

Operating Systems

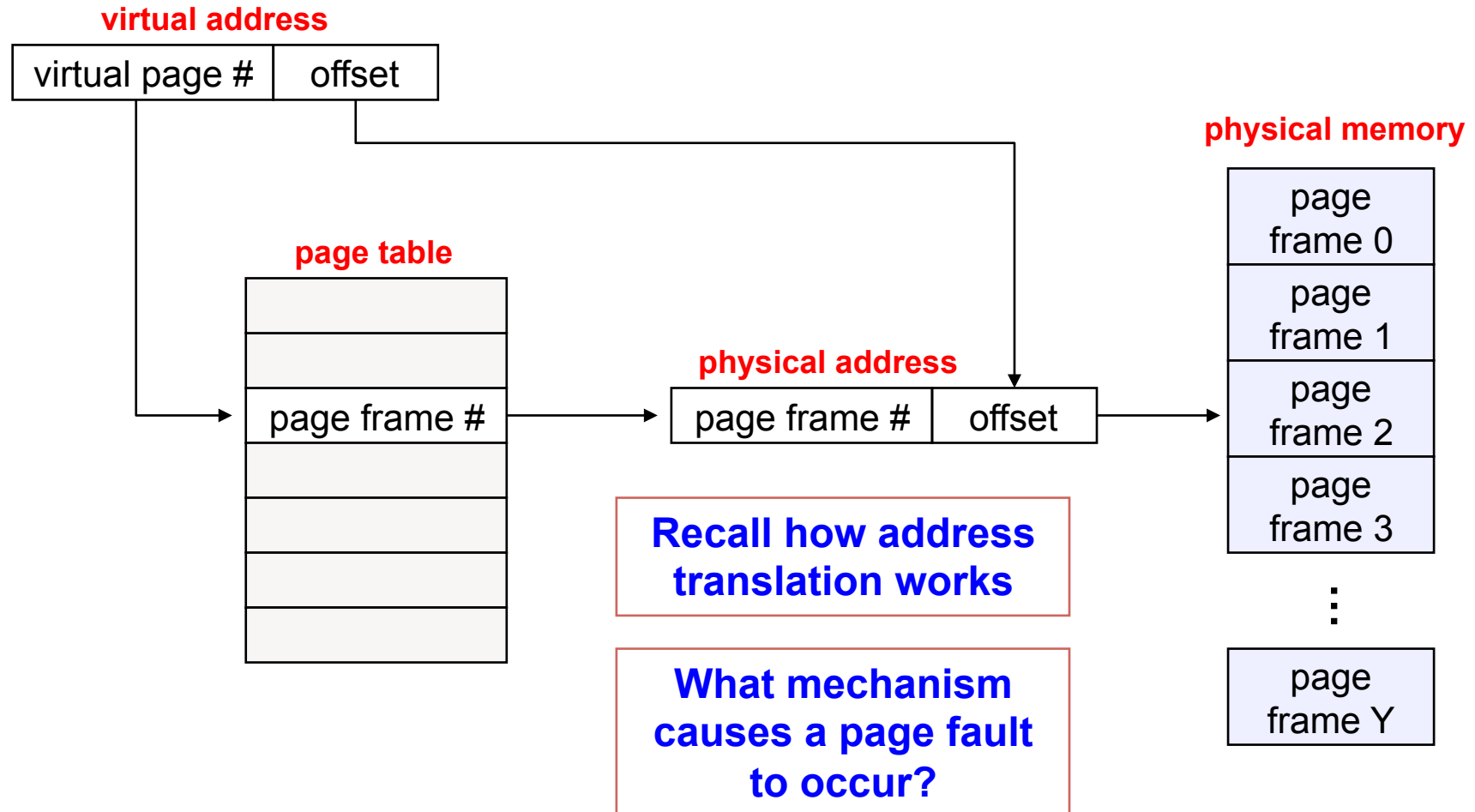
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Page Table Management, TLBs, and Other Pragmatics

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Address translation and page faults (refresher!)



