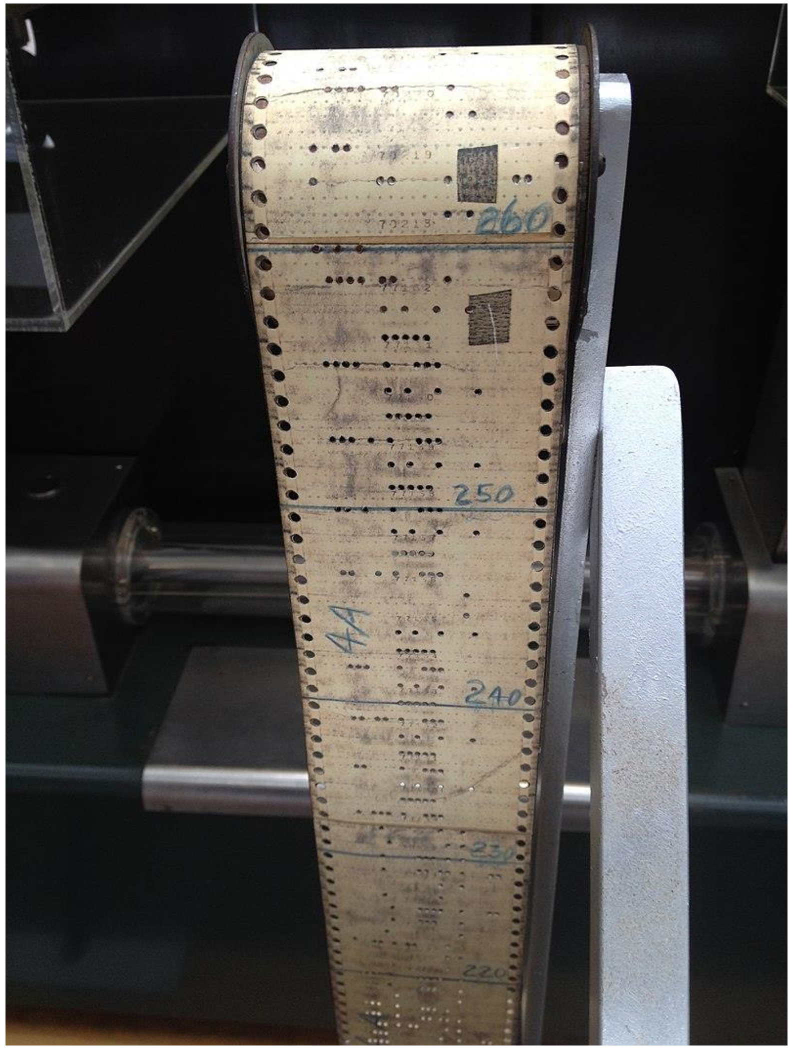
Photo: ArnoldReinhold, Wikimedia commons

