Introduction to Computer Systems

15-213, fall 2009
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Today

- **System level I/O**
  - Unix I/O
  - Standard I/O
  - RIO (robust I/O) package
  - Conclusions and examples

Unix Files

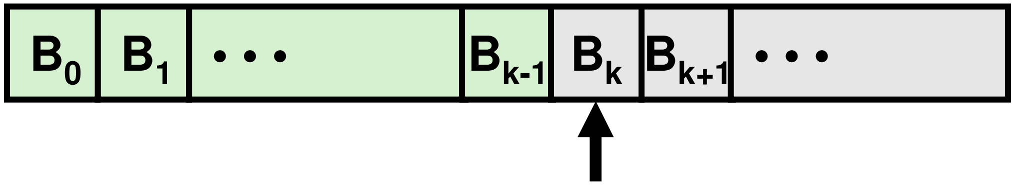
- A Unix ***file*** is a sequence of *m* bytes:
  - B_0, B_1, ... , B_k , ... , B_{m-1}
- All I/O devices are represented as files:
  - **`/dev/sda2`** (**`/usr`** disk partition)
  - **`/dev/tty2`** (terminal)
- Even the kernel is represented as a file:
  - **`/dev/kmem`** (kernel memory image)
  - **`/proc`** (kernel data structures)

Unix File Types

- **Regular file**
  - File containing user/app data (binary, text, whatever)
  - OS does not know anything about the format
    - other than “sequence of bytes”, akin to main memory
- **Directory file**
  - A file that contains the names and locations of other files
- **Character special and block special files**
  - Terminals (character special) and disks (block special)
- **FIFO (named pipe)**
  - A file type used for inter-process communication
- **Socket**
  - A file type used for network communication between processes

Unix I/O

- **Key Features**
  - Elegant mapping of files to devices allows kernel to export simple interface called Unix I/O
  - Important idea: All input and output is handled in a consistent and uniform way
- **Basic Unix I/O operations (system calls):**
  - Opening and closing files
    - `open()` and `close()`
  - Reading and writing a file
    - `read()` and `write()`
  - Changing the ***current file position*** (seek)
    - indicates next offset into file to read or write
    - `lseek()`



Current file position = k

Opening Files

- **Opening a file informs the kernel that you are getting ready to access that file**

```
int fd;   /* file descriptor */

if ((fd = open("/etc/hosts", O_RDONLY)) < 0) {
   perror("open");
   exit(1);
}
```

- **Returns a small identifying integer *file descriptor***
  - `fd == -1` indicates that an error occurred
- **Each process created by a Unix shell begins life with three open files associated with a terminal:**
  - 0: standard input
  - 1: standard output
  - 2: standard error

Closing Files

- Closing a file informs the kernel that you are finished accessing that file

```
int fd;     /* file descriptor */
int retval; /* return value */

if ((retval = close(fd)) < 0) {
   perror("close");
   exit(1);
}
```

- Closing an already closed file is a recipe for disaster in threaded programs (more on this later)
- Moral: Always check return codes, even for seemingly benign functions such as `close()`

Reading Files

- **Reading a file copies bytes from the current file position to memory, and then updates file position**

```
char buf[512];
int fd;       /* file descriptor */
int nbytes;   /* number of bytes read */

/* Open file fd ...  */
/* Then read up to 512 bytes from file fd */
if ((nbytes = read(fd, buf, sizeof(buf))) < 0) {
   perror("read");
   exit(1);
}
```

- **Returns number of bytes read from file `fd` into `buf`**
  - Return type `ssize_t` is signed integer
  - `nbytes < 0` indicates that an error occurred
  - ***Short counts*** (`nbytes < sizeof(buf)`) are possible and are not errors!

Writing Files

- Writing a file copies bytes from memory to the current file position, and then updates current file position

```
char buf[512];
int fd;       /* file descriptor */
int nbytes;   /* number of bytes read */

/* Open the file fd ... */
/* Then write up to 512 bytes from buf to file fd */
if ((nbytes = write(fd, buf, sizeof(buf)) < 0) {
   perror("write");
   exit(1);
}
```

- Returns number of bytes written from `buf` to file `fd`
  - `nbytes < 0` indicates that an error occurred
  - As with reads, short counts are possible and are not errors!

Simple Unix I/O example

- Copying standard in to standard out, one byte at a time

```
int main(void)
{
    char c;
    int len;

    while ((len = read(0 /*stdin*/, &c, 1)) == 1) {
        if (write(1 /*stdout*/, &c, 1) != 1) {
            exit(20);
        }
    }
    if (len < 0) {
        printf (“read from stdin failed”);
        exit (10);
    }
    exit(0);
}
```

File Metadata

- ***Metadata*** **is data about data, in this case file data**
- **Per-file metadata maintained by kernel**
  - accessed by users with the **`stat`** and **`fstat`** functions

```
/* Metadata returned by the stat and fstat functions */
struct stat {
    dev_t         st_dev;      /* device */
    ino_t         st_ino;      /* inode */
    mode_t        st_mode;     /* protection and file type */
    nlink_t       st_nlink;    /* number of hard links */
    uid_t         st_uid;      /* user ID of owner */
    gid_t         st_gid;      /* group ID of owner */
    dev_t         st_rdev;     /* device type (if inode device) */
    off_t         st_size;     /* total size, in bytes */
    unsigned long st_blksize;  /* blocksize for filesystem I/O */
    unsigned long st_blocks;   /* number of blocks allocated */
    time_t        st_atime;    /* time of last access */
    time_t        st_mtime;    /* time of last modification */
    time_t        st_ctime;    /* time of last change */
};
```

Example of Accessing File Metadata

```
/* statcheck.c - Querying and manipulating a file’s meta data */
#include "csapp.h"

int main (int argc, char **argv)
{
    struct stat stat;
    char *type, *readok;

    Stat(argv[1], &stat);
    if (S_ISREG(stat.st_mode))
        type = "regular";
    else if (S_ISDIR(stat.st_mode))
        type = "directory";
    else
        type = "other";
    if ((stat.st_mode & S_IRUSR)) /* OK to read?*/
        readok = "yes";
    else
        readok = "no";

    printf("type: %s, read: %s\n", type, readok);
    exit(0);
}
```

```
unix> ./statcheck statcheck.c
type: regular, read: yes
unix> chmod 000 statcheck.c
unix> ./statcheck statcheck.c
type: regular, read: no
unix> ./statcheck ..
type: directory, read: yes
unix> ./statcheck /dev/kmem
type: other, read: yes
```

