



香港中文大學
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

CENG4480

Lecture 09: Memory 1

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Overview

Introduction

Memory Principle

Random Access Memory (RAM)

Non-Volatile Memory

Conclusion



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Why We Need Memory?

Combinational Circuit:

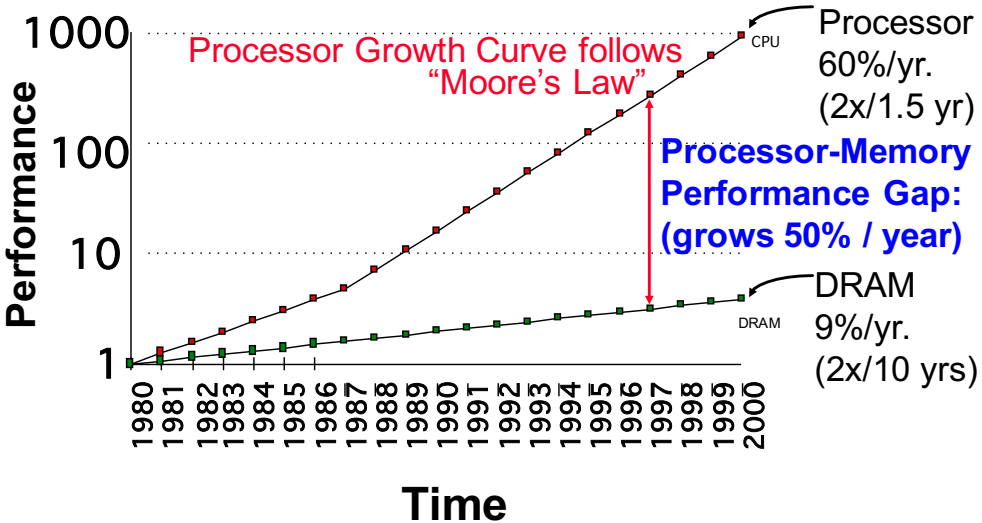
- ▶ Always gives the same output for a given set of inputs
- ▶ E.g., adders

Sequential Circuit:

- ▶ Store information
- ▶ Output depends on stored information
- ▶ E.g., counter
- ▶ Need a **storage** element



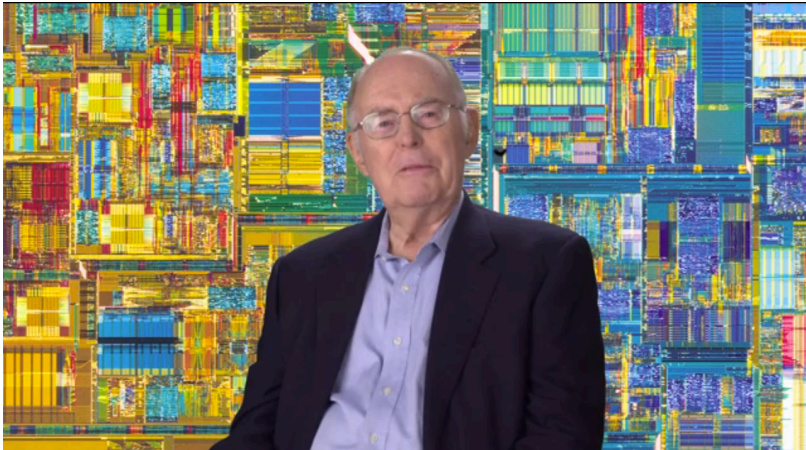
Who Cares About the Memory Hierarchy?

