

Network Protocols

Transmission Control Protocol (TCP)

IP review

- IP provides just enough *connected-ness*
 - Global addressing
 - Hop-by-hop routing
- IP over everything
 - Ethernet, ATM, X.25, fiber, etc.
- Minimizes network state
- Unreliable datagram forwarding

TCP key features

- Sequencing
- Byte-stream delivery
- Connection-oriented
- Reliability
- Flow-control
- Congestion avoidance

TCP feature summary

Provides a completely reliable (no data duplication or loss), connection-oriented, full-duplex byte stream transport service that allows two application programs to form a connection, send data in either direction simultaneously and then terminate the connection.

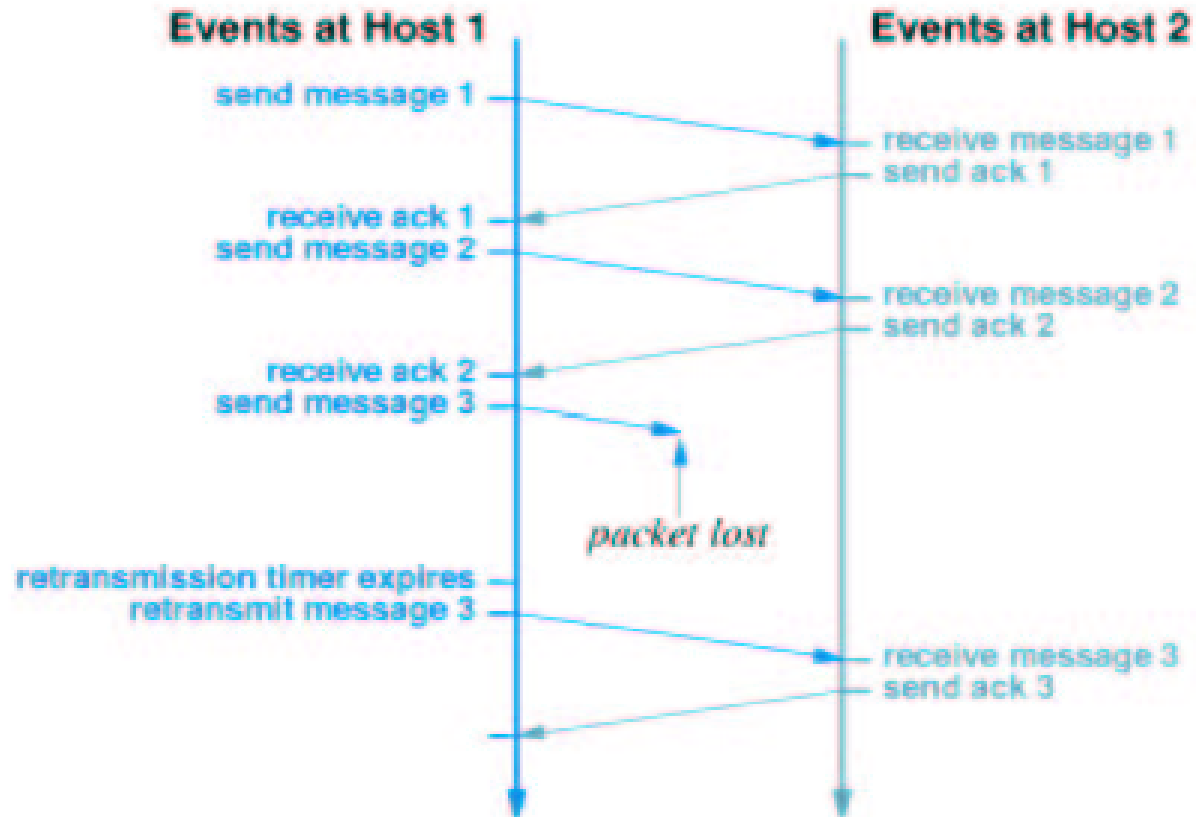
Apparent contradiction

- IP offers best effort (unreliable) delivery
- TCP uses IP
- TCP provides completely reliable transfer
- How is this possible?

