

# System-Level I/O

15-213 / 18-213: Introduction to Computer Systems  
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## **Instructors:**

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# Today

- **Unix I/O**
- Metadata, sharing, and redirection
- Standard I/O
- RIO (robust I/O) package
- Closing remarks

# Unix Files

- A Unix *file* is a sequence of  $m$  bytes:
  - $B_0, B_1, \dots, B_k, \dots, B_{m-1}$
- All I/O devices are represented as files:
  - `/dev/sda2` (`/usr` disk partition)
  - `/dev/tty2` (terminal)
- Even the kernel is represented as a file:
  - `/dev/kmem` (kernel memory image)
  - `/proc` (kernel data structures)

# Unix File Types

## ■ Regular file

- File containing user/app data (binary, text, whatever)
- OS does not know anything about the format
  - other than “sequence of bytes”, akin to main memory

## ■ Directory file

- A file that contains the names and locations of other files

## ■ Character special and block special files

- Terminals (character special) and disks (block special)

## ■ FIFO (named pipe)

- A file type used for inter-process communication

## ■ Socket

- A file type used for network communication between processes

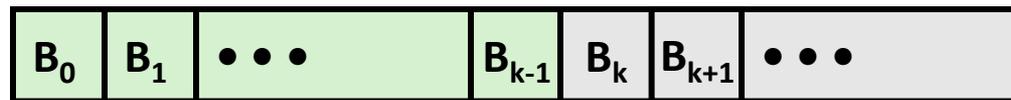
# Unix I/O

## ■ Key Features

- Elegant mapping of files to devices allows kernel to export simple interface called Unix I/O
- Important idea: All input and output is handled in a consistent and uniform way

## ■ Basic Unix I/O operations (system calls):

- Opening and closing files
  - `open()` and `close()`
- Reading and writing a file
  - `read()` and `write()`
- Changing the *current file position* (seek)
  - indicates next offset into file to read or write
  - `lseek()`



Current file position = k

# Opening Files

- Opening a file informs the kernel that you are getting ready to access that file

```
int fd;    /* file descriptor */

if ((fd = open("/etc/hosts", O_RDONLY)) < 0) {
    perror("open");
    exit(1);
}
```

- Returns a small identifying integer *file descriptor*
  - `fd == -1` indicates that an error occurred
- Each process created by a Unix shell begins life with three open files associated with a terminal:
  - 0: standard input
  - 1: standard output
  - 2: standard error

# Closing Files

- Closing a file informs the kernel that you are finished accessing that file

```
int fd;      /* file descriptor */
int retval; /* return value */

if ((retval = close(fd)) < 0) {
    perror("close");
    exit(1);
}
```

- Closing an already closed file is a recipe for disaster in threaded programs (more on this later)
- Moral: Always check return codes, even for seemingly benign functions such as `close()`

# Reading Files

- Reading a file copies bytes from the current file position to memory, and then updates file position

```
char buf[512];
int fd;      /* file descriptor */
int nbytes; /* number of bytes read */

/* Open file fd ... */
/* Then read up to 512 bytes from file fd */
if ((nbytes = read(fd, buf, sizeof(buf))) < 0) {
    perror("read");
    exit(1);
}
```

- Returns number of bytes read from file `fd` into `buf`
  - Return type `ssize_t` is signed integer
  - `nbytes < 0` indicates that an error occurred
  - *Short counts* (`nbytes < sizeof(buf)`) are possible and are not errors!

# Writing Files

- Writing a file copies bytes from memory to the current file position, and then updates current file position

```
char buf[512];
int fd;          /* file descriptor */
int nbytes;     /* number of bytes read */

/* Open the file fd ... */
/* Then write up to 512 bytes from buf to file fd */
if ((nbytes = write(fd, buf, sizeof(buf)) < 0) {
    perror("write");
    exit(1);
}
```

- Returns number of bytes written from `buf` to file `fd`
  - `nbytes < 0` indicates that an error occurred
  - As with reads, short counts are possible and are not errors!

# Simple Unix I/O example

- Copying standard in to standard out, one byte at a time

```
int main(void)
{
    char c;
    int len;

    while ((len = read(0 /*stdin*/, &c, 1)) == 1) {
        if (write(1 /*stdout*/, &c, 1) != 1) {
            exit(20);
        }
    }
    if (len < 0) {
        printf ("read from stdin failed");
        exit (10);
    }
    exit(0);
}
```

# On Short Counts

- **Short counts can occur in these situations:**
  - Encountering (end-of-file) EOF on reads
  - Reading text lines from a terminal
  - Reading and writing network sockets or Unix pipes
  
- **Short counts never occur in these situations:**
  - Reading from disk files (except for EOF)
  - Writing to disk files

# Today

- Unix I/O
- **Metadata, sharing, and redirection**
- Standard I/O
- RIO (robust I/O) package
- Closing remarks

# File Metadata

- **Metadata** is data about data, in this case file data
- **Per-file metadata maintained by kernel**
  - accessed by users with the `stat` and `fstat` functions

```
/* Metadata returned by the stat and fstat functions */
struct stat {
    dev_t          st_dev;          /* device */
    ino_t          st_ino;         /* inode */
    mode_t        st_mode;        /* protection and file type */
    nlink_t       st_nlink;       /* number of hard links */
    uid_t         st_uid;         /* user ID of owner */
    gid_t         st_gid;         /* group ID of owner */
    dev_t         st_rdev;        /* device type (if inode device) */
    off_t         st_size;        /* total size, in bytes */
    unsigned long st_blksize;     /* blocksize for filesystem I/O */
    unsigned long st_blocks;     /* number of blocks allocated */
    time_t        st_atime;       /* time of last access */
    time_t        st_mtime;       /* time of last modification */
    time_t        st_ctime;       /* time of last change */
};
```

