

Investigating Threads

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lab you should be able to:

- LO1. Write a source code that creates threads
- LO2. Use the simulator to compile and run the code
- LO3. Display the list of processes/threads and the tree of processes showing the parent/child process relationship
- LO4. Demonstrate that threads share their parent's data areas
- LO5. Modify the source code to create a version not using threads to be able to compare the two versions
- LO6. Simulate a multi-threaded server program

What are threads?

Threads are similar to processes and they too get scheduled by the OS. However, they do not normally exist in isolation. All threads have parent processes or other parent threads. Threads are usually referred to as "light-weight processes" (lwp). This is because thread creation and management is not as demanding and time-consuming as processes. Also, threads normally share their parents' (and grandparents') global data spaces and other resources.

Tutorial Exercises

In this tutorial, you'll investigate the threads (or light-weight processes). To do this we'll use the CPU/OS simulator. You also need to use the "teaching" compiler that is part of the simulator. Please note that the method of creating threads, as shown below, is specific to the "teaching" compiler and the simulator; other languages such as Java and C++ use different methods.

LO1. Write a source code that creates threads.

Start the CPU/OS simulator. In the compiler window enter the following source code:

```
program ThreadTest1
  sub thread1 as thread
    writeln("In thread1")
    while true
    wend
  end sub

  sub thread2 as thread
    call thread1
```

```

        writeln("In thread2")
        while true
            wend
    end sub

    call thread2
    writeln("In main")

do
loop
end

```

Notes:

1. The “**as thread**” construct marks the subroutine executable as a thread.
2. You may wish to save the above code in a file or paste it in Notebook.

Briefly explain what the above code is doing:

List the order in which you expect the text to be displayed by the “writeln” statements:

LO2. Use the simulator to compile and run the code.

LO3. Display the list of processes/threads and the tree of processes showing the parent/child process relationship.

- a) Compile the above source and load the generated code in memory.
- b) Make the console window visible by clicking on the **INPUT/OUTPUT...** button. Also make sure the console window stays on top by checking the **Stay on top** check box.
- c) Now, go to the OS simulator window (use the **OS...** button in the CPU simulator window) and create a single process of program *ThreadTest1* in the program list view. For this use the **CREATE NEW PROCESS** button.
- d) Make sure the scheduling policy selected is **Round Robin** and that the simulation speed is set at maximum.
- e) Hit the **START** button and at the same time observe the displays on the console window.

Briefly explain your observations:

How many processes are created?

Identify, by name, which is a process and which is a thread:

- f) Now, click on the **Views** tab and click on the **VIEW PROCESS LIST...** button. Observe the contents of the window now displaying.

Briefly explain your observations:

What do you think the **PPID** field signifies?

Is there equivalent information in MS Windows?

- g) In the Process List window hit the **PROCESS TREE...** button. Observe the contents of the window now displaying.

Briefly explain your observations:

How are the parent/child process relationships represented?

Identify the parent and the children processes:

Is there equivalent information in MS Windows?

- h) Stop the running processes by repeatedly using the **KILL** button in the OS simulator window.

LO4. Demonstrate that threads share their parent's data areas.

We now need to modify the above program statements for the next set of exercises. You can do this in two ways: 1) Modify the existing source, 2) Copy the code and paste it into a new editor window (you can use the **NEW...** button for this in the compiler window). The

required modifications are in bold and underlined. Also make sure that this modified program has a different program name as shown below.

```
program ThreadTest2
  var s1 string(6)
  var s2 string(6)

  sub thread1 as thread
    s1 = "hello1"
    writeln("In thread1")
    while true
      wend
    end sub

  sub thread2 as thread
    call thread1
    s2 = "hello2"
    writeln("In thread2")
    while true
      wend
    end sub

  call thread2
  writeln("In main")
  wait

  writeln(s1)
  writeln(s2)
end
```

Notes:

1. The “**wait**” statement allows the parent process to wait for its children to terminate before it continues.

Briefly explain what effect the modifications will have:

- a) Compile the above source and load the generated code in memory.
- b) Click on the **SYMBOL TABLE...** button in the compiler window. In the displayed window, observe the information on variables **s1** and **s2**.

Make a note below of the data memory addresses for variables **s1** and **s2**:

- c) Make the console window visible by clicking on the **INPUT/OUTPUT...** button. Also make sure the console window stays on top by checking the **Stay on top** check box.
- d) Now, go to the OS simulator window and create a single process of program *ThreadTest2* in the program list view. For this use the **CREATE NEW PROCESS** button.
- e) Make sure the scheduling policy selected is **Round Robin** and that the simulation speed is set at maximum.
- f) Hit the **START** button and after all the displays on the console window are done use the **SUSPEND** button to temporarily suspend the processes. Identify and select the grandparent process.
- g) Now, click on the **SHOW MEMORY...** button. This action will display the data area of the selected process. Observe the contents of the memory areas of variables **s1** and **s2** (use the address values you noted down in (b) above).
- h) Display the memory areas of the child processes and again observe the contents of the memory areas of variables **s1** and **s2** (note that each string variable's data starts with the first byte set to 03).

Briefly explain what your general observations are and suggest what the significance of your observations is:

- i) Click on the **RESUME** button and stop the running processes by repeatedly using the **KILL** button in the OS simulator window.

LO5. Modify the source code to create a version not using threads to be able to compare the two versions.

- a) Modify the source code for *ThreadTes1* by removing the two instances of “**as thread**” from the two subroutine declarations. You may wish to call this modified source code *ThreadTest3*.
- b) Compile the code and load in memory.
- c) Create a process of it and run in the OS simulator.
- d) Observe the display in the console window.

Briefly describe what you observe and explain how and why this differs from the results of the previous processes:

- e) Stop the running process by using the **KILL** button in the OS simulator window.

LO6. Simulate a multi-threaded server program

In the compiler window enter the following source code:

```
program ServerTest
  var p integer

  sub ServiceThread as thread
    writeln("Started service")
    for i = 1 to 30
      next
    writeln("Finished service")
  end sub

  sub ServerThread as thread
    while true
      read(nowait, p)
      select p
        case '1'
          call ServiceThread
        case 'q'
          break
        case else
```

```
                end select
            wend
        end sub

        call ServerThread
        wait
    end
```

- a. Compile the above source, load the generated code in memory and run it.
- b. Make a note below of what you observe on the OS simulator window:

- c. On the console window type **1** four times one after the other and observe the displays on the console.
- d. When all the threads finish then make a note of the displays on the console.

- e. Type **q** on the console to stop the server program.
- f. Now, modify the above code by removing the “**as thread**” construct from the subroutine *ServiceThread*.
- g. Compile the above source, load the generated code in memory and run it.
- h. On the console window type **1** four times one after the other and observe the displays on the console.
- i. When all the threads finish then make a note of the displays on the console.

- j. Type **q** on the console to stop the server program.
- k. Compare the displays in (l) with those in (q) above. Do they differ? If they do then explain below why they differ?