Repeated Slide: Opening Files

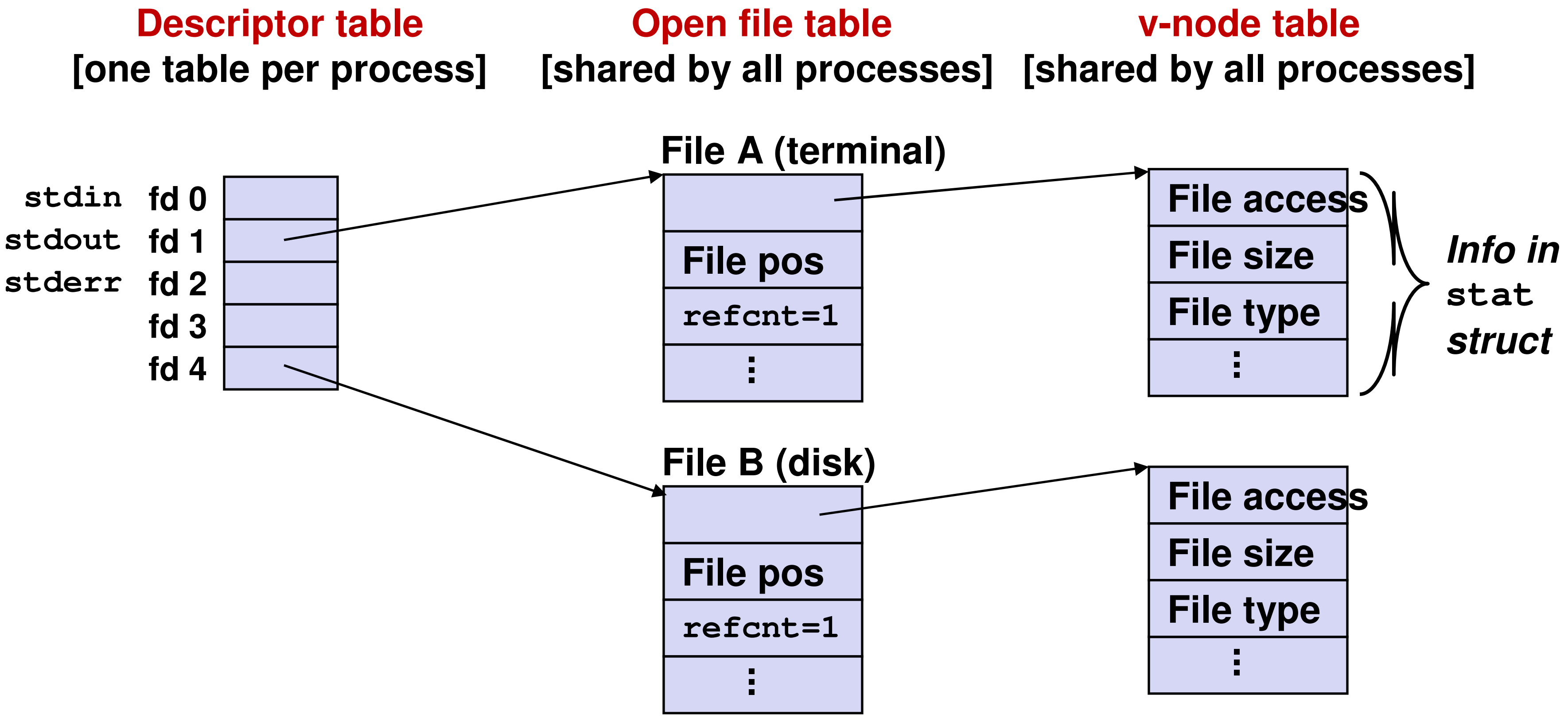
- **Opening a file informs the kernel that you are getting ready to access that file**

```
int fd;   /* file descriptor */

if ((fd = open("/etc/hosts", O_RDONLY)) < 0) {
   perror("open");
   exit(1);
}
```

- **Returns a small identifying integer *file descriptor***
  - `fd == -1` indicates that an error occurred
- **Each process created by a Unix shell begins life with three open files associated with a terminal:**
  - 0: standard input
  - 1: standard output
  - 2: standard error

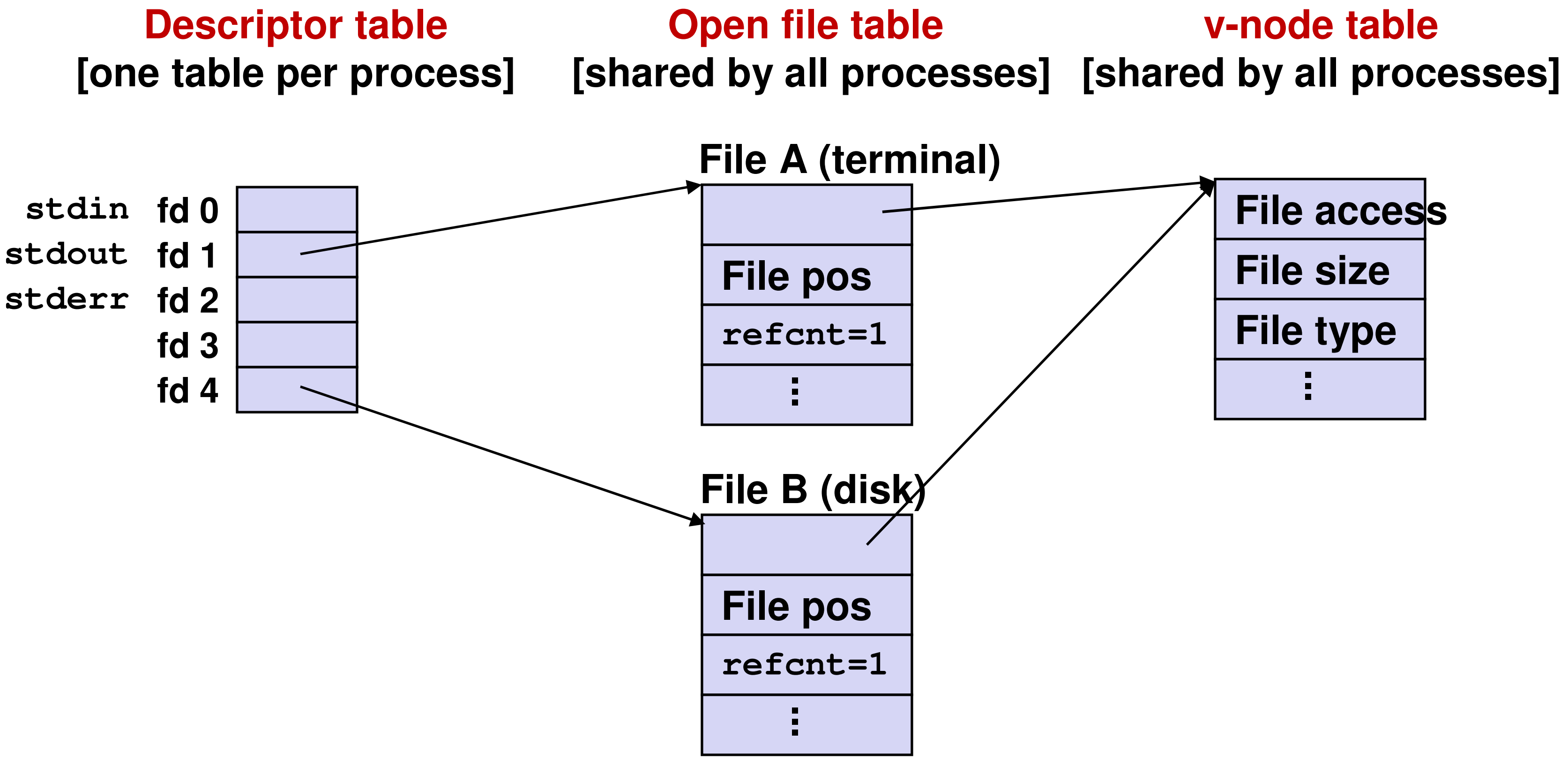
How the Unix Kernel Represents Open Files

