Memory Hierarchy and Cache

Memory hierarchy
Cache basics
Locality
Cache organization
Cache-aware programming

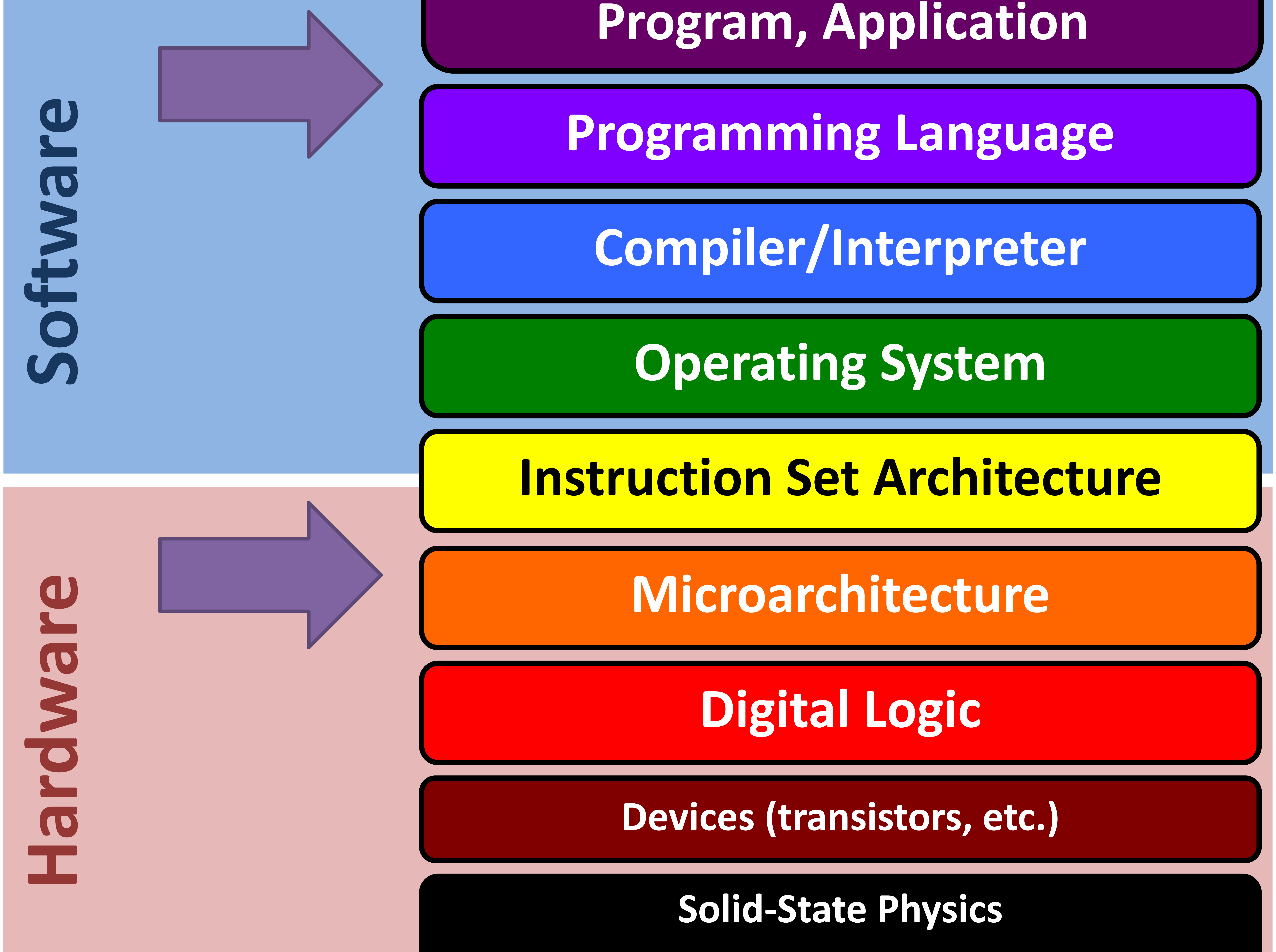
Big picture: memory layout impacts program performance in sometimes surprising ways!

When someone says "clear your browser's cache", what does that do?

0

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.


Software
Program, Application
Programming Language
Compiler/Interpreter
Operating System
Instruction Set Architecture
Hardware
Microarchitecture
Digital Logic
Devices (transistors, etc.)
Solid-State Physics

Examples: Nvidia documentation

"CUDA®, a general purpose parallel computing platform and programming model that leverages the parallel compute engine in NVIDIA GPUs to solve many complex computational problems in a more efficient way than on a CPU."

- Nvidia CUDA C++ Programming Guide

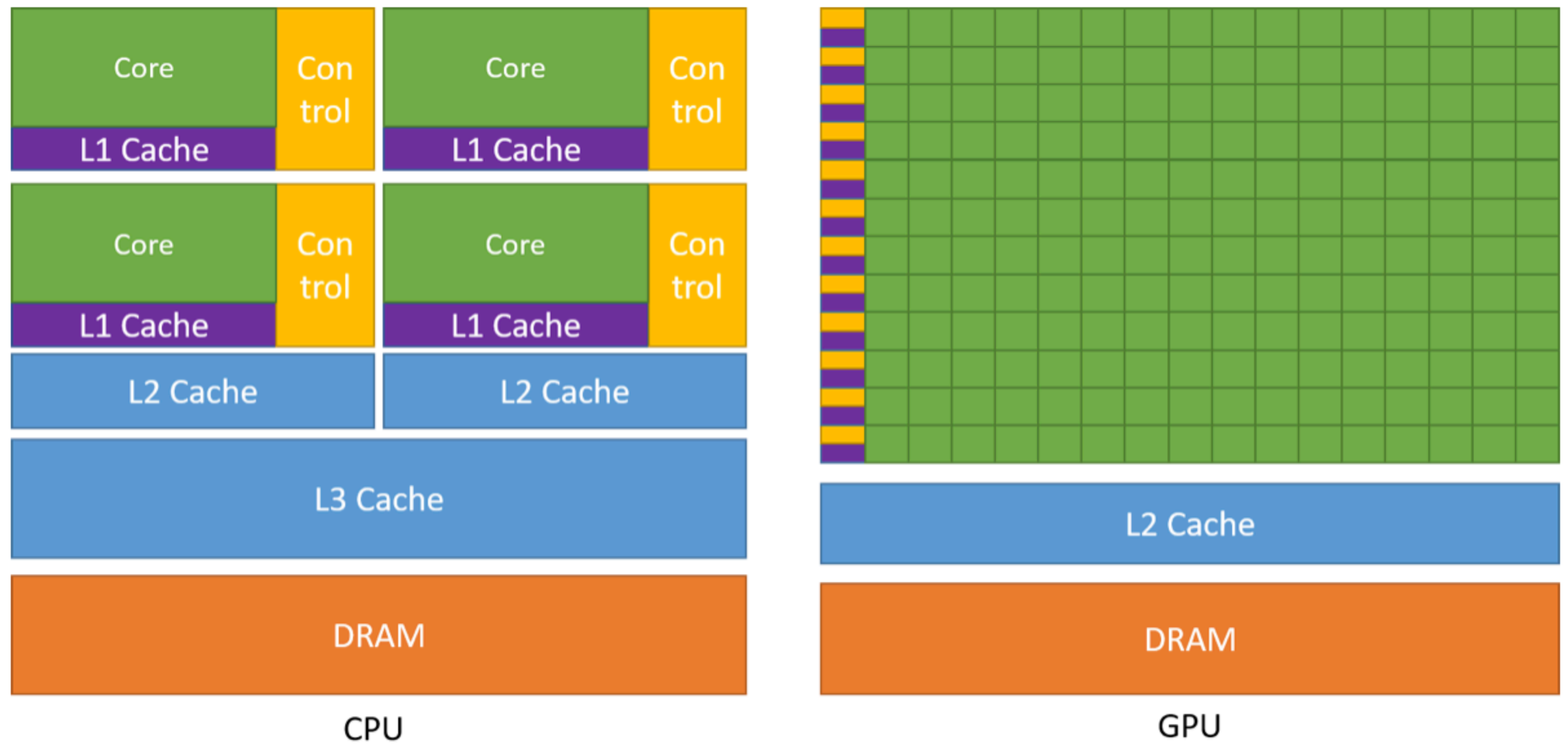


Figure 1: *The GPU Devotes More Transistors to Data Processing*

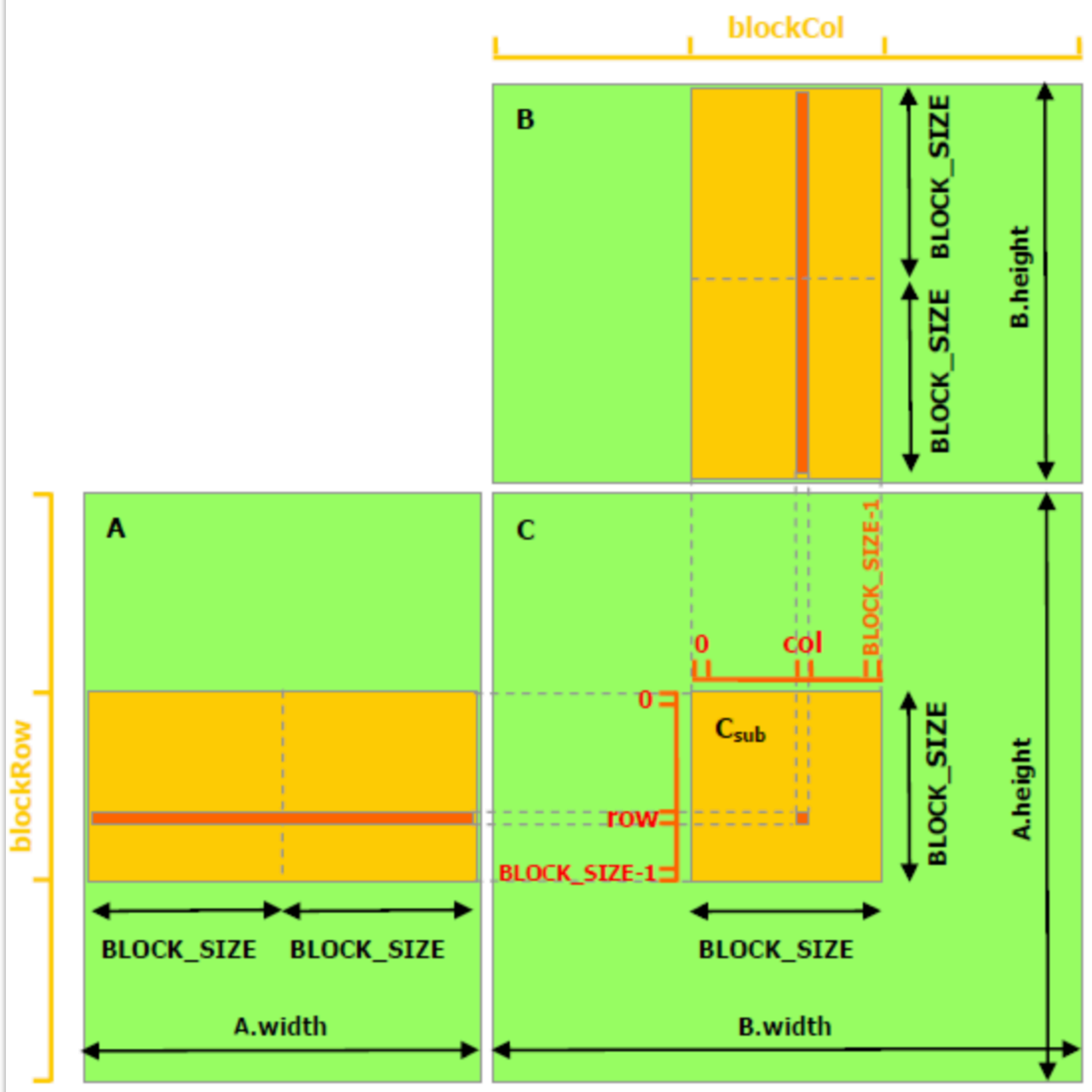


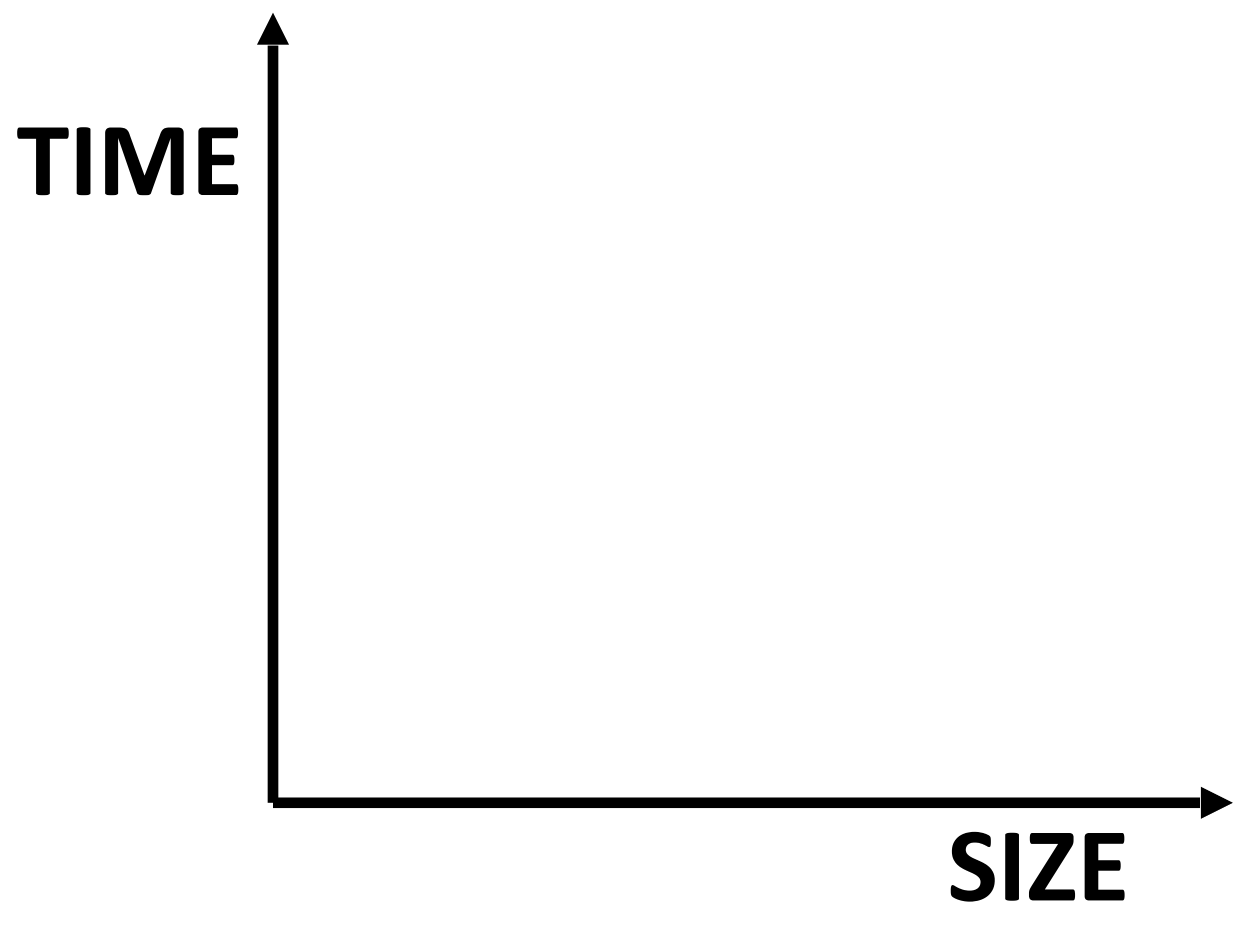
Figure 9: *Matrix Multiplication with Shared Memory*

What are these caches? Why the complex matrix multiply?

