

CS2100 Computer Organisation
Tutorial #11: Cache
 (Week 13: 13 – 17 April 2026)
Answers to Selected Questions

Tutorial Questions

1. A processor uses a cache memory system with the following characteristics:
- Cache hit time = 2 ns
 - Cache miss rate = 5%
 - Main memory access time = 80 ns

What is the average memory access time (AMAT)?

Answer:

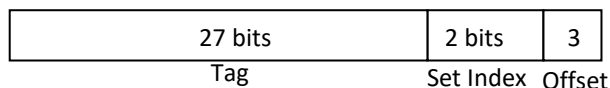
Cache I slide 20: $AMAT = (\text{Hit rate} \times \text{Hit time}) + (\text{Miss rate} \times \text{Miss penalty}) = 0.95 \times 2 + 0.05 \times 82 = 6 \text{ ns.}$

3. Use the series of references given in question 1 above: 4, 16, 32, 20, 80, 68, 76, 224, 36, 44, 16, 172, 20, 24, 36, and 68 in a MIPS machine. Assuming a **two-way set-associative cache** with two-word blocks and a total size of 16 words that is initially empty, label each address reference as a hit or miss and show the content of the cache. Assume **LRU** replacement policy.

You may write the data word starting at memory address X as M[X]. (For example, data word starting at memory address 12 is written as M[12]. This implies that the word includes the 4 bytes of data at addresses 12, 13, 14 and 15.) You may write the tag values as decimal numbers. If a block is replaced in the cache, cross out the corresponding content in the cache, and write the new content over it.

Answer:

Since this is a MIPS machine, a word consists of 4 bytes or 32 bits.
 Should first work out the tag, set index, and offset fields:



- | | | | | |
|------|----------|----|-----|--------|
| 4: | 00...000 | 00 | 100 | ← Miss |
| 16: | 00...000 | 10 | 000 | ← Miss |
| 32: | 00...001 | 00 | 000 | ← Miss |
| 20: | 00...000 | 10 | 100 | ← Hit |
| 80: | 00...010 | 10 | 000 | ← Miss |
| 68: | 00...010 | 00 | 100 | ← Miss |
| 76: | 00...010 | 01 | 100 | ← Miss |
| 224: | 00...111 | 00 | 000 | ← Miss |
| 36: | 00...001 | 00 | 100 | ← Miss |
| 44: | 00...001 | 01 | 100 | ← Miss |
| 16: | 00...000 | 10 | 000 | ← Hit |
| 172: | 00...101 | 01 | 100 | ← Miss |
| 20: | 00...000 | 10 | 100 | ← Hit |
| 24: | 00...000 | 11 | 000 | ← Miss |
| 36: | 00...001 | 00 | 100 | ← Hit |
| 68: | 00...010 | 00 | 100 | ← Miss |

Cache set	Valid bit	Tag	Word0	Word1	Valid bit	Tag	Word0	Word1
0	0 1	0 2 1	M[0] M[64] M[32]	M[4] M[68] M[36]	0 1	1 7 2	M[32] M[224] M[64]	M[36] M[228] M[68]
1	0 1	2 5	M[72] M[168]	M[76] M[172]	0 1	1	M[40]	M[44]
2	0 1	0	M[16]	M[20]	0 1	2	M[80]	M[84]
3	0 1	0	M[24]	M[28]	0			

4. Although we use only data memory as example in the cache lecture, the principle covered is equally applicable to the instruction memory. This question takes a look at both the instruction cache and data cache.

The code below is from Tutorial 8 Question 1 (*palindrome checking*) with the following variable mappings:

low → \$s0, high → \$s1, matched → \$s3, base of string[] → \$s4, size → \$s5

#	Code	Comment
i0	[some instruction]	
i1	addi \$s0, \$zero, 0	# low = 0
i2	addi \$s1, \$s5, -1	# high = size-1
i3	addi \$s3, \$zero, 1	# matched = 1
	loop:	
i4	slt \$t0, \$s0, \$s1	# (low < high)?
i5	beq \$t0, \$zero, exit	# exit if (low >= high)
i6	beq \$s3, \$zero, exit	# exit if (matched == 0)
i7	add \$t1, \$s4, \$s0	# address of string[low]
i8	lb \$t2, 0(\$t1)	# t2 = string[low]
i9	addi \$t3, \$s4, \$s1	# address of string[high]
i10	lb \$t4, 0(\$t3)	# t4 = string[high]
i11	beq \$t2, \$t4, else	
i12	addi \$s3, \$zero, 0	# matched = 0
i13	j endW	# can be "j loop"
	else:	
i14	addi \$s0, \$s0, 1	# low++
i15	addi \$s1, \$s1, -1	# high--
	endW:	
i16	j loop	# end of while
	exit:	
i17	[some instruction]	

Parts (a) to (d) assume that instruction i0 is stored at memory address 0x0.

- (a) Instruction cache: **Direct mapped with 2 blocks of 16 bytes each** (i.e. each block can hold 4 consecutive instructions).

Starting with an empty cache, the fetching of instruction i1 will cause a cache miss. After the cache miss is resolved, we now have the following instructions in the instruction cache:

Instruction Cache Block 0	[i0, i1, i2, i3]
Instruction Cache Block 1	[empty]

Fetching of i2 and i3 are all cache hits as they can be found in the cache.

