# Virtual Memory: Concepts

15-213: Introduction to Computer Systems
17th Lecture, July 12, 2022

**Instructors:**

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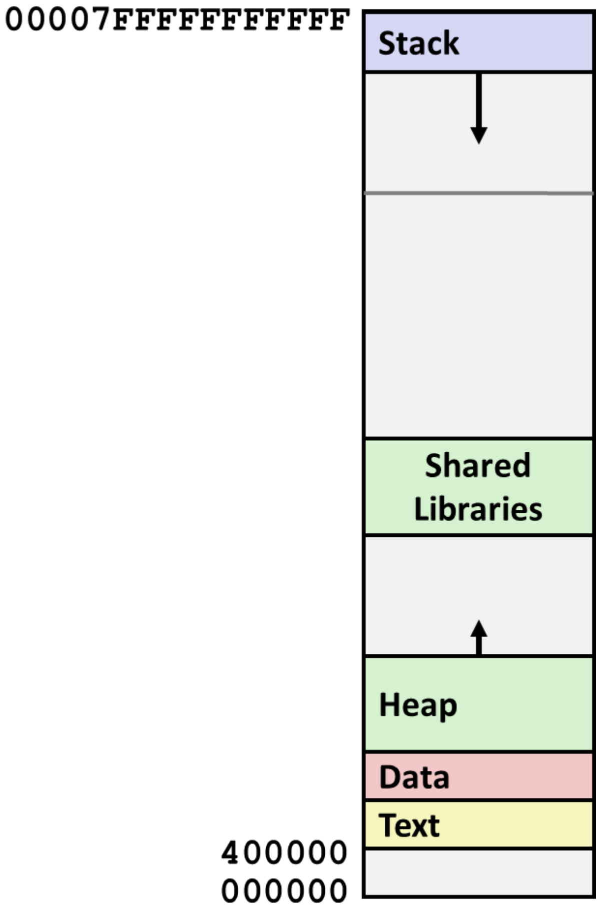
# This Picture is a Lie

- This is RAM, we said…
- But the computer can run more than one program at a time!
- Where are all the other programs?
- Let’s *investigate*.



# Processes (Teaser for Thursday)

- **Definition: A *process* is an instance of a running program.**
  - One of the most profound ideas in computer science
  - Not the same as “program” or “processor”

- **Unix: A *parent process* creates a new *child process* by calling `fork`**
  - Child is (sort of) a copy of the parent
  - `fork` returns *twice*—once in each process
    - Different return value in each

- **Parent can wait for child to finish by calling `waitpid`**
  - For now, think of this as “what `main` returns to”

# Activity Part 1

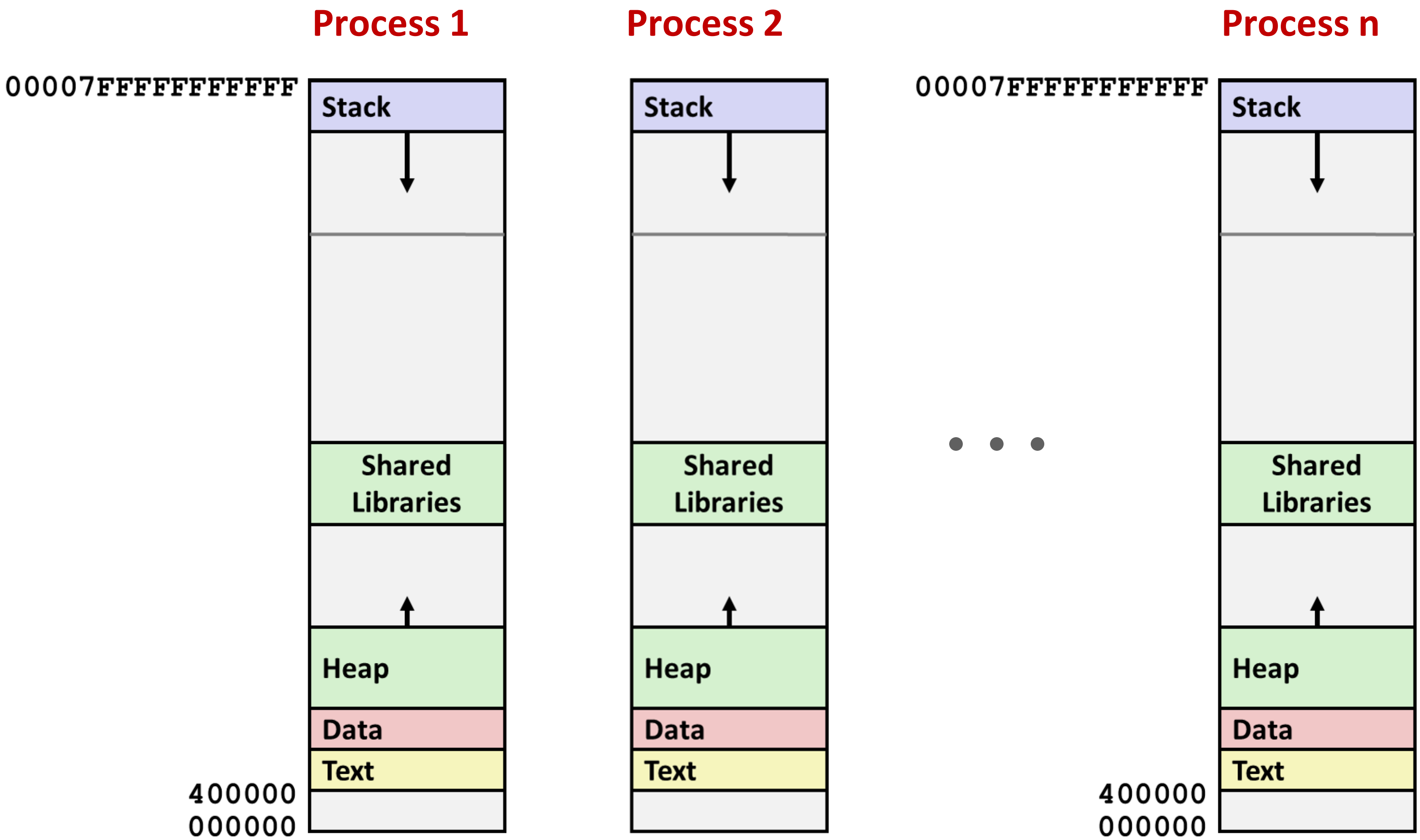
```
wget http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~213/activities/vm-concepts.tar
tar xf vm-concepts.tar
cd vm-concepts
less addrs.c
```

… further instructions in handout …

**Stop after part 1 (end of page 2)**

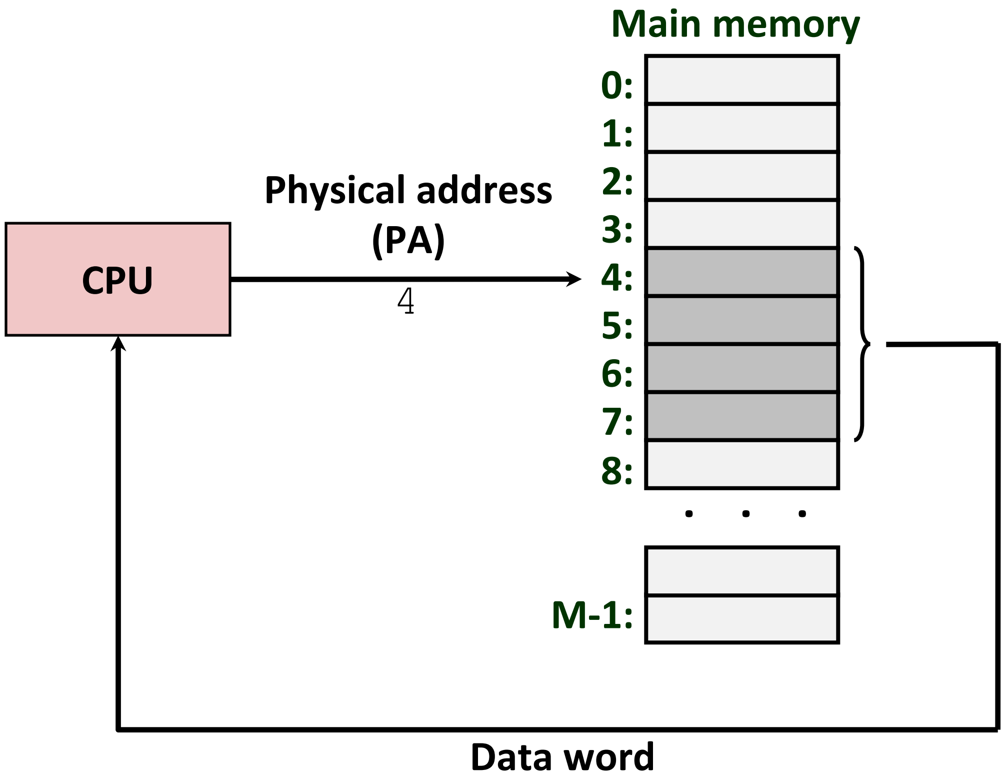
**Caution: problems 3-5 involve deliberately running the sharks out of memory**

# Hmmm, How Does This Work?!



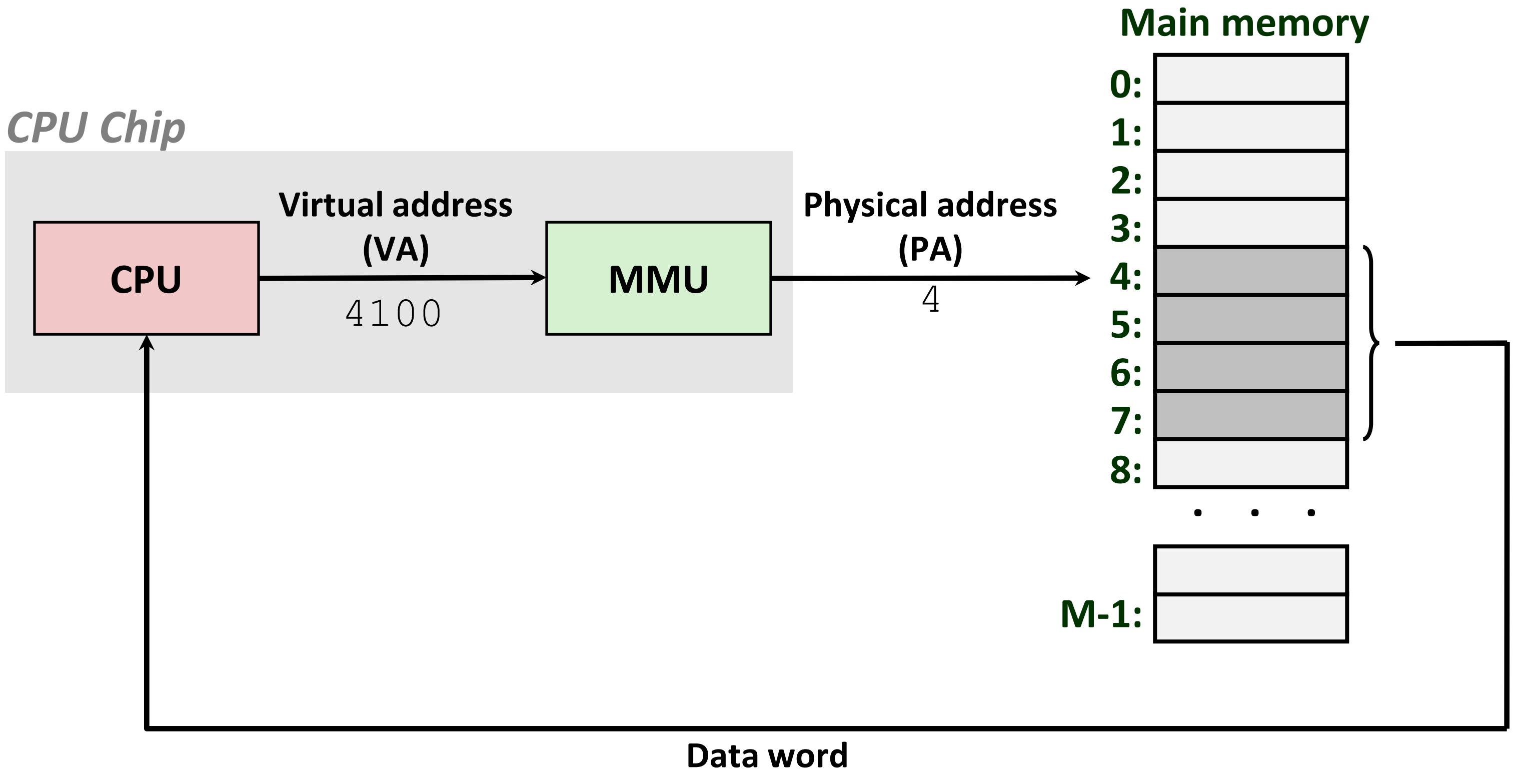
*Solution: Virtual Memory (today and next lecture)*

# A System Using Physical Addressing



- **Used in "simple" systems like embedded microcontrollers in devices like cars, elevators, and digital picture frames**

