CPU Scheduling – Outline

- What is scheduling in the OS?
- What are common scheduling criteria?
- How to evaluate scheduling algorithms?
- What are common scheduling algorithms?
- How is thread scheduling different from process scheduling?
- What are the issues in multiple-processor scheduling?
- Operating systems case studies.

Basic Concepts

- Multiprogramming
  - most processes alternate between CPU bursts and I/O bursts
  - CPU free and idle during I/O burst
  - schedule another process on the CPU
  - maximizes CPU utilization

- CPU bound process
  - spends most of its time in the CPU
  - at least a few long CPU bursts

- I/O bound process
  - spends most its time performing I/O
  - several short CPU bursts

CPU Scheduler

- Responsible for the selection of the next running process
  - part of the OS dispatcher
  - selects from among the processes in memory that are ready to execute
  - based on a particular strategy

- When does CPU scheduling happen?
  - process switches from running to waiting state
  - process switches from running to ready state
  - process switches from waiting to ready state
  - process terminates

- Scheduling under 1 and 4 is nonpreemptive
- All other scheduling is preemptive

Preemptive Vs. Non-preemptive CPU Scheduling

- Non-preemptive scheduling
  - process voluntarily releases the CPU (conditions 1 and 4)
  - easy, requires no special hardware
  - poor response time for interactive and real-time systems

- Preemptive scheduling
  - OS can force a running process involuntarily relinquish the CPU
    - arrival of a higher priority process
    - running process exceeds its time-slot
  - may require special hardware, eg., timer
  - may require synchronization mechanisms to maintain data consistency
  - complicates design of the kernel
  - favored by most OSes
**Dispatcher**

- Scheduler is a part of the dispatcher module in the OS
- Functions of the dispatcher
  - get the new process from the scheduler
  - switch out the context of the current process
  - give CPU control to the new process
  - jump to the proper location in the new program to restart that program
- Time taken by the dispatcher to stop one process and start another running is called the *dispatch latency*

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**Scheduling Queues**

- Job queue: consists of all processes
  - all jobs (processes), once submitted, are in the job queue
  - scheduled by the long-term scheduler
- Ready queue: consists of processes in memory
  - processes ready and waiting for execution
  - scheduled by the short-term or CPU scheduler
- Device queue: processes waiting for a device
  - multiple processes can be blocked for the same device
  - I/O completion moves process back to ready queue

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**Performance Metrics for CPU Scheduling**

- **CPU utilization**: percentage of time that the CPU is busy
- **Throughput**: number of processes that complete their execution per time unit
- **Turnaround time**: amount of time to execute a particular process (submission time to completion time)
- **Waiting time**: amount of time a process has been waiting in the ready queue
- **Response time**: amount of time it takes from when a request was submitted until the first response is produced

**Scheduling goals**

- maximize CPU utilization and throughput
- minimize turnaround time, waiting time and response time
- be fair to all processes and all users
Method for Evaluating CPU Scheduling Algorithms

- **Evaluation criteria**
  - define relative importance of the performance metrics
  - include other system-specific measures

- **Deterministic modeling**
  - takes a particular predetermined *workload* and defines the performance of each algorithm for that workload
  - simple and fast, gives exact numbers
  - difficult to generalize results
  - can recognize algorithm performance trends over several inputs
  - used for explaining scheduling algorithms
  - *used in the rest of this chapter!*

Workload Models and Gantt Charts

- **Workload model:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Arrival Time</th>
<th>Burst Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Gantt charts:**
  - bar chart to illustrate a particular schedule
  - figure shows batch schedule

Deterministic Modeling Example

- Suppose we have processes A, B, and C, submitted at time 0.
- We want to know the response time, waiting time, and turnaround time of process A

  turnaround time  
  wait time  
  response time = 0

  Time

  A B C A B C A C A C

Deterministic Modeling Example

- Suppose we have processes A, B, and C, submitted at time 0.
- We want to know the response time, waiting time, and turnaround time of process B.

  turnaround time  
  wait time  
  response time

  Time

  A B C A B C A C A C
Deterministic Modeling Example

- Suppose we have processes A, B, and C, submitted at time 0.
- We want to know the response time, waiting time, and turnaround time of process C.