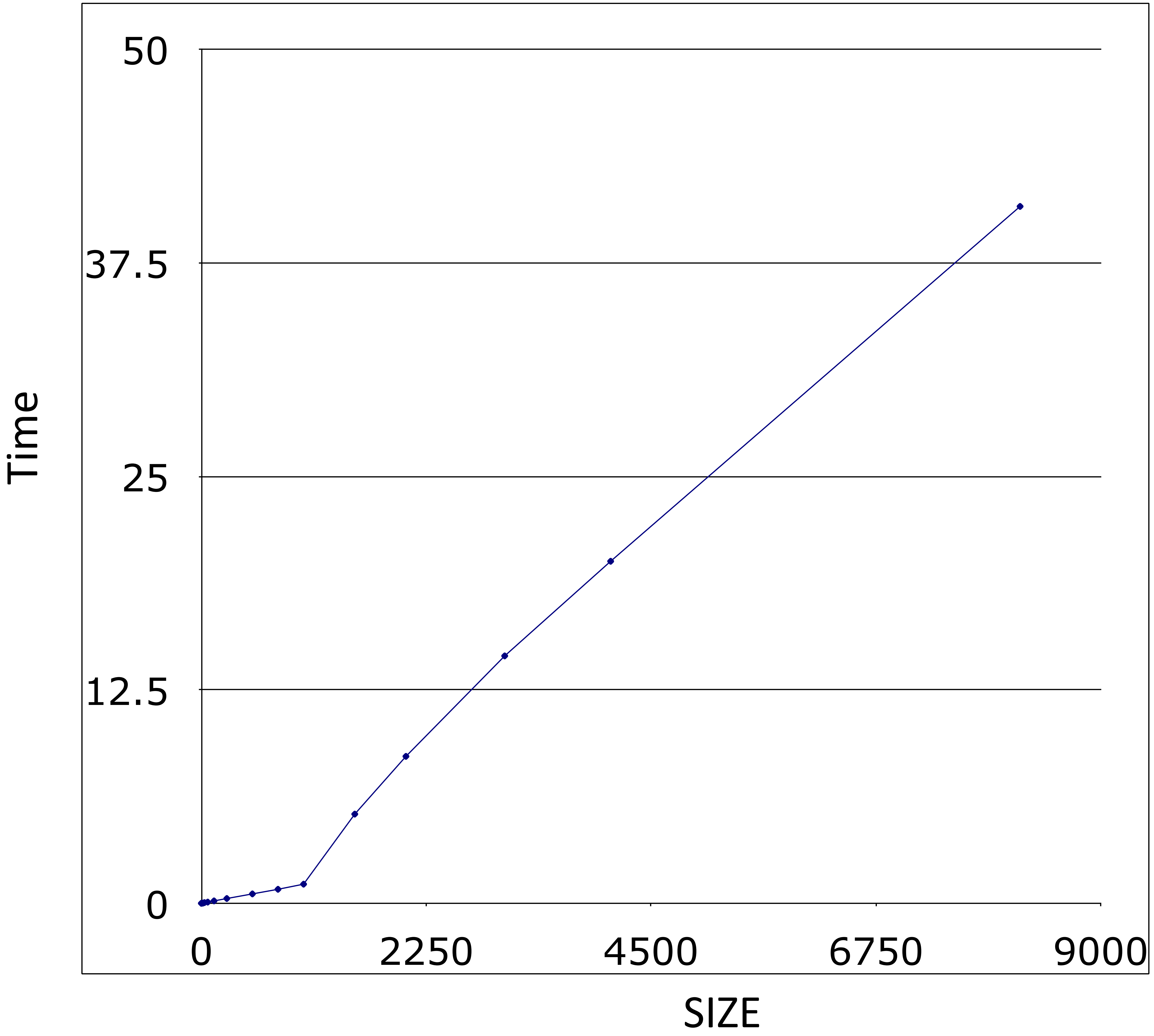
https://docs.nvidia.com/cuda/cuda-c-programming-guide

Expectation: How does execution time grow with SIZE?

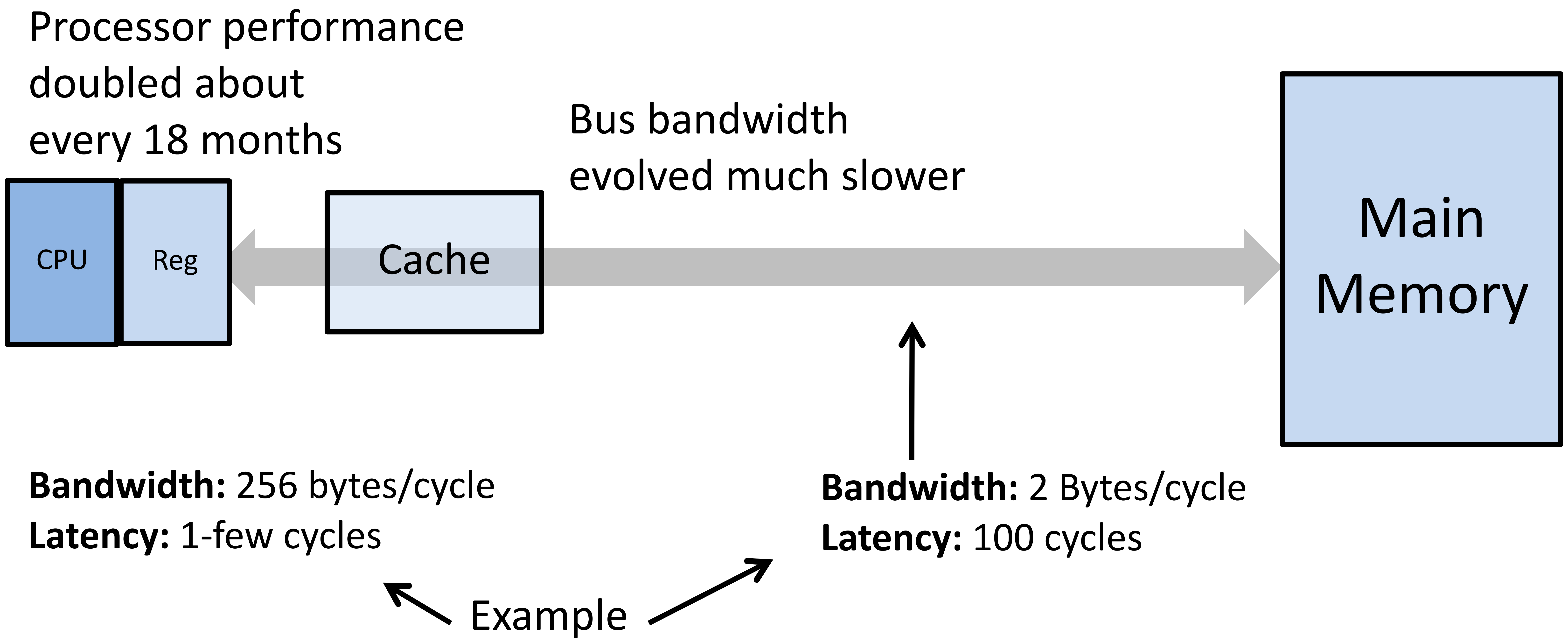
```
int array[SIZE];
fillArrayRandomly(array);
int s = 0;

for (int i = 0; i < 200000; i++) {
  for (int j = 0; j < SIZE; j++) {
    s += array[j];
  }
}
```



Reality



Processor-memory bottleneck



Solution: caches

Cache

English:

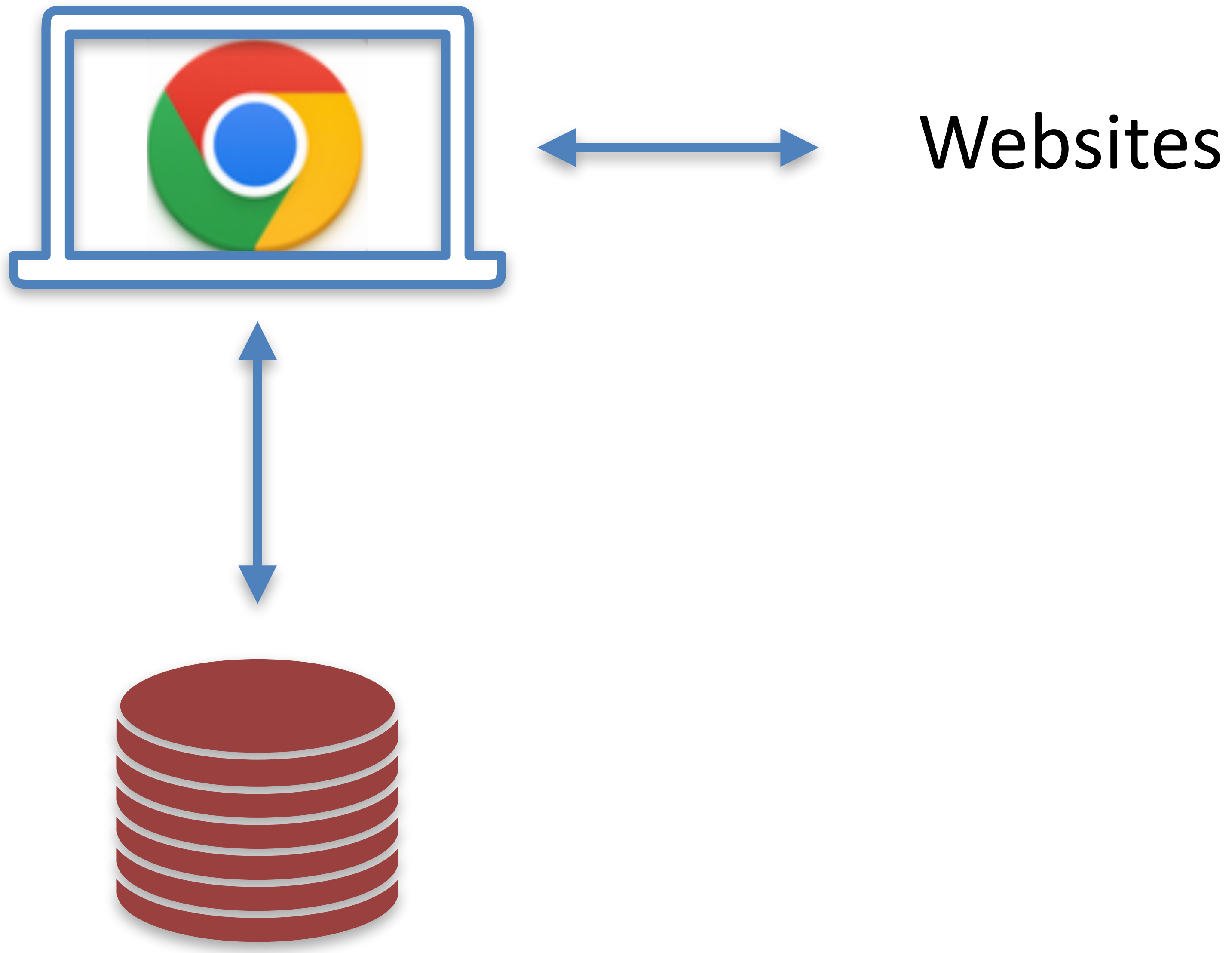
n. a hidden storage space for provisions, weapons, or treasures

v. to store away in hiding for future use

Computer Science:

