



# CS107, Lecture 13

## C Generics and Function Pointers, Take II

Reading: K&R 5.11

[Ed Discussion](#)

# Integer Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort_int(int arr[], size_t n, int (*cmp_fn)(int, int)) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (size_t i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            if (cmp_fn(arr[i - 1], arr[i]) > 0) {
                swap(&arr[i - 1], &arr[i], sizeof(int));
                swapped = true;
            }
        }

        if (!swapped) {
            return;
        }
    }
}
```

**bubble\_sort\_int** now supports any possible sort ordering. But it's not fully generic - it still only works with **int** arrays. What about other types?

# Generic Bubble Sort

file\_that\_sorts\_ints.c

```
#include <bubblesort.h>
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    ...
}
```

file\_that\_sorts\_strings.c

```
#include <bubblesort.h>
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    ...
}
```

file\_that\_sorts\_structs.c

```
#include <bubblesort.h>
int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    ...
}
```

**Goal:** write 1 implementation of **bubblesort** that any program can use to sort data of any type.

bubblesort.h/c



# Generic Bubble Sort

To write one generic **bubblesort** function, we must create one function signature that works for any scenario.

```
void bubble_sort(int arr[], size_t n,  
                int (*cmp_fn)(int, int));
```

# Generic Bubble Sort

To write one generic **bubblesort** function, we must create one function signature that works for any scenario.

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, size_t n,  
                size_t elem_size_bytes,  
                int (*cmp_fn)(int, int));
```

Problem: we need **one comparison function signature** that works with any type.

# Generic Bubble Sort

To write one generic **bubblesort** function, we must create one function pointer signature that works for any data type.

```
void bubble_sort_int(void *arr, size_t n,  
    size_t elem_size_bytes, int (*cmp_fn)(int, int));  
void bubble_sort_long(void *arr, size_t n,  
    size_t elem_size_bytes, int (*cmp_fn)(long, long));  
void bubble_sort_str(void *arr, size_t n,  
    size_t elem_size_bytes, int (*cmp_fn)(char *, char *));  
...
```



**How can we write a  
function that can take in  
parameters of any type?**

# Generic Parameters

- Let's say I want to write a function **generic\_func** that takes in one parameter, but it could be any type. What should we specify as the parameter type?

```
generic_func(type param1) { ...
```

- **Problem:** C needs the parameter to be a single specified size. But in theory it could be infinitely big (e.g., a large struct).
- **Key Idea:** require the caller to pass in a *pointer to the data*. Pointers are always 8 bytes, regardless of what they address.
- **Problem:** which pointer type should I pick? e.g., `int *`, `char *`? If it doesn't match the actual type, the caller will have to cast (yuck).
- **Key Idea #2:** make the parameter type a **void \***, which means "any pointer".

# Generic Bubble Sort

- We will use the same idea for **bubblesort**'s comparison function. Make its parameters **void \*s**. Then we must call them by specifying *pointers to what we want to compare*, not the elements themselves.

Let's write a generic version of **bubblesort**:

1. Make the parameters and swap functionality generic
2. Make the comparison function generic

# Generic Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort(int *arr, size_t n, int (*cmp_fn)(int, int)) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;
        for (size_t i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            if (cmp_fn(arr[i - 1], arr[i]) > 0) {
                swap(&arr[i - 1], &arr[i], sizeof(int));
                swapped = true;
            }
        }

        if (!swapped) {
            return;
        }
    }
}
```

Let's start by making the parameters generic.

# Generic Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, size_t n,  
                size_t elem_size_bytes, int (*cmp_fn)(int, int)) {  
    while (true) {  
        bool swapped = false;  
        for (size_t i = 1; i < n; i++) {  
            if (cmp_fn(arr[i - 1], arr[i]) > 0) {  
                swap(&arr[i - 1], &arr[i], elem_size_bytes);  
                swapped = true;  
            } // args passed to cmp_fn and swap won't compile! must fix!  
        }  
  
        if (!swapped) {  
            return;  
        }  
    }  
}
```

Let's start by making the parameters generic.

