REGISTER ALLOCATION

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The Register Allocation Problem

- Intermediate code uses unlimited temporaries
  - Simplifies code generation and optimization
  - Complicates final translation to assembly
- Typical intermediate code uses too many temporaries
- The problem:
  - Rewrite the intermediate code to use no more temporaries than there are machine registers
- Method:
  - Assign multiple temporaries to each register – But without changing the program behavior

An Example

- Consider the program

```
a := c + d
e := a + b
f := e - 1
```

- Assume a and e dead after use
  - Temporary a can be “reused” after e := a + b
  - So can temporary e
- Can allocate a, e, and f all to one register (r1):

```
r1 := r2 + r3
r1 := r1 + r4
r1 := r1 - 1
```

- A dead temporary is not needed
  - A dead temporary can be reused

The Idea

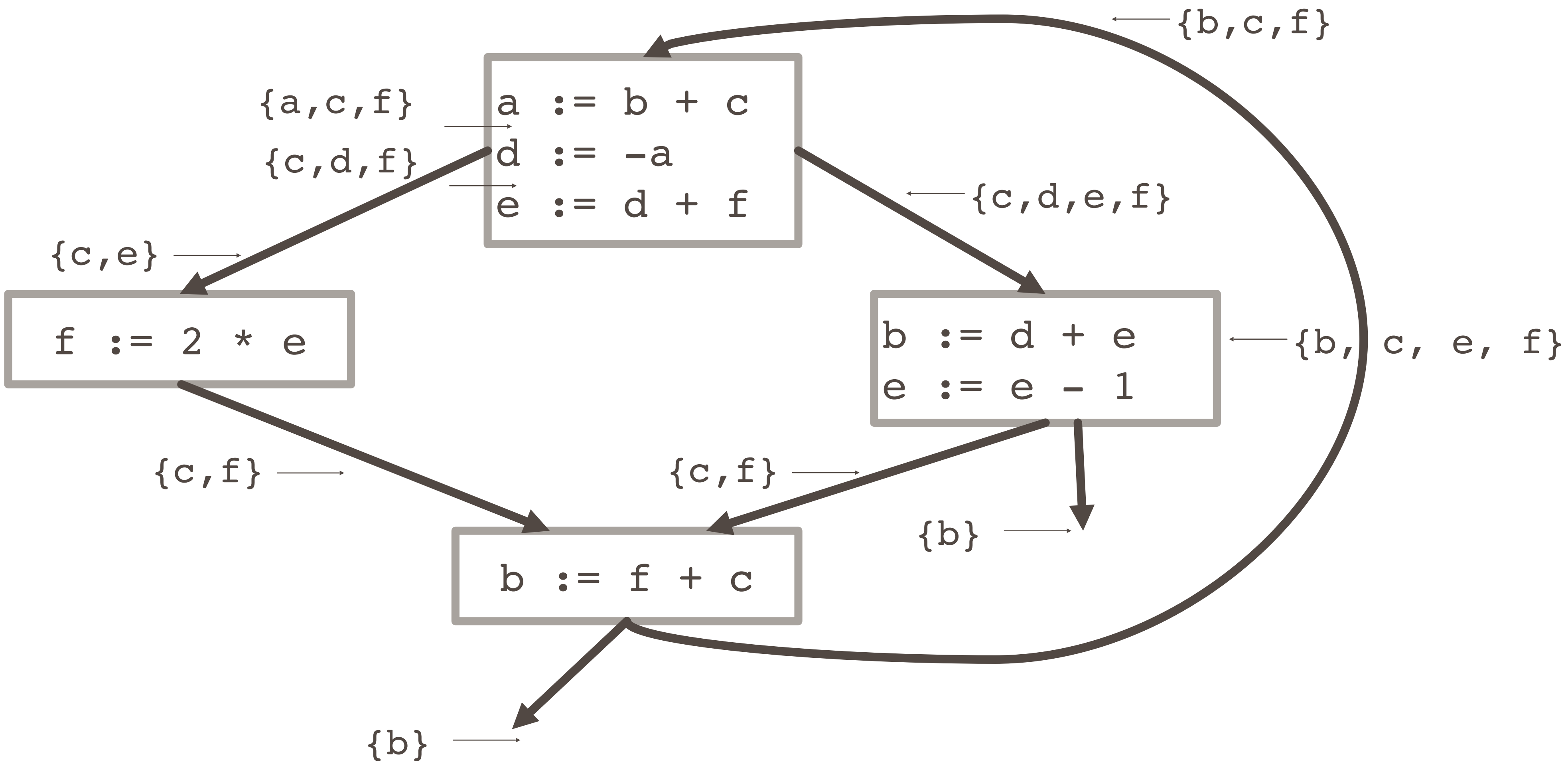
- Temporaries t_1 and t_2 can share the same register if at any point in the program at most one of t_1 or t_2 is live.

