

# Mvcc Unmasked

---

BRUCE MOMJIAN,  
ENTERPRISEDB

July, 2011



## Abstract

This talk explains how Multiversion Concurrency Control (MVCC) is implemented in Postgres, and highlights optimizations which minimize the downsides of MVCC.

# Unmasked: Who Are These People?



# Unmasked: The Original Star Wars Cast



Left to right: Han Solo, Darth Vader, Chewbacca, Leia, Luke Skywalker, R2D2

# Why Unmask MVCC?

- Predict concurrent query behavior
- Manage MVCC performance effects
- Understand storage space reuse

# Outline

1. Introduction to MVCC
2. MVCC Implementation Details
3. MVCC Cleanup Requirements and Behavior

# What is MVCC?

Multiversion Concurrency Control (MVCC) allows Postgres to offer high concurrency even during significant database read/write activity. MVCC specifically offers behavior where "readers never block writers, and writers never block readers".

This presentation explains how MVCC is implemented in Postgres, and highlights optimizations which minimize the downsides of MVCC.

# Which Other Database Systems Support MVCC?

- Oracle
- DB2 (partial)
- MySQL with InnoDB
- Informix
- Firebird
- MSSQL (optional, disabled by default)

# MVCC Behavior

Cre	40
Exp	

INSERT

Cre	40
Exp	47

DELETE

Cre	64
Exp	78

old (delete)

UPDATE

Cre	78
Exp	

new (insert)



# MVCC Snapshots

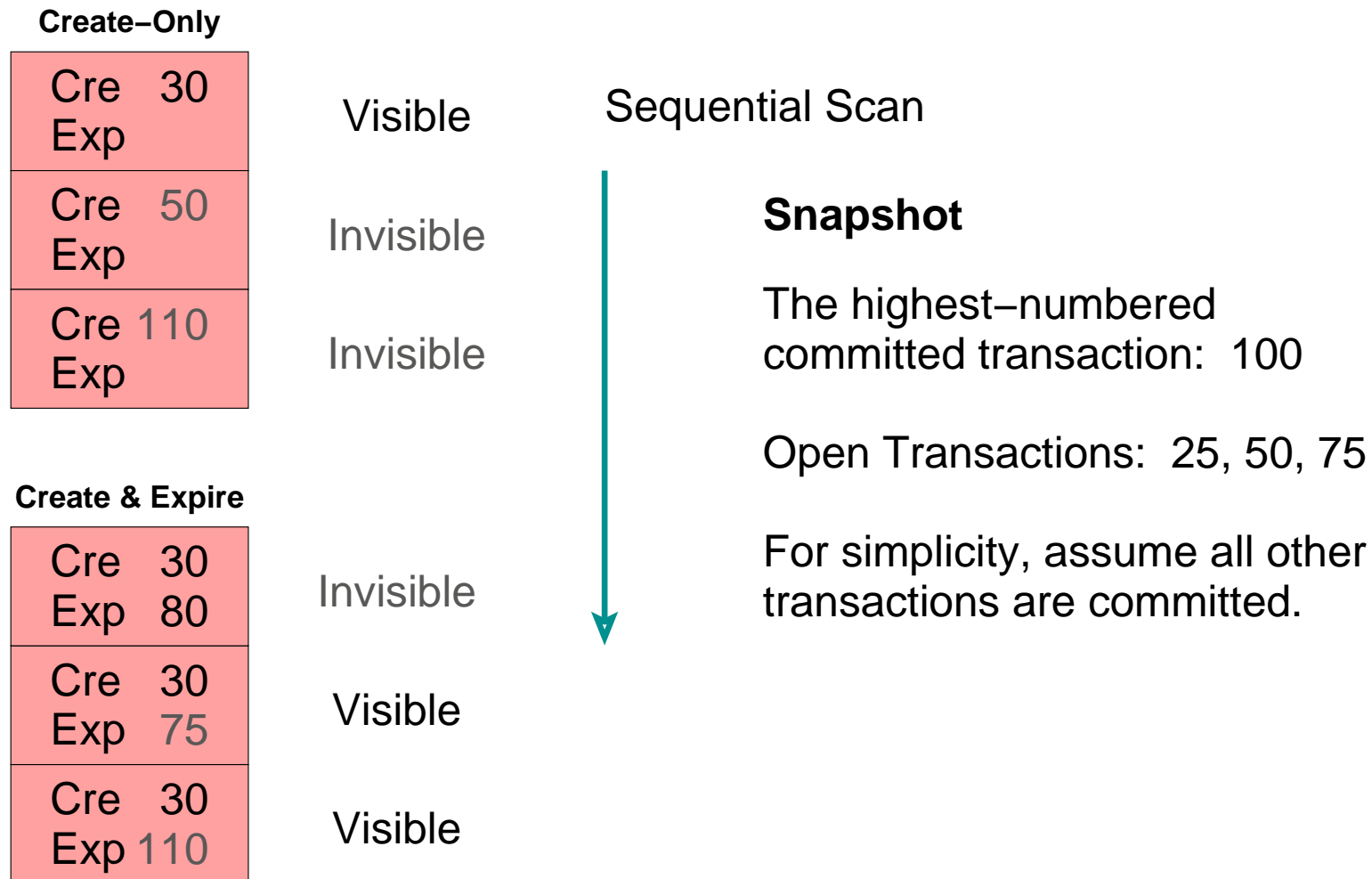
MVCC snapshots control which tuples are visible for SQL statements. A snapshot is recorded at the start of each SQL statement in READ COMMITTED transaction isolation mode, and at transaction start in SERIALIZABLE transaction isolation mode. In fact, it is frequency of taking new snapshots that controls the transaction isolation behavior.

When a new snapshot is taken, the following information is gathered:

- the highest-numbered committed transaction
- the transaction numbers currently executing

Using this snapshot information, Postgres can determine if a transaction's actions should be visible to an executing statement.

# MVCC Snapshots Determine Row Visibility



Internally, the creation xid is stored in the system column 'xmin', and expire in 'xmax'.

# Confused Yet?

Source code comment in *src/backend/utils/time/tqual.c*:

```
((Xmin == my-transaction &&
  Cmin < my-command &&
  (Xmax is null ||
   (Xmax == my-transaction &&
    Cmax >= my-command)))
||
 (Xmin is committed &&
  (Xmax is null ||
   (Xmax == my-transaction &&
    Cmax >= my-command) ||
   (Xmax != my-transaction &&
    Xmax is not committed))))
```

inserted by the current transaction  
before this command, and  
the row has not been deleted, or  
it was deleted by the current transaction  
but not before this command,  
or  
the row was inserted by a committed transaction, and  
the row has not been deleted, or  
the row is being deleted by this transaction  
but it's not deleted "yet", or  
the row was deleted by another transaction  
that has not been committed

mao [Mike Olson] says 17 march 1993: *the tests in this routine are correct; if you think they're not, you're wrong, and you should think about it again. i know, it happened to me.*

# Implementation Details

All queries were generated on an unmodified version of Postgres. The contrib module *pageinspect* was installed to show internal heap page information and *pg\_freespacemap* was installed to show free space map information.

# Setup

```
CREATE TABLE mvcc_demo (val INTEGER);
CREATE TABLE
DROP VIEW IF EXISTS mvcc_demo_page0;
DROP VIEW
CREATE VIEW mvcc_demo_page0 AS
    SELECT '(0,' || lp || ')' AS ctid,
           CASE lp_flags
             WHEN 0 THEN 'Unused'
             WHEN 1 THEN 'Normal'
             WHEN 2 THEN 'Redirect to ' || lp_off
             WHEN 3 THEN 'Dead'
           END,
           t_xmin::text::int8 AS xmin,
           t_xmax::text::int8 AS xmax,
           t_ctid
    FROM heap_page_items(get_raw_page('mvcc_demo', 0))
    ORDER BY lp;
CREATE VIEW
```

# INSERT Using Xmin

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 0  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1  
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----  
  5409 |    0 |  1  
(1 row)
```

All the queries used in this presentation are available at <http://momjian.us/main/writings/pgsql/mvcc.sql>.

# Just Like INSERT

Cre	40
Exp	

INSERT

Cre	40
Exp	47

DELETE

Cre	64
Exp	78

old (delete)

UPDATE

Cre	78
Exp	

new (insert)

# DELETE Using Xmax

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 1  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1  
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----  
  5411 |    0 |   1  
(1 row)
```

```
BEGIN WORK;  
BEGIN  
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 1
```



# DELETE Using Xmax

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----
```

```
(0 rows)
```

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----
```

```
5411 | 5412 | 1
```

```
(1 row)
```

```
SELECT txid_current();
```

```
txid_current
```

```
-----
```

```
5412
```

```
(1 row)
```

```
COMMIT WORK;
```

```
COMMIT
```

# Just Like DELETE

Cre	40
Exp	

INSERT

Cre	40
Exp	47

DELETE

Cre	64
Exp	78

old (delete)

UPDATE

Cre	78
Exp	

new (insert)

# UPDATE Using Xmin and Xmax

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 0  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1  
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----  
  5413 |    0 |   1  
(1 row)
```

```
BEGIN WORK;  
BEGIN  
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = 2;  
UPDATE 1
```

# UPDATE Using Xmin and Xmax

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----
```

```
5414 |    0 |  2
```

```
(1 row)
```