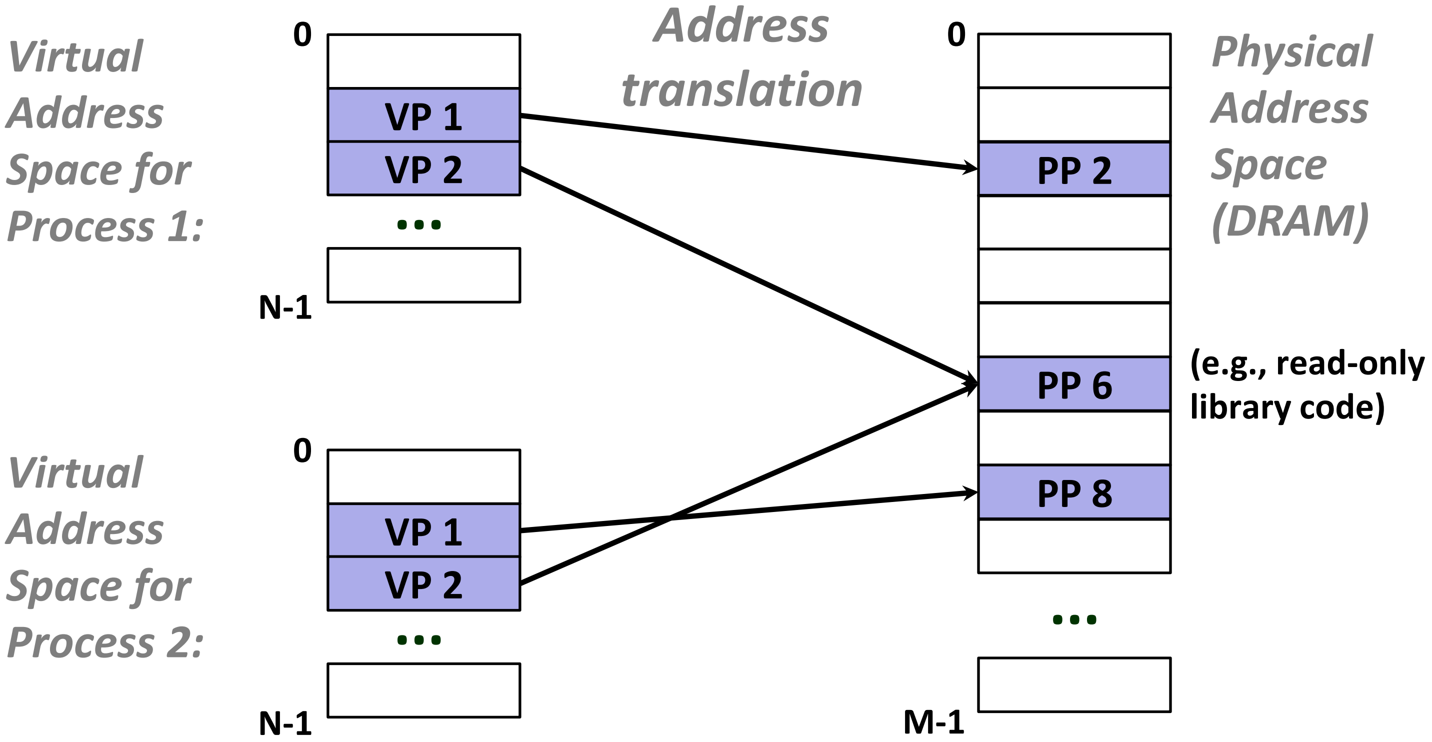
# A System Using Virtual Addressing



- Used in all modern servers, laptops, and smart phones
- One of the great ideas in computer science

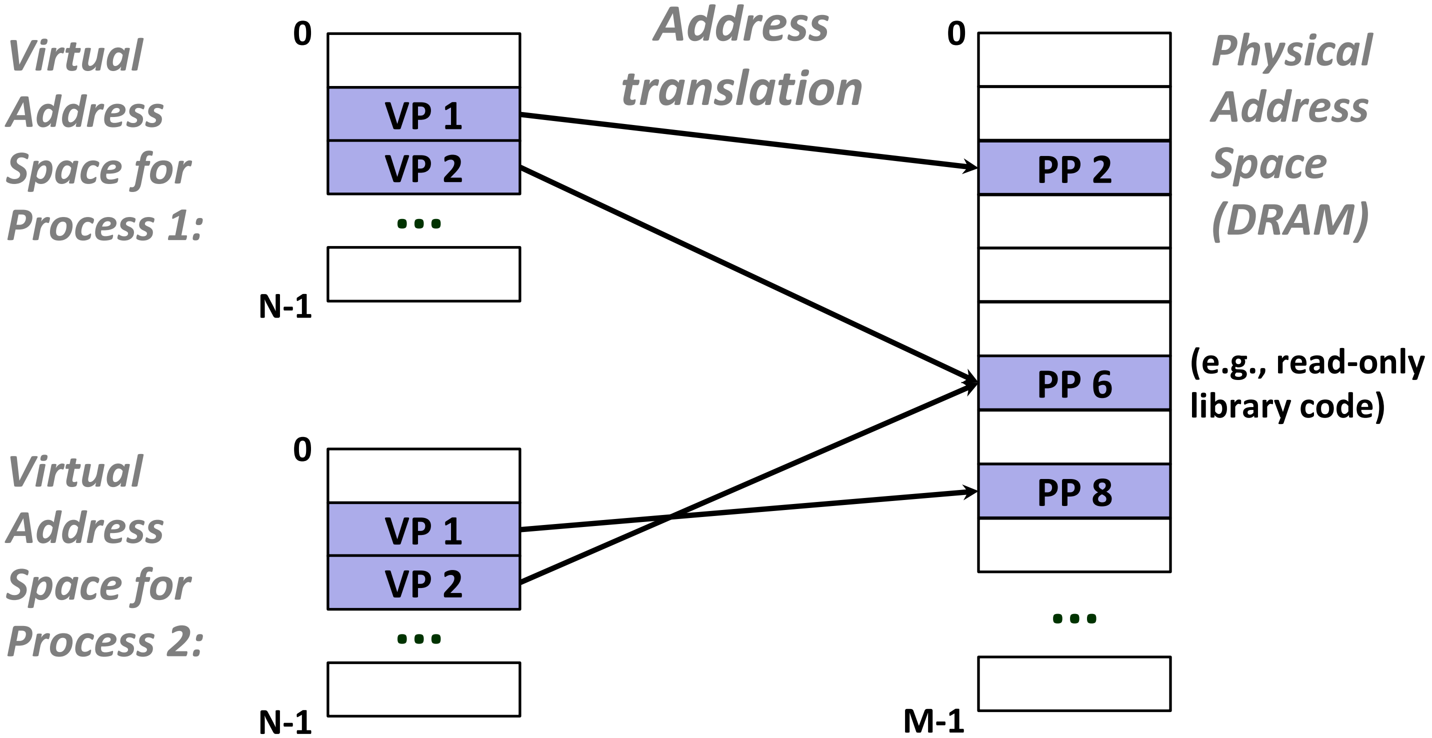
# VM as a Tool for Memory Management

- **Key idea: each process has its own virtual address space**
  - It can view memory as a simple linear array
  - Mapping function scatters addresses through physical memory
    - Well-chosen mappings can improve locality


Virtual Address Space for Process 1:
0
VP 1
VP 2
...
N-1
Address translation
0
PP 2
PP 6
PP 8
...
M-1
Physical Address Space (DRAM)
(e.g., read-only library code)
Virtual Address Space for Process 2:
0
VP 1
VP 2
...
N-1

# VM as a Tool for Memory Management

- **Simplifying memory allocation**
  - Each virtual page can be mapped to any physical page
  - A virtual page can be stored in different physical pages at different times
- **Sharing code and data among processes**
  - Map virtual pages to the same physical page (here: PP 6)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VP 2
...
N-1

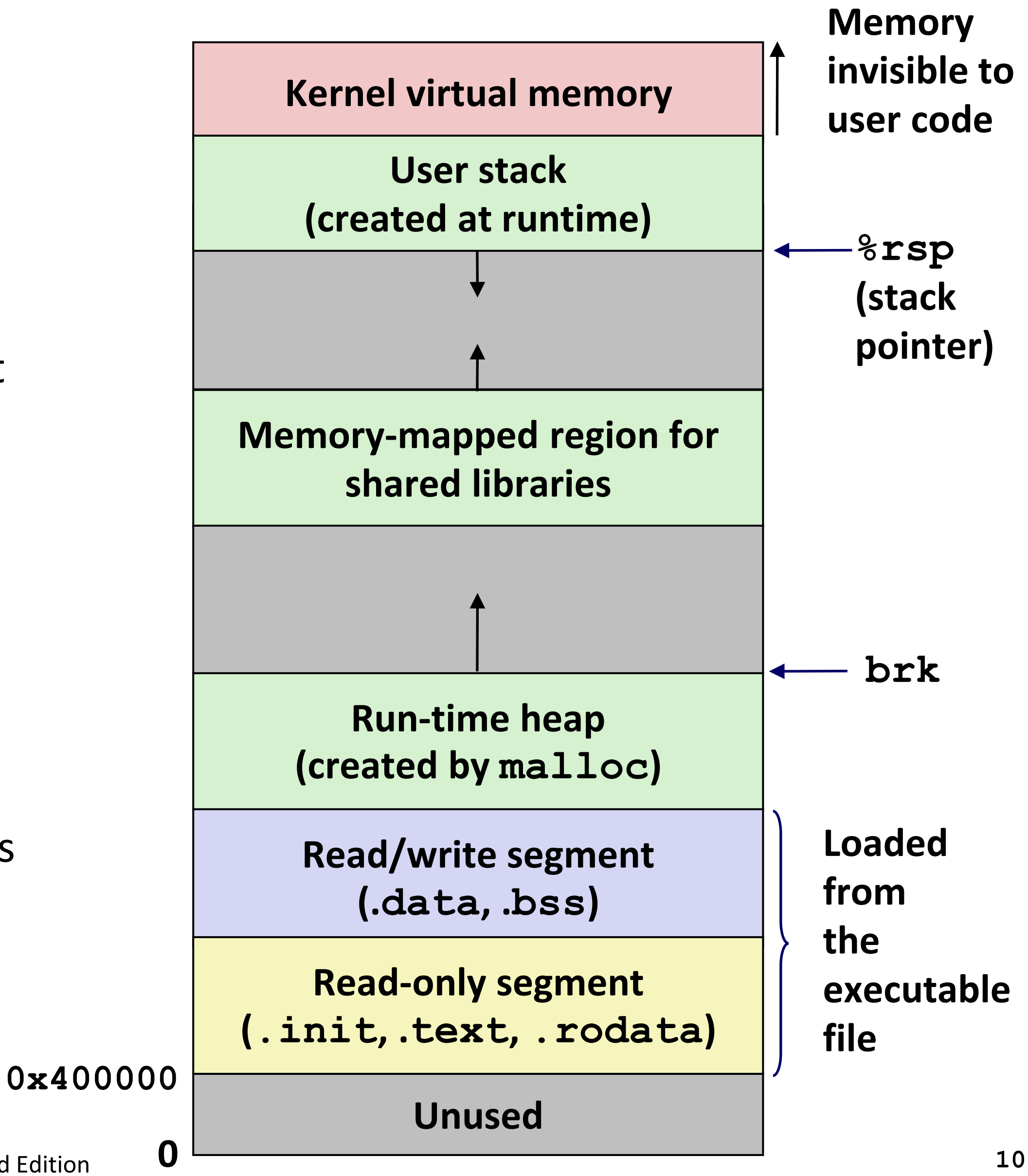
# Simplifying Linking and Loading

## Linking

- Each program has similar virtual address space
- Code, data, and heap always start at the same addresses.

## Loading

- **execve** allocates virtual pages for .text and .data sections & creates PTEs marked as invalid
- The **.text** and **.data** sections are copied, page by page, on demand by the virtual memory system


Kernel virtual memory
Memory invisible to user code
User stack (created at runtime)
%rsp (stack pointer)
Memory-mapped region for shared libraries
brk
Run-time heap (created by malloc)
Read/write segment (.data, .bss)
Read-only segment (.init, .text, .rodata)
Loaded from the executable file
0x400000
Unused
0

# Address Spaces

- **Linear address space:** Ordered set of contiguous non-negative integer addresses:

  {0, 1, 2, 3 … }

- **Virtual address space:** Set of $N = 2^n$ virtual addresses

  {0, 1, 2, 3, …, N-1}

- **Physical address space:** Set of $M = 2^m$ physical addresses

  {0, 1, 2, 3, …, M-1}

# Why Virtual Memory (VM)?

- **Uses main memory efficiently**
  - Use DRAM as a cache for parts of a virtual address space
- **Simplifies memory management**
  - Each process gets the same uniform linear address space
- **Isolates address spaces**
  - One process can't interfere with another's memory
  - User program cannot access privileged kernel information and code

# VM Address Translation

- **Virtual Address Space**
  - *V = {0, 1, …, N–1}*
- **Physical Address Space**
  - *P = {0, 1, …, M–1}*
- **Address Translation**
  - ***MAP: V → P U {Ø}***
  - For virtual address ***a***:
    - ***MAP(a) = a′*** if data at virtual address ***a*** is at physical address ***a'*** in ***P***
    - ***MAP(a) = Ø*** if data at virtual address ***a*** is not in physical memory
      - Either invalid or stored on disk

