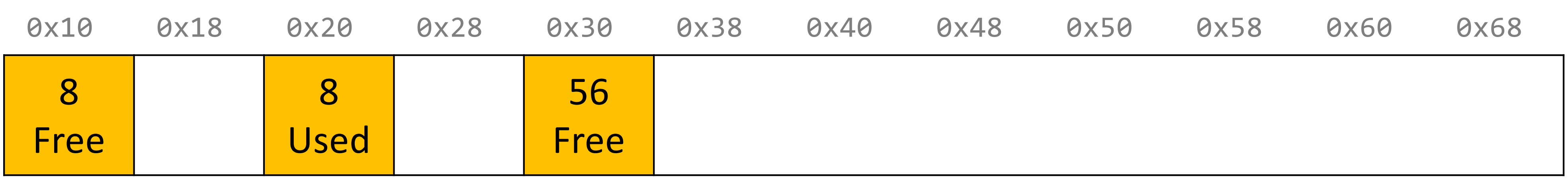
CS107, Lecture 23
Managing The Heap, Take II

Reading: B&O 9.9 and 9.11

Ed Discussion: https://edstem.org/us/courses/46162/discussion/3867604

Can We Do Better?

- It would be nice if we could jump *just between free blocks*, rather than all blocks, to find a block to reuse.
- **Idea:** let’s modify each header to add a pointer to the previous free block and a pointer to the next free block.



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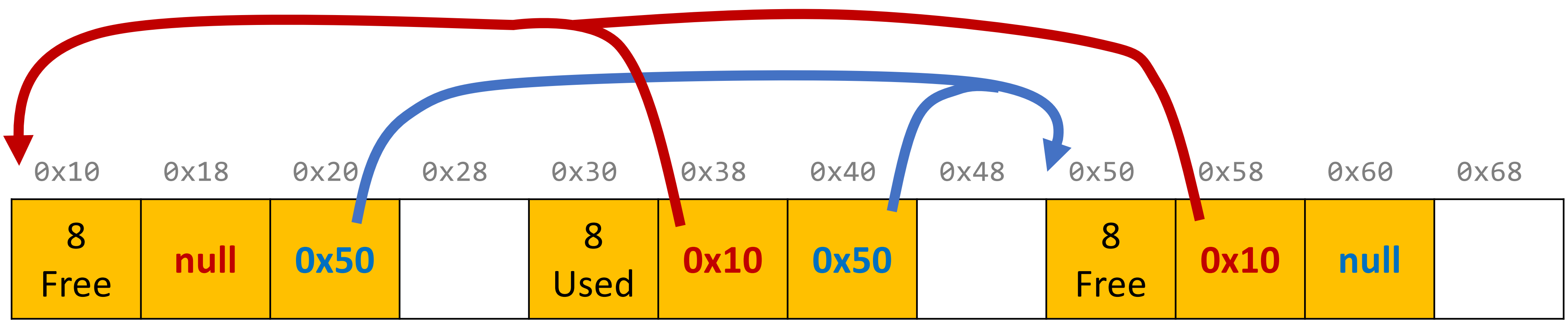

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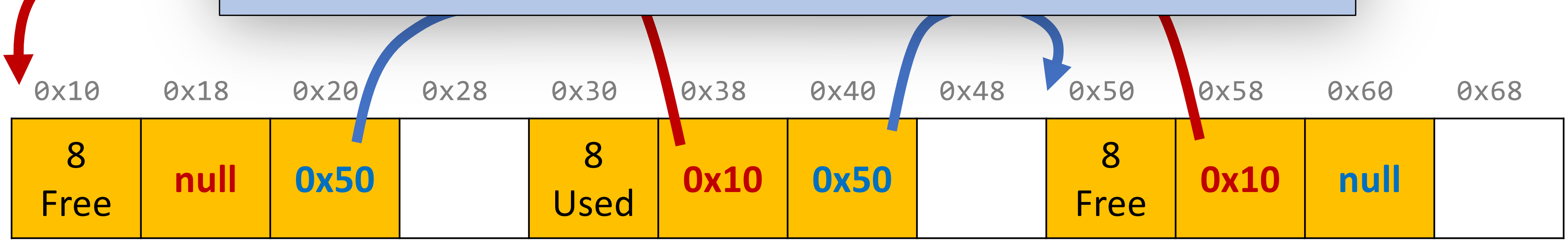
This is inefficient – it triples the size of *every* header, when we just need to jump from one free block to another. And even if we just made free headers bigger, it's complicated to have *two* different header sizes.



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- **Idea:** let's modify each header to add a pointer to the previous free block and a pointer to the next free block. *This is inefficient / complicated.*
- **Where can we put these pointers to the next/previous free block?**
- **Idea:** In a separate data structure?

