Control Flow Analysis

PLT (Fall 2019)

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Representing Control Flow

High-level representation

- Control flow is implicit in an AST

Low-level representation:

- Use a **Control-flow graph (CFG)**
  - Nodes represent statements (low-level linear IR)
  - Edges represent explicit flow of control

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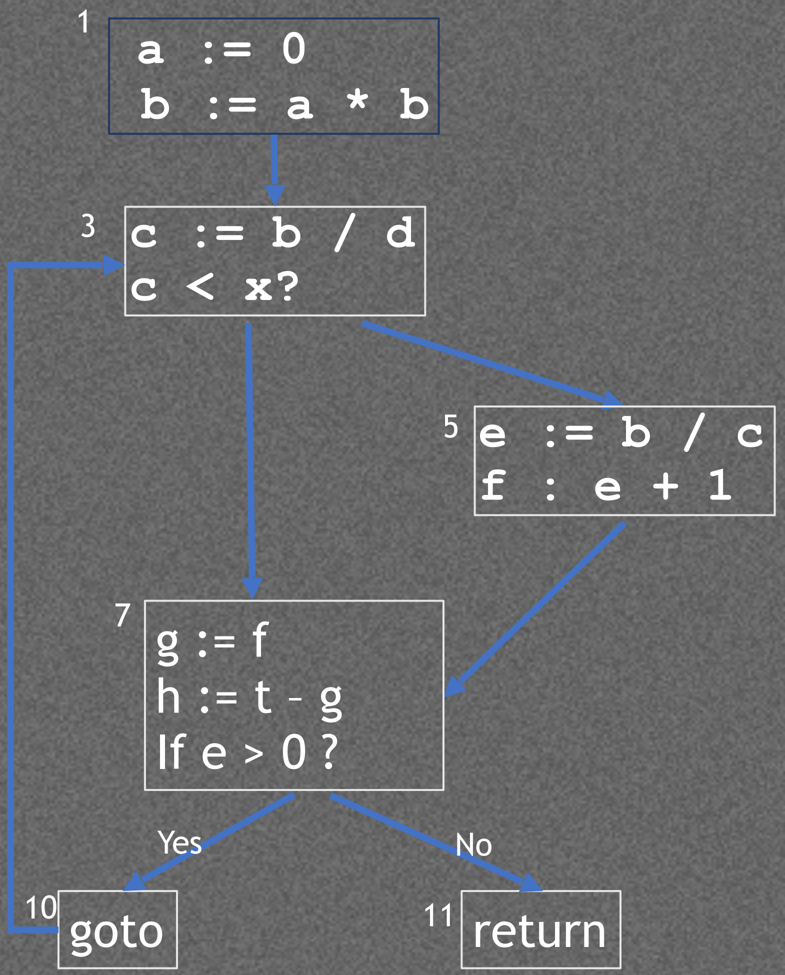
What Is Control-Flow Analysis?

```
1          a := 0
2          b := a * b
3   L1: c := b/d
4          if c < x goto L2
5          e := b / c
6          f := e + 1
7   L2: g := f
8          h := t - g
9          if e > 0 goto L3
10  goto L1
11  L3: return
```



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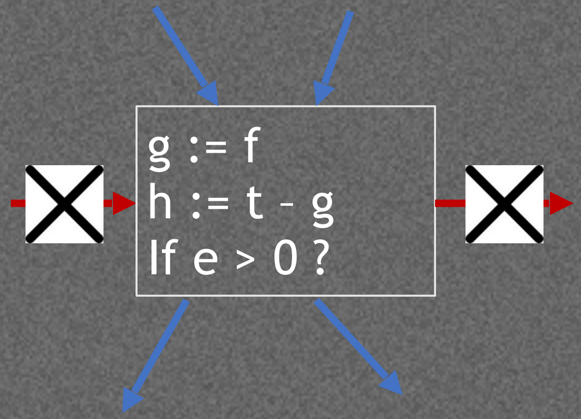
Basic Blocks

- A **basic block** is a sequence of straight line code that can be entered only at the beginning and exited only at the end



```
g := f
h := t - g
If e > 0 ?
```

Building basic blocks

– Identify **leaders**

–The first instruction in a procedure, or

–The target of any branch, or

–An instruction immediately following a branch (implicit target)