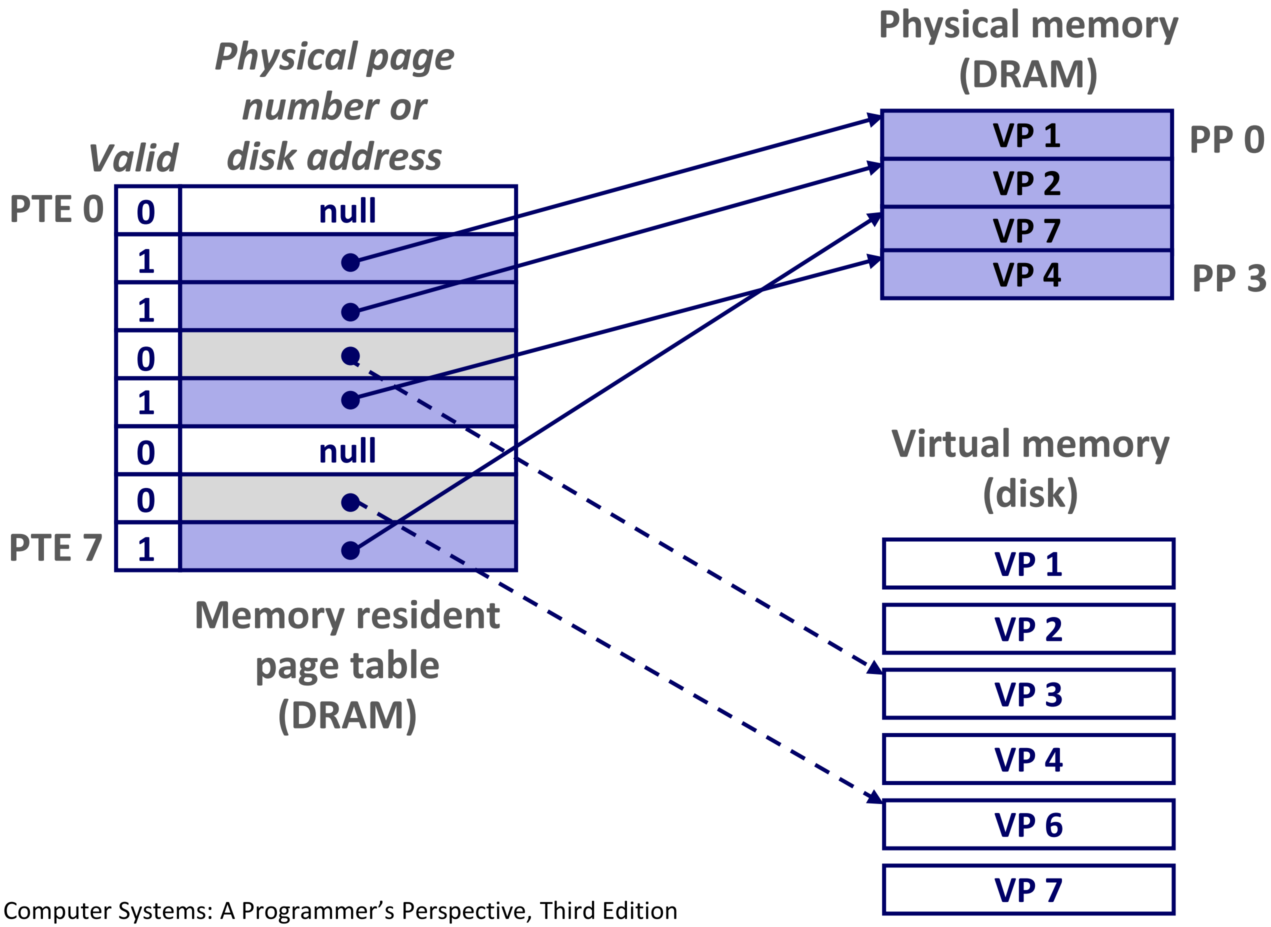
# Activity Part 2 through 4

- **Now you have some idea *what* is going on**
- **Let’s look at *how* it’s done**
- **Details aren’t *supposed* to be visible**
  - We can get some clues via performance monitoring

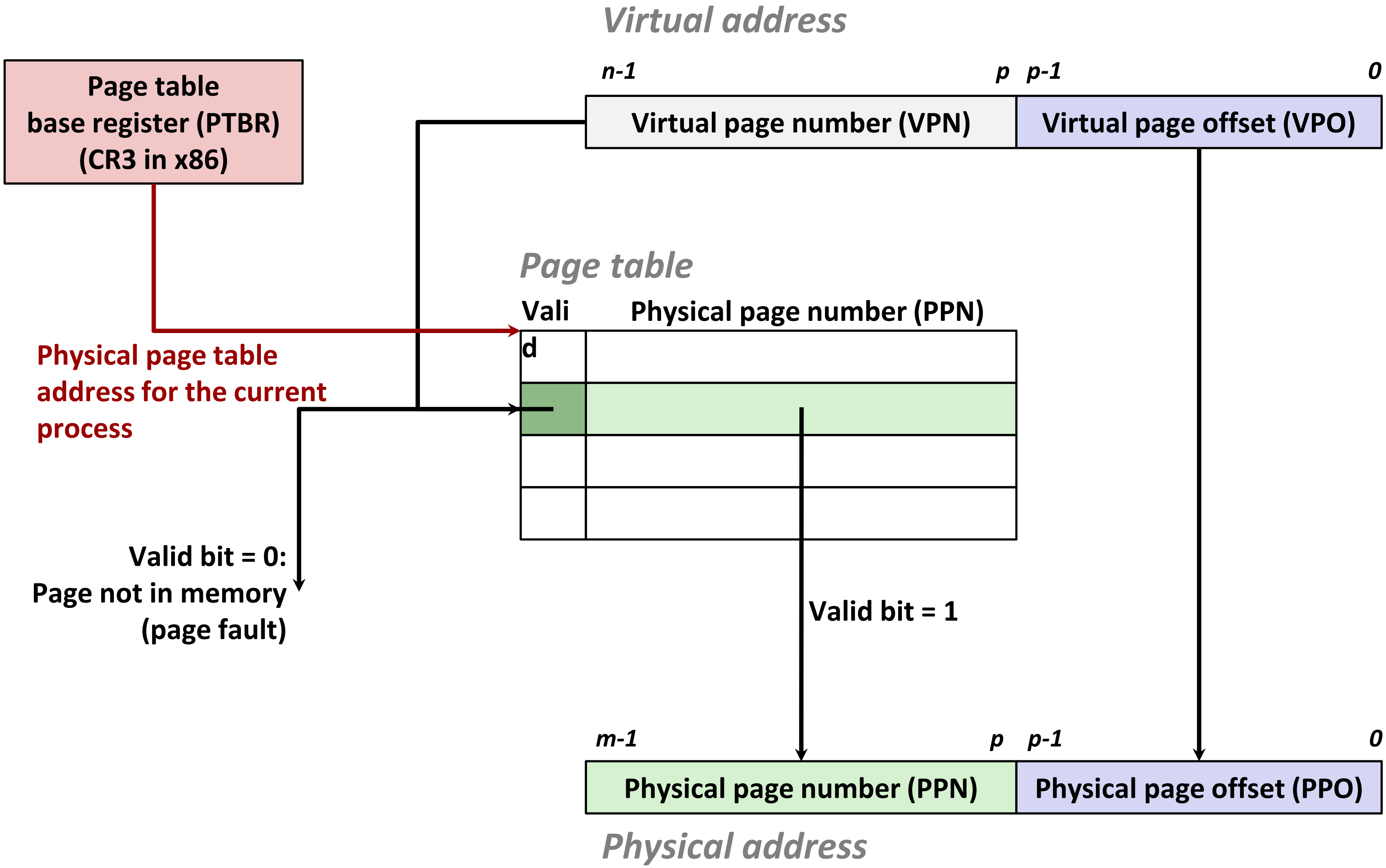
- **Do activity part 2 through 4 now**
  - Stop at the end of page 5

# Enabling Data Structure: Page Table

- **A *page table* is an array of page table entries (PTEs) that maps virtual pages to physical pages.**
  - Per-process kernel data structure in DRAM

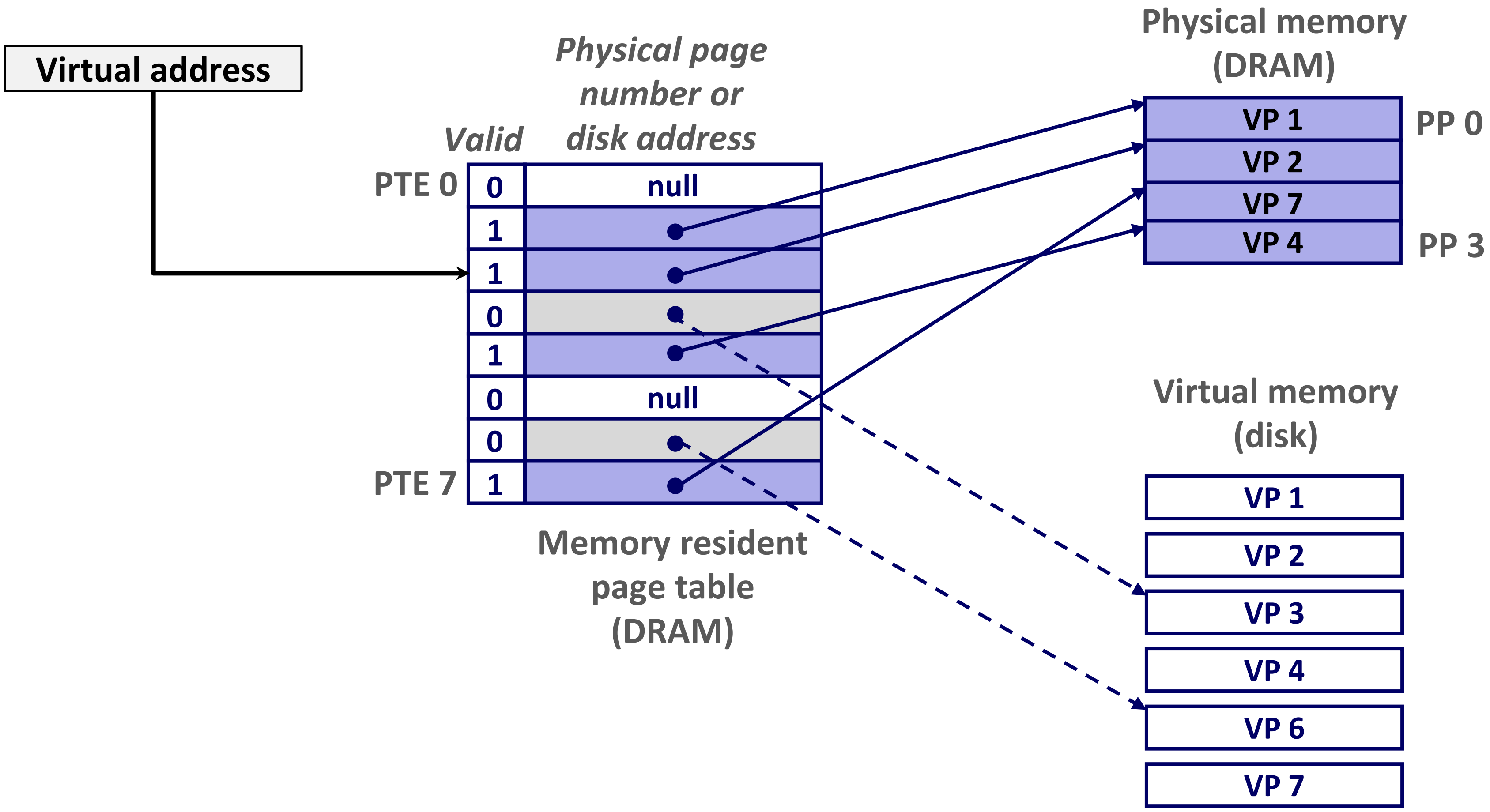


# Address Translation With a Page Table

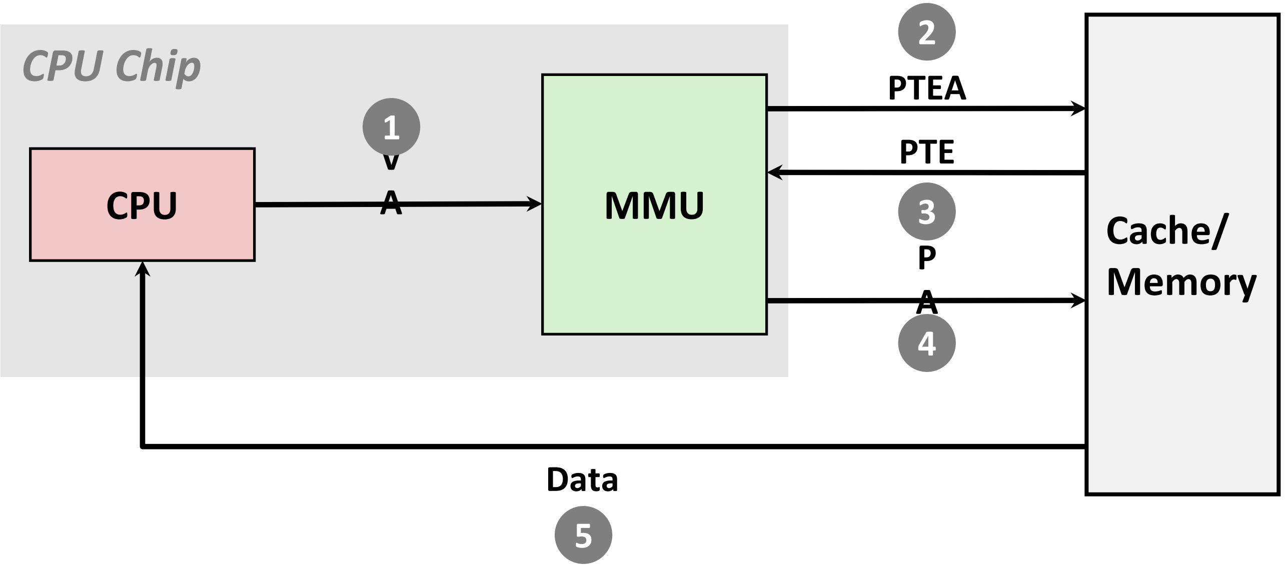


# Page Hit

- ***Page hit:*** **reference to VM word that is in physical memory (DRAM cache hit)**



