05: Interrupts

How did we read inputs from sensors in the first lab? What are the upsides and downsides to this method?

Sensors

Polling vs interrupts

Polling: reading input periodically, keep track of changes

Interrupt: be alerted when input changes/does something we are watching for

Real life examples: push notification vs checking texting app, rice cooker alerting you vs manually checking doneness, pet begging for food instead of you checking their bowl...

Types of interrupts

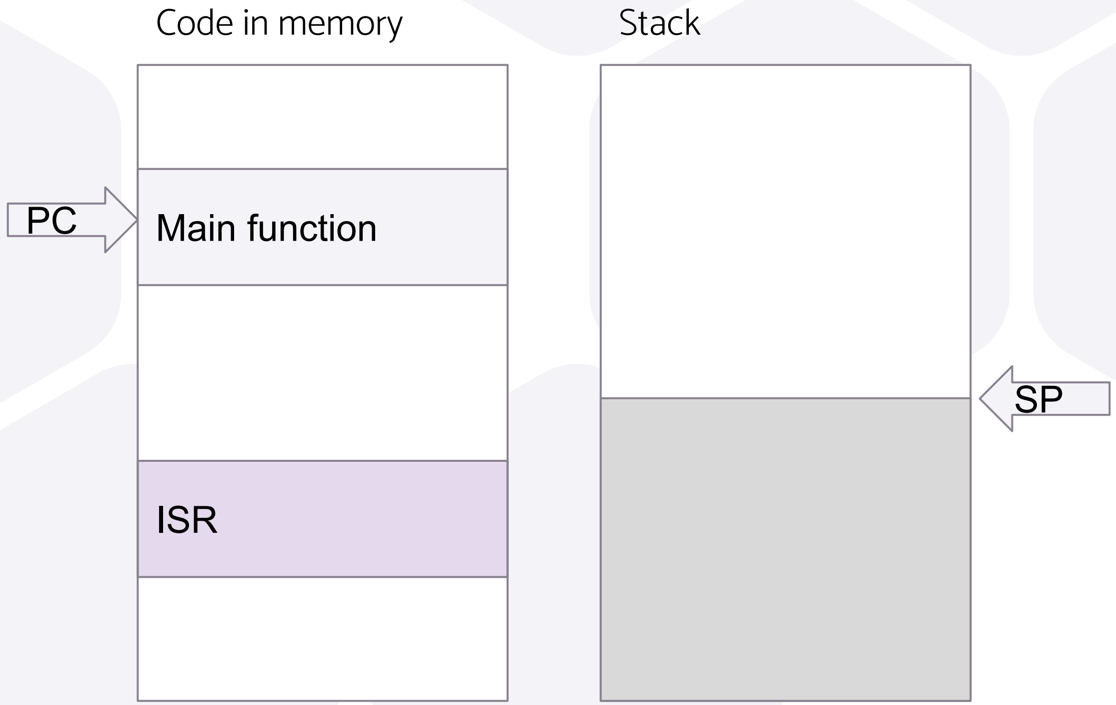
Software interrupts - function is called or some bits are set in a specific memory location to tell the software to go to an *interrupt service routine (ISR)*

