

# Memory Allocation I

CSE 351 Summer 2022

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## WHEN WILL WE FORGET?

BASED ON US CENSUS BUREAU  
NATIONAL POPULATION PROJECTIONS

ASSUMING WE DON'T REMEMBER CULTURAL  
EVENTS FROM BEFORE AGE 5 OR 6

BY THIS YEAR:	THE MAJORITY OF AMERICANS WILL BE TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER:
2016	RETURN OF THE JEDI RELEASE
2017	THE FIRST APPLE MACINTOSH
2018	NEW COKE
2019	CHALLENGER
2020	CHERNOBYL
2021	BLACK MONDAY
2022	THE REAGAN PRESIDENCY
2023	THE BERLIN WALL
2024	HAMMERTIME
2025	THE SOVIET UNION
2026	THE LA RIOTS
2027	LORENA BOBBITT
2028	THE FORREST GUMP RELEASE
2029	THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE
2030	OT SIMPSON'S TRIAL
2038	A TIME BEFORE FACEBOOK
2039	VH1'S I LOVE THE 90s
2040	HURRICANE KATRINA
2041	THE PLANET PLUTO
2042	THE FIRST iPhone
2047	ANYTHING EMBARRASSING YOU DO TODAY

Adapted from

<https://xkcd.com/1093/>

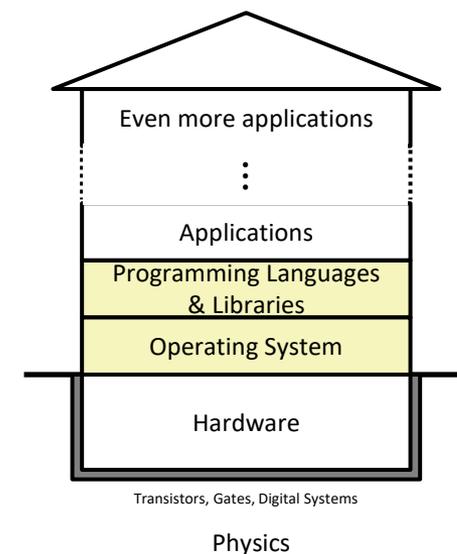
# Relevant Course Information

- ❖ hw16 due tonight, hw18 due Monday, hw19 due next Wed
- ❖ Lab 4 due Wednesday (8/10)
  - Last lab you can use late days on
  - hw18 is prep for part 2
- ❖ Lab 5 releasing next Monday, due Friday (8/19)
  - Hard deadline! No late days can be used

# The Hardware/Software Interface

## ❖ Topic Group 3: **Scale & Coherence**

- Caches, Processes, Virtual Memory, **Memory Allocation**



- ❖ How do we maintain logical consistency in the face of more data and more processes?
  - How do we support control flow both within many processes and things external to the computer?
  - How do we support data access, including dynamic requests, across multiple processes?

# Reading Review

- ❖ Terminology:
  - Dynamically-allocated data: malloc, free
  - Allocators: implicit vs. explicit allocators, heap blocks, implicit vs. explicit free lists
  - Heap fragmentation: internal vs. external
  
- ❖ Questions from the Reading?

# Multiple Ways to Store Program Data

## ❖ Static global data

- Fixed size at compile-time
- Entire *lifetime of the program* (loaded from executable)
- Portion is read-only (e.g., string literals)

## ❖ Stack-allocated data

- Local/temporary variables
  - Can be dynamically sized (in some versions of C)
- Known *lifetime* (deallocated on `return`)

## ❖ **Dynamic (heap) data**

- Size known only at runtime (i.e., based on user-input)
- Lifetime known only at runtime (long-lived data structures)

```
int array[1024];

void foo(int n) {
    int tmp;
    int local_array[n];

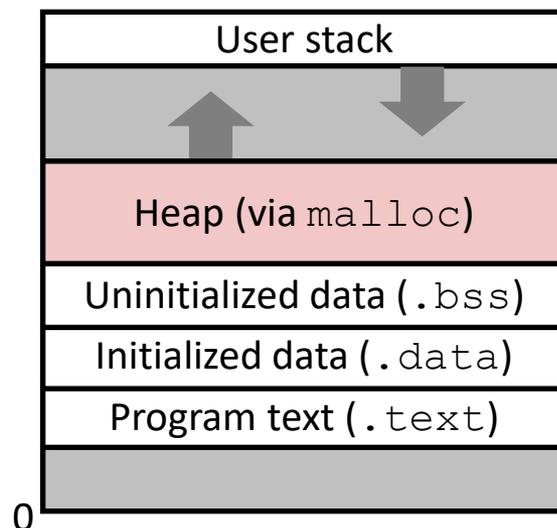
    int* dyn =
        (int*)malloc(n*sizeof(int));
}
```