# Address Translation: Page Hit



1) Processor sends virtual address to MMU

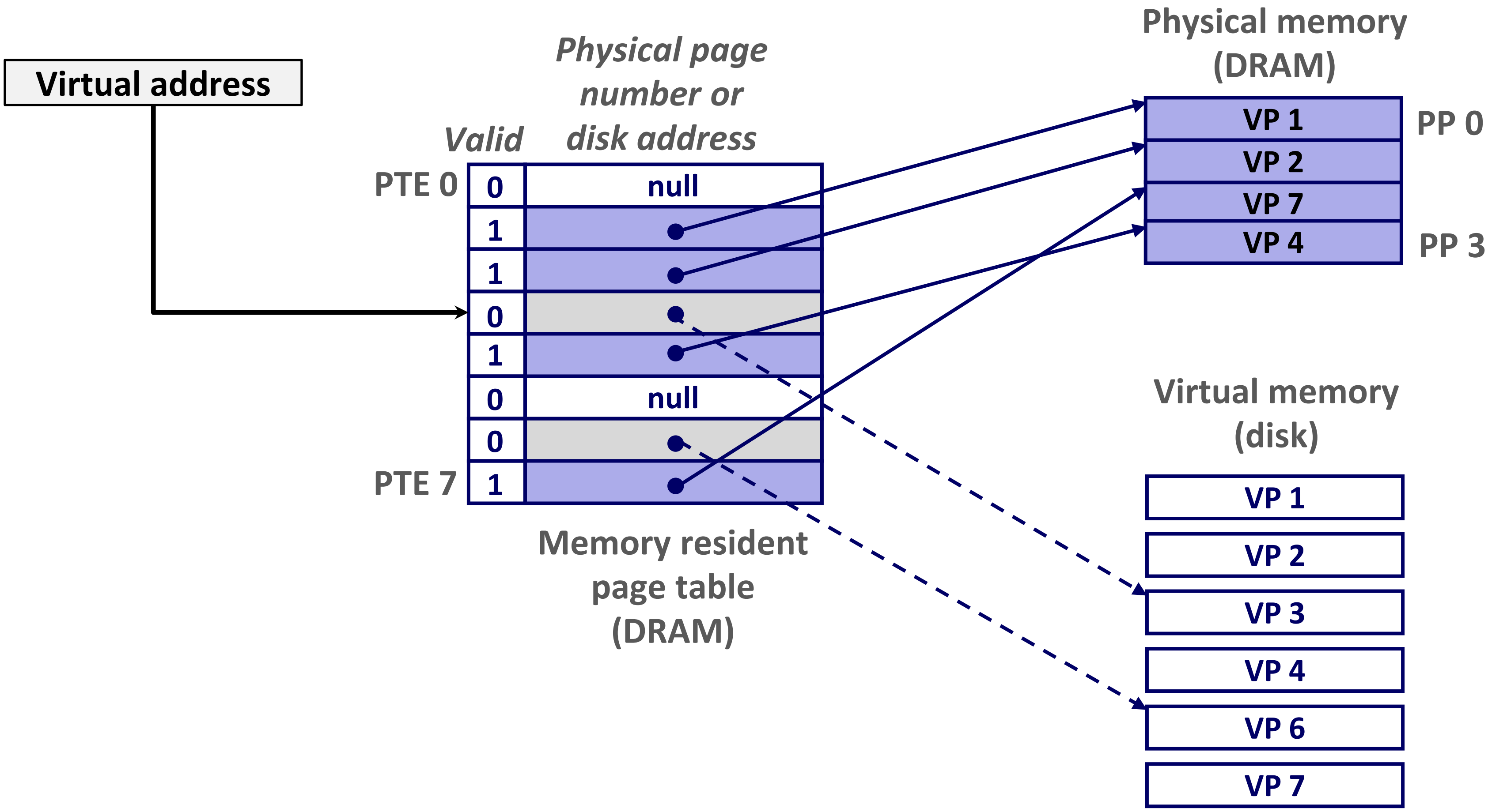
2-3) MMU fetches PTE from page table in memory

4) MMU sends physical address to cache/memory

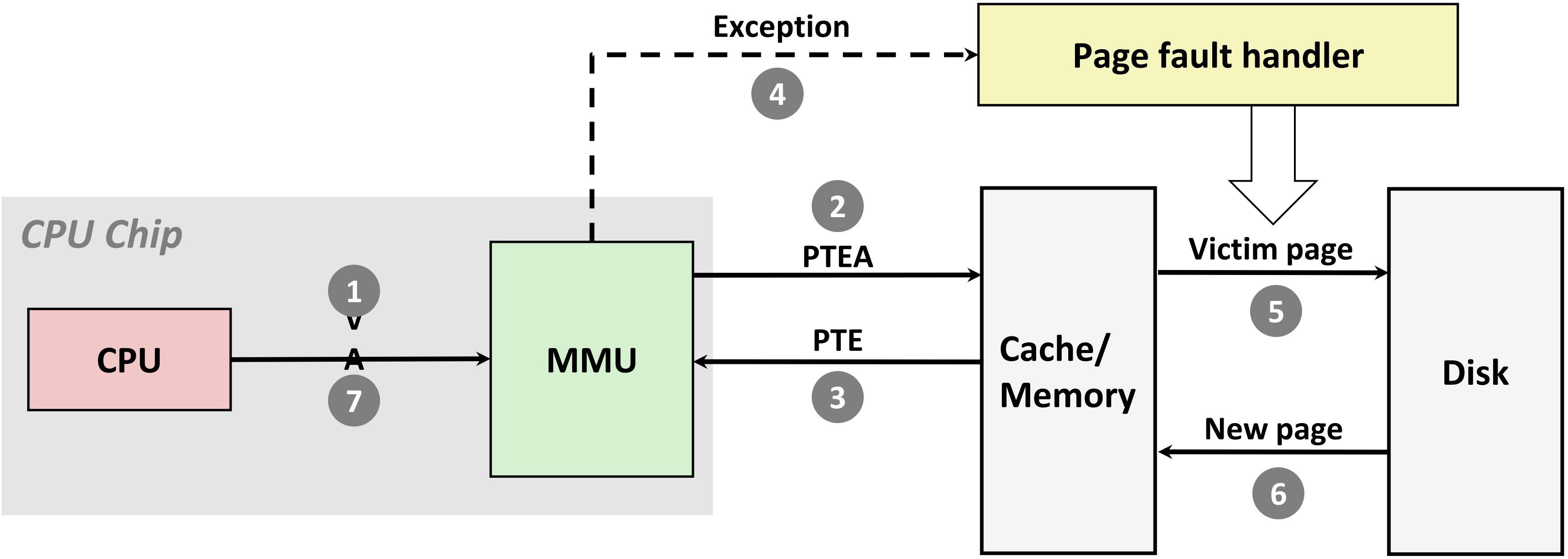
5) Cache/memory sends data word to processor

# Page Fault

- *Page fault:* reference to VM word that is not in physical memory (DRAM cache miss)



# Address Translation: Page Fault



1) Processor sends virtual address to MMU

2-3) MMU fetches PTE from page table in memory

4) Valid bit is zero, so MMU triggers page fault exception

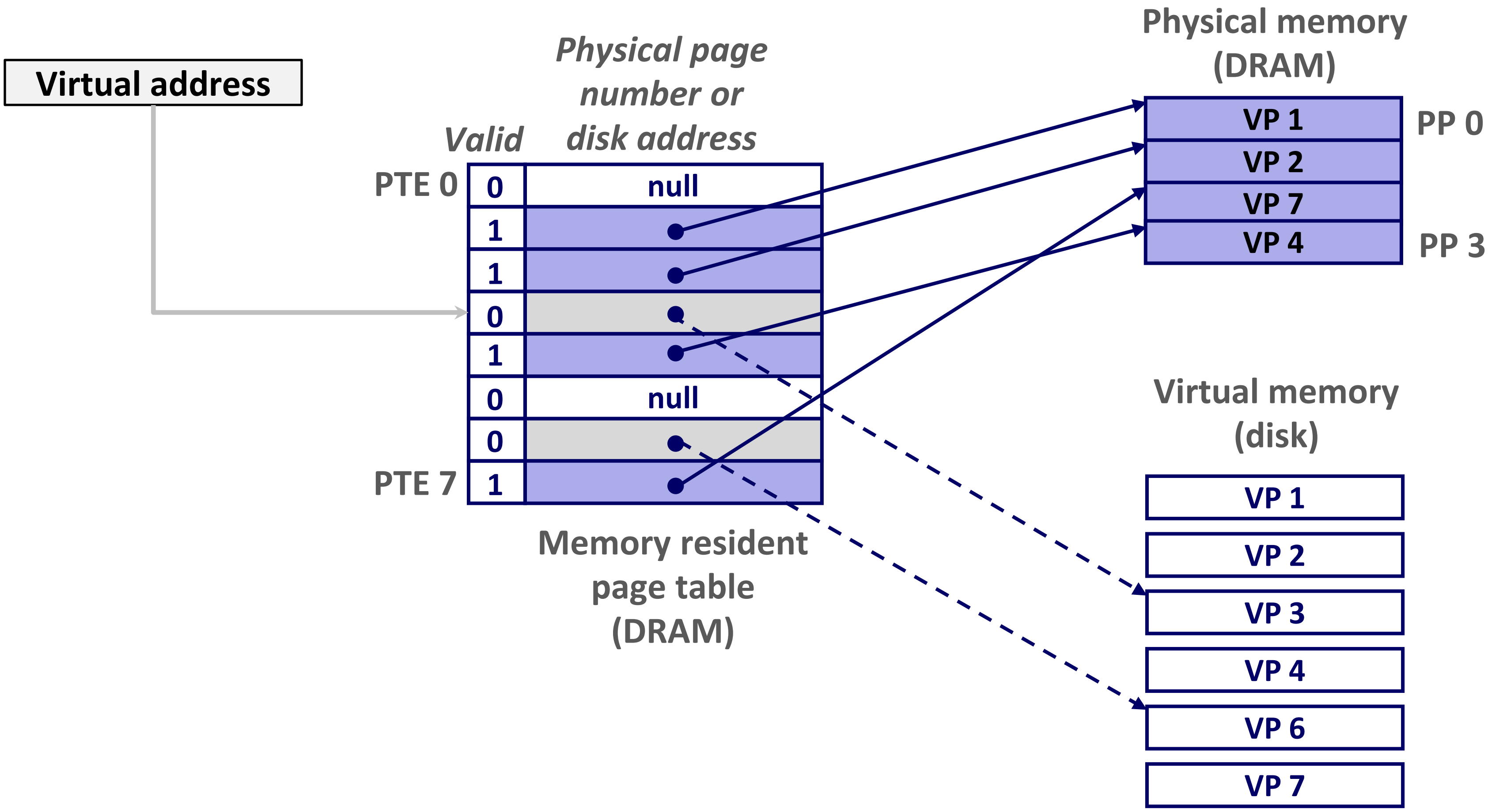
5) Handler identifies victim (and, if dirty, pages it out to disk)

6) Handler pages in new page and updates PTE in memory

7) Handler returns to original process, restarting faulting instruction

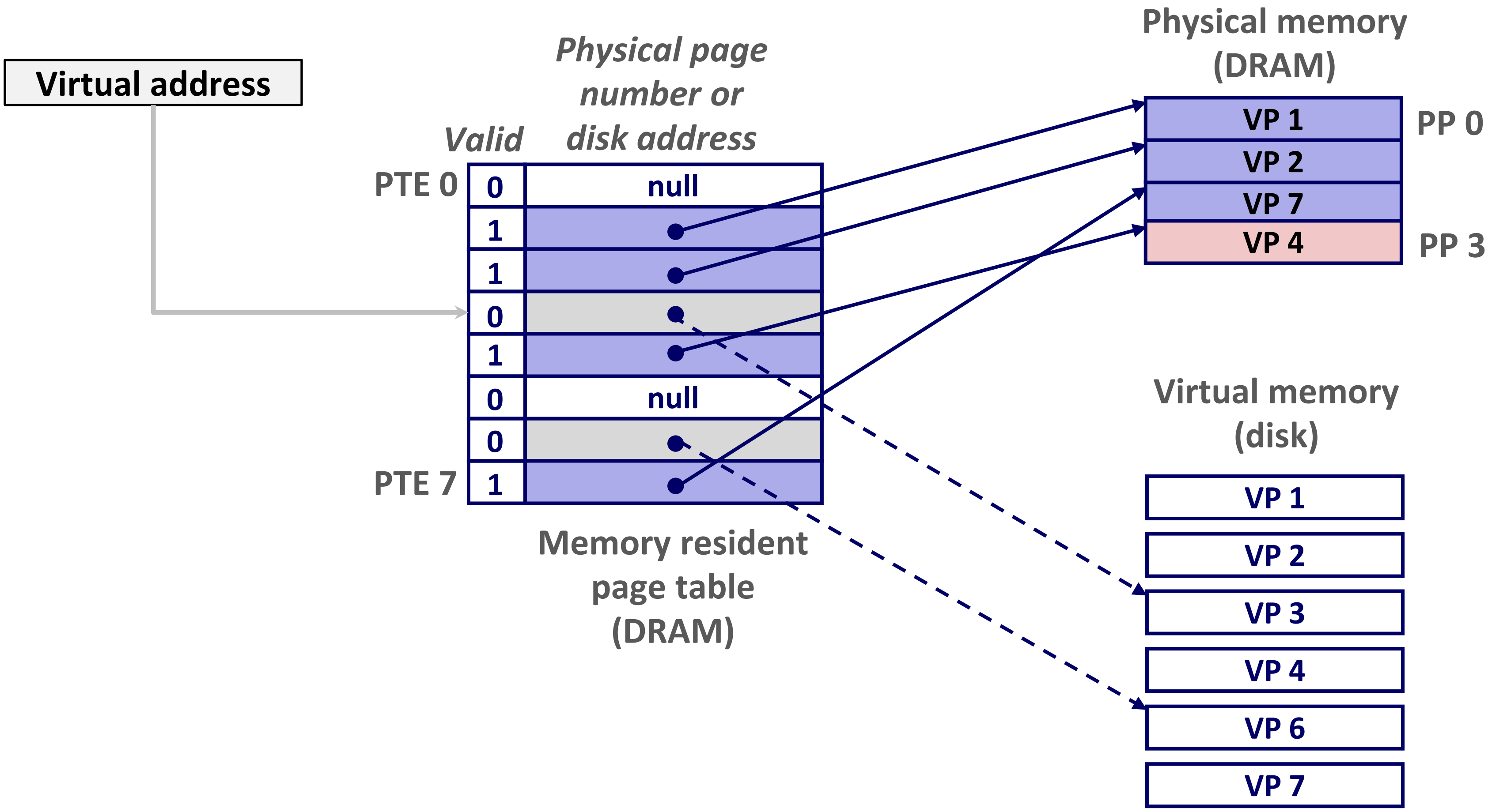
# Handling Page Fault

- Page miss causes page fault (an exception)