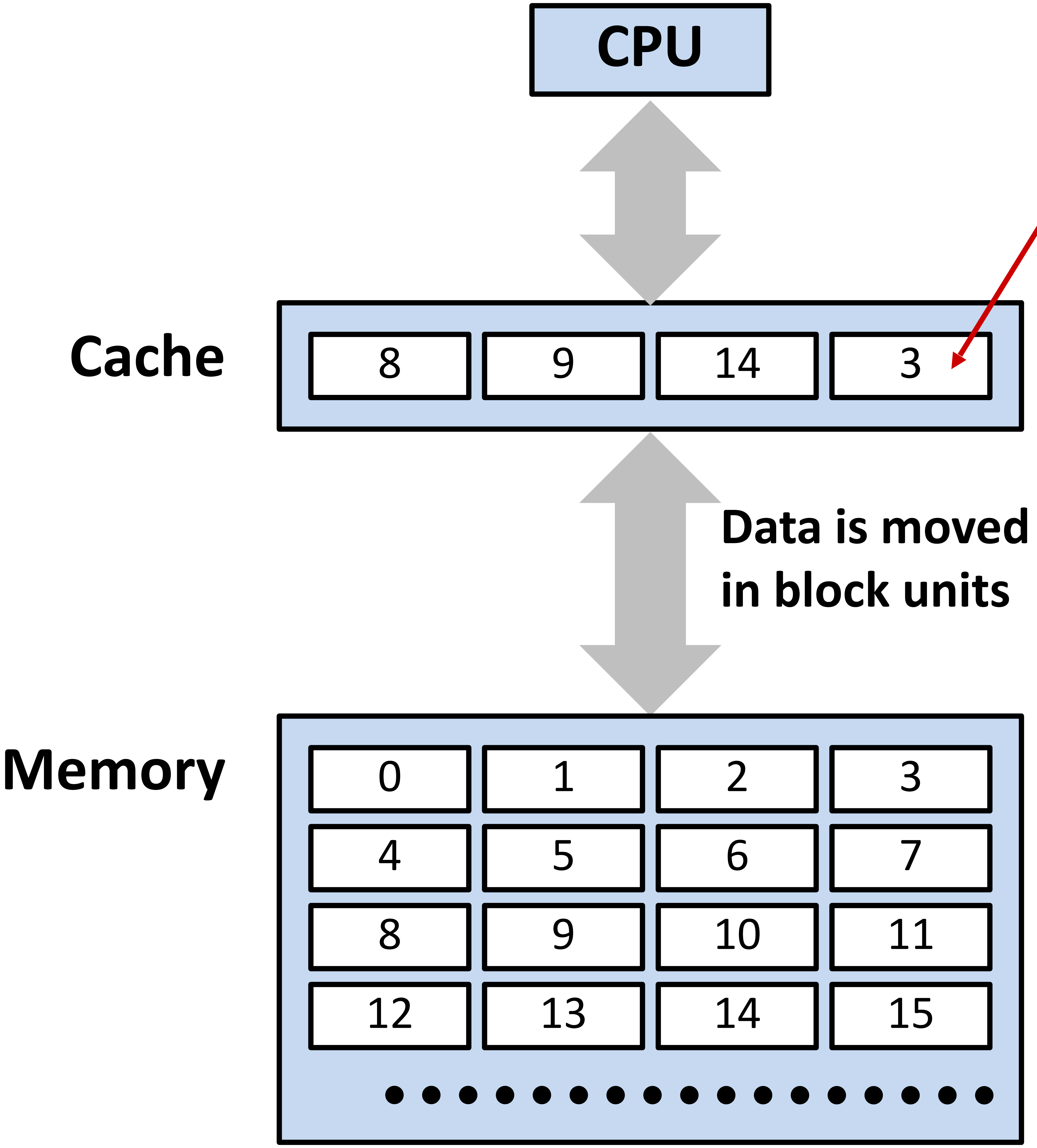
n. a computer memory with short access time used to store frequently or recently used instructions or data

v. to store [data/instructions] temporarily for later quick retrieval



Also used more broadly in CS: software caches, file caches, etc.

General cache mechanics

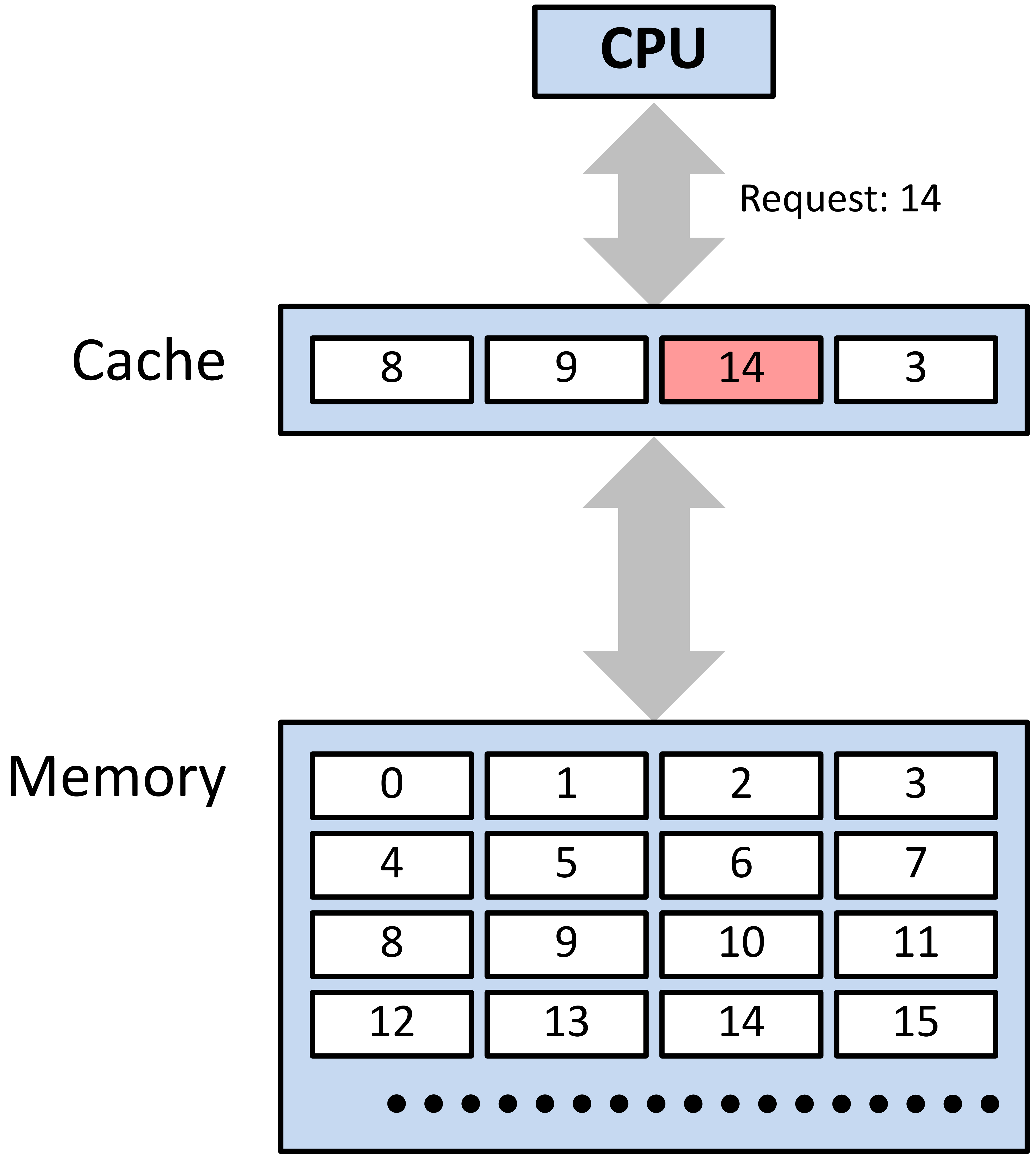


Block: unit of data
in cache and memory.
(a.k.a. line)

Smaller, faster, more expensive.
Stores **subset of memory blocks**.
(lines)

Larger, slower, cheaper.
Partitioned into blocks (lines)**.**

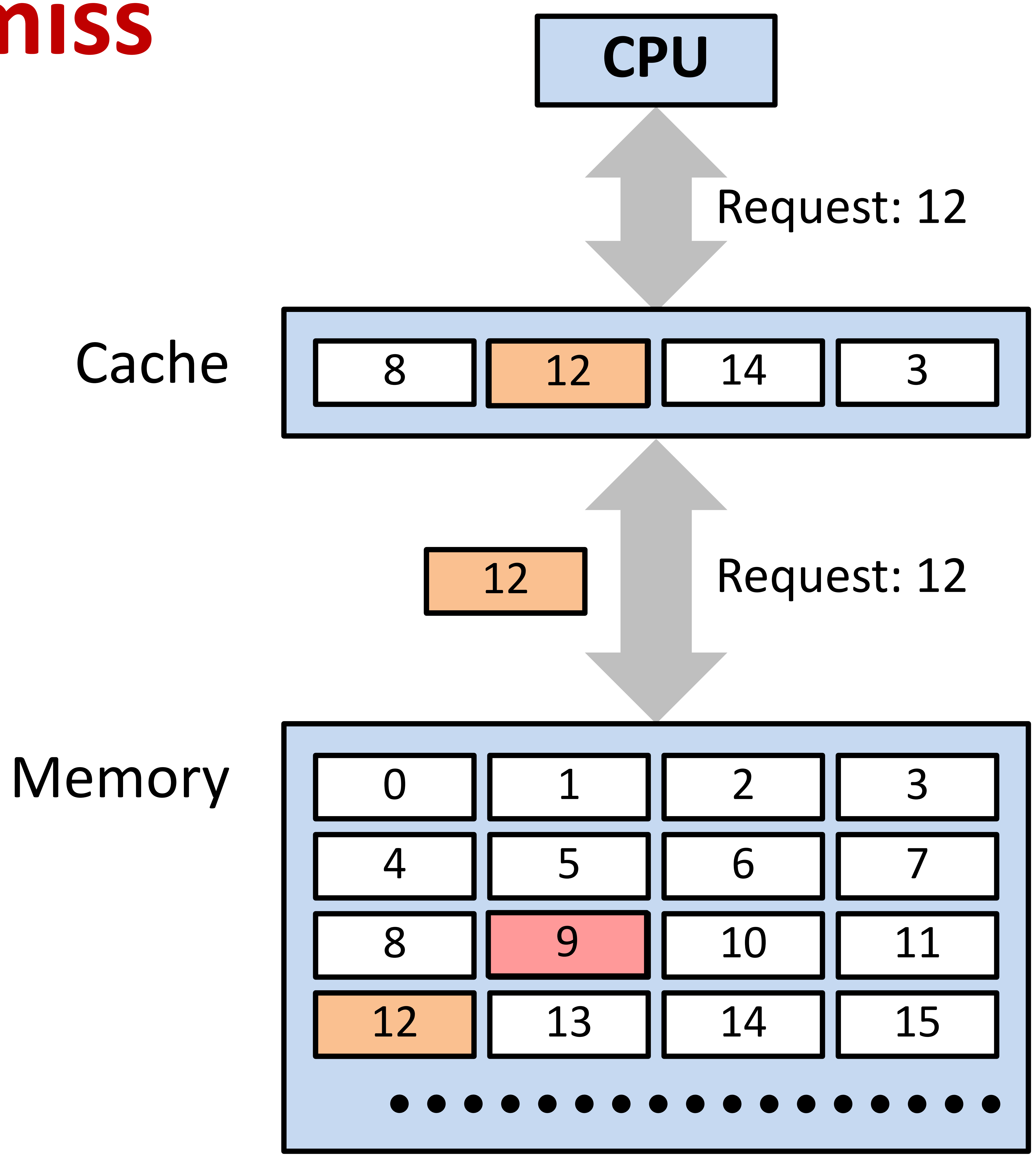
Cache **hit**



1. Request** data in block **b.

2. Cache hit:
Block b is in cache.

Cache miss



*1. **Request** data in block **b.***

2. Cache miss:
block is not in cache

3. Cache eviction:
Evict a block to make room, maybe store to memory.

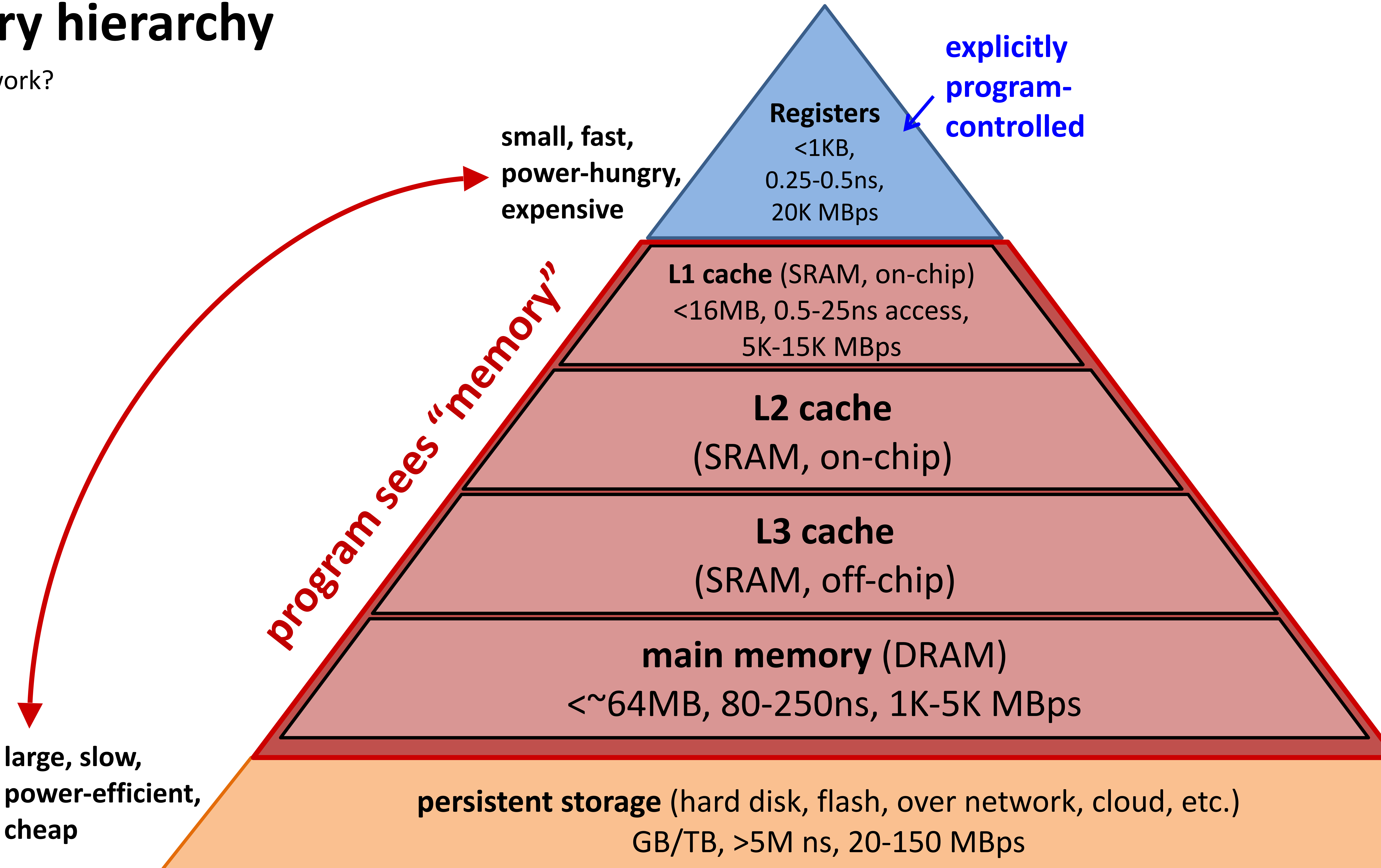
4. Cache fill:
Fetch block from memory, store in cache.

