



Switches

Reading: Section 3.2

CS 375: Computer Networks

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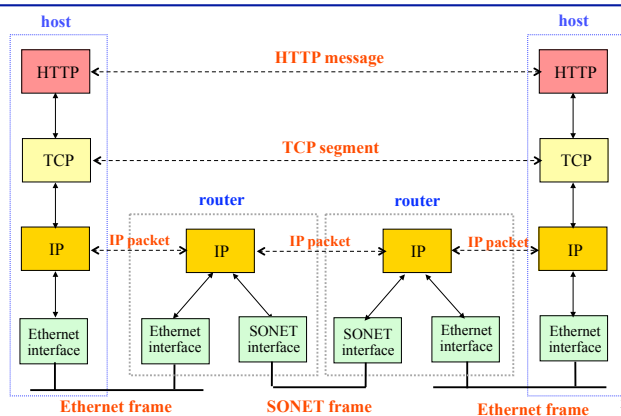
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Goals of Today's Lecture

- Devices that shuttle data at different layers
 - Repeaters and hubs
 - Bridges and switches
 - Routers
- Switch protocols and mechanisms
 - Dedicated access and full-duplex transfers
 - Cut-through switching
 - Self learning of the switch table
 - Spanning trees
- Virtual LANs (VLANs)

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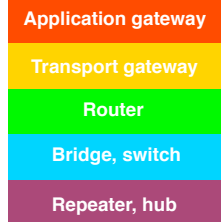
Message, Segment, Packet, and Frame



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Shuttling Data at Different Layers

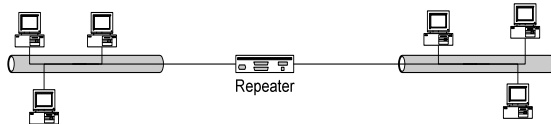
- Different devices switch different things
 - Network layer: packets (routers)
 - Link layer: frames (bridges and switches)
 - Physical layer: electrical signals (repeaters and hubs)



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Physical Layer: Repeaters

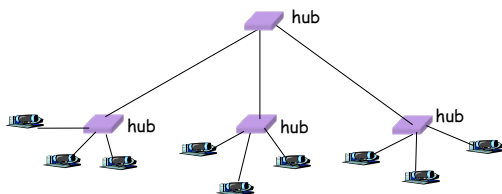
- Distance limitation in local-area networks
 - Electrical signal becomes weaker as it travels
 - Imposes a limit on the length of a LAN
- Repeaters join LANs together
 - Analog electronic device
 - Continuously monitors electrical signals on each LAN
 - Transmits an amplified copy



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Physical Layer: Hubs

- Joins multiple input lines electrically
 - Designed to hold multiple line cards
 - Do not necessarily amplify the signal
- Very similar to repeaters
 - Also operates at the physical layer



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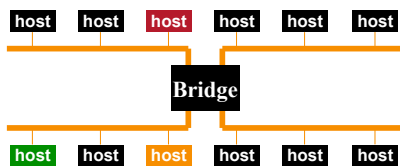
Limitations of Repeaters and Hubs

- One large shared link
 - Each bit is sent everywhere
 - So, aggregate throughput is limited
 - E.g., three departments each get 10 Mbps independently
 - ... and then connect via a hub and must share 10 Mbps
- Cannot support multiple LAN technologies
 - Does not buffer or interpret frames
 - So, can't interconnect between different rates or formats
 - E.g., 10 Mbps Ethernet and 100 Mbps Ethernet
- Limitations on maximum nodes and distances
 - Shared medium imposes length limits (see next lecture)
 - E.g., cannot go beyond 2500 meters on Ethernet

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Link Layer: Bridges

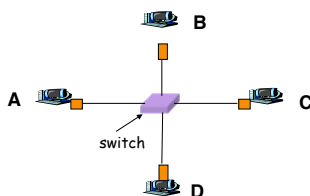
- Connects two or more LANs at the link layer
 - Extracts destination address from the frame
 - Looks up the destination in a table
 - Forwards the frame to the appropriate LAN segment
- Each segment can carry its own traffic



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Link Layer: Switches

- Typically connects individual computers
 - A switch is essentially the same as a bridge
 - ... though typically used to connect hosts, not LANs
- Like bridges, support concurrent communication
 - Host A can talk to C, while B talks to D