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----
```

```
5413 | 5414 |  1
```

```
(1 row)
```

```
COMMIT WORK;
```

```
COMMIT
```

# Just Like UPDATE

Cre	40
Exp	

INSERT

Cre	40
Exp	47

DELETE

Cre	64
Exp	78

old (delete)

UPDATE

Cre	78
Exp	

new (insert)

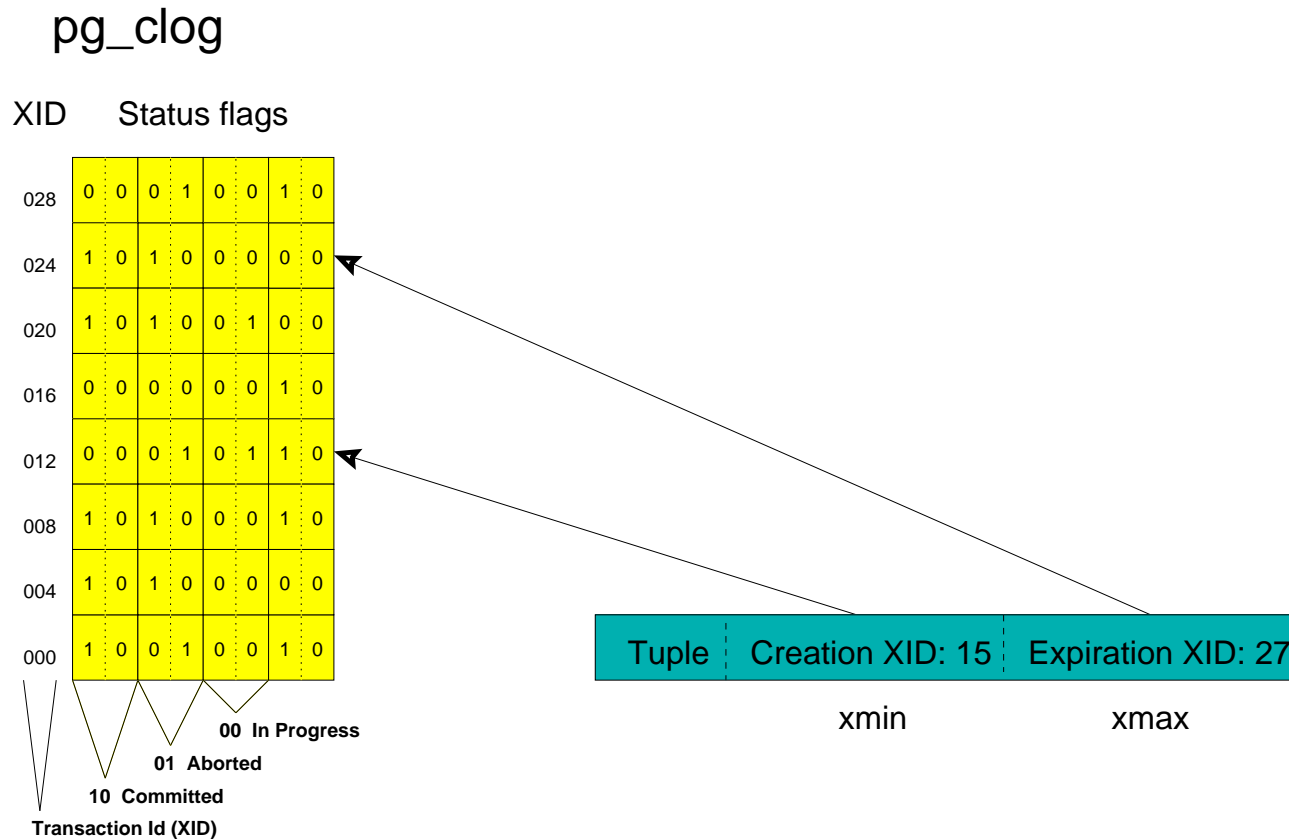
# Aborted Transaction IDs Remain

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 1  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1
```

```
BEGIN WORK;  
BEGIN  
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 1  
ROLLBACK WORK;  
ROLLBACK
```

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----  
  5415 | 5416 | 1  
(1 row)
```

# Aborted IDs Can Remain Because Transaction Status Is Recorded Centrally



Transaction roll back marks the transaction ID as aborted. All sessions will ignore such transactions; it is not necessary to revisit each row to undo the transaction.

# Row Locks Using Xmax

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 1  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1
```

```
BEGIN WORK;  
BEGIN  
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----  
  5416 |    0 |   1  
(1 row)  
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo FOR UPDATE;  
  xmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----  
  5416 |    0 |   1  
(1 row)
```



## Row Locks Using Xmax

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
  xmin | xmax | val
-----+-----+-----
  5416 | 5417 | 1
(1 row)
COMMIT WORK;
COMMIT
```

The tuple bit `HEAP_XMAX_EXCL_LOCK` is used to indicate that `xmax` is a locking xid rather than an expiration xid.

# Multi-Statement Transactions

Multi-statement transactions require extra tracking because each statement has its own visibility rules. For example, a cursor's contents must remain unchanged even if later statements in the same transaction modify rows. Such tracking is implemented using system command id columns cmin/cmax, which is internally actually is a single column.

# INSERT Using Cmin

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DELETE 1
```

```
BEGIN WORK;
```

```
BEGIN
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (3);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

# INSERT Using Cmin

```
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | cmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5419 | 0 | 0 | 1
```

```
5419 | 1 | 0 | 2
```

```
5419 | 2 | 0 | 3
```

(3 rows)

```
COMMIT WORK;
```

```
COMMIT
```

# DELETE Using Cmin

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DELETE 3
```

```
BEGIN WORK;
```

```
BEGIN
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (3);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

## DELETE Using Cmin

```
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | cmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5421 | 0 | 0 | 1
```

```
5421 | 1 | 0 | 2
```

```
5421 | 2 | 0 | 3
```

(3 rows)

```
DECLARE c_mvcc_demo CURSOR FOR
```

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, cmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DECLARE CURSOR
```

## DELETE Using Cmin

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 3  
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | cmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----+-----  
(0 rows)
```

```
FETCH ALL FROM c_mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | xmax | cmax | val  
-----+-----+-----+-----  
  5421 | 5421 |    0 | 1  
  5421 | 5421 |    1 | 2  
  5421 | 5421 |    2 | 3  
(3 rows)  
COMMIT WORK;  
COMMIT
```

A cursor had to be used because the rows were created and deleted in this transaction and therefore never visible outside this transaction.

# UPDATE Using Cmin

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;
DELETE 0
BEGIN WORK;
BEGIN
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);
INSERT 0 1
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);
INSERT 0 1
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (3);
INSERT 0 1
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
  xmin | cmin | xmax | val
-----+-----+-----+-----
  5422 |    0 |    0 |   1
  5422 |    1 |    0 |   2
  5422 |    2 |    0 |   3
(3 rows)
DECLARE c_mvcc_demo CURSOR FOR
SELECT xmin, xmax, cmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```



# UPDATE Using Cmin

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val * 10;  
UPDATE 3  
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

xmin	cmin	xmax	val
5422	3	0	10
5422	3	0	20
5422	3	0	30

(3 rows)

```
FETCH ALL FROM c_mvcc_demo;  
xmin | xmax | cmax | val
```

xmin	xmax	cmax	val
5422	5422	0	1
5422	5422	1	2
5422	5422	2	3

(3 rows)

```
COMMIT WORK;
```

```
COMMIT
```

# Modifying Rows From Different Transactions

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;  
DELETE 3  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1  
SELECT xmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;  
  xmin | xmax | val  
-----+-----+-----  
  5424 |    0 |   1  
(1 row)
```

```
BEGIN WORK;  
BEGIN  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);  
INSERT 0 1  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (3);  
INSERT 0 1  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (4);  
INSERT 0 1
```

# Modifying Rows From Different Transactions

```
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | cmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5424 | 0 | 0 | 1
```

```
5425 | 0 | 0 | 2
```

```
5425 | 1 | 0 | 3
```

```
5425 | 2 | 0 | 4
```

(4 rows)

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val * 10;
```

```
UPDATE 4
```

# Modifying Rows From Different Transactions

```
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | cmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5425 | 3 | 0 | 10
```

```
5425 | 3 | 0 | 20
```

```
5425 | 3 | 0 | 30
```

```
5425 | 3 | 0 | 40
```

```
(4 rows)
```

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, cmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | xmax | cmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5424 | 5425 | 3 | 1
```

```
(1 row)
```

```
COMMIT WORK;
```

```
COMMIT
```

## Combo Command Id

Because *cmin* and *cmax* are internally a single system column, it is impossible to simply record the status of a row that is created and expired in the same multi-statement transaction. For that reason, a special combo command id is created that references a local memory hash that contains the actual *cmin* and *cmax* values.