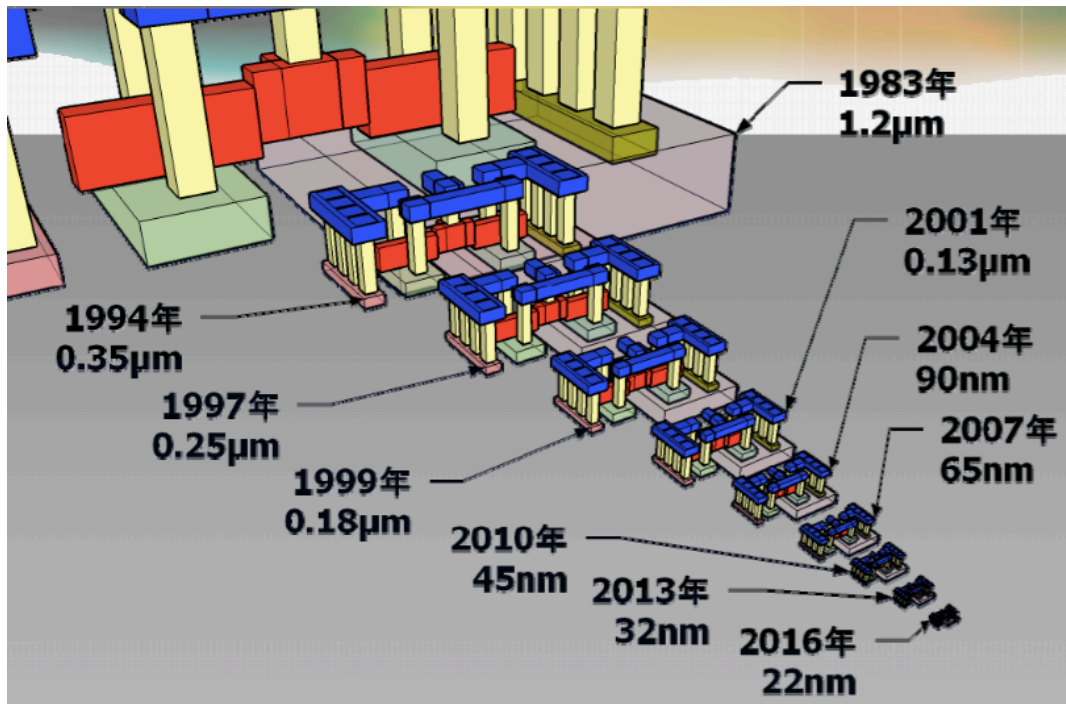


Moore's Law

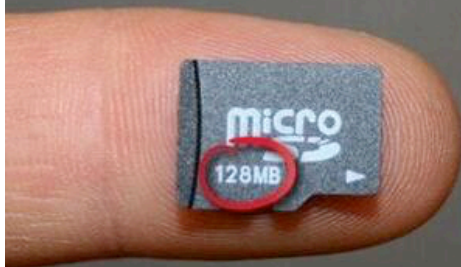
Transistor number on a unit area would double every 1.5 years.

*1965 paper reprint: [link](#)





2005



2014



Memory System Revisted

- ▶ Maximum size of memory is determined by addressing scheme

E.g.

16-bit addresses can only address $2^{16} = 65536$ memory locations

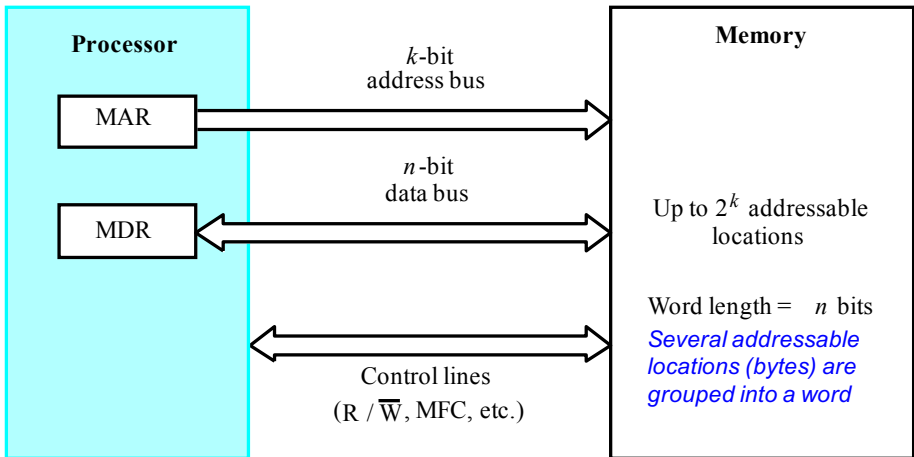
- ▶ Most machines are **byte**-addressable
- ▶ each memory address location refers to a byte
- ▶ Most machines retrieve/store data in words
- ▶ Common abbreviations
 - ▶ $1\text{k} \approx 2^{10}$ (kilo)
 - ▶ $1\text{M} \approx 2^{20}$ (Mega)
 - ▶ $1\text{G} \approx 2^{30}$ (Giga)
 - ▶ $1\text{T} \approx 2^{40}$ (Tera)