– Gobble all subsequent instructions until the next leader

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Basic Block Example

```
1          a := 0
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```

Leaders?

- {1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11}

Blocks?

- {1, 2}
- {3, 4}
- {5, 6}
- {7, 8, 9}
- {10}
- {11}

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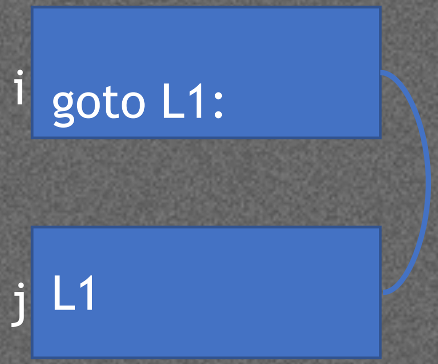
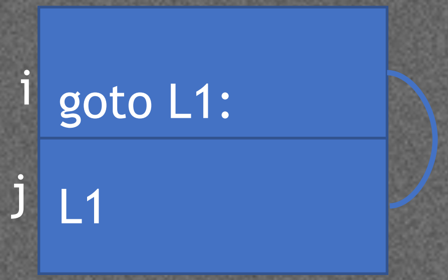
Building a CFG From Basic Block

Construction

- Each CFG node represents a basic block
- There is an edge from node i to j if
  - Last statement of block i branches to the first statement of j, or
  - Block i does **not** end with an unconditional branch and is immediately followed in program order by block j (fall through)





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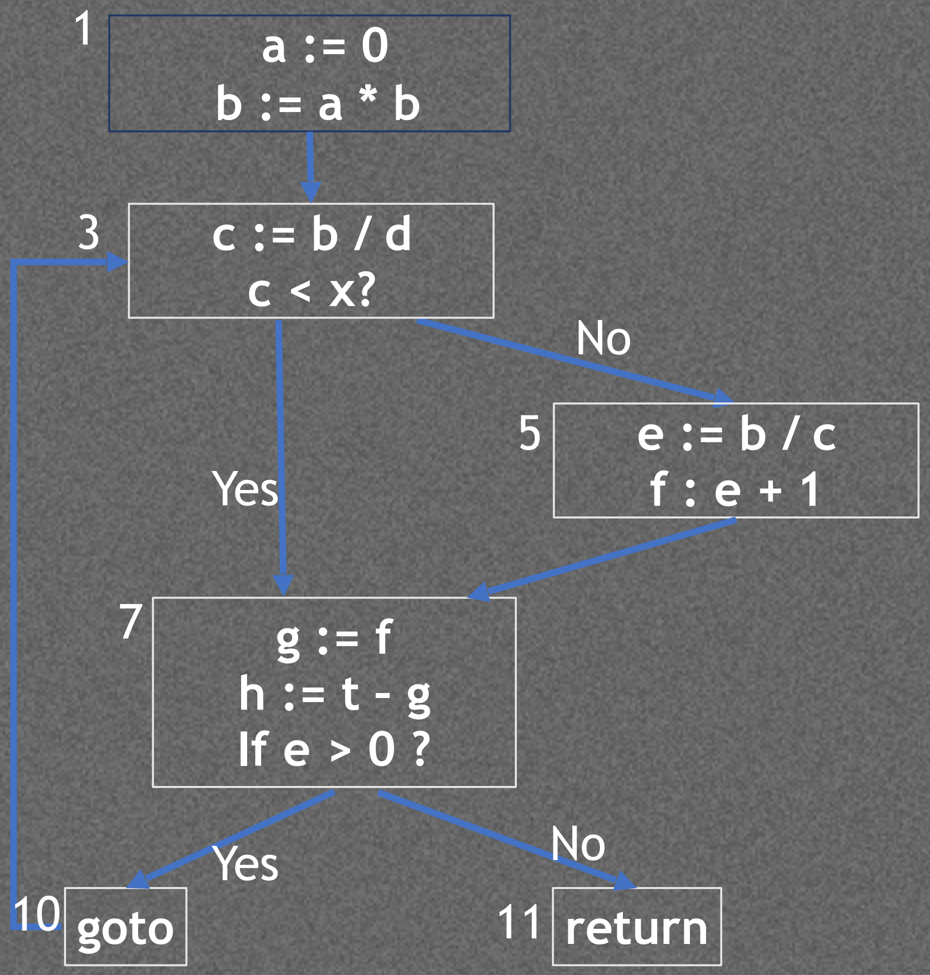

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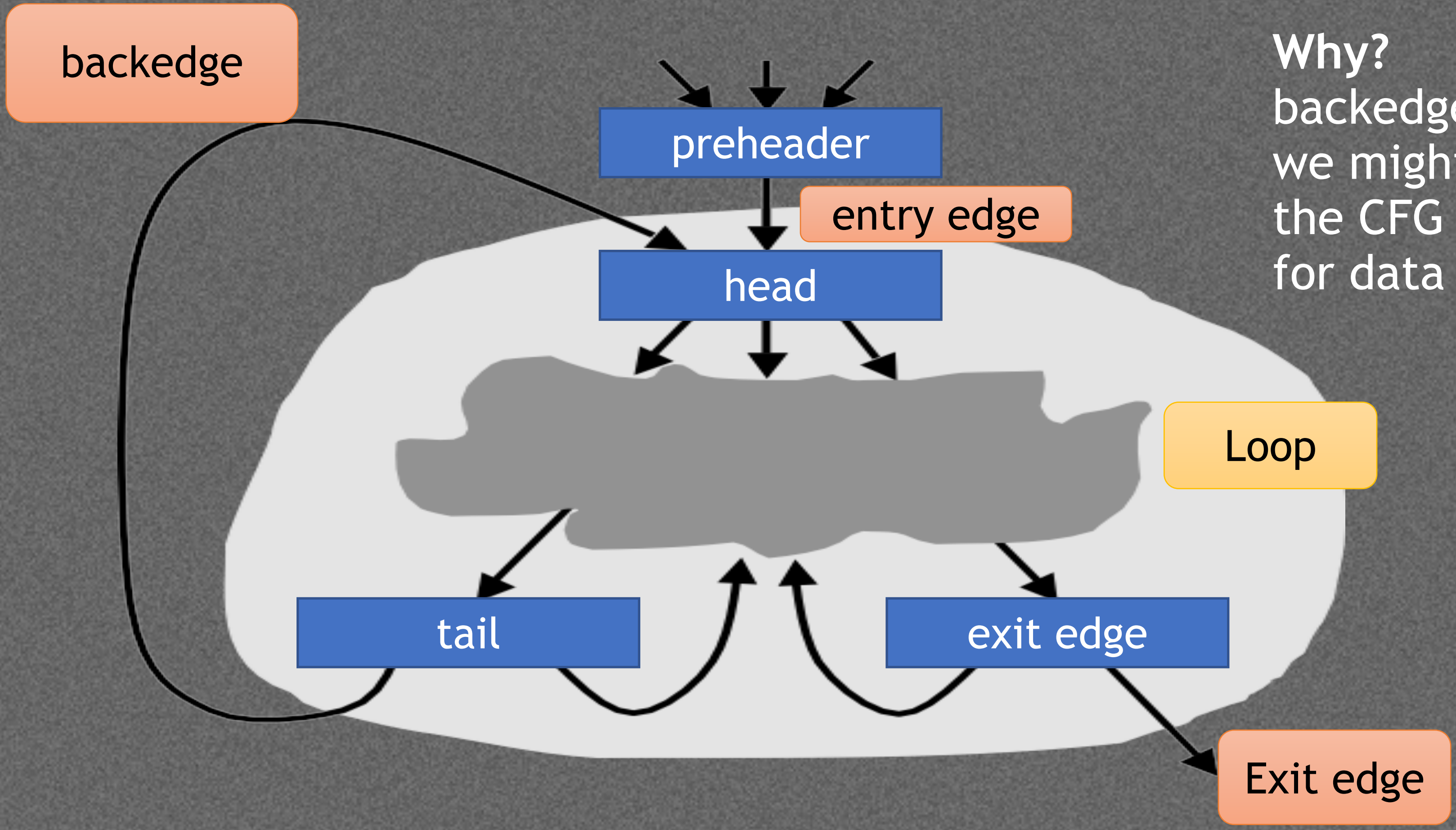