# UPDATE Using Combo Command Ids

*-- use TRUNCATE to remove even invisible rows*

```
TRUNCATE mvcc_demo;
```

```
TRUNCATE TABLE
```

```
BEGIN WORK;
```

```
BEGIN
```

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DELETE 0
```

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DELETE 0
```

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DELETE 0
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (3);
```

```
INSERT 0 1
```

# UPDATE Using Combo Command Ids

```
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | cmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5427 | 3 | 0 | 1
```

```
5427 | 4 | 0 | 2
```

```
5427 | 5 | 0 | 3
```

(3 rows)

```
DECLARE c_mvcc_demo CURSOR FOR
```

```
SELECT xmin, xmax, cmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DECLARE CURSOR
```

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val * 10;
```

```
UPDATE 3
```

# UPDATE Using Combo Command Ids

```
SELECT xmin, cmin, xmax, * FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | cmin | xmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5427 | 6 | 0 | 10
```

```
5427 | 6 | 0 | 20
```

```
5427 | 6 | 0 | 30
```

(3 rows)

```
FETCH ALL FROM c_mvcc_demo;
```

```
xmin | xmax | cmax | val
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
5427 | 5427 | 0 | 1
```

```
5427 | 5427 | 1 | 2
```

```
5427 | 5427 | 2 | 3
```

(3 rows)



# UPDATE Using Combo Command Ids

```
SELECT t_xmin AS xmin,
       t_xmax::text::int8 AS xmax,
       t_field3::text::int8 AS cmin_cmax,
       (t_infomask::integer & X'0020'::integer)::bool AS is_combocid
FROM heap_page_items(get_raw_page('mvcc_demo', 0))
ORDER BY 2 DESC, 3;
 xmin | xmax | cmin_cmax | is_combocid
-----+-----+-----+-----
 5427 | 5427 |          0 | t
 5427 | 5427 |          1 | t
 5427 | 5427 |          2 | t
 5427 |    0 |          6 | f
 5427 |    0 |          6 | f
 5427 |    0 |          6 | f
(6 rows)
COMMIT WORK;
COMMIT
```

The last query uses `/contrib/pageinspect`, which allows visibility of internal heap page structures and all stored rows, including those not visible in the current snapshot. (Bit `0x0020` is internally called

`HEAP_COMBOCID`.)  
MVCC Unmasked

# MVCC Implementation Summary

**xmin:** creation transaction number, set by INSERT and UPDATE

**xmax:** expire transaction number, set by UPDATE and DELETE; also used for explicit row locks

**cmin/cmax:** used to identify the command number that created or expired the tuple; also used to store combo command ids when the tuple is created and expired in the same transaction, and for explicit row locks

# Traditional Cleanup Requirements

Traditional single-row-version (non-MVCC) database systems require storage space cleanup:

- deleted rows
- rows created by aborted transactions

# MVCC Cleanup Requirements

MVCC has additional cleanup requirements:

- The creation of a new row during UPDATE (rather than replacing the existing row); the storage space taken by the old row must eventually be recycled.
- The *delayed* cleanup of deleted rows (cleanup cannot occur until there are no transactions for which the row is visible)

Postgres handles both traditional and MVCC-specific cleanup requirements.

# Cleanup Behavior

Fortunately, Postgres cleanup happens automatically:

- On-demand cleanup of a single heap page during row access, specifically when a page is accessed by SELECT, UPDATE, and DELETE
- In bulk by an autovacuum processes that runs in the background

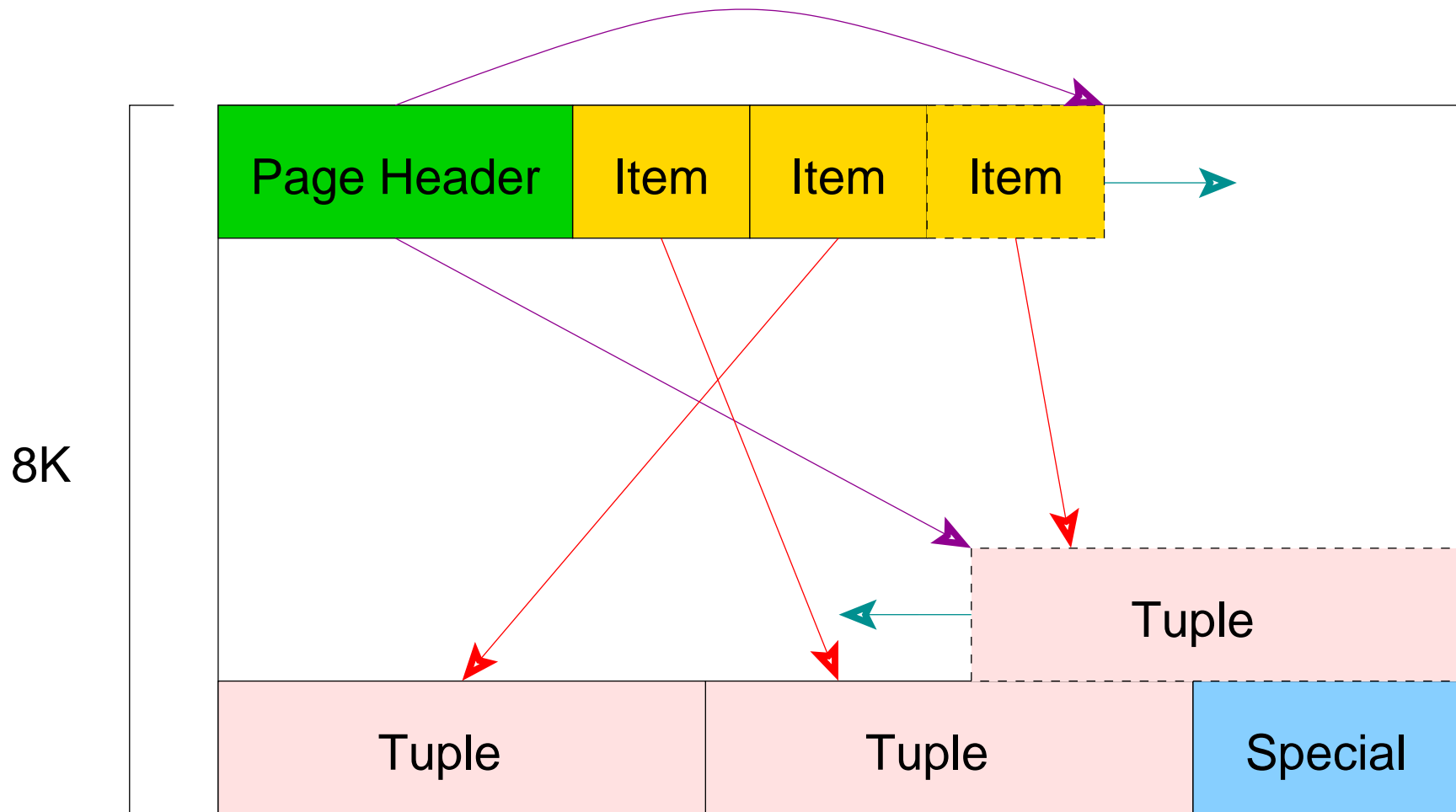
Cleanup can also be initiated manually by VACUUM.

# Aspects of Cleanup

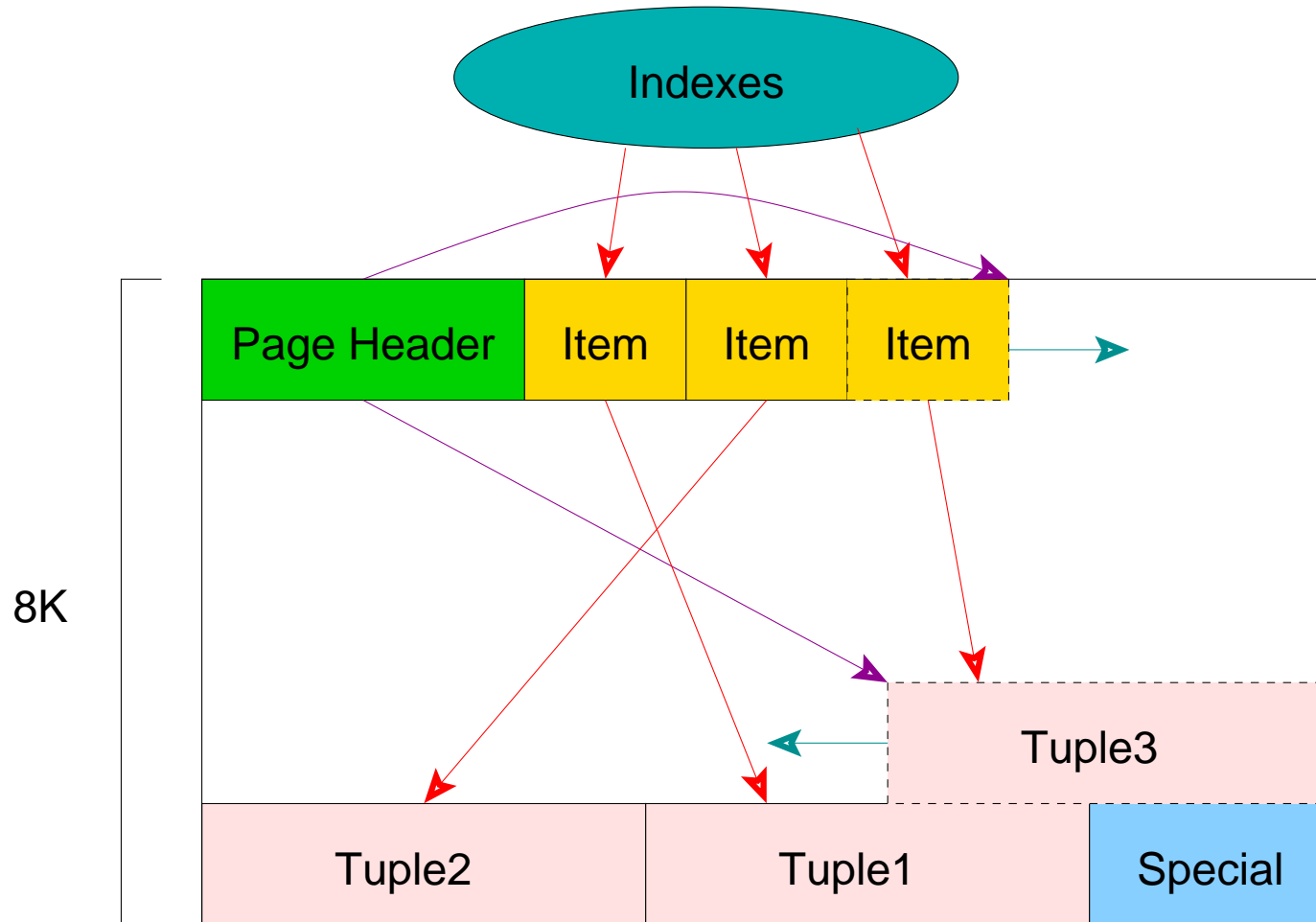
Cleanup involves recycling space taken by several entities:

- heap tuples/rows (the largest)
- heap item pointers (the smallest)
- index entries

# Internal Heap Page

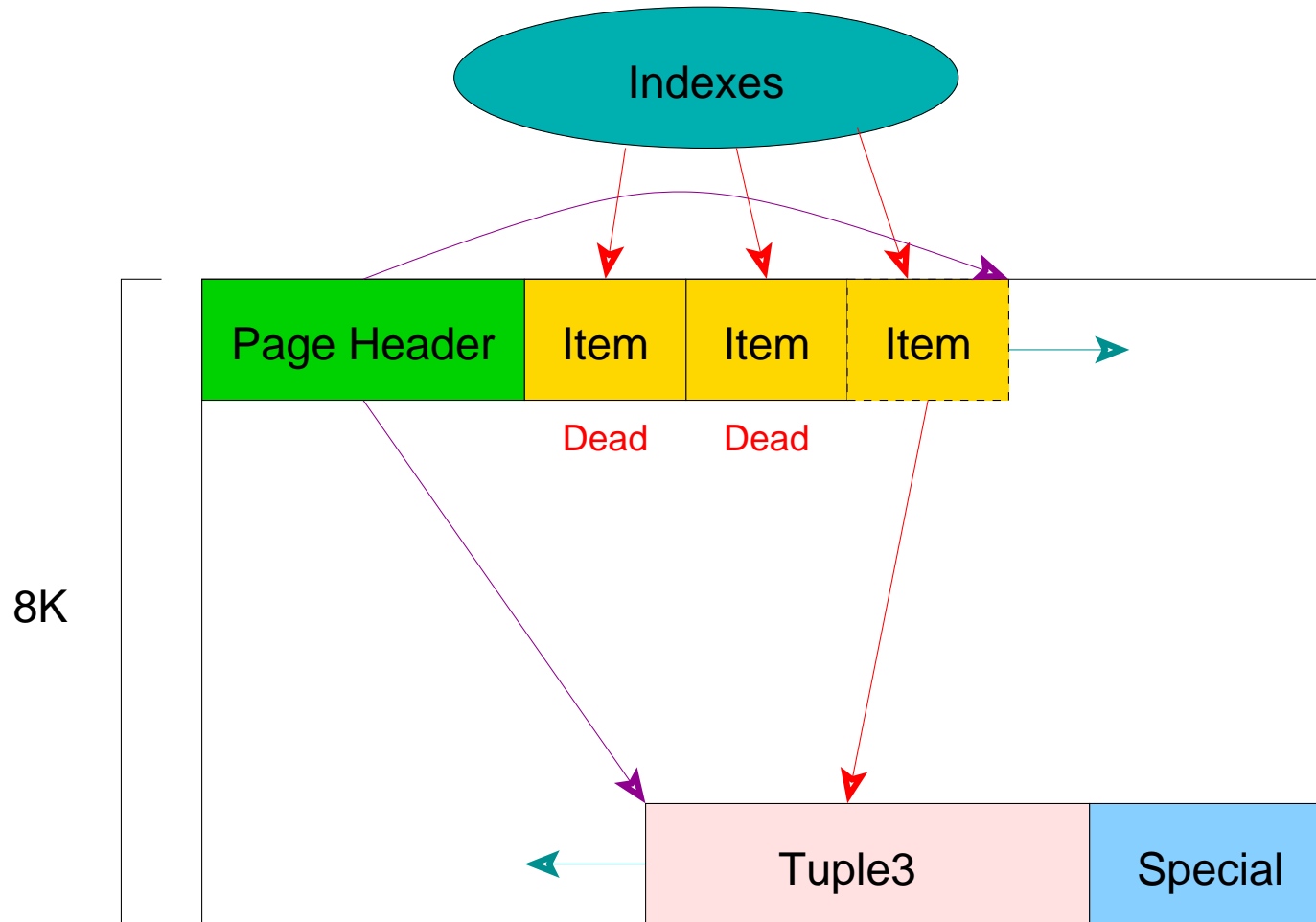


# Indexes Point to Items, Not Tuples



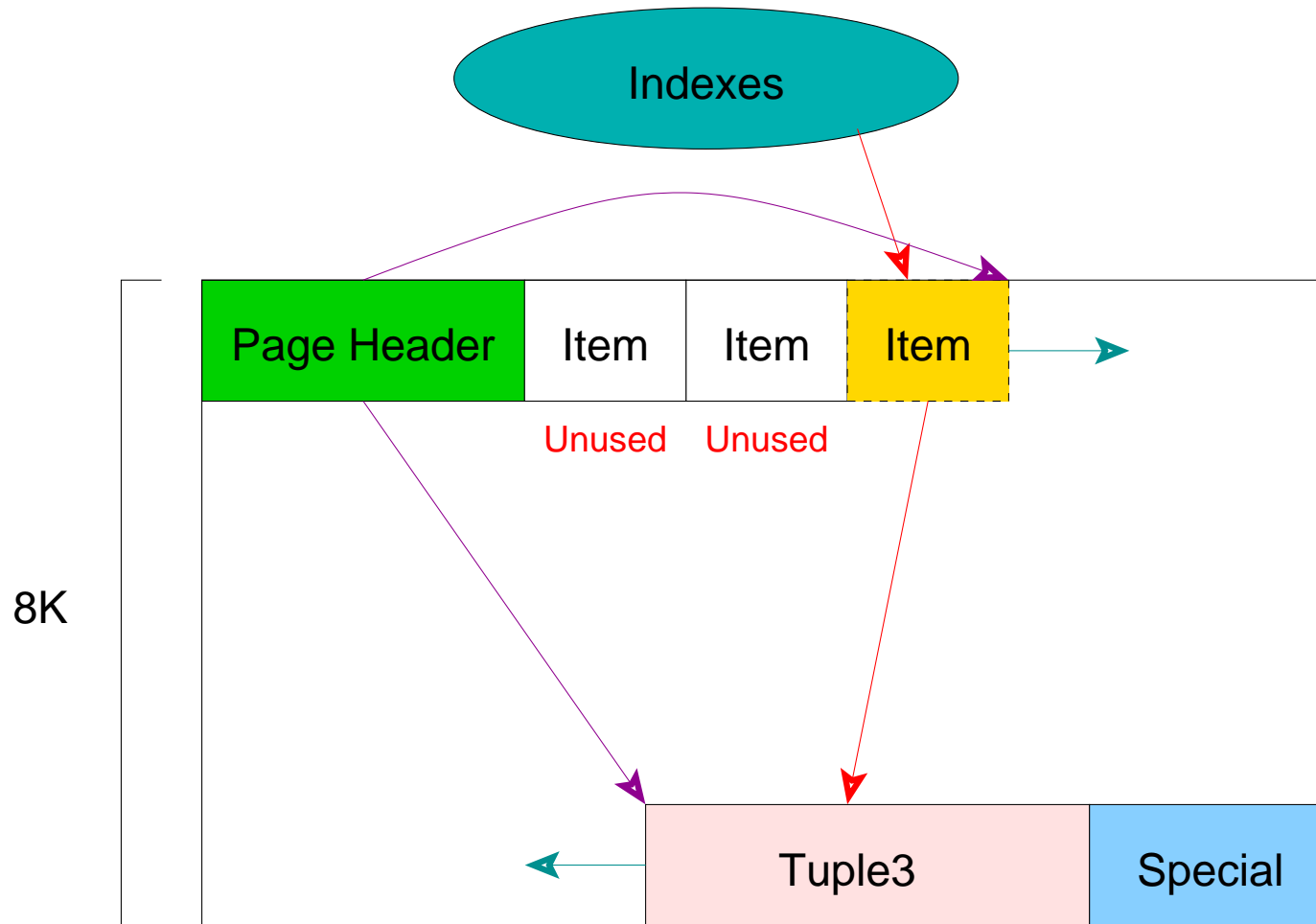


# Heap Tuple Space Recycling



Indexes prevent item pointers from being recycled.

# VACUUM Later Recycle Items



VACUUM performs index cleanup, then can mark “dead” items as “unused”.