Example: Harvard Mark 1

- Slow by today standards!
    - 3 Additions/s, 6 secs for mults, etc



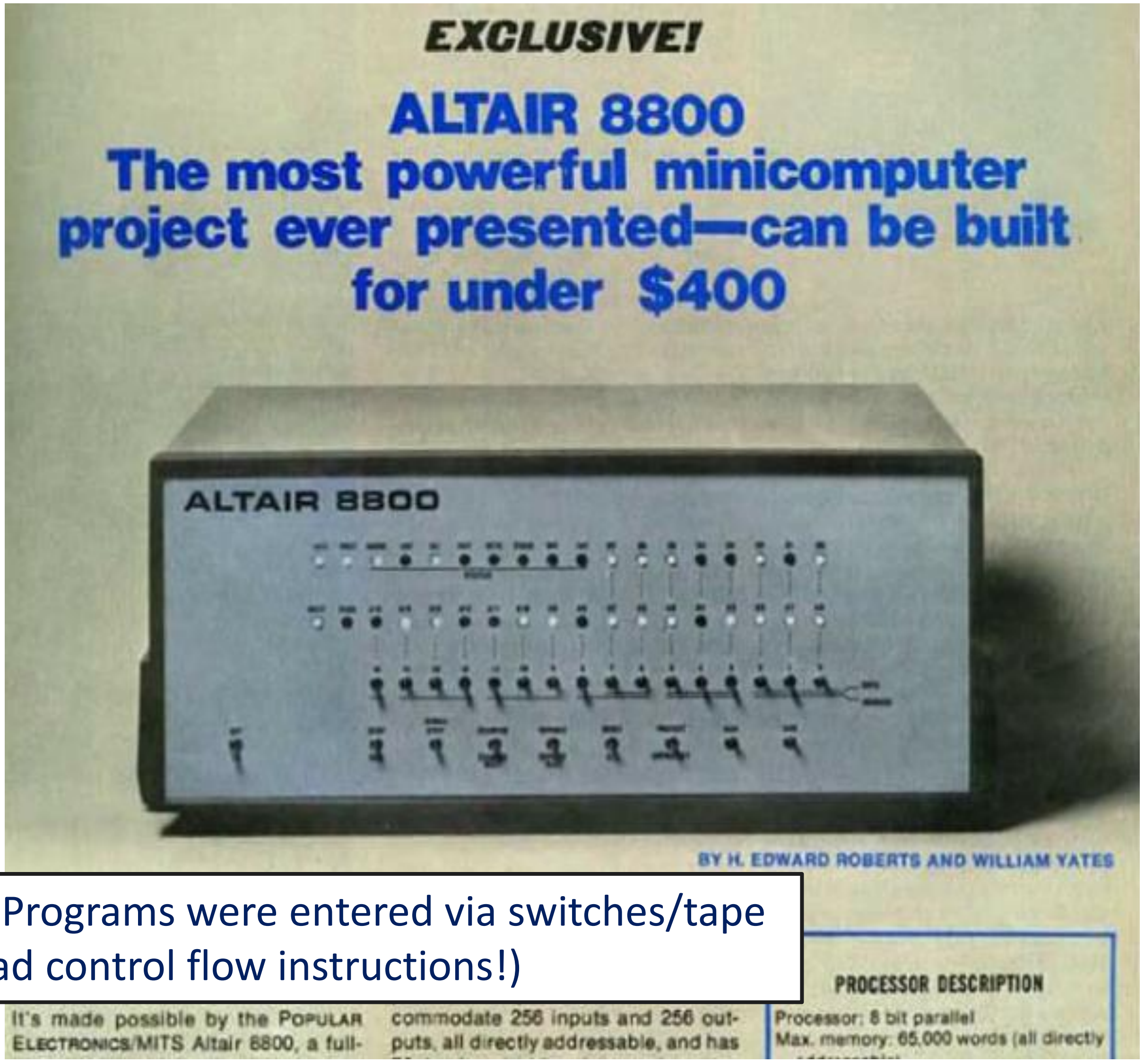
Data also entered via switches



Programs/data entered through tape, no control flow instructions! (Loops meant physically gluing tape into loops)

Another example: MITS Altair (1978)

- Built using Intel 8080 @ 2 MHz
- Only input are front panel switches
- Only output are front panel LEDs
- First successful personal computer
- Bill Gates sold his first software
  - Altair BASIC
  - Tape reader expansion



EXCLUSIVE!

ALTAIR 8800
The most powerful minicomputer project ever presented—can be built for under $400

ALTAIR 8800

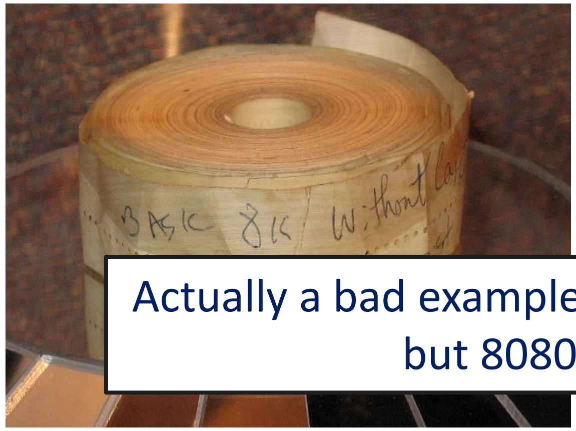
BY H. EDWARD ROBERTS AND WILLIAM YATES

It's made possible by the POPULAR ELECTRONICS/MITS Altair 8800, a full-

commodate 256 inputs and 256 outputs, all directly addressable, and has

PROCESSOR DESCRIPTION

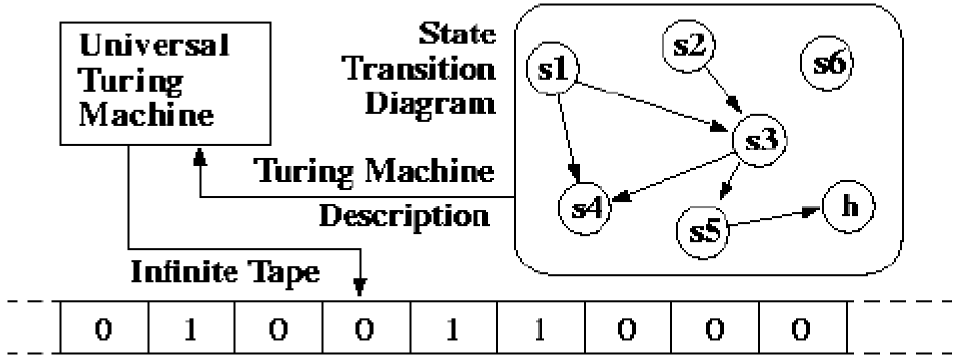
Processor: 8 bit parallel
Max. memory: 65,000 words (all directly



Actually a bad example… Programs were entered via switches/tape but 8080 had control flow instructions!)