# Example of Accessing File Metadata

```
/* statcheck.c - Querying and manipulating a file's meta data */
```

```
#include "csapp.h"
```

```
int main (int argc, char **argv)
```

```
{
```

```
    struct stat stat;
```

```
    char *type, *readok;
```

```
    Stat(argv[1], &stat);
```

```
    if (S_ISREG(stat.st_mode))
```

```
        type = "regular";
```

```
    else if (S_ISDIR(stat.st_mode))
```

```
        type = "directory";
```

```
    else
```

```
        type = "other";
```

```
    if ((stat.st_mode & S_IRUSR) /* OK to read? */)
```

```
        readok = "yes";
```

```
    else
```

```
        readok = "no";
```

```
    printf("type: %s, read: %s\n", type, readok);
```

```
    exit(0);
```

```
}
```

```
unix> ./statcheck statcheck.c
```

```
type: regular, read: yes
```

```
unix> chmod 000 statcheck.c
```

```
unix> ./statcheck statcheck.c
```

```
type: regular, read: no
```

```
unix> ./statcheck ..
```

```
type: directory, read: yes
```

```
unix> ./statcheck /dev/kmem
```

```
type: other, read: yes
```

statcheck.c

# Repeated Slide: Opening Files

- Opening a file informs the kernel that you are getting ready to access that file

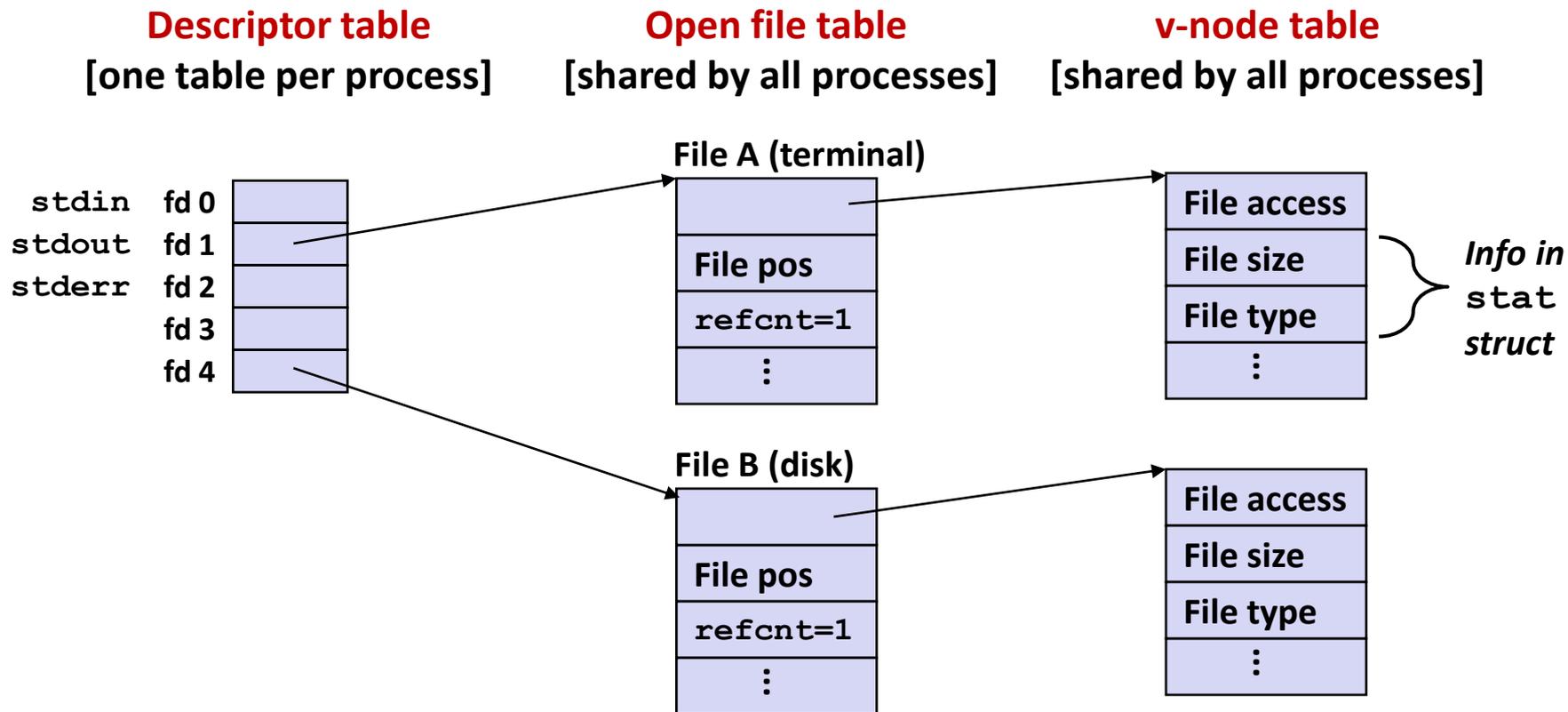
```
int fd;    /* file descriptor */

if ((fd = open("/etc/hosts", O_RDONLY)) < 0) {
    perror("open");
    exit(1);
}
```

- Returns a small identifying integer *file descriptor*
  - `fd == -1` indicates that an error occurred

