

# Instruction Sets - Part 3 MIPS Subroutines and Programs

Ref: Chapter 3

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## Subroutines

```
main:
# multiply 3 x 2
addi $a0,$zero,3
addi $a1,$zero,2

# call the subroutine
jal multiply

# print out the result
move $v0,$v0
li $v0,4
la $a0,$msg
syscall

li $v0,1
move $a0,$a0
syscall

li $v0,10
syscall

multiply:
# mult subroutine needs some registers
# so we save $t0 first
# 2 arguments $a0 and $a1 are multiplied
# using repeated addition

sub $sp,$sp,4 # make room for $t0
sw $t0,0($sp) # put t0 on the stack

# start with $t0 = 0
add $t0,$zero,$zero

mult_loop:
# loop on a1
beq $a1,$zero,mult_end

# add another $a0
add $t0,$t0,$a0

# decrement $a1
sub $a1,$a1,1
j mult_loop

mult_end:
# put the result in $v0
add $v0,$t0,$zero

# restore $t0
lw $t0,0($sp)
add $sp,$sp,4
# return to caller
jr $ra
```

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## Subroutine Issues

- How to call a subroutine
  - how to pass parameters
  - how to get the return value
- How to write a subroutine
  - where to look for parameters
  - saving registers
  - returning a value
  - returning to the *caller*

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## Special Registers

**\$a0-\$a4**: argument registers

- this is where we put arguments before calling a subroutine.

**\$v0, \$v1**: return value registers

- where subroutines put return values

**\$ra**: return address register

- holds the address the subroutine should jump to when it's done.

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## *Jump and Link* Instruction **jal address**

- Puts the address of the next instruction (**PC+4**) in the **\$ra** register.
- Jumps to the specific address.
  
- Addressing mode is just like the **j** instruction (26 bit absolute address).

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## Returning from the Subroutine

- Assuming the subroutine doesn't clobber the **\$ra** register:
  - when the subroutine is done, it jumps to the address in **\$ra**

**jr \$ra**

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## What if the subroutine uses a register?

Accepted convention:

**\$t0, \$t1, ... \$t7** are always OK to use.

- if you call a subroutine and you need the value of **\$t0** to be the same after the call, you must save it in memory!
- *caller saves \$t0 ... \$t7*

**\$s0-\$s7** must not be changed by a subroutine.

- If you need them in your subroutine you need to save the previous value and restore them before returning.
- *callee saves \$s0 ... \$s7*

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## Saving registers and the Stack

- Most of the time we use whatever registers we want inside subroutines.
  - must save and restore **\$s0-\$s7**
- This happens so often there is a special register and data structure used to support saving and restoring registers.

### *The Stack*

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## The Stack

- The stack is an area of memory reserved for the purpose of saving registers.
- The **\$sp** register (*stack pointer*) holds the address of the *top* of the stack.
  
- The stack grows and shrinks as registers are saved and restored.

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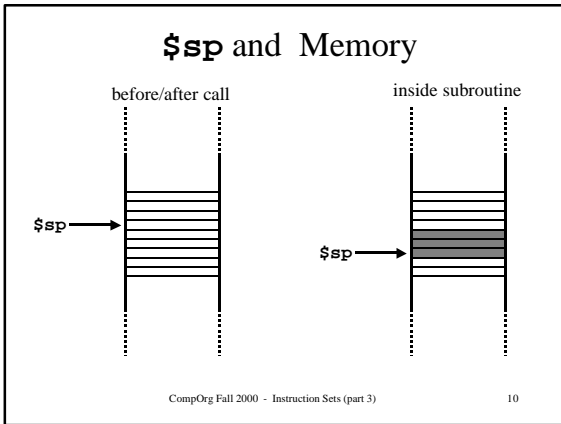
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### Stack handling code

- Suppose your subroutine needs to use 3 registers: `$s0`, `$s1` and `$s2`:
  - first make room for saving three words by subtracting 12 from the stack pointer
 

```
sub $sp, $sp, 12
```
  - now put copies of the three registers on the stack.
 

```
sw $s0, 0($sp)
sw $s1, 4($sp)
sw $s2, 8($sp)
```

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### Stack handling code (cont.)