von Neumann and Turing machine

- Turing machine is a mathematical model of computing machines
  - Proven to be able to compute any mechanically computable functions
  - Anything an algorithm can compute, it can compute
- Components include
  - An infinite tape (like memory) and a header which can read/write a location
  - A state transition diagram (like program) and a current location (like pc)
    - State transition done according to current value in tape
- Only natural that computer designs gravitate towards provably universal models



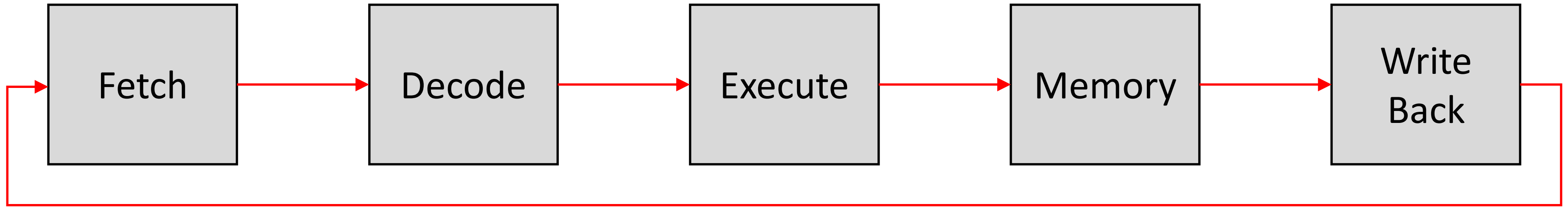
Source: Manolis Kamvysselis

Stored program computer, now what?

- Once we decide on the stored program computer paradigm
    - With program counter (PC) pointing to encoded programs in memory
- Then it becomes an issue of deciding the programming abstraction
    - Instruction set architecture, which we talked about
- Then, it becomes an issue of executing it quickly and efficiently
    - Microarchitecture! – Improving performance/efficiency/etc while maintaining ISA abstraction
    - Which is the core of this class, starting now

The classic RISC pipeline

- Many early RISC processors had very similar structure
  - MIPS, SPARC, etc…
  - Major criticism of MIPS is that it is too optimized for this 5-stage pipeline
- RISC-V is also typically taught using this structure as well



Remember:
Super simplified processor operation

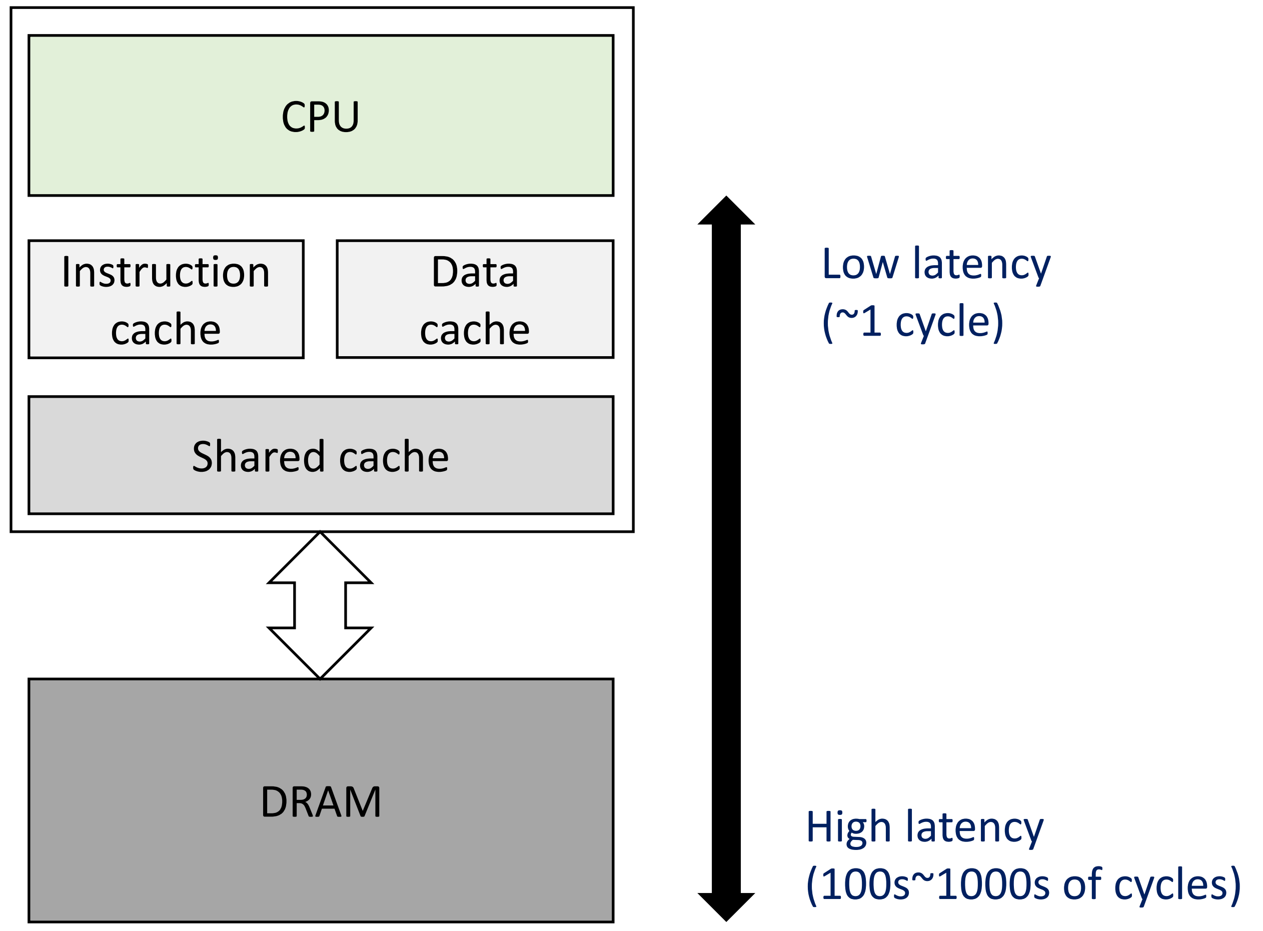
```
inst = mem[PC]
next_PC = PC + 4

if ( inst.type == STORE ) mem[rf[inst.arg1]] = rf[inst.arg2]
if ( inst.type == LOAD ) rf[inst.arg1] = mem[rf[inst.arg2]]
if ( inst.type == ALU ) rf[inst.arg1] = alu(inst.op, rf[inst.arg2], rf[inst.arg3])
if ( inst.type == COND ) next_PC = rf[inst.arg1]

PC = next_PC
```