# Memory Allocation

- ❖ **Dynamic memory allocation**
  - Introduction and goals
  - Allocation and deallocation (free)
  - Fragmentation
- ❖ Explicit allocation implementation
  - Implicit free lists
  - Explicit free lists (Lab 5)
  - Segregated free lists
- ❖ Implicit deallocation: garbage collection
- ❖ Common memory-related bugs in C

# Dynamic Memory Allocation (Review)

- ❖ Programmers use **dynamic memory allocators** to acquire memory at run time
  - For data structures whose size (or lifetime) is known only at runtime

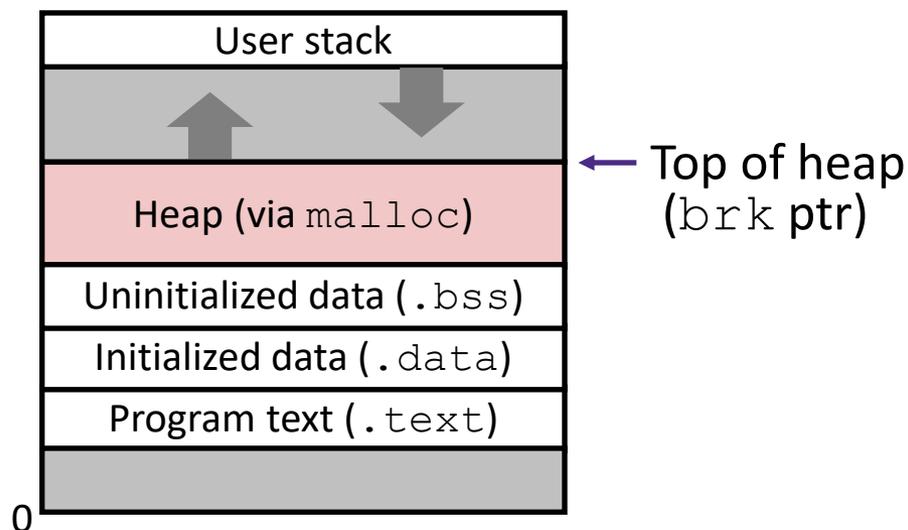


- ❖ Types of allocators

- ★ **Explicit allocator:** programmer allocates and frees space
  - Example: `malloc` and `free` in C
- **Implicit allocator:** programmer only allocates space (no free)
  - Example: garbage collection in Java, Caml, and Lisp

# Dynamic Memory Allocation

- ❖ Allocator organizes heap as a collection of variable-sized <sup>heap</sup> *blocks*, which are either *allocated* or *free*
  - Allocator requests pages in the heap region; OS kernel allocates these pages to the process
  - Application objects are typically smaller than pages, so the allocator manages heap blocks *within* pages
    - (Larger objects handled too; ignored here)



# Allocating Memory in C (Review)

- ❖ Need to `#include <stdlib.h>`
- ❖ `void*` `malloc(size_t size)`
  - Allocates a continuous block of `size` bytes of uninitialized memory
  - Returns a pointer to the beginning of the allocated block; `NULL` indicates a failed request
    - Typically aligned to an 8-byte (x86) or 16-byte (x86-64) boundary
    - Returns `NULL` if allocation failed (also sets `errno`) or `size==0`
- ❖ ~~▲~~ Different blocks not necessarily adjacent
- ❖ Good practices:
  - `ptr = (int*) malloc(n*sizeof(int));`
    - `sizeof` makes code more portable
    - `void*` is implicitly cast into any pointer type; explicit typecast will help you catch coding errors when pointer types don't match