Achieving reliability

- Reliable connection start-up
- Reliable data transfer
 - Sender starts a timer
 - Receiver sends ACK when data arrives
 - Sender retransmits if timer expires before ACK is returned
- Reliable connection shutdown

Reliability illustrated



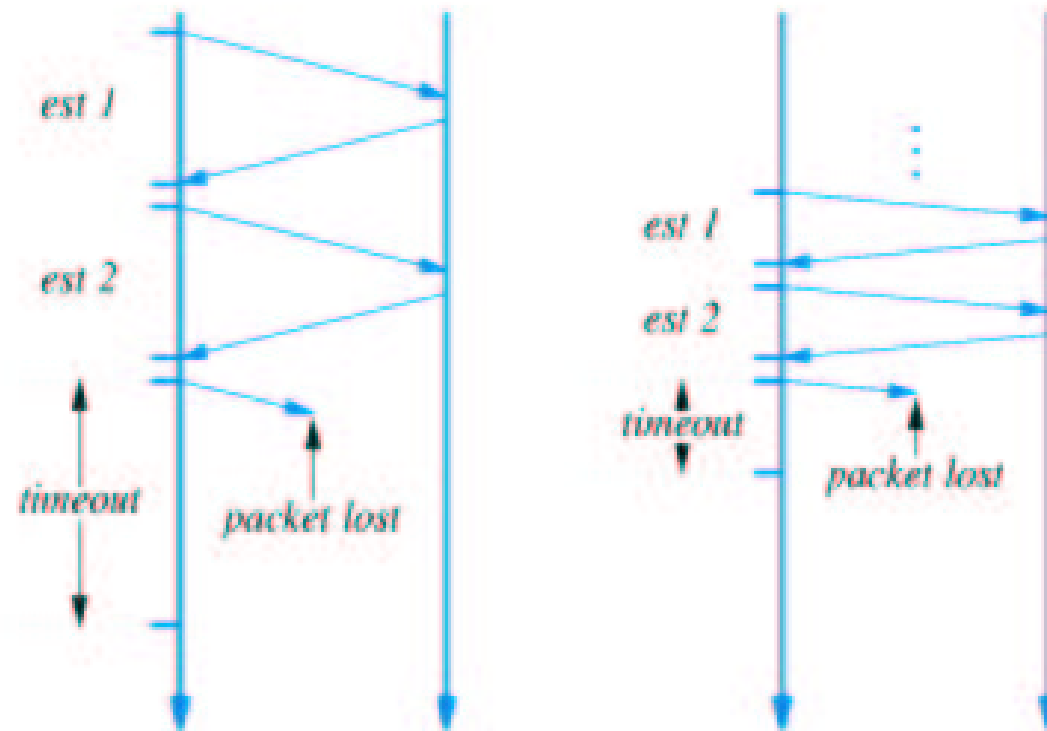
When do you retransmit?

- The time for an ACK to return depends on:
 - Distance between endpoints (propagation delay)
 - Network traffic conditions (congestion)
 - End system conditions (CPU, buffers)
- Packets can be lost, damaged or fragmented
- Network traffic conditions can change rapidly

Solving retransmission problem

- Keep running average of round trip time (RTT)
- Current average determines retransmission timer
- This is known as adaptive retransmission
- This is key to TCP's success
- How does each RTT sample affect the average?
 - What weight do you give each sample?
 - Higher weight means timer changes quickly
 - Lower weight means timer changes slowly