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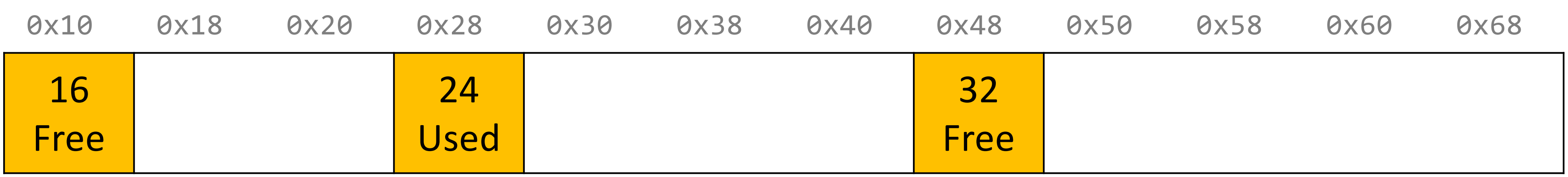
- **Where can we put these pointers to the next/previous free block?**
- **Idea:** In a separate data structure? *More difficult to access in a separate place – prefer storing near blocks on the heap itself.*

Can We Do Better?

- **Key Insight:** the payloads of the free blocks aren't being used, because they're free.
- **Idea:** since we only need to store these pointers for free blocks, let's store them in the first 16 bytes of each free block's payload!



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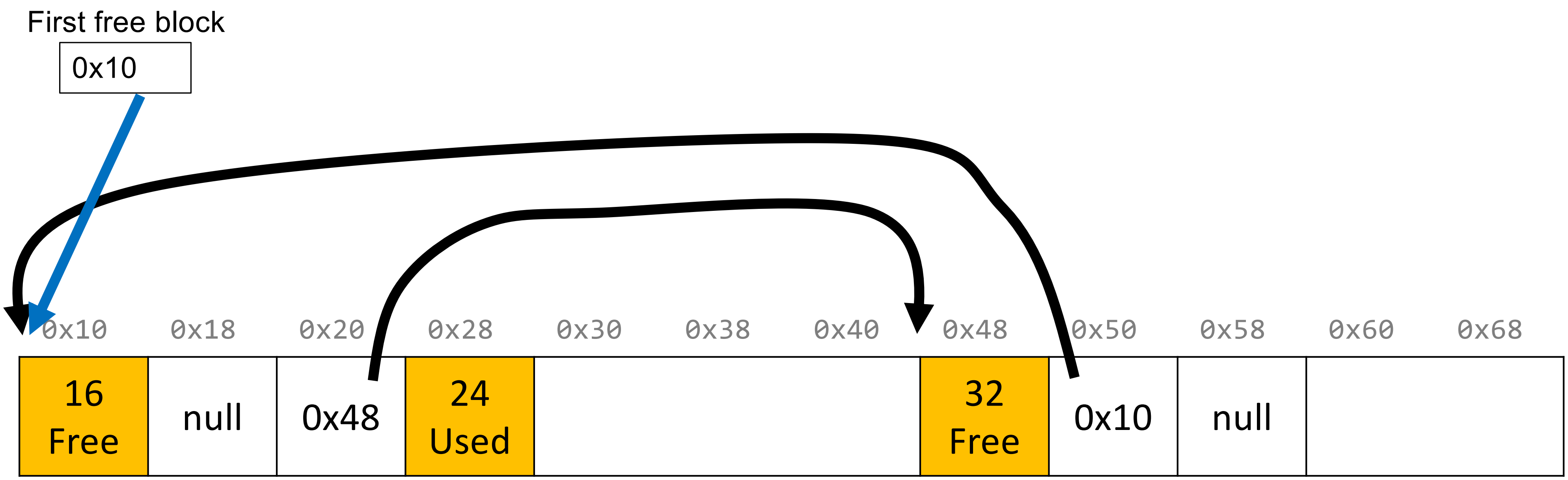

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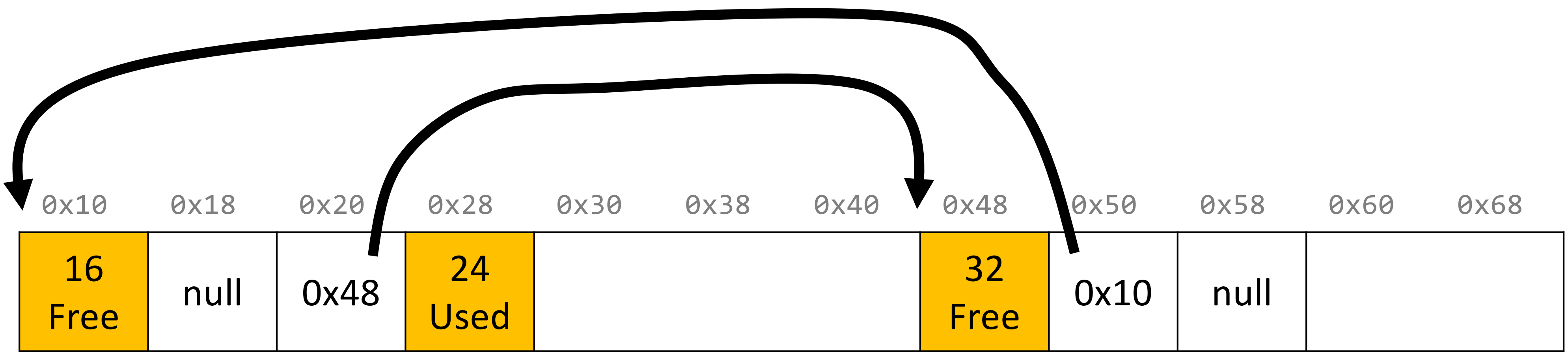
- **Key Insight:** the payloads of the free blocks aren't being used, because they're free.
- **Idea:** since we only need to store these pointers for free blocks, let's store them in the first 16 bytes of each free block's payload!
- This means each payload must be big enough to store 2 pointers (16 bytes). So, we must require that for every free block and every allocated one as well.