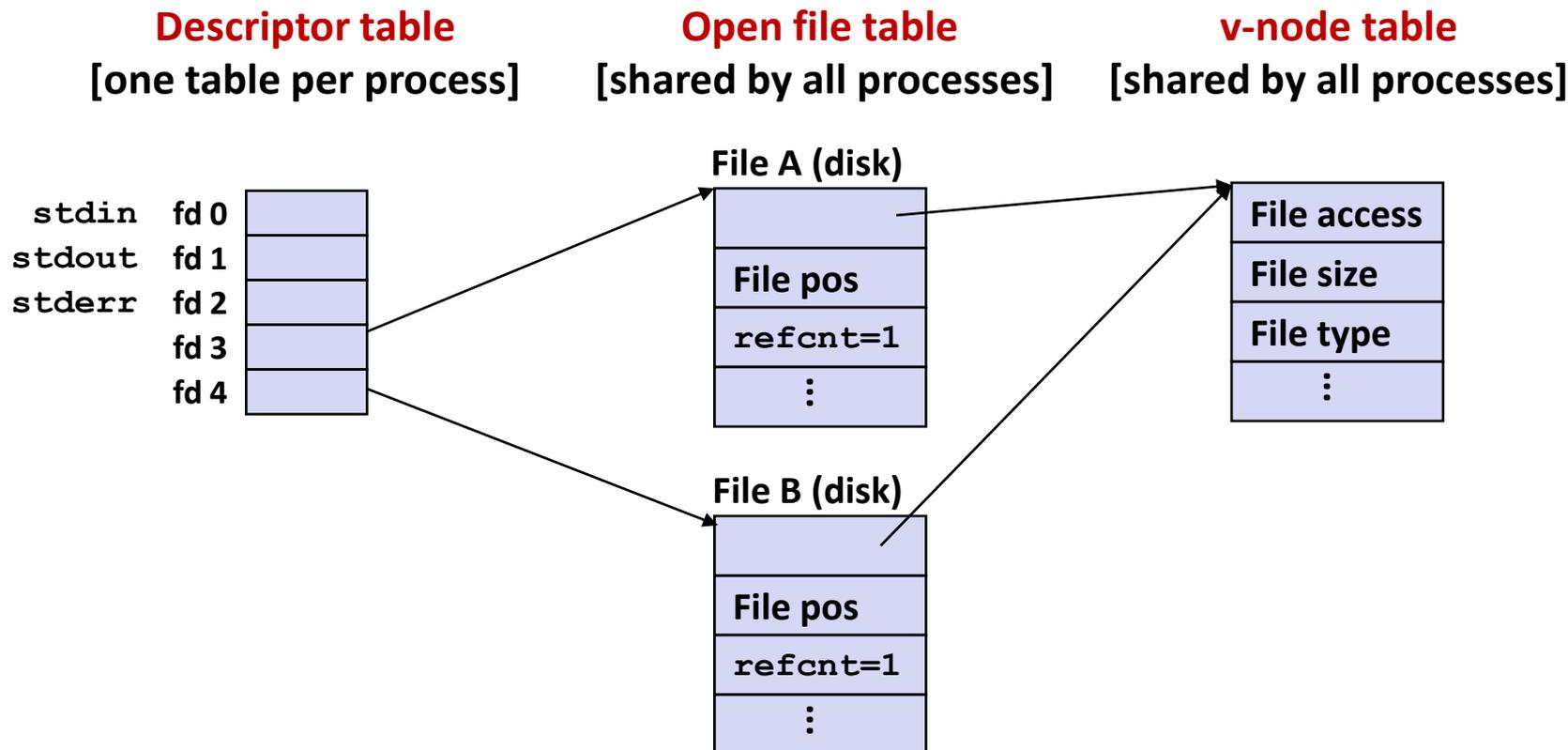
# How the Unix Kernel Represents Open Files

- Two descriptors referencing two distinct open disk files. Descriptor 1 (stdout) points to terminal, and descriptor 4 points to open disk file



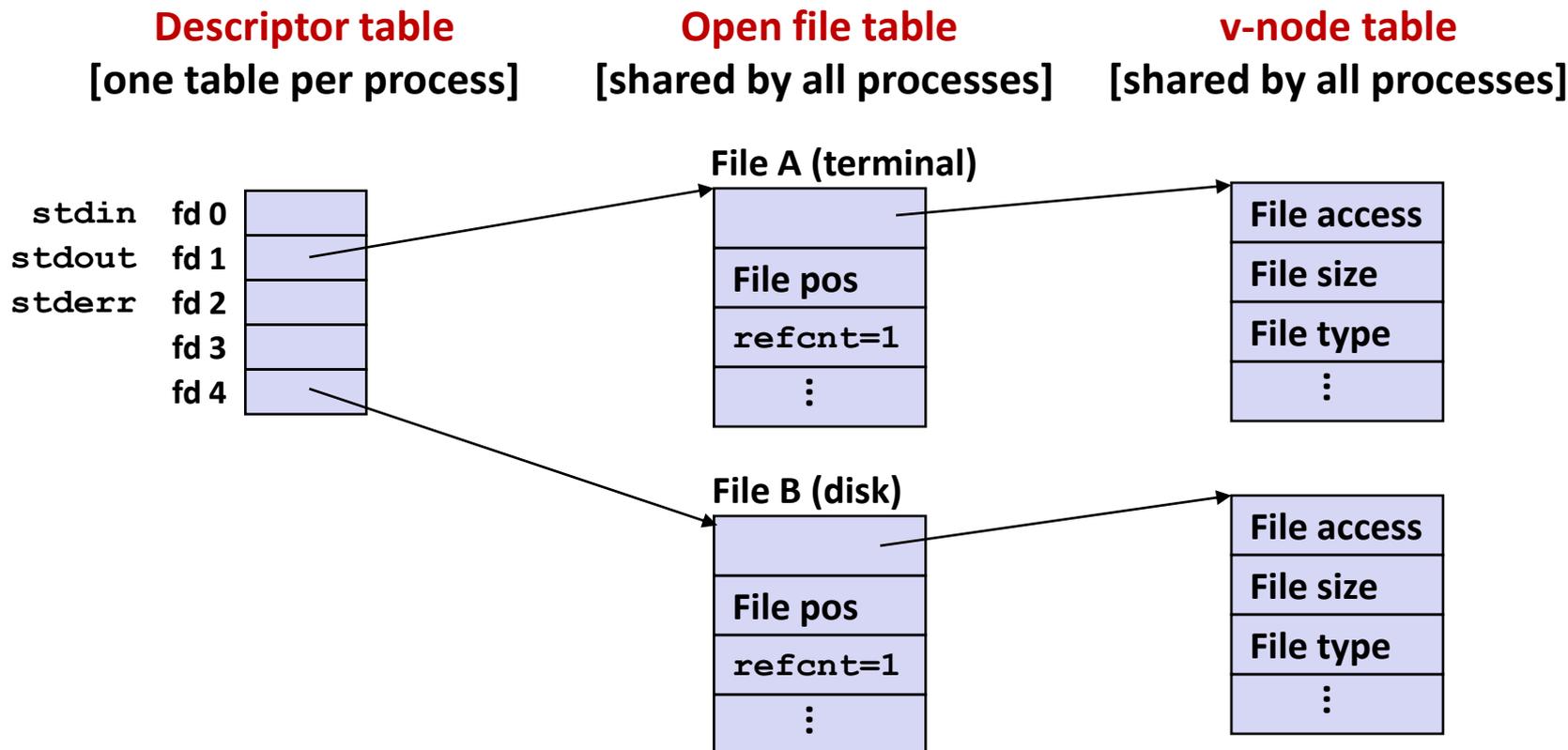
# File Sharing

- Two distinct descriptors sharing the same disk file through two distinct open file table entries
  - E.g., Calling `open` twice with the same `filename` argument