# Handling Page Fault

- Page miss causes page fault (an exception)
- Page fault handler selects a victim to be evicted (here VP 4)



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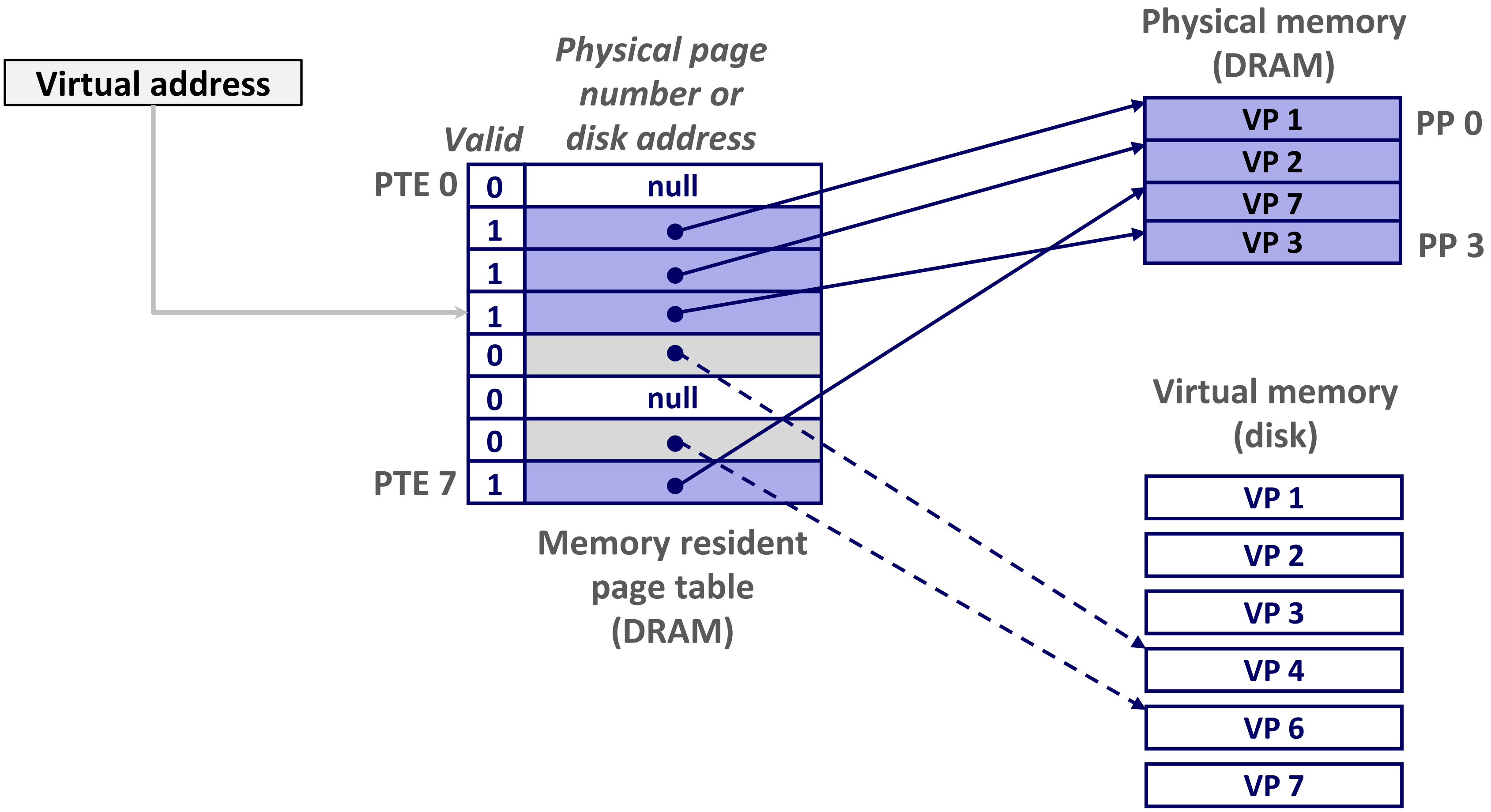
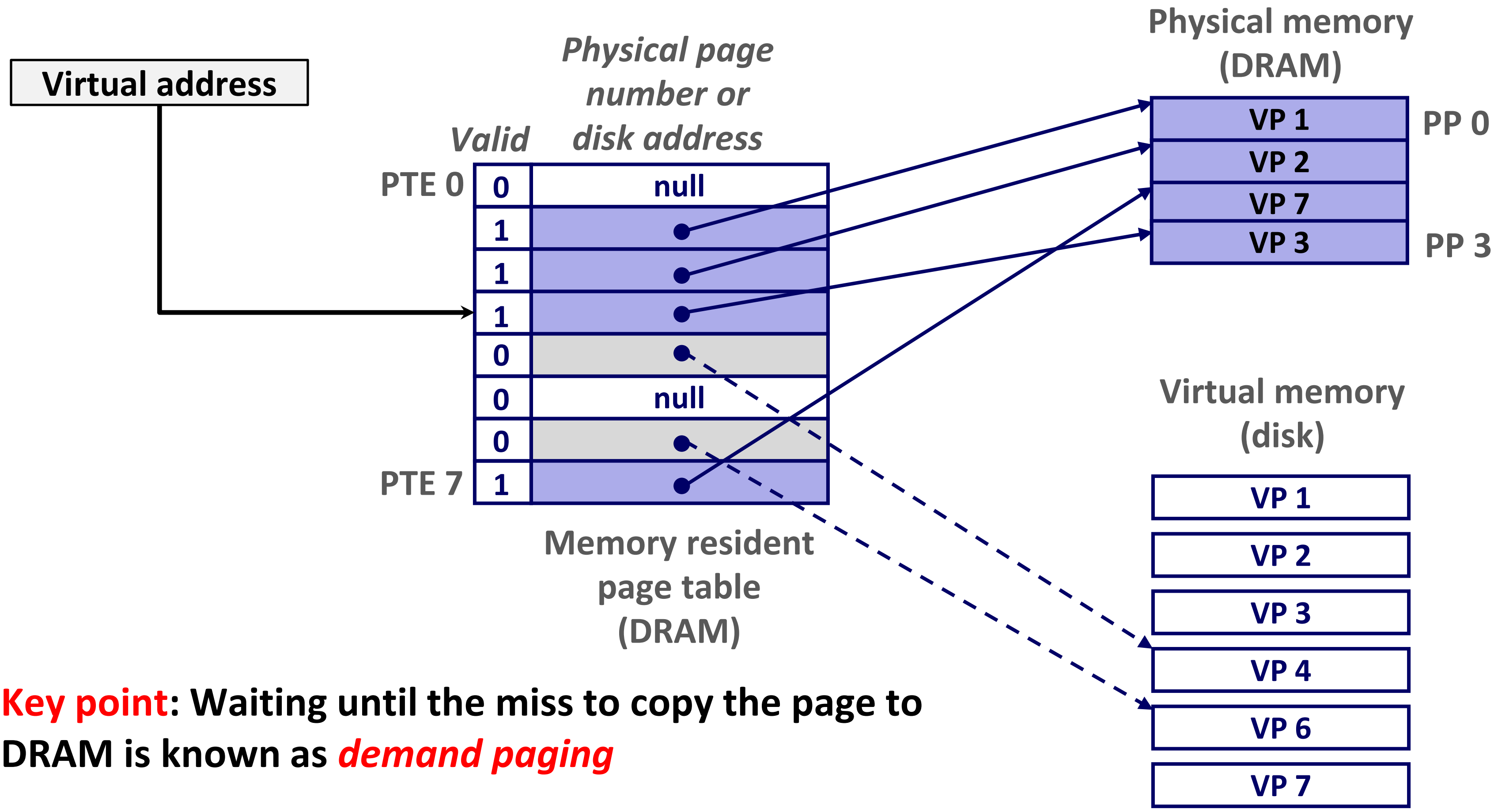


# Handling Page Fault

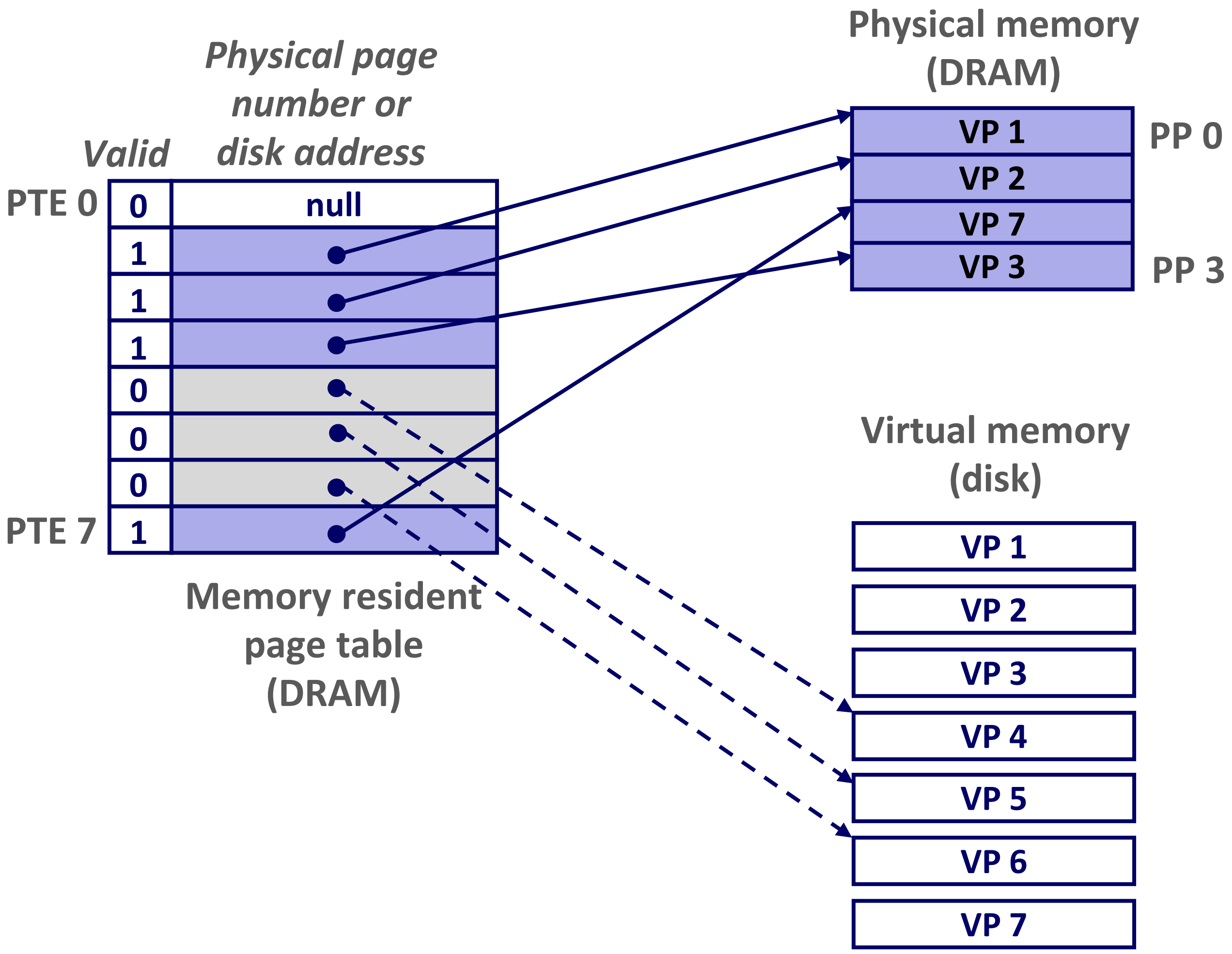
- Page miss causes page fault (an exception)
- Page fault handler selects a victim to be evicted (here VP 4)
- Offending instruction is restarted: page hit!