How does OS handle a page fault?

- Interrupt causes system to be entered
- System saves state of running process, then vectors to page fault handler routine
 - find or create (through eviction) a page frame into which to load the needed page **(1)**
 - if I/O is required, run some other process while it's going on
 - find the needed page on disk and bring it into the page frame **(2)**
 - run some other process while the I/O is going on
 - fix up the page table entry
 - mark it as “valid,” set “referenced” and “modified” bits to false, set protection bits appropriately, point to correct page frame
 - put the process on the ready queue

- (1) Find or create (through eviction) a page frame into which to load the needed page
 - run page replacement algorithm
 - free page frame
 - assigned but unmodified (“clean”) page frame
 - assigned and modified (“dirty”) page frame
 - assigned but “clean”
 - find PTE (may be a different process!)
 - mark as invalid (disk address must be available for subsequent reload)
 - assigned and “dirty”
 - find PTE (may be a different process!)
 - mark as invalid
 - write it out

- OS may speculatively maintain lists of clean and dirty frames selected for replacement
 - May also speculatively clean the dirty pages (by writing them to disk)

- (2) Find the needed page on disk and bring it into the page frame
 - processor makes process ID and faulting virtual address available to page fault handler
 - process ID gets you to the base of the page table
 - VPN portion of VA gets you to the PTE
 - data structure analogous to page table (an array with an entry for each page in the address space) contains disk address of page
 - at this point, it's just a simple matter of I/O
 - must be positive that the target page frame remains available!

“Issues”

- (a) Memory reference overhead of address translation
 - 2 references per address lookup (page table, then memory)
 - solution: use a hardware cache to absorb page table lookups
 - translation lookaside buffer (TLB)
- (b) Memory required to hold page tables can be huge
 - need one PTE per page in the virtual address space
 - 32 bit AS with 4KB pages = 2^{20} PTEs = 1,048,576 PTEs
 - 4 bytes/PTE = **4MB per page table**
 - OS's typically have separate page tables per process
 - 25 processes = 100MB of page tables
 - 48 bit AS, same assumptions, **256GB per page table!**

Solution 1 to (b): Page the page tables

- Simplest notion:
 - Put user page tables in a pageable segment of the system's address space
 - The OS page table maps the portion of the VAS in which the user process page tables live
 - Pin the system's page table(s) in physical memory
 - So you can never fault trying to access them
 - When you need a user page table entry
 - It's in the OS virtual address space, so need the OS page table to translate to a physical address
 - You cannot fault on accessing the OS page table (because it's pinned)
 - The OS page table might indicate that the user page table isn't in physical memory
 - That's just a regular page fault
- This isn't exactly what's done any longer
 - Although it is *exactly* what VAX/VMS did!
 - And it's a useful model, and a component, for what's actually done