# How Processes Share Files: Fork()

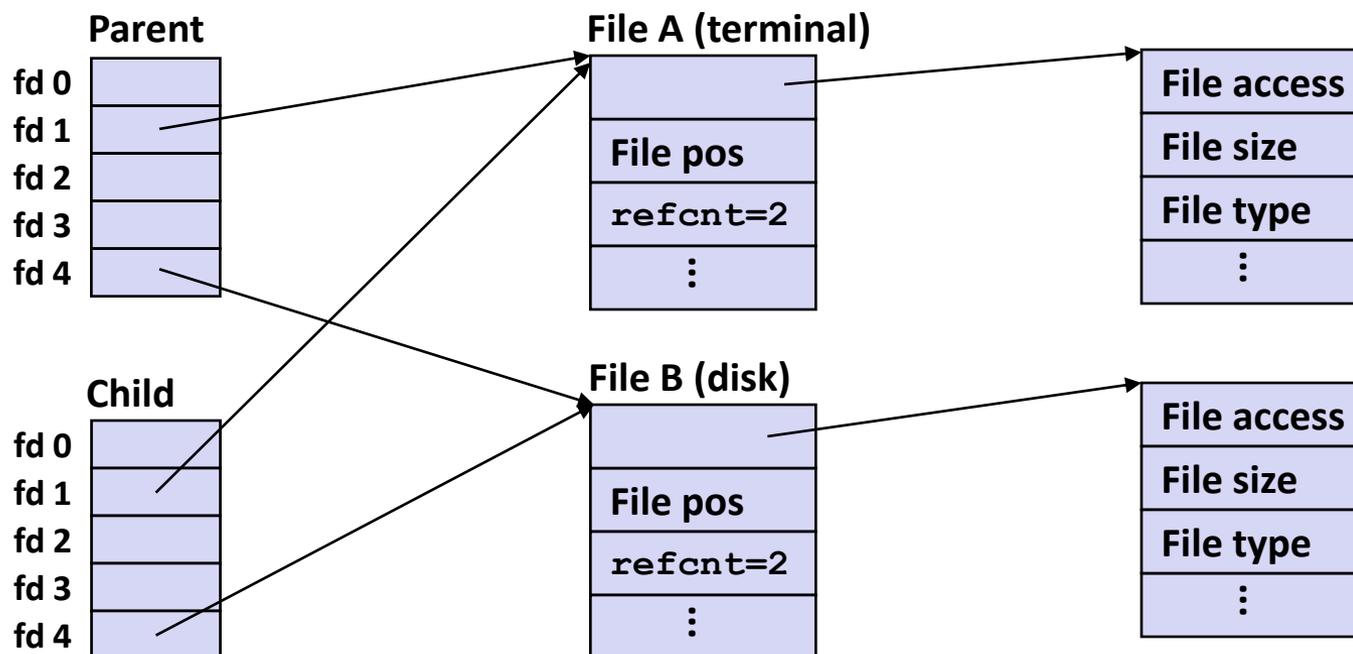
- A child process inherits its parent's open files
  - Note: situation unchanged by `exec` functions (use `fcntl` to change)
- *Before* `fork()` call:



# How Processes Share Files: Fork()

- A child process inherits its parent's open files
- *After* fork():
  - Child's table same as parent's, and +1 to each refcnt

**Descriptor table** [one table per process]      **Open file table** [shared by all processes]      **v-node table** [shared by all processes]



# I/O Redirection

- Question: How does a shell implement I/O redirection?

```
unix> ls > foo.txt
```

- Answer: By calling the `dup2 (oldfd, newfd)` function
  - Copies (per-process) descriptor table entry `oldfd` to entry `newfd`