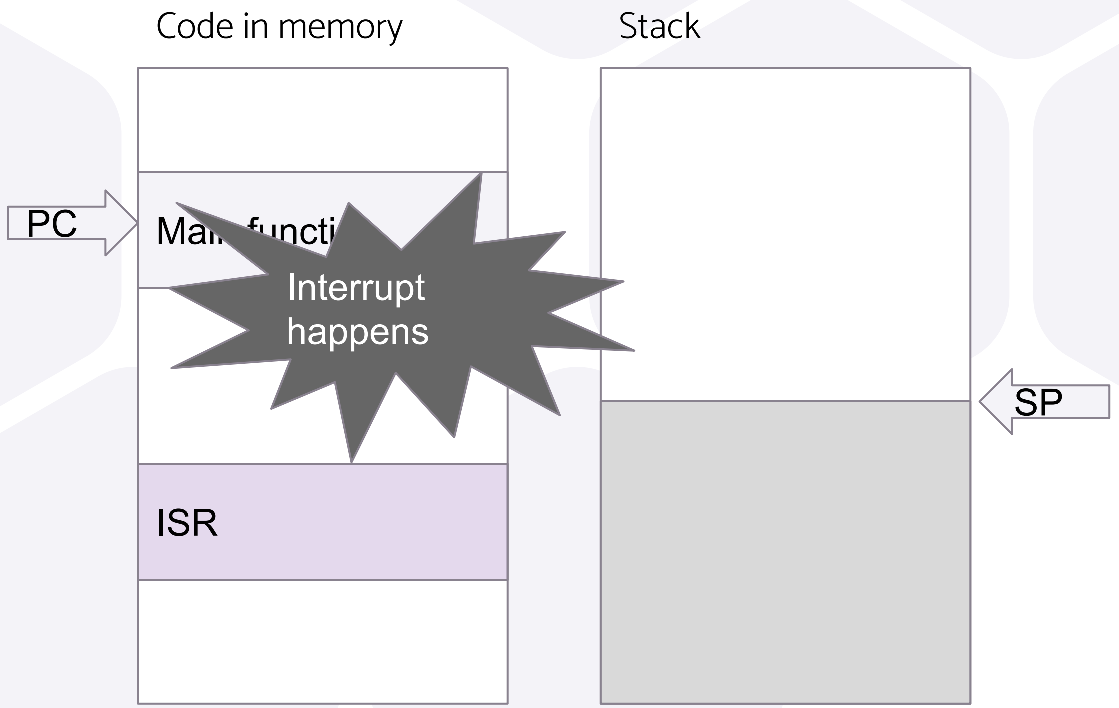
Hardware interrupts - physical trigger (voltage change on pin or internal peripheral) tells software to go to an ISR

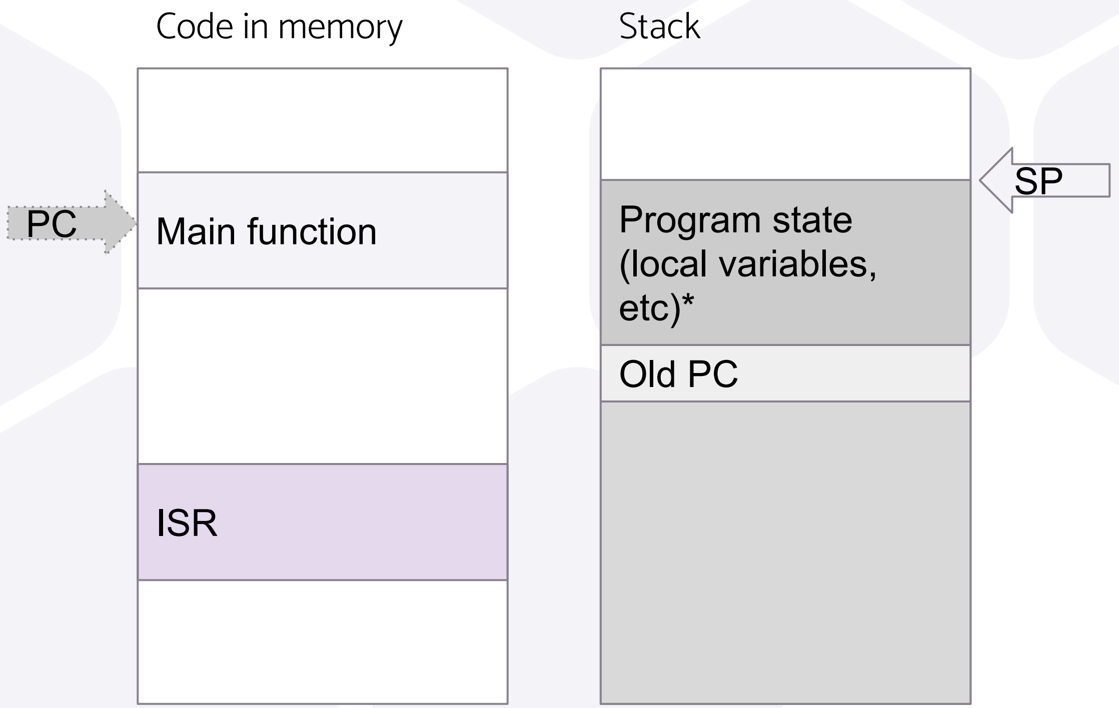
Exceptions - internal trigger (like writing to a protected memory location) triggers a fault