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  - Different blocks not necessarily adjacent
- ❖ Related functions:
  - `void* calloc(size_t nitems, size_t size)`
    - “Zeros out” allocated block
  - `void* realloc(void* ptr, size_t size)`
    - Changes the size of a previously allocated block (if possible)
  - `void* sbrk(intptr_t increment)`
    - Used internally by allocators to grow or shrink the heap

# Freeing Memory in C (Review)

- ❖ Need to `#include <stdlib.h>`
- ❖ `void free(void* p)` *doesn't change the pointer!  
(now points to deallocated memory)*
  - Releases whole block pointed to by `p` to the pool of available memory
  - Pointer `p` must be the address *originally* returned by `m/c/realloc` (*i.e.*, beginning of the block), otherwise system exception raised
  - Don't call `free` on a block that has already been released
  - No action occurs if you call `free(NULL)`

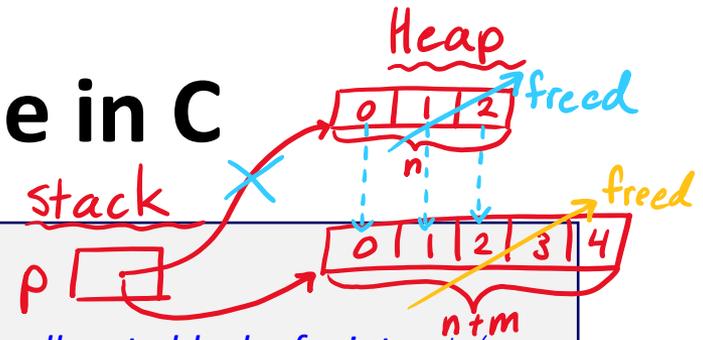
# Memory Allocation Example in C

```

void foo(int3 n, int2 m) {
    int i, *p;
    ① p = (int*) malloc(n*sizeof(int)); /* allocate block of n ints */
    if (p == NULL) { /* check for allocation error */
        perror("malloc"); ← prints message related
        exit(0);          to errno
    }
    for (i=0; i<n; i++) /* initialize int array */
        p[i] = i;

    /* add space for m ints to end of p block */
    ② p = (int*) realloc(p, (n+m)*sizeof(int)); /* check for allocation error */
    if (p == NULL) {
        perror("realloc");
        exit(0);
    }
    for (i=n; i < n+m; i++) /* initialize new spaces */
        p[i] = i;
    for (i=0; i<n+m; i++) /* print new array */
        printf("%d\n", p[i]);
    ③ free(p); /* free p */
}

```

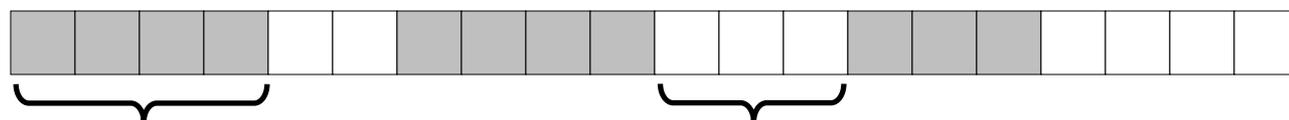


# Notation

□ = 1 word = 8 bytes

- ❖ We will draw memory divided into *words*
  - Each *word* is 64 bits = 8 bytes
  - Allocations will be in sizes that are a multiple of words (*i.e.*, multiples of 8 bytes)
  - Book and old videos still use 4-byte *word*
    - Holdover from 32-bit version of textbook 😞

Heap:



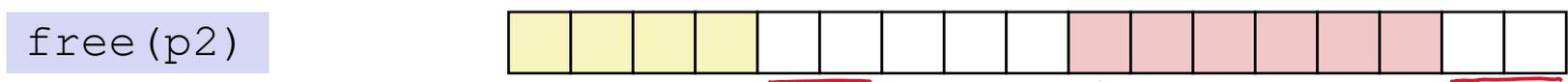
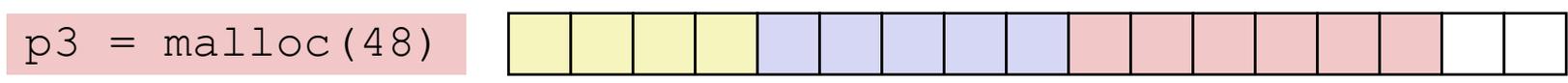
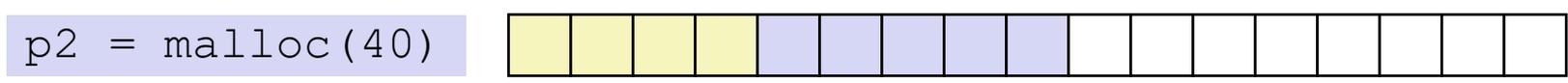
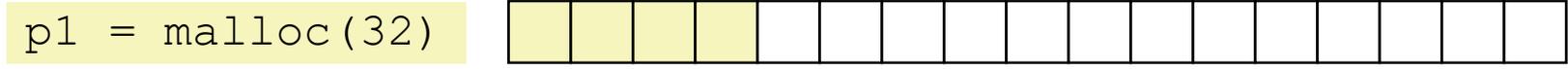
Allocated block  
(4 words)  
32 bytes

Free block  
(3 words)  
24 bytes

□ Free word  
■ Allocated word

# Allocation Example

= 8-byte word



*dependent on allocator placement policy*



# Implementation Interface (Review)

## ❖ Applications

- Can issue arbitrary sequence of `malloc` and `free` requests
- Must never access memory not currently allocated
- Must never free memory not currently allocated
  - Also must only use `free` with previously `malloc`'ed blocks

## ❖ Allocators

- Can't control number or size of allocated blocks
- Must respond immediately to `malloc` (*can't reorder or buffer*)
- Must allocate blocks from free memory (*blocks can't overlap*)
- Must align blocks so they satisfy all alignment requirements
- ★ Can't move the allocated blocks (*defragmentation not allowed*)  
*would break your pointers!*

# Performance Goals (Review)

- ❖ **Goals:** Given some sequence of `malloc` and `free` requests  $R_0, R_1, \dots, R_k, \dots, R_{n-1}$ , maximize **throughput** and **peak memory utilization**
  - These goals are often conflicting

## 1) Throughput

- Number of completed requests per unit time
- Example:
  - If 5,000 `malloc` calls and 5,000 `free` calls completed in 10 seconds, then throughput is 1,000 operations/second

# Performance Goals

- ❖ Definition: *Aggregate payload*  $P_k$ 
  - `malloc(p)` results in a block with a *payload* of  $p$  bytes
  - After request  $R_k$  has completed, the *aggregate payload*  $P_k$  is the sum of currently allocated payloads
- ❖ Definition: *Current heap size*  $H_k$ 
  - Assume  $H_k$  is monotonically non-decreasing
    - Allocator can increase size of heap using `sbrk`

## 2) Peak Memory Utilization

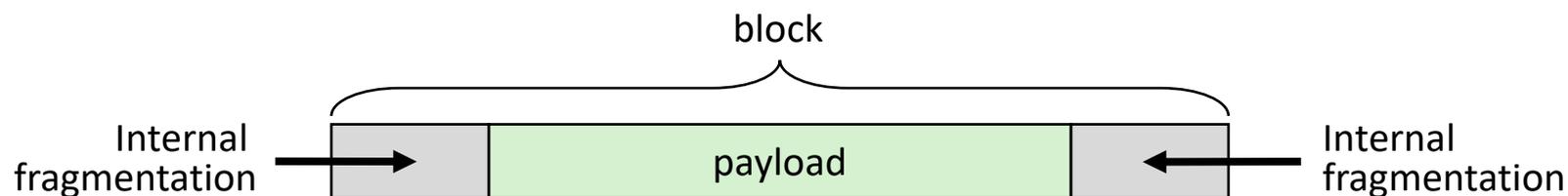
- Defined as  $U_k = (\max_{i \leq k} P_i) / H_k$  after  $k+1$  requests
- Goal: maximize utilization for a sequence of requests
- *Why is this hard? And what happens to throughput?  
pack fast or pack tight?*