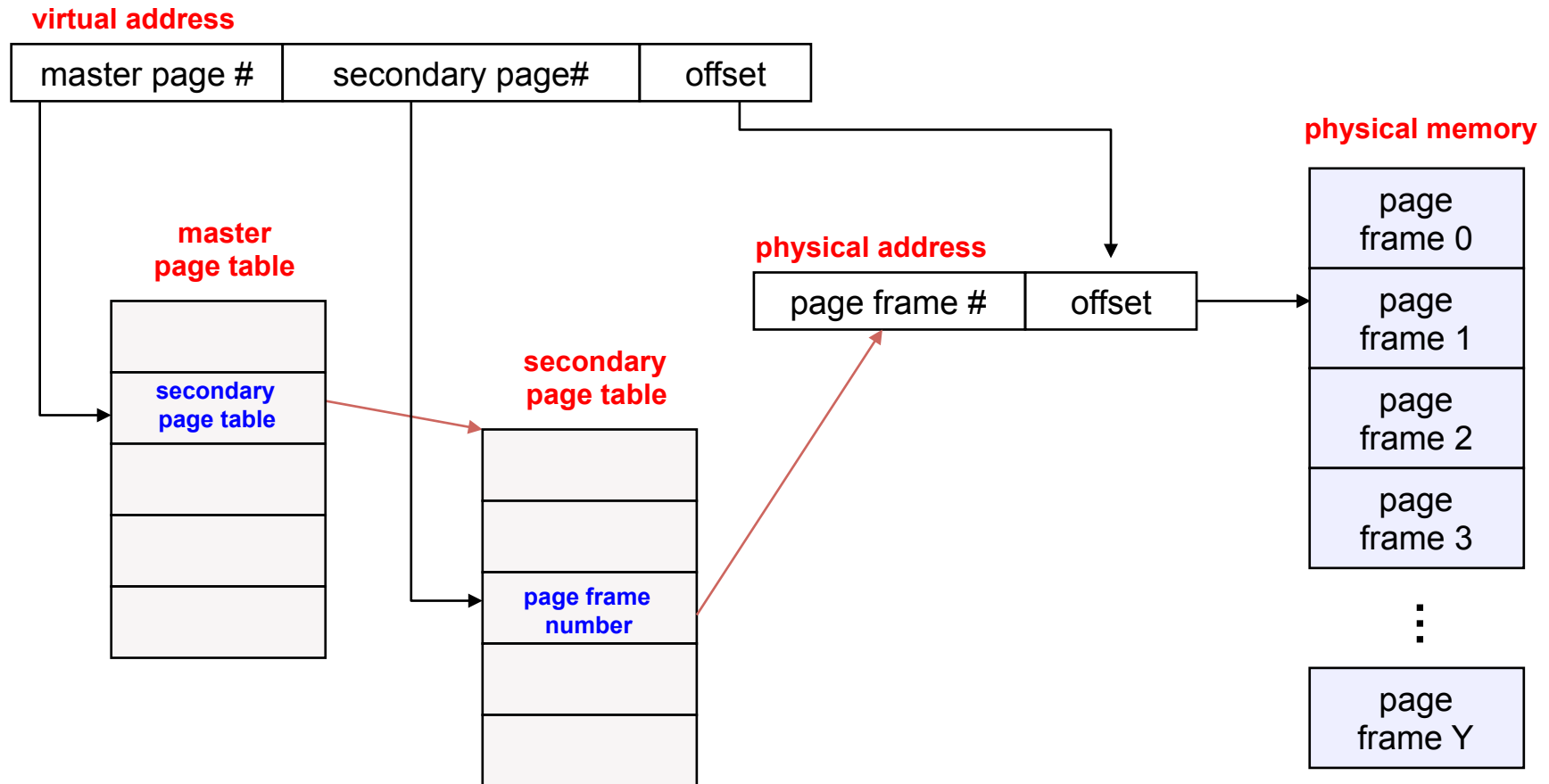
Solution 2 to (b): Multi-level page tables

- How can we reduce the physical memory requirements of page tables?
 - observation: only need to map the portion of the address space that is actually being used (often a tiny fraction of the total address space)
 - a process may not use its full 32/48/64-bit address space
 - a process may have unused “holes” in its address space
 - a process may not reference some parts of its address space for extended periods
 - all problems in CS can be solved with a level of indirection!
 - two-level (three-level, four-level) page tables

Two-level page tables

- With two-level PT's, virtual addresses have 3 parts:
 - master page number, secondary page number, offset
 - master PT maps master PN to secondary PT
 - secondary PT maps secondary PN to page frame number
 - offset and PFN yield physical address