Interrupt process

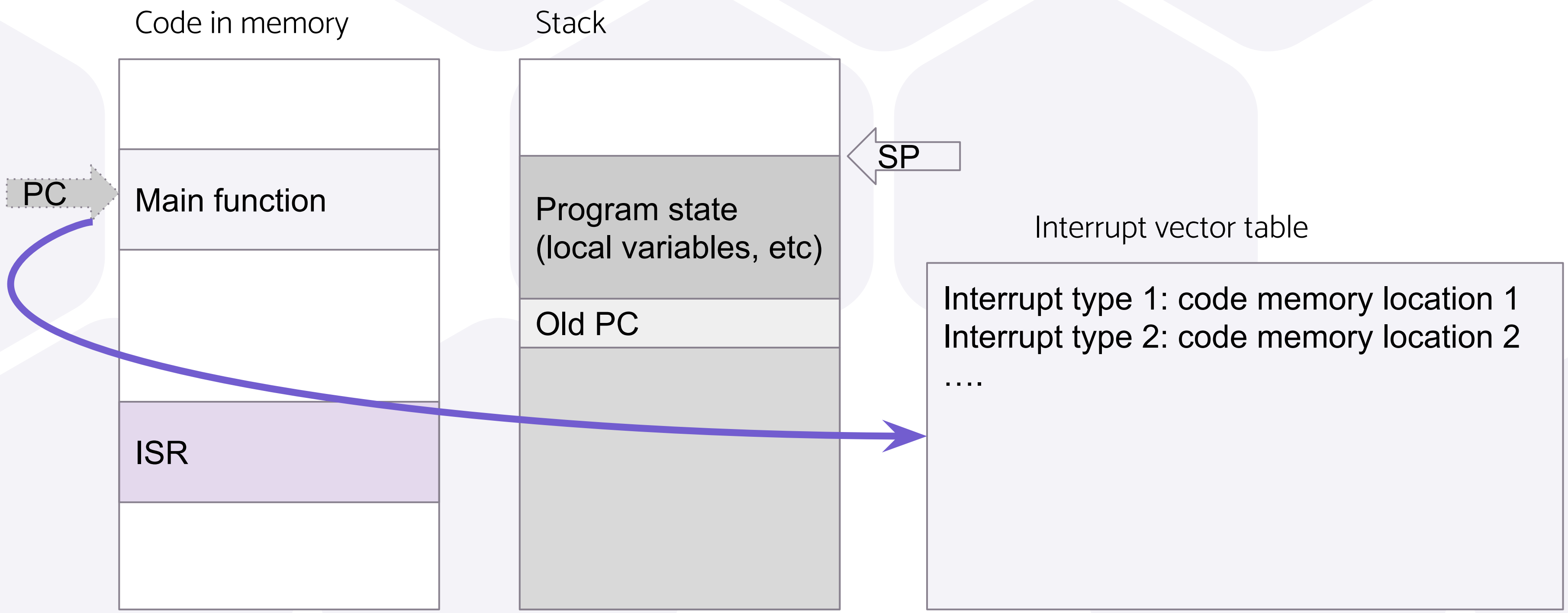
1. Program executing normally
2. Interrupt triggered
3. Processor saves program state
4. Processor enters ISR
5. Processor restores program state
6. Program resumes executing