i.e.,

- If t_1 and t_2 are live at the same time, they cannot share a register

Algorithm: Part I

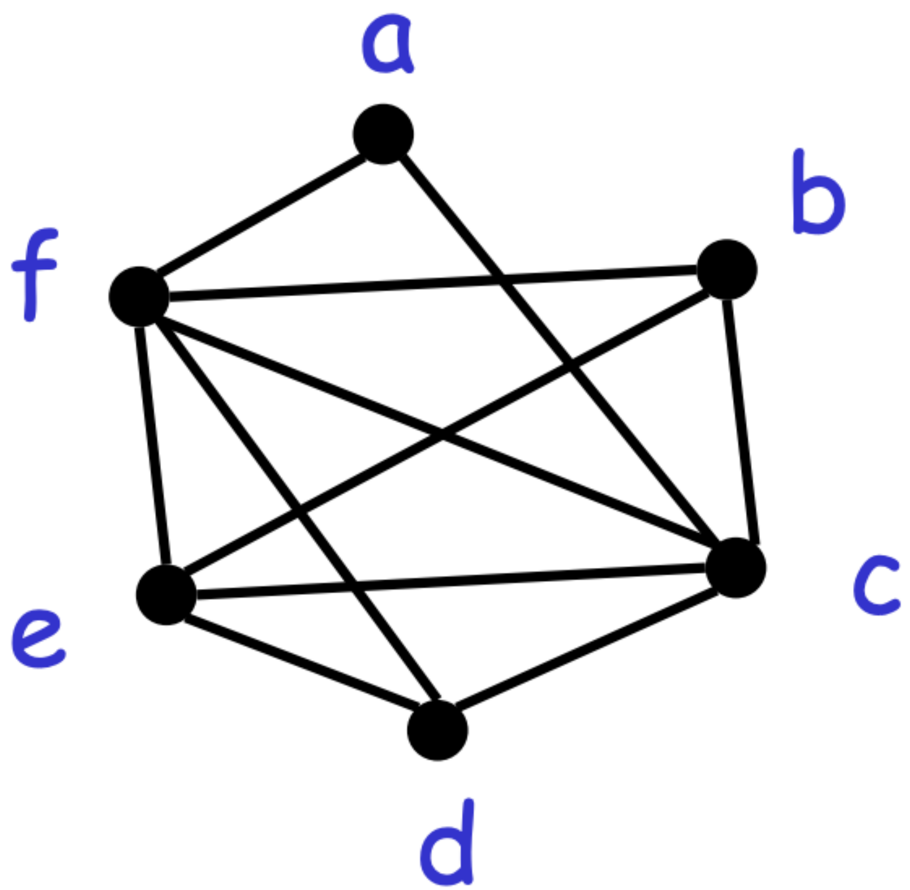
- Compute live variables for each point:



The Register Interference Graph

- Construct an undirected graph
  - A node for each temporary
  - An edge between t_1 and t_2 if they are live simultaneously at some point in the program
- This is the register interference graph (RIG)
  - Two temporaries can be allocated to the same register if there is no edge connecting them

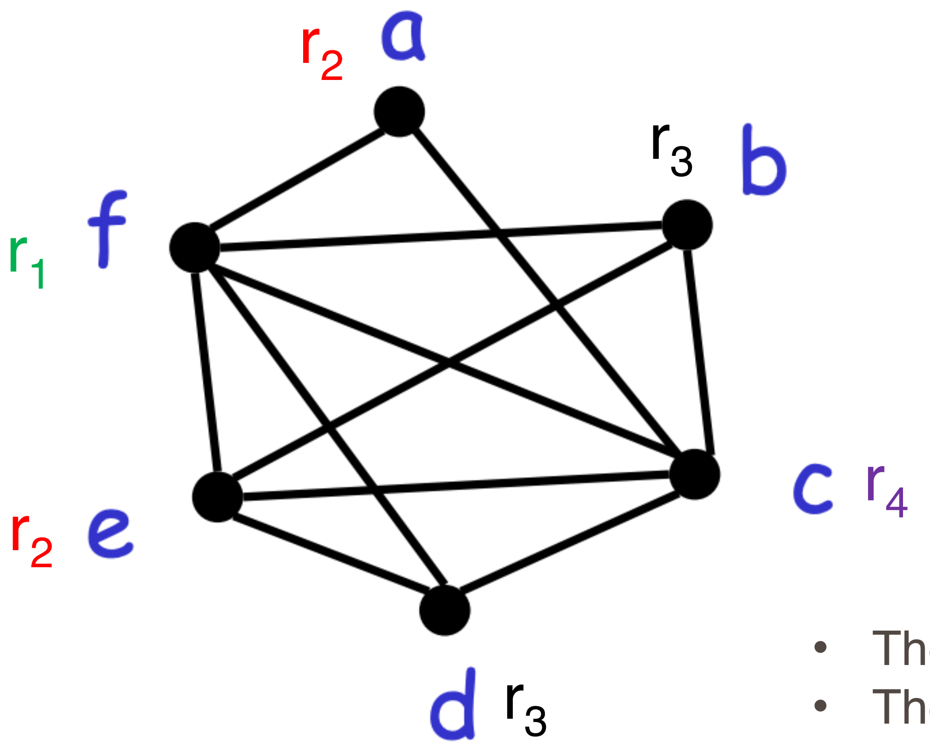
Example



- E.g., b and c cannot be in the same register
- E.g., b and d could be in the same register