**Key point: Waiting until the miss to copy the page to DRAM is known as *demand paging***

# Allocating Pages

- Allocating a new page (VP 5) of virtual memory.

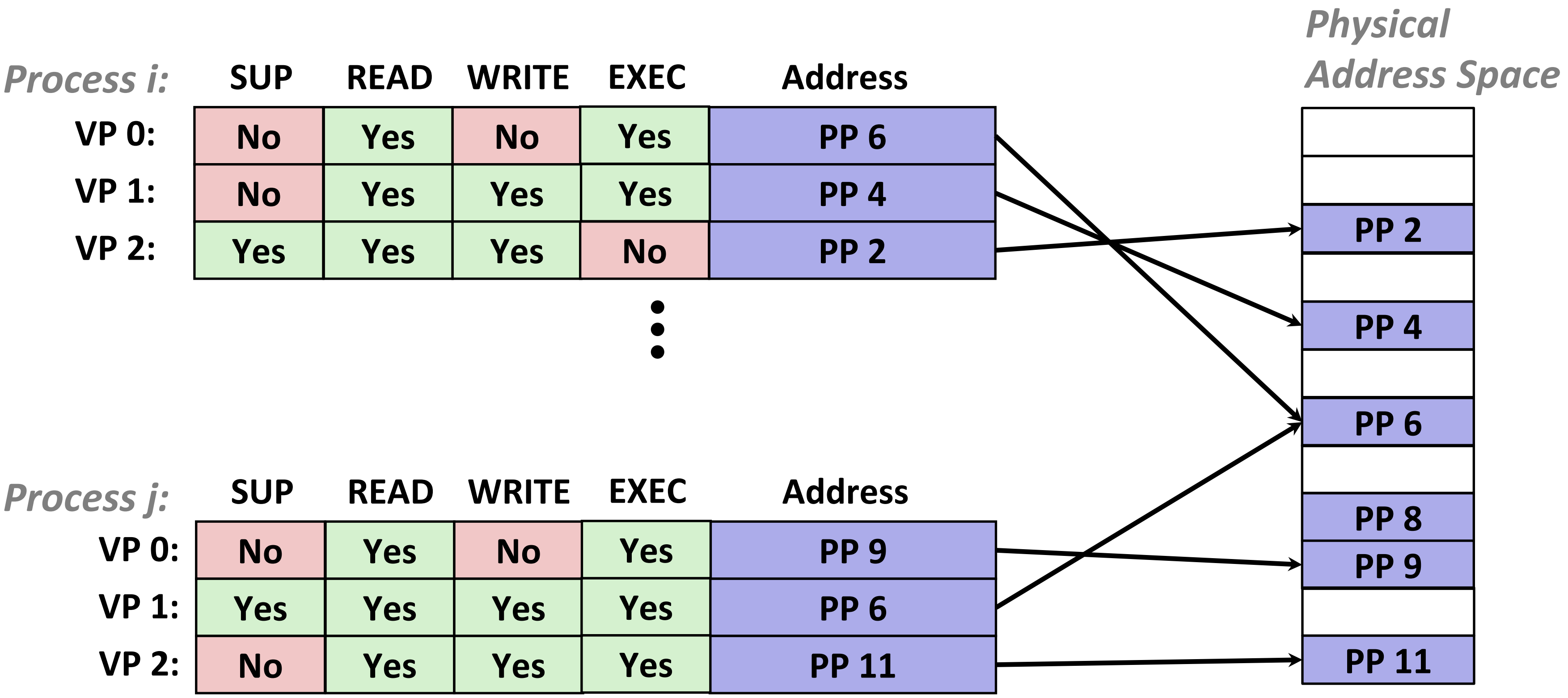


# Activity Part 5 and 6

- So far we’ve only been looking at well-behaved programs
- What if they misbehave?
- Wouldn’t it be nice if a misbehaving process couldn’t interfere with any *other* processes?

# VM as a Tool for Memory Protection

- Extend PTEs with permission bits
- MMU checks these bits on each access



*Process i:*

| | SUP | READ | WRITE | EXEC | Address |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VP 0: | No | Yes | No | Yes | PP 6 |
| VP 1: | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | PP 4 |
| VP 2: | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | PP 2 |

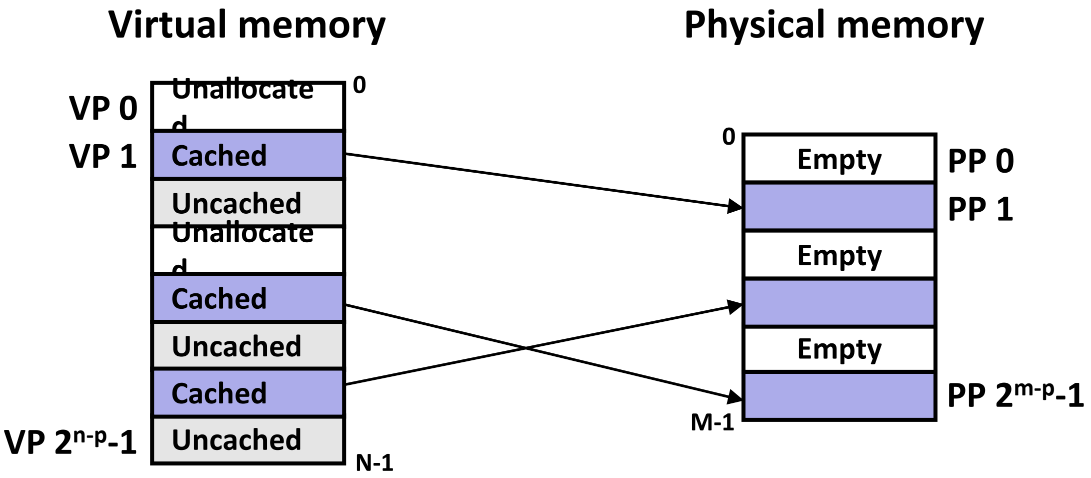
•
•
•

*Process j:*

| | SUP | READ | WRITE | EXEC | Address |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VP 0: | No | Yes | No | Yes | PP 9 |
| VP 1: | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | PP 6 |
| VP 2: | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | PP 11 |

# VM as a Tool for Caching

- Conceptually, *virtual memory* is an array of N contiguous bytes stored on disk.
- The contents of the array on disk are cached in *physical memory* (*DRAM cache*)
    - These cache blocks are called *pages* (size is P = $2^p$ bytes)



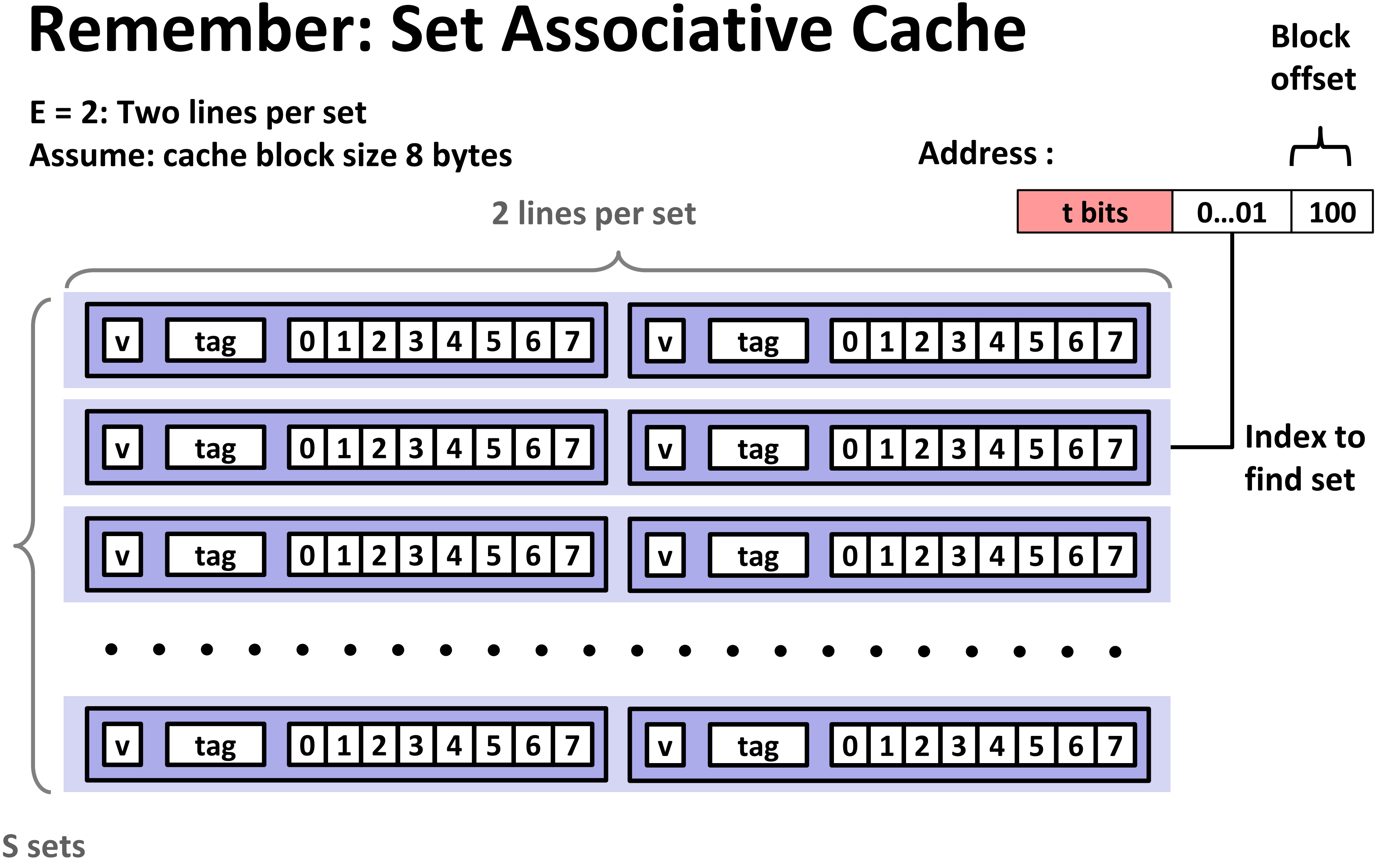
Virtual pages (VPs) stored on disk

Physical pages (PPs) cached in DRAM

# Remember: Set Associative Cache

E = 2: Two lines per set

Assume: cache block size 8 bytes

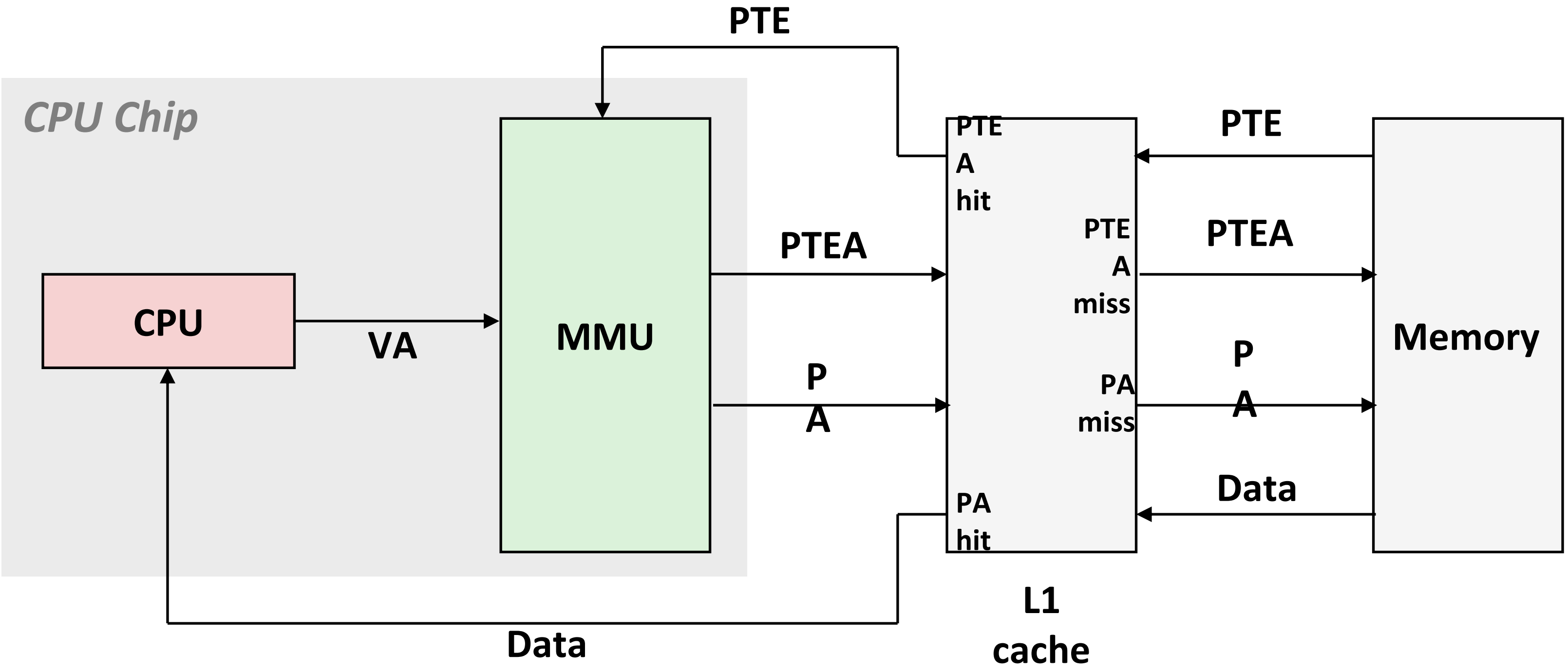


# DRAM Cache Organization

- **DRAM cache organization driven by the enormous miss penalty**
  - DRAM is about ***10x*** slower than SRAM
  - Disk is about ***10,000x*** slower than DRAM

