Memory Management

Memory management is the functionality of an operating system which handles or manages primary memory and moves processes back and forth between main memory and disk during execution. Memory management keeps track of each and every memory location, regardless of either it is allocated to some process or it is free. It checks how much memory is to be allocated to processes. It decides which process will get memory at what time. It tracks whenever some memory gets freed or unallocated and correspondingly it updates the status.

Main Memory refers to a physical memory that is the internal memory to the computer. The word main is used to distinguish it from external mass storage devices such as disk drives. Main memory is also known as RAM. The computer is able to change only data that is in main memory. Therefore, every program we execute and every file we access must be copied from a storage device into main memory.

All the programs are loaded in the main memory for execution. Sometimes complete program is loaded into the memory, but sometimes a certain part or routine of the program is loaded into the main memory only when it is called by the program, this mechanism is called **Dynamic Loading**, this enhance the performance.

Also, at times one program is dependent on some other program. In such a case, rather than loading all the dependent programs, CPU links the dependent programs to the main executing program when its required. This mechanism is known as **Dynamic Linking**.

Difference between Logical and Physical Address in Operating System

Address uniquely identifies a location in the memory. We have two types of addresses that are logical address and physical address. The logical address is a virtual address and can be viewed by the user. The user can't view the physical address directly. The logical address is used like a reference, to access the physical address. The fundamental difference between logical and physical address is that logical address is generated by CPU during a program execution whereas, the physical address refers to a location in the memory

Definition of Logical Address

Address generated by CPU while a program is running is referred as Logical Address. The logical address is virtual as it does not exist physically. Hence, it is also called as Virtual Address. This address is used as a reference to access the physical memory location. The set of all logical addresses generated by a programs perspective is called Logical Address Space.

The logical address is mapped to its corresponding physical address by a hardware device called Memory-Management Unit. The address-binding methods used by MMU generate identical logical and physical address during compile time and load time. However, while run-time the address-binding methods generate different logical and physical address.

Definition of Physical Address

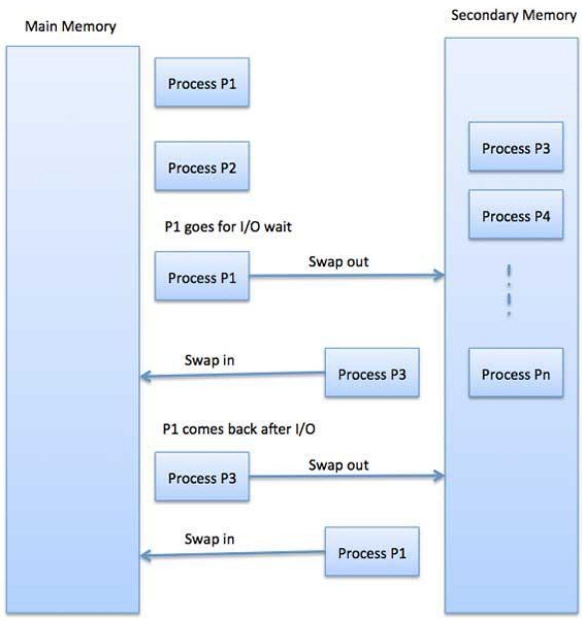
Physical Address identifies a physical location in a memory. MMU (Memory-Management Unit) computes the physical address for the corresponding logical address. MMU also uses logical address computing physical address. The user never deals with the physical address. Instead, the physical address is accessed by its corresponding logical address by the user. The user program generates the logical address and thinks that the program is running in this logical address. But the program needs physical memory for its execution. Hence, the logical address must be mapped to the physical address before they are used.

The logical address is mapped to the physical address using a hardware called Memory-Management Unit. The set of all physical addresses corresponding to the logical addresses in a Logical address space is called Physical Address Space.

Swapping

Swapping is mechanisms in which a process can be swapped temporarily out of main memory (or move) to secondary storage (disk) and make that memory available to other processes. At some later time, the system swaps back the process from the secondary storage to main memory.

Though performance is usually affected by swapping process but it helps in running multiple and big processes in parallel and that's the reason Swapping is also known as a technique for memory compaction.



The total time taken by swapping process includes the time it takes to move the entire process to a secondary disk and then to copy the process back to memory, as well as the time the process takes to regain main memory.

Fragmentation

As processes are loaded and removed from memory, the free memory space is broken into little pieces. It happens after sometimes that processes cannot be allocated to memory blocks considering their small size and memory blocks remains unused. This problem is known as Fragmentation.

Fragmentation is of two types −

External fragmentation

Total memory space is enough to satisfy a request or to reside a process in it, but it is not contiguous, so it cannot be used.

Internal fragmentation

Memory block assigned to process is bigger. Some portion of memory is left unused, as it cannot be used by another process.