Adaptive retransmission illustrated



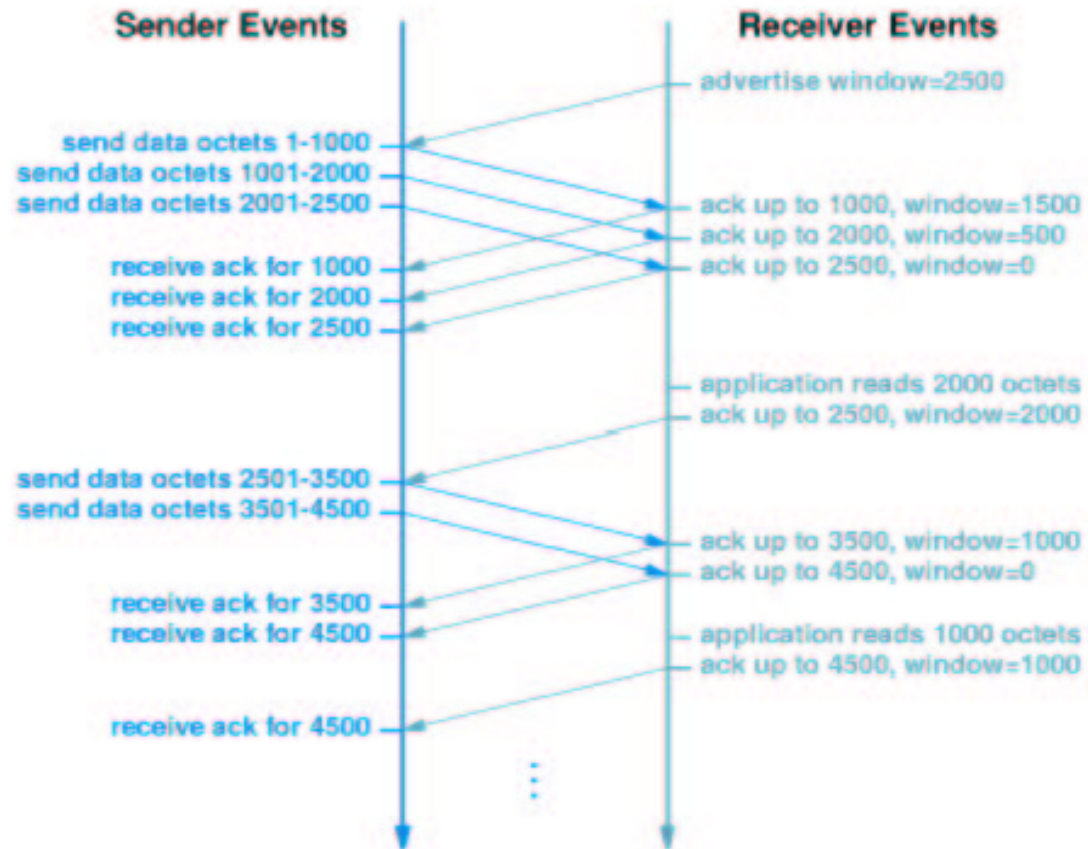
Flow control

- Match the sending rate with allowable receiver rate
- TCP uses a sliding window
 - Receiver advertises available buffer space
 - Also known as the window
 - Sender can transmit a full window without receiving an ACK for that transmitted data
- Ideally the window size allows pipe to remain full

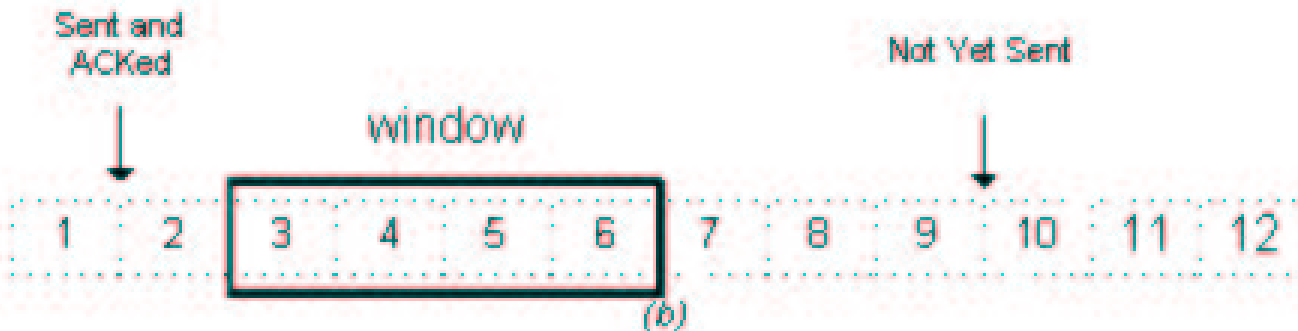
Window size advertisement

- Each ACK carries receiver's current window size
 - Called the window advertisement
 - If zero, window is closed, no data can be sent
- Interpretation of window advertisement:
 - Receiver: I can accept X octets or less unless I tell you otherwise