Simplified View

Data transfer takes place through

- ▶ **MAR**: memory address register
- ▶ **MDR**: memory data register



Big Picture

Processor usually runs much faster than main memory:

- ▶ Small memories are fast, large memories are slow.
- ▶ Use a **cache memory** to store data in the processor that is likely to be used.

Main memory is limited:

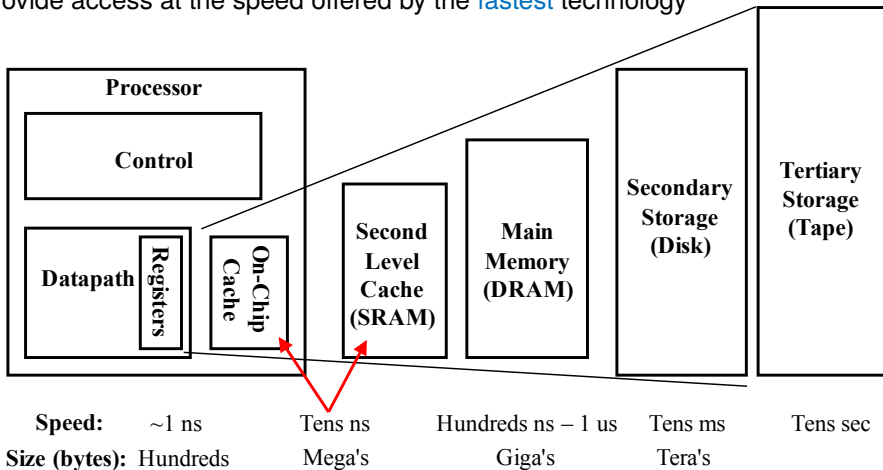
- ▶ Use **virtual memory** to increase the apparent size of physical memory by moving unused sections of memory to disk (automatically).
- ▶ A translation between virtual and physical addresses is done by a memory management unit (**MMU**)
- ▶ To be discussed in later lectures



Memory Hierarchy

Taking advantage of the **principle of locality**:

- ▶ Present the user with as much memory as is available in the **cheapest** technology.
- ▶ Provide access at the speed offered by the **fastest** technology



Terminology

Memory Access Time

time between start and finish of a memory request

Memory Cycle Time

minimum delay between successive memory operations

Random Access Memory (RAM)

Property: comparable access time for any memory locations



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Random Access Memory (RAM)

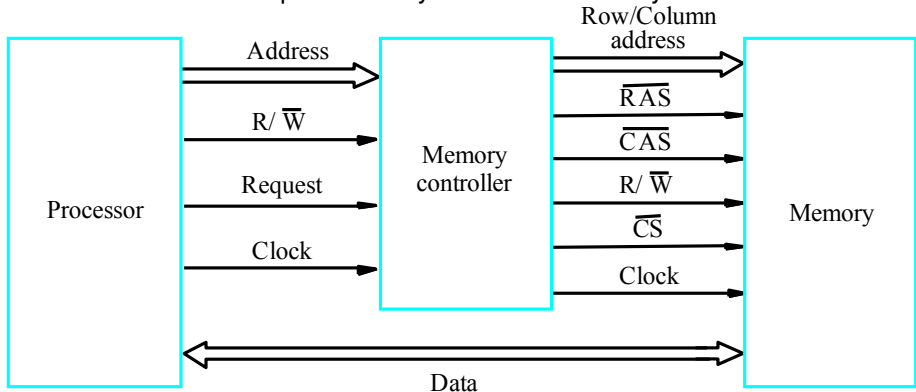
Non-Volatile Memory

Conclusion



Memory Controller

- ▶ A **memory controller** is normally used to interface between the memory and the processor.
- ▶ DRAMs have a slightly more complex interface as they need refreshing and they usually have time-multiplex signals to reduce pin number.
- ▶ SRAM interfaces are simpler and may not need a memory controller.