- **Two descriptors referencing two distinct open disk files. Descriptor 1 (stdout) points to terminal, and descriptor 4 points to open disk file**



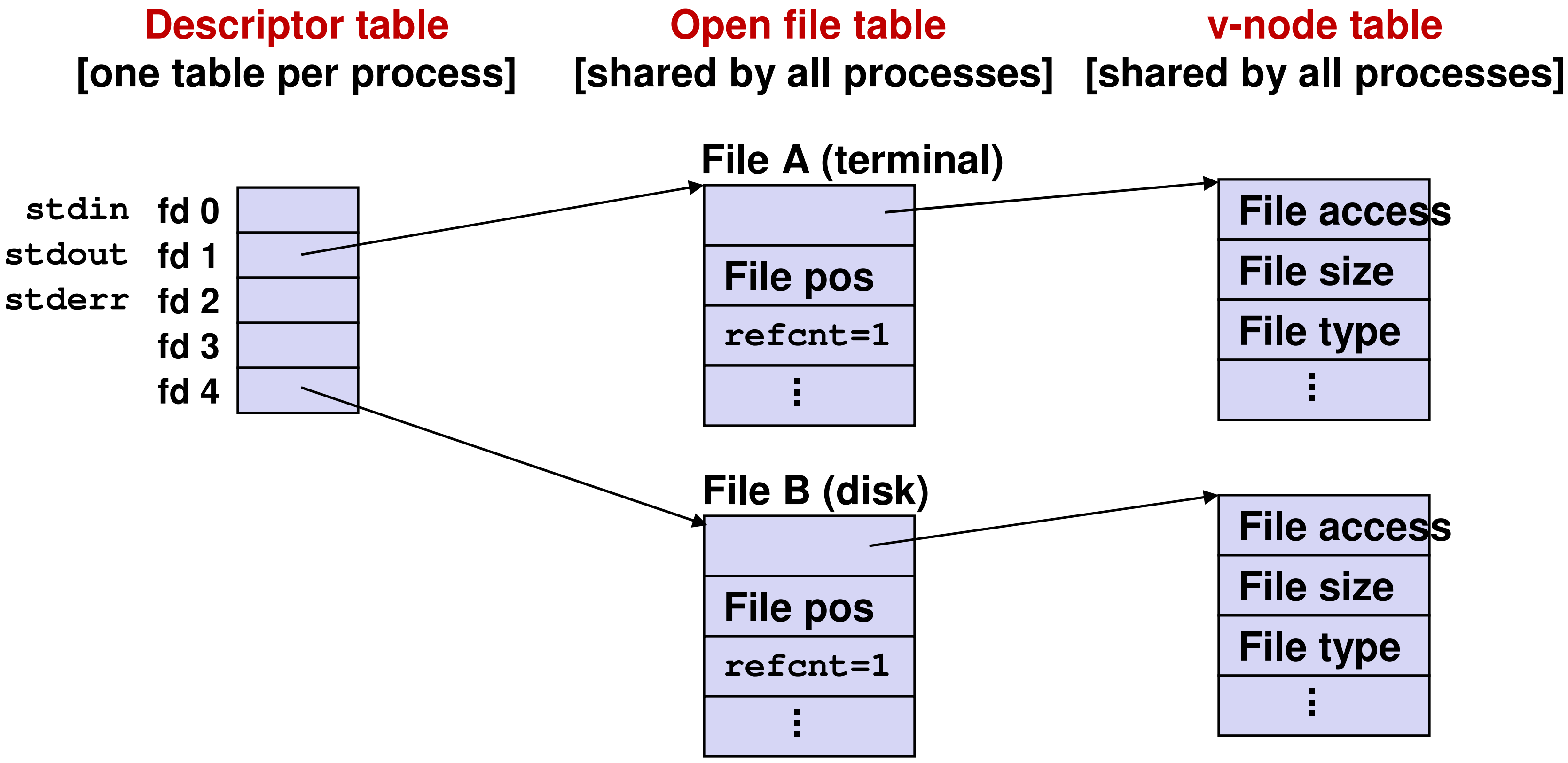
File Sharing

- **Two distinct descriptors sharing the same disk file through two distinct open file table entries**
  - E.g., Calling **`open`** twice with the same **`filename`** argument



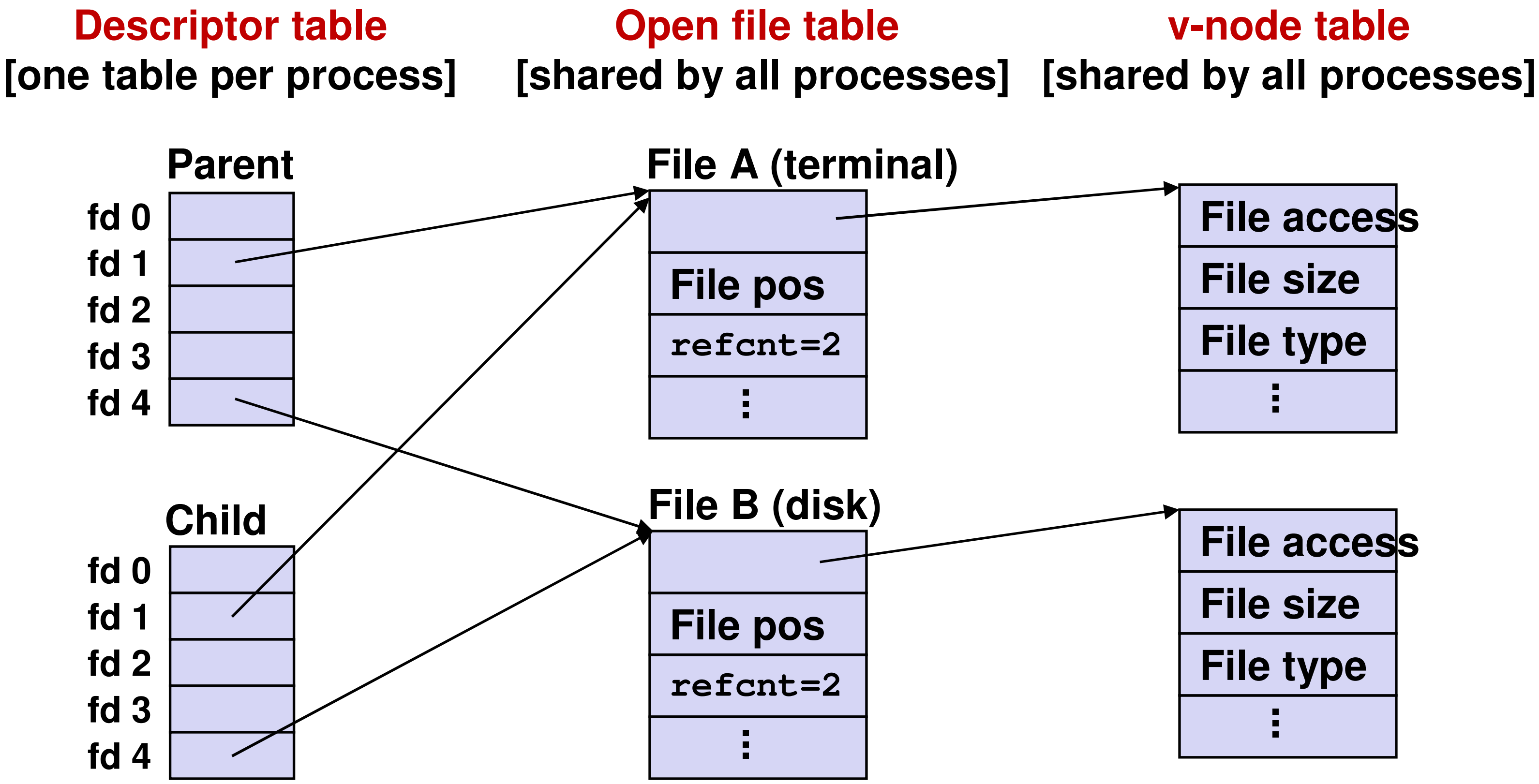
How Processes Share Files: Fork()