The classic RISC pipeline

- ❑ Fetch: Request instruction fetch from memory
- ❑ Decode: Instruction decode & register read
- ❑ Execute: Execute operation or calculate address
- ❑ Memory: Request memory read or write
- ❑ Writeback: Write result (either from execute or memory) back to register

Why these 5 stages? Why not 1 or 6?

Reminder:
A high-level view of computer architecture



Will deal with caches in detail later!

Designing a microprocessor

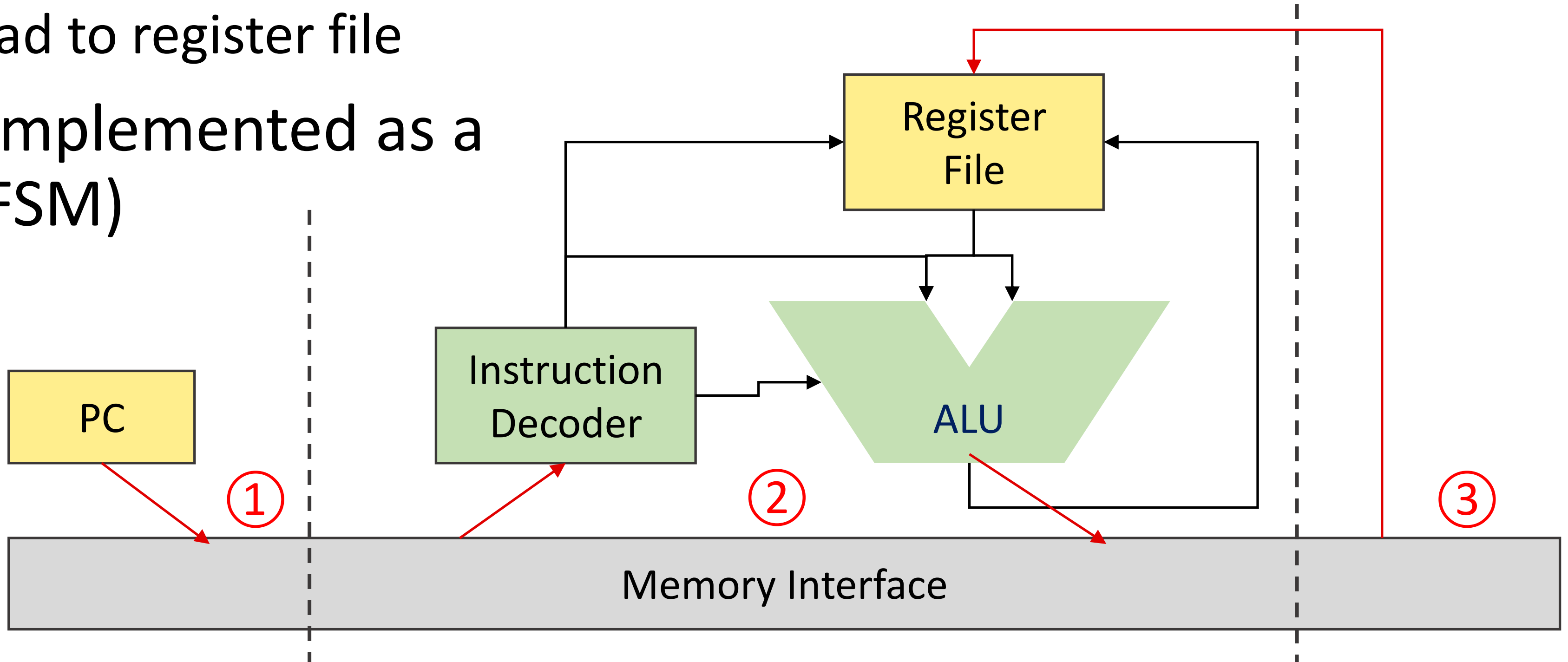
- Many, many constraints processors optimize for, but for now:

- Constraint 1: Circuit timing
  - Processors are complex! How do we organize the pipeline to process instructions as fast as possible?
- Constraint 2: Memory access latency
  - Register files can be accessed as a combinational circuit, but it is small
  - All other memory have high latency, and must be accessed in separate request/response
    - Memory can have high ***throughput***, but also high ***latency***

Memory will be covered in detail later!

The most basic microarchitecture

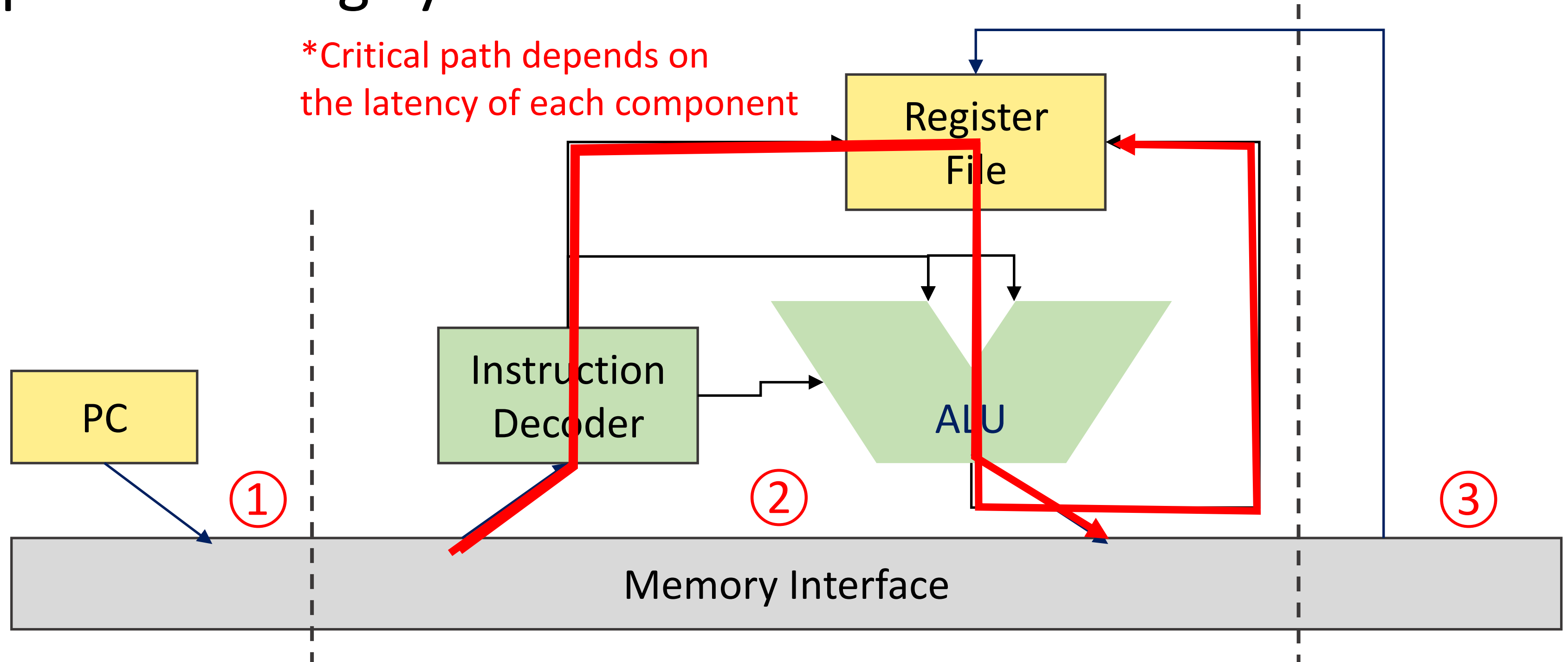
- Because memory is not combinational, our RISC ISA requires at least three disjoint stages to handle
  - Instruction fetch
  - Instruction receive, decode, execute (ALU), register file access, memory request
  - If mem read, write read to register file
- Three stages can be implemented as a Finite State Machine (FSM)



Will this processor be fast?
Why or why not?