Two-level page tables



- Example:
 - 32-bit address space, 4KB pages, 4 bytes/PTE
 - how many bits in offset?
 - need 12 bits for 4KB ($2^{12}=4K$), so offset is 12 bits
 - want master PT to fit in one page
 - 4KB/4 bytes = 1024 PTEs
 - thus master page # is 10 bits ($2^{10}=1K$)
 - and there are 1024 secondary page tables
 - and 10 bits are left ($32-12-10$) for indexing each secondary page table
 - hence, each secondary page table has 1024 PTEs and fits in one page

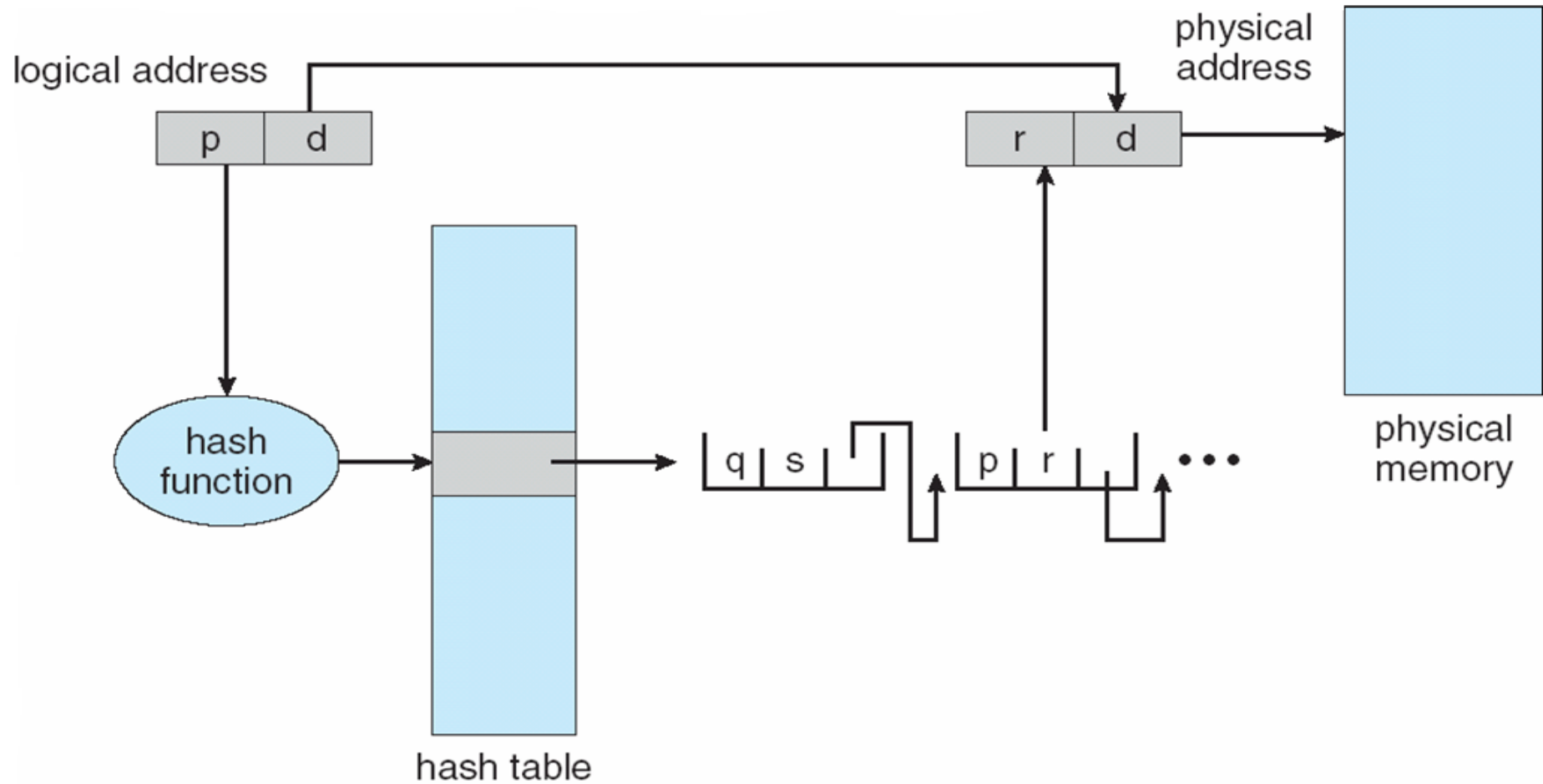
Generalizing