- **A child process inherits its parent's open files**
  - Note: situation unchanged by **`exec()`** functions
- ***Before* fork() call:**



How Processes Share Files: Fork()

- A child process inherits its parent's open files
- *After* fork():
  - Child's table same as parents, and +1 to each refcnt

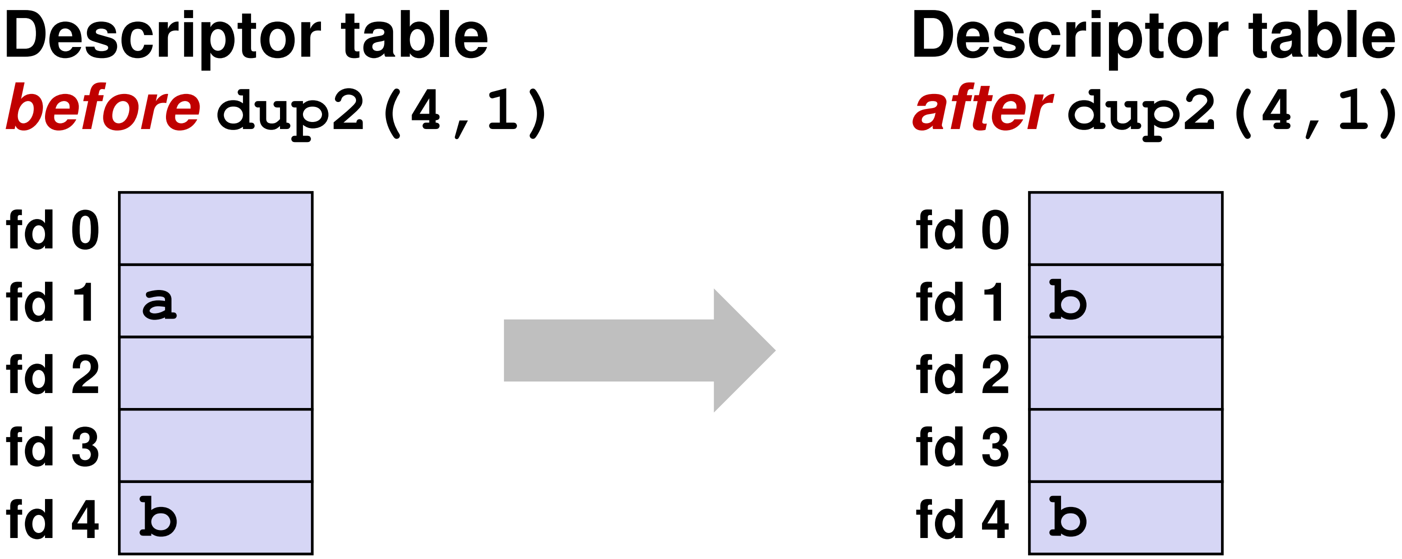


I/O Redirection

- **Question: How does a shell implement I/O redirection?**

```
unix> ls > foo.txt
```

- **Answer: By calling the `dup2(oldfd, newfd)` function**
  - Copies (per-process) descriptor table entry **`oldfd`** to entry **`newfd`**