Looping



Why?
backedges indicate that we might need to traverse the CFG more than once for data flow analysis

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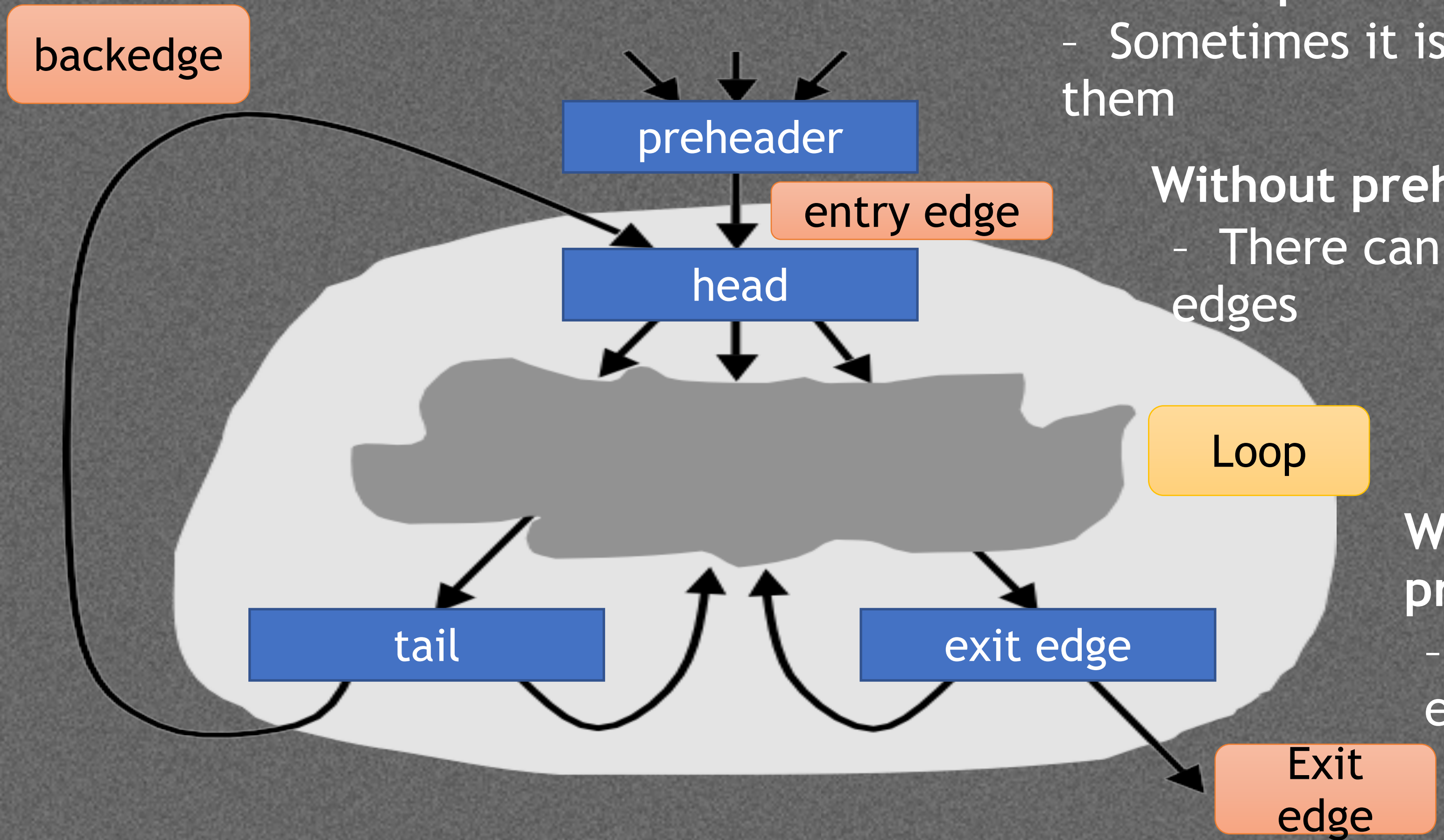
Looping



Not all loops have preheaders

- Sometimes it is useful to create them

Without preheader node

- There can be multiple entry edges

With single preheader node

- There is only one entry edge

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Looping Terminology

Loop: Strongly connected component of CFG

Loop entry edge: Source not in loop & target in loop

Loop exit edge: Source in loop & target not in loop

Loop header node: Target of loop entry edge

Natural loop: Loop with only a single loop header

Back edge: Target is loop header & source is in the loop

Loop tail node: Source of back edge

Looping Terminology

Loop preheader node: Single node that’s source of the loop entry edge

Nested loop: Loop whose header is inside another loop

Reducible flow graph: CFG whose loops are all natural loops