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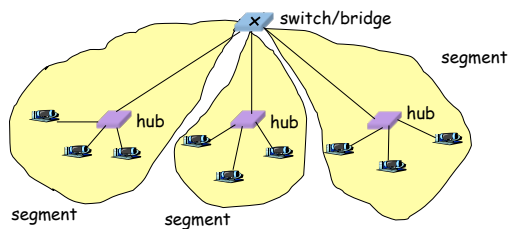
Dedicated Access and Full Duplex

- **Dedicated access**
 - Host has direct connection to the switch
 - ... rather than a shared LAN connection
- **Full duplex**
 - Each connection can send in both directions
 - Host sending to switch, and host receiving from switch
 - E.g., in 10BaseT and 100Base T
- **Completely supports concurrent transmissions**
 - Each connection is a bidirectional point-to-point link

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Bridges/Switches: Traffic Isolation

- **Switch breaks subnet into LAN segments**
- **Switch filters packets**
 - Frame only forwarded to the necessary segments
 - Segments can support separate transmissions



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Advantages Over Hubs/Repeaters

- **Only forwards frames as needed**
 - Filters frames to avoid unnecessary load on segments
 - Sends frames only to segments that need to see them
- **Extends the geographic span of the network**
 - Separate segments allow longer distances
- **Improves privacy by limiting scope of frames**
 - Hosts can "snoop" the traffic traversing their segment
 - ... but not all the rest of the traffic
- **Can join segments using different technologies**

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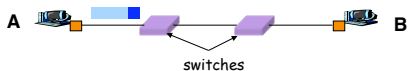
Disadvantages Over Hubs/Repeaters

- Delay in forwarding frames
 - Bridge/switch must receive and parse the frame
 - ... and perform a look-up to decide where to forward
 - Storing and forwarding the packet introduces delay
 - Solution: cut-through switching
- Need to learn where to forward frames
 - Bridge/switch needs to construct a forwarding table
 - Ideally, without intervention from network administrators
 - Solution: self-learning
- Higher cost
 - More complicated devices that cost more money

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Motivation For Cut-Through Switching

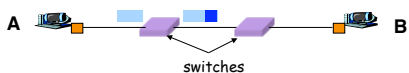
- Buffering a frame takes time
 - Suppose L is the length of the frame
 - And R is the transmission rate of the links
 - Then, receiving the frame takes L/R time units
- Buffering delay can be a high fraction of total delay
 - Propagation delay is small over short distances
 - Making buffering delay a large fraction of total
 - Analogy: large group walking through NYC



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Cut-Through Switching

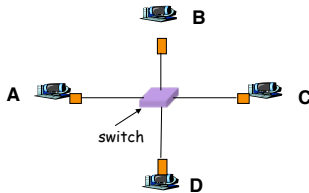
- Start transmitting as soon as possible
 - Inspect the frame header and do the look-up
 - If outgoing link is idle, start forwarding the frame
- Overlapping transmissions
 - Transmit the head of the packet via the outgoing link
 - ... while still receiving the tail via the incoming link
 - Analogy: different folks crossing different intersections



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Motivation For Self Learning

- Switches forward frames selectively
 - Forward frames only on segments that need them
- Switch table
 - Maps destination MAC address to outgoing interface
 - Goal: construct the switch table automatically

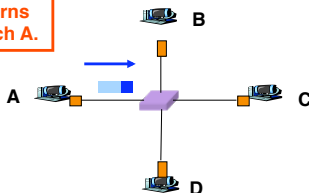


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Self Learning: Building the Table

- When a frame arrives
 - Inspect the *source* MAC address
 - Associate the address with the *incoming* interface
 - Store the mapping in the switch table
 - Use a time-to-live field to eventually forget the mapping

Switch learns
how to reach A.

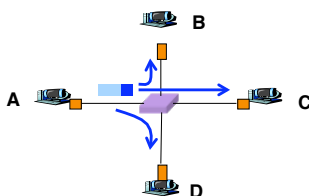


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Self Learning: Handling Misses

- When frame arrives with unfamiliar destination
 - Forward the frame out all of the interfaces
 - ... except for the one where the frame arrived
 - Hopefully, this case won't happen very often

When in
doubt,
shout!