Descriptor table  
*before* `dup2 (4, 1)`

fd 0	
fd 1	a
fd 2	
fd 3	
fd 4	b

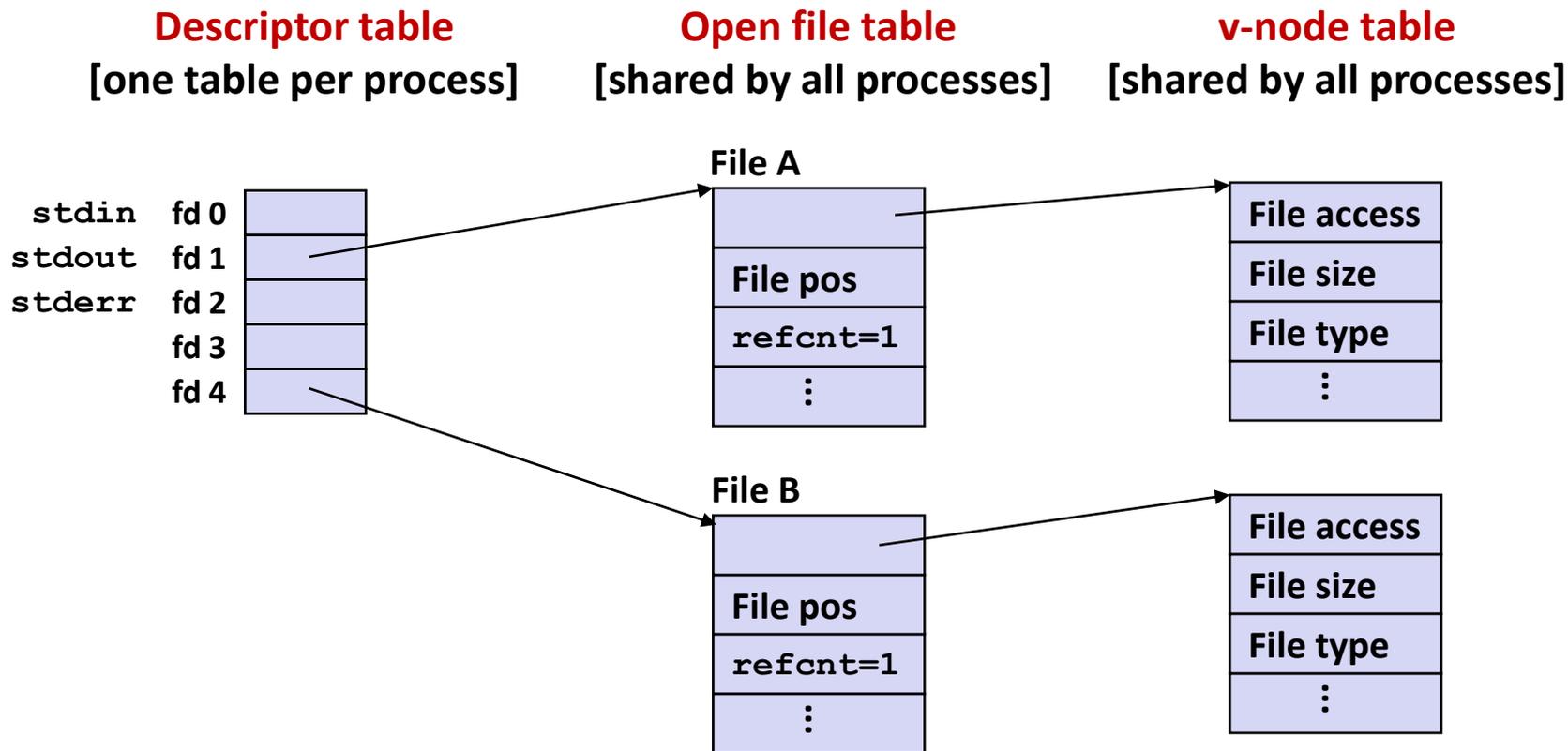


Descriptor table  
*after* `dup2 (4, 1)`

fd 0	
fd 1	b
fd 2	
fd 3	
fd 4	b

# I/O Redirection Example

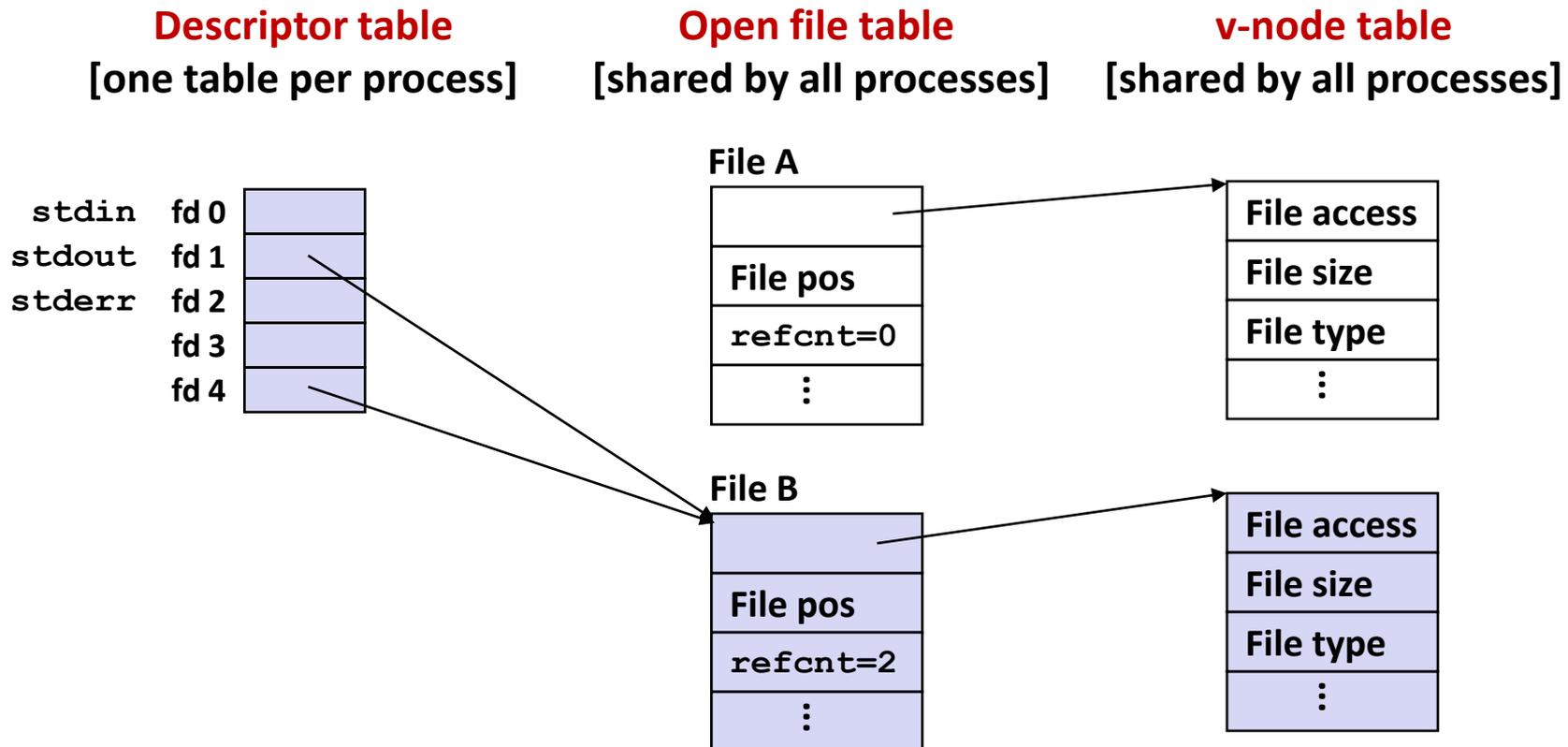
- **Step #1: open file to which stdout should be redirected**
  - Happens in child executing shell code, before `exec`



# I/O Redirection Example (cont.)

## ■ Step #2: call `dup2 (4, 1)`

- cause `fd=1` (stdout) to refer to disk file pointed at by `fd=4`



# Today

- Unix I/O
- Metadata, sharing, and redirection
- **Standard I/O**
- RIO (robust I/O) package
- Closing remarks

# Standard I/O Functions

- The C standard library (`libc.so`) contains a collection of higher-level *standard I/O* functions
  - Documented in Appendix B of K&R
- Examples of standard I/O functions:
  - Opening and closing files (`fopen` and `fclose`)
  - Reading and writing bytes (`fread` and `fwrite`)
  - Reading and writing text lines (`fgets` and `fputs`)
  - Formatted reading and writing (`fscanf` and `fprintf`)

# Standard I/O Streams

- Standard I/O models open files as *streams*
  - Abstraction for a file descriptor and a buffer in memory
- C programs begin life with three open streams (defined in `stdio.h`)
  - `stdin` (standard input)
  - `stdout` (standard output)
  - `stderr` (standard error)

```
#include <stdio.h>
extern FILE *stdin; /* standard input (descriptor 0) */
extern FILE *stdout; /* standard output (descriptor 1) */
extern FILE *stderr; /* standard error (descriptor 2) */

int main() {
    fprintf(stdout, "Hello, world\n");
}
```