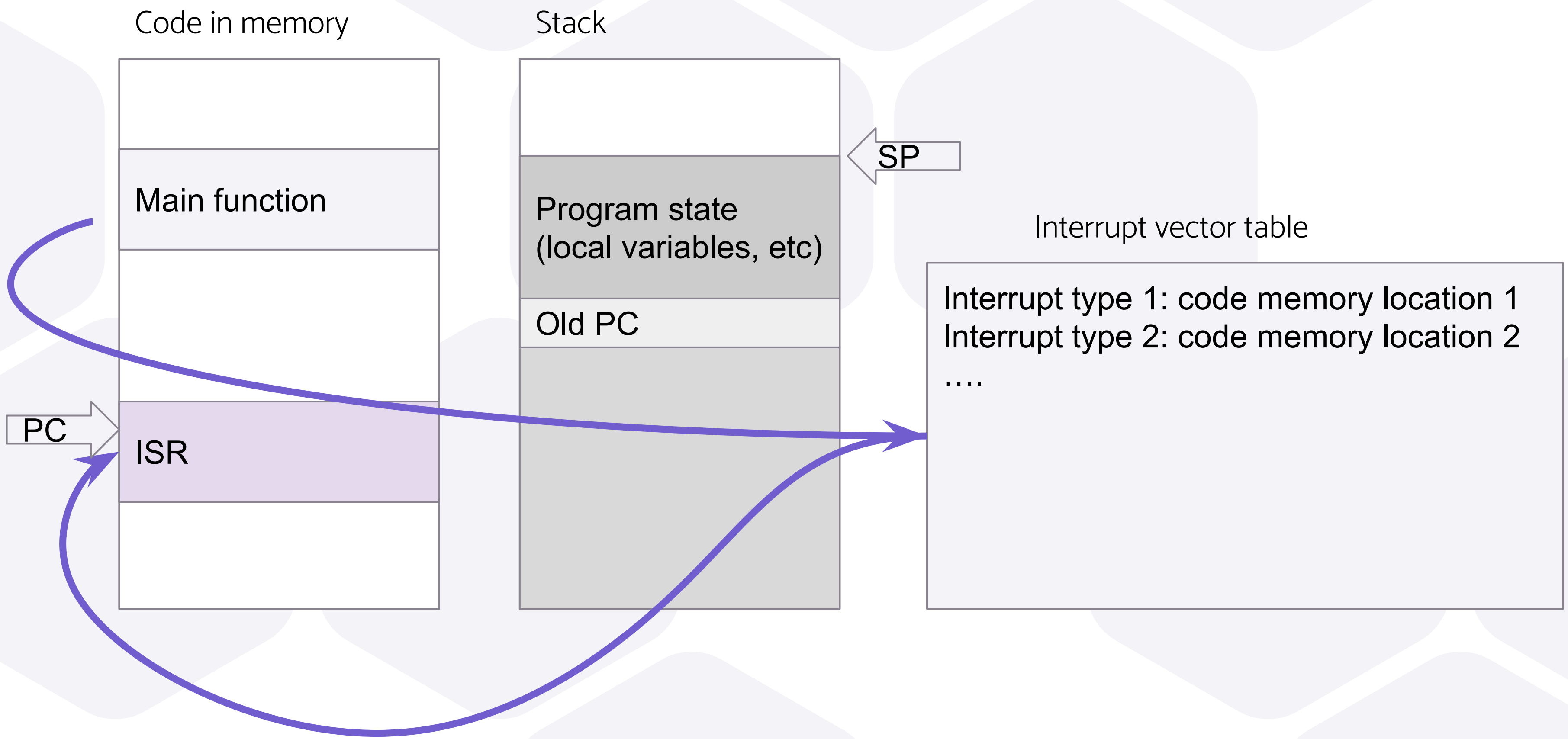

Code in memory
Stack
PC
Main function
ISR
SP


Code in memory
Stack
PC
Main function
Interrupt happens
ISR
SP