# Cleanup of Deleted Rows

```
TRUNCATE mvcc_demo;
TRUNCATE TABLE

-- force page to < 10% empty
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo SELECT 0 FROM generate_series(1, 240);
INSERT 0 240

-- compute free space percentage
SELECT (100 * (upper - lower) / pagesize::float8)::integer AS free_pct
FROM page_header(get_raw_page('mvcc_demo', 0));
  free_pct
-----
         6
(1 row)
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);
INSERT 0 1
```

# Cleanup of Deleted Rows

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
OFFSET 240;
  ctid  | case  | xmin | xmax | t_ctid
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----
(0,241) | Normal | 5430 | 0    | (0,241)
(1 row)
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo WHERE val > 0;
DELETE 1
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);
INSERT 0 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
OFFSET 240;
  ctid  | case  | xmin | xmax | t_ctid
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----
(0,241) | Normal | 5430 | 5431 | (0,241)
(0,242) | Normal | 5432 | 0    | (0,242)
(2 rows)
```

# Cleanup of Deleted Rows

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo WHERE val > 0;
DELETE 1
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (3);
INSERT 0 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Dead			
(0,242)	Normal	5432	5433	(0,242)
(0,243)	Normal	5434	0	(0,243)

(3 rows)

In normal, multi-user usage, cleanup might have been delayed because other open transactions in the same database might still need to view the expired rows. However, the behavior would be the same, just delayed.

# Cleanup of Deleted Rows

```
-- force single-page cleanup via SELECT
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo
```

```
OFFSET 1000;
```

```
val
```

```
-----
```

```
(0 rows)
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

```
ctid | case | xmin | xmax | t_ctid
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----
```

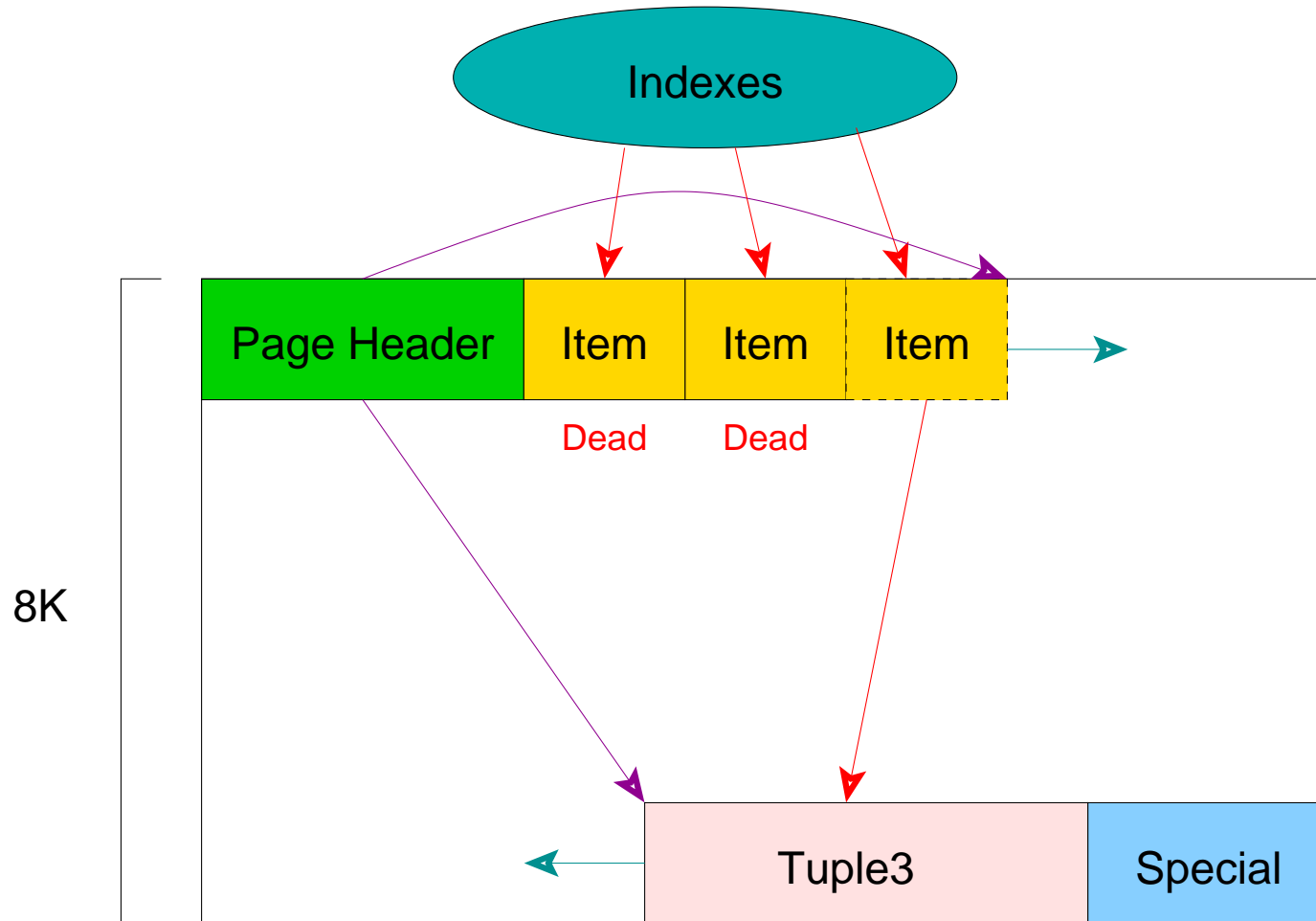
```
(0,241) | Dead |      |      |      |
```

```
(0,242) | Dead |      |      |      |
```

```
(0,243) | Normal | 5434 | 0 | (0,243)
```

```
(3 rows)
```

# Same as this Slide



# Cleanup of Deleted Rows

```
SELECT pg_freespace('mvcc_demo');
```

```
pg_freespace
```

```
-----
```

```
(0,0)
```

```
(1 row)
```

```
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
```

```
VACUUM
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

```
ctid | case | xmin | xmax | t_ctid
```

```
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----
```

```
(0,241) | Unused |      |      |
```

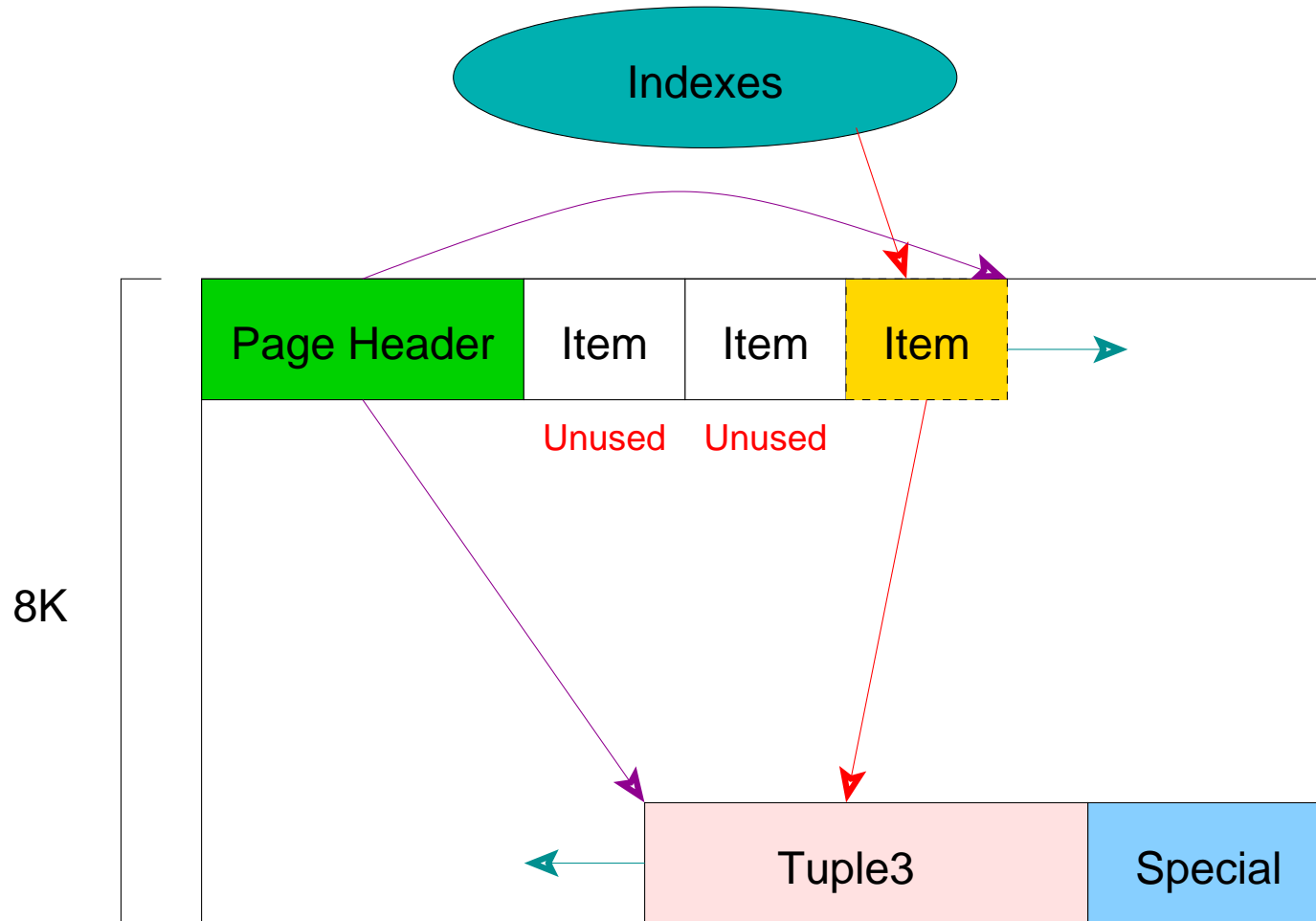
```
(0,242) | Unused |      |      |
```