Definitions

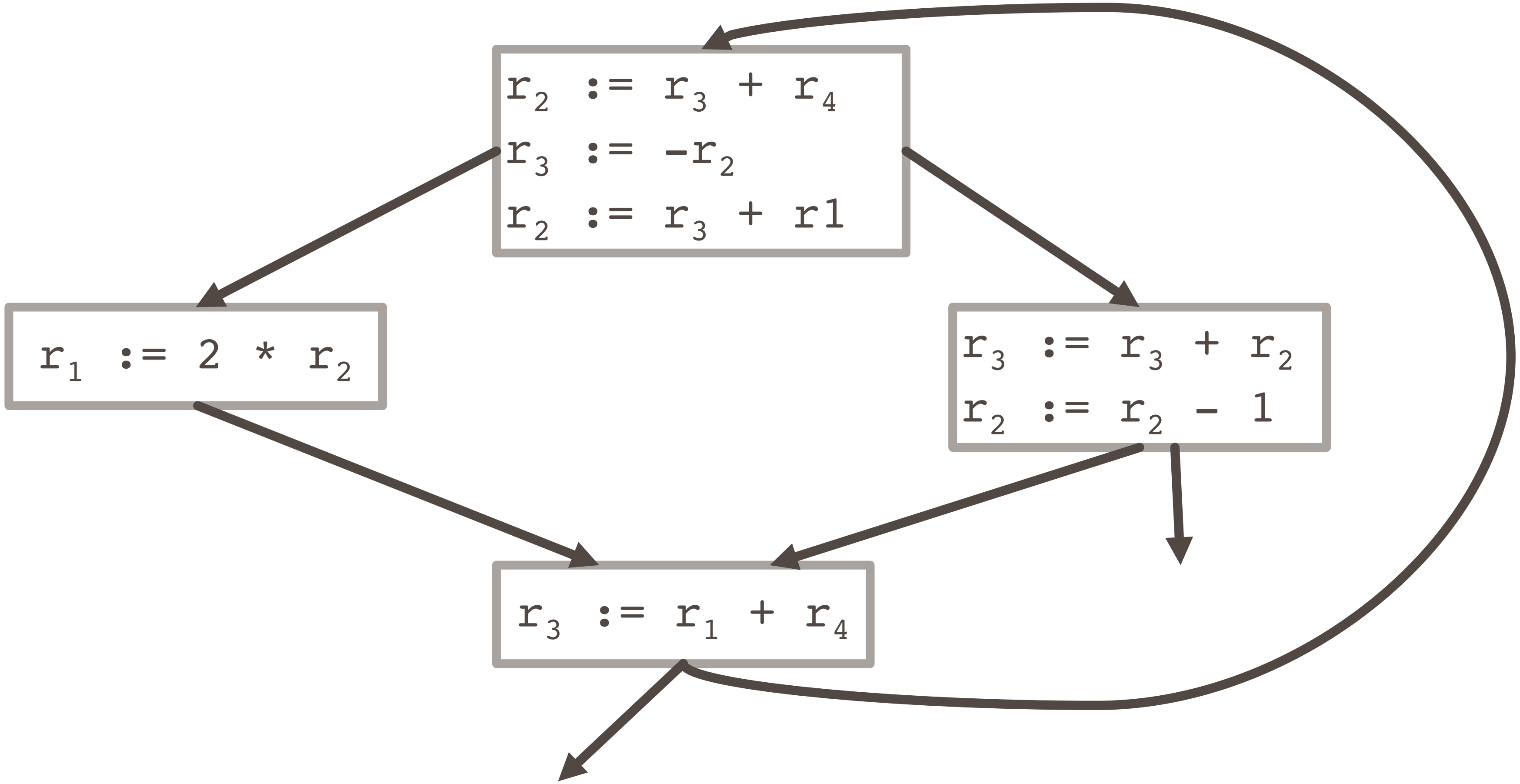
- A coloring of a graph is an assignment of colors to nodes, such that nodes connected by an edge have different colors
- A graph is k-colorable if it has a coloring with k colors



- There is no coloring with less than 4 colors
- There are 4-colorings of this graph

Example After Register Allocation

- Compute live variables for each point:



Computing Graph Colorings

- How do we compute graph colorings?
- It isn't easy:
  - This problem is very hard (NP-hard).
  - No efficient algorithms are known.
    - Solution: use heuristics
  - A coloring might not exist for a given number of registers
    - Solution: later

Graph Coloring Heuristic

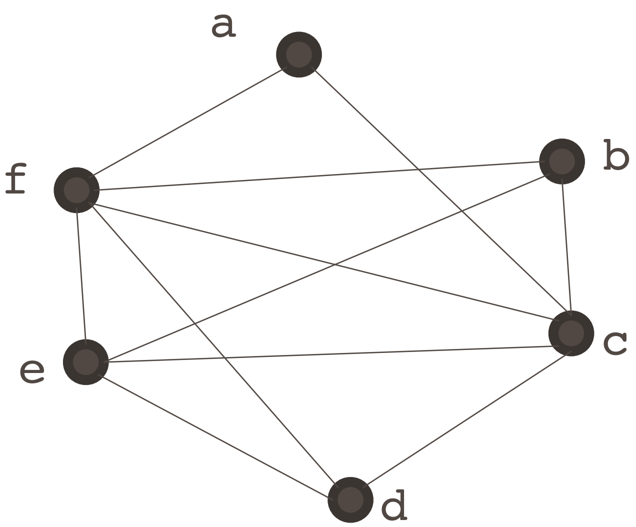
- Observation:
  - Pick a node t with fewer than k neighbors in RIG
  - Eliminate t and its edges from RIG
  - If resulting graph is k-colorable, then so is the original graph
- Why?
  - Let c1,…,cn be the colors assigned to the neighbors of t in the reduced graph
  - Since n < k we can pick some color for t that is different from those of its neighbors

Graph Coloring Heuristic

- The following works well in practice:
  - Pick a node t with fewer than k neighbors
  - Put t on a stack and remove it from the RIG
  - Repeat until the graph has one node
- Assign colors to nodes on the stack
  - Start with the last node added
  - At each step pick a color different from those assigned to already colored neighbors

Graph Coloring Example (1)

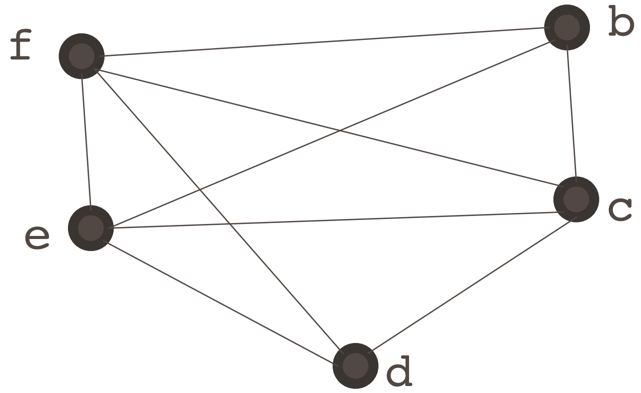
- Start with the RIG and with k = 4:



Stack: {}

- Remove a

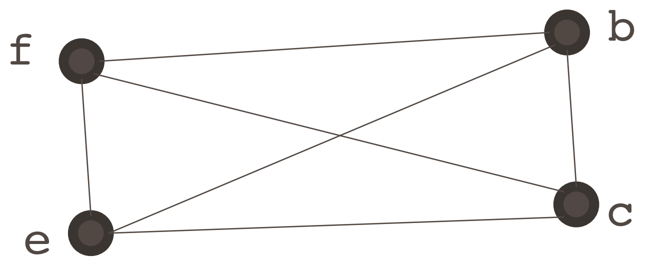
Graph Coloring Example (2)



Stack: {a}

- Remove d

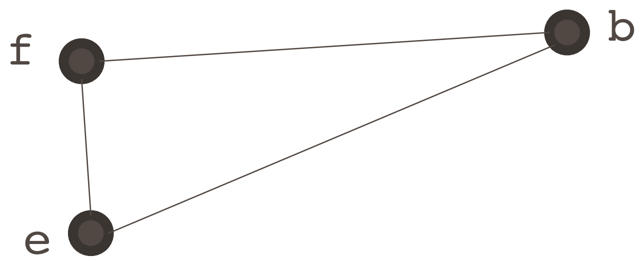
Graph Coloring Example (3)



Stack: {d, a}

- Remove c

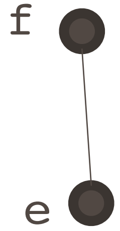
Graph Coloring Example (4)



Stack: {c, d, a}

- Remove b

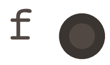
Graph Coloring Example (5)



Stack: {b, c, d, a}

- Remove e

Graph Coloring Example (6)



Stack: {e, b, c, d, a}

- Remove f

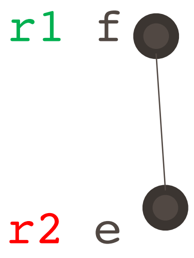
Graph Coloring Example (7)

Stack: {f, e, b, c, d, a}

Graph Coloring Example (8)

Stack: {e, b, c, d, a}

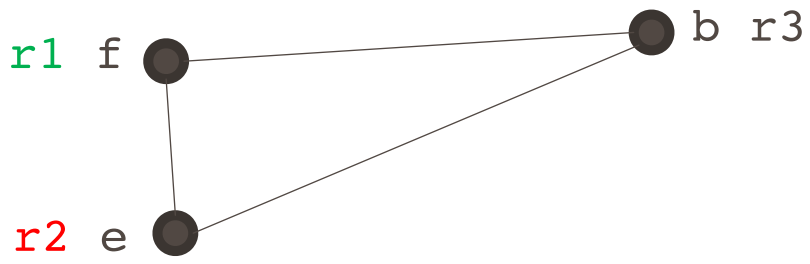
Graph Coloring Example (9)



Stack: {b, c, d, a}

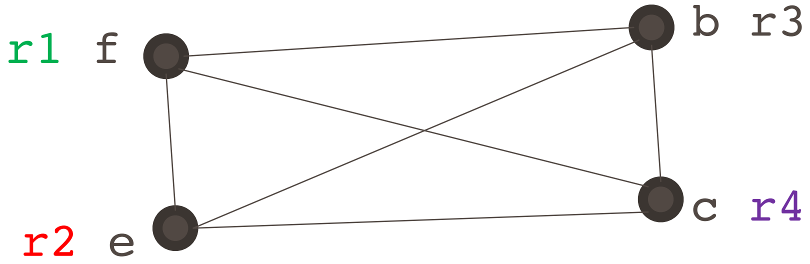
- e must be in a different register from f

Graph Coloring Example (10)



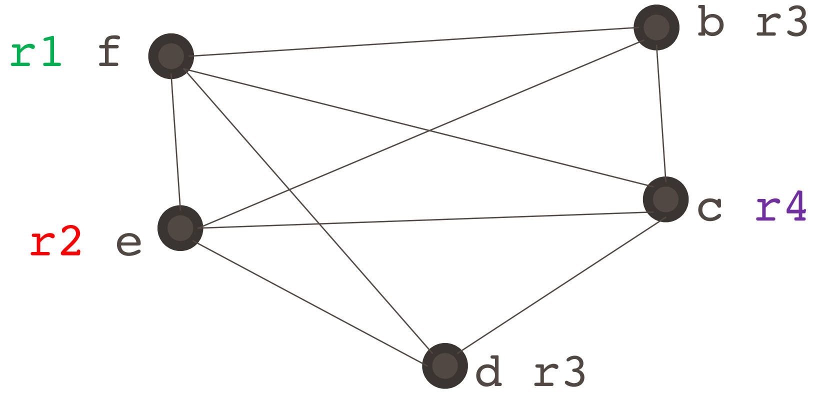
Stack: {c, d, a}

Graph Coloring Example (11)