- **Consequences**
  - Large page (block) size: typically 4 KB, sometimes 4 MB
  - Fully associative
    - Any VP can be placed in any PP
    - Requires a “large” mapping function – different from cache memories
  - Highly sophisticated, expensive replacement algorithms
    - Too complicated and open-ended to be implemented in hardware
  - Write-back rather than write-through

# Integrating VM and Cache



***VA: virtual address, PA: physical address, PTE: page table entry, PTEA = PTE address***

# Locality to the Rescue Again!

- **Virtual memory seems terribly inefficient, but it works because of locality.**

- **At any point in time, programs tend to access a set of active virtual pages called the *working set***
  - Programs with better temporal locality will have smaller working sets

- **If (working set size < main memory size)**
  - Good performance for one process after compulsory misses

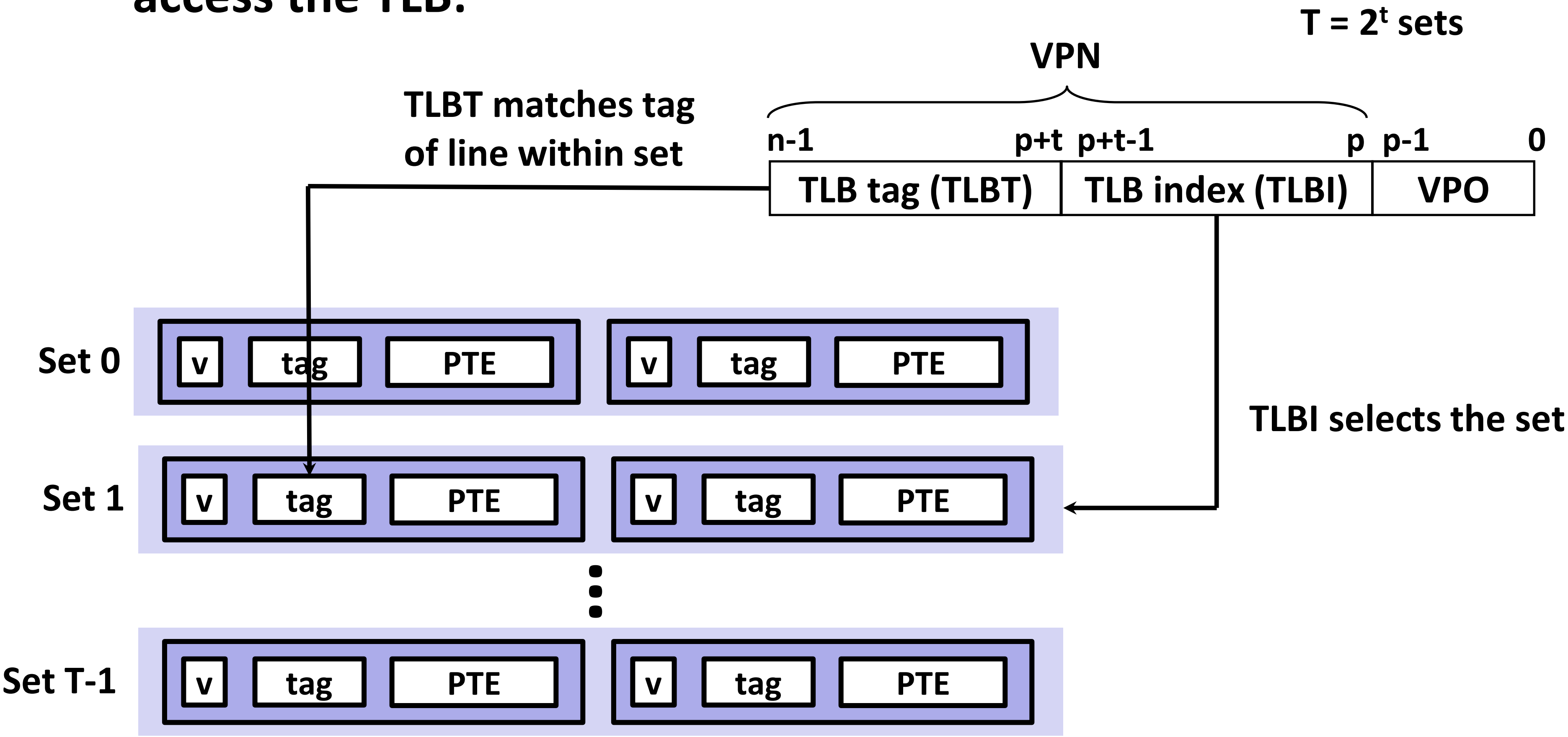
- **If ( SUM(working set sizes) > main memory size )**
  - *Thrashing:* Performance meltdown where pages are swapped (copied) in and out continuously

# Speeding up Translation with a TLB

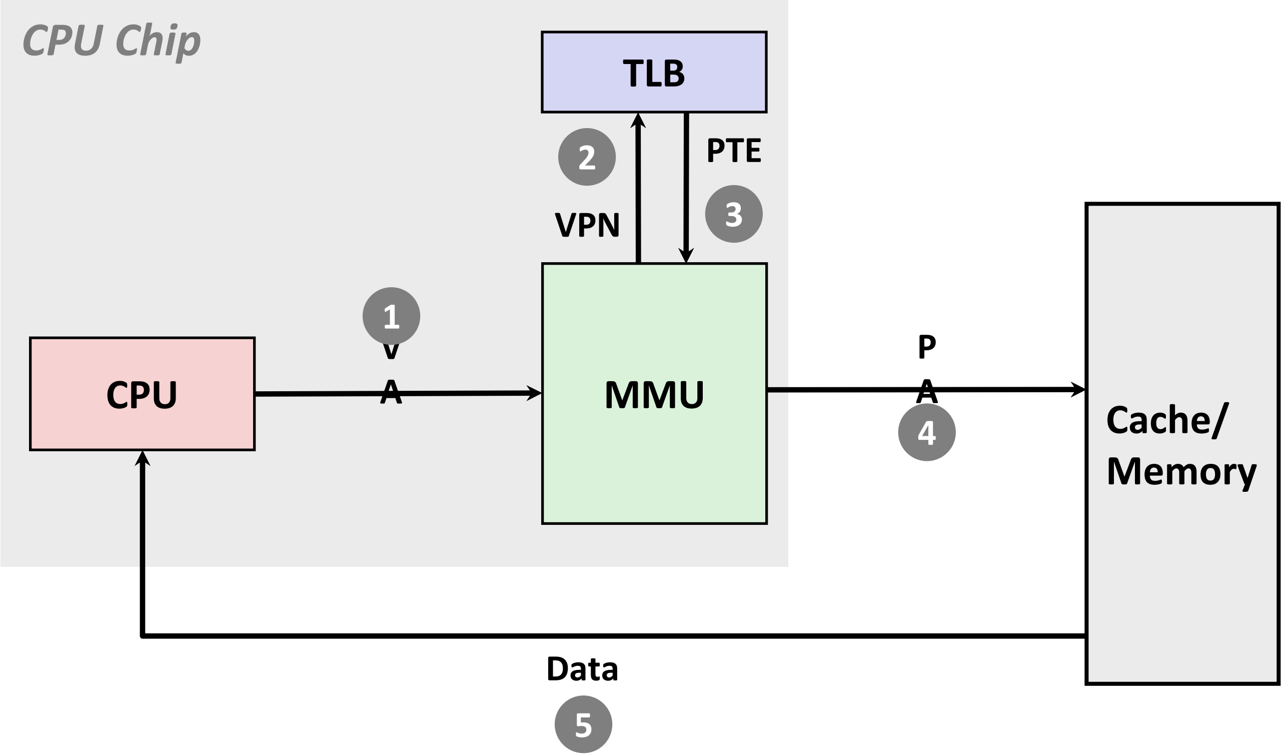
- **Page table entries (PTEs) are cached in L1 like any other memory word**
  - PTEs may be evicted by other data references
  - PTE hit still requires a small L1 delay
- **Solution: *Translation Lookaside Buffer* (TLB)**
  - Small set-associative hardware cache in MMU
  - Maps virtual page numbers to  physical page numbers
  - Contains complete page table entries for small number of pages

# Accessing the TLB

- MMU uses the VPN portion of the virtual address to access the TLB:

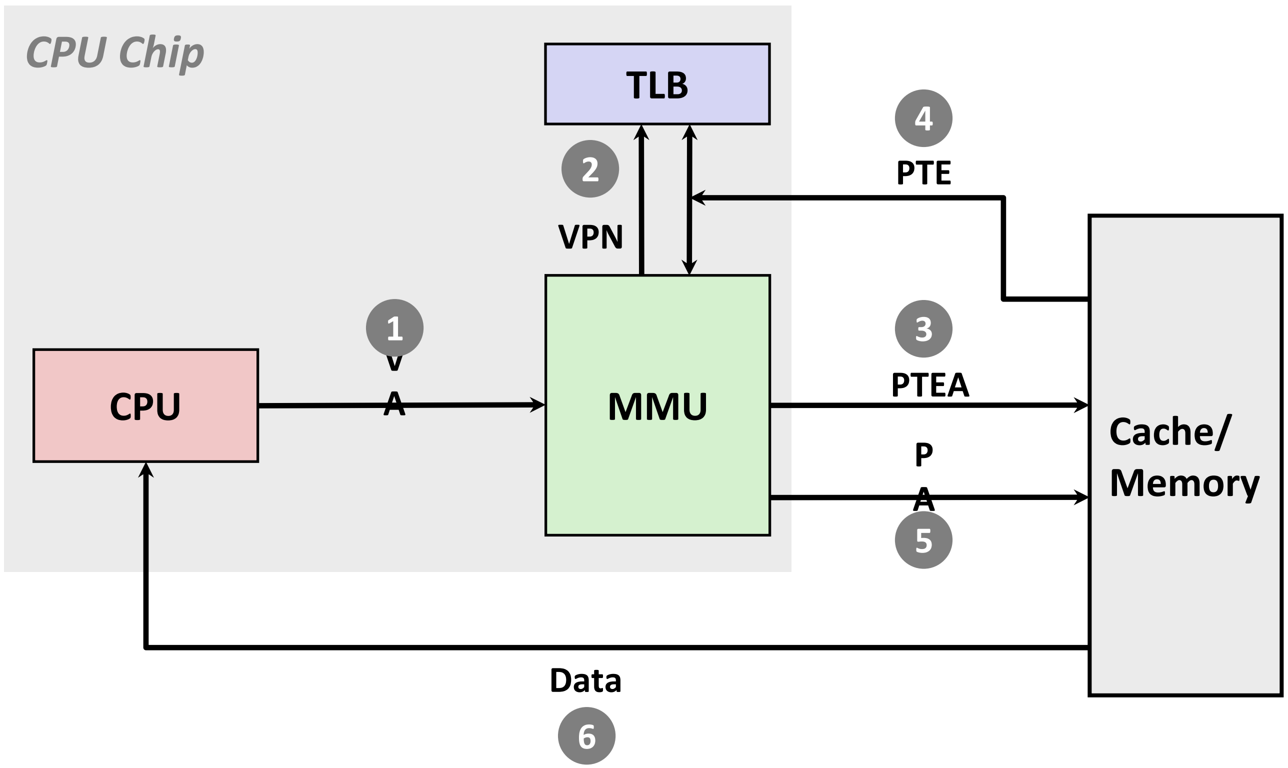


# TLB Hit



**A TLB hit eliminates a memory access**

# TLB Miss



**A TLB miss incurs an additional memory access (the PTE)**

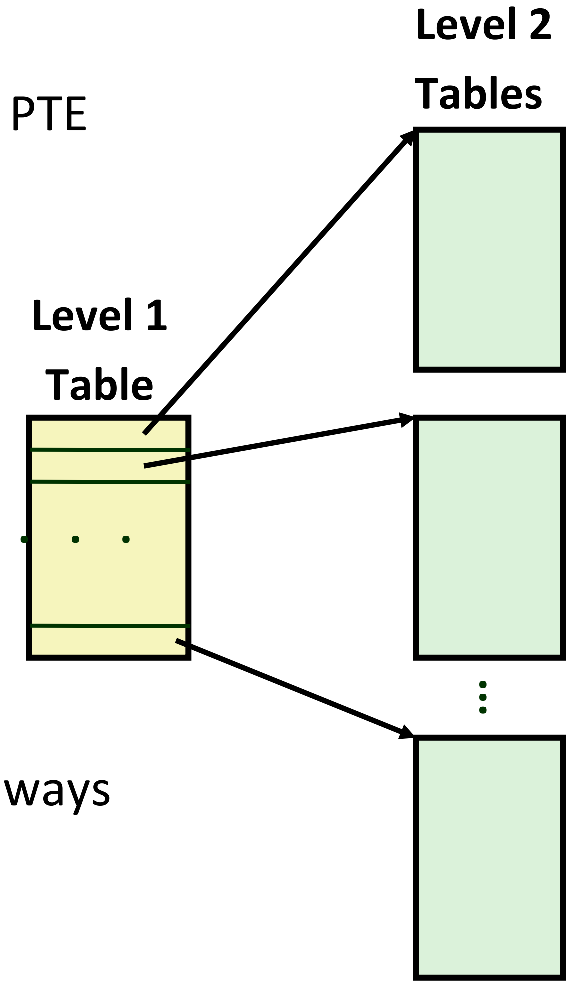
Fortunately, TLB misses are rare. Why?