```
(0,243) | Normal | 5434 | 0 | (0,243)
```

```
(3 rows)
```



# Same as this Slide



## Free Space Map (FSM)

```
SELECT pg_freespace('mvcc_demo');  
pg_freespace  
-----  
(0,416)  
(1 row)
```

VACUUM also updates the free space map (FSM), which records pages containing significant free space. This information is used to provide target pages for INSERTs and some UPDATEs (those crossing page boundaries). Single-page vacuum does not update the free space map.

# Another Free Space Map Example

```
TRUNCATE mvcc_demo;
```

```
TRUNCATE TABLE
```

```
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
```

```
VACUUM
```

```
SELECT pg_freespace('mvcc_demo');
```

```
pg_freespace
```

```
-----
```

```
(0 rows)
```

## Another Free Space Map Example

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);
INSERT 0 1
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
VACUUM
SELECT pg_freespace('mvcc_demo');
pg_freespace
```

-----

(0,8128)

(1 row)

```
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);
INSERT 0 1
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
VACUUM
SELECT pg_freespace('mvcc_demo');
pg_freespace
```

-----

(0,8096)

(1 row)

# Another Free Space Map Example

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo WHERE val = 2;  
DELETE 1  
VACUUM mvcc_demo;  
VACUUM
```

```
SELECT pg_freespace('mvcc_demo');  
pg_freespace  
-----  
 (0,8128)  
(1 row)
```

## VACUUM Also Removes End-of-File Pages

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo WHERE val = 1;
DELETE 1
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
VACUUM
```

```
SELECT pg_freespace('mvcc_demo');
   pg_freespace
```

```
-----
```

(0 rows)

```
SELECT pg_relation_size('mvcc_demo');
   pg_relation_size
```

```
-----
```

0

(1 row)

VACUUM FULL shrinks the table file to its minimum size, but requires an exclusive table lock.

# Optimized Single-Page Cleanup of Old UPDATE Rows

The storage space taken by old UPDATE tuples can be reclaimed just like deleted rows. However, certain UPDATE rows can even have their items reclaimed, i.e. it is possible to reuse certain old UPDATE items, rather than marking them as “dead” and requiring VACUUM to reclaim them after removing referencing index entries.

Specifically, such item reuse is possible with special HOT update (heap-only tuple) chains, where the chain is on a single heap page and all indexed values in the chain are identical.

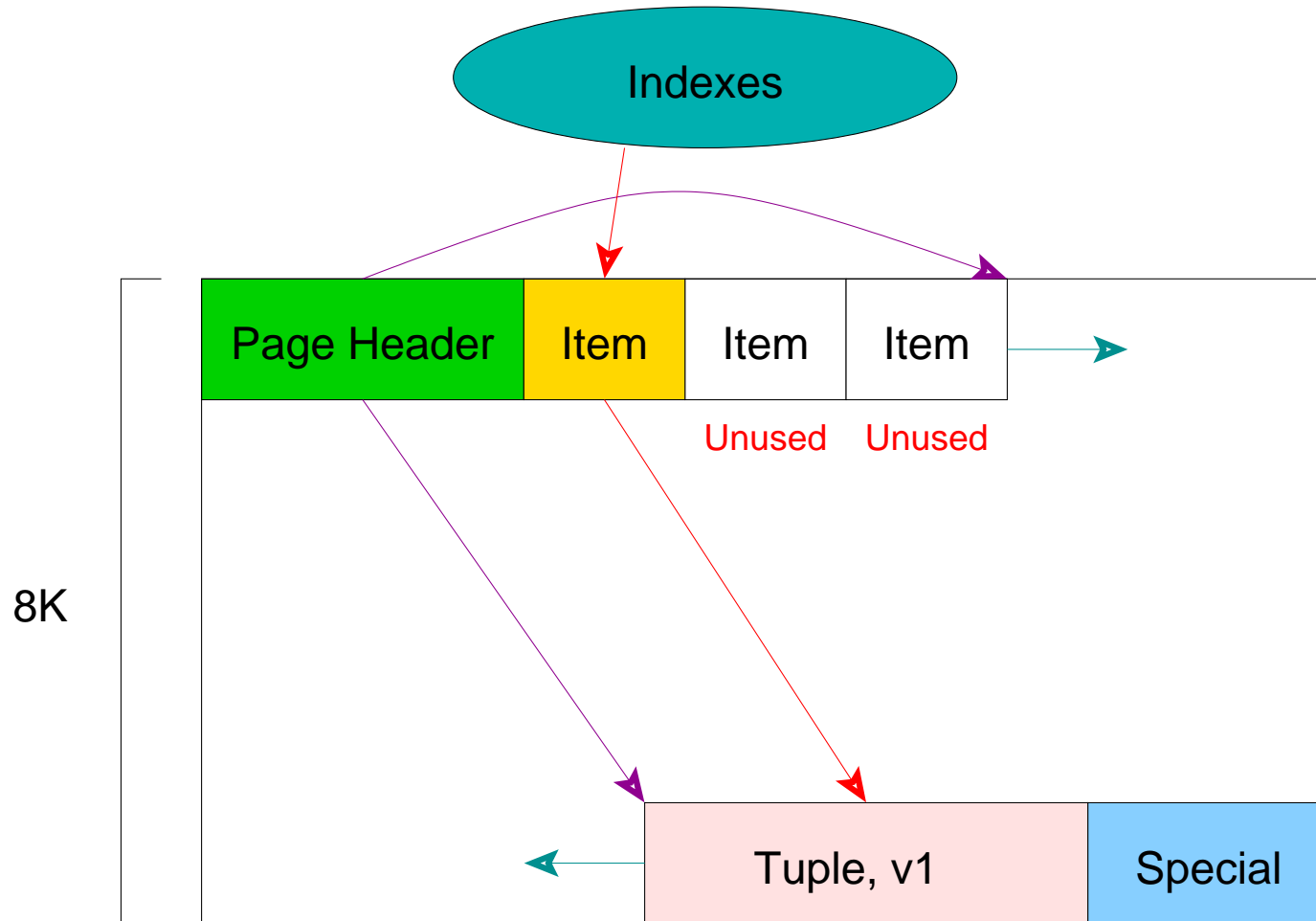
## Single-Page Cleanup of HOT UPDATE Rows

HOT update items can be freed (marked “unused”) if they are in the middle of the chain, i.e. not at the beginning or end of the chain. At the head of the chain is a special “Redirect” item pointers that are referenced by indexes; this is possible because all indexed values are identical in a HOT/redirect chain.

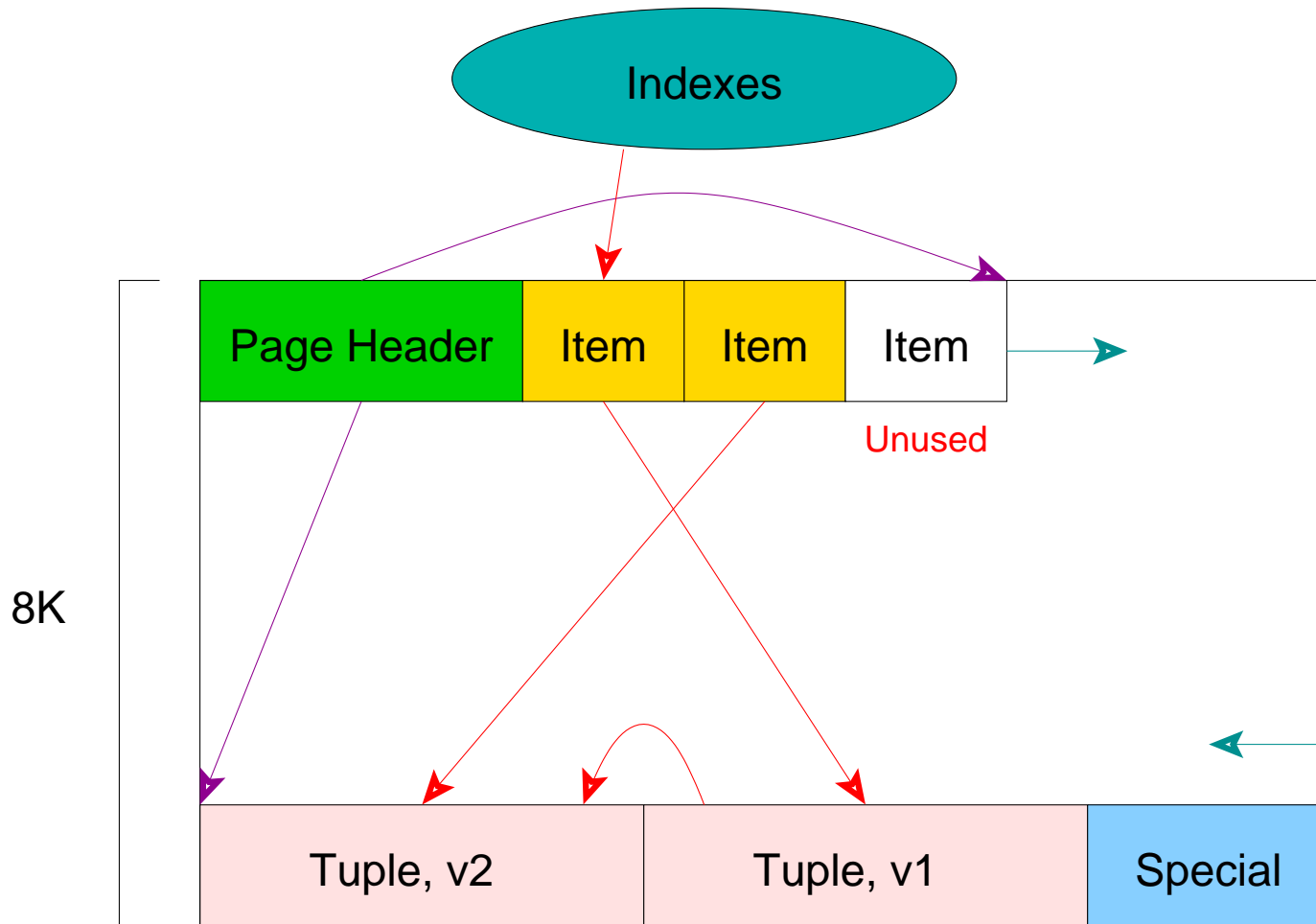
Index creation with HOT chains is complex because the chains might contain inconsistent values for the newly indexed columns. This is handled by indexing just the end of the HOT chain and allowing the index to be used only by transactions that start after the index has been created. (Specifically, post-index-creation transactions cannot see the inconsistent HOT chain values due to MVCC visibility rules; they only see the end of the chain.)



