Processes and Threads

Process

- ‘Heavy-weight’ unit of computation
- Process descriptor
  - Object program (Program text)
  - Data segment
  - Stack
  - Heap
  - Process Status Word (PSW) – executing, waiting, ready
  - Resources acquired
Process contents

- Memory for each process contains
  - Program text
  - Globals/static variables
  - Stack
  - Heap

Main Memory
Process Control Block (PCB)

- Also called Process Descriptor
- Each process has per-process state maintained by the OS
  - Identification: process, parent, user, group, etc.
  - Address space: virtual memory, memory limits
  - I/O state: file handles (file system), communication endpoints (network), etc.
  - Accounting information
  - Program counter, Stack counter
- Details in later chapter

Thread

- Thread: light-weight process
  - OS maintains minimal internal state information
- Usually instantiated from a process
- Each thread has its OWN unique descriptor
  - Data, Thread Status Word (TSW)
- SHARES with the parent process (and other threads)
  - Program text
  - Resources
  - Parent process data segment
Process Vs Threads

- Processes require substantially more OS overhead in creation and maintenance

![Diagram showing the difference between processes and threads](image)

Taken from Modern Operating Systems, 2nd Ed, Tanenbaum, 2001

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Thread space

- Data is shared among all threads
- Each thread maintains its own stack
- Each thread has its own Program Counter (PC)
wait()

- Used by parent process to wait on ONE child process to finish
- int wait(&status);
- return value of wait is the process id of child process that just finished
- if no child processes, wait returns −1 immediately

wait() ... ctd

- wait returns value if child process
  - called function exit()... or terminated normally
  - gets terminated by a signal
- returns exit status of child in variable status
waitpid()
- Used by parent to wait on a specific child process to terminate indicated by pid
- int waitpid(pid, &status, options)
- pid: process id of the child process parent waits on

pipes
- One form of inter-process communication (IPC)
- follows message-passing paradigm of IPC
int fds[2];
retval = pipe(fd);
- creates two file descriptors, one for reading, the second for writing
What are pthreads?

- A standardized programming interface
- For UNIX systems, specified by the IEEE POSIX 1003.1c standard (1995).
- Implementations which adhere to this standard are referred to as POSIX threads, or Pthreads.

```
$gcc -o firstthread firstthread.c -lpthread
```
pthread creation

- **Use** `pthread_create` function

```c
pthread_create(thread, attr, routine, arg)
```

- **thread**: Name of this thread
- **attr**: Thread attributes
- **routine**: Function that gets executed once thread is started
- **arg**: A single argument to be passed to routine, cast as pointer of type void, passed by reference.
  - For multiple arguments, bundle them up in a struct and pass struct to routine

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First pthread program

```c
#include <pthread.h>
#include <stdio.h>
#define NUM_THREADS 5
int main()
{
    pthread_t threads[NUM_THREADS];
    int rc, t;
    for (t = 0; t < NUM_THREADS; t++) {
        printf("Creating thread %d\n", t);
        rc = pthread_create(&threads[t], NULL, PrintHello, (void *)&t);
    }
    pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```
First pthread program... ctd

```c
void *PrintHello(void *threadid)
{
    printf("%d: Hello World!\n", threadid);
    pthread_exit(NULL);
}
```
- `pthread_exit(void *status)`: Used to explicitly terminate a thread
- Thread can use the `status` variable to specify its status; pass data to `joining` threads

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pthreads... ctd

- `pthread_join()`: Analogous to `wait()` for processes.
- Allows threads to `join` to form single thread of execution
Second example

```c
#include <pthread.h>
#include <stdio.h>

int main(void) {
    int N = 8;
    pthread_t hThread; int fact;
    pthread_create(&hThread, NULL, (void *)ChildThread, (void *)(void *)N);
    pthread_join(hThread, (void *)&fact);
    printf("Factorial of N = %d\n", fact); return 0;
}
```

Second example... ctd

```c
void ChildThread(int N) {
    int i; int fact = 1;

    for(i=1;i<=N;++i) {
        fact*=i;
    }

    pthread_exit((void *)fact);
}
```
Reference for pthreads

- Posix threads programming
  http://www.llnl.gov/computing/tutorials/workshopops/workshop/pthreads/MAIN.html#Pthread
- Introduction to pthreads
  http://phoenix.liunet.edu/~mdevi/pthread/Intro.htm