Explicit Free List Allocator

- This design builds on the implicit allocator, but also stores pointers to the next and previous free block inside each free block's payload.
- When we allocate a block, we look through just the free blocks using our linked list to find a free one, and we update its header and the linked list to reflect its allocated size and that it is now allocated.
- When we free a block, we update its header to reflect it is now free and update the linked list.

This **explicit** list of free blocks increases request throughput, with some costs (design and internal fragmentation)

Explicit Free List: List Design

How do you want to organize your explicit free list?
(compare utilization/throughput)

A. Address-order (each block's address is less than successor block's address)
B. Last-in first-out (LIFO)/like a stack, where newly freed blocks are at the beginning of the list
C. Other (e.g., by size, etc.)

Up to you!

Better memory utilization, Linear-time free

Constant free (push recent block onto stack)

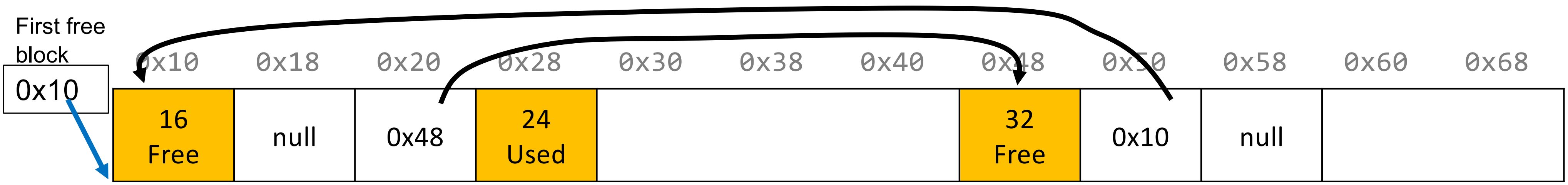
(more at end of lecture)

Explicit free list design

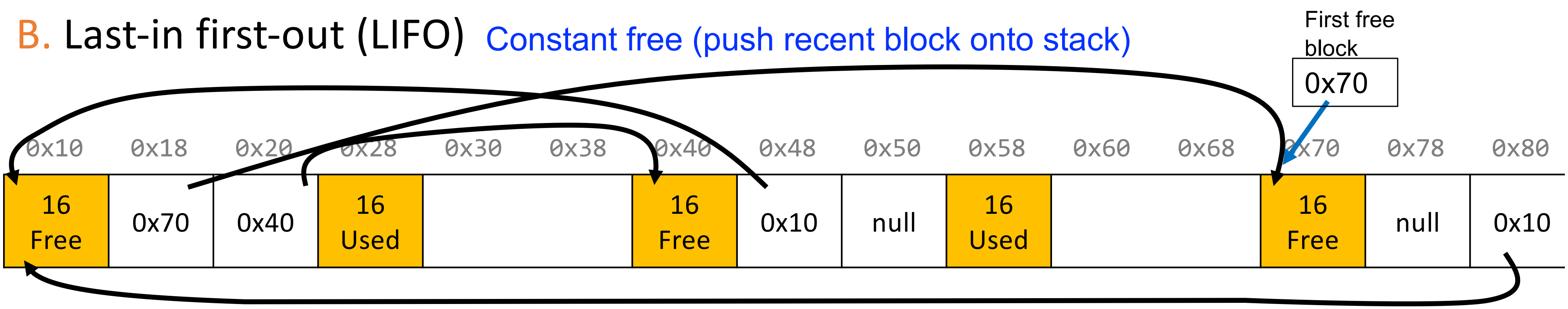
Up to you!

How do you want to organize your explicit free list?(utilization/throughput)

A. Address-order Better memory util, linear free



B. Last-in first-out (LIFO) Constant free (push recent block onto stack)



C. Other (e.g., by size, etc.) (see textbook)

Implicit vs. Explicit: So Far

Implicit Free List

- 8B header for size + alloc/free status
- Allocation requests are worst-case linear in total number of blocks
- Implicitly address-order

Explicit Free List

- 8B header for size + alloc/free status
- Free block payloads store prev/next free block pointers
- Allocation requests are worst-case linear in number of free blocks
- Can choose block ordering

Revisiting Our Goals

Can we do better?