# Generic Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, size_t n,  
                size_t elem_size_bytes, int (*cmp_fn)(int, int)) {  
    while (true) {  
        bool swapped = false;  
        for (size_t i = 1; i < n; i++) {  
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;  
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;  
            if (cmp_fn(arr[i - 1], arr[i]) > 0) {  
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);  
                swapped = true;  
            }  
        }  
        if (!swapped) {  
            return;  
        }  
    }  
}
```

Let's start by making the parameters generic.

# Generic Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, size_t n,  
                size_t elem_size_bytes, int (*cmp_fn)(void *, void *)) {  
    while (true) {  
        bool swapped = false;  
        for (size_t i = 1; i < n; i++) {  
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;  
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;  
            if (cmp_fn(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem) > 0) {  
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);  
                swapped = true;  
            }  
        }  
        if (!swapped) {  
            return;  
        }  
    }  
}
```

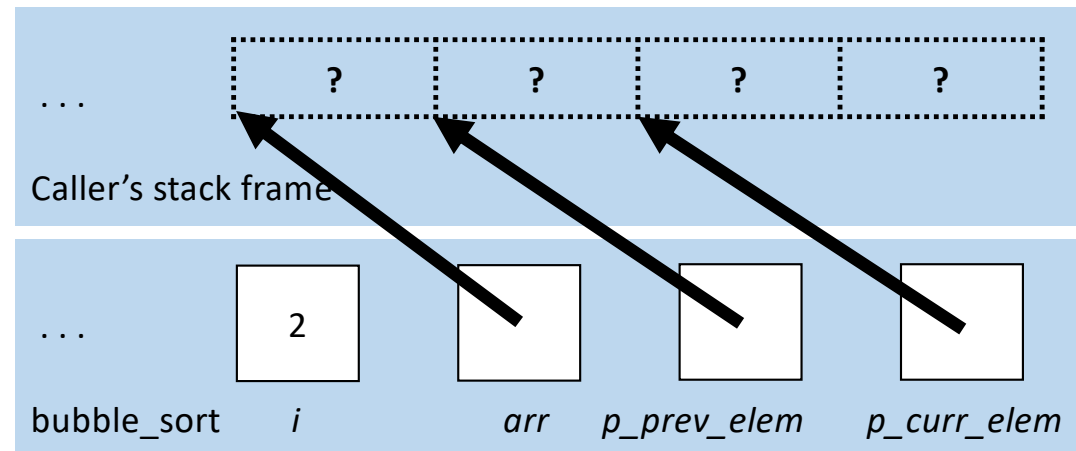
Let's start by making the parameters generic.

# Generic Bubble Sort

```
void bubble_sort(void *arr, size_t n, size_t elem_size_bytes,
                int (*cmp_fn)(void *, void *)) {
    while (true) {
        bool swapped = false;

        for (size_t i = 1; i < n; i++) {
            void *p_prev_elem = (char *)arr + (i - 1) * elem_size_bytes;
            void *p_curr_elem = (char *)arr + i * elem_size_bytes;
            if (cmp_fn(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem) > 0) {
                swap(p_prev_elem, p_curr_elem, elem_size_bytes);
                swapped = true;
            }
        }

        if (!swapped) {
            return;
        }
    }
}
```



# Calling Generic Bubble Sort

```
// 0 if equal, neg if first before second, pos if second before first
int sort_descending(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {
    ???
}

int main(int argc, char *argv[]) {
    int nums[] = {4, 2, -5, 1, 12, 56};
    int nums_count = sizeof(nums) / sizeof(nums[0]);
    bubble_sort(nums, nums_count, sizeof(nums[0]), sort_descending);
    ...
}
```

**Key idea:** now the comparison function is passed pointers to the elements being compared.

# Function Pointers

How does the caller implement a comparison function that bubble sort can use?  
**The key idea is now the comparison function is passed pointers to the elements that are being compared.**

We can use the following pattern:

- 1) Cast the void \*argument(s) and set typed pointers equal to them.
- 2) Dereference the typed pointer(s) to access the values.
- 3) Perform the necessary operation.