Assuming the string being checked is a palindrome. Show the instruction cache block content **at the end of the 1st iteration (i.e. up to instruction i16)**.

Answer:

Instruction Cache Block 0	[i16,]
Instruction Cache Block 1	[i12, i13, i14, i15]

Working: Instructions executed = i1 to i11, i14 to i16

Block #0, Cache index = 0	[i0, i1, i2, i3]
Block #1, Cache index = 1	[i4, i5, i6, i7]
Block #2, Cache index = 0	[i8, i9, i10, i11]
Block #3, Cache index = 1	[i12, i13, i14, i15]
Block #4, Cache index = 0	[i16, other....]

- (b) If the loop is executed for a total of 10 iterations, what is the total number of cache hits (i.e. after the 10th "j loop" is fetched)?

Answer:

Working (1st Iteration):

i1	i2	i3	i4	i5	i6	i7	i8	i9	i10	i11	i14	i15	i16
M	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M

Working (2nd iteration onward):

i4	i5	i6	i7	i8	i9	i10	i11	i14	i15	i16
M	H	H	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M

Total hits = 9 (1st iteration) + 7×9 (remaining 9 iterations) = **72**

(c) Suppose we change the instruction cache to:

- **Direct mapped with 4 blocks of 8 bytes each** (i.e. each block can hold 2 consecutive instructions).

Assuming the string being checked is a palindrome. Show the instruction cache block content **at the end of the 1st iteration (i.e. up to instruction i16)**.

Answer:

Instruction Cache Block 0	[i16, ...]
Instruction Cache Block 1	[i10, i11]
Instruction Cache Block 2	[i4, i5]
Instruction Cache Block 3	[i14, i15]

Working:

First, find out the block information for the full code:

Block #0, Cache index = 0	[i0, i1]
Block #1, Cache index = 1	[i2, i3]
Block #2, Cache index = 2	[i4, i5]
Block #3, Cache index = 3	[i6, i7]
Block #4, Cache index = 0	[i8, i9]
Block #5, Cache index = 1	[i10, i11]
Block #6, Cache index = 2	[i12, i13]
Block #7, Cache index = 3	[i14, i15]
Block #8, Cache index = 0	[i16, ...]

Second, use the execution pattern to find out what is accessed, since we execute i1 to i11 (Block #0 to Block #5) then i14 to i16 (Block #7 and Block #8), we get the final cache content as shown. You should note that Block #6 [i12, i13] is not accessed in this particular execution.

(d) If the loop is executed for a total of 10 iterations, what is the total number of cache hits (i.e. after the 10th "j loop" is fetched)?

Answer:

Working (1st Iteration):

i1	i2	i3	i4	i5	i6	i7	i8	i9	i10	i11	i14	i15	i16
M	M	H	M	H	M	H	M	H	M	H	M	H	M

Working (2nd iteration onward):

i4	i5	i6	i7	i8	i9	i10	i11	i14	i15	i16
H	H	M	H	M	H	H	H	M	H	M

Total hits = 6 (1st iteration) + 7×9 (remaining 9 iterations) = 69

Let us now turn to the study of **data cache**. We will assume the following scenario for parts (e) to (g):

- The string being checked is **64-character long**. The first character is located at location **0x1000**.
- The string is a palindrome (i.e. it will go through 32 iterations of the code).

(e) Given a **direct mapped data cache with 2 cache blocks, each block is 8 bytes**, what is the final content of the data cache at the end of the code execution (after the code failed the beq at i5)? Use **s[X..Y]** to indicate the data **string[X]** to **string[Y]**.

Answer:

Data Cache Block #0	s[32..39]
Data Cache Block #1	s[24..31]

Access patterns = s[0], s[63], s[1], s[62], ..., s[31], s[32]

Blocks information (blocks that can go into the same cache location are listed together):

Cache index = 0	s[0..7] [16..23] [32..39] [48..55]
Cache index = 1	s[8..15] [24..31] [40..47] [56..63]

(f) What is the hit rate of (e)? Give your answer in a fraction or a percentage correct to two decimal places.

Answer:

Observation: the access pattern nicely alternates between Block0-Block1 and Block1-Block0. So, in general, other than the first miss to bring in a block, the remaining 7 accesses on the block are all hits.

Hence, hit rate = **7/8** or **87.50%**

(g) Suppose the string is now **72-character long**, the first character is still located at location **0x1000** and the string is still a palindrome, what is the hit rate at the end of the execution?

Answer:

Access patterns = s[0], s[71], s[1], s[70], ..., s[35], s[36]

Blocks information (blocks that can go into the same cache location are listed together):

Cache index = 0	s[0..7] [16..23] [32..39] [48..55] [64..71]
Cache index = 1	s[8..15] [24..31] [40..47] [56..63]

Observation: the access pattern is either Block0-Block0 or Block1-Block1. So, every access is a miss, except the last block [32..39]! This is an example of **cache thrashing** (you can imagine the cache is "beaten up" pretty badly 😊).

Hence, hit rate = **7/72** (the last 7 accesses on block [32..39]) or **9.72%**