- Early architectures used 1-level page tables
- VAX, P-II used 2-level page tables
- SPARC used 3-level page tables
- 68030 used 4-level page tables
- Key thing is that the outer level must be **wired down** (pinned in physical memory) in order to break the recursion – *no smoke and mirrors*

Alternatives

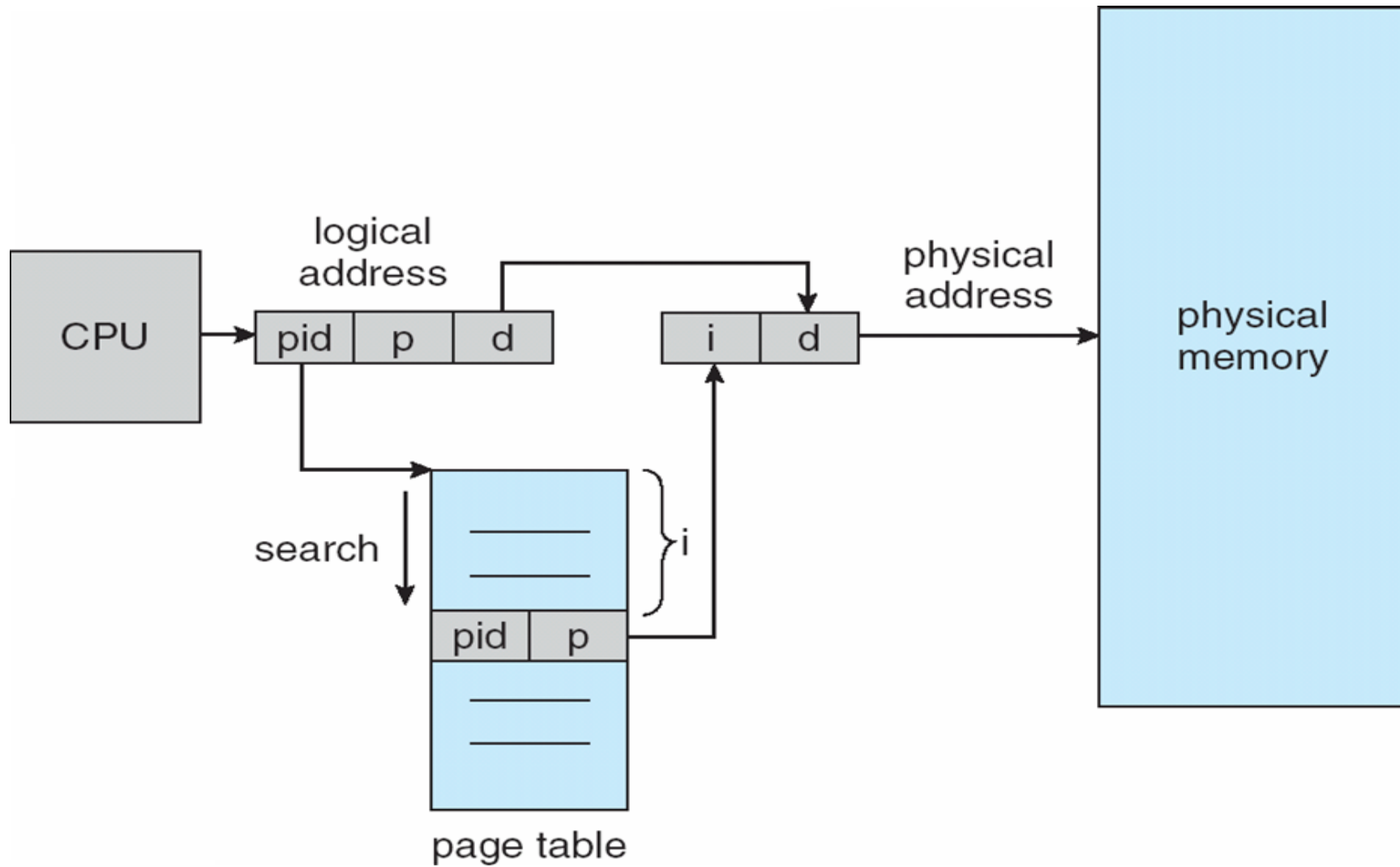
- Hashed page table (great for sparse address spaces)
 - VPN is used as a hash
 - collisions are resolved because the elements in the linked list at the hash index include the VPN as well as the PFN