# Initial Single-Row State

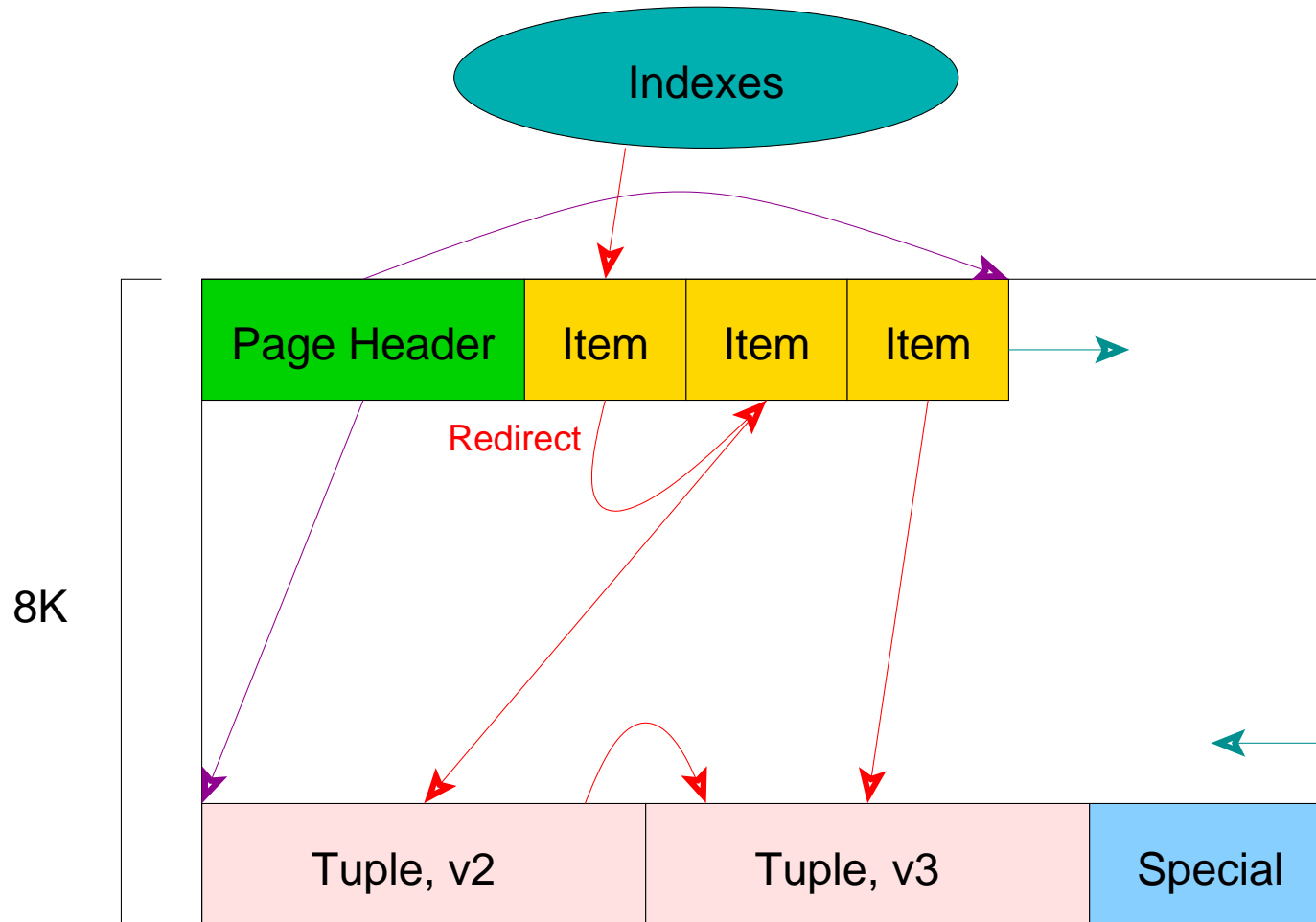


# UPDATE Adds a New Row

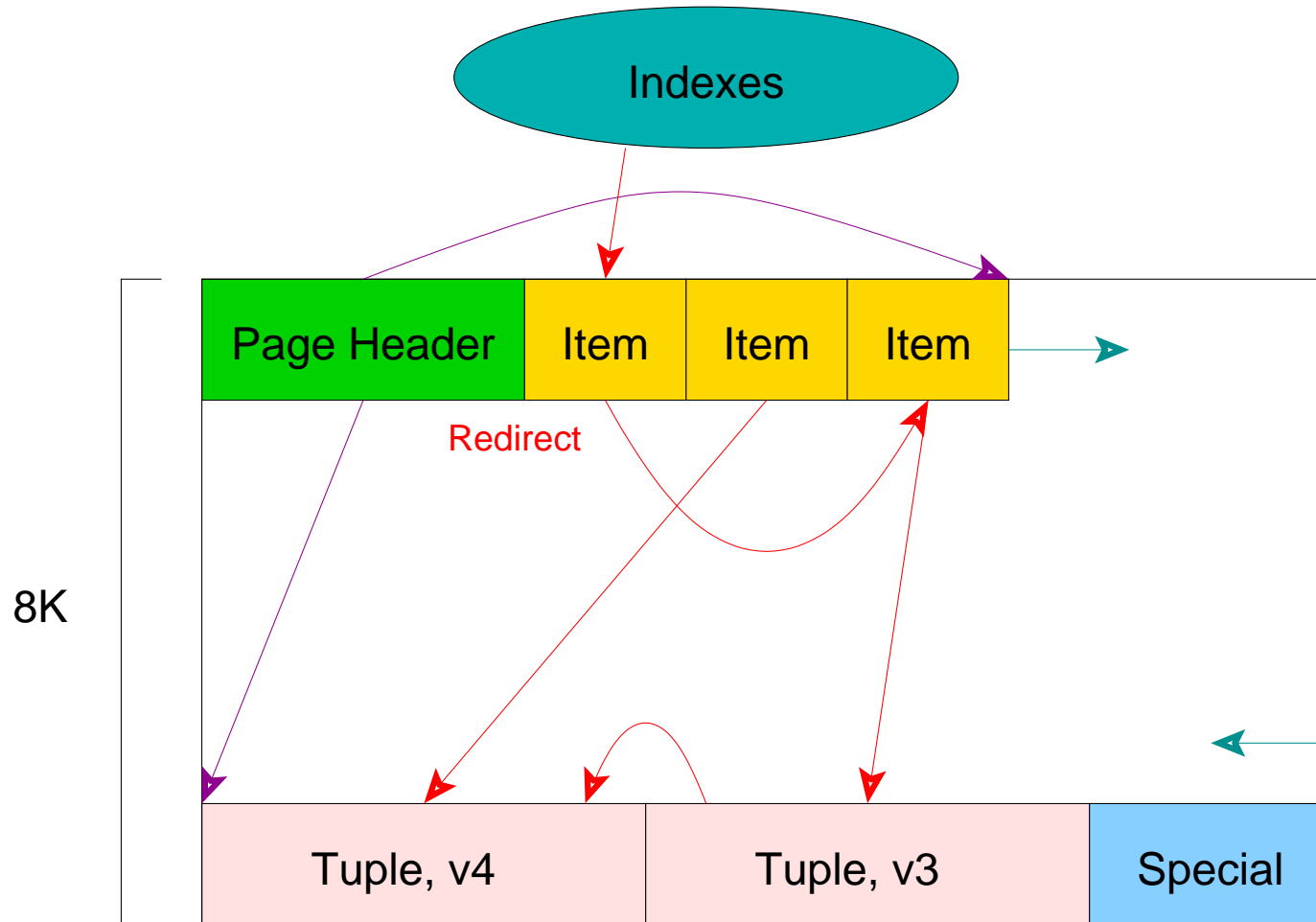


No index entry added because indexes only point to the head of the HOT chain.