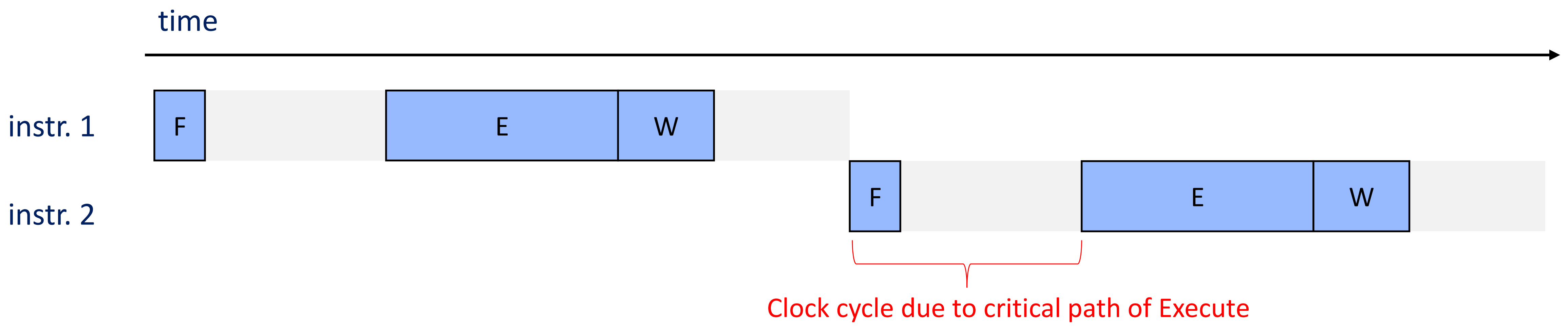
Limitations of our simple microarchitecture

- Stage two is disproportionately long
  - Very long critical path, which limits the clock speed of the whole processor
  - Stages are “not balanced”
- Note: we have not pipelined things yet!



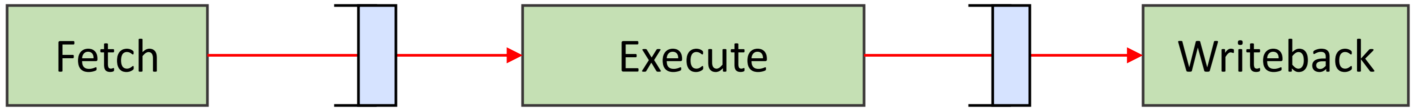
Limitations of our simple microarchitecture

- Let’s call our stages Fetch(“F”), Execute(“E”), and Writeback (“W”)
- Speed of our simple microarchitecture, assuming:
  - Clock-synchronous circuits, single-cycle memory
- Lots of time not spent doing useful work!
  - Can pipelining help with performance?