# Fragmentation (Review)

- ❖ Poor memory utilization is caused by *fragmentation*
  - Sections of memory are not used to store anything useful, but cannot satisfy allocation requests
  - Two types: *internal* and *external*
- ❖ **Recall:** Fragmentation in structs
  - Internal fragmentation was wasted space *inside* of the struct (between fields) due to alignment
  - External fragmentation was wasted space *between* struct instances (*e.g.*, in an array) due to alignment
- ❖ Now referring to wasted space in the heap *inside* or *between* allocated blocks

# Internal Fragmentation

- ❖ For a given block, *internal fragmentation* occurs if payload is smaller than the block



- ❖ **Causes:**

- Padding for alignment purposes
  - Overhead of maintaining heap data structures (inside block, outside payload)
  - Explicit policy decisions (e.g., return a big block to satisfy a small request) *faster throughput to not individually size every block*
- ❖ Easy to measure because only depends on past requests

# External Fragmentation

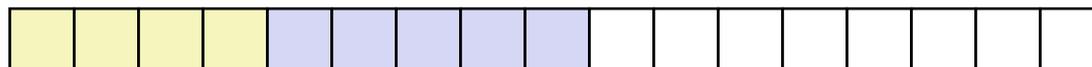
□ = 8-byte word

- ❖ For the heap, *external fragmentation* occurs when allocation/free pattern leaves “holes” between blocks
  - That is, the aggregate payload is non-continuous
  - Can cause situations where there is enough aggregate heap memory to satisfy request, but no single free block is large enough

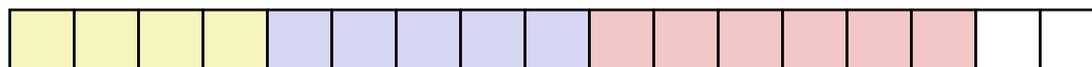
```
p1 = malloc(32)
```



```
p2 = malloc(40)
```



```
p3 = malloc(48)
```



```
free(p2)
```



```
p4 = malloc(48)
```

*Oh no! (What would happen now?)*

- ❖ Don't know what future requests will be
  - Difficult to impossible to know if past placements will become problematic

# Polling Question

❖ Which of the following statements is FALSE?

▪ Vote in Ed Lessons

A. Temporary arrays should *not* be allocated on the Heap *should allocate on the stack*

B. malloc returns an address of a block that is filled with mystery data *allocates only; no initialization*

C. Peak memory utilization is a measure of both internal and external fragmentation *aggregate payload  
heap size*

D. An allocation failure will cause your program to stop *just returns NULL*

E. We're lost...

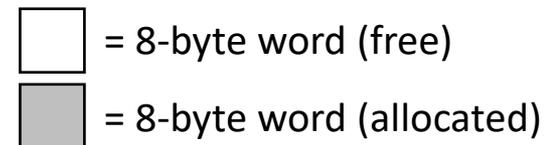
# Implementation Issues

- ❖ How do we know how much memory to free given just a pointer?
- ❖ How do we keep track of the free blocks?
- ❖ How do we pick a block to use for allocation (when many might fit)?
- ❖ What do we do with the extra space when allocating a structure that is smaller than the free block it is placed in?
- ❖ How do we reinsert a freed block into the heap?