- Before returning, your subroutine should restore the 3 registers:
 

```
lw $s2, 8($sp)
lw $s1, 4($sp)
lw $s0, 0($sp)
```
- And put the stack pointer back to its original value:
 

```
add $sp, $sp, 12
```

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## Why bother?

- We write subroutines so that they can be called from *any other code*.
  - as far as the *caller* is concerned, **\$s0- \$s7** don't change.
- The stack provides a single mechanism that will work no matter who called the subroutine.

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## Exercise

- Create a multiplication subroutine.
  - \$a0 is multiplied by \$a1 and the product is returned in \$v0
- We've already looked at the multiply code, all we need to do is make this a subroutine.

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## multiply in 'C'

```
int multiply(int x, int y) {  
    prod=0;  
    while (y>0) {  
        prod = prod + x;  
        y--;  
    }  
    return(prod);  
}
```

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## Assembly Multiply

```
int multiply(int x, int y) {
    prod=0;
    while (y>0) {
        prod = prod + x;
        y--;
    }
    return(prod);
}

multiply:
    add $t0,$zero,$zero # prod=0
m_loop:
    beq $a1,$zero,m_eol # while y>0
    add $t0,$t0,$a0     # prod = prod+x
    subi $a1,$a1,1     # y--;
    j m_loop
m_eol:
    add $v0,$t0,$zero  # return(prod)
    jr $ra
```

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## Not a typical example!

- `multiply` doesn't need many registers and it doesn't call any subroutines.
  - no need to save and restore registers
- Let's go back and make our assembly version of `strcpy` a subroutine.

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## strcpy in C

```
strcpy( char *str1, char *str2 ) {
    while (*str2) {
        *str1 = *str2;
        str1++;
        str2++;
    }
}
```

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## strcpy in Assembly

`str1` is `$s1` and `str2` is `$s2`

```
Loop:  lb  $t0,0($s2)    # $t0 = *str2
      sb  $t0,0($s1)    # *str1 = $t0
      addi $s2,$s2,1    # str2++
      addi $s1,$s1,1    # str1++
      bne $t0,$zero,Loop #
```

- Uses registers `$s0`, `$s1` and `$t0`
- Remember our convention: callee (the subroutine) must save and restore `$s0-$s7`

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## strcpy subroutine

```
strcpy:
  addi $sp,$sp,-8    # make room for 2 regs
  sw  $s2,4($sp)    # save $s2
  sw  $s1,0($sp)    # save $s1
  add $s1,$a0,$zero #
  add $s2,$a1,$zero #

Loop:
  lb  $t0,0($s2)    # $t0 = *str2
  sb  $t0,0($s1)    # *str1 = $t0
  addi $s2,$s2,1    # str2++
  addi $s1,$s1,1    # str1++
  bne $t0,$zero,Loop # jump if not done

  lw  $s1,0($sp)    # restore $s0
  lw  $s2,4($sp)    # restore $s1
  addi $sp,$sp,8    # adjust stack
  jr  $ra          # return
```

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## Recursive Exercise

Write the MIPS Assembly Language code for the following C program:

```
int factorial( int x ) {
  if (x<1) return 1;
  else return x * factorial(x-1);
}
```

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## Recursion - Issues

- Since this subroutine calls another subroutine (in this case it calls itself!):
  - we need to save `$ra`
  - we need to save any temp registers (`$t0-$t7`) before calling a subroutine.
    - only if we need the value of a temp register to still be the same after the call!