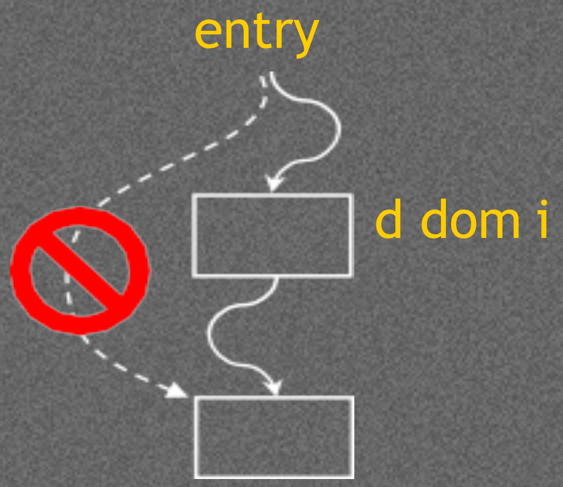
Identifying Loops

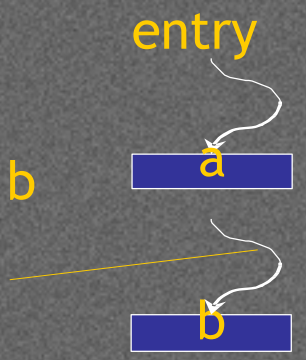
- Why is it important?
  - Most execution time spent in loops, so optimizing loops will often give most benefit

- Many approaches
  - Interval analysis
    - Exploit the natural hierarchical structure of programs
    - Decompose the program into nested regions called intervals
  - Structural analysis: a generalization of interval analysis
  - Identify **dominators** to discover loops

Dominators

- d **dom** i if all paths from entry to node i include d
- Strict Dominator (d sdom i)
  - If d dom i, but d != i
- Immediate dominator (a idom b)
  - a sdom b and there does not exist any node c such that a != c, c != b, a dom c, c dom b
- Post dominator (p pdom i)
  - If every possible path from i to exit includes p





a idom b

not $ c, a sdom c and c sdom b

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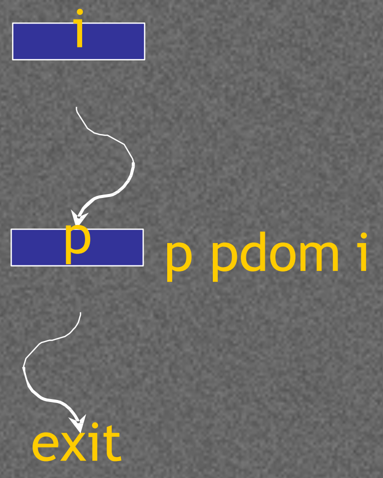
Dominators