Placement Policy:
where to put block in cache

Replacement Policy:
which block to evict

Memory hierarchy

Why does it work?

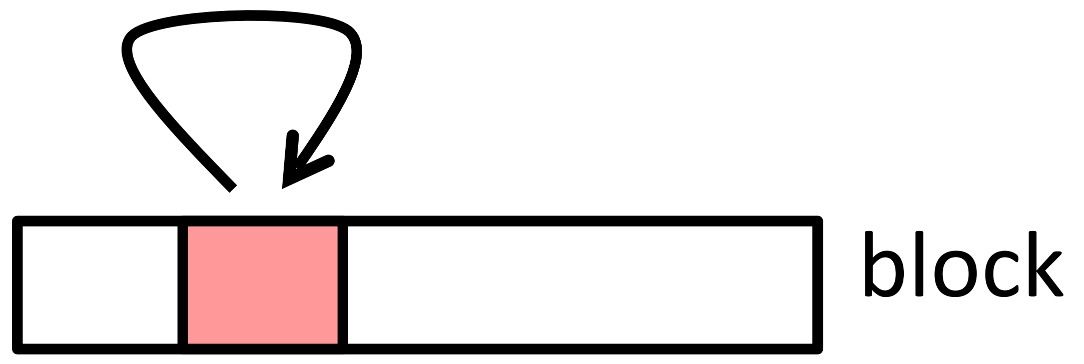


Locality: why caches work

Programs tend to use data and instructions at addresses near or equal to those they have used recently.

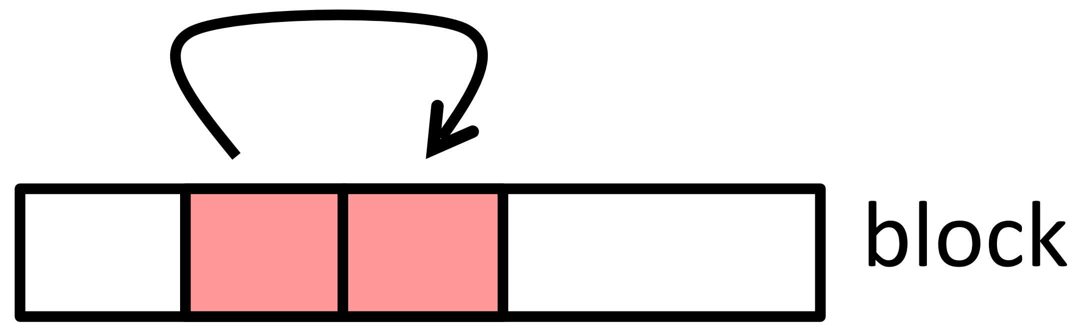
Temporal locality:

Recently referenced items are ***likely***
to be referenced again in the near future.



Spatial locality:

Items with nearby addresses are ***likely***
to be referenced close together in time.



How do caches exploit temporal and spatial locality?

In terms accessing the input array, does this function have temporal or spatial locality?

0

```c
int sum(int *arr) {
    int s = 0;
    while (*arr != -1) {
        s += *arr;
        arr++;
    }
}
```

Temporal

Spatial

None of the above

Locality #1: Basic iteration over array

```
sum = 0;
for (i = 0; i < n; i++) {
  sum += a[i];
}
return sum;
```

What is stored in memory?

Locality #2: iteration over 2D array

ex

row-major M x N 2D array in C

```
int sum_array_rows(int a[M][N]) {
    int sum = 0;

    for (int i = 0; i < M; i++) {
        for (int j = 0; j < N; j++) {
            sum += a[i][j];
        }
    }
    return sum;
}
```

Locality #3: iteration over 2D array

ex

row-major M x N 2D array in C

Swapped loop order

```
int sum_array_cols(int a[M][N]) {
    int sum = 0;

    for (int j = 0; j < N; j++) {
        for (int i = 0; i < M; i++) {
            sum += a[i][j];
        }
    }
    return sum;
}
```

a[0][0]	a[0][1]	a[0][2]	a[0][3]	
a[1][0]	a[1][1]	a[1][2]	a[1][3]	…
a[2][0]	a[2][1]	a[2][2]	a[2][3]	
	…			

Locality #4

What is "wrong" with this code?

How can it be fixed?

```
int sum_array_3d(int a[M][N][N]) {
    int sum = 0;

    for (int i = 0; i < N; i++) {
        for (int j = 0; j < N; j++) {
            for (int k = 0; k < M; k++) {
                sum += a[k][i][j];
            }
        }
    }
    return sum;
}
```

Cost of cache misses

Miss cost could be 100 × hit cost.

99% hits could be **twice** as good as 97%. How?

Assume cache hit time of 1 cycle, miss penalty of 100 cycles

Mean access time:

97% hits: (0.97 * 1 cycle) + (0.03 * 100 cycles) = 3.97 cycles

99% hits: (0.93 * 1 cycle) + (0.01 * 100 cycles) = 1.93 cycles

hit/miss rates

Cache performance metrics

Miss Rate

Fraction of memory accesses to data not in cache (misses / accesses)

Typically: 3% - 10% for L1; maybe < 1% for L2, depending on size, etc.

Hit Time

Time to find and deliver a block in the cache to the processor.

Typically: **1 - 2 clock cycles** for L1**; 5 - 20 clock cycles** for L2

Miss Penalty

Additional time required on cache miss = main memory access time

Typically **50 - 200 cycles** for L2 *(trend: increasing!)*

Cache organization

Block

Fixed-size unit of data in memory/cache

Placement Policy

Where in the cache should a given block be stored?

Replacement Policy

What if there is no room in the cache for requested data?

- least recently used, most recently used

Write Policy

When should writes update lower levels of memory hierarchy?

- write back, write through, write allocate, no write allocate

Blocks

Divide address space into fixed-size aligned blocks.

power of 2

Example: block size = 8

full byte address

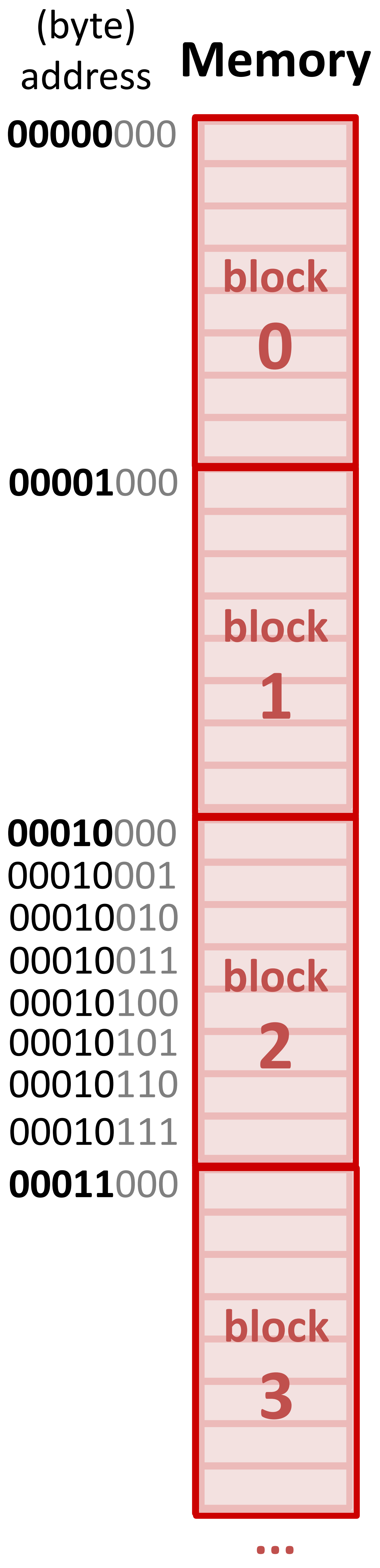
00010010

Block ID

address bits - offset bits

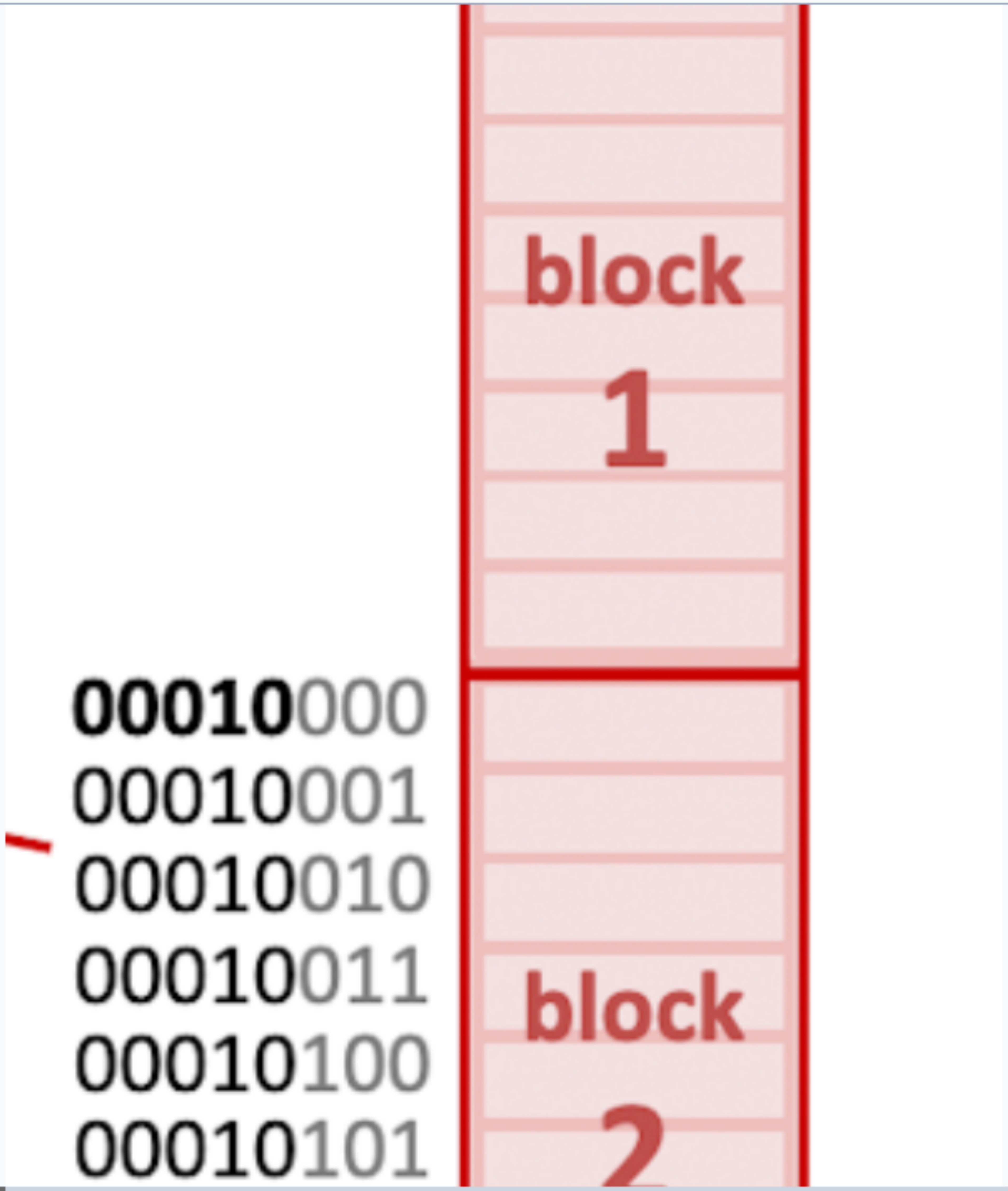
offset within block

$\log_2$(block size)



With a block size of 8 and assuming the cache starts empty, how many cache *misses* would the following sequence of accesses have? 00010010 00010011 00000001

0



- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- None of the above

Start the presentation to see live content. For screen share software, share the entire screen. Get help at **pollev.com/app**

Cache size puzzle

ex

Cache starts *empty.*

Access (address, hit/miss) stream:

(0xA, miss), (0xB, hit), (OxC, miss)

What could the block size be?