Types of memory allocation:

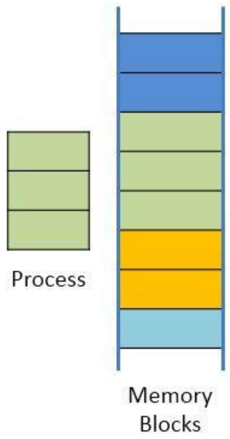
Contiguous and Non contiguous Memory Allocation

Memory is a large array of bytes, where each byte has its own address. The memory allocation can be classified into two methods contiguous memory allocation and non-contiguous memory allocation. The major difference between Contiguous and Noncontiguous memory allocation is that the contiguous memory allocation assigns the consecutive blocks of memory to a process requesting for memory whereas, the noncontiguous memory allocation assigns the separate memory blocks at the different location in memory space in a nonconsecutive manner to a process requesting for memory. We will discuss some more differences between contiguous and non-contiguous memory allocation.

Definition of Contiguous Memory Allocation

The operating system and the user's processes both must be accommodated in the main memory. Hence the main memory is divided into two partitions: at one partition the operating system resides and at other the user processes reside. In usual conditions, the several user processes must reside in the memory at the same time, and therefore, it is important to consider the allocation of memory to the processes.

The Contiguous memory allocation is one of the methods of memory allocation. In contiguous memory allocation, when a process requests for the memory, a single contiguous section of memory blocks is assigned to the process according to its requirement.



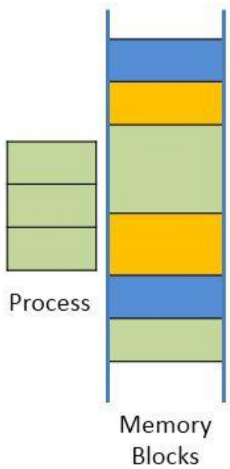
Contiguous Memory Allocation

The contiguous memory allocation can be achieved by dividing the memory into the fixed-sized partition and allocate each partition to a single process only. But this will cause the degree of multiprogramming, bounding to the number of fixed partition done in the memory. The contiguous memory allocation also leads to the internal fragmentation. Like, if a fixed sized memory block allocated to a process is slightly larger than its requirement then the left over memory space in the block is called internal fragmentation. When the process residing in the partition terminates the partition becomes available for the another process.

In the variable partitioning scheme, the operating system maintains a table which indicates, which partition of the memory is free and which occupied by the processes. The contiguous memory allocation fastens the execution of a process by reducing the overheads of address translation.

Definition Non-Contiguous Memory Allocation

The Non-contiguous memory allocation allows a process to acquire the several memory blocks at the different location in the memory according to its requirement. The noncontiguous memory allocation also reduces the memory wastage caused due to internal and external fragmentation. As it utilizes the memory holes, created during internal and external fragmentation.



Noncontiguous Memory Allocation

Paging and segmentation:

Paging and segmentation are the two ways which allow a process's physical address space to be non-contiguous. In non-contiguous memory allocation, the process is divided into blocks (pages or segments) which are placed into the different area of memory space according to the availability of the memory.

The noncontiguous memory allocation has an advantage of reducing memory wastage but, but it increases the overheads of address translation. As the parts of the process are placed in a different location in memory, it slows the execution of the memory because time is consumed in address translation.

Here, the operating system needs to maintain the table for each process which contains the base address of the each block which is acquired by the process in memory space.

Paging:

Paging is a memory management scheme that eliminates the need for contiguous allocation of physical memory. This scheme permits the physical address space of a process to be non – contiguous.

- Logical Address or Virtual Address (represented in bits): An address generated by the CPU
- Logical Address Space or Virtual Address Space(represented in words or bytes): The set of all logical addresses generated by a program
- Physical Address (represented in bits): An address actually available on memory unit
- Physical Address Space (represented in words or bytes): The set of all physical addresses corresponding to the logical addresses

The mapping from virtual to physical address is done by the memory management unit (MMU) which is a hardware device and this mapping is known as paging technique.

- The Physical Address Space is conceptually divided into a number of fixed-size blocks, called **frames**.
- The Logical address Space is also spitted into fixed-size blocks, called **pages**.
- Page Size = Frame Size

Address generated by CPU is divided into

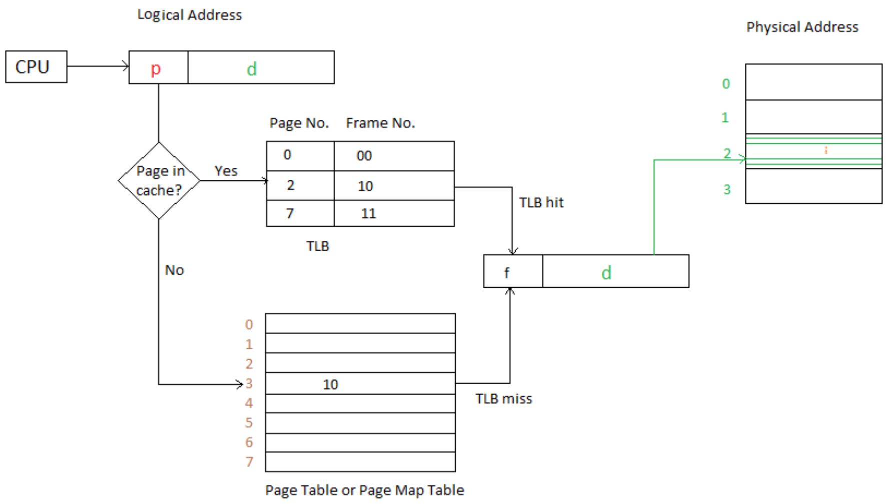
- **Page number(p):** Number of bits required to represent the pages in Logical Address Space or Page number
- **Page offset(d):** Number of bits required to represent particular word in a page or page size of Logical Address Space or word number of a page or page offset.