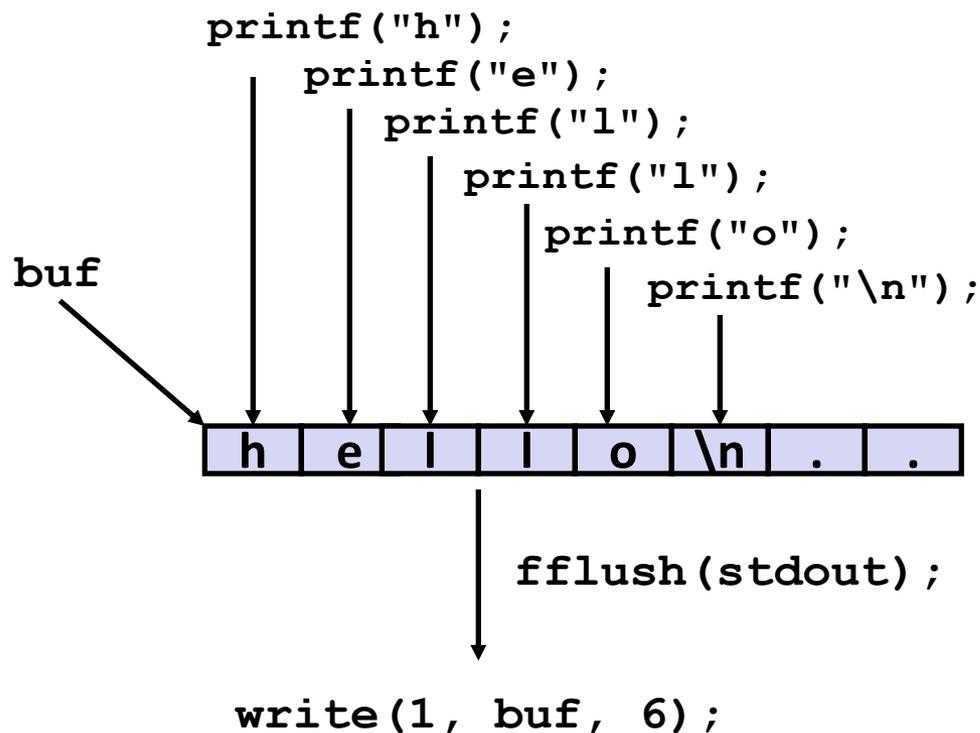
# Buffered I/O: Motivation

- **Applications often read/write one character at a time**
  - `getc`, `putc`, `ungetc`
  - `gets`, `fgets`
    - Read line of text one character at a time, stopping at newline
- **Implementing as Unix I/O calls expensive**
  - `read` and `write` require Unix kernel calls
    - > 10,000 clock cycles
- **Solution: Buffered read**
  - Use Unix `read` to grab block of bytes
  - User input functions take one byte at a time from buffer
    - Refill buffer when empty



# Buffering in Standard I/O

- Standard I/O functions use buffered I/O



- Buffer flushed to output fd on “\n” or `fflush()` call

# Standard I/O Buffering in Action

- You can see this buffering in action for yourself, using the always fascinating Unix `strace` program:

```
#include <stdio.h>

int main()
{
    printf("h");
    printf("e");
    printf("l");
    printf("l");
    printf("o");
    printf("\n");
    fflush(stdout);
    exit(0);
}
```

```
linux> strace ./hello
execve("./hello", ["hello"], [/* ... */]).
...
write(1, "hello\n", 6)                = 6
...
exit_group(0)                          = ?
```

# Today

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- **RIO (robust I/O) package**
- Closing remarks

# The RIO Package

- RIO is a set of wrappers that provide efficient and robust I/O in apps, such as network programs that are subject to short counts
- RIO provides two different kinds of functions
  - Unbuffered input and output of binary data
    - `rio_readn` and `rio_writen`
  - Buffered input of binary data and text lines
    - `rio_readlineb` and `rio_readnb`
    - Buffered RIO routines are thread-safe and can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor
- Download from <http://csapp.cs.cmu.edu/public/code.html>
  - `src/csapp.c` and `include/csapp.h`

# Implementation of `rio_readn`

```
/*
 * rio_readn - robustly read n bytes (unbuffered)
 */
ssize_t rio_readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n)
{
    size_t nleft = n;
    ssize_t nread;
    char *bufp = usrbuf;

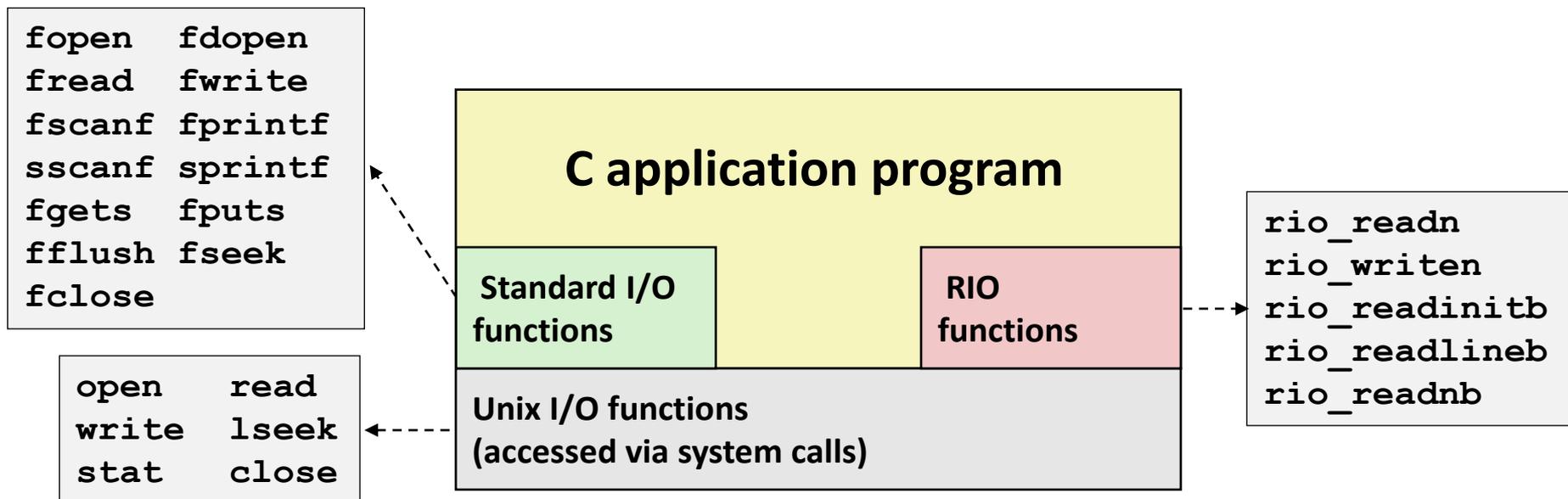
    while (nleft > 0) {
        if ((nread = read(fd, bufp, nleft)) < 0) {
            if (errno == EINTR) /* interrupted by sig handler return */
                nread = 0;      /* and call read() again */
            else
                return -1;     /* errno set by read() */
        }
        else if (nread == 0)
            break;             /* EOF */
        nleft -= nread;
        bufp += nread;
    }
    return (n - nleft);       /* return >= 0 */
}
```

# Today

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- RIO (robust I/O) package
- **Closing comments**

# Unix I/O vs. Standard I/O vs. RIO

- Standard I/O and RIO are implemented using low-level Unix I/O



- Which ones should you use in your programs?