today

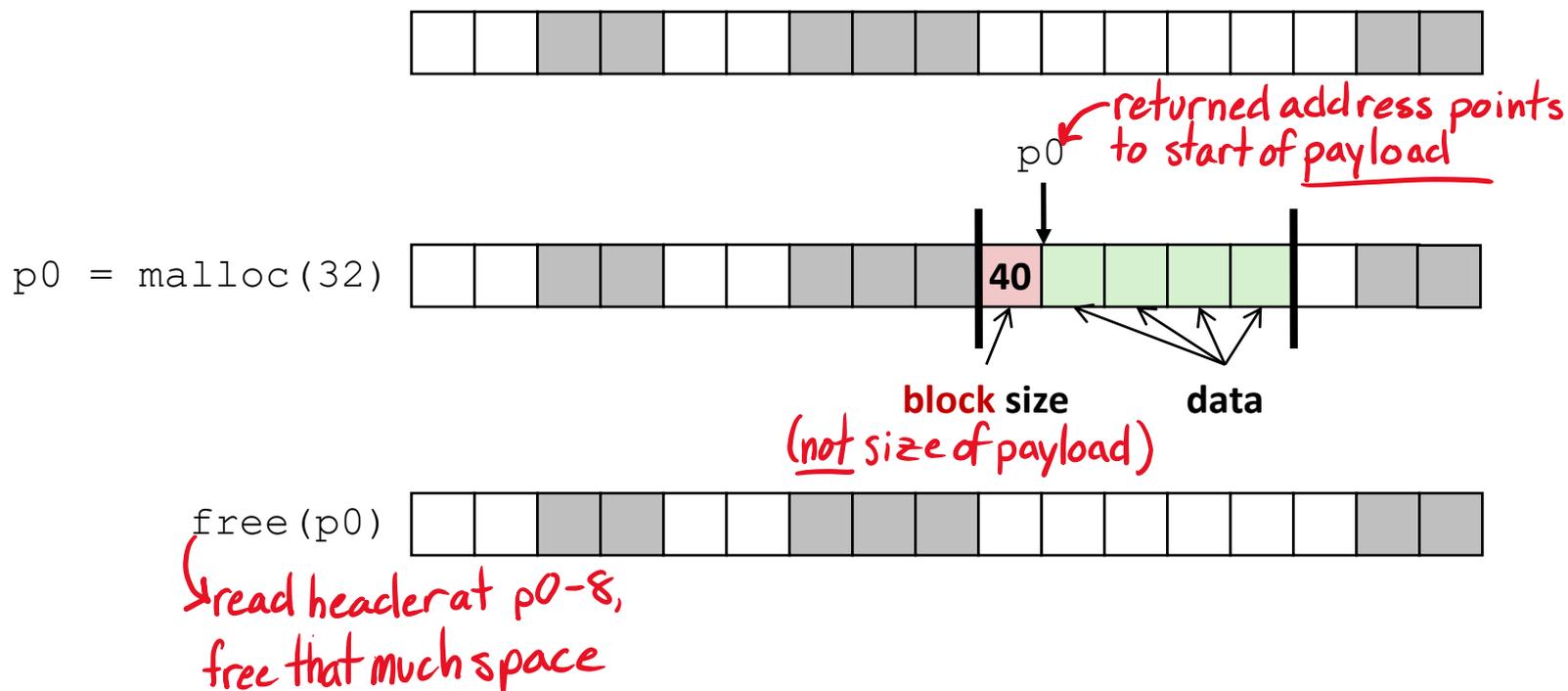
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# Knowing How Much to Free

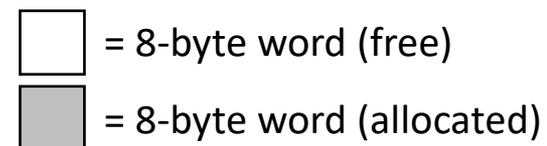


## ❖ Standard method

- Keep the length of a block in the word preceding the data
  - This word is often called the *header field* or header
- Requires an extra word for every allocated block

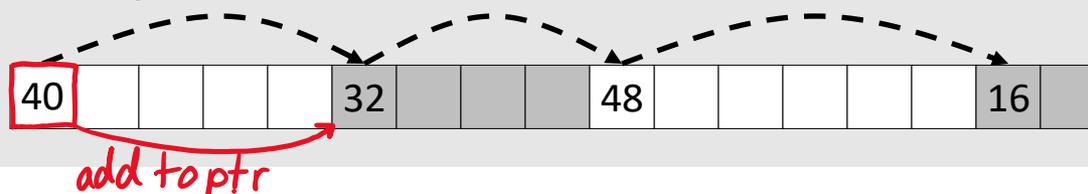


# Keeping Track of Free Blocks

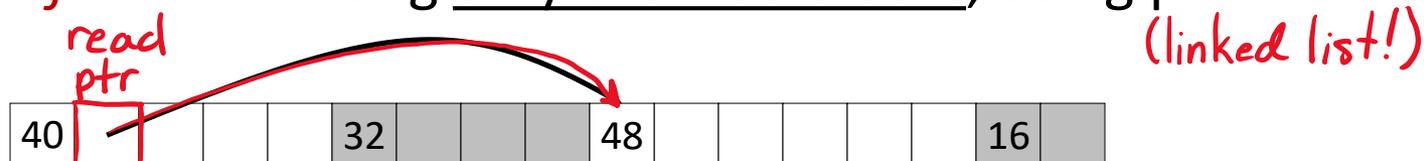


## 1) *Implicit free list* using length – links all blocks using math

- No actual pointers, and must check each block if allocated or free



## 2) *Explicit free list* among only the free blocks, using pointers



## 3) *Segregated free list*

- Different free lists for different size “classes”