Physical Address is divided into

- **Frame number(f):** Number of bits required to represent the frame of Physical Address Space or Frame number.
- **Frame offset(d):** Number of bits required to represent particular word in a frame or frame size of Physical Address Space or word number of a frame or frame offset.

The hardware implementation of page table can be done by using dedicated registers. But the usage of register for the page table is satisfactory only if page table is small. If page table contain large number of entries then we can use TLB(translation Look-aside buffer), a special, small, fast look up hardware cache.

- The TLB is associative, high speed memory.
- Each entry in TLB consists of two parts: a tag and a value.
- When this memory is used, then an item is compared with all tags simultaneously. If the item is found, then corresponding value is returned.



Segmentation

A Memory Management technique in which memory is divided into variable sized chunks which can be allocated to processes. Each chunk is called a **Segment**.

A table stores the information about all such segments and is called **Segment Table.**

Segment Table: It maps two dimensional Logical address into one dimensional Physical address.

It's each table entry has

- **Base Address:** It contains the starting physical address where the segments reside in memory.
- **Limit:** It specifies the length of the segment.

Address generated by the CPU is divided into:

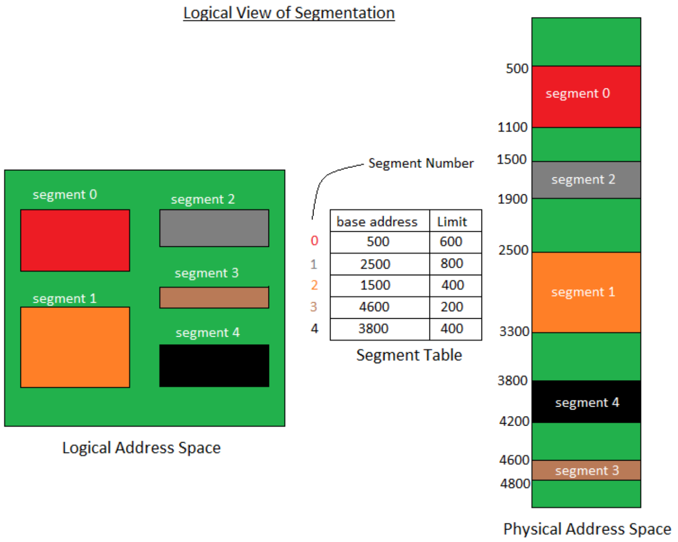
- Segment number **(s):** Number of bits required to represent the segment.
- Segment offset **(d)**: Number of bits required to represent the size of the segment**.**

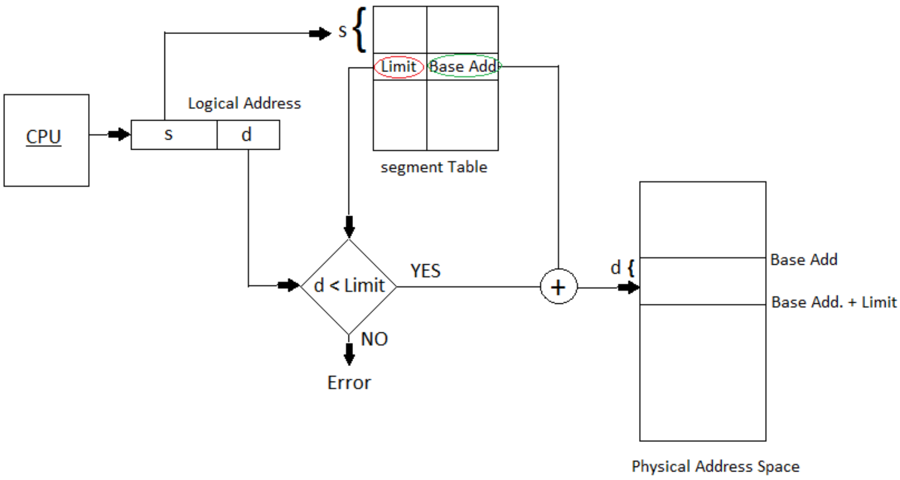
Advantages of Segmentation:

- No Internal fragmentation.
- Segment Table consumes less space in comparison to Page table in paging.