1. Can we avoid searching all blocks for free blocks to reuse? **Yes! We can use a doubly-linked list.**
2. Can we merge adjacent free blocks to keep large spaces available?
3. Can we avoid always copying/moving data during realloc?

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Coalescing

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void *a = malloc(8);
void *b = malloc(8);
void *c = malloc(16);
free(b);
free(a);
void *d = malloc(32);
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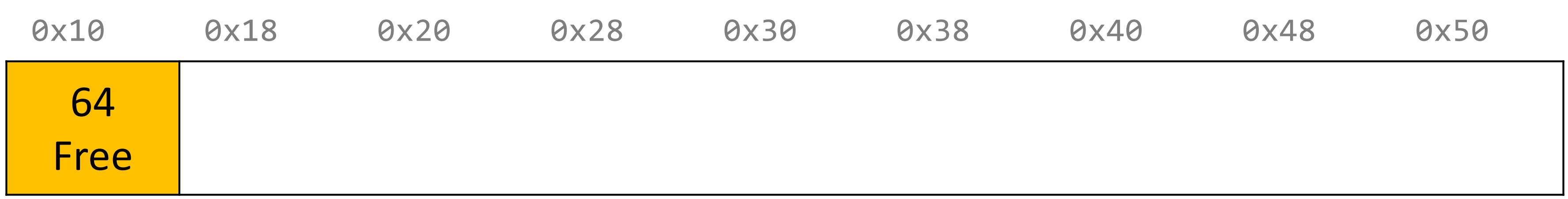

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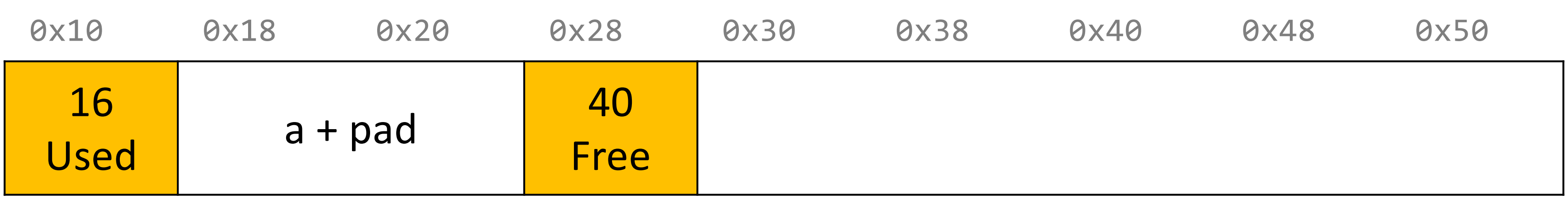

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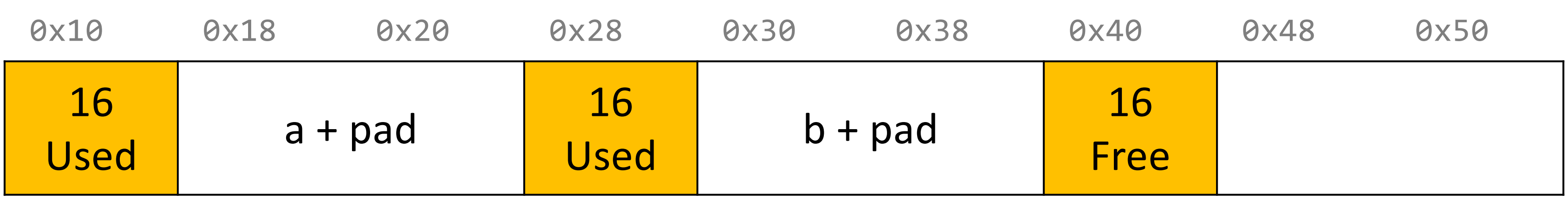

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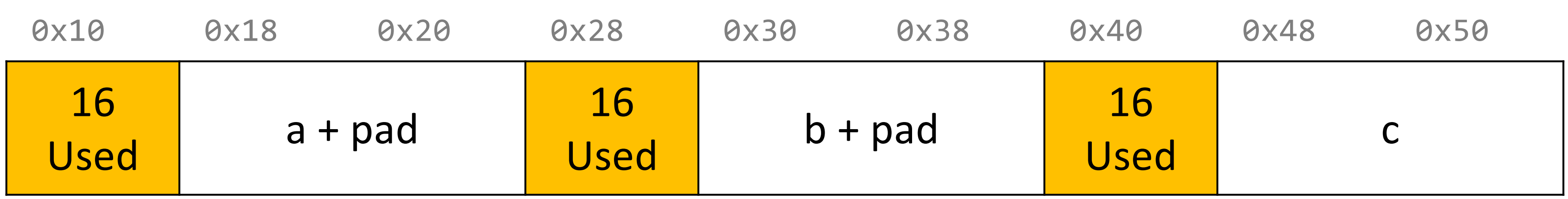

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0x10 0x18 0x20 0x28 0x30 0x38 0x40 0x48 0x50