- **Post dominators (p pdom i)**

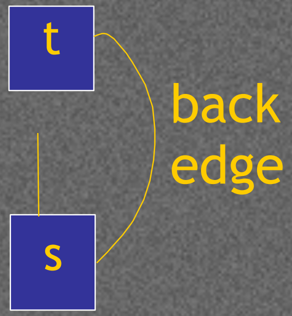
if every possible path from i to exit includes p
(p dom i in the flow graph whose arcs are
reversed and entry and exit are interchanged)



Identifying Natural Loops and Dominators

- Back Edge
  - A **back edge** of a natural loop is one whose target of the back edge dominates its source

- Natural Loop
  - The **natural loop** of a back edge (m→n), where n dominates m, is the set of nodes x such that n dominates x and there is a path from x to m not containing n



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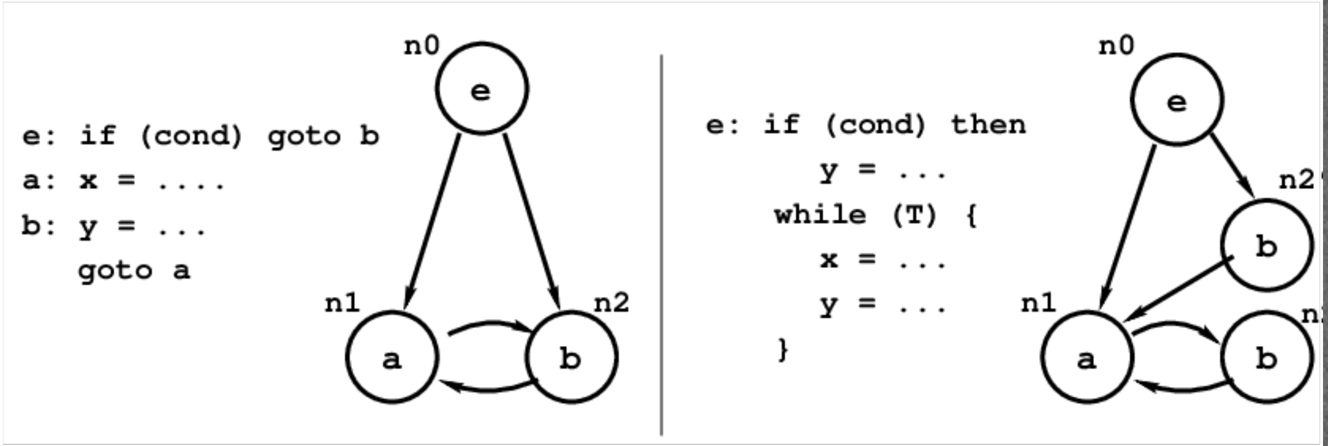
Reducibility

- A CFG is **reducible** (well-structured) if we can partition its edges into two disjoint sets, the **forward edges** and the **back** edges, such that
  - The forward edges form an acyclic graph in which every node can be reached from the entry node
  - The back edges consist only of edges whose targets dominate their sources
  - Non-natural loops ⇔ irreducibility