Disadvantage of Segmentation:

- As processes are loaded and removed from the memory, the free memory space is broken into little pieces, causing External fragmentation.





Segmented Paging

Pure segmentation is not very popular and not being used in many of the operating systems. However, Segmentation can be combined with Paging to get the best features out of both the techniques.

In Segmented Paging, the main memory is divided into variable size segments which are further divided into fixed size pages.

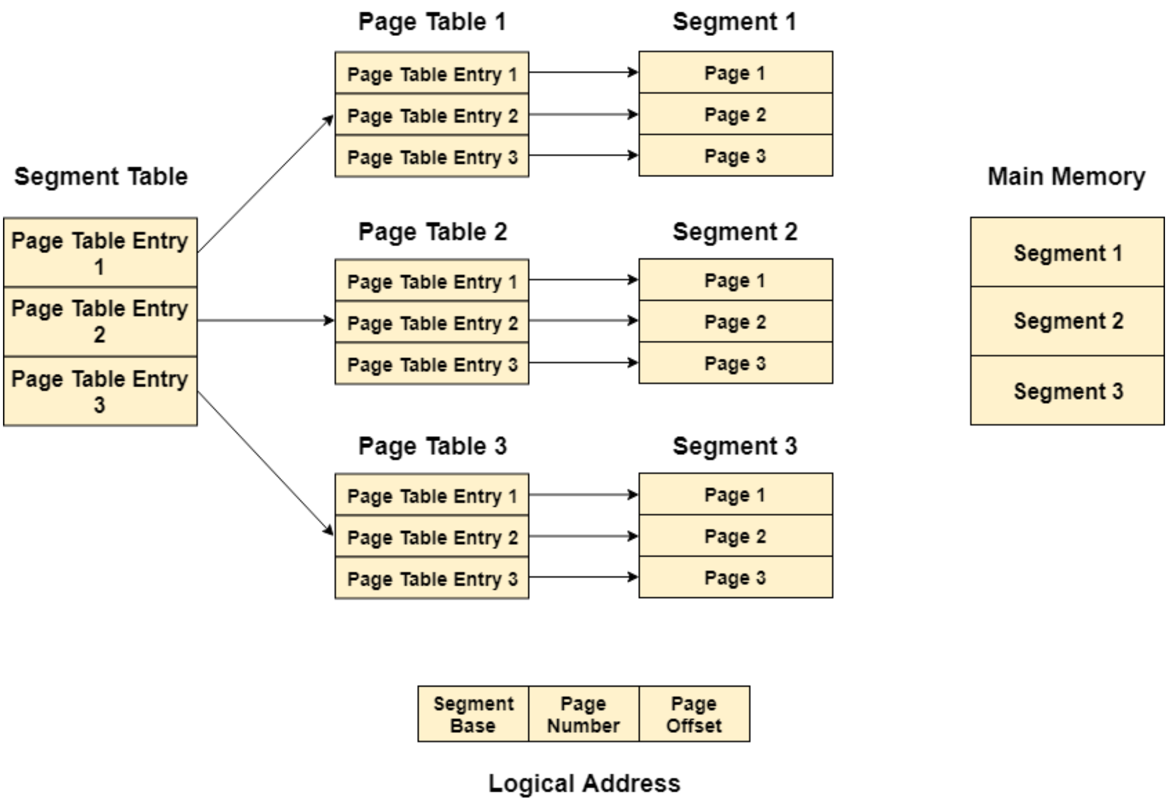
1. Pages are smaller than segments.
2. Each Segment has a page table which means every program has multiple page tables.
3. The logical address is represented as Segment Number (base address), Page number and page offset.

Segment Number → It points to the appropriate Segment Number.