16 Used	a + pad	16 Free	b + pad	16 Used	c

Coalescing

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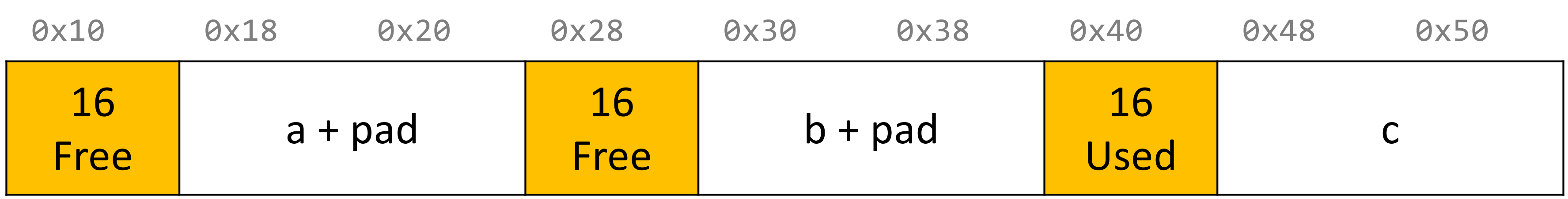

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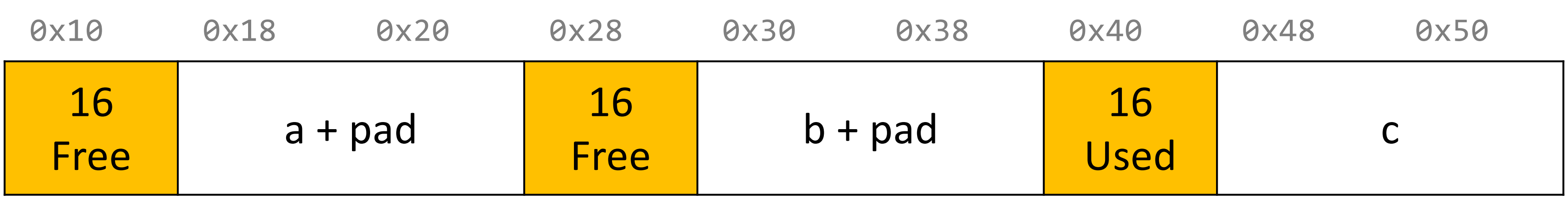
We have enough memory space, but it is fragmented into free blocks sized from earlier requests!

We'd like to be able to merge adjacent free blocks back together. How can we do this?



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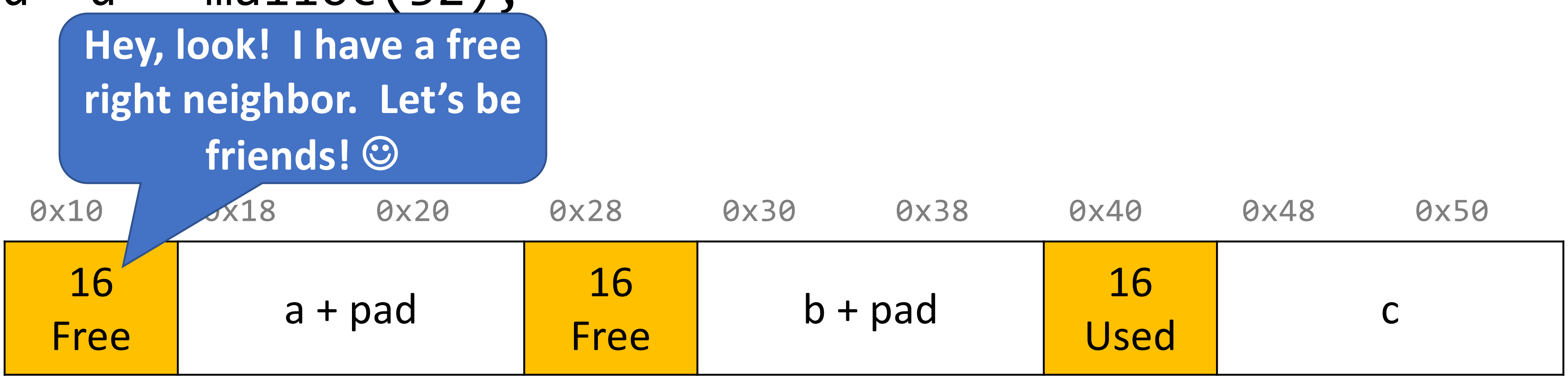