# Pros and Cons of Unix I/O

## ■ Pros

- Unix I/O is the most general and lowest overhead form of I/O.
  - All other I/O packages are implemented using Unix I/O functions.
- Unix I/O provides functions for accessing file metadata.
- Unix I/O functions are async-signal-safe and can be used safely in signal handlers.

## ■ Cons

- Dealing with short counts is tricky and error prone.
- Efficient reading of text lines requires some form of buffering, also tricky and error prone.
- Both of these issues are addressed by the standard I/O and RIO packages.

# Pros and Cons of Standard I/O

## ■ Pros:

- Buffering increases efficiency by decreasing the number of **read** and **write** system calls
- Short counts are handled automatically

## ■ Cons:

- Provides no function for accessing file metadata
- Standard I/O functions are not async-signal-safe, and not appropriate for signal handlers.
- Standard I/O is not appropriate for input and output on network sockets
  - There are poorly documented restrictions on streams that interact badly with restrictions on sockets (CS:APP2e, Sec 10.9)

# Choosing I/O Functions

- **General rule: use the highest-level I/O functions you can**
  - Many C programmers are able to do all of their work using the standard I/O functions
  - But, be sure to understand the functions you use!
- **When to use standard I/O**
  - When working with disk or terminal files
- **When to use raw Unix I/O**
  - Inside signal handlers, because Unix I/O is async-signal-safe
  - In rare cases when you need absolute highest performance
- **When to use RIO**
  - When you are reading and writing network sockets
  - Avoid using standard I/O on sockets

# Aside: Working with Binary Files

## ■ Binary File Examples

- Object code, Images (JPEG, GIF),

## ■ Functions you shouldn't use on binary files

- Line-oriented I/O such as `fgets`, `scanf`, `printf`, `rio_readlineb`
  - Different systems interpret `0x0A` (`'\n'`) (newline) differently:
    - Linux and Mac OS X: `LF (0x0a)` [`'\n'`]
    - HTTP servers & Windows: `CR+LF (0x0d 0x0a)` [`'\r\n'`]
  - Use things like `rio_readn` or `rio_readnb` instead
- String functions
  - `strlen`, `strcpy`
  - Interprets byte value 0 (end of string) as special

# For Further Information

## ■ The Unix bible:

- W. Richard Stevens & Stephen A. Rago, *Advanced Programming in the Unix Environment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Addison Wesley, 2005
  - Updated from Stevens's 1993 classic text.

## ■ Stevens is arguably the best technical writer ever.

- Produced authoritative works in:
  - Unix programming
  - TCP/IP (the protocol that makes the Internet work)
  - Unix network programming
  - Unix IPC programming

## ■ Tragically, Stevens died Sept. 1, 1999

- But others have taken up his legacy

# Fun with File Descriptors (1)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
    char c1, c2, c3;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    fd2 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    Dup2(fd2, fd3);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    Read(fd2, &c2, 1);
    Read(fd3, &c3, 1);
    printf("c1 = %c, c2 = %c, c3 = %c\n", c1, c2, c3);
    return 0;
}
ffiles1.c
```

- What would this program print for file containing “abcde”?

# Fun with File Descriptors (2)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int fd1;
    int s = getpid() & 0x1;
    char c1, c2;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O_RDONLY, 0);
    Read(fd1, &c1, 1);
    if (fork()) { /* Parent */
        sleep(s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Parent: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    } else { /* Child */
        sleep(1-s);
        Read(fd1, &c2, 1);
        printf("Child: c1 = %c, c2 = %c\n", c1, c2);
    }
    return 0;
}
ffiles2.c
```

- What would this program print for file containing “abcde”?

# Fun with File Descriptors (3)

```
#include "csapp.h"
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    int fd1, fd2, fd3;
    char *fname = argv[1];
    fd1 = Open(fname, O_CREAT|O_TRUNC|O_RDWR, S_IRUSR|S_IWUSR);
    Write(fd1, "pqrs", 4);
    fd3 = Open(fname, O_APPEND|O_WRONLY, 0);
    Write(fd3, "jklmn", 5);
    fd2 = dup(fd1); /* Allocates descriptor */
    Write(fd2, "wxyz", 4);
    Write(fd3, "ef", 2);
    return 0;
}
```

ffiles3.c

- What would be the contents of the resulting file?

# Accessing Directories

- **Only recommended operation on a directory: read its entries**
  - `dirent` structure contains information about a directory entry
  - `DIR` structure contains information about directory while stepping through its entries

```
#include <sys/types.h>
#include <dirent.h>

{
    DIR *directory;
    struct dirent *de;
    ...
    if (!(directory = opendir(dir_name)))
        error("Failed to open directory");
    ...
    while (0 != (de = readdir(directory))) {
        printf("Found file: %s\n", de->d_name);
    }
    ...
    closedir(directory);
}
```

# Backup Slides

# Unbuffered RIO Input and Output

- Same interface as Unix `read` and `write`
- Especially useful for transferring data on network sockets

```
#include "csapp.h"
```