Window size illustrated



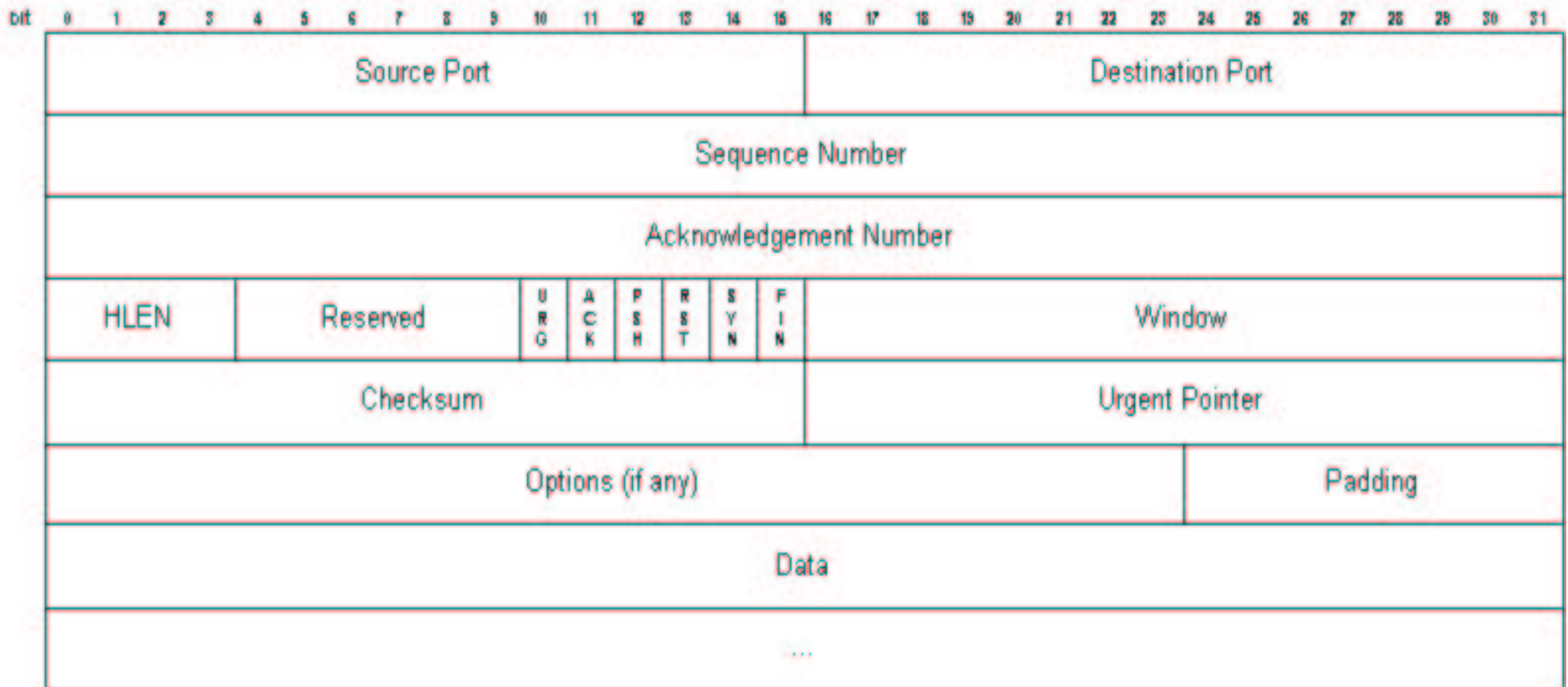
Window size: another picture



Byte stream sequencing

- Each segment carries a sequence number
- Sequencing helps ensure in order delivery
- TCP sequence numbers are fixed at 32 bits
 - Byte stream is not limited to 2^{32} bytes
 - Sequence number space can wrap
- Each side has an initial sequence number (ISN)
 - Exchanged during connection establishment
- Receiver ACKs cumulative octets (bytes)