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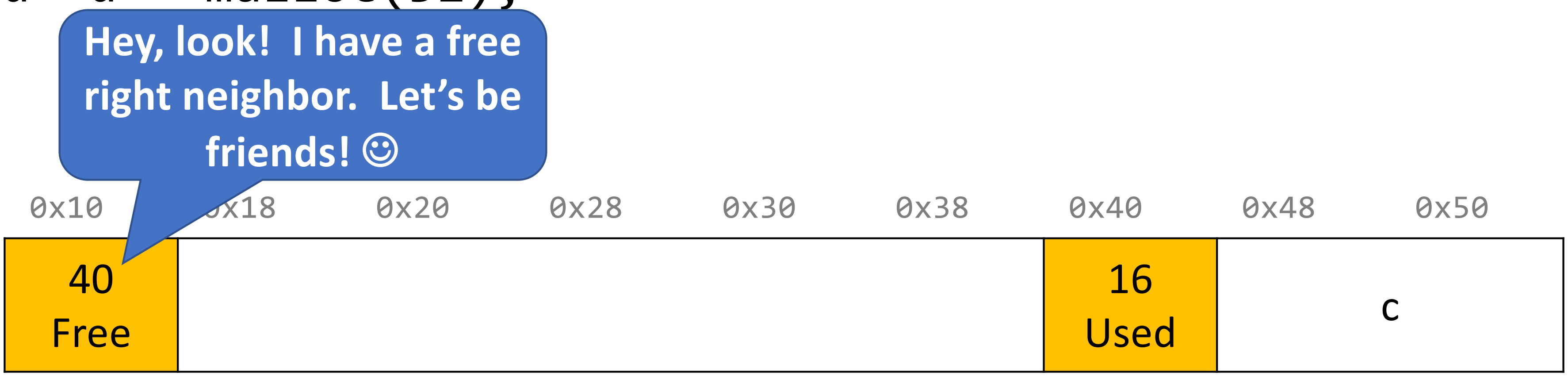

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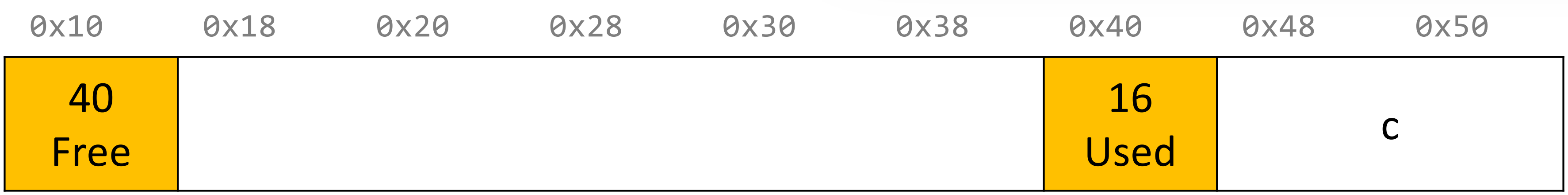
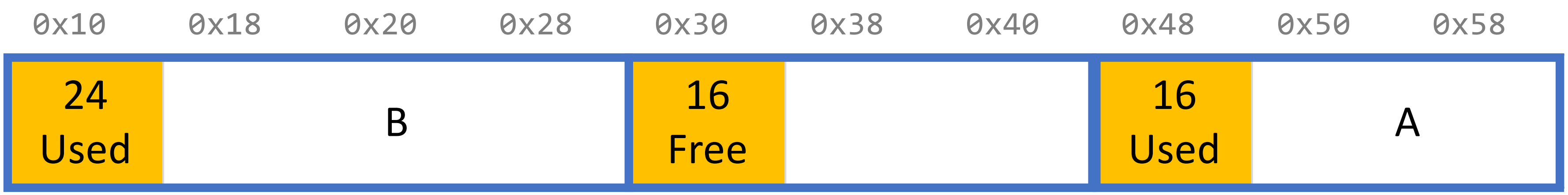
The process of combining adjacent free blocks is called *coalescing*.

For your explicit heap allocator, you should coalesce, if possible, when a block is freed. **You only need to coalesce the most immediate right neighbor.**



Practice 1: Explicit (coalesce)

For the following heap layout, what would the heap look like after the following request is made, assuming we are using an **explicit** free list allocator with a **first-fit** approach and **coalesce on free**?

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free(b);
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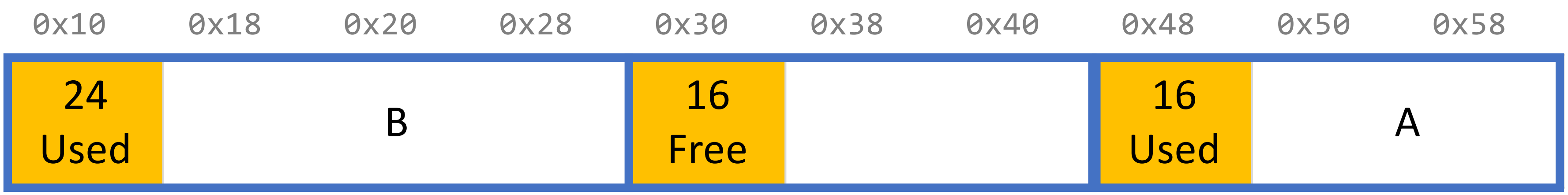