Page Number → It Points to the exact page within the segment

Page Offset → Used as an offset within the page frame

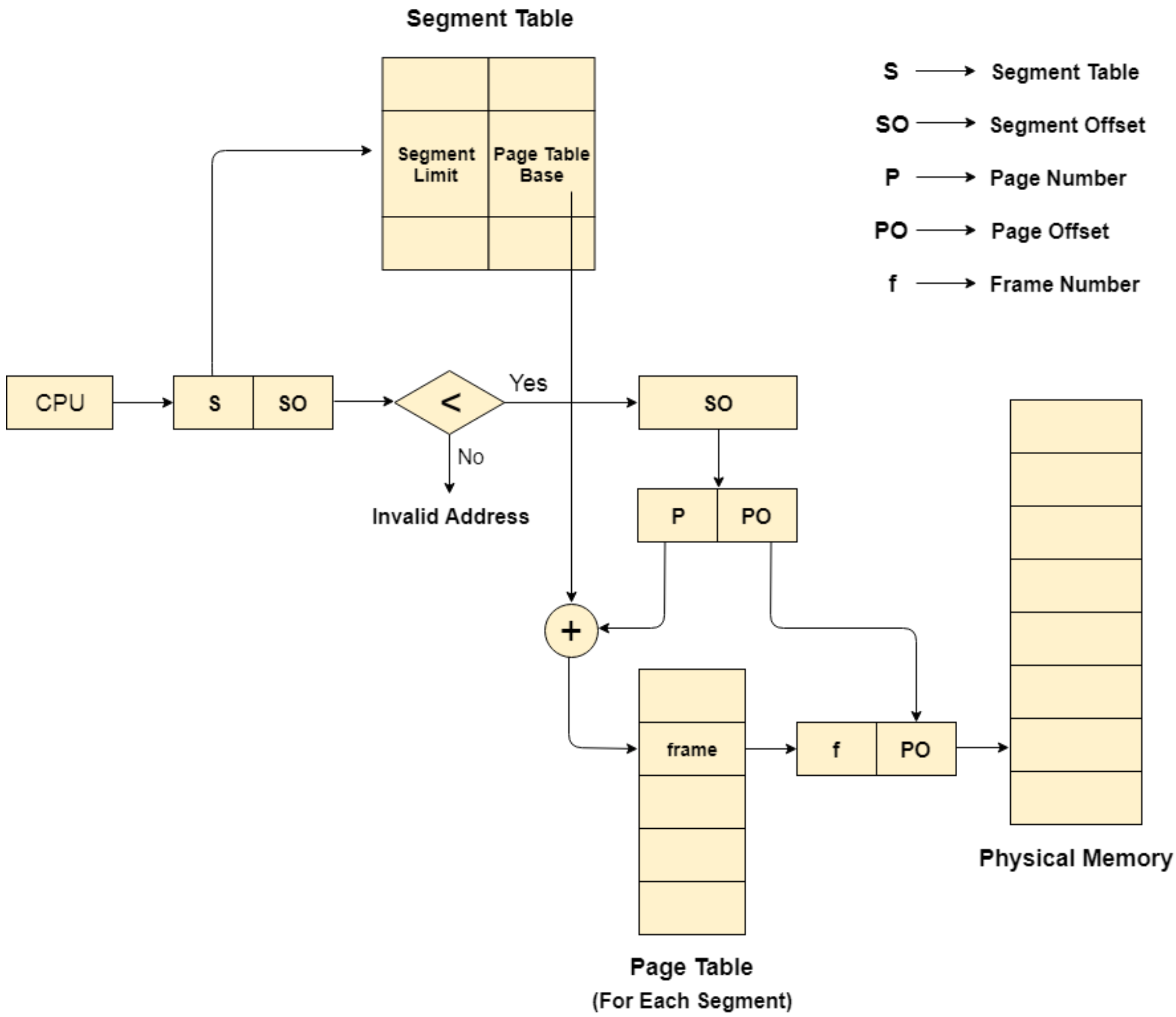
Each Page table contains the various information about every page of the segment. The Segment Table contains the information about every segment. Each segment table entry points to a page table entry and every page table entry is mapped to one of the page within a segment.



Translation of logical address to physical address

The CPU generates a logical address which is divided into two parts: Segment Number and Segment Offset. The Segment Offset must be less than the segment limit. Offset is further divided into Page number and Page Offset. To map the exact page number in the page table, the page number is added into the page table base.

The actual frame number with the page offset is mapped to the main memory to get the desired word in the page of the certain segment of the process.



Advantages of Segmented Paging

1. It reduces memory usage.
2. Page table size is limited by the segment size.
3. Segment table has only one entry corresponding to one actual segment.
4. External Fragmentation is not there.
5. It simplifies memory allocation.

Disadvantages of Segmented Paging

1. Internal Fragmentation will be there.
2. The complexity level will be much higher as compare to paging.
3. Page Tables need to be contiguously stored in the memory.