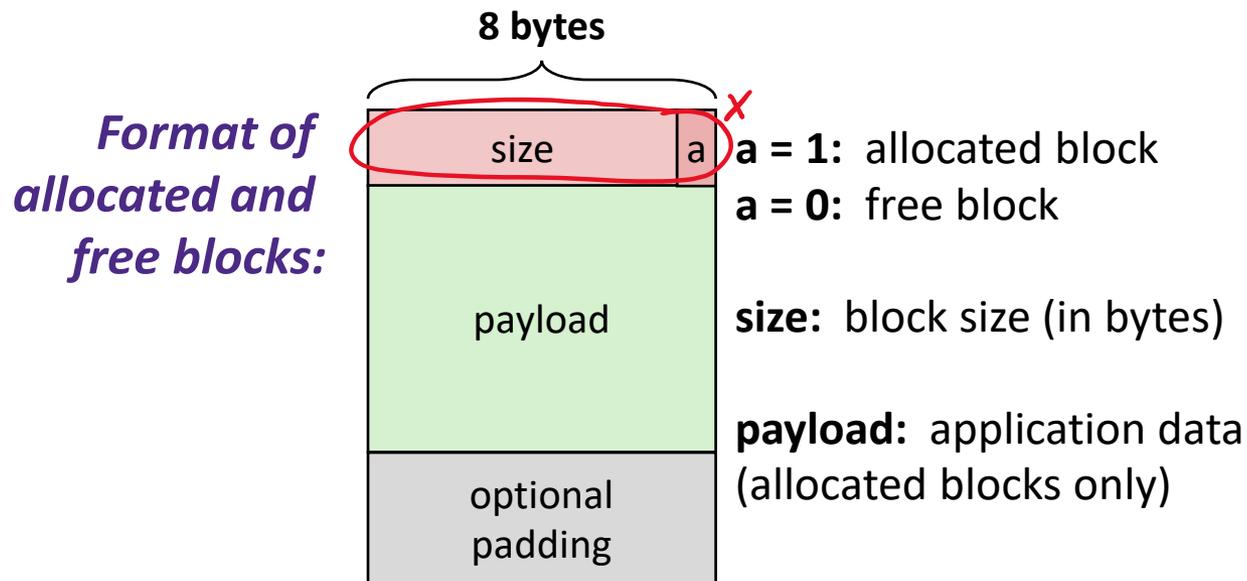
## 4) *Blocks sorted by size*

- Can use a balanced binary tree (e.g., red-black tree) with pointers within each free block, and the length used as a key

# Implicit Free Lists

- ❖ For each block we need: **size, is-allocated?**
  - Could store using two words, but wasteful
- ❖ Standard trick
  - If blocks are aligned, some low-order bits of `size` are always 0
  - Use lowest bit as an allocated/free flag (fine as long as aligning to  $K > 1$ )
  - When reading `size`, must remember to mask out this bit!

*addr is mult of 8 = 0b1000*  
 e.g., with 8-byte alignment,  
 possible values for size:  
 00001000 = 8 bytes  
 00010000 = 16 bytes  
 00011000 = 24 bytes  
 ...



If `x` is first word (header):

```
x = size | a;
a = x & 1;
size = x & ~1;
```

*or +*  
*-2*

# Header Questions

- ❖ How many “flags” can we fit in our header if our allocator uses 16-byte alignment?

*all multiples of 16 have lowest 4 bits as zeroes*

*16  $\Rightarrow$  0b10000  $\Rightarrow$  4 flags*

- ❖ If we placed a new “flag” in the second least significant bit, write out a C expression that will extract this new flag from `header`

*Two steps: ① mask out bit ②*

*② shift into LSB ①*

*(header & 2) >> 1*

*(header >> 1) & 1*