RAS (CAS) = Row (Column) Address Strobe; CS = Chip Select



Memory Controller

- ▶ The memory controller accepts a complete address and the R/W signal from the processor.
- ▶ The controller generates the **RAS** (Row Access Strobe) and **CAS** (Column Access Strobe) signals.



Memory Controller

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- ▶ The **high-order** address bits, which select a row in the cell array, are provided first under the control of the RAS (Row Access Strobe) signal.
- ▶ Then the **low-order** address bits, which select a column, are provided on the same address pins under the control of the CAS (Column Access Strobe) signal.



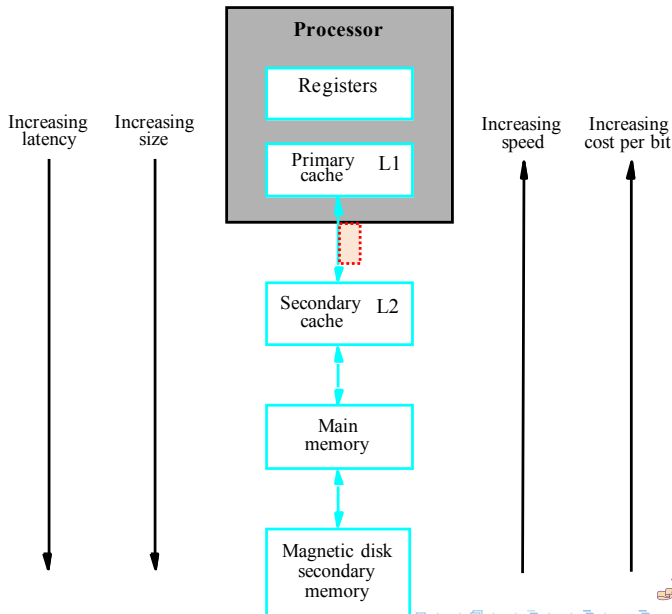
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- ▶ Then the **low-order** address bits, which select a column, are provided on the same address pins under the control of the CAS (Column Access Strobe) signal.
- ▶ The right memory module will be selected based on the address. Data lines are connected directly between the processor and the memory.
- ▶ SDRAM needs refresh, but the refresh overhead is only less than 1 percent of the total time available to access the memory.



Memory Hierarchy

- ▶ **Aim:** to produce fast, big and cheap memory
- ▶ L1, L2 cache are usually SRAM
- ▶ Main memory is DRAM
- ▶ Relies on *locality of reference*



Locality of Reference

Temporal Locality (locality in time)

- ▶ If an item is referenced, it will tend to be referenced again soon.
- ▶ When information item (instruction or data) is first needed, brought it into cache where it will hopefully be used again.

Spatial Locality (locality in space)

- ▶ If an item is referenced, neighbouring items whose addresses are close-by will tend to be referenced soon.
- ▶ Rather than a single word, fetch data from adjacent addresses as well.



Mix-and-Match: Best of Both

By taking advantages of the principle of locality:

- ▶ Present the user with as much memory as is available in the cheapest technology.
- ▶ Provide access at the speed offered by the fastest technology.