(steps 1 and 2 can often be combined into a single step)

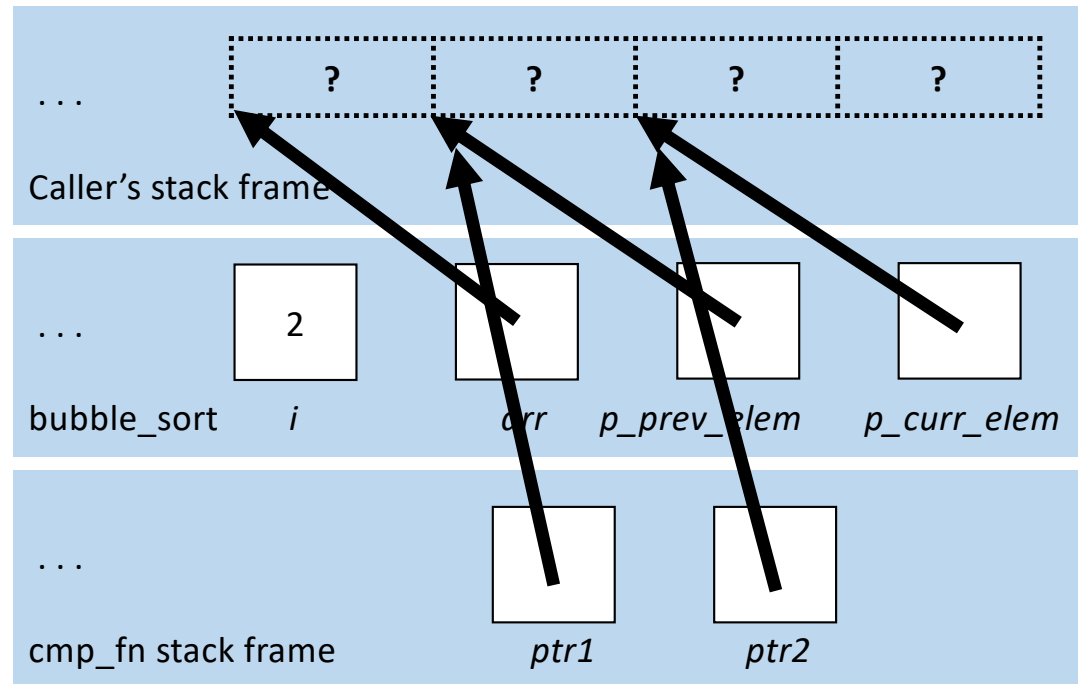
# Function Pointers

```
int sort_descending(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {  
    // 1) cast arguments to int *s  
    int *num1ptr = (int *)ptr1;  
    int *num2ptr = (int *)ptr2;  
  
    // 2) dereference typed points to access values  
    int num1 = *num1ptr;  
    int num2 = *num2ptr;  
  
    // 3) perform operation  
    return num2 - num1;  
}
```

This function is created by the caller **specifically** to compare integers, knowing their addresses are necessarily disguised as **void \***so that **bubble\_sort** can work for any array type.