Descriptor table *before* `dup2(4,1)`

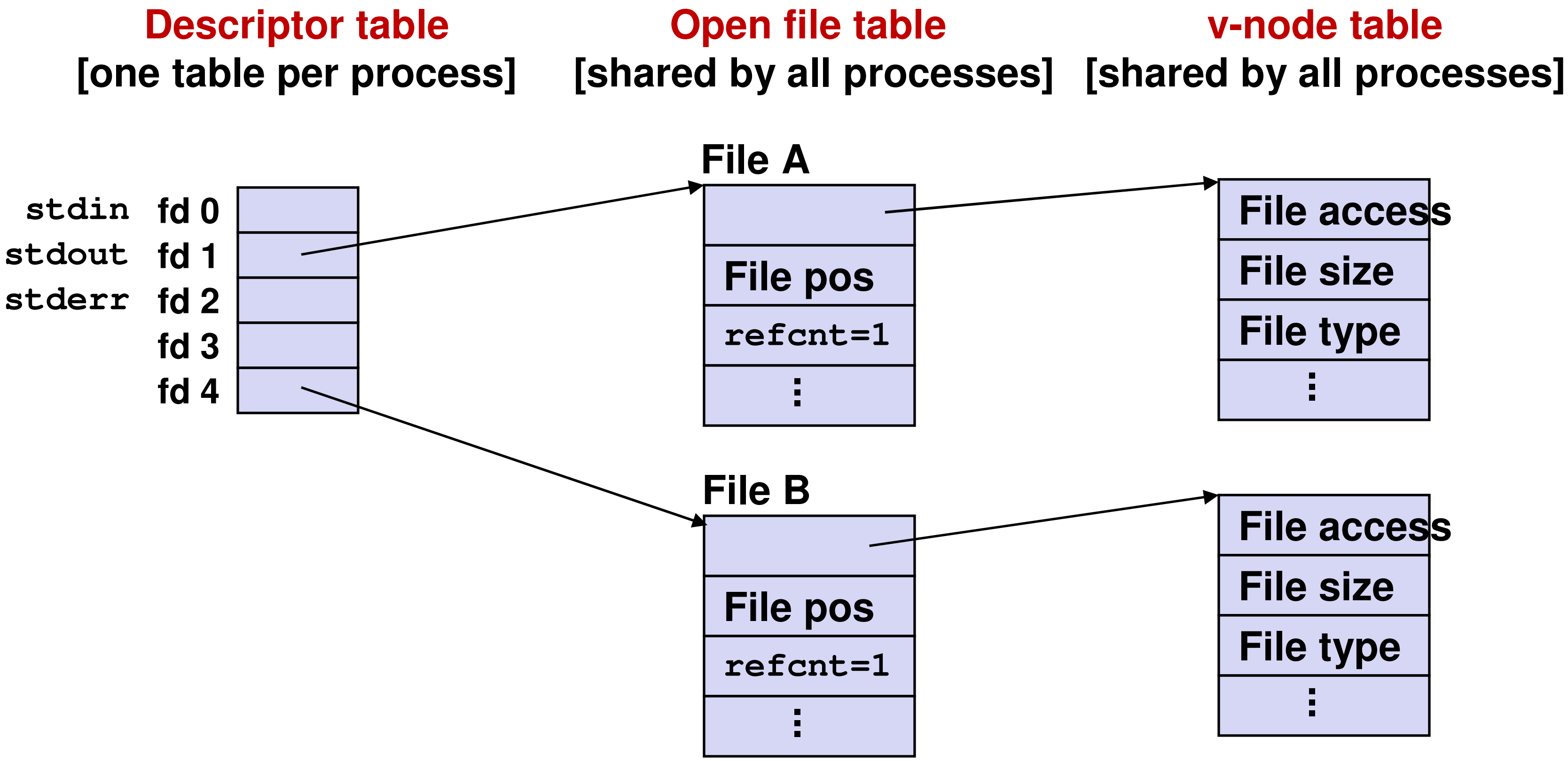
fd 0	
fd 1	a
fd 2	
fd 3	
fd 4	b

Descriptor table *after* `dup2(4,1)`

fd 0	
fd 1	b
fd 2	
fd 3	
fd 4	b

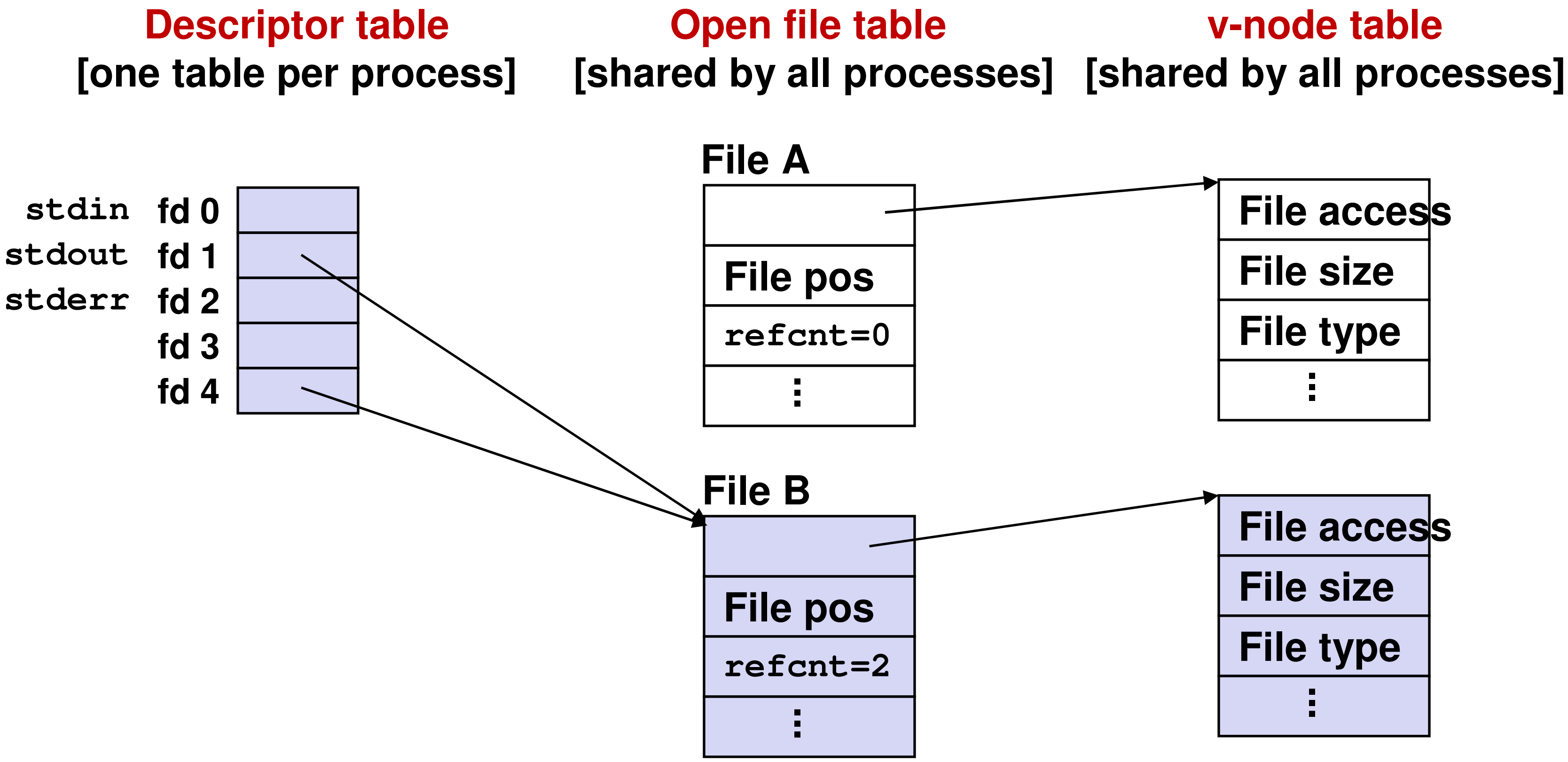
I/O Redirection Example

- **Step #1: open file to which stdout should be redirected**
  - Happens in child executing shell code, before exec()



I/O Redirection Example (cont.)

- **Step #2: call `dup2(4,1)`**
  - cause fd=1 (stdout) to refer to disk file pointed at by fd=4



Today

- **System level I/O**
  - Unix I/O
  - **Standard I/O**
  - RIO (robust I/O) package
  - Conclusions and examples

Standard I/O Functions

- **The C standard library (`libc.a`) contains a collection of higher-level *standard I/O* functions**
  - Documented in Appendix B of K&R.

- **Examples of standard I/O functions:**
  - Opening and closing files (**`fopen`** and **`fclose`**)
  - Reading and writing bytes (**`fread`** and **`fwrite`**)
  - Reading and writing text lines (**`fgets`** and **`fputs`**)
  - Formatted reading and writing (**`fscanf`** and **`fprintf`**)