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## Outline of `factorial` subroutine

- save registers `$ra`, and `$a0` (the argument `x`)
- check to see if `x < 1`, if so just return 0
- if `x >= 1`:
  - call `factorial(x-1)` and put result in `$a1`
  - put `x` in `$a0`
  - call multiply: result in `$v0`
  - restore `$ra` and `$a0`
  - return

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## `factorial` (part 1)

```
factorial:
    # make room for 2 registers
    addi $sp,$sp,-8

    # save $ra and $a0 on stack
    sw $a0,4($sp)
    sw $ra,0($sp)

    slti $t0,$a0,1    # is x < 1 ?
    bne $t0,$zero,L1  # yes - go to L1
```

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### factorial (part 2) when $x \geq 1$

```
sub $a0,$a0,1    # x--;
jal factorial    # call fact(x-1)

# Now multiply the result by x
# a0 is no longer x,
#   but we still have it on the stack

lw $a0,4($sp)
add $a1,$v0,$zero # $v0 is fact(x-1)
jal multiply     # get the product
```

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### factorial (part 3)

```
# restore $a0 and $ra before returning
# multiply may have changed $a0
#   (so we must restore again)
# $v0 is already the return value

lw $ra,0($sp) # restore $ra
lw $a0,4($sp) # restore $a0
add $sp,$sp,8 # restore the stack
jr $ra
```

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### factorial (part 4) $x < 1$

```
L1:
# x < 1 so we just return 1
addi $v0,$zero,1
# $a0 and $ra have not changed,
# so there is no need to restore
# but we need to restore the stack
add $sp,$sp,8
jr $ra
```

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### Exercise: Simulate **factorial(3)**

- Step through the code, keeping track of:
  - all the used registers
  - \$sp and the contents of the stack
- Spim makes this easy!

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### What about saving **\$t0-\$t7**?

- The convention says we should expect subroutines to use **\$t0-\$t7**.
- If we use them and need the value to be the same after a subroutine call – we need to save them before calling the subroutine.
- We also need to restore them after calling the subroutine.

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### Saving registers

- The code is the same – use the stack:

```
add $sp,$sp,-4      add $sp,$sp,-8
sw $t0,0($sp)      sw $t1,4($sp)
                    sw $t0,0($sp)

jal whatever

                    jal whatever

lw $t0,0($sp)      lw $t1,4($sp)
add $sp,$sp,4      lw $t0,0($sp)
                    add $sp,$sp,4
```

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## Writing & Calling Subroutines

- When calling a subroutine:
  - you don't need to worry about `$s0-$s7`, they won't change.
  - you do need to worry about `$t0-$t7` they may change.
- When writing a subroutine:
  - you need to save/restore the callers `$s0-$s7` if you use them.
  - `$t0-$t7` are always free to use

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## More Writing Subroutines

- Careful with `$ra` – if you call a subroutine this will change `$ra` (and your return won't work!). Might need to save/restore `$ra`.
- Careful with `$a0-$a4` and `$v0-$v1`.
- ALWAYS: Make sure `$sp` is the same as when you were called!!!!

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## Pseudoinstructions

- There are many instructions you can use in MIPS assembly language that don't really exist!
- They are a *convenience* for the programmer (or compiler) – just a shorthand notation for specifying some operation(s).

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## MIPS **move** pseudoinstruction

`move destreg, srcereg`

There is no move instruction, but the assembler lets us pretend.

The assembler can achieve this using `add` and `$zero`:

`move $s0, $s1` is really `add $s0,$s1,$zero`

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## **blt** revisited

- *Branch if less than* is a pseudoinstruction based on `slt` and `bne`:

`blt $s0,$s1,foo` is really `slt $at,$s0,$s1`  
`bne $at,foo`

Register `$at` is reserved for use by the assembler (we can't use it – the assembler needs it for pseudoinstructions).

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## Some useful pseudoinstructions

`li` load immediate

`la` load address

`sgt, sle, sge` set if greater than, ...

`bge, bgt, ble, blt` conditional branching

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