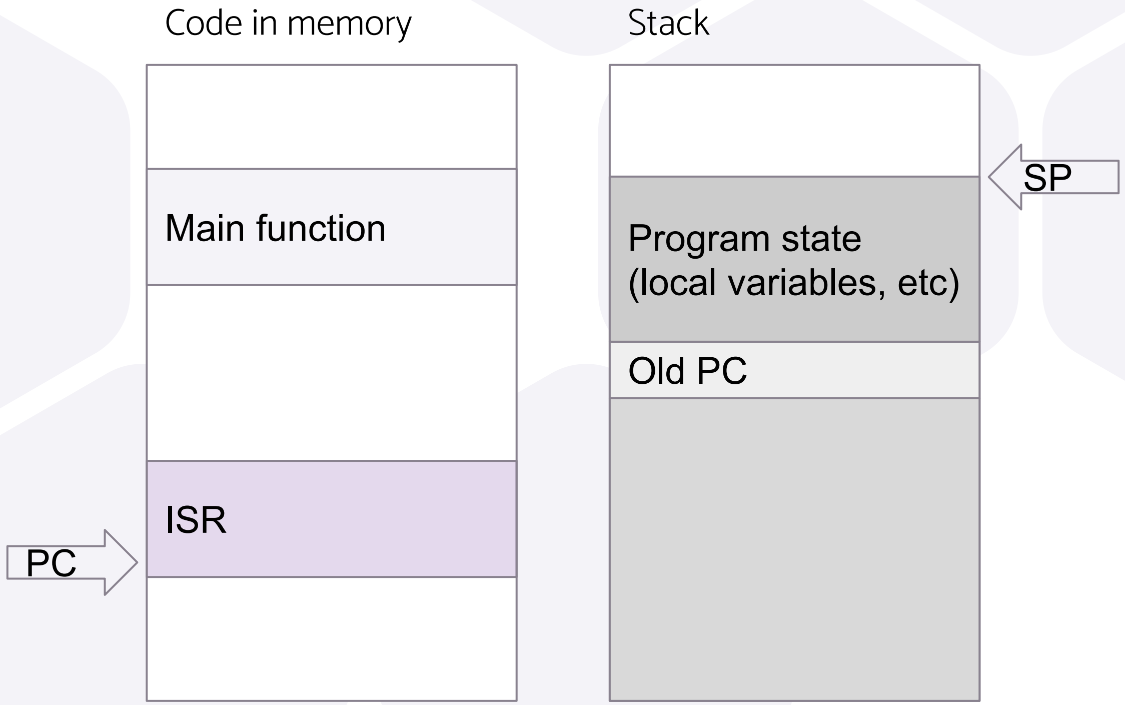


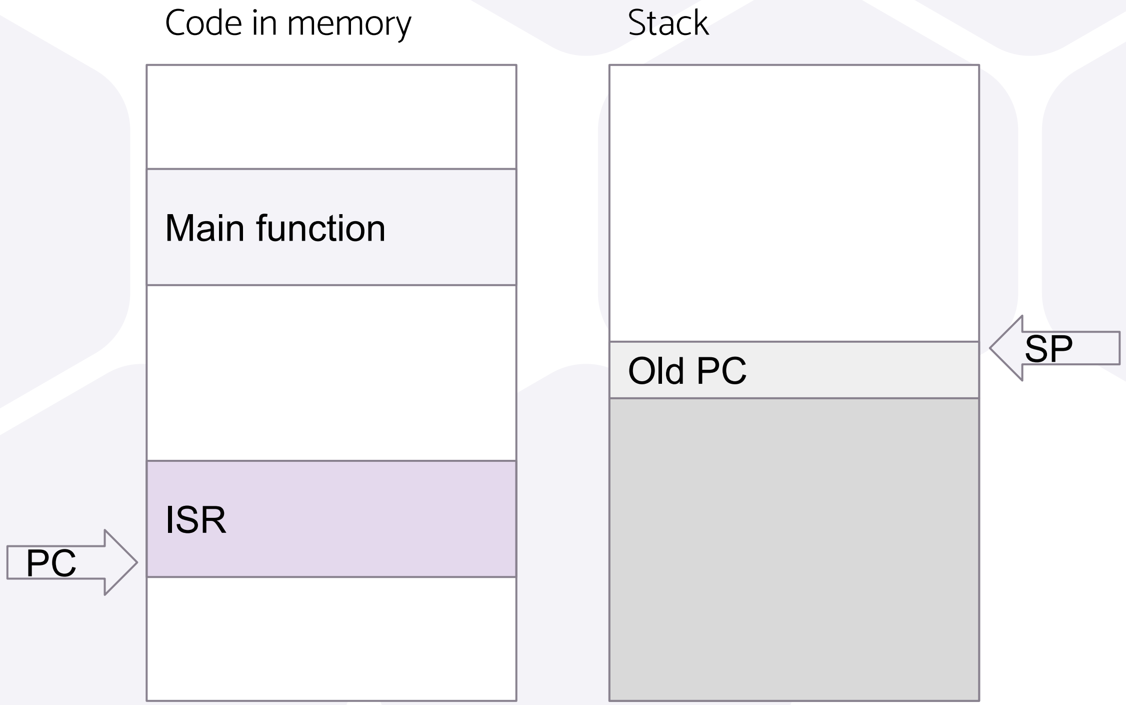
*architecture/MCU-dependent. Sometimes it is up to the programmer to save specific state such as registers