DRAM is slow but cheap and dense:

- ▶ Good choice for presenting the user with a BIG memory system ↔ main memory

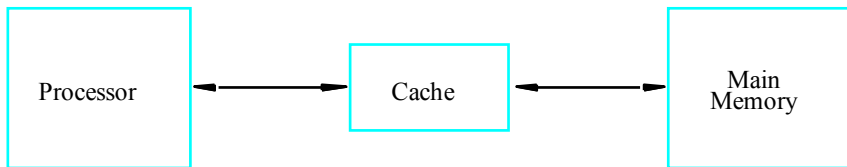
SRAM is fast but expensive and not very dense:

- ▶ Good choice for providing the user FAST access time ↔ L1 and L2 cache



Cache Usage

- ▶ Need to determine how the cache is organized
- ▶ **Mapping functions** determine how memory addresses are assigned to cache locations
- ▶ Need to have a **replacement algorithm** to decide what to do when cache is full (i.e. decide which item to be unloaded from cache).



Block

A set of contiguous addresses of a given size (**cache block** is also called **cache line**)



Cache Read Operation

- ▶ Contents of a block are **read** into the cache the first time from the memory.
- ▶ Subsequent accesses are (hopefully) from the cache, called a **cache read hit**.
- ▶ Number of cache entries is relatively small, need to keep most likely used data in cache.
- ▶ When an un-cached block is required, need to employ a **replacement algorithm** to remove an old block and to create space for the new one.



Cache Write Operation

Scheme 1: Write-Through

Cache and main memory updated at the same time.

Note that read misses and read hits can occur.



Cache Write Operation

Scheme 1: Write-Through

Cache and main memory updated at the same time.

Note that read misses and read hits can occur.

Scheme 2: Write-Back

Update cache only and mark the entry dirty. Main memory will be updated later when cache block is removed.

Note that write misses and write hits can occur.



Question 2:

Which write scheme is simpler? Which one has better performance? Why?



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Random Access Memory (RAM)

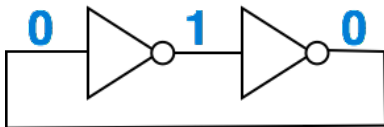
Non-Volatile Memory

Conclusion



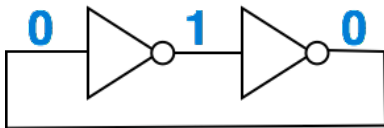
Storage based on Feedback

- ▶ What if we add feedback to a pair of inverters?

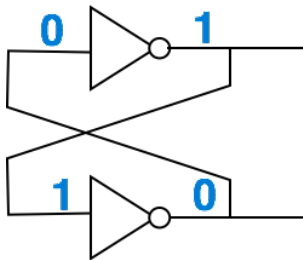


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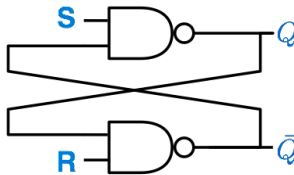
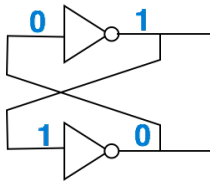


- ▶ Usually drawn as a ring of **cross-coupled** inverters
- ▶ Stable way to store one bit of information (*w. power*)



How to change the value stored?

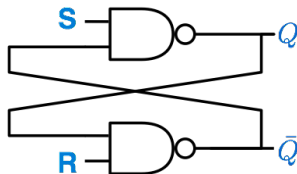
- ▶ Replace inverter with **NAND** gate
- ▶ **RS Latch**



A	B	A nand B
0	0	1
0	1	1
1	0	1
1	1	0

QUESTION:

What's the Q value based on different R, S inputs?



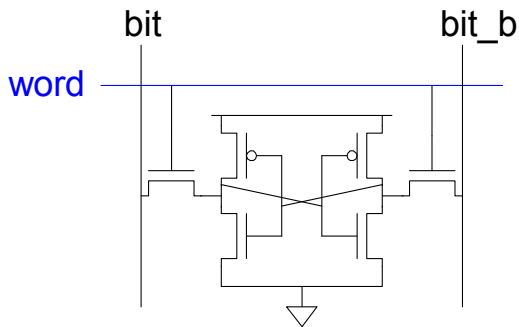
A	B	A nand B
0	0	1
0	1	1
1	0	1
1	1	0

- ▶ R=S=1:
- ▶ S=0, R=1:
- ▶ S=1, R=0:
- ▶ R=S=0:



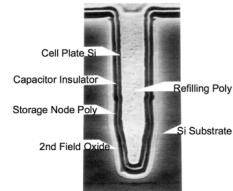
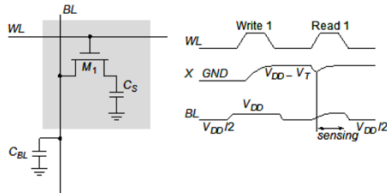
SRAM Cell

- ▶ At least 6 transistors (**6T**)
- ▶ Used in most commercial chips
- ▶ A pair of **weak** cross-coupled inverters
- ▶ **Data** stored in cross-coupled inverters



DRAM Cell

- ▶ **1** Transistor (**1T**)
- ▶ Requires presence of an extra **capacitor**
- ▶ Modifications in the manufacturing process.
- ▶ Higher density
- ▶ **Write**: Charged or discharged the capacitor (slow)
- ▶ **Read**: Charge redistribution takes place between bit line and storage capacitance



SRAM v.s. DRAM

Static RAM (SRAM)

- ▶ Capable of retaining the state as long as power is applied.
- ▶ They are **fast**, low power (current flows only when accessing the cells) but costly (require several transistors), so the capacity is small.
- ▶ They are the Level 1 cache and Level 2 cache inside a processor, of size 3 MB or more.

Dynamic RAM (DRAM)

- ▶ store data as electric charge on a capacitor.
- ▶ Charge leaks away with time, so DRAMs must be refreshed.
- ▶ In return for this trouble, **much higher density** (simpler cells).



The good thing about having a bad memory is that jokes can be funny more than once.



someecards
user card



Synchronous DRAM (SDRAM)

- ▶ The common type used today as it uses a clock to synchronize the operation.
- ▶ The refresh operation becomes transparent to the users.
- ▶ All control signals needed are generated inside the chip.
- ▶ The initial commercial SDRAM in the 1990s were designed for clock speed of up to 133MHz.
- ▶ Today's SDRAM chips operate with clock speeds exceeding 1 GHz.



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Memory modules are used to hold several SDRAM chips and are the standard type used in a computer's motherboard, of size like 4GB or more.

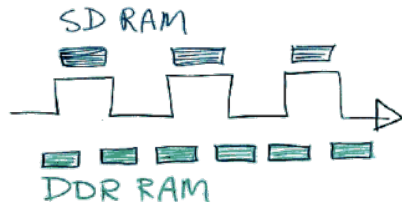


Double Data Rate (DDR) SDRAM

- ▶ normal SDRAMs only operate once per clock cycle
- ▶ Double Data Rate (DDR) SDRAM transfers data on both clock edges
- ▶ **DDR-2** (4x basic memory clock) and **DDR-3** (8x basic memory clock) are in the market.
- ▶ They offer increased storage capacity, lower power and faster clock speeds.
- ▶ For example, DDR2 can operate at clock frequencies of 400 and 800 MHz. Therefore, they can transfer data at effective clock speed of 800 and 1600 MHz.



Performance of SDRAM



1 Hertz

1 Cycle per second

RAM Type	Theoretical Maximum Bandwidth
SDRAM 100 MHz (PC100)	$100 \text{ MHz} \times 64 \text{ bit/ cycle} = 800 \text{ MByte/sec}$
SDRAM 133 MHz (PC133)	$133 \text{ MHz} \times 64 \text{ bit/ cycle} = 1064 \text{ MByte/sec}$
DDR SDRAM 200 MHz (PC1600)	$2 \times 100 \text{ MHz} \times 64 \text{ bit/ cycle} \approx 1600 \text{ MByte/sec}$
DDR SDRAM 266 MHz (PC2100)	$2 \times 133 \text{ MHz} \times 64 \text{ bit/ cycle} \approx 2100 \text{ MByte/sec}$
DDR SDRAM 333 MHz (PC2600)	$2 \times 166 \text{ MHz} \times 64 \text{ bit/ cycle} \approx 2600 \text{ MByte/sec}$
DDR-2 SDRAM 667 MHz (PC2-5400)	$2 \times 2 \times 166 \text{ MHz} \times 64 \text{ bit/ cycle} \approx 5400 \text{ MByte/sec}$
DDR-2 SDRAM 800 MHz (PC2-6400)	$2 \times 2 \times 200 \text{ MHz} \times 64 \text{ bit/ cycle} \approx 6400 \text{ MByte/sec}$