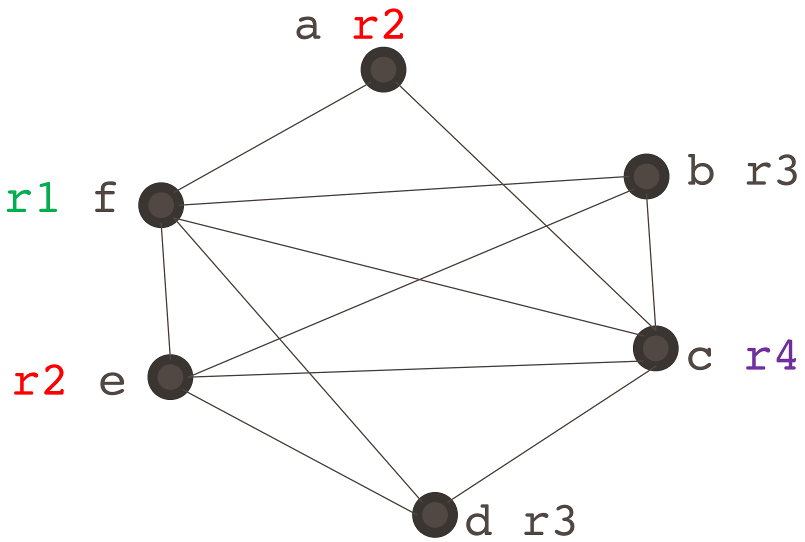
Stack: {d, a}

Graph Coloring Example (12)



Stack: {a}

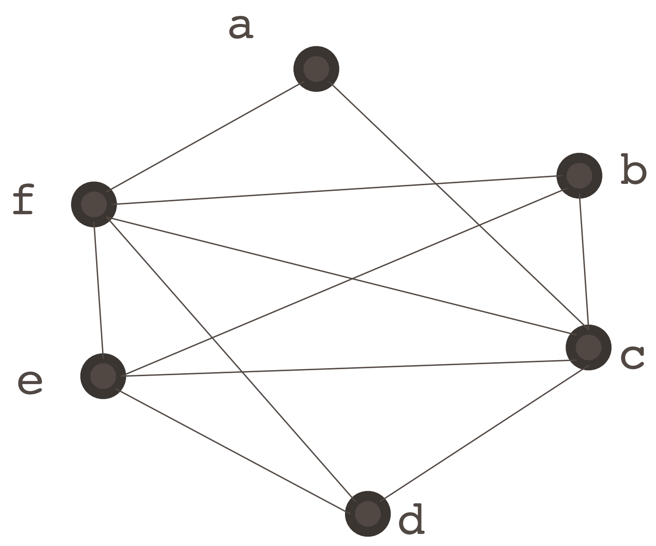
Graph Coloring Example (13)



Stack: {}

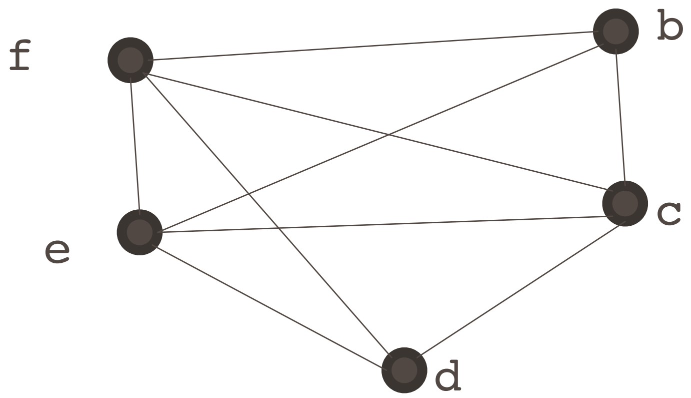
What if the Heuristic Fails?

- What if all nodes have k or more neighbors ?
- Example: Try to find a 3-coloring of the RIG:



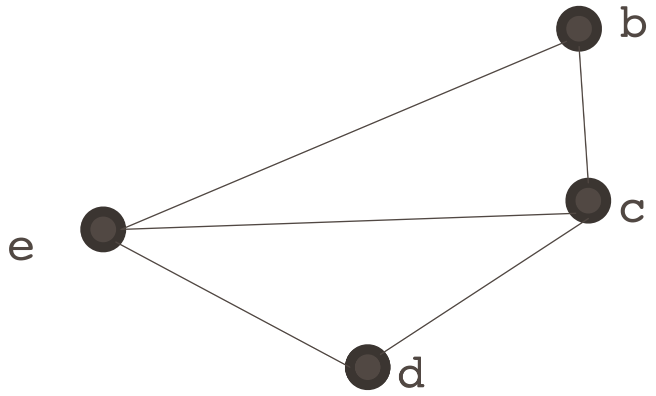
What if the Heuristic Fails?

- Remove a and get stuck (as shown below)
- Pick a node as a candidate for spilling
  - A spilled temporary "lives" in memory
  - Assume that f is picked as a candidate



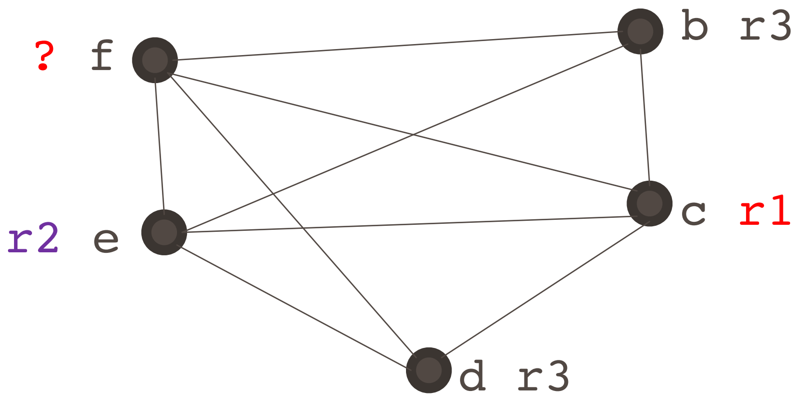
What if the Heuristic Fails?