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Switch Filtering/Forwarding

When switch receives a frame:

index switch table using MAC dest address

if entry found for destination

then{

if dest on segment from which frame arrived

then drop the frame

else forward the frame on interface indicated

}

else flood

forward on all but the interface
on which the frame arrived

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Flooding Can Lead to Loops

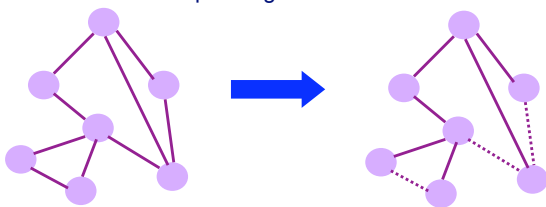
- Switches sometimes need to broadcast frames
 - Upon receiving a frame with an unfamiliar destination
 - Upon receiving a frame sent to the broadcast address
- Broadcasting is implemented by flooding
 - Transmitting frame out every interface
 - ... except the one where the frame arrived
- Flooding can lead to forwarding loops
 - E.g., if the network contains a cycle of switches
 - Either accidentally, or by design for higher reliability



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Solution: Spanning Trees

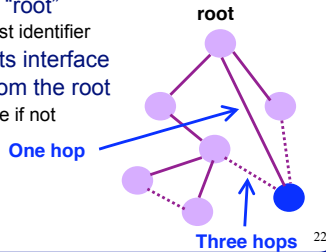
- Ensure the topology has no loops
 - Avoid using some of the links when flooding
 - ... to avoid forming a loop
- Spanning tree
 - Sub-graph that covers all vertices but contains no cycles
 - Links not in the spanning tree do not forward frames



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Constructing a Spanning Tree

- **Need a distributed algorithm**
 - Switches cooperate to build the spanning tree
 - ... and adapt automatically when failures occur
- **Key ingredients of the algorithm**
 - Switches need to elect a “root”
 - The switch with the smallest identifier
 - Each switch identifies if its interface is on the shortest path from the root
 - And it exclude from the tree if not
 - Messages (Y, d, X)
 - From node X
 - Claiming Y is the root
 - And the distance is d



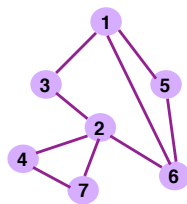
Steps in Spanning Tree Algorithm

- **Initially, each switch thinks it is the root**
 - Switch sends a message out every interface
 - ... identifying itself as the root with distance 0
 - Example: switch X announces (X, 0, X)
- **Switches update their view of the root**
 - Upon receiving a message, check the root id
 - If the new id is smaller, start viewing that switch as root
- **Switches compute their distance from the root**
 - Add 1 to the distance received from a neighbor
 - Identify interfaces not on a shortest path to the root
 - ... and exclude them from the spanning tree

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Example From Switch #4's Viewpoint

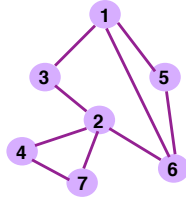
- **Switch #4 thinks it is the root**
 - Sends (4, 0, 4) message to 2 and 7
- **Then, switch #4 hears from #2**
 - Receives (2, 0, 2) message from 2
 - ... and thinks that #2 is the root
 - And realizes it is just one hop away
- **Then, switch #4 hears from #7**
 - Receives (2, 1, 7) from 7
 - And realizes this is a longer path
 - So, prefers its own one-hop path
 - And removes 4-7 link from the tree



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Example From Switch #4's Viewpoint

- Switch #2 hears about switch #1
 - Switch 2 hears (1, 1, 3) from 3
 - Switch 2 starts treating 1 as root
 - And sends (1, 2, 2) to neighbors
- Switch #4 hears from switch #2
 - Switch 4 starts treating 1 as root
 - And sends (1, 3, 4) to neighbors
- Switch #4 hears from switch #7
 - Switch 4 receives (1, 3, 7) from 7
 - And realizes this is a longer path
 - So, prefers its own three-hop path
 - And removes 4-7 link from the tree



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Robust Spanning Tree Algorithm

- Algorithm must react to failures
 - Failure of the root node
 - Need to elect a new root, with the next lowest identifier
 - Failure of other switches and links
 - Need to recompute the spanning tree
- Root switch continues sending messages
 - Periodically reannouncing itself as the root (1, 0, 1)
 - Other switches continue forwarding messages
- Detecting failures through timeout (soft state!)
 - Switch waits to hear from others
 - Eventually times out and claims to be the root