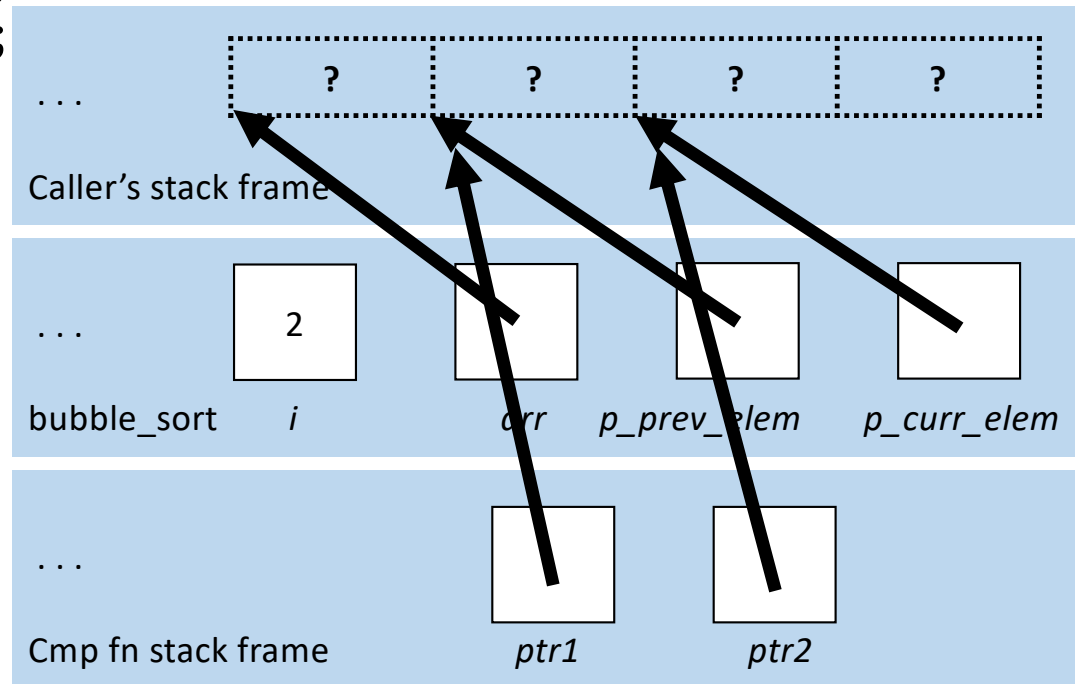
# Function Pointers

```
int sort_descending(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {  
    return *(int *)ptr2 - *(int *)ptr1;  
}
```



# String Comparison Function

```
int string_compare(void *ptr1, void *ptr2) {  
    // cast arguments and dereference  
    char *str1 = *(char **)ptr1;  
    char *str2 = *(char **)ptr2;  
  
    // perform operation  
    return strcmp(str1, str2);  
}
```



# Function Pointer Pitfalls

- If a function takes a function pointer as a parameter, any function with the expected prototype can be passed in, even if it's the wrong function.
- Think about what happens if you pass in a string comparison function when sorting an integer array?

# Practice: Count Matches

- Let's write a generic function **count\_matches** that can count the number of a certain type of element in a generic array.
- It should take in as parameters information about the generic array, and a function parameter that can take in a pointer to a single array element and tell us if it's a match.

```
int count_matches(void *base, size_t nelems,  
                 size_t elem_size_bytes,  
                 bool (*match_fn)(void *));
```



# Demo: Count Matches



count\_matches.c

# Practice Solution: count\_matches

```
int count_matches(void *base, size_t nelems, size_t elem_size_bytes,
                 bool (*match_fn)(void *)) {

    int match_count = 0;

    for (size_t i = 0; i < nelems; i++) {
        void *curr_p = (char *)base + i * elem_size_bytes;
        if (match_fn(curr_p)) {
            match_count++;
        }
    }

    return match_count;
}
```

# Generic C Standard Library Functions

- **qsort** – I can sort an array of any type! To do that, I need you to provide me a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to sort.
- **bsearch** – I can use binary search to search for a key in an array of any type! To do that, I need you to provide me a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to search.
- **lfind** – I can use linear search to search for a key in an array of any type! To do that, I need you to provide me a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to search.
- **lsearch** - I can use linear search to search for a key in an array of any type! I will also add the key for you if I can't find it. In order to do that, I need you to provide me a function that can compare two elements of the kind you are asking me to search.