- Remove f and continue the simplification
  - Simplification now succeeds: b, d, e, c



What if the Heuristic Fails?

- Eventually we must assign a color to f
- We hope that among the 4 neighbors of f we use less than 3 colors ⇒ optimistic coloring



Spilling

- If optimistic coloring fails, we spill f
    - Allocate a memory location for f
        - Typically in the current stack frame
        - Call this address fa
- Before each operation that reads f, insert

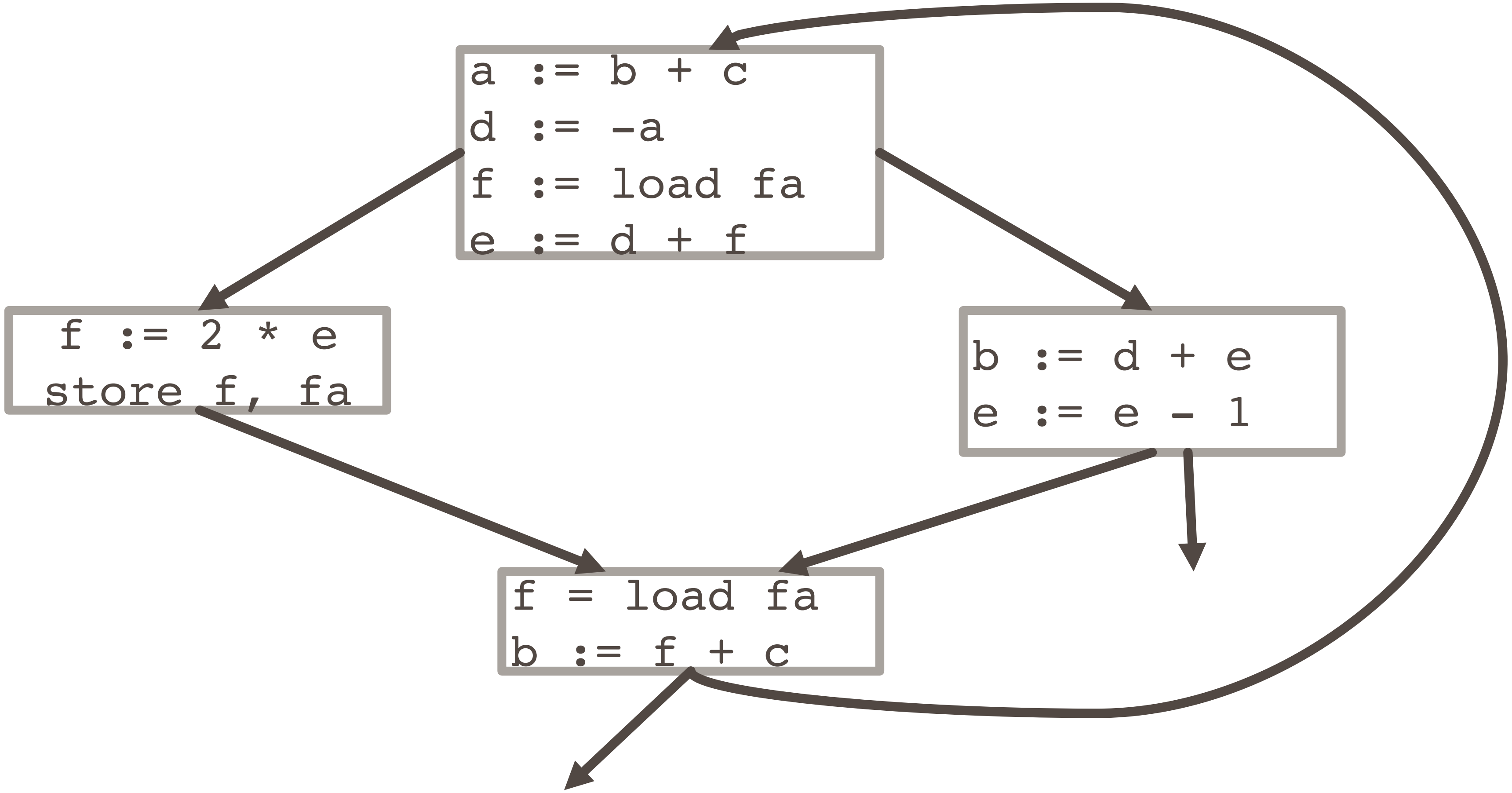
  f := load fa

- After each operation that writes f, insert

  store f, fa

Spilling Example

- This is the new code after spilling f

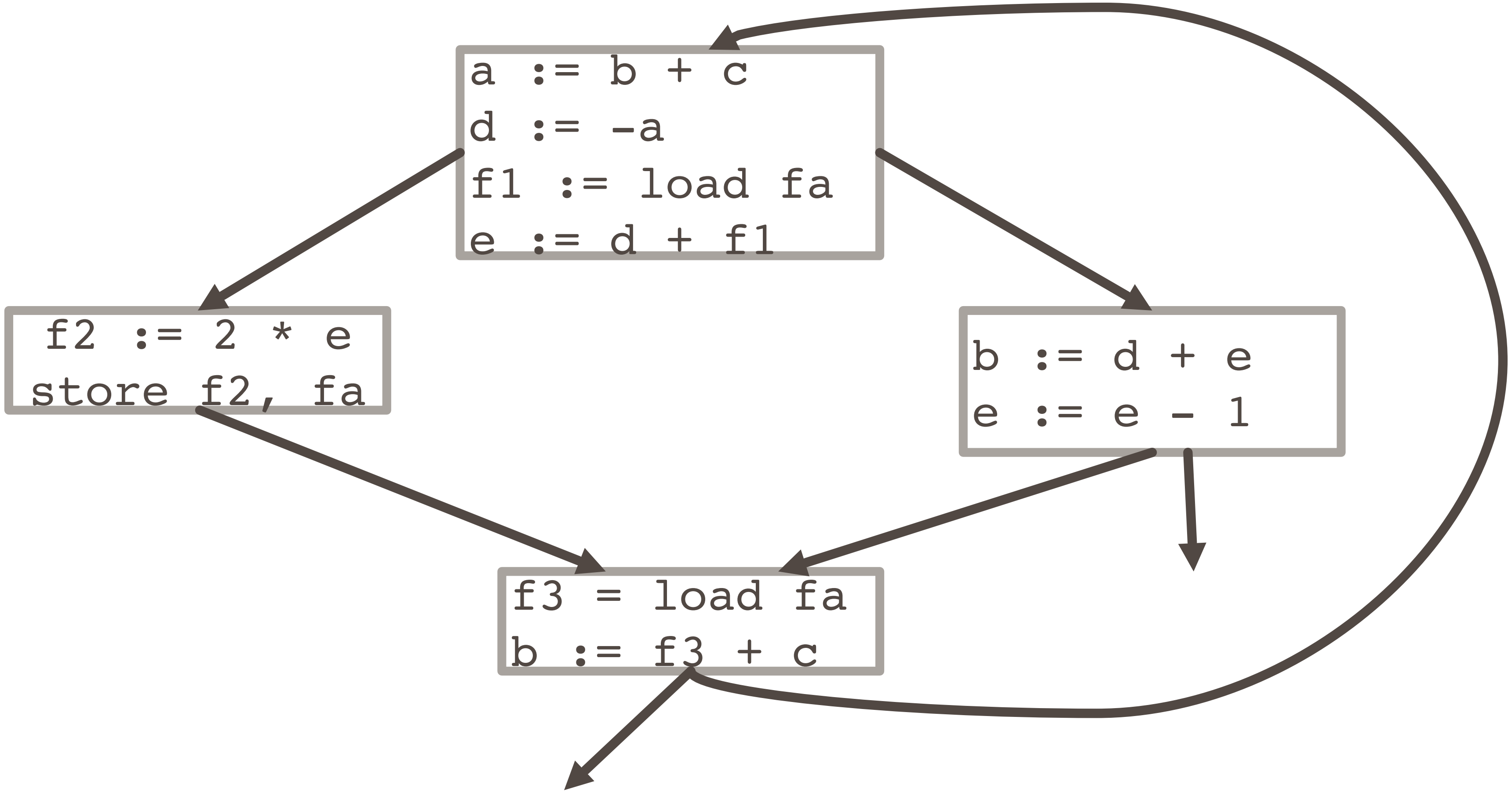


A Problem

- This code reuses the register name f
- Correct, but suboptimal
  - Should use distinct register names whenever possible
  - Allows different uses to have different colors