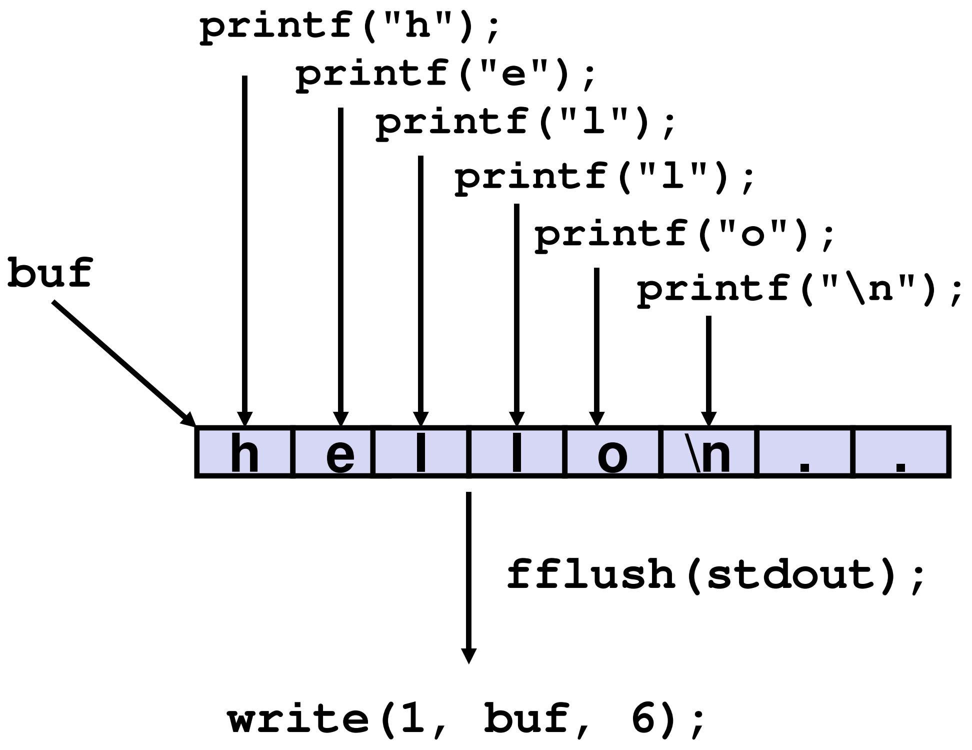
Standard I/O Streams

- **Standard I/O models open files as *streams***
  - Abstraction for a file descriptor and a buffer in memory.
  - Similar to buffered RIO (later)
- **C programs begin life with three open streams (defined in `stdio.h`)**
  - `stdin` (standard input)
  - `stdout` (standard output)
  - `stderr` (standard error)

```
#include <stdio.h>
extern FILE *stdin;  /* standard input  (descriptor 0) */
extern FILE *stdout; /* standard output (descriptor 1) */
extern FILE *stderr; /* standard error  (descriptor 2) */

int main() {
    fprintf(stdout, "Hello, world\n");
}
```

Buffering in Standard I/O

- **Standard I/O functions use buffered I/O**



```
printf("h");
printf("e");
printf("l");
printf("l");
printf("o");
printf("\n");
```

```
fflush(stdout);
```

```
write(1, buf, 6);
```

- **Buffer flushed to output fd on “\n” or `fflush()` call**

Standard I/O Buffering in Action

- You can see this buffering in action for yourself, using the always fascinating Unix `strace` program:

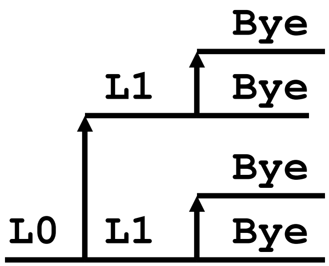
```
#include <stdio.h>

int main()
{
    printf("h");
    printf("e");
    printf("l");
    printf("l");
    printf("o");
    printf("\n");
    fflush(stdout);
    exit(0);
}
```

```
linux> strace ./hello
execve("./hello", ["hello"], [/* ... */]).
...
write(1, "hello\n", 6...)                 = 6
...
_exit(0)                                  = ?
```

Fork Example #2 (Earlier Lecture)

- **Key Points**
  - Both parent and child can continue forking

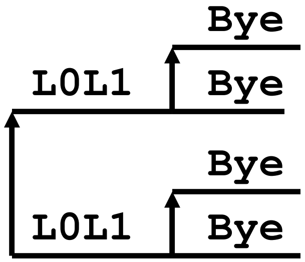
```
void fork2()
{
    printf("L0\n");
    fork();
    printf("L1\n");
    fork();
    printf("Bye\n");
}
```



Fork Example #2 (modified)

- **Removed the “\n” from the first printf**
  - As a result, “L0” gets printed twice

```
void fork2a()
{
    printf("L0");
    fork();
    printf("L1\n");
    fork();
    printf("Bye\n");
}
```



Repeated Slide: Reading Files

- **Reading a file copies bytes from the current file position to memory, and then updates file position**

```
char buf[512];
int fd;       /* file descriptor */
int nbytes;   /* number of bytes read */

/* Open file fd ...  */
/* Then read up to 512 bytes from file fd */
if ((nbytes = read(fd, buf, sizeof(buf))) < 0) {
   perror("read");
   exit(1);
}
```

- **Returns number of bytes read from file `fd` into `buf`**
  - Return type `ssize_t` is signed integer
  - `nbytes < 0` indicates that an error occurred
  - ***short counts*** (`nbytes < sizeof(buf)`) are possible and are not errors!

Dealing with Short Counts

- **Short counts can occur in these situations:**
  - Encountering (end-of-file) EOF on reads
  - Reading text lines from a terminal
  - Reading and writing network sockets or Unix pipes

- **Short counts never occur in these situations:**
  - Reading from disk files (except for EOF)
  - Writing to disk files

- **One way to deal with short counts in your code:**
  - Use the RIO (Robust I/O) package from your textbook’s `csapp.c` file (Appendix B)

Today

- **System level I/O**
  - Unix I/O
  - Standard I/O
  - **RIO (robust I/O) package**
  - Conclusions and examples

The RIO Package

- **RIO is a set of wrappers that provide efficient and robust I/O in apps,**
  such as network programs that are subject to short counts

- **RIO provides two different kinds of functions**
  - Unbuffered input and output of binary data
    - **`rio_readn`** and **`rio_writen`**
  - Buffered input of binary data and text lines
    - **`rio_readlineb`** and **`rio_readnb`**
    - Buffered RIO routines are ***thread-safe*** and can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor

- **Download from**
  `csapp.cs.cmu.edu/public/ics/code/src/csapp.c`
  `csapp.cs.cmu.edu/public/ics/code/include/csapp.h`

Unbuffered RIO Input and Output

- **Same interface as Unix `read` and `write`**
- **Especially useful for transferring data on network sockets**

```
#include "csapp.h"

ssize_t rio_readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
ssize_t rio_writen(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
```

Return: num. bytes transferred if OK, 0 on EOF (`rio_readn` only), -1 on error

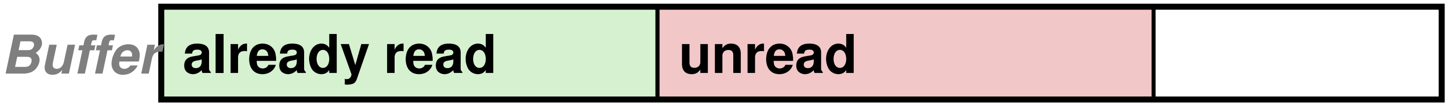
- **`rio_readn`** returns short count only if it encounters EOF
  - Only use it when you know how many bytes to read
- **`rio_writen`** never returns a short count
- Calls to **`rio_readn`** and **`rio_writen`** can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor

Implementation of `rio_readn`

```
/*
 * rio_readn - robustly read n bytes (unbuffered)
 */
ssize_t rio_readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n)
{
    size_t nleft = n;
    ssize_t nread;
    char *bufp = usrbuf;

    while (nleft > 0) {
        if ((nread = read(fd, bufp, nleft)) < 0) {
            if (errno == EINTR) /* interrupted by sig handler return
*/
                nread = 0;       /* and call read() again */
            else
                return -1;       /* errno set by read() */
        }
        else if (nread == 0)
            break;              /* EOF */
        nleft -= nread;
        bufp += nread;
    }
    return (n - nleft);          /* return >= 0 */
}
```