TCP segment illustrated



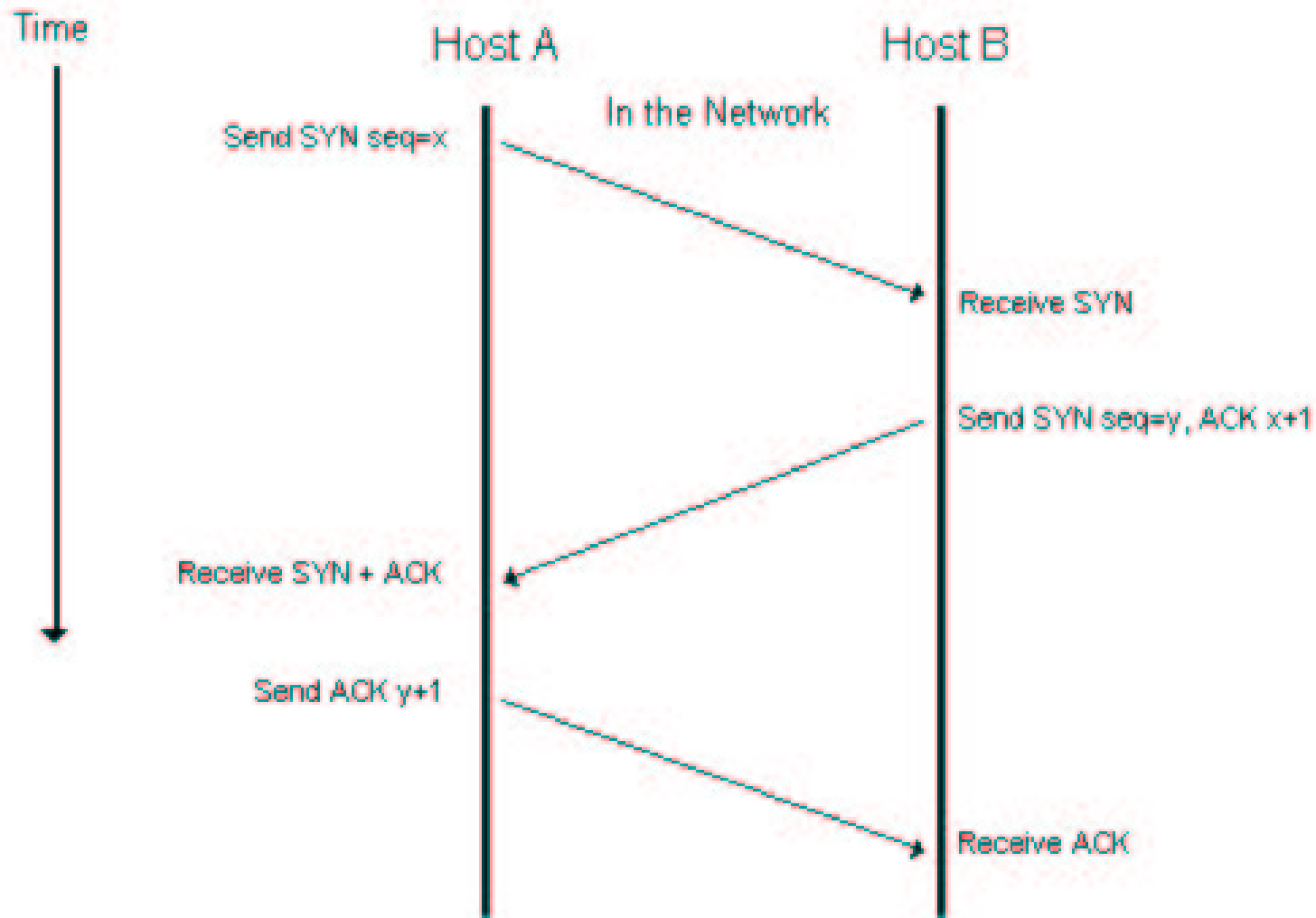
Application multiplexing

- OS independent identifier for a network process
- Each application assigned a unique 16-bit integer
 - Called a port number
- Server applications
 - Use standard, well-known port numbers
 - Usually low numbered port numbers
- Clients
 - Obtain unused number from protocol software
 - Usually uses high numbered port numbers