# Summary of Address Translation Symbols

- **Basic Parameters**
  - **N = $2^n$** : Number of addresses in virtual address space
  - **M = $2^m$** : Number of addresses in physical address space
  - **P = $2^p$** : Page size (bytes)
- **Components of the virtual address (VA)**
  - **TLBI**: TLB index
  - **TLBT**: TLB tag
  - **VPO**: Virtual page offset
  - **VPN**: Virtual page number
- **Components of the physical address (PA)**
  - **PPO**: Physical page offset (same as VPO)
  - **PPN:** Physical page number

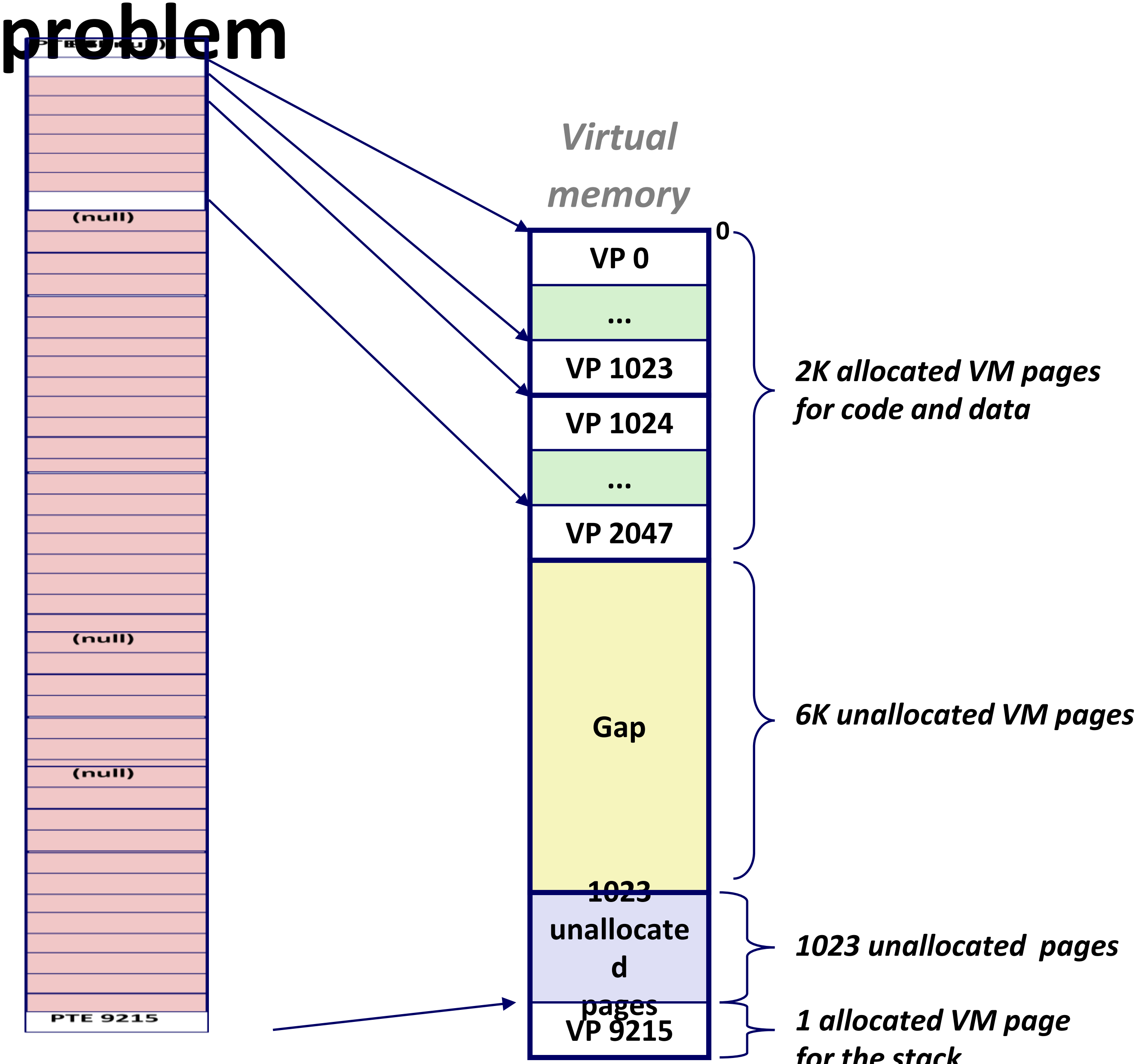
# Multi-Level Page Tables

- **Suppose:**
  - 4KB ($2^{12}$) page size, 48-bit address space, 8-byte PTE
- **Problem:**
  - Would need a 512 GB page table!
    - $2^{48} * 2^{-12} * 2^{3} = 2^{39}$ bytes
- **Common solution: Multi-level page table**
- **Example: 2-level page table**
  - Level 1 table: each PTE points to a page table (always memory resident)
  - Level 2 table: each PTE points to a page (paged in and out like any other data)



# We have a problem

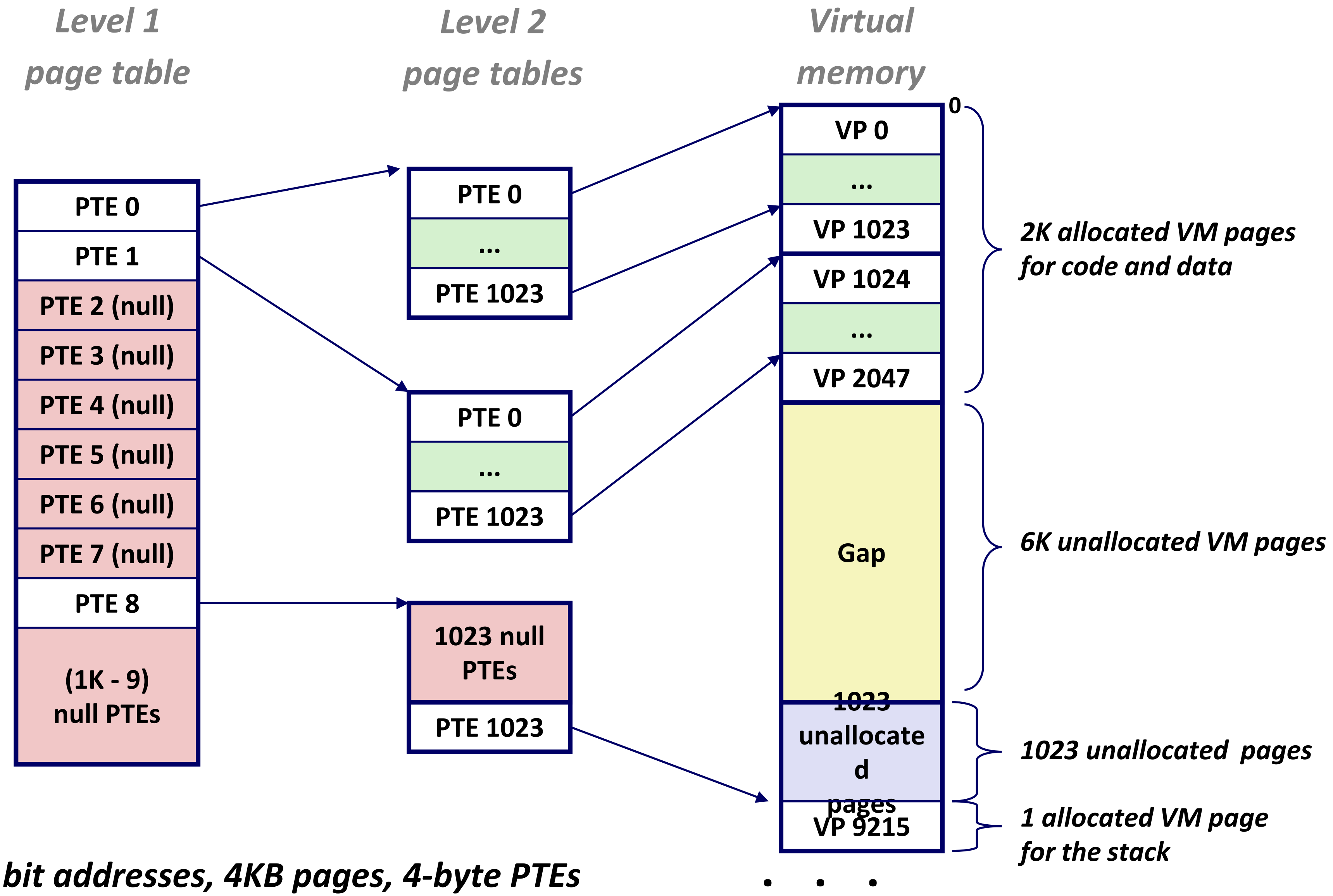
$2^{20}$ Entries of 4 bytes each



*32 bit addresses, 4KB pages, 4-byte PTEs*

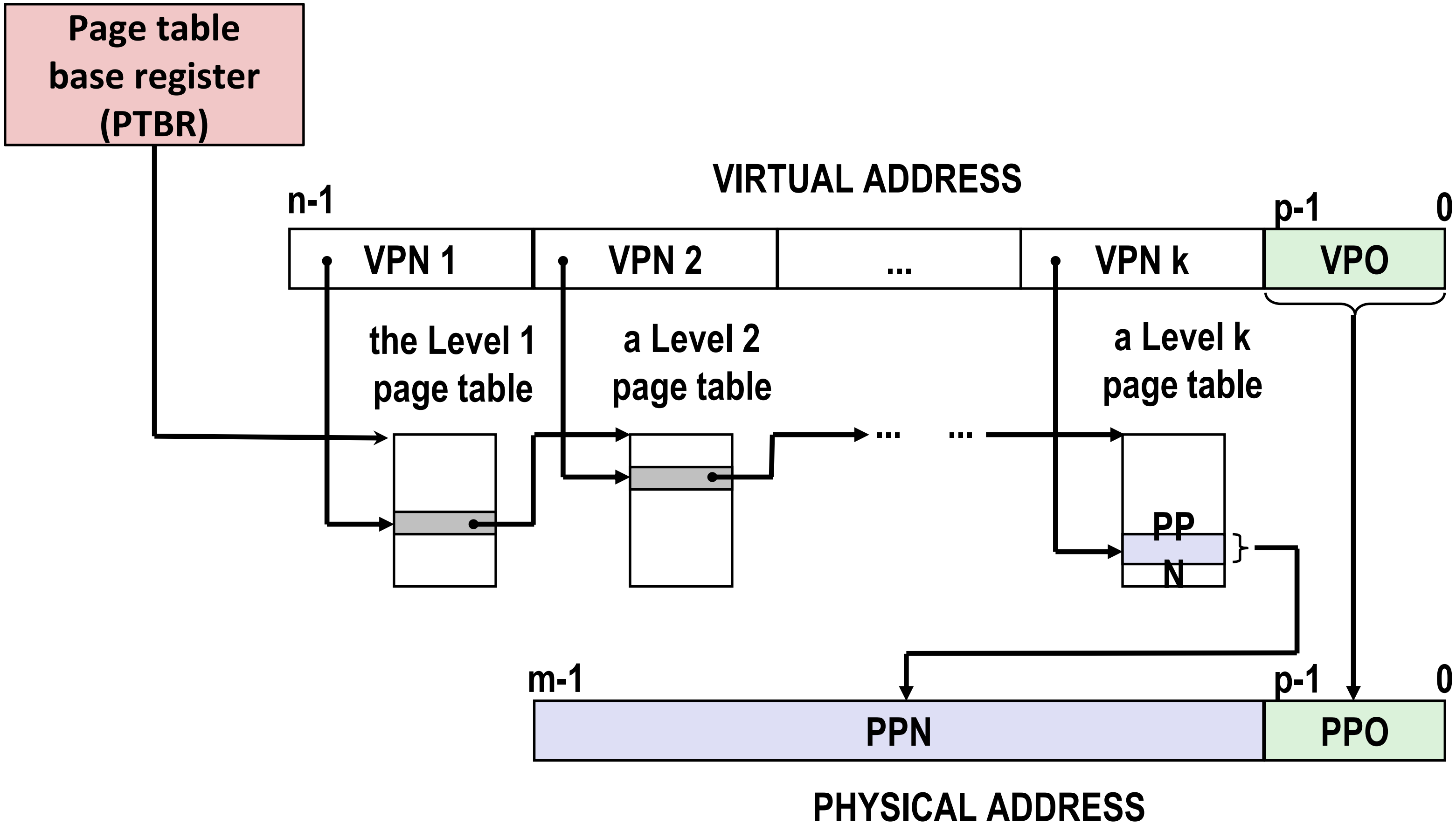
. . .

# A Two-Level Page Table Hierarchy



**32 bit addresses, 4KB pages, 4-byte PTEs**

# Translating with a k-level Page Table



# Summary

- **Programmer's view of virtual memory**
  - Each process has its own private linear address space
  - Cannot be corrupted by other processes

- **System view of virtual memory**
  - Uses memory efficiently by caching virtual memory pages
    - Efficient only because of locality
  - Simplifies memory management and programming
  - Simplifies protection by providing a convenient interpositioning point to check permissions