Cache size puzzle

ex

Cache starts *empty.*

Access (address, hit/miss) stream:

(0xA, miss), (0xB, hit), (OxC, miss)

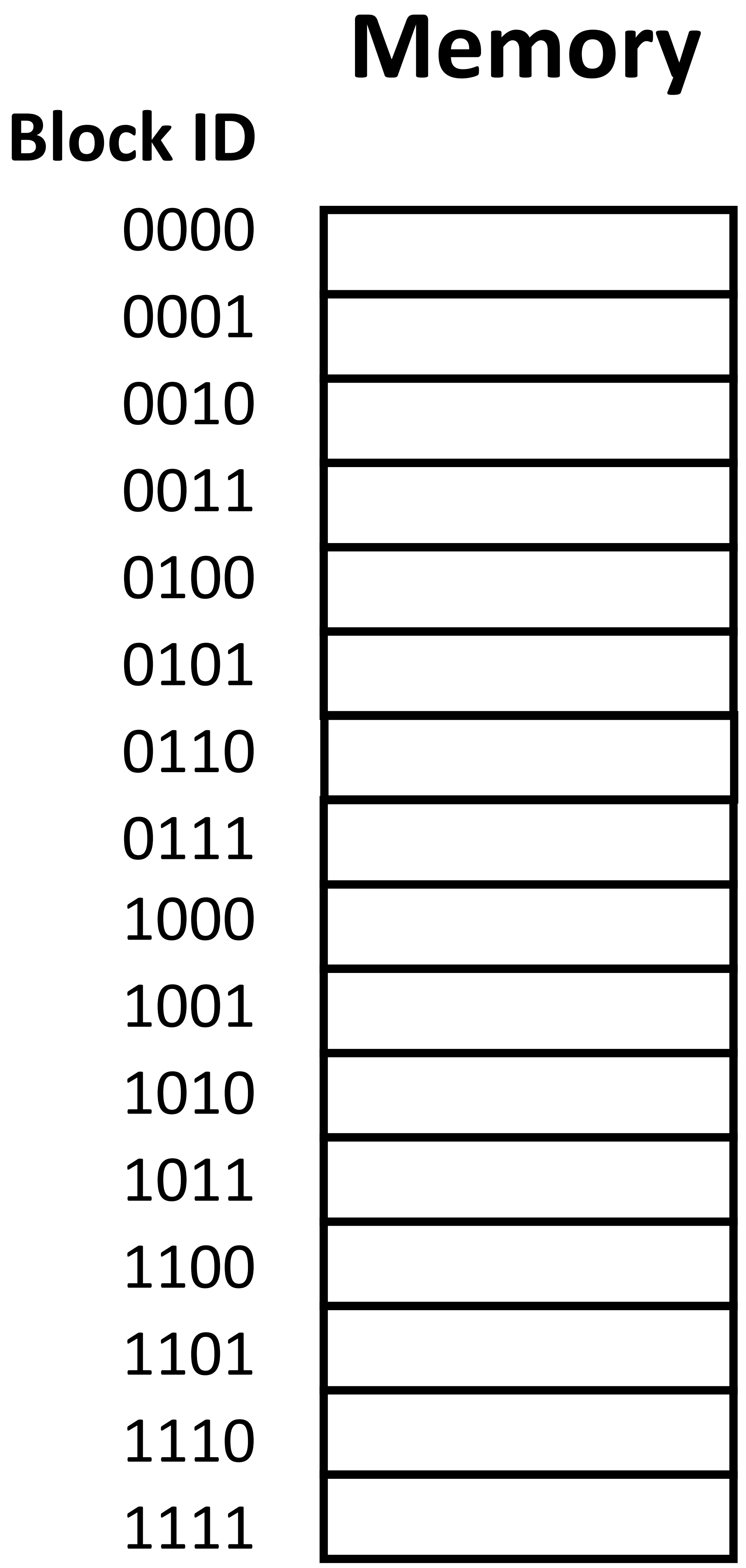
What could the block size be?

1. First, convert the hex to integers
2. Remember that blocks must be aligned to the block size
3. Hint: there are two possible block sizes!

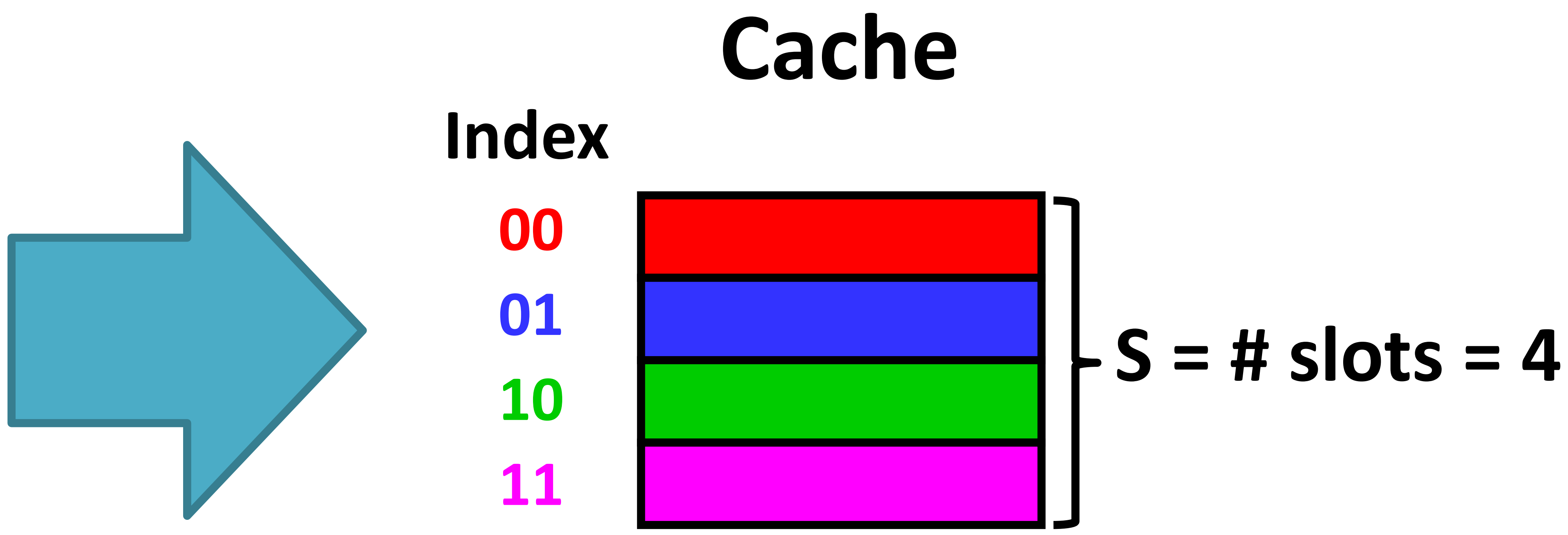
Placement policy

optional

Mapping:
index(Block ID) = **???**



Large, fixed number of block slots.

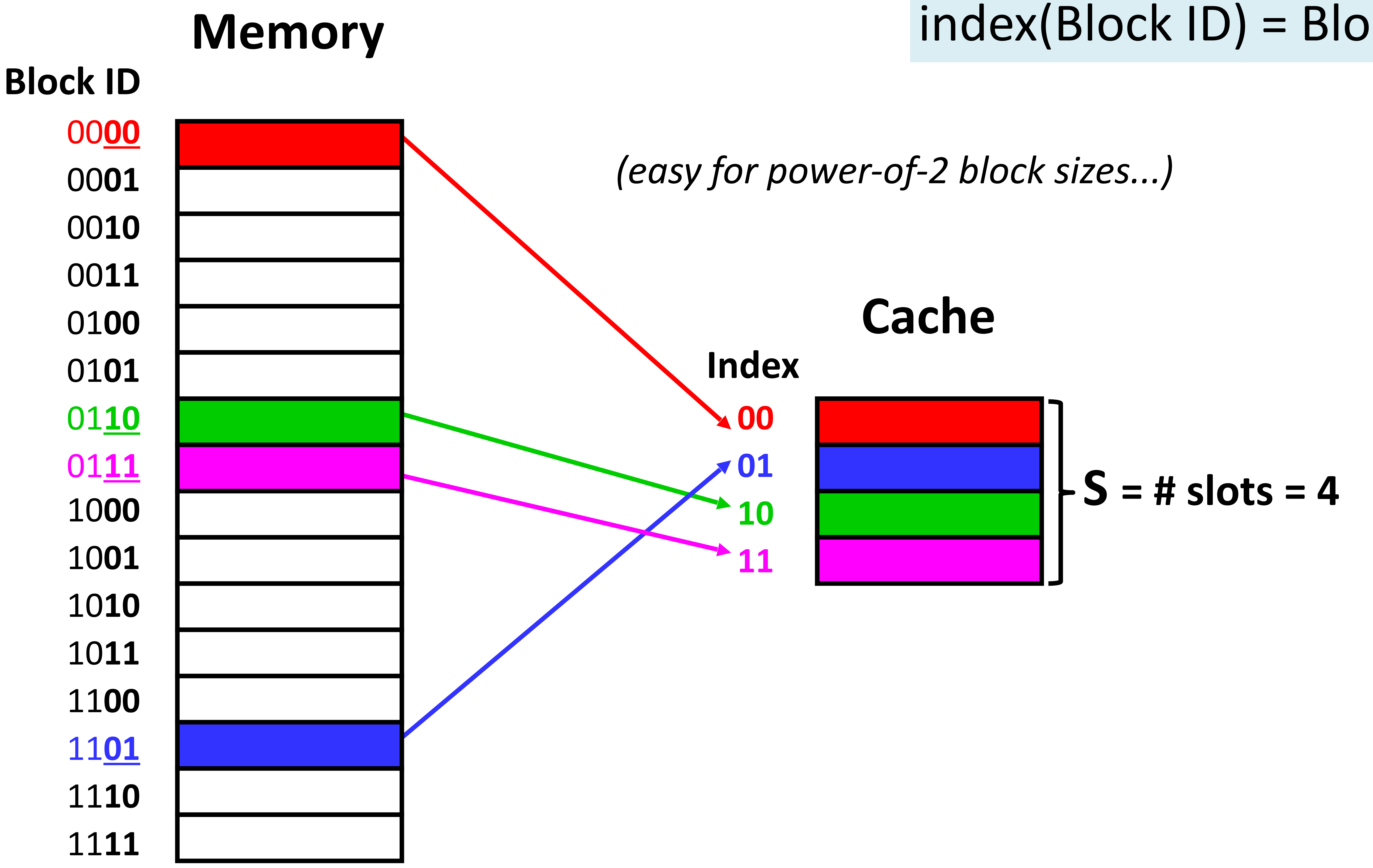


Small, fixed number of block slots.

Placement: *direct-mapped*

optional

Mapping:
index(Block ID) = Block ID *mod* S

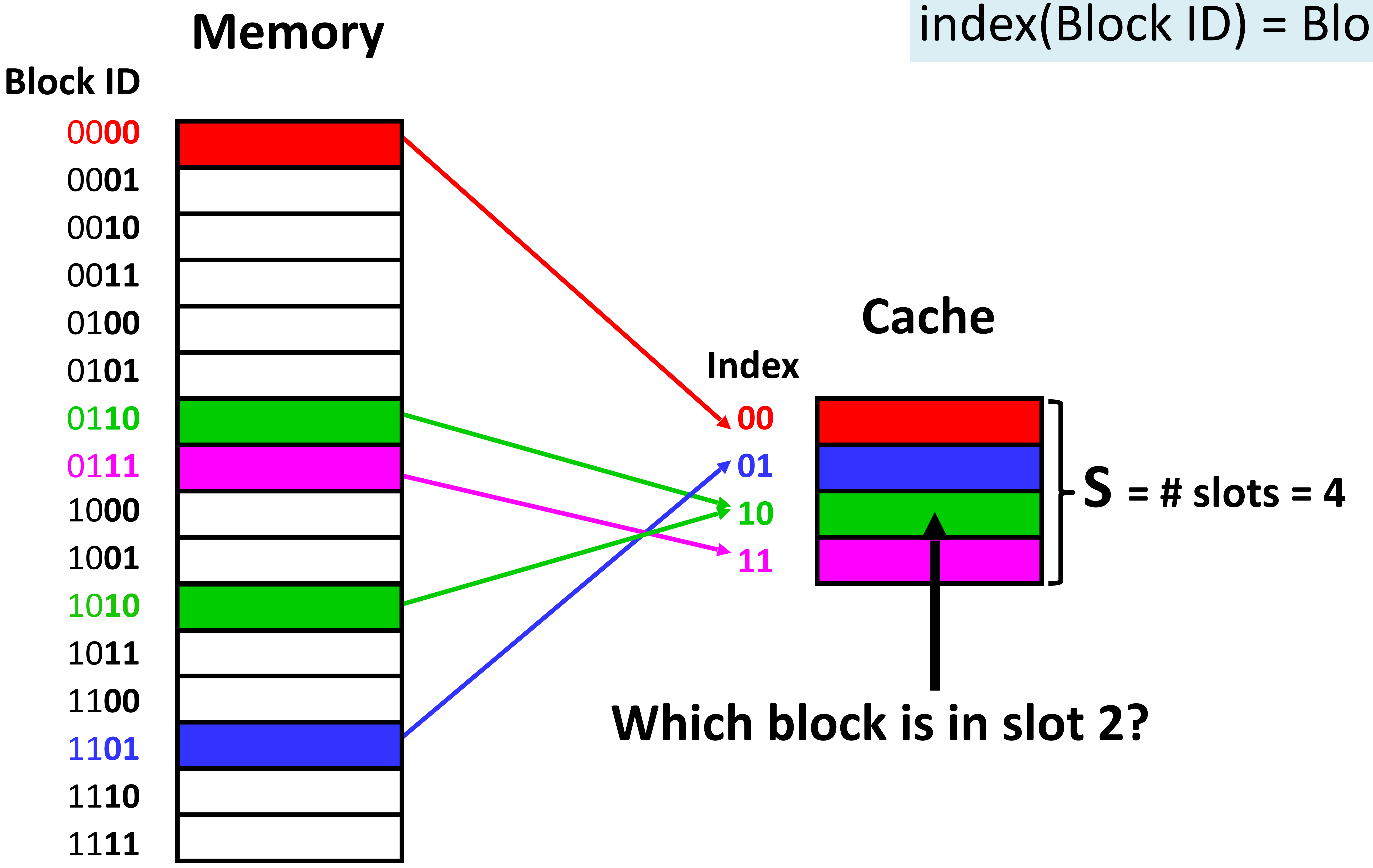


(easy for power-of-2 block sizes...)