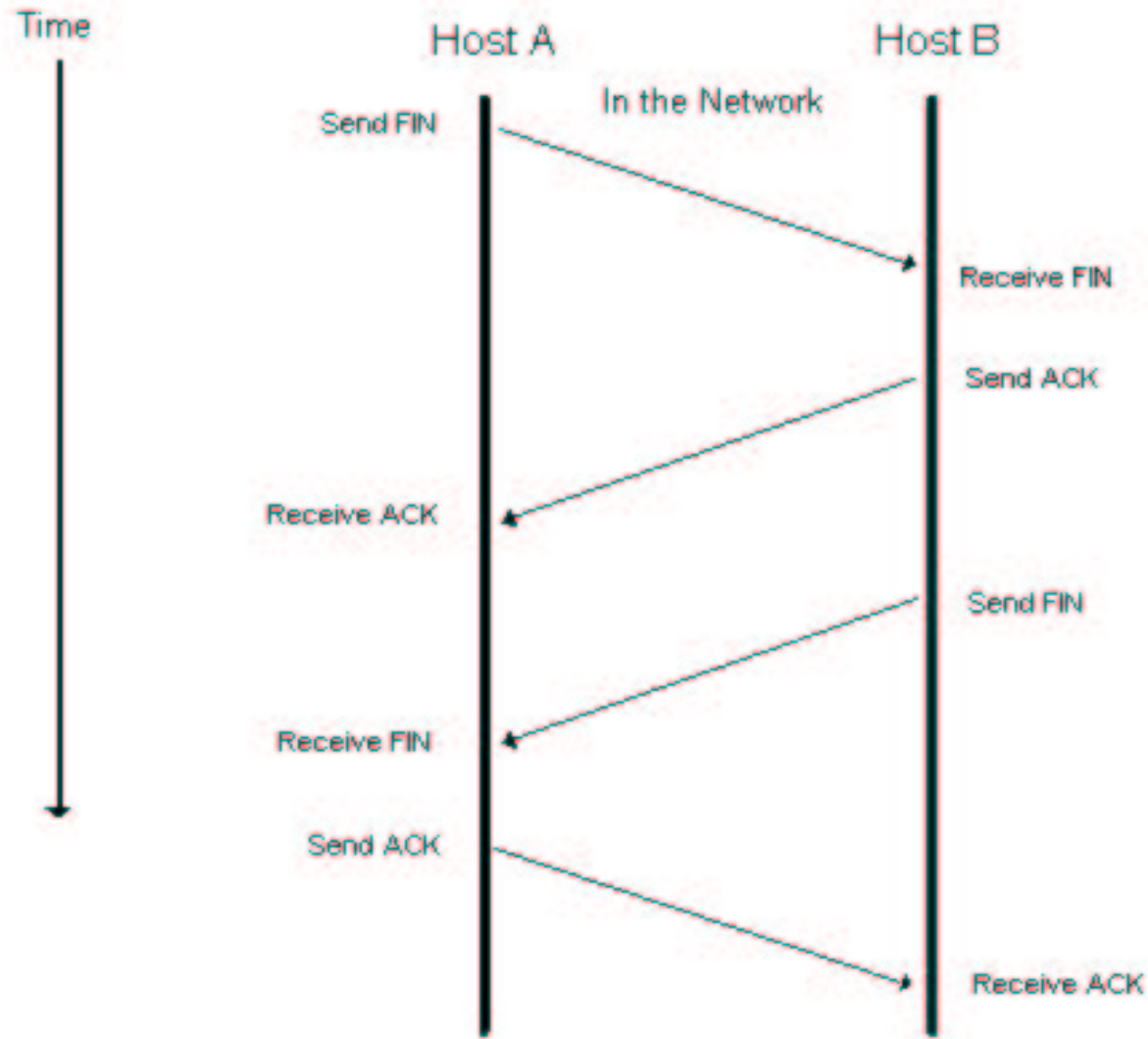
TCP connection start-up

- The three-way handshake used
- Servers use a passive open
 - Application sits waiting on an open port
- Clients use an active open
 - Application requests a connection to server
- Initial sequence number (ISN) exchange is the primary goal
- Other parameters/options can also be exchanged
 - e.g. Window scale, maximum segment size, etc.

3-way handshake illustrated



Connection shutdown illustrated



Congestion principles

- Flow control
 - Matching the sending and receiving rates
- Congestion control
 - Active response to network overload conditions
 - End hosts cannot control congestion per se
 - Network devices (routers) do this
- Congestion avoidance
 - Cautionary response to presumed conditions
 - TCP does this

TCP congestion control

- Recall sliding window (advertised window)
 - Receiver based control of sending rate
- Congestion window is sender based control
- Sender transmits $\min(\text{cwnd}, \text{advertised window})$
 - This value is the *transmission window*
- TCP sender infers network conditions and adjusts

TCP retransmission

- TCP starts timer after sending a segment
- If ACK returns, reset timer
- If time-out occurs, retransmit and increase timer
 - This is a *back-off* process
- Can't retransmit forever, need some upper bound
- Eventually TCP would give up
 - Maximum time-out must be at least 60 seconds