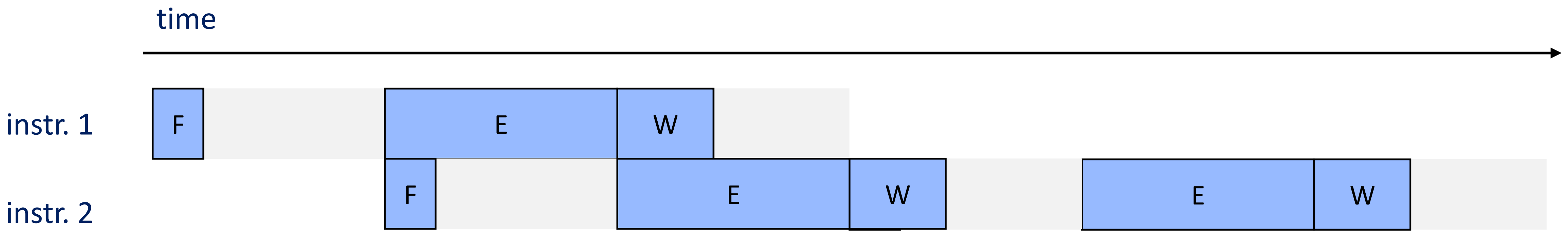
Pipelined processor introduction

- Attempt to pipeline our processor using pipeline registers/FIFOs



* We will see soon why pipelining a processor isn't this simple

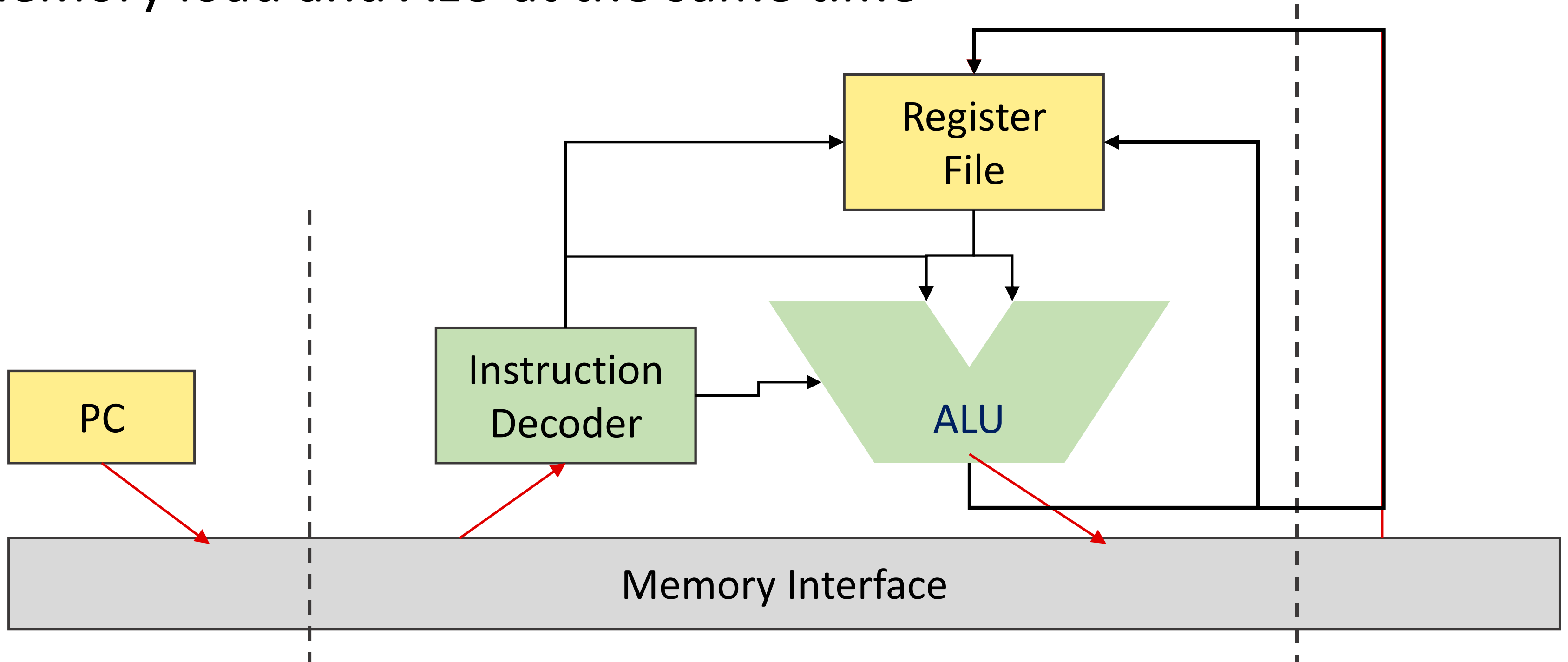
- Much better latency and throughput!
  - Average CPI reduced from 3 to 1!
  - Still lots of time spent not doing work. Can we do better?



Note we need a memory interface with two concurrent interfaces now! (For fetch and execute)
Remember instruction and data caches!

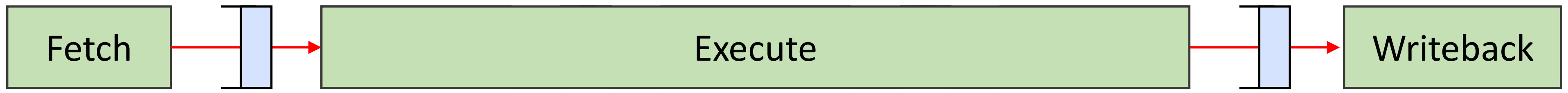
Building a balanced pipeline

- Must reduce the critical path of Execute
- Writing ALU results to register file can be moved to "Writeback"
  - Most circuitry already exists in writeback stage
  - No instruction uses memory load and ALU at the same time
    - RISC!



Building a balanced pipeline

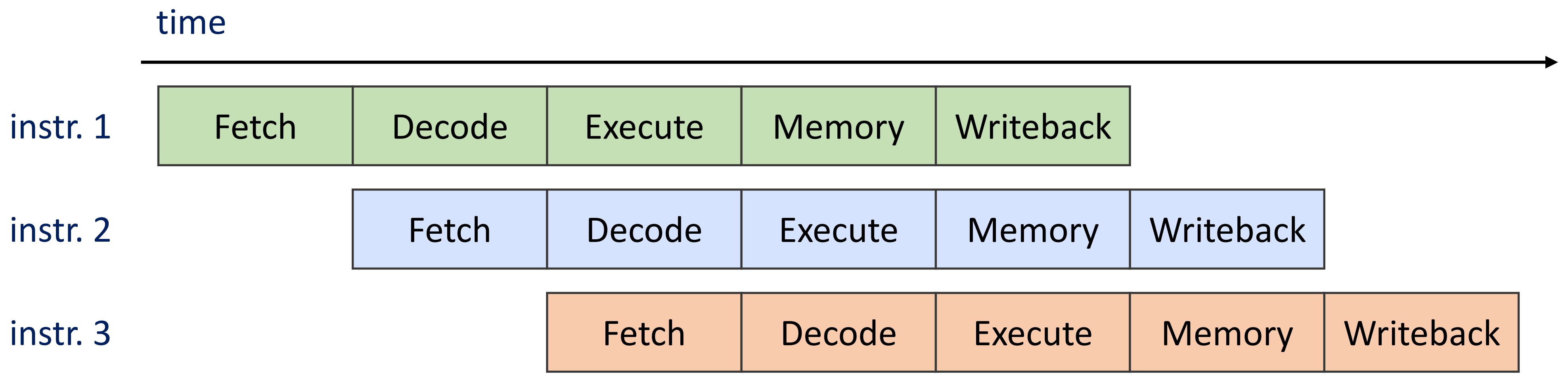
- Divide execute into multiple stages
  - “Decode”
    - Extract bit-encoded values from instruction word
    - Read register file
  - “Execute”
    - Perform ALU operations
  - “Memory”
    - Request memory read/write
- No single critical path which reads and writes to register file in one cycle