```
e: if (cond) goto b
a: x = ....
b: y = ...
   goto a
```

```
e: if (cond) then
      y = ...
   while (T) {
      x = ...
      y = ...
   }
```

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Reducibility

- Structured control-flow constructs give rise to reducible CFGs

- Value of reducibility:
  - –Dominance useful in identifying loops
  - –Simplifies code transformations (every loop has a single header)
  - –Permits interval analysis

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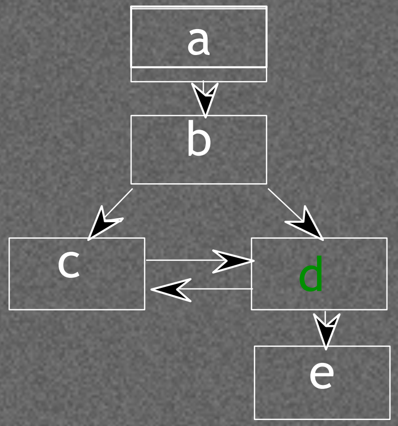
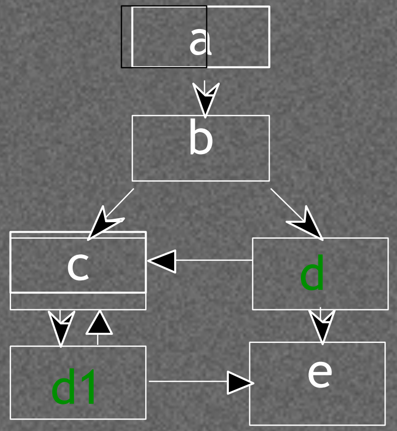
Handling Irreducible CFG’s

- Node splitting
  - Can turn irreducible CFGs into reducible CFGs





General idea

- Reduce graph (iteratively remove self edges, merge nodes with single pred)
- More than one node => irreducible
  - Split any multi-parent node and start over

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Why go through all this trouble?

–We can work on the binary code

–Most modern languages still provide a **goto** statement

–Languages typically provide multiple types of loops. This analysis lets us treat them all uniformly

–We may want a compiler with multiple front ends for multiple languages; rather than translating each language to a CFG, translate each language to a canonical IR and then to a CFG

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