Virtual Memory

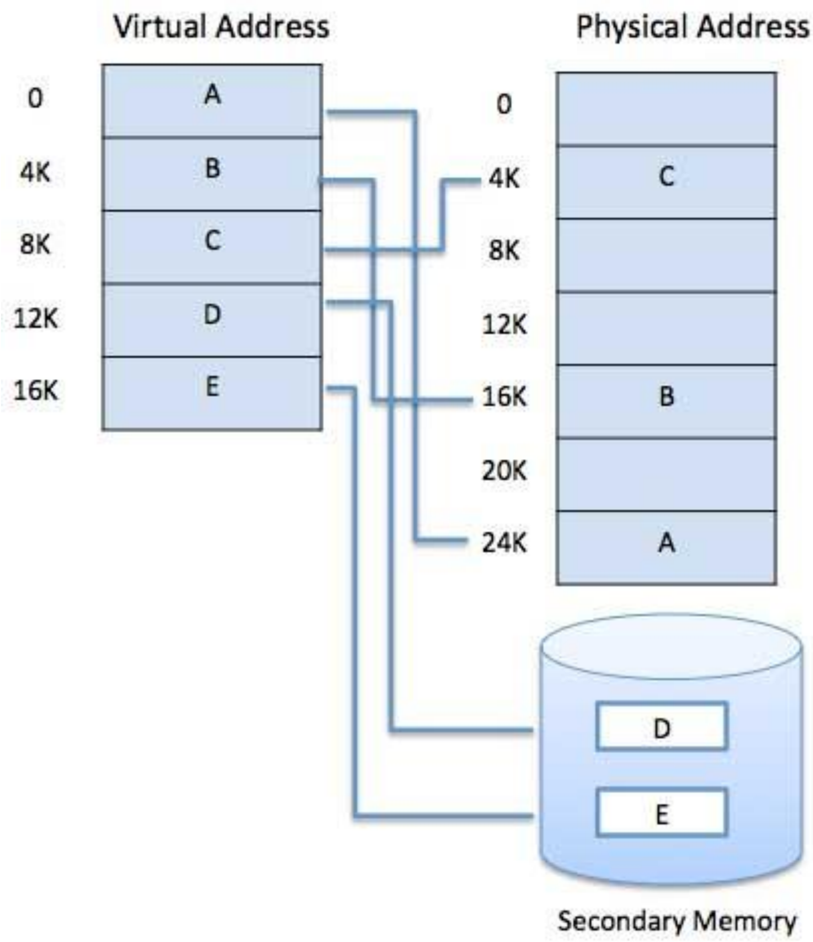
A computer can address more memory than the amount physically installed on the system. This extra memory is actually called **virtual memory** and it is a section of a hard disk that's set up to emulate the computer's RAM.

The main visible advantage of this scheme is that programs can be larger than physical memory. Virtual memory serves two purposes. First, it allows us to extend the use of physical memory by using disk. Second, it allows us to have memory protection, because each virtual address is translated to a physical address.

Following are the situations, when entire program is not required to be loaded fully in main memory.

- User written error handling routines are used only when an error occurred in the data or computation.
- Certain options and features of a program may be used rarely.
- Many tables are assigned a fixed amount of address space even though only a small amount of the table is actually used.
- The ability to execute a program that is only partially in memory would counter many benefits.
- Less number of I/O would be needed to load or swap each user program into memory.
- A program would no longer be constrained by the amount of physical memory that is available.
- Each user program could take less physical memory, more programs could be run the same time, with a corresponding increase in CPU utilization and throughput.

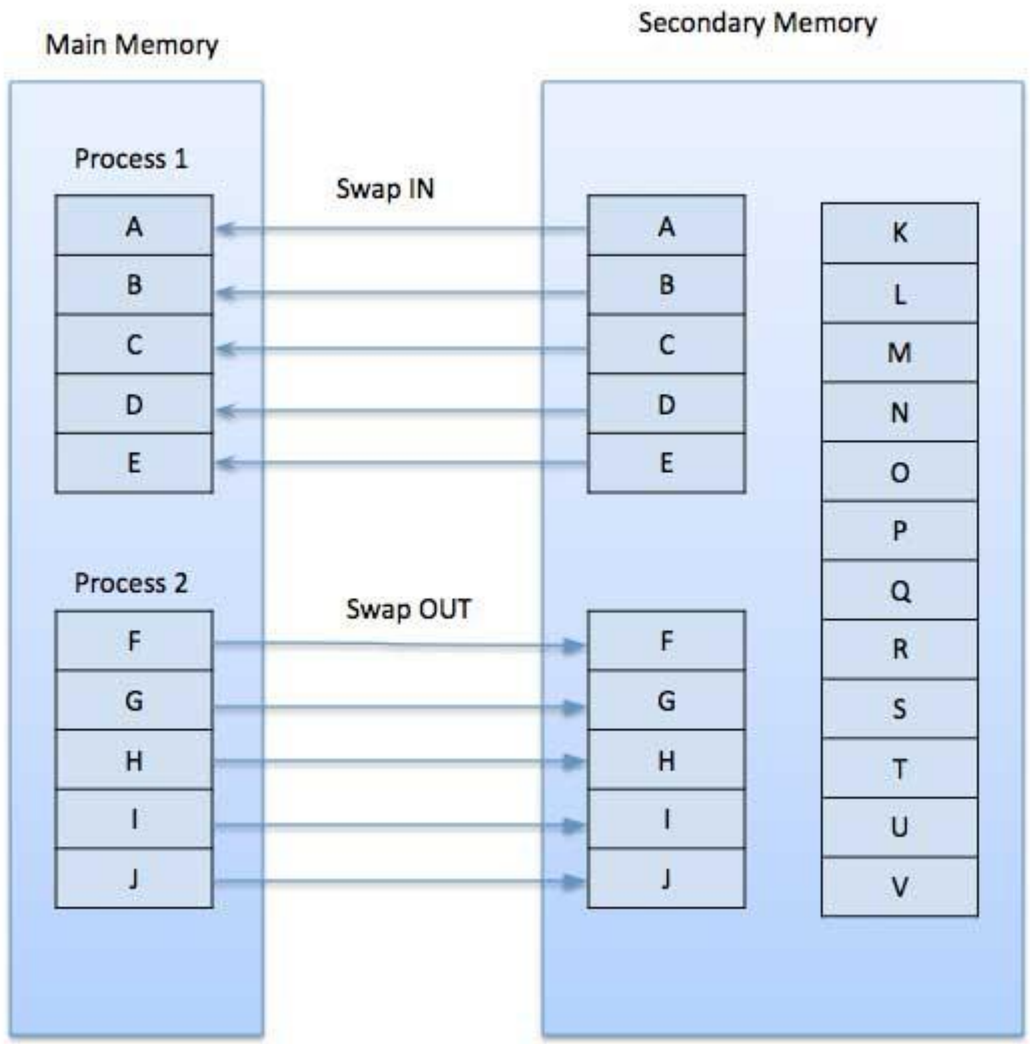
Modern microprocessors intended for general-purpose use, a memory management unit, or MMU, is built into the hardware. The MMU's job is to translate virtual addresses into physical addresses. A basic example is given below −