Hashed page table



Alternatives

- Hashed page table (great for sparse address spaces)
 - VPN is used as a hash
 - collisions are resolved because the elements in the linked list at the hash index include the VPN as well as the PFN
- Inverted page table (really reduces space!)
 - one entry per page frame
 - includes process id, VPN
 - hard to search! (but IBM PC/RT actually did this!)



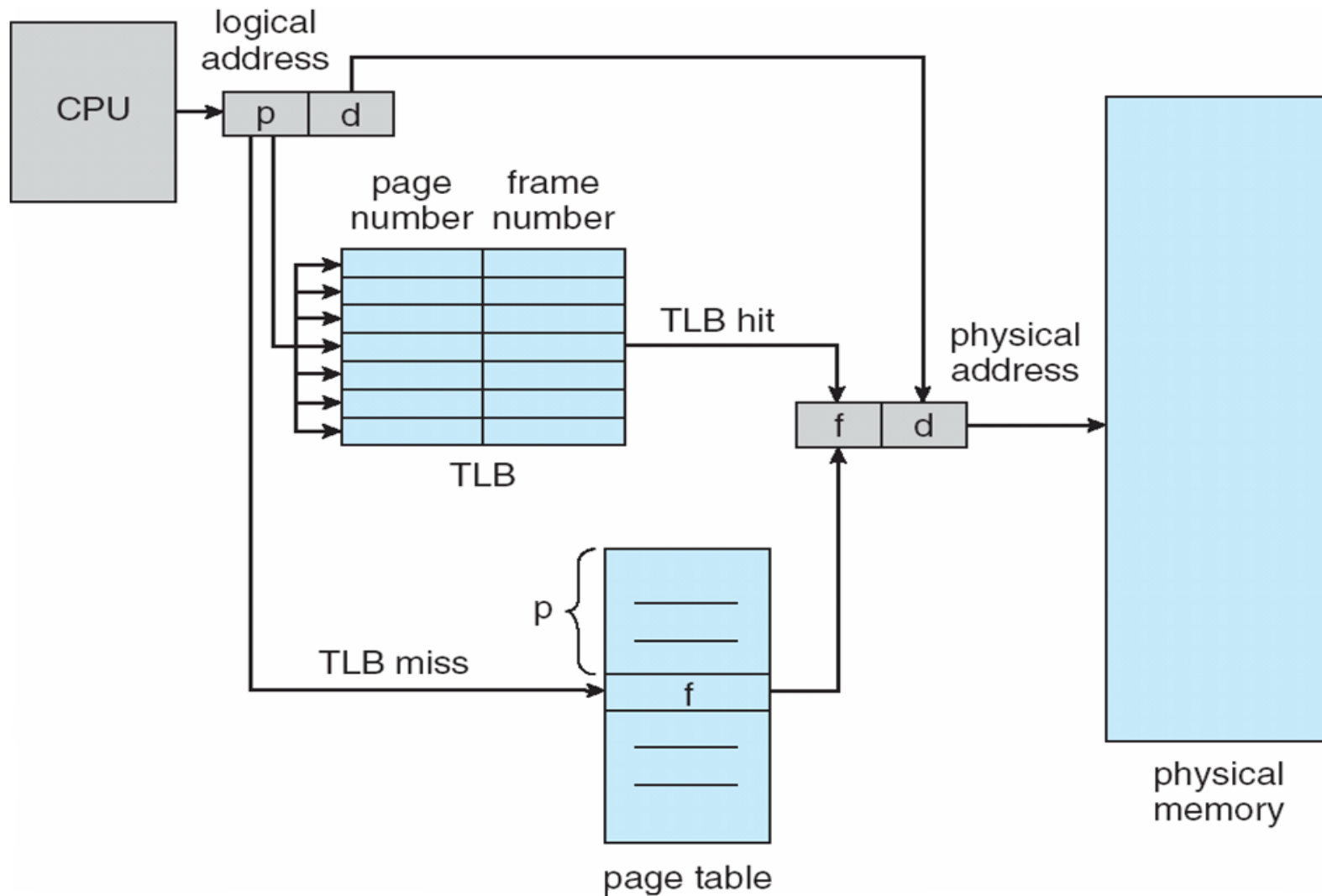
Making it all efficient

- Original page table scheme doubled the cost of memory lookups
 - one lookup into page table, a second to fetch the data
- Two-level page tables triple the cost!!
 - two lookups into page table, a third to fetch the data
- How can we make this more efficient?
 - goal: make fetching from a virtual address about as efficient as fetching from a physical address
 - solution: use a hardware cache inside the CPU
 - cache the virtual-to-physical translations in the hardware
 - called a **translation lookaside buffer (TLB)**
 - TLB is managed by the memory management unit (MMU)

TLBs

- Translation lookaside buffer
 - translates virtual page #s into PTEs (page frame numbers) (not physical addrs)
 - can be done in single machine cycle
- TLB is implemented in hardware
 - is a fully associative cache (all entries searched in parallel)
 - cache tags are virtual page numbers
 - cache values are PTEs (page frame numbers)
 - with PTE + offset, MMU can directly calculate the PA
- TLBs exploit locality
 - processes only use a handful of pages at a time