Buffered I/O: Motivation

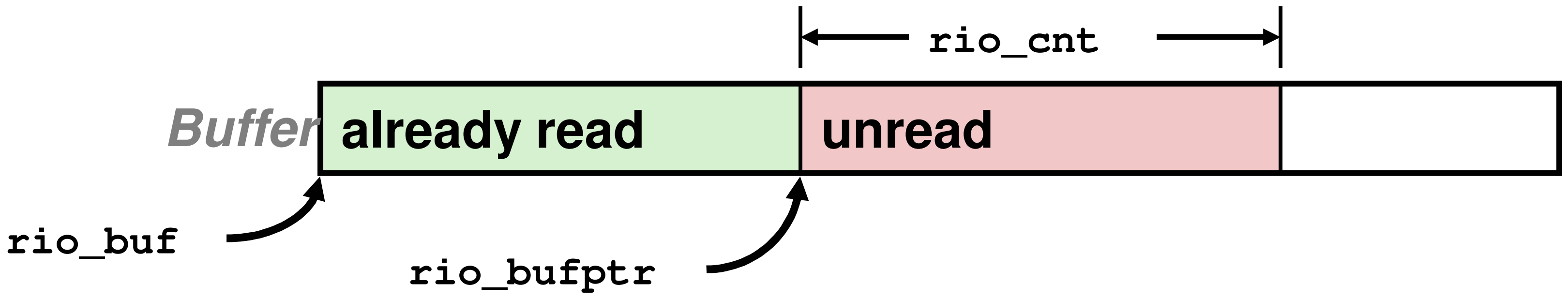
- **I/O Applications Read/Write One Character at a Time**
  - getc, putc, ungetc
  - gets
    - Read line of text, stopping at newline
- **Implementing as Calls to Unix I/O Expensive**
  - Read & Write involve require Unix kernel calls
    - > 10,000 clock cycles



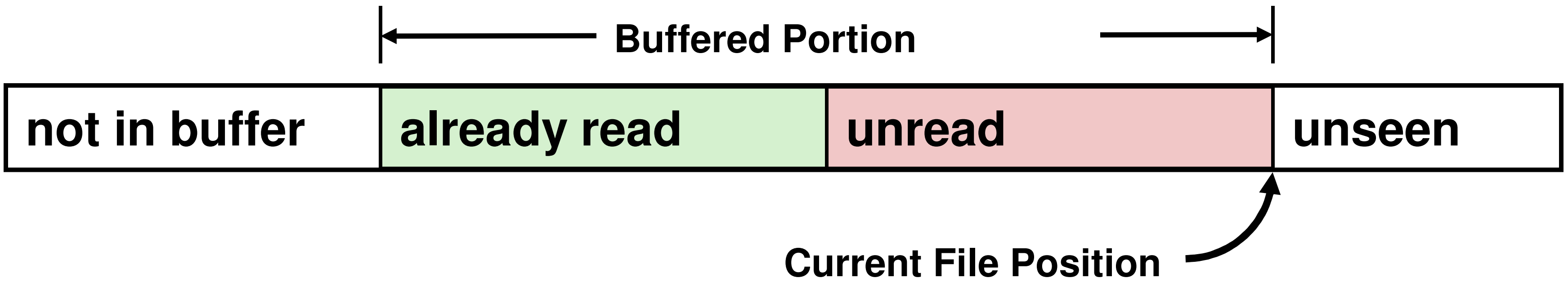
- **Buffered Read**
  - Use Unix read() to grab block of bytes
  - User input functions take one byte at a time from buffer
    - Refill buffer when empty

Buffered I/O: Implementation

- For reading from file
- File has associated buffer to hold bytes that have been read from file but not yet read by user code

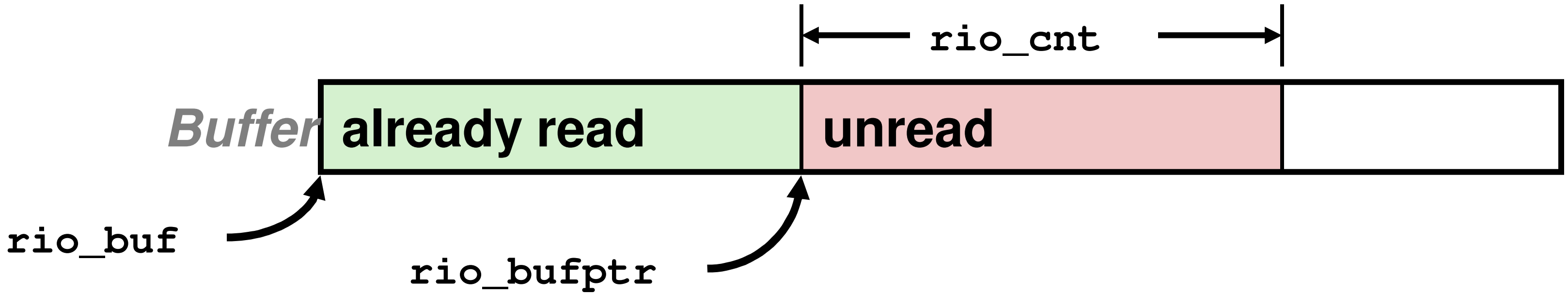


- Layered on Unix File



Buffered I/O: Declaration

- All information contained in struct



```
typedef struct {
    int rio_fd;                /* descriptor for this internal buf */
    int rio_cnt;               /* unread bytes in internal buf */
    char *rio_bufptr;          /* next unread byte in internal buf */
    char rio_buf[RIO_BUFSIZE]; /* internal buffer */
} rio_t;
```

Buffered RIO Input Functions

- **Efficiently read text lines and binary data from a file partially cached in an internal memory buffer**

```
#include "csapp.h"

void rio_readinitb(rio_t *rp, int fd);

ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen);
```

Return: num. bytes read if OK, 0 on EOF, -1 on error

- `rio_readlineb` reads a text line of up to `maxlen` bytes from file `fd` and stores the line in `usrbuf`
  - Especially useful for reading text lines from network sockets
- Stopping conditions
  - `maxlen` bytes read
  - EOF encountered
  - Newline (‘`\n`’) encountered

Buffered RIO Input Functions (cont)

```
#include "csapp.h"

void rio_readinitb(rio_t *rp, int fd);

ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen);
ssize_t rio_readnb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
```

Return: num. bytes read if OK, 0 on EOF, -1 on error

- `rio_readnb` reads up to `n` bytes from file `fd`
- Stopping conditions
  - `maxlen` bytes read
  - EOF encountered
- Calls to `rio_readlineb` and `rio_readnb` can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor
  - Warning: Don’t interleave with calls to `rio_readn`

RIO Example

- Copying the lines of a text file from standard input to standard output

```
#include "csapp.h"

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    int n;
    rio_t rio;
    char buf[MAXLINE];

    Rio_readinitb(&rio, STDIN_FILENO);
    while((n = Rio_readlineb(&rio, buf, MAXLINE)) != 0)
        Rio_writen(STDOUT_FILENO, buf, n);
    exit(0);
}
```

Today

- **System level I/O**
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  - **Conclusions and examples**

Fun with File Descriptors (1)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
    char c1, c2, c3;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    fd2 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    Dup2(fd2, fd3);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    Read(fd2, &c2, 1);
    Read(fd3, &c3, 1);
    printf("c1 = %c, c2 = %c, c3 = %c\n", c1, c2, c3);
    return 0;
}
```

- What would this program print for file containing “abcde”?

Fun with File Descriptors (2)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int fd1;
    int s = getpid() & 0x1;
    char c1, c2;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    if (fork()) { /* Parent */
        sleep(s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Parent: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    } else { /* Child */
        sleep(1-s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Child: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    }
    return 0;
}
```

- What would this program print for file containing “abcde”?