Virtual memory is commonly implemented by demand paging. It can also be implemented in a segmentation system. Demand segmentation can also be used to provide virtual memory.

Demand Paging

A demand paging system is quite similar to a paging system with swapping where processes reside in secondary memory and pages are loaded only on demand, not in advance. When a context switch occurs, the operating system does not copy any of the old program's pages out to the disk or any of the new program's pages into the main memory Instead, it just begins executing the new program after loading the first page and fetches that program's pages as they are referenced.



While executing a program, if the program references a page which is not available in the main memory because it was swapped out a little ago, the processor treats this invalid memory reference as a **page fault** and transfers control from the program to the operating system to demand the page back into the memory.

Advantages

Following are the advantages of Demand Paging −

- Large virtual memory.
- More efficient use of memory.
- There is no limit on degree of multiprogramming.

Disadvantages

- Number of tables and the amount of processor overhead for handling page interrupts are greater than in the case of the simple paged management techniques.

Page Replacement Algorithm

Page replacement algorithms are the techniques using which an Operating System decides which memory pages to swap out, write to disk when a page of memory needs to be allocated. Paging happens whenever a page fault occurs and a free page cannot be used for allocation purpose accounting to reason that pages are not available or the number of free pages is lower than required pages.

When the page that was selected for replacement and was paged out, is referenced again, it has to read in from disk, and this requires for I/O completion. This process determines the quality of the page replacement algorithm: the lesser the time waiting for page-ins, the better is the algorithm.

A page replacement algorithm looks at the limited information about accessing the pages provided by hardware, and tries to select which pages should be replaced to minimize the total number of page misses, while balancing it with the costs of primary storage and processor time of the algorithm itself. There are many different page replacement algorithms. We evaluate an algorithm by running it on a particular string of memory reference and computing the number of page faults,

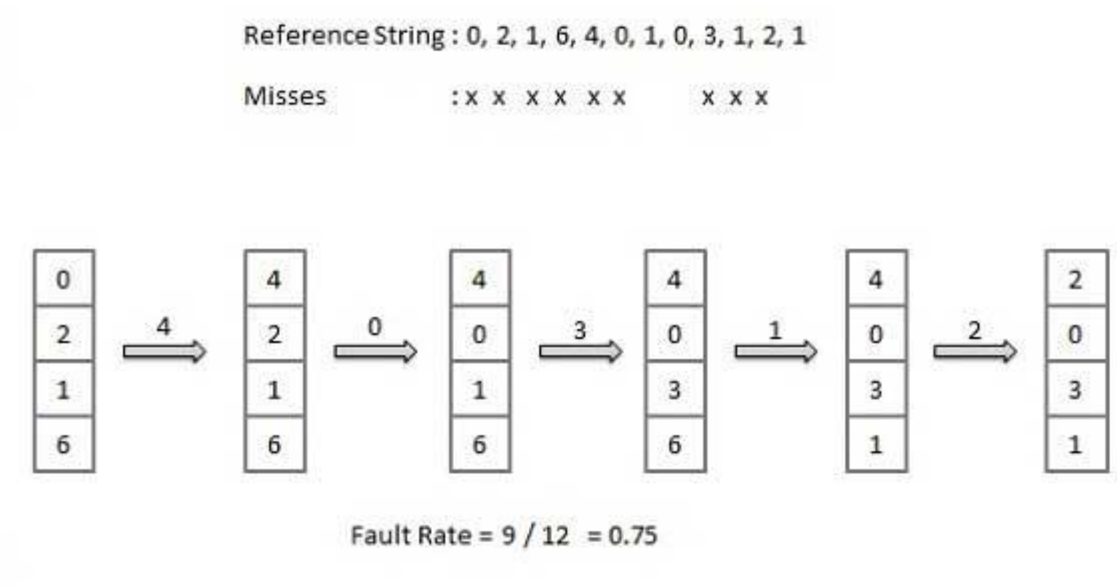
Reference String

The string of memory references is called reference string. Reference strings are generated artificially or by tracing a given system and recording the address of each memory reference. The latter choice produces a large number of data, where we note two things.