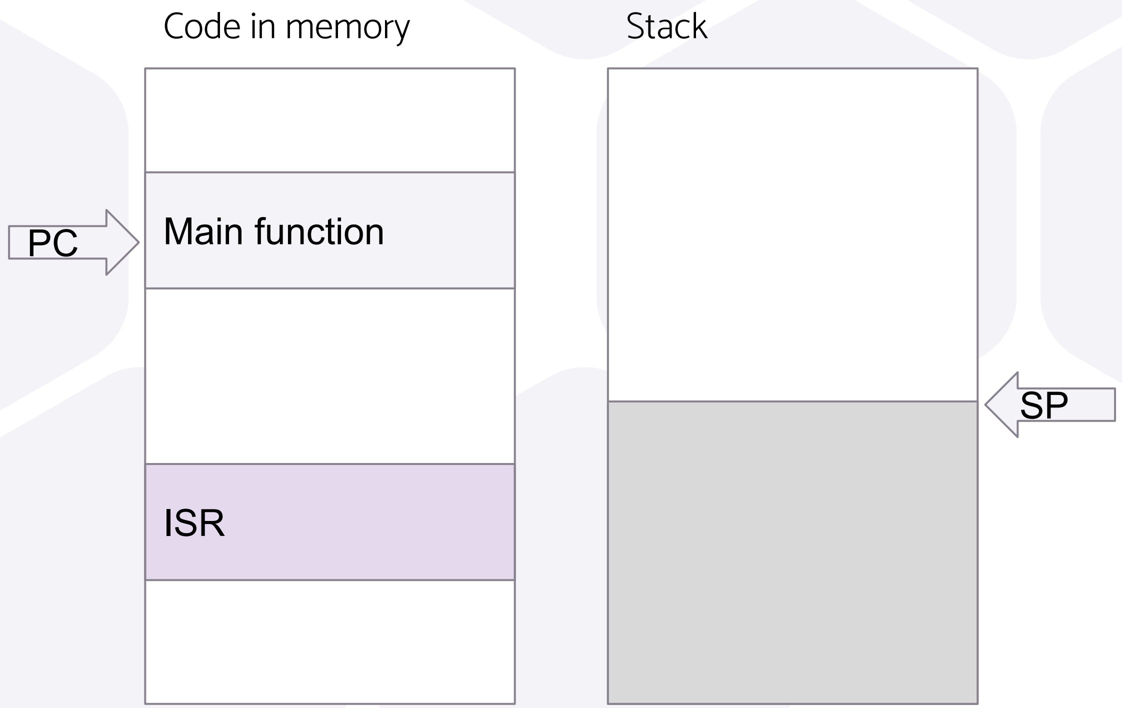

Code in memory
Stack
PC
Main function
ISR
SP
Program state
(local variables, etc)
Old PC
Interrupt vector table
Interrupt type 1: code memory location 1
Interrupt type 2: code memory location 2
….



Interrupt type 1: code memory location 1
Interrupt type 2: code memory location 2
….


Code in memory
Stack
Main function
ISR
PC
Program state
(local variables, etc)
Old PC
SP


Code in memory
Stack
Main function
ISR
PC
Old PC
SP


Code in memory
Stack
PC
Main function
ISR
SP

What if multiple interrupts happen?

Often interrupts are **prioritized**

Higher priority interrupt is allowed to interrupt lower priority interrupt

- Ties broken by position in vector interrupt table

Some predetermined; some configured by programmer

Implementing ISRs

Often only one handler for some type of interrupt

- Example on SAMD21 (your Arduino MCU): external interrupts share one ISR
- **Why?**

Check flags that are set by MCU to see which pin/peripheral triggered the interrupt -- you will see this in lab 3

What is the difference between an interrupt and a subroutine call?

Interrupts can happen at any time

Subroutine call: you know exactly when in the code you call it

Interrupt: can happen at any point, even “inside” of a command

- Even x = x + 1 could be made up of multiple machine instructions (load x from memory, increment x, write value back to memory)

Atomic instructions: values being read/changed in atomic instruction cannot be read/changed by anyone else

Disabling interrupts

- Inside an ISR
- For atomicity

Warning: could interfere with some functionality
(more on this in future labs!)

Homework problem 10.7

(a) Is it possible for the ISR to update the value of sensor1 while the main function is checking whether sensor1 is faulty? Why or why not?

(b) Suppose a spurious error occurs that causes sensor1 or sensor2 to be a faulty value for one measurement. Is it possible for that this code would not report “Sensor1 faulty” or “Sensor2 faulty”?

(d) Suppose that instead being interrupt driven, ISR and main are executed concurrently, each in its own thread. Assume a microkernel that can interrupt any thread at any time and switch contexts to execute another thread. In this scenario, is it possible for the ISR to update the value of sensor1 while the main function is checking whether sensor1 is faulty? Why or why not?

```
char flag = 0;
volatile char* display;
volatile short sensor1, sensor2;

void ISR() {
  if (flag) {
    sensor1 = readSensor1();
  } else {
    sensor2 = readSensor2();
  }
}

int main() {
  // ... set up interrupts ...
  // ... enable interrupts ...
  while(1) {
    if (flag) {
      if isFaulty2(sensor2) {
        display = "Sensor2 Faulty";
      }
    } else {
      if isFaulty1(sensor1) {
        display = "Sensor1 Faulty";
      }
    }
    flag = !flag;
  }
}
```

Why do we care?

Interrupts are powerful and used widely in embedded programming

Understanding how interrupts affect program state/variables aids in design and debugging

Interrupts complicate modeling and timing analysis of a system (more on this later)