See Section 3.2.2 in the textbook for details and another example ²⁶

Evolution Toward Virtual LANs

- In the olden days...
 - Thick cables snaked through cable ducts in buildings
 - Every computer they passed was plugged in
 - All people in adjacent offices were put on the same LAN
 - Independent of whether they belonged together or not
- More recently...
 - Hubs and switches changed all that
 - Every office connected to central wiring closets
 - Often multiple LANs (k hubs) connected by switches
 - Flexibility in mapping offices to different LANs

Group users based on organizational structure,
rather than the physical layout of the building.

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Why Group by Organizational Structure?

- **Security**
 - Ethernet is a shared media
 - Any interface card can be put into “promiscuous” mode
 - ... and get a copy of all of the traffic (e.g., midterm exam)
 - So, isolating traffic on separate LANs improves security
- **Load**
 - Some LAN segments are more heavily used than others
 - E.g., researchers running experiments get out of hand
 - ... can saturate their own segment and not the others
 - Plus, there may be natural locality of communication
 - E.g., traffic between people in the same research group

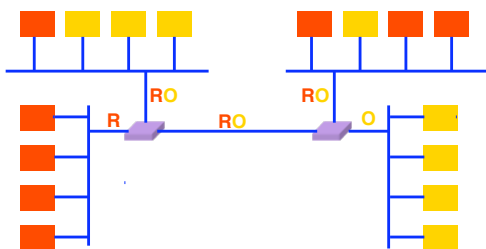
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People Move, and Roles Change

- **Organizational changes are frequent**
 - E.g., faculty office becomes a grad-student office
 - E.g., graduate student becomes a faculty member
- **Physical rewiring is a major pain**
 - Requires unplugging the cable from one port
 - ... and plugging it into another
 - ... and hoping the cable is long enough to reach
 - ... and hoping you don't make a mistake
- **Would like to “rewire” the building in software**
 - The resulting concept is a Virtual LAN (VLAN)

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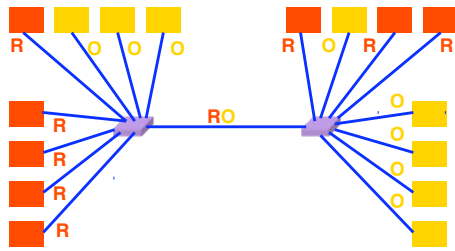
Example: Two Virtual LANs



Red VLAN and Orange VLAN
Bridges forward traffic as needed

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Example: Two Virtual LANs



Red VLAN and Orange VLAN
Switches forward traffic as needed

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Making VLANs Work

- Bridges/switches need configuration tables
 - Saying which VLANs are accessible via which interfaces
- Approaches to mapping to VLANs
 - Each interface has a VLAN color
 - Only works if all hosts on same segment belong to same VLAN
 - Each MAC address has a VLAN color
 - Useful when hosts on same segment belong to different VLANs
 - Useful when hosts move from one physical location to another
- Changing the Ethernet header
 - Adding a field for a VLAN tag
 - Implemented on the bridges/switches
 - ... but can still interoperate with old Ethernet cards

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Moving From Switches to Routers

- Advantages of switches over routers
 - Plug-and-play
 - Fast filtering and forwarding of frames
 - No pronunciation ambiguity (e.g., “router” vs. “rowter”)
- Disadvantages of switches over routers
 - Topology is restricted to a spanning tree
 - Large networks require large ARP tables
 - Broadcast storms can cause the network to collapse

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Comparing Hubs, Switches, Routers

	Hub/ Repeater	Bridge/ Switch	Router
Traffic isolation	no	yes	yes
Plug and Play	yes	yes	no
Efficient routing	no	no	yes
Cut through	yes	yes	no

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Conclusion

- Shuttling data from one link to another
 - Bits, frames, packets, ...
 - Repeaters/hubs, bridges/switches, routers, ...
- Key ideas in switches
 - Cut-through switching
 - Self learning of the switch table
 - Spanning trees
 - Virtual LANs (VLANs)
- Next week
 - Monday: Links
 - Wednesday: Midterm exam

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