Placement: mapping ambiguity?

optional

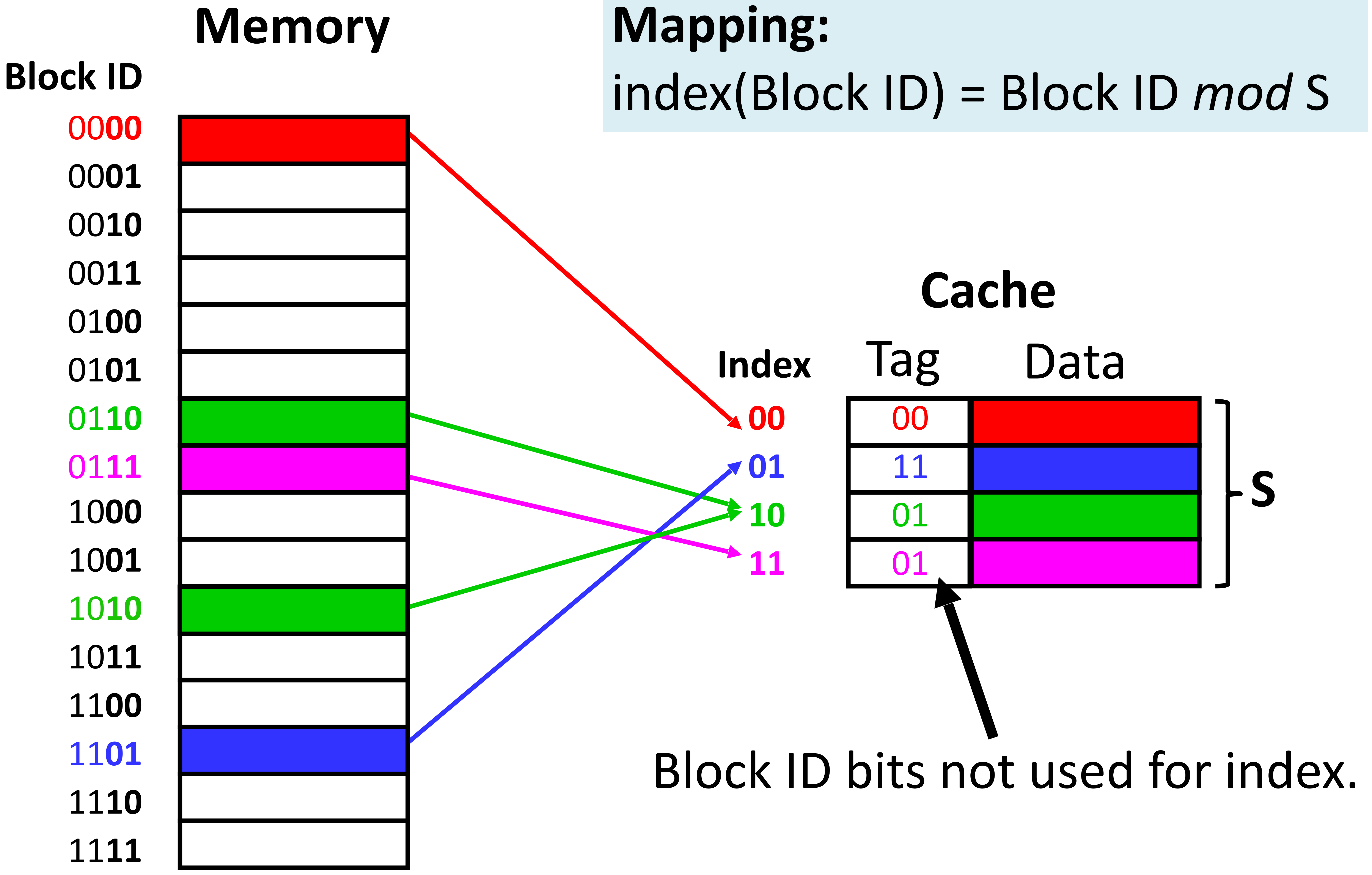
Mapping:
index(Block ID) = Block ID *mod* S



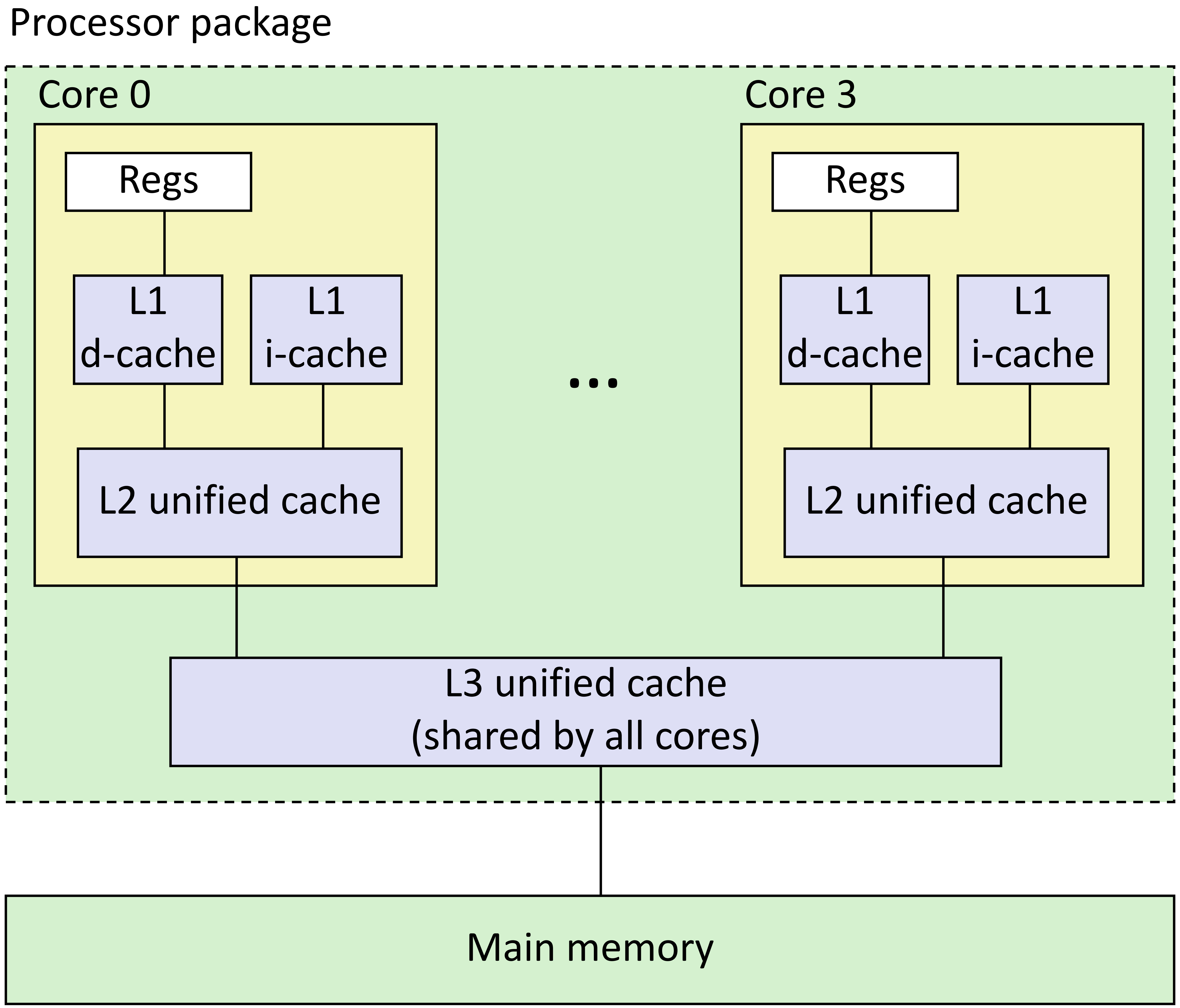
Placement: tags resolve ambiguity

optional

Mapping:
index(Block ID) = Block ID *mod* S



Example memory hierarchy



Typical laptop/desktop processor
(c.a. 2020s)

L1 i-cache and d-cache:
32 KB,
Access: 4 cycles

L2 unified cache:
256 KB
Access: 10-20 cycles

L3 unified cache:
8 MB
Access: 40-100 cycles

slower, but more likely to hit

Block size: 64 bytes for all caches.

Software caches

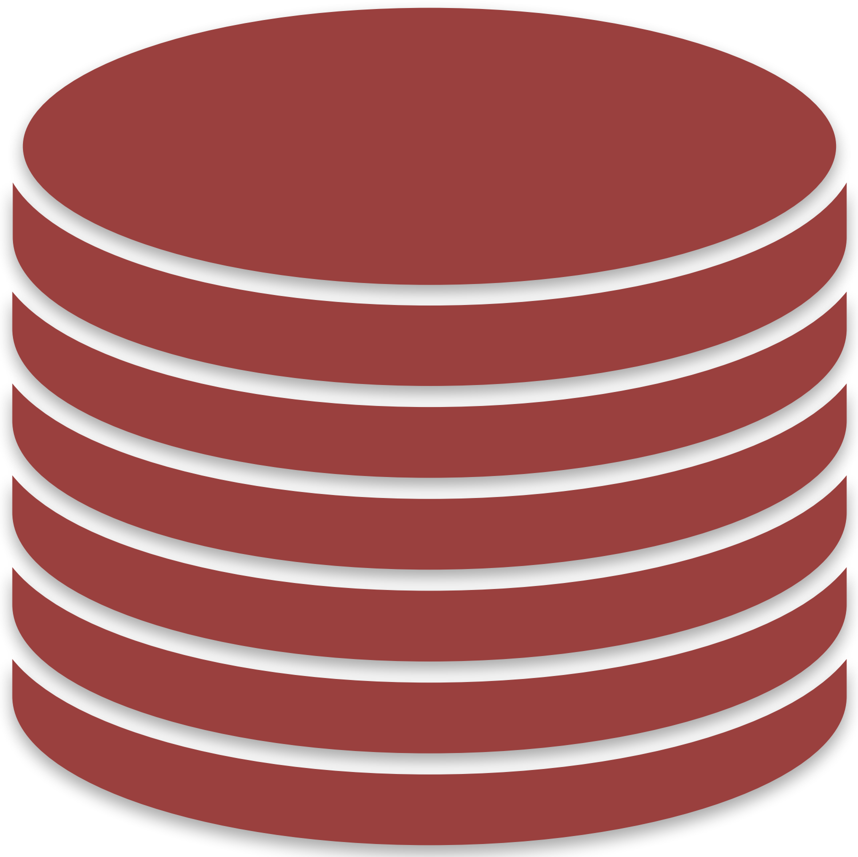
Examples

File system buffer caches, web browser caches, database caches, network CDN caches, etc.

Some design differences

Often use complex replacement policies

Not necessarily constrained to single “block” transfers



Cache-friendly code

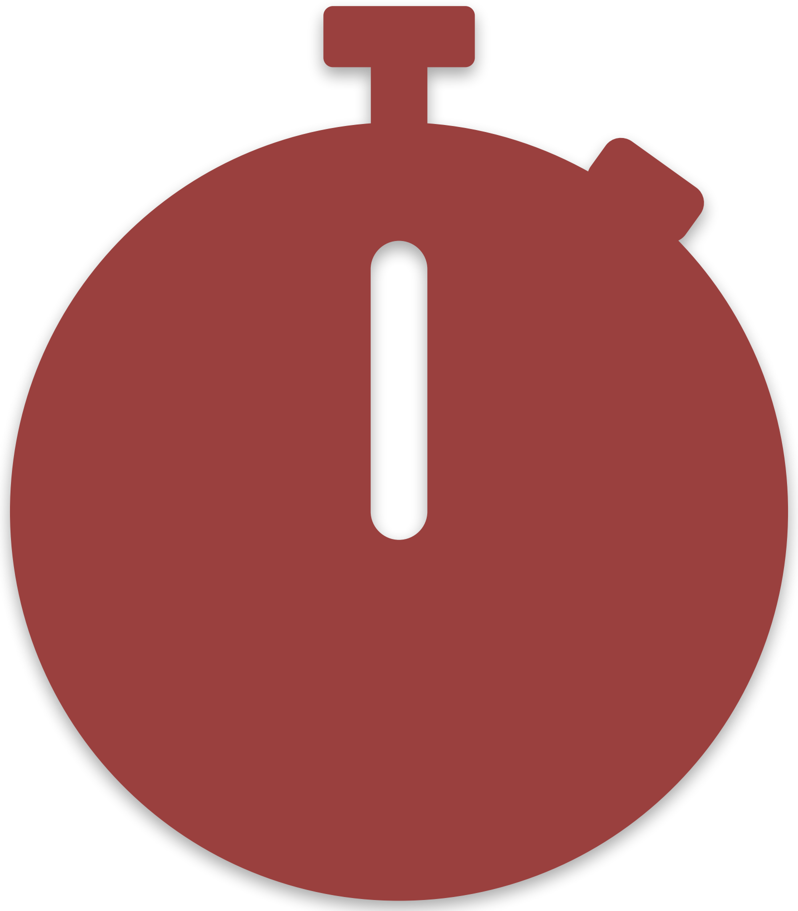
Locality, locality, locality.