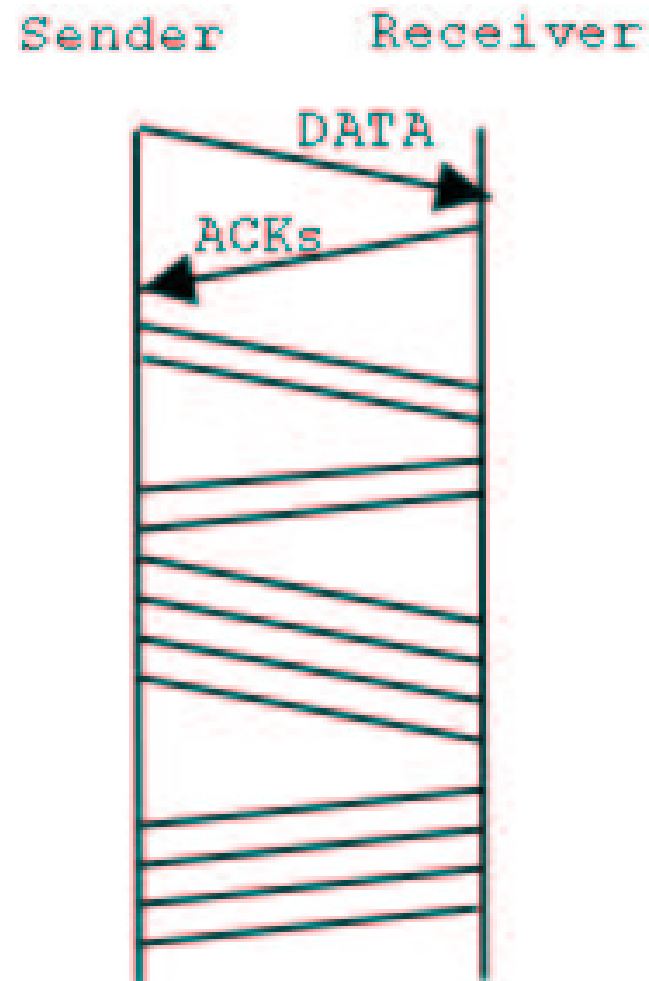
Estimating round trip time (RTT)

- TCP measures RTT for which to calculate timers
- If ACKs return quickly, timers should be short
 - If loss occurs, recovery happens quickly
- If ACKs return slowly, timers should be long
 - If delays occur, retransmits not sent needlessly
- Keep a smoothed running average of RTT
 - Smoothed RTT used to adjust retransmit timer
 - Karn's algorithm says ignore ACKs of retransmits

TCP slow start

- Recall that $\min(\text{cwnd}, \text{awnd}) = \text{transmission window}$
- Rather than sending a full window at start-up...
- Initialize cwnd to 1 maximum segment size (MSS)
- Increase cwnd by 1 MSS for every ACK returned
- Obviously don't go past advertised window!
- This can actually be quite fast, exponential!