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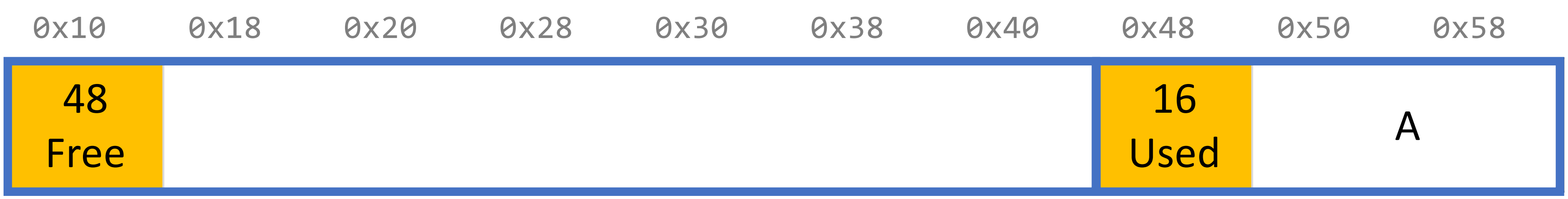

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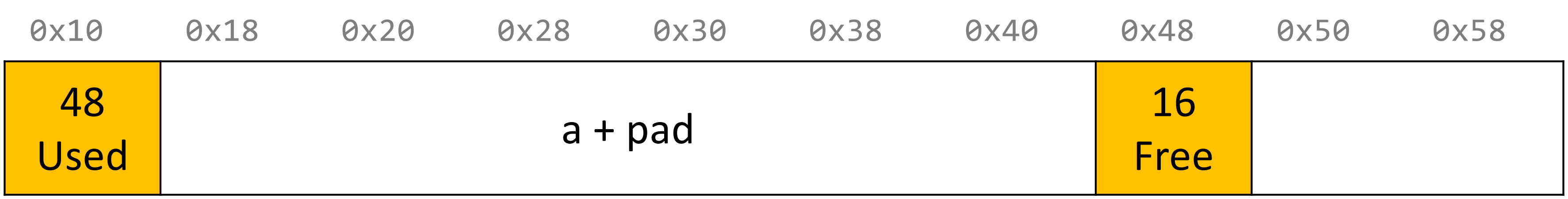
Realloc

- For the implicit allocator, we didn't worry much about realloc. We always moved data when they requested a different amount of space.
  - Note: realloc can grow *or* shrink the data size.
- But sometimes we may be able to keep the data in the same place. How?
  - **Case 1:** size is growing, but we added padding to the block and can use that
  - **Case 2:** size is shrinking, so we can use the existing block
  - **Case 3:** size is growing, and current block isn't big enough, but adjacent blocks are free.

Realloc: Growing In Place

```
void *a = malloc(42);
...
void *b = realloc(a, 48);
```

a's earlier request was too small, so we added padding. Now they are requesting a larger size we can satisfy with that padding! So realloc can return the same address.



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void *a = malloc(42);
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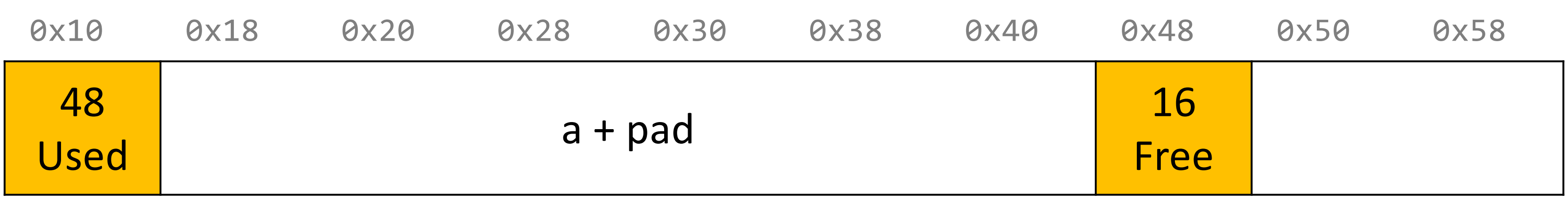
If a realloc is requesting to shrink, we can still use the same starting address.

If we can, we should try to recycle the now-freed memory into another freed block.



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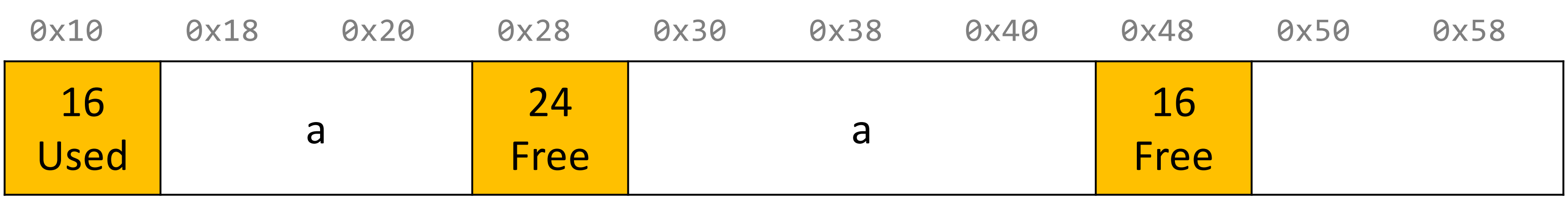