Programmer can optimize for cache performance

- Data structure layout
- Data access patterns
  - Nested loops
  - Blocking / tiling

All systems favor “cache-friendly code”

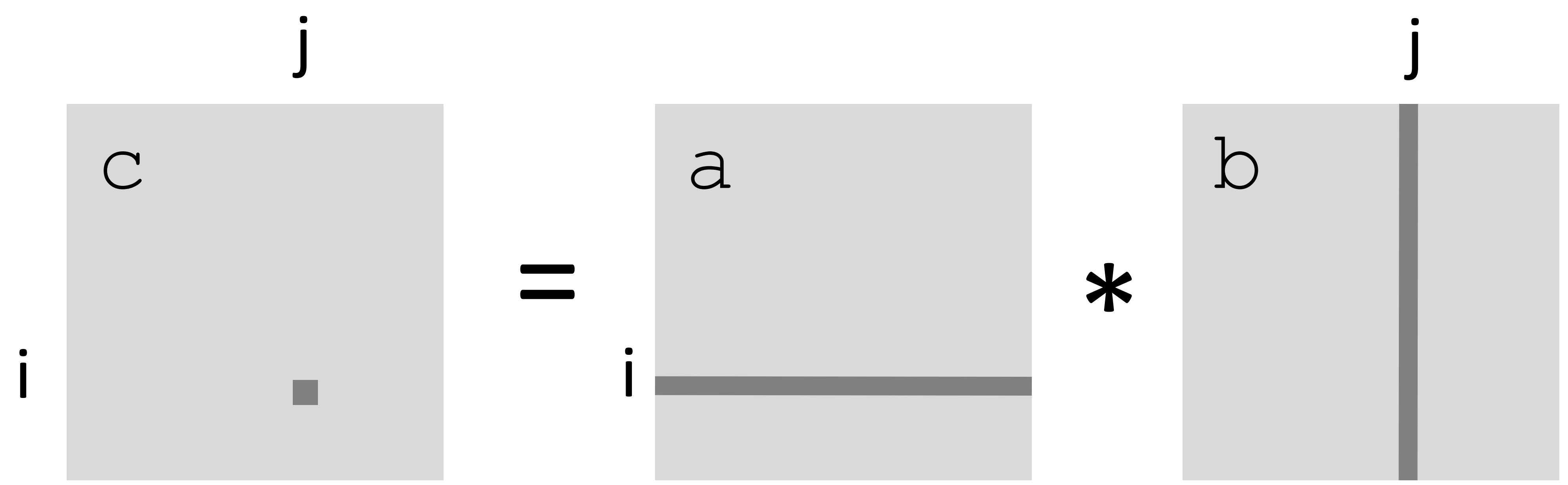
- Performance is hardware-specific
- Generic rules capture most advantages
  - Keep working set small (temporal locality)
  - Use small strides (spatial locality)
  - Focus on *inner loop* code



Example: Matrix Multiplication

optional

```c
c = (double *) calloc(sizeof(double), n*n);

/* Multiply n x n matrices a and b  */
void mmm(double *a, double *b, double *c, int n) {
    int i, j, k;
    for (i = 0; i < n; i++)
       for (j = 0; j < n; j++)
          for (k = 0; k < n; k++)
             c[i*n + j] += a[i*n + k]*b[k*n + j];
}
```



$$(AB)_{ij} = \sum_{k=1}^{m} A_{ik} B_{kj}.$$

memory access pattern?

Cache Miss Analysis

optional

Assume:

Matrix elements are doubles

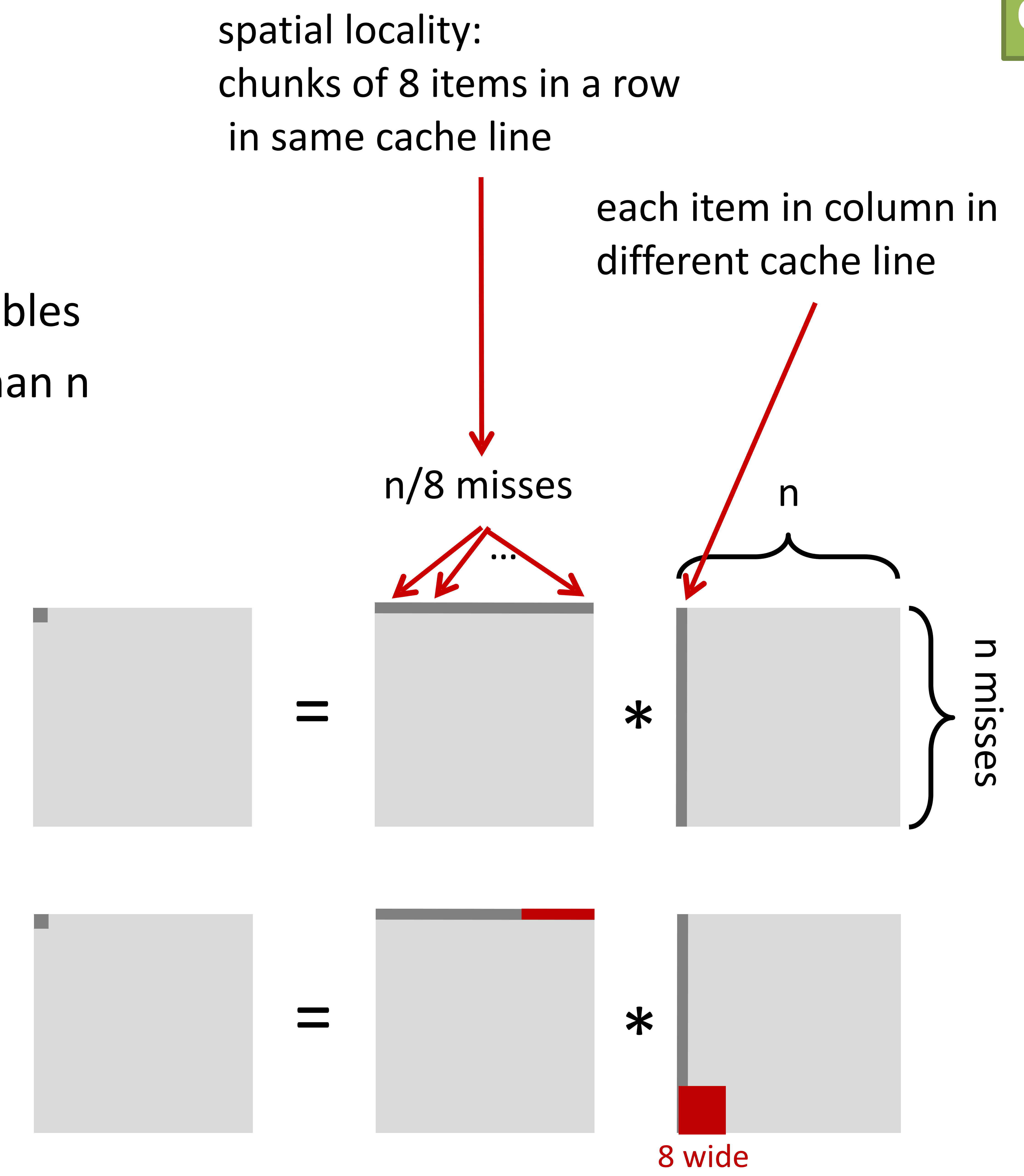
Cache block = 64 bytes = 8 doubles

Cache size C is much smaller than n

First iteration:

n/8 + n = 9n/8 misses
(omitting matrix c)

Afterwards in cache:
(schematic)



Cache Miss Analysis

optional

Assume:

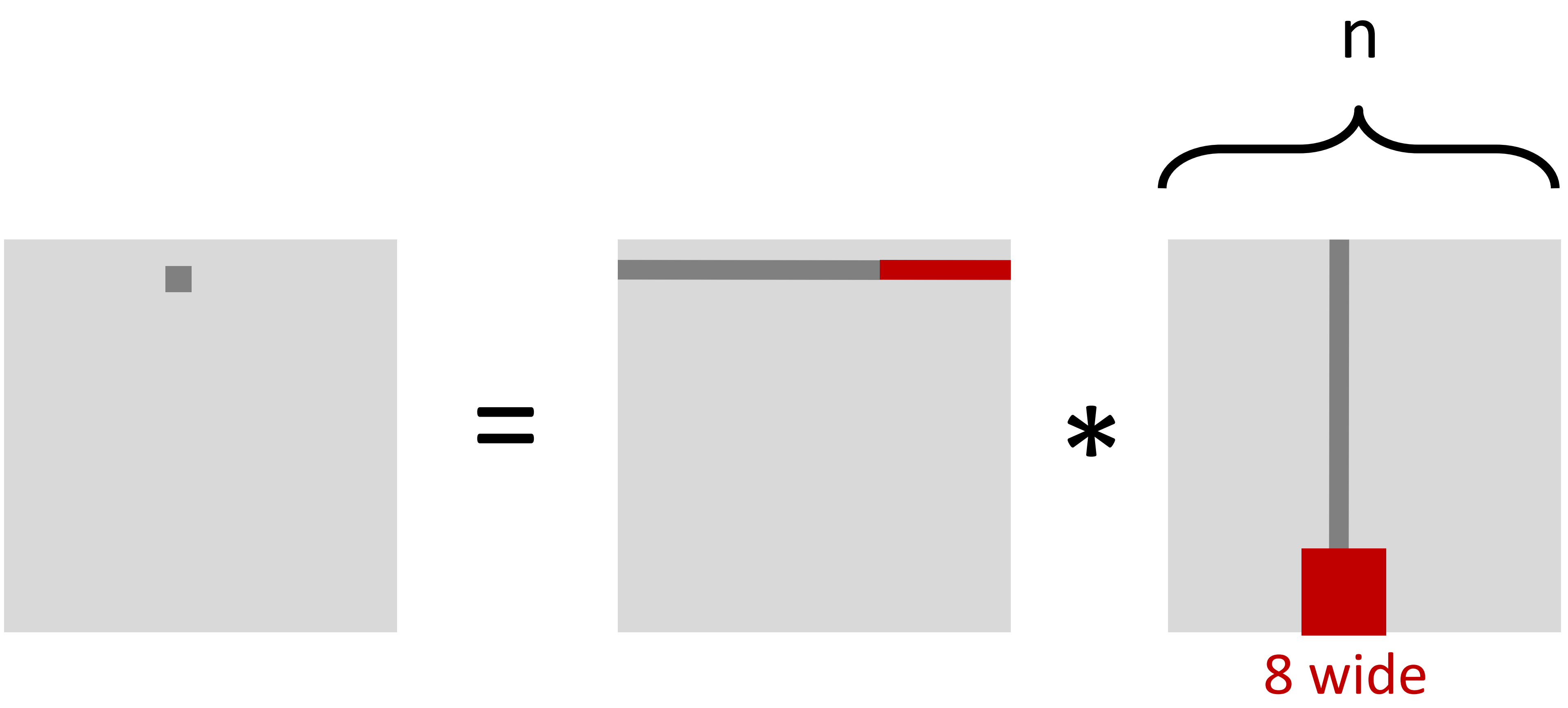
Matrix elements are doubles

Cache block = 64 bytes = 8 doubles

Cache size C is much smaller than n

Other iterations:

Again:
n/8 + n = 9n/8 misses
(omitting matrix c)



Total misses:

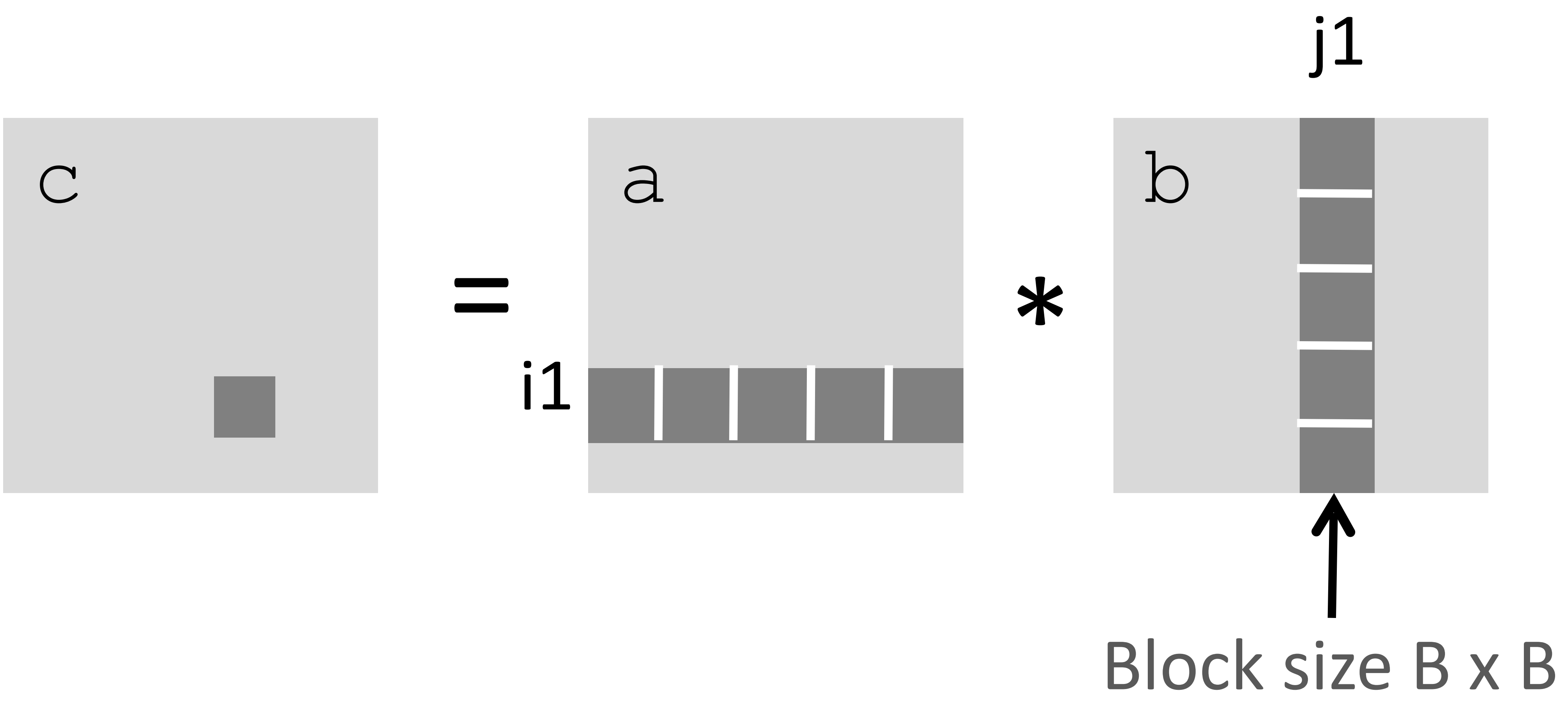
$9n/8 * n^2 = (9/8) * n^3$

once per element

Blocked Matrix Multiplication

optional

```
c = (double *) calloc(sizeof(double), n*n);

/* Multiply n x n matrices a and b  */
void mmm(double *a, double *b, double *c, int n) {
  int i, j, k;
  for (i = 0; i < n; i+=B)
    for (j = 0; j < n; j+=B)
      for (k = 0; k < n; k+=B)
        /* B x B mini matrix multiplications */
        for (i1 = i; i1 < i+B; i1++)
          for (j1 = j; j1 < j+B; j1++)
            for (k1 = k; k1 < k+B; k1++)
              c[i1*n + j1] += a[i1*n + k1]*b[k1*n + j1];
}
```