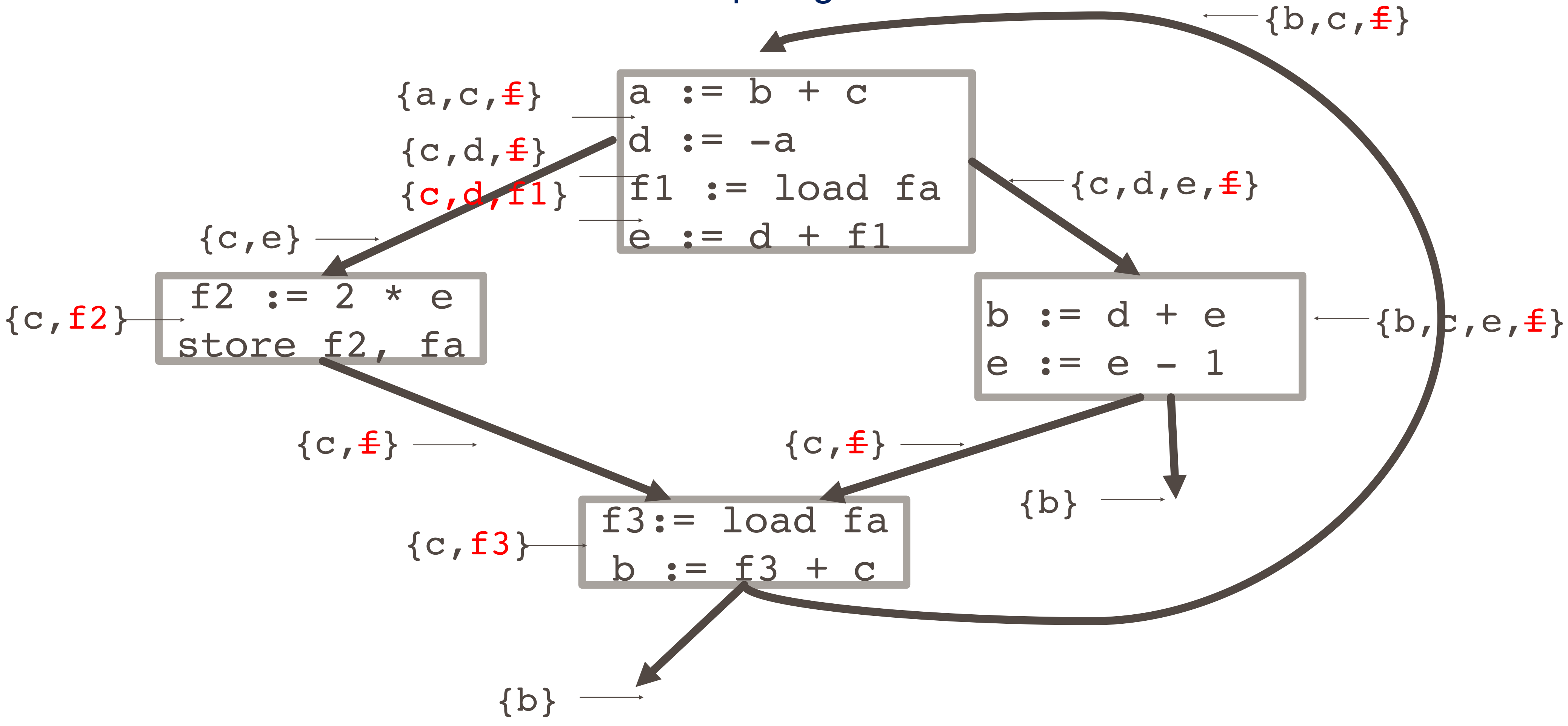
Spilling Example

- This is the new code after spilling f



Recomputing Liveness Information

- The new liveness information after spilling:

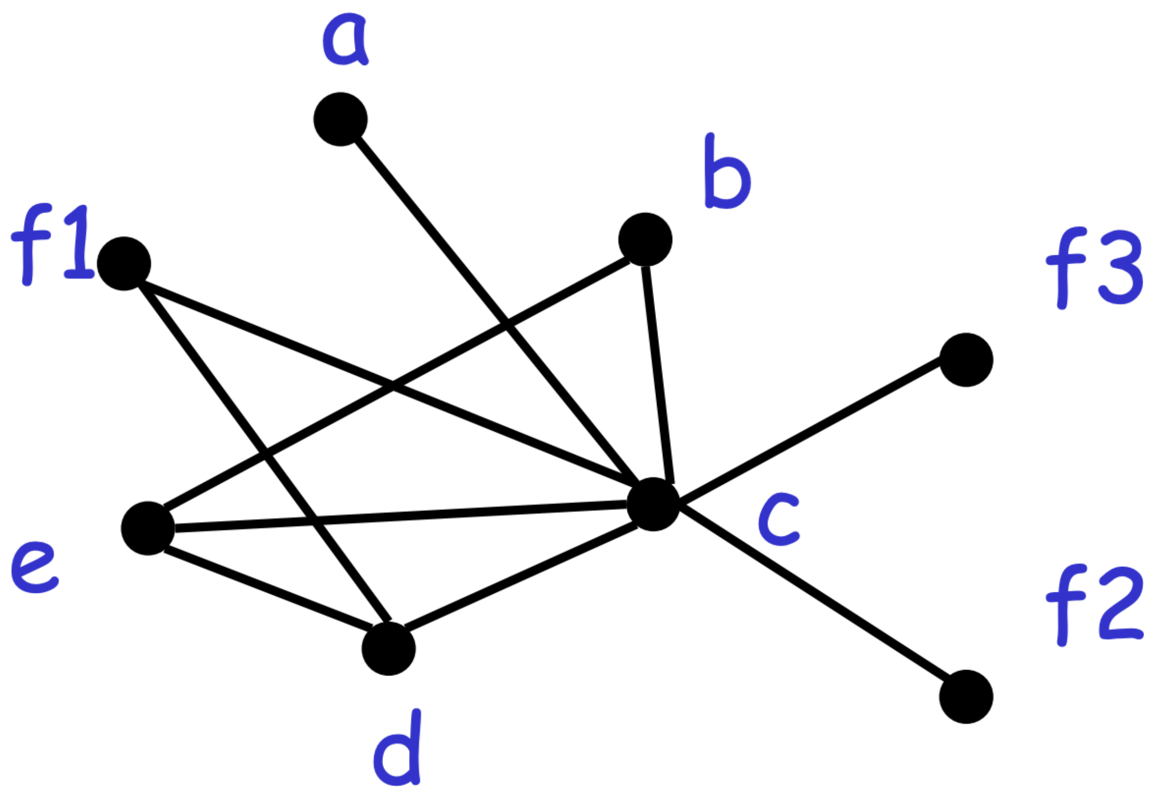


Recomputing Liveness Information

- New liveness information is almost as before
  - Note f has been split into three temporaries
- fi is live only
  - Between a fi := load fa and the next instruction
  - Between a store fi, fa and the preceding instr.
- Spilling reduces the live range of f
  - And thus reduces its interferences
  - Which results in fewer RIG neighbors

Recompute RIG After Spilling

- Some edges of the spilled node are removed
- In our case f still interferes only with c and d
- And the resulting RIG is 3-colorable



Spilling Notes

- Additional spills might be required before a coloring is found
- The tricky part is deciding what to spill
  - But any choice is correct
- Possible heuristics:
  - Spill temporaries with most conflicts
  - Spill temporaries with few definitions and uses
  - Avoid spilling in inner loops

Caches

- Compilers are very good at managing registers
  - Much better than a programmer could be
- Compilers are not good at managing caches
  - This problem is still left to programmers
  - It is still an open question how much a compiler can do to improve cache performance
- Compilers can, and a few do, perform some cache optimizations

Cache Optimization

- Consider the loop

```
for(j := 1; j < 10; j++)
 for(i=1; i<1000;i++)
   a[i] *= b[i]
```

- This program has terrible cache performance
  - Why?

Cache Optimization

- Consider the program

```
for(i=1; i<1000; i++)
  for(j := 1; j < 10; j++)
     a[i] *= b[i]
```

  - Computes the same thing
  - But with much better cache behavior
  - Might actually be more than 10x faster
- A compiler can perform this optimization
  - called loop interchange

Conclusions

- Register allocation is a “must have” in compilers:
  - Because intermediate code uses too many temporaries
  - Because it makes a big difference in performance
- Register allocation is more complicated for CISC machines