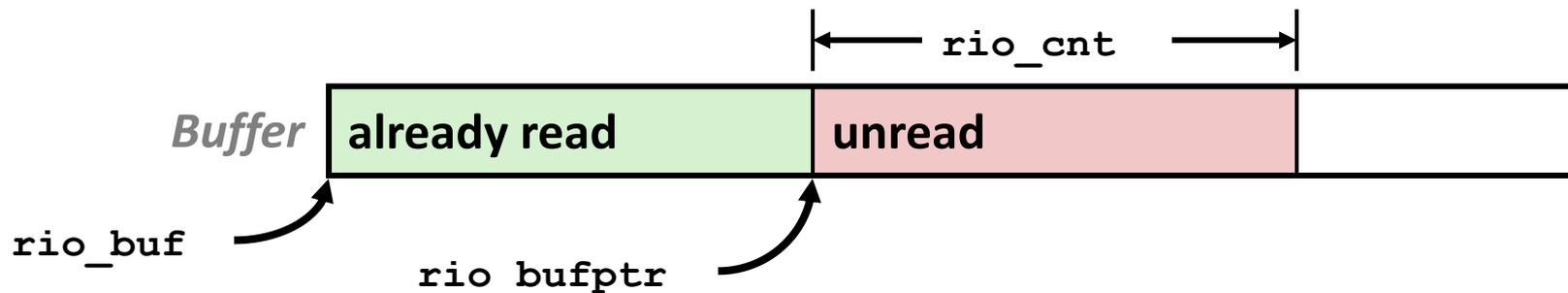
```
ssize_t rio_readn(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);  
ssize_t rio_writen(int fd, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
```

**Return: num. bytes transferred if OK, 0 on EOF (`rio_readn` only), -1 on error**

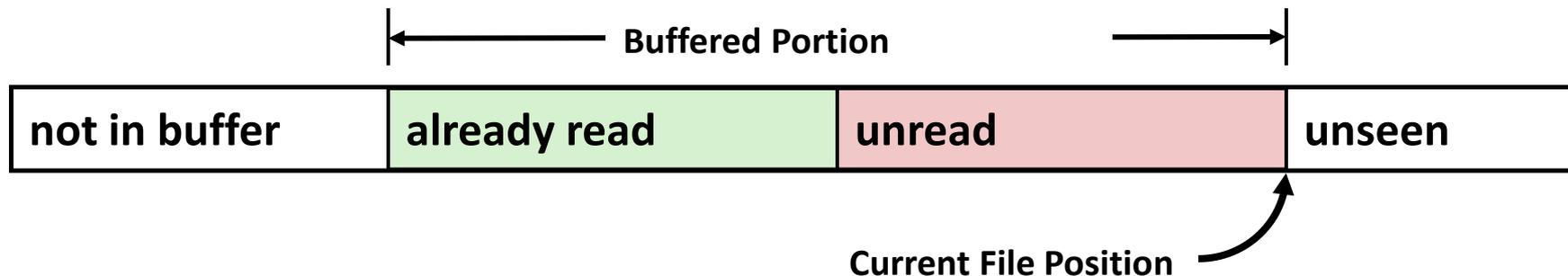
- `rio_readn` returns short count only if it encounters EOF
  - Only use it when you know how many bytes to read
- `rio_writen` never returns a short count
- Calls to `rio_readn` and `rio_writen` can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor

# Buffered I/O: Implementation

- For reading from file
- File has associated buffer to hold bytes that have been read from file but not yet read by user code

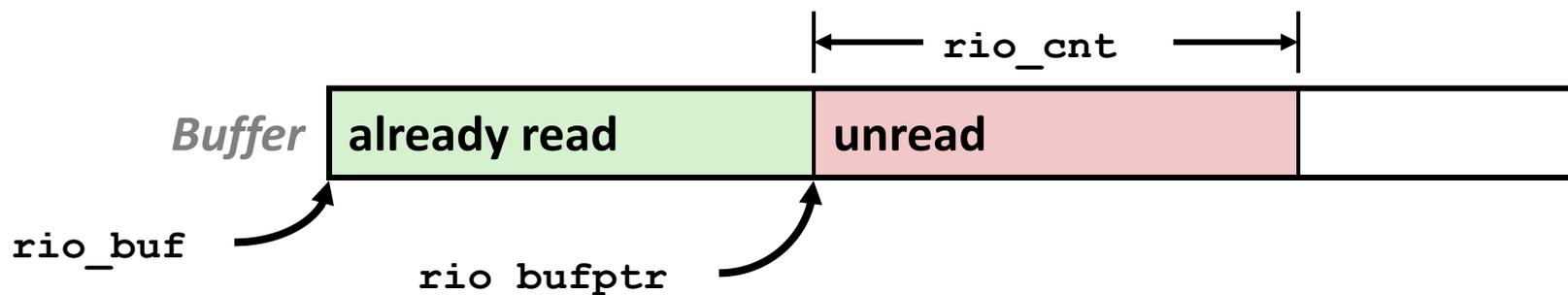


- Layered on Unix file:



# Buffered I/O: Declaration

- All information contained in struct



```
typedef struct {
    int rio_fd;           /* descriptor for this internal buf */
    int rio_cnt;         /* unread bytes in internal buf */
    char *rio_bufptr;    /* next unread byte in internal buf */
    char rio_buf[RIO_BUFSIZE]; /* internal buffer */
} rio_t;
```

# Buffered RIO Input Functions

- Efficiently read text lines and binary data from a file partially cached in an internal memory buffer

```
#include "csapp.h"

void rio_readinitb(rio_t *rp, int fd);

ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen);
```

Return: num. bytes read if OK, 0 on EOF, -1 on error

- **rio\_readlineb** reads a text line of up to **maxlen** bytes from file **fd** and stores the line in **usrbuf**
  - Especially useful for reading text lines from network sockets
- Stopping conditions
  - **maxlen** bytes read
  - EOF encountered
  - Newline ('\n') encountered

# Buffered RIO Input Functions (cont)

```
#include "csapp.h"

void rio_readinitb(rio_t *rp, int fd);

ssize_t rio_readlineb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t maxlen);
ssize_t rio_readnb(rio_t *rp, void *usrbuf, size_t n);
```

**Return: num. bytes read if OK, 0 on EOF, -1 on error**

- **rio\_readnb** reads up to **n** bytes from file **fd**
- Stopping conditions
  - **maxlen** bytes read
  - EOF encountered
- Calls to **rio\_readlineb** and **rio\_readnb** can be interleaved arbitrarily on the same descriptor
  - Warning: Don't interleave with calls to **rio\_readn**

# RIO Example

- Copying the lines of a text file from standard input to standard output

```
#include "csapp.h"

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    int n;
    rio_t rio;
    char buf[MAXLINE];

    Rio_readinitb(&rio, STDIN_FILENO);
    while((n = Rio_readlineb(&rio, buf, MAXLINE)) != 0)
        Rio_writen(STDOUT_FILENO, buf, n);
    exit(0);
}
```

cpfile.c