Method for Evaluating CPU Scheduling Algorithms (2)

- Queueing models
  - analytically model the queue behavior (under some assumptions)
  - involves a lot of complicated math
  - can only handle a limited number of distributions and algorithms
  - may not be very accurate because of unrealistic assumptions

- Simulations
  - get a workload information from a system
  - simulate the scheduling algorithm
  - compute the performance metrics
  - time and space intensive
  - is practically the best evaluation method

Simulation Illustration

Scheduling Algorithms

- First Come, First Served (FCFS)
- Shortest Job First (SJF)
- Priority Based
- Round Robin (RR)
- Multilevel Queue Scheduling
- Multilevel Feedback Queue Scheduling
**First Come, First Served Scheduling**

- Assigns the CPU based on the order of the requests.
- Implemented using a FIFO queue.
- No preemption

**Advantages**
- straightforward, simple to write and understand

**Disadvantages**
- average waiting time may be too long
  - huge variation based on when processes arrive
- cannot balance CPU-bound and I/O-bound processes
  - *convoy effect*, short process behind long process
- cannot be used for time-sharing systems

---

**FCFS Scheduling Example**

Suppose that the processes arrive in the order: $P_1, P_2, P_3$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Arrival Time</th>
<th>Burst Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Waiting time for $P_1 = 0$; $P_2 = 24$; $P_3 = 27$

Average waiting time: $(0 + 24 + 27)/3 = 17$

---

**Shortest Job First (SJF) Scheduling**

- Order each process based on the length of its next CPU burst
- Allocate CPU to the process from the front of the list
  - shortest next CPU burst

**Advantages**
- SJF is optimal
  - achieves minimum average waiting time for a given set of processes

**Disadvantages**
- difficult to know the length of the next CPU request
  - can ask the user, who may not know any better!
- model-based prediction
  - can lead to process *starvation*
Example of SJF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Arrival Time</th>
<th>Burst Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- SJF scheduling chart

Average waiting time = (3 + 16 + 9 + 0) / 4 = 7

Estimate Length of the Next CPU Burst

- Can only estimate the length
  - next CPU burst similar to previous CPU bursts?
  - how relevant is the history of previous CPU bursts?
- Calculated as an exponential average of the previous CPU bursts for the process
- Formula:

\[ \tau_{n+1} = \alpha t_n + (1 - \alpha) \tau_n \]

Estimate Length of the Next CPU Burst (2)

- \( \alpha = 0 \)
  - \( \tau_{n+1} = \tau_n \)
  - Recent history does not count
- \( \alpha = 1 \)
  - \( \tau_{n+1} = \alpha t_n \)
  - Only the actual last CPU burst counts
- If we expand the formula, we get:

\[
\begin{align*}
\tau_{n+1} &= \alpha t_n + (1 - \alpha) \alpha t_{n-1} + \\
&+ (1 - \alpha) \alpha t_{n-2} + \\
&+ \cdots \\
&+ (1 - \alpha)^{n+1} \tau_0
\end{align*}
\]

- Since both \( \alpha \) and \((1 - \alpha)\) are less than or equal to 1, each successive term has less weight than its predecessor
Preemptive SJF Scheduling

- New shorter process can preempt longer current running process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Arrival Time</th>
<th>Burst Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Shortest Remaining Time First scheduling chart:

Priority Scheduling

- A priority number associated with each process
- CPU allocated to the process with the highest priority
  - equal priority processes scheduled in FCFS order
- Internally determined priorities
  - time limit, memory requirements, etc
  - SJF uses next CPU burst for its priority (how?)
- Externally specified priorities
  - process importance, user-level, etc
- Can be preemptive or non-preemptive
- Text uses low numbers for high priorities

Priority Scheduling (2)

- Advantages
  - priorities can be made as general as needed
- Disadvantage
  - low priority process may never execute (indefinite blocking or starvation)
- Aging
  - technique to prevent starvation
  - increase priority of processes with time

Round Robin Scheduling (RR)

- Round robin algorithm
  - arrange jobs in FCFS order
  - allocate CPU to the first job in the queue for one time-slice
  - preempt job, add it to the end of the queue
  - allocate CPU to the next job and continue...
- One time slice is called a time quantum
- Is by definition preemptive
  - can be considered as FCFS with preemption
- Advantages
  - simple, avoids starvation
- Disadvantages
  - may involve a large context switch overhead
  - higher average waiting time than SJF
  - an I/O bound process on a heavily loaded system will run slower
Example of RR with Time Quantum = 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Burst Times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Gantt scheduling chart is:

```
0 4 7 10 14 18 22 26 30
P1 P2 P3 P1 P1 P1 P1
```

Average waiting time = 5.66

Round Robin Scheduling (2)

- Performance
  - Depends on the length of the time quantum
  - Large time quantum → FCFS like behavior
  - Small time quantum → large context switch overhead

- Generally,
  - Time quanta range from 10 – 100 milliseconds
  - Context switch time is less than 10 microseconds

- RR has larger waiting time, but provides better response time for interactive systems

- Turnaround time depends on the size of the time quantum

Turnaround Time Varies With The Time Quantum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>process</th>
<th>time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multilevel Queue

- Ready queue is partitioned into separate queues:
  - Foreground (interactive)
  - Background (batch)