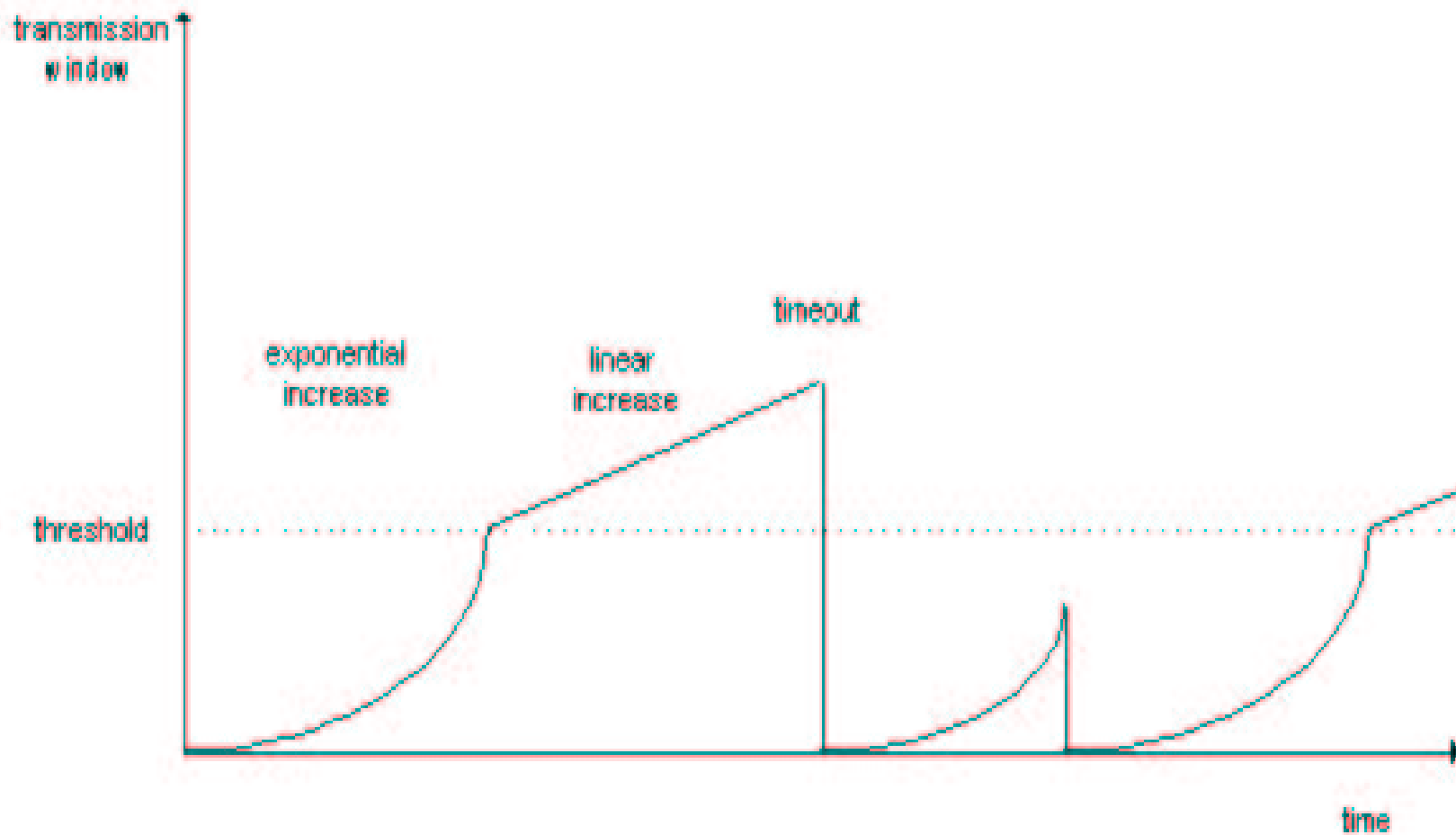
TCP slow start illustrated



TCP congestion avoidance

- If a retransmission timer expires, slow down
- Set slow start threshold = transmission window $\times \frac{1}{2}$
 - This is ssthresh
- Set cwnd back to 1 MSS
- Transmit $\min(\text{cwnd}, \text{advertised window})$ as usual
- Do slow start until transmission window = ssthresh
- Thereafter, increase cwnd by $1/\text{cwnd}$ per ACK
 - Linear increase instead of exponential

Congestion avoidance illustrated



Duplicate ACKs

- Recall ACKs acknowledge cumulative octets
- TCP receiver sends an immediate ACK if it receives an out-of-order segment
- This is a duplicate ACK
- This dupe ACK informs the sender and tells it what sequence number the receiver expected
- Its unclear whether dupe ACKs indicate loss or simply packet re-ordering on the network
- But, multiple duplicate ACKs probably indicate loss

TCP fast retransmit

- If sender gets ≥ 3 dupe ACKs, assume loss
- Immediately retransmit, don't wait for timer to expire
- Goto fast recovery

TCP fast recovery

- Duplicate ACKs indicate data is still flowing
- If there was a loss event, it was probably temporary
- Go directly to congestion avoidance
 - Not all the way into slow start!
 - Don't want to start off with just a 1 MSS window
- This is the fast recovery algorithm
 - Minus a few minor details

Other TCP *stuff*

- Selective ACK (SACK) option
- Window scale option
- Timestamp option
- Persist timer (window probes)
- Silly window syndrome
- Keepalive timer
- Nagle algorithm