 - 16-48 entries in TLB is typical (64-192KB)
 - can hold the “hot set” or “working set” of a process
 - hit rates in the TLB are therefore really important

Mechanics of TLB



Managing TLBs

- Address translations are mostly handled by the TLB
 - >99% of translations, but there are **TLB misses** occasionally
 - in case of a miss, translation is placed into the TLB
- Hardware (memory management unit (MMU))
 - knows where page tables are in memory
 - OS maintains them, HW access them directly
 - tables have to be in HW-defined format
 - this is how x86 works
 - And that was part of the difficulty in virtualizing the x86 ...
- Software loaded TLB (OS)
 - TLB miss faults to OS, OS finds right PTE and loads TLB
 - must be fast (but, 20-200 cycles typically)
 - CPU ISA has instructions for TLB manipulation
 - OS gets to pick the page table format

Managing TLBs (2)

- OS must ensure TLB and page tables are consistent
 - when OS changes protection bits in a PTE, it needs to invalidate the PTE if it is in the TLB
- What happens on a process context switch?
 - remember, each process typically has its own page tables
 - need to invalidate all the entries in TLB! (**flush TLB**)
 - **this is a big part of why process context switches are costly**
 - can you think of a hardware fix to this?
- When the TLB misses, and a new PTE is loaded, a cached PTE must be evicted
 - choosing a victim PTE is called the “TLB replacement policy”
 - implemented in hardware, usually simple (e.g., LRU)