- Each queue has its own scheduling algorithm
  - Foreground – RR
  - Background – FCFS

- Scheduling must be done between the queues
  - Fixed priority scheduling; (i.e., serve all from foreground then from background). Possibility of starvation.
  - Time slice – each queue gets a certain amount of CPU time which it can schedule amongst its processes; i.e., 80% to foreground in RR, 20% to background in FCFS
**Multilevel Queue Scheduling**

- **Used when**
  - processes can be easily classified into groups
  - each group has a different scheduling requirement

- **Algorithm**
  - partition ready queue into multiple queues
  - determine some scheduling algorithm for each processes in each queue
    - FCFS, SJF, RR, etc.
  - determine inter-queue scheduling
    - fixed priority, fixed CPU utilization per queue, etc.
  - permanently assign a process to a particular queue

---

**Multilevel Queue Scheduling Example**

- **Example:** *foreground* Vs. *background* processes
  - foreground are interactive, background are batch processes
  - foreground have priority over background
  - intra-queue scheduling
    - foreground – response time, background – low overhead, no starvation
    - foreground – RR, background – FCFS
  - scheduling between the queues
    - fixed priority scheduling; foreground – higher priority
    - time slice; 80% to foreground in RR, 20% to background in FCFS

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**Multilevel Queue Scheduling Example (2)**

**Multilevel Feedback Queue Scheduling**

- Allows process to move between queues
  - used to dynamically sort process based on their typical CPU bursts

- **Algorithm**
  - multiple queues with different fixed priorities
  - round robin at each priority level
  - run highest priority jobs first, once those finish, run next highest priority, etc.
  - jobs start in the highest priority queue
  - if time slice expires, drop the job by one level
  - if time slice does not expire, push the job up by one level
Example of Multilevel Feedback Queues

- **Priority 0 (time slice = 1):**
- **Priority 1 (time slice = 2):**
- **Priority 2 (time slice = 4):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time = 0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time = 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time = 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time = 3
Example of Multilevel Feedback Queues

- Priority 0 (time slice = 1):
- Priority 1 (time slice = 2):
- Priority 2 (time slice = 4):

Suppose A is blocked on I/O

Suppose A now returns from I/O
Example of Multilevel Feedback Queues

- Priority 0 (time slice = 1):
- Priority 1 (time slice = 2):
- Priority 2 (time slice = 4):

Multilevel Feedback Queues

- Approximates SRTF
  - A CPU-bound job drops like a rock
  - I/O-bound jobs stay near the top
- Still unfair for long running jobs
  - Counter-measure: Aging
    - Increase the priority of long running jobs if they are not serviced for a period of time
    - Tricky to tune aging

Lottery Scheduling

- Adaptive scheduling approach to address the fairness problem
- Algorithm
  - Each process owns some tickets
  - On each time slice, a ticket is randomly picked
  - On average, the allocated CPU time is proportional to the number of tickets given to each job
- To approximate SJF, short jobs get more tickets
- To avoid starvation, each job gets at least one ticket
Lottery Scheduling Example

- Short jobs: 10 tickets each
- Long jobs: 1 ticket each

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># short jobs/# long jobs</th>
<th>% of CPU for each short job</th>
<th>% of CPU for each long job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0/2</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/0</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thread Scheduling

- On systems supporting threads
  - *kernel* threads are the real scheduling entities
  - *user* threads need to be mapped to kernel threads for execution
  - scheduling attributes may be set at thread creation

- Contention-scope
  - PTHREAD_SCOPE_PROCESS
    - group user threads to contend for common kernel thread(s)
  - PTHREAD_SCOPE_SYSTEM
    - directly assign to kernel thread, contends with other kernel threads

- inheritsched
  - PTHREAD_INHERIT_SCHED
    - inherit scheduling policy and priority from parent thread
  - PTHREAD_EXPLICIT_SCHED
    - explicitly specify scheduling policy and priority of the new thread

Thread Scheduling (2)

- schedpolicy
  - SCHED_OTHER
    - regular non-real-time scheduling
  - SCHED_RR
    - real-time round-robin scheduling
  - SCHED_FIFO
    - real-time FCFS scheduling

- schedparam
  - set/get the priority of the thread

- All parameters only relevant
  - if thread library supports non-one-to-one user level threads
  - for real-time scheduling

Pthread Scheduling Example

```c
int main(int argc, char *argv[]){
  int i;
  pthread t tid[5];
  pthread attr t attr;

  pthread attr init(&attr); /* get the default attributes */
  /* set the scheduling algorithm to PROCESS or SYSTEM */
  pthread attr setscope(&attr, PTHREAD_SCOPE SYSTEM);
  /* set the scheduling policy - FIFO, RT, or OTHER */
  pthread attr setschedpolicy(&attr, SCHED OTHER);

  for (i = 0; i < 5; i++)
    pthread create(&tid[i], &attr, runner, NULL);

  for (i = 0; i < NUM THREADS; i++)
    pthread join(tid[i], NULL);
}

void *runner(void *param){
  printf("I am a thread\n");
  pthread exit(0);
}
```
Multiple-Processor Scheduling Issues