Bandwidth comparison. However, due to latencies, SDRAM does not perform as good as the figures shown.



Bandwidth v.s. Latency

Example

- ▶ Mary acts **FAST** but she's always **LATE**.
- ▶ Peter is always **PUNCTUAL** but he is **SLOW**.



Bandwidth v.s. Latency

Example

- ▶ Mary acts **FAST** but she's always **LATE**.
- ▶ Peter is always **PUNCTUAL** but he is **SLOW**.

Bandwidth:

- ▶ talking about the “number of bits/bytes per second” when transferring a block of data steadily.

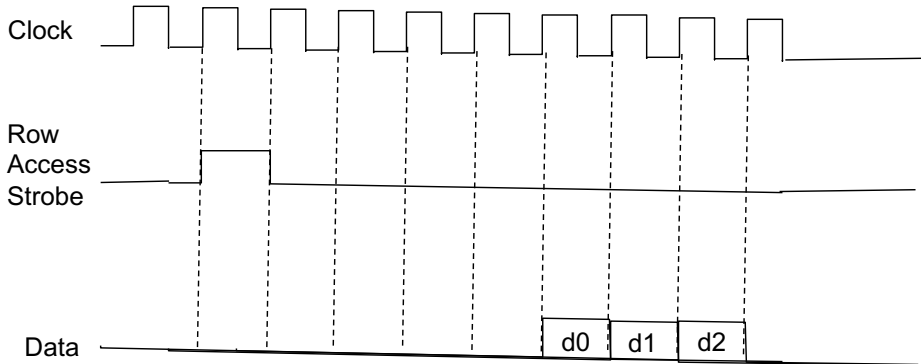
Latency:

- ▶ amount of time to transfer the first word of a block after issuing the access signal.
- ▶ Usually measure in “number of clock cycles” or in $ns/\mu s$.



Question:

Suppose the clock rate is 500 MHz. What is the latency and what is the bandwidth, assuming that each data is 64 bits?



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Read-Only Memory (ROM)

- ▶ Memory content fixed and cannot be changed easily.
- ▶ Useful to **bootstrap** a computer since RAM is volatile (i.e. lost memory) when power removed.
- ▶ We need to store a small program in such a memory, to be used to start the process of loading the OS from a hard disk into the main memory.

PROM/EPROM/EEPROM



FLASH Memory

- ▶ Flash devices have greater density, higher capacity and lower cost per bit.
- ▶ Can be read and written
- ▶ This is normally used for **non-volatile** storage
- ▶ Typical applications include cell phones, digital cameras, MP3 players, etc.



FLASH Cards

- ▶ Flash cards are made from FLASH chips
- ▶ Flash cards with standard interface are usable in a variety of products.
- ▶ Flash cards with USB interface are widely used – memory keys.
- ▶ Larger cards may hold 32GB. A minute of music can be stored in about 1MB of memory, hence 32GB can hold 500 hours of music.



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Conclusion

- ▶ Processor usually runs much faster than main memory
- ▶ Common RAM types:
SRAM, DRAM, SDRAM, DDR SDRAM
- ▶ Principle of locality: Temporal and Spatial
 - ▶ Present the user with as much memory as is available in the **cheapest** technology.
 - ▶ Provide access at the speed offered by the **fastest** technology.
- ▶ Memory hierarchy:
 - ▶ Register → Cache → Main Memory → Disk → Tape