Functionality enhanced by page tables

- Code (instructions) is read-only
 - A bad pointer can't change the program code
- Dereferencing a null pointer is an error caught by hardware
 - Don't use the first page of the virtual address space – mark it as invalid – so references to address 0 cause an interrupt
- Inter-process memory protection
 - My address XYZ is different that your address XYZ
- Shared libraries
 - All running C programs use libc
 - Have only one (partial) copy in physical memory, not one per process
 - All page table entries mapping libc point to the same set of physical frames
 - DLL's in Windows

More functionality

- Generalizing the use of “shared memory”
 - Regions of two separate processes’s address spaces map to the same physical frames
 - Why? Faster inter-process communication
 - Just read/write from/to shared memory
 - Don’t have to make a syscall
 - Will have separate PTE’s per process, so can give different processes different access rights
 - E.g., one reader, one writer
- Copy-on-write (CoW), e.g., on fork()
 - Instead of copying all pages, create shared mappings of parent pages in child address space
 - Make shared mappings read-only for both processes
 - When either process writes, fault occurs, OS “splits” the page

Less familiar uses

- Memory-mapped files
 - instead of using open, read, write, close
 - “map” a file into a region of the virtual address space
 - e.g., into region with base ‘X’
 - accessing virtual address ‘X+N’ refers to offset ‘N’ in file
 - initially, all pages in mapped region marked as invalid
 - OS reads a page from file whenever invalid page accessed
 - OS writes a page to file when evicted from physical memory
 - only necessary if page is dirty

More unusual uses

- We saw that page replacement algorithms use the fact that “soft faults” are relatively cheap
 - Soft faults: faults on pages that are actually in memory, but whose PTE entries have artificially been marked as invalid
- That idea can be used whenever it would be useful to trap on a reference to some data item
- Example: debugger watchpoints
 - How?
- (The utility of this idea is limited by the fact that the granularity of detection is the page)

Summary

- We know how address translation works in the “vanilla” case (single-level page table, no fault, no TLB)
 - hardware splits the **virtual address** into the **virtual page number** and the **offset**; uses the VPN to index the **page table**; concatenates the offset to the **page frame number** (which is in the PTE) to obtain the physical address
- We know how the OS handles a page fault
 - find or create (through eviction) a page frame into which to load the needed page
 - find the needed page on disk and bring it into the page frame
 - fix up the page table entry
 - put the process on the ready queue

- We're aware of two "gotchas" that complicate things in practice
 - the memory reference overhead of address translation
 - the need to reference the page table doubles the memory traffic
 - solution: use a hardware cache (TLB = translation lookaside buffer) to absorb page table lookups
 - the memory required to hold page tables can be huge
 - solution: use multi-level page tables; can page the lower levels, or at least omit them if the address space is sparse
 - this makes the TLB even more important, because without it, a single user-level memory reference can cause two or three or four page table memory references ... and we can't even afford one!

- TLB details
 - Implemented in hardware
 - **fully associative cache** (all entries searched in parallel)
 - cache **tags** are virtual page numbers
 - cache **values** are page table entries (page frame numbers)
 - with PTE + offset, MMU can directly calculate the physical address
 - Can be small because of locality
 - 16-48 entries can yield a 99% hit ratio
 - Searched *before* the hardware walks the page table(s)
 - **hit**: address translation does not require an extra memory reference (or two or three or four) – “free”
 - **miss**: the hardware walks the page table(s) to translate the address; this translation is put into the TLB, evicting some other translation; typically managed LRU by the hardware

- On context switch
 - TLB must be **purged/flushed** (using a special hardware instruction) unless entries are tagged with a process ID
 - otherwise, the new process will use the old process's TLB entries and reference its page frames!
- Cool tricks
 - Read-only code
 - Dereferencing a null pointer is an error
 - Inter-process memory protection
 - Shared libraries
 - Inter-process communication
 - Shared memory
 - Copy-on-write
 - Memory-mapped files
 - Soft faults (e.g., debugger watchpoints)