- **Multiprocessor Scheduling**
  - asymmetric multiprocessing
    - only one processor accesses the system data structures
    - simple
  - symmetric multiprocessing (SMP)
    - each processor is self-scheduling
    - need to maintain scheduler data structures synchronization

- **Processor affinity**
  - process has affinity for processor on which it is currently running
    - reduce memory and cache overhead
    - memory affinity important for NUMA architectures
  - soft and hard processor affinity
    - how strictly OS maintains affinity policy

NUMA and CPU Scheduling

Case Studies: Solaris Scheduling

- **Priority-based scheduling**
- **Six classes**
  - real time, system, fair share, fixed priority, time shar, and interactive (in order of priority)
  - different priorities and scheduling algorithms in different classes
- **The default class is time sharing**
  - uses multilevel feedback queue with variable time slices
  - inverse relationship between priorities and time slices
  - good response time for interactive processes and good throughput for CPU-bound processes
  - see the dispatch table
Solaris Dispatch Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>priority</th>
<th>time quantum</th>
<th>time quantum expired</th>
<th>return from sleep</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Studies: Solaris Scheduling (2)

- Real-time scheduling class
  - highest priority, bounded time response
  - should be careful before putting a process in this class
- System scheduling class
  - reserved for kernel threads (scheduling and paging daemon)
- Fixed priority scheduling class
  - priorities not dynamically adjusted
- Fair share scheduling class
  - based on lottery scheduling
  - processes grouped into projects; each project assigned some number of lottery tokens
  - processes within each project share the token fairly
- Process class priorities converted to global priorities

Case Studies: Linux Scheduling (v2.5)

- Linux scheduling (version 2.5)
  - constant order O(1) scheduling time
  - support for SMP systems
  - provide fairness and support for interactive tasks
- Priority-based, preemptive, global round-robin scheduling
  - two priority ranges: time-sharing and real-time
  - Real-time range from 0 to 99 and nice value from 100 to 140
  - numerically lower values have higher priorities
  - higher priority tasks are give longer time slice
  - Task run-able as long as time left in time slice (active)
    - If no time left (expired), not run-able until all other tasks use their slices
  - see mapping figure
Priorities and Time-slice length

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>numeric priority</th>
<th>relative priority</th>
<th>time quantum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>highest</td>
<td>200 ms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>real-time tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>other tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>lowest</td>
<td>10 ms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case Studies: Linux Scheduling (v2.5)

- More about Linux scheduling
  - maintains two arrays: active and expired
  - tasks linked in arrays according to their priorities
  - active tasks on expiration of their time quanta move to the expired array
  - real-time tasks have static priorities
  - normal tasks have dynamic priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>active array</th>
<th>expired array</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>priority</td>
<td>task lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[0]</td>
<td></td>
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Case Studies: Linux Scheduling (v2.6.23+)

- Completely Fair Scheduler (CFS)
  - Scheduling classes, each with specific priority
    - scheduler picks highest priority task in highest scheduling class
    - rather than quantum based on fixed time allotments, based on proportion of CPU time
    - two scheduling classes included (default, real-time), others can be added
  - Quantum calculated based on nice value from -20 to +19
    - lower value is higher priority
    - calculates target latency – interval of time during which task should run at least once
    - target latency can increase if say number of active tasks increases
  - CFS scheduler maintains per task virtual run time in variable vruntime
    - associated with decay factor based on priority of task
      - lower priority is higher decay rate
      - normal default priority yields virtual run time = actual run time
    - task with lowest virtual run time runs next
The Linux CFS scheduler provides an efficient algorithm for selecting which task to run next. Each runnable task is placed in a red-black tree—a balanced binary search tree whose key is based on the value of vruntime. This tree is shown below:

When a task becomes runnable, it is added to the tree. If a task on the tree is not runnable (for example, if it is blocked while waiting for I/O), it is removed. Generally speaking, tasks that have been given less processing time (smaller values of vruntime) are toward the left side of the tree, and tasks that have been given more processing time are on the right side. According to the properties of a binary search tree, the leftmost node has the smallest key value, which for the sake of the CFS scheduler means that it is the task with the highest priority. Because the red-black tree is balanced, navigating it to discover the leftmost node will require $O(\log N)$ operations (where $N$ is the number of nodes in the tree). However, for efficiency reasons, the Linux scheduler caches this value in the variable rthData, and thus determines which task to run next merely retrieves the cached value.