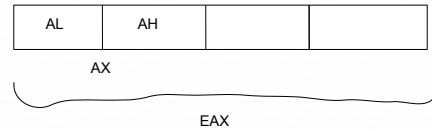


# x86 Assembly Crash Course

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## Registers

- ✦ Only variables available in assembly
- ✦ General Purpose Registers:
  - ✦ EAX, EBX, ECX, EDX (32 bit)
  - ✦ Can be addressed by 8 and 16 bit subsets



## Registers (cont.)

- ✦ Index and Pointer Registers
  - ✦ EBP – Stack Base
  - ✦ ESP – Stack “Top”
  - ✦ EIP – Instruction Pointer
  - ✦ ESI& EDI
- ✦ EFLAGS – holds processor state
  - ✦ Bitwise interpretation

## Basic Instruction Layout

- ✦ Opcode Dest, Src1, Src2
  - ✦ `ADD %EAX, %EBX == EAX = EAX + EBX`
- ✦ Operation Suffix indicates operand size:
  - ✦ l (long) = 32 bits
    - ✦ ex: `addl %eax, %ebx`
  - ✦ w (word) = 16 bits

## Basic Instructions

- ✦ Simple Instructions:
  - ✦ ADD, SUB, MUL, DIV
- ✦ Stack Manipulation - PUSH, POP
  - ✦ PUSHAL, POPAL – push/pop “big 7” registers at once
  - ✦ PUSHF, POPF - push/pop eflags register
- ✦ Call a function with CALL
- ✦ Return from a function with RET
- ✦ Copy a register value with MOV

## Addressing Memory

- ✦ Address stored in a register: `(%eax)`
- ✦ Address in register + offset: `4(%eax)`
- ✦ C variable `foo` becomes: `_foo`

## Next: Inline assembly

- ✦ But first, a bit of very helpful background on compilers

## Detour: Compiler Intro

- ✦ Parse high-level source code
- ✦ Convert to intermediate form (often SSA)
  - ✦ Convert all variables into infinite, logical registers
- ✦ Optimize! Optimize! Optimize! (heavy thinking here)
- ✦ Map logical registers onto architectural registers
  - ✦ A.k.a. register assignment
- ✦ Emit machine code

## Example (high-level lang)

```
x = 0;
y = x + 1;
// x = x * y
asm ("imul %eax, %ebx": "=a"(x) : "a"(x), "b"(y));
y = y + x;
```

## Example (Convert to pseudo-SSA)

```
x_0 = 0;
y_0 = x_0 + 1;
// x = x * y
asm ("imul %eax, %ebx": "=a"(x_1) : "a"(x_0), "b"(y_0));
y_1 = y_0 + x_1;
```

Assembly treated as  
black box, except  
input/output params

Every assignment  
treated like a new  
variable

## Example (Assign Registers)

```
x_0 = 0;           %edx = 0;
y_0 = x_0 + 1;     %ecx = %edx + 1;
// x = x * y       %eax = %edx; //
asm ("imul %eax, %ebx":
    "=a"(x_1) :
    "a"(x_0), "b"(y_0));
y_1 = y_0 + x_1;  %edx = %ecx + %eax;
```

Reuse edx. No  
longer live

"=a"(x\_1)

## Key points

- ✦ Compiler treats your assembly code mostly as a black box
- ✦ You specify what input variables should be in which registers
  - ✦ Compiler adds code to move variables around as needed
- ✦ You specify what output variables are in which registers
  - ✦ Compiler factors this into register assignment after the assembly
- ✦ Note that parameters are copy-by-value
  - ✦ In the previous example, if you don't specify an output back to x, the output will be ignored
  - ✦ Treated as x\_1 vs. x\_0

## For completeness

- ✦ Compilers are really smart. Seriously.
- ✦ In reality, a register assignment phase would probably work backwards from input constraints on inline assembly
- ✦ I didn't do this in the previous slide for the purposes of illustration
- ✦ Not always possible to avoid moving registers around or saving values before inline assembly

## Example (More Sophisticated)

```
x_0 = 0;                               %eax= 0; // "a"(x_0),
y_0 = x_0 + 1;                         %ebx = %eax + 1;
// x = x * y                             // "b"(y_0)
asm ("imul %eax, %ebx":                 "imul %eax, %ebx"
    "=a"(x_1) :                          %ecx = %ebx + %eax;
    "a"(x_0), "b"(y_0));
y_1 = y_0 + x_1;
```

## Inlined Assembly

... // c code

```
asm ("assembly code" \
```

```
output registers : \
```

```
input registers : \
```

```
clobbered registers );
```

Think of this as a separate function; inputs/outputs must be explicit

What is a clobbered register?

## A Concrete Example

```
asm volatile ("movl %0, %%ecx\n"
    "movl %1, %%ecx\n" \
    "movl %2, %%ebx\n" \
    "movl %3, %%eax\n" \
    "xchg %%ebx, %%bx\n" \
    : /*no output*/ \
    : "g"(addr), "g"(name), \
      "g"(len), "g"(105) \
    : "eax", "ebx", "ecx", "edx");
```

%0 - not a real register; compiler will slot in

g = Let the compiler assign the register

These registers will be trashed (but not input/output)

## Clobbered Registers

- ✦ Suppose %edx is not an input or output parameter to your inline assembly
- ✦ The compiler may store some unrelated variable in this registers **before** your assembly, and then try to use it **after** the assembly
- ✦ Clobber registers tell the compiler to save this value (e.g., by pushing it on the stack), and restore it later if needed
- ✦ Compiler does sophisticated liveness analysis to figure out whether this is necessary

## A More Efficient Version

```
asm volatile (xchg %%bx, %%bx " \
    : /*no output*/ \
    : "d"(addr), "c"(name), \
      "b"(len), "a"(105));
```

- ✦ Notice:
  - ✦ Clobber registers only needed if not in input/output
  - ✦ If we want arguments in specific registers, no need to move them/waste time bouncing between registers
  - ✦ If you don't care, good to give the compiler some options