Results in a small number of stages with relatively good balance!

Ideally balanced pipeline performance

- Clock cycle: 1/5 of total latency
- Circuits in all stages are always busy with useful work

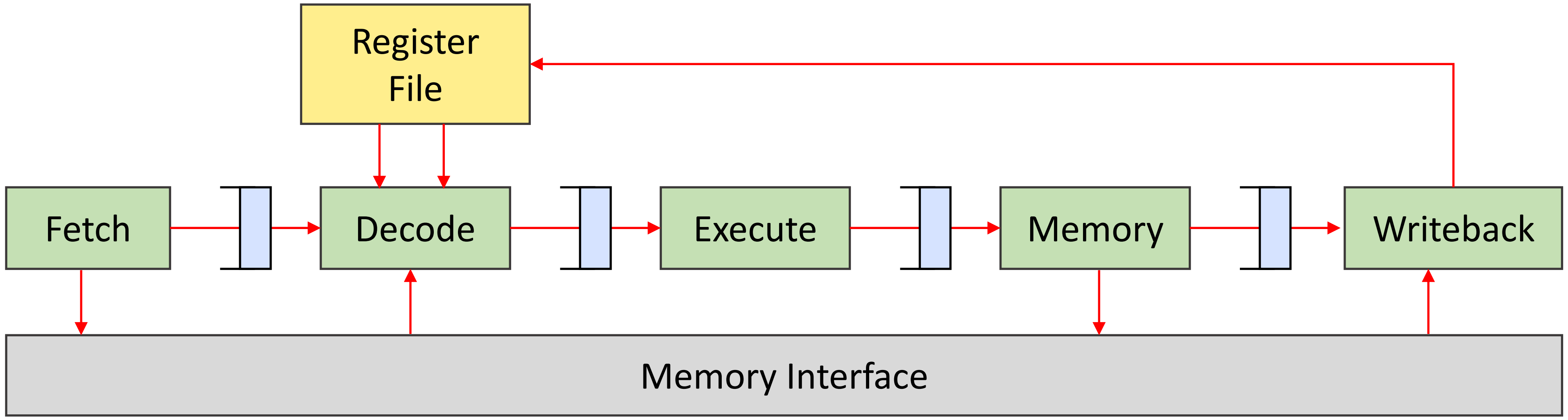


Aside: Real-world processors have wide range of pipeline stages

Name	Stages
AVR/PIC microcontrollers	2
ARM Cortex-M0	3
Apple A9 (Based on ARMv8)	16
Original Intel Pentium	5
Intel Pentium 4	30+
Intel Core (i3,i5,i7,…)	14+
RISC-V Rocket	6

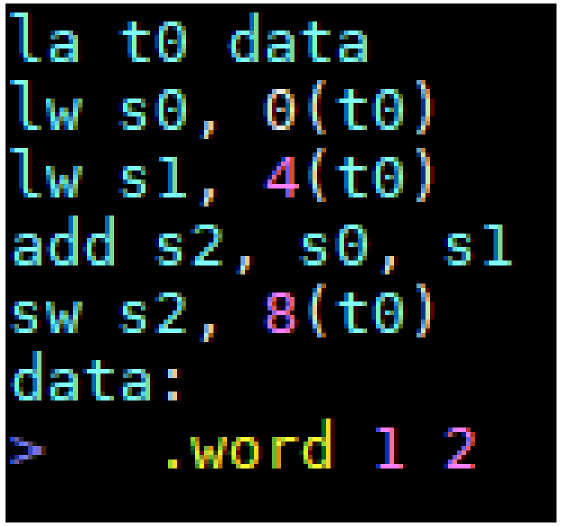
Designs change based on requirements!

Will our pipeline operate correctly?



A problematic example

- What should be stored in data+8? 3, right?



```
la t0 data
lw s0, 0(t0)
lw s1, 4(t0)
add s2, s0, s1
sw s2, 8(t0)
data:
>    .word 1 2
```

- Assuming zero-initialized register file, our pipeline will write zero

Why? “Hazards”