Cache Miss Analysis

optional

Assume:

Cache block = 64 bytes = 8 doubles

Cache size C << n (much smaller than n)

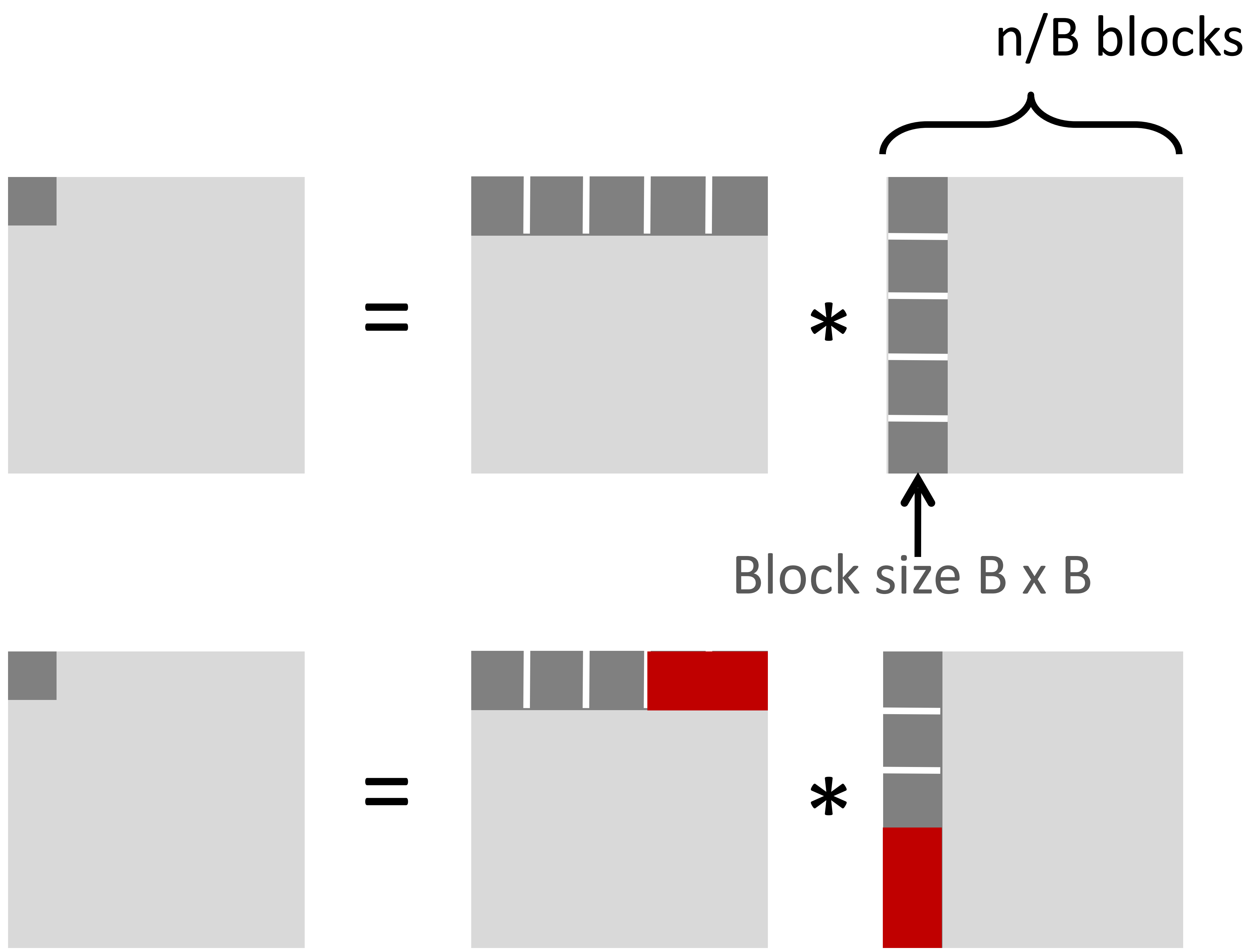
Three blocks fit into cache: $3B^2 < C$

First (block) iteration:

$B^2/8$ misses for each block

$2n/B * B^2/8 = nB/4$

(omitting matrix c)



Cache Miss Analysis

optional

Assume:

Cache block = 64 bytes = 8 doubles

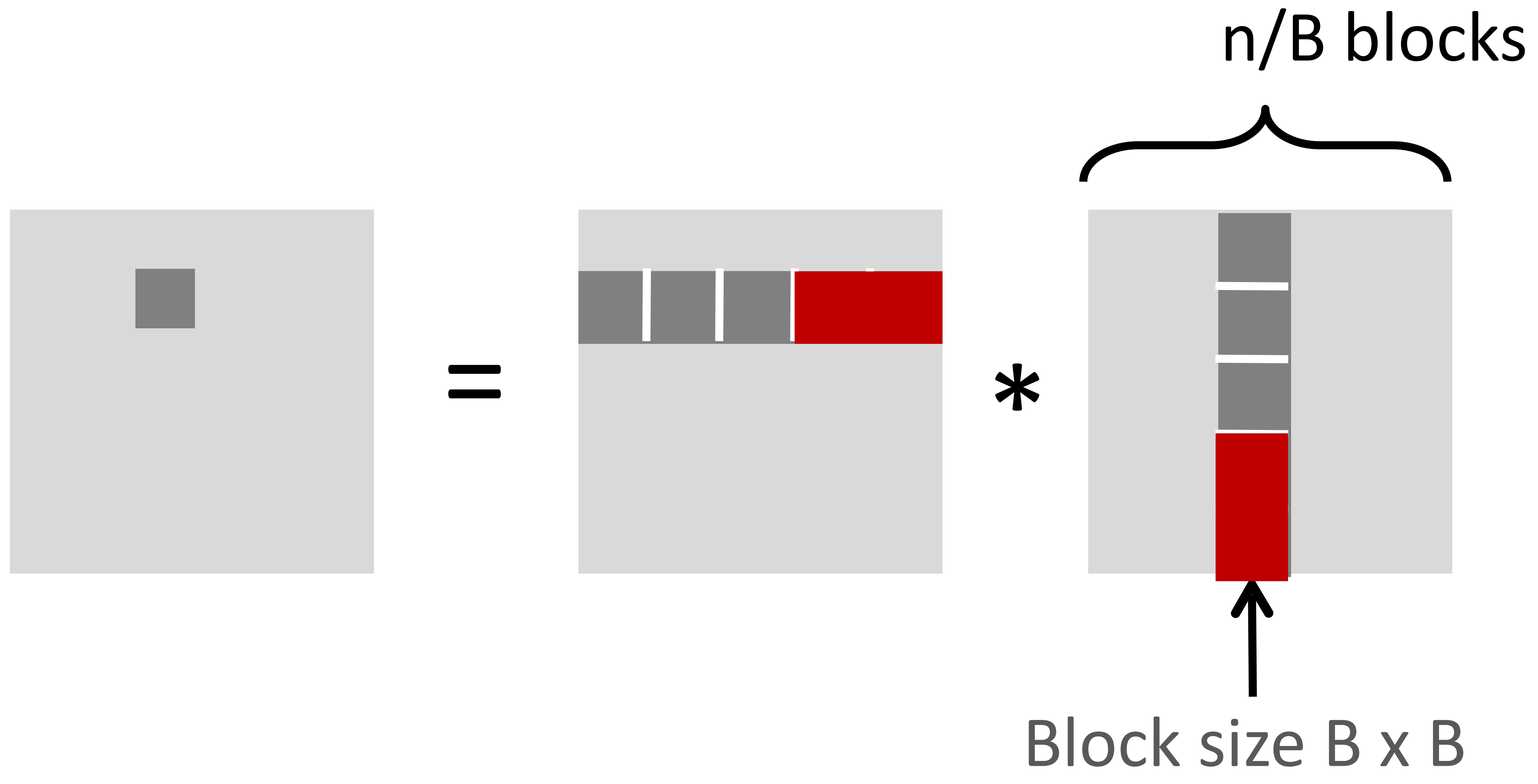
Cache size C << n (much smaller than n)

Three blocks fit into cache: $3B^2 < C$

Other (block) iterations:

Same as first iteration

$2n/B * B^2/8 = nB/4$



Total misses:

$nB/4 * (n/B)^2 = n^3/(4B)$

Summary: blocking/tiling

No blocking: $(9/8) * n^3 \approx 1.1n^3$

Blocking: $1/(4B) * n^3 \approx 0.1\text{-}0.3\ n^3$

If B = 8 difference is 4 * 8 * 9 / 8 = 36x

If B = 16 difference is 4 * 16 * 9 / 8 = 72x

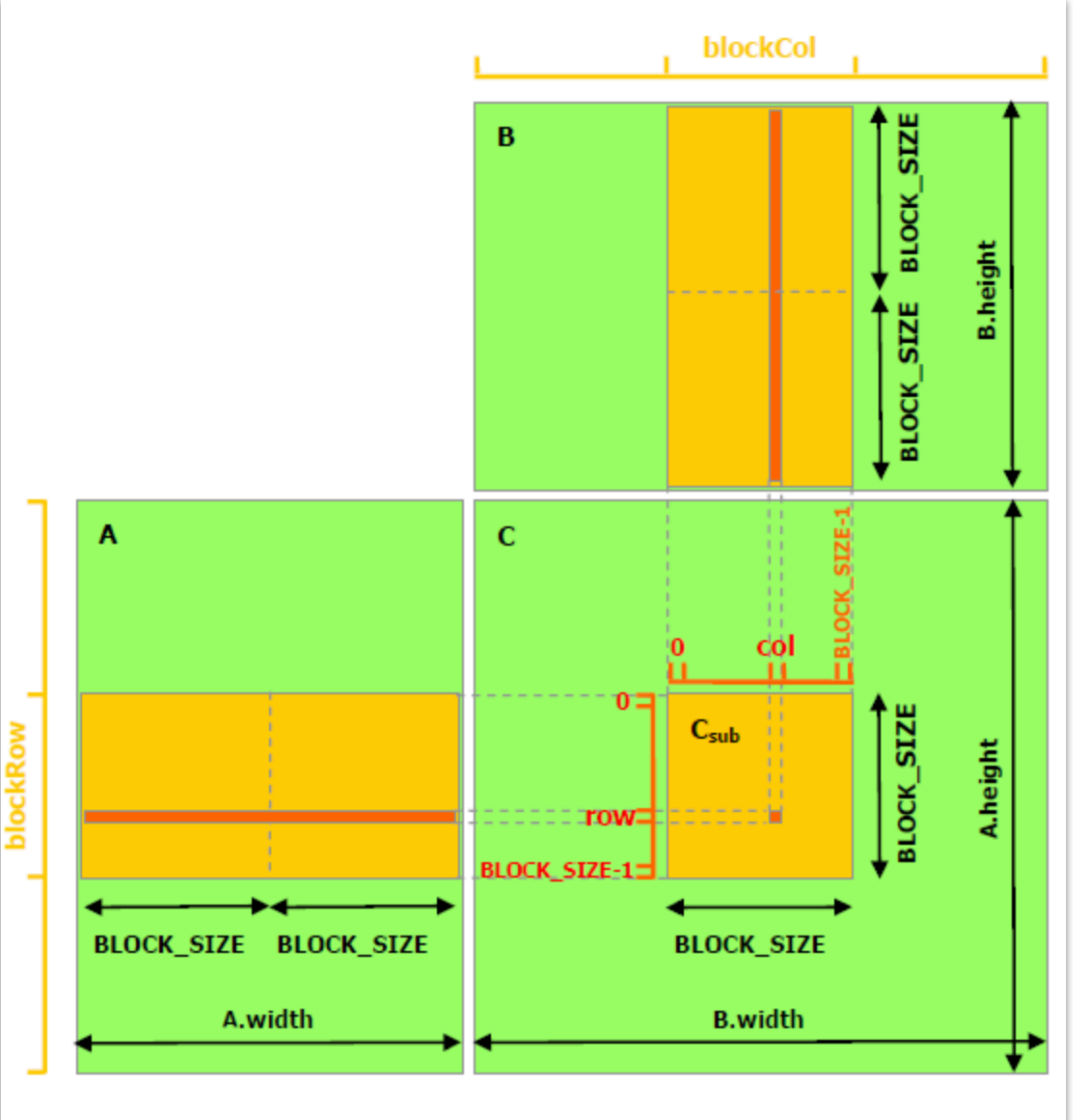


Figure 9: *Matrix Multiplication with Shared Memory*

Reason for dramatic difference:

- Matrix multiplication has inherent temporal locality:
  - Input data: $3n^2$, computation $2n^3$
  - Every array element used O(n) times!
- But program has to be written properly

Modern machine learning/scientific computing frameworks leverage this!
Including blocking/tiling on GPUs. Often, with specific matrix multiply units.

Exercise: order these 3 functions by locality

ex

```c
typedef struct {
    int vel[3];
    int acc[3];
} point;
```

```c
#define N 100
point p[N];
```

```c
void clear1(point *p, int n) {
    int i, j;
    for (i=0; i<n; i++){
        for (j=0; j<3; j++) {
            p[i].vel[j] = 0;
            p[i].acc[j] = 0;
        }
    }
}
```

```c
void clear2(point *p, int n) {
    int i, j;
    for (i=0; i<n; i++){
        for (j=0; j<3; j++)
            p[i].vel[j] = 0;
        for (j=0; j<3; j++)
            p[i].acc[j] = 0;
    }
}
```

```c
void clear3(point *p, int n) {
    int i, j;
    for (j=0; j<3; j++){
        for (i=0; i<n; i++)
            p[i].vel[j] = 0;
        for (i=0; i<n; i++)
            p[i].acc[j] = 0;
    }
}
```