Fun with File Descriptors (3)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O_CREAT|O_TRUNC|O_RDWR, S_IRUSR|S_IWUSR);
    Write(fd1, "pqrs", 4);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O_APPEND|O_WRONLY, 0);
    Write(fd3, "jklmn", 5);
    fd2 = dup(fd1);  /* Allocates descriptor */
    Write(fd2, "wxyz", 4);
    Write(fd3, "ef", 2);
    return 0;
}
```

- **What would be the contents of the resulting file?**

Accessing Directories

- **Only recommended operation on a directory: read its entries**
  - dirent structure contains information about a directory entry
  - DIR structure contains information about directory while stepping

```
#include <sys/types.h>
#include <dirent.h>

{
  DIR *directory;
  struct dirent *de;
  ...
  if (!(directory = opendir(dir_name)))
      error("Failed to open directory");
  ...
  while (0 != (de = readdir(directory))) {
      printf("Found file: %s\n", de->d_name);
  }
  ...
  closedir(directory);
}
```

Unix I/O Key Characteristics

Classic Unix/Linux I/O:

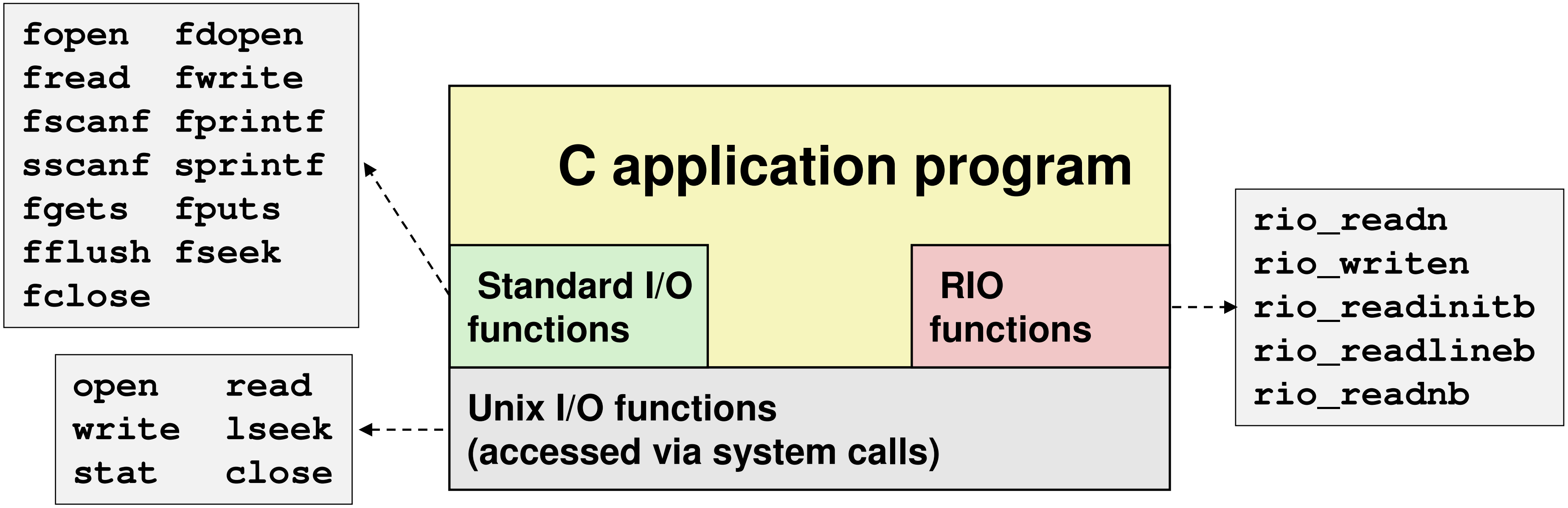
- **I/O operates on linear streams of bytes**
  - Can reposition insertion point and extend file at end
- **I/O tends to be synchronous**
  - Read or write operation block until data has been transferred
- **Fine grained I/O**
  - One key-stroke at a time
  - Each I/O event is handled by the kernel and an appropriate process

Mainframe I/O:

- **I/O operates on structured records**
  - Functions to locate, insert, remove, update records
- **I/O tends to be asynchronous**
  - Overlap I/O and computation within a process
- **Coarse grained I/O**
  - Process writes “channel programs” to be executed by the I/O hardware
  - Many I/O operations are performed autonomously with one interrupt at completion

Unix I/O vs. Standard I/O vs. RIO

- Standard I/O and RIO are implemented using low-level
  Unix I/O



```
fopen   fdopen
fread   fwrite
fscanf  fprintf
sscanf  sprintf
fgets   fputs
fflush  fseek
fclose
```

```
open    read
write   lseek
stat    close
```

C application program

Standard I/O functions

RIO functions

Unix I/O functions
(accessed via system calls)

```
rio_readn
rio_writen
rio_readinitb
rio_readlineb
rio_readnb
```

- Which ones should you use in your programs?

Choosing I/O Functions

- **General rule: use the highest-level I/O functions you can**
  - Many C programmers are able to do all of their work using the standard I/O functions

- **When to use standard I/O**
  - When working with disk or terminal files
- **When to use raw Unix I/O**
  - When you need to fetch file metadata
  - In rare cases when you need absolute highest performance
- **When to use RIO**
  - When you are reading and writing network sockets or pipes
  - Never use standard I/O or raw Unix I/O on sockets or pipes

Pros and Cons of Unix I/O

- **Pros**
  - Unix I/O is the most general and lowest overhead form of I/O.
    - All other I/O packages are implemented using Unix I/O functions.
  - Unix I/O provides functions for accessing file metadata.

- **Cons**
  - Dealing with short counts is tricky and error prone.
  - Efficient reading of text lines requires some form of buffering, also tricky and error prone.
  - Both of these issues are addressed by the standard I/O and RIO packages.

Pros and Cons of Standard I/O

- **Pros:**
  - Buffering increases efficiency by decreasing the number of **`read`** and **`write`** system calls
  - Short counts are handled automatically
- **Cons:**
  - Provides no function for accessing file metadata
  - Standard I/O is not appropriate for input and output on network sockets
  - There are poorly documented restrictions on streams that interact badly with restrictions on sockets

For Further Information

- **The Unix bible:**
  - W. Richard Stevens & Stephen A. Rago, ***Advanced Programming in the Unix Environment***, 2nd Edition, Addison Wesley, 2005
    - Updated from Stevens' 1993 book
- **Stevens is arguably the best technical writer ever.**
  - Produced authoritative works in:
    - Unix programming
    - TCP/IP (the protocol that makes the Internet work)
    - Unix network programming
    - Unix IPC programming
- **Tragically, Stevens died Sept. 1, 1999**
  - But others have taken up his legacy