Realloc: Growing In Place

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void *a = malloc(42);
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void *b = realloc(a, 72);
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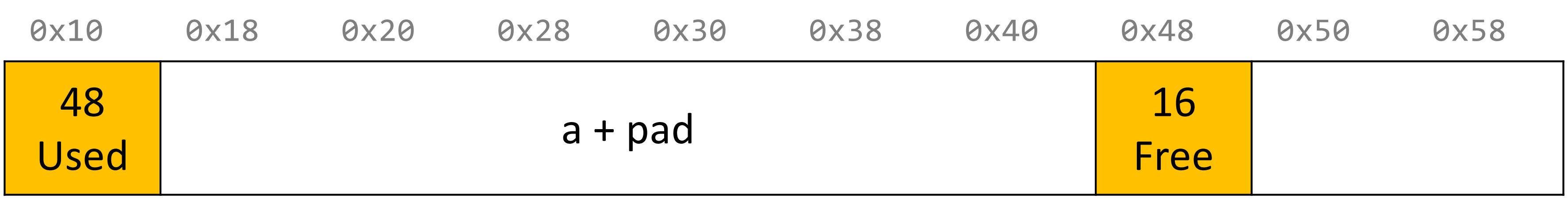
Even with the padding, we don't have enough space to satisfy the larger size. But we have an adjacent neighbor that is free – let's team up!



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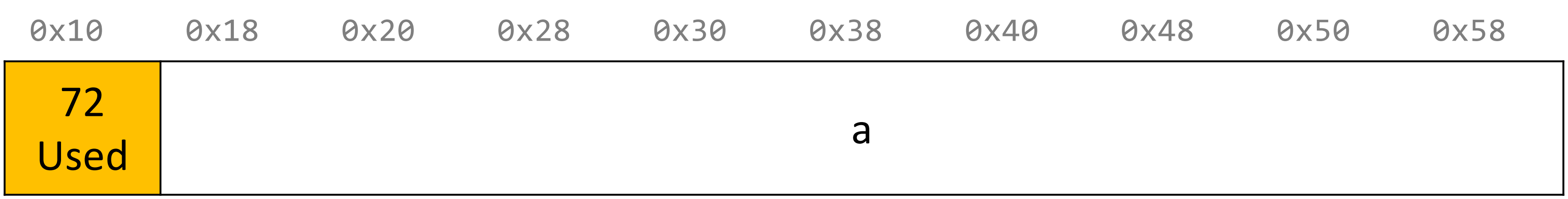
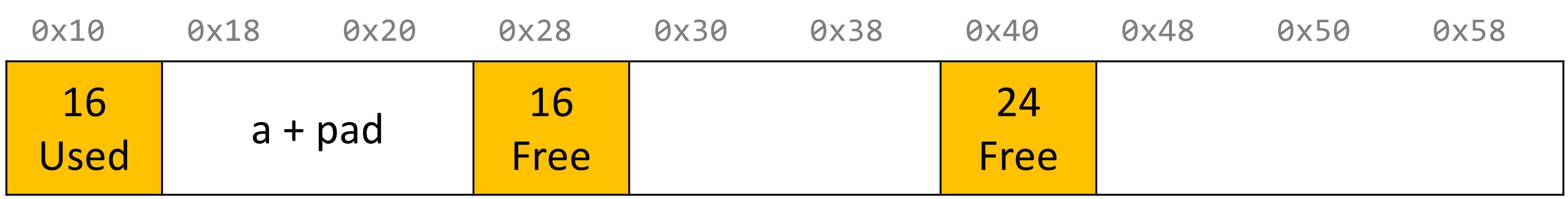
Now we can still return the same address.



Realloc: Growing In Place

```
void *a = malloc(8);
...
void *b = realloc(a, 72);
```

For your project, you should combine with your *right* neighbors as much as possible until we get enough space, or until we know we cannot get enough space.



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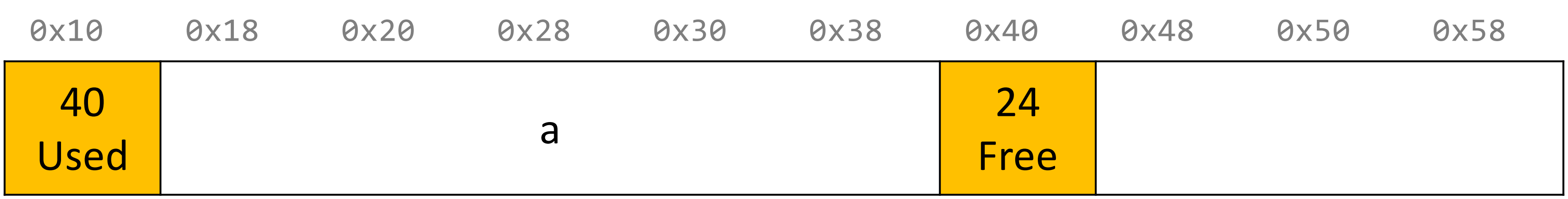

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