- For a given page size, we need to consider only the page number, not the entire address.
- If we have a reference to a page **p**, then any immediately following references to page **p** will never cause a page fault. Page p will be in memory after the first reference; the immediately following references will not fault.
- For example, consider the following sequence of addresses − 123,215,600,1234,76,96
- If page size is 100, then the reference string is 1,2,6,12,0,0

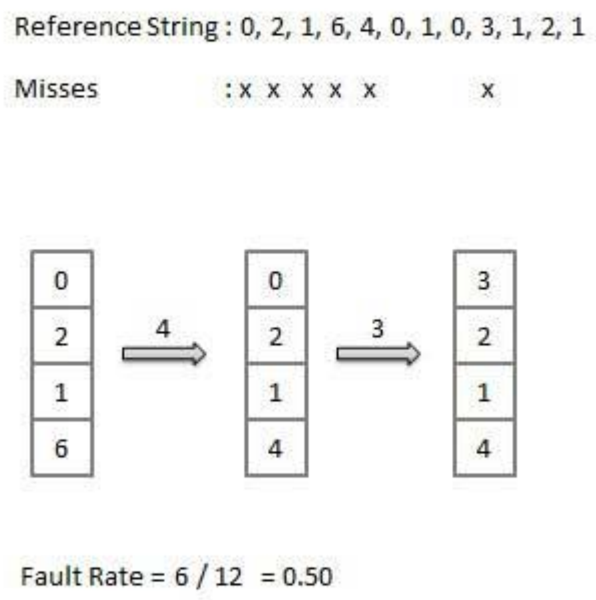
First In First Out (FIFO) algorithm

- Oldest page in main memory is the one which will be selected for replacement.
- Easy to implement, keep a list, replace pages from the tail and add new pages at the head.



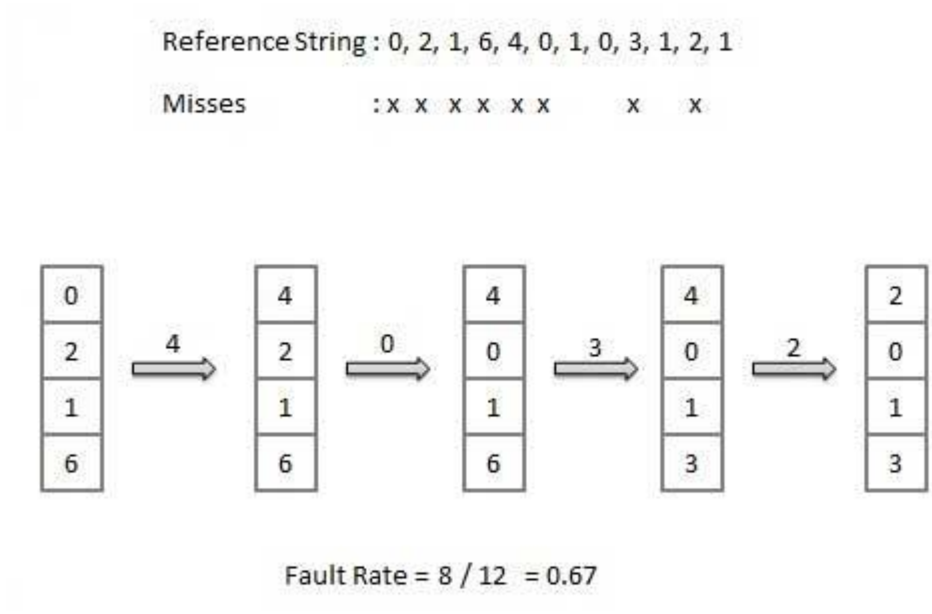
Optimal Page algorithm

- An optimal page-replacement algorithm has the lowest page-fault rate of all algorithms. An optimal page-replacement algorithm exists, and has been called OPT or MIN.
- Replace the page that will not be used for the longest period of time. Use the time when a page is to be used.



Least Recently Used (LRU) algorithm

- Page which has not been used for the longest time in main memory is the one which will be selected for replacement.
- Easy to implement, keep a list, replace pages by looking back into time.



Page Buffering algorithm

- To get a process start quickly, keep a pool of free frames.
- On page fault, select a page to be replaced.
- Write the new page in the frame of free pool, mark the page table and restart the process.
- Now write the dirty page out of disk and place the frame holding replaced page in free pool.

Least frequently Used(LFU) algorithm

- The page with the smallest count is the one which will be selected for replacement.
- This algorithm suffers from the situation in which a page is used heavily during the initial phase of a process, but then is never used again.

Most frequently Used(MFU) algorithm

- This algorithm is based on the argument that the page with the smallest count was probably just brought in and has yet to be used.

Reference:

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