

How to use movable pointers

version	1.1.1
scope	Example. This code is provided as example code for a user to base their code on.
description	How to use movable pointers
boards	Unless otherwise specified, this example runs on the SliceKIT Core Board, but can easily be run on any XMOS device by using a different XN file.

Movable pointers are pointers that only exist in one variable at a time. The initialization of a movable pointer is special. At initialization time you can set the pointer to point to a particular object. As with global pointers, the object pointed to is then hidden so it cannot be accessed directly during the lifetime of the pointer:

```
void g()
{
    int * movable x = &y[0];    // x is initialized to point to y

    // cannot access y during the lifetime of x
    ...
}
```

Movable pointers cannot be copied. For example the following code is invalid:

```
int * movable y;
...
void g()
{
    int * movable x = &a[0];
    y = x;    // This is an error, you cannot copy the value of x.
    ...
}
```

Instead of copying, the pointers can be “moved” using the special `move` operator. The `move` operator transfers the pointer value and sets the original pointer to `null`:

```
void f() {
    int * movable y;
    int a[5] = {4,5,6,7,8};
    int * movable x = &a[0];
    y = move(x);

    if (x == null)
        printf("x is now null.\n");

    printf("The contents of y is %d\n", *y);

    x = move(y);
}
```

When a pointer is moved the original pointer is set to `null`. So the pointer only exists in one variable.

To avoid dangling pointers, movable pointers must have their original value when they go out of scope (so the pointer is not left dangling anywhere else):

```
int * movable y;
..
void g()
{
    int * movable x = &a[0];
    y = move(x);
    ...
    x = move(y);
    ...
} <--- x must have its original value at this point
```

A runtime check enforces this restriction.

As a result of this, movable pointers need to be moved back into their original variable location before that variable goes out of scope.

The `move` operator can also be used to move a pointer into or out of a function :

```
int * movable p_global;

void grab_pointer(int * movable x) {
    // store x in a global
    p_global = move(x);
}

int * movable retrieve_pointer(void) {
    // retrieve x from a global
    *p_global += 1;
    return move(p_global);
}

void g(void) {
    int i = 77;
    int * movable x = &i;
    grab_pointer(move(x));
    if (x == null)
        printf("x is now null.\n");
    x = retrieve_pointer();
    printf("Contents of x is %d\n", *x);
}
```



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