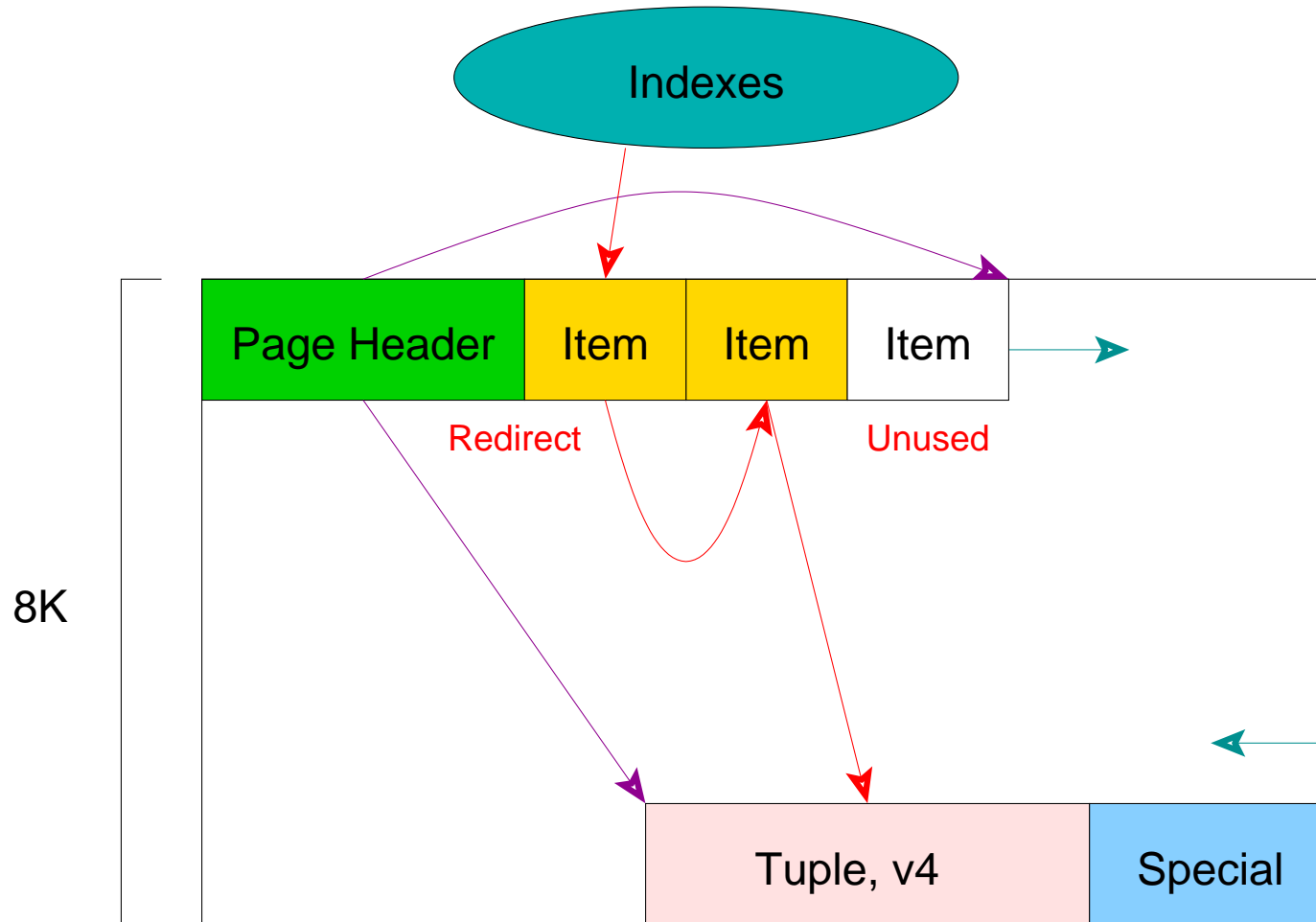
# Redirect Allows Indexes To Remain Valid



# UPDATE Replaces Another Old Row



# All Old UPDATE Row Versions Eventually Removed



This cleanup was performed by another operation on the same page.

# Cleanup of Old Updated Rows

```
TRUNCATE mvcc_demo;  
TRUNCATE TABLE  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo SELECT 0 FROM generate_series(1, 240);  
INSERT 0 240  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0  
OFFSET 240;  
  ctid  | case | xmin | xmax | t_ctid  
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----  
 (0,241) | Normal | 5437 | 0 | (0,241)  
(1 row)
```

# Cleanup of Old Updated Rows

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val + 1 WHERE val > 0;
```

```
UPDATE 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Normal	5437	5438	(0,242)
(0,242)	Normal	5438	0	(0,242)

(2 rows)

# Cleanup of Old Updated Rows

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val + 1 WHERE val > 0;
```

```
UPDATE 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

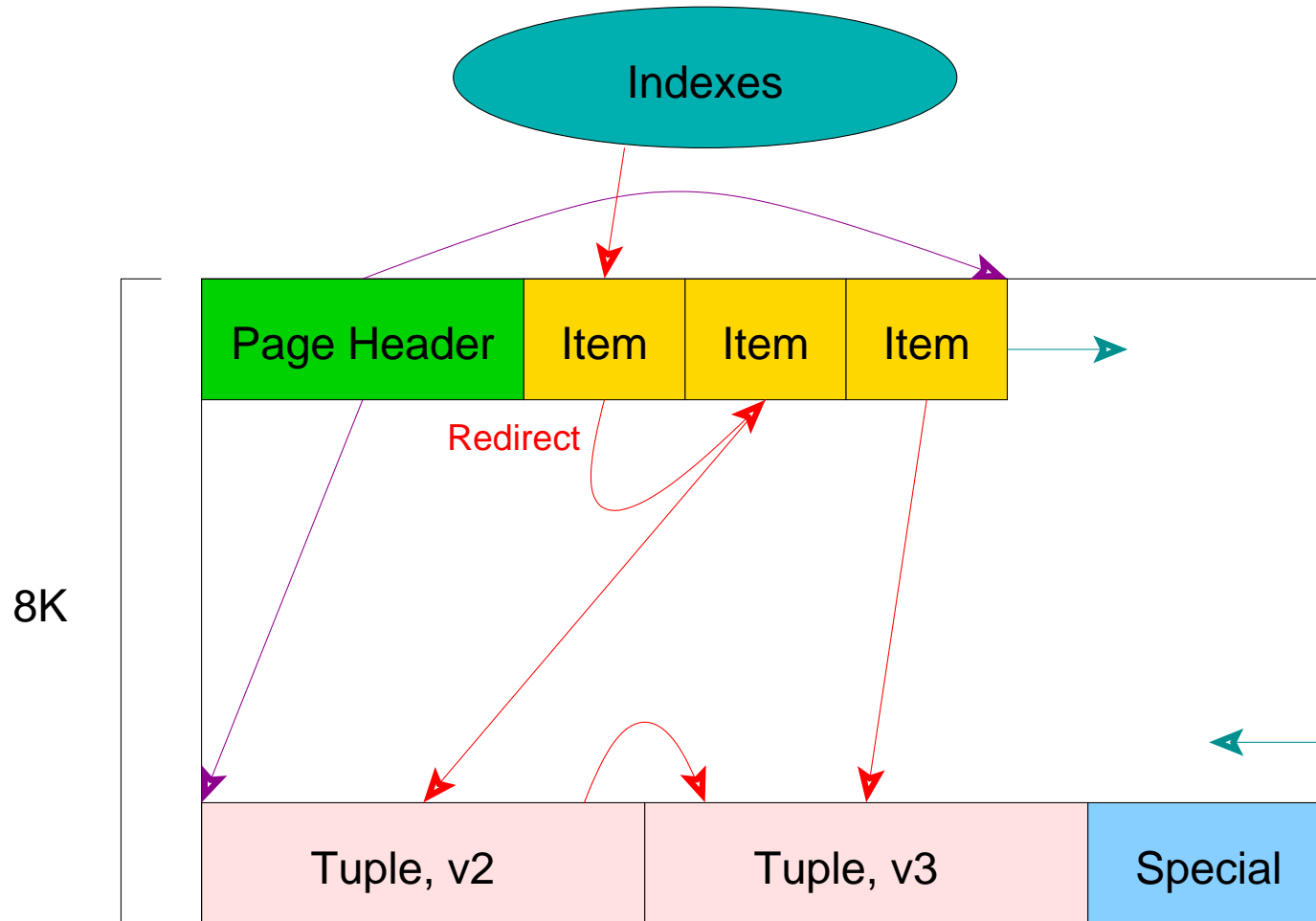
ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Redirect to 242			
(0,242)	Normal	5438	5439	(0,243)
(0,243)	Normal	5439	0	(0,243)

(3 rows)

No index entry added because indexes only point to the head of the HOT chain.



# Same as this Slide



# Cleanup of Old Updated Rows

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val + 1 WHERE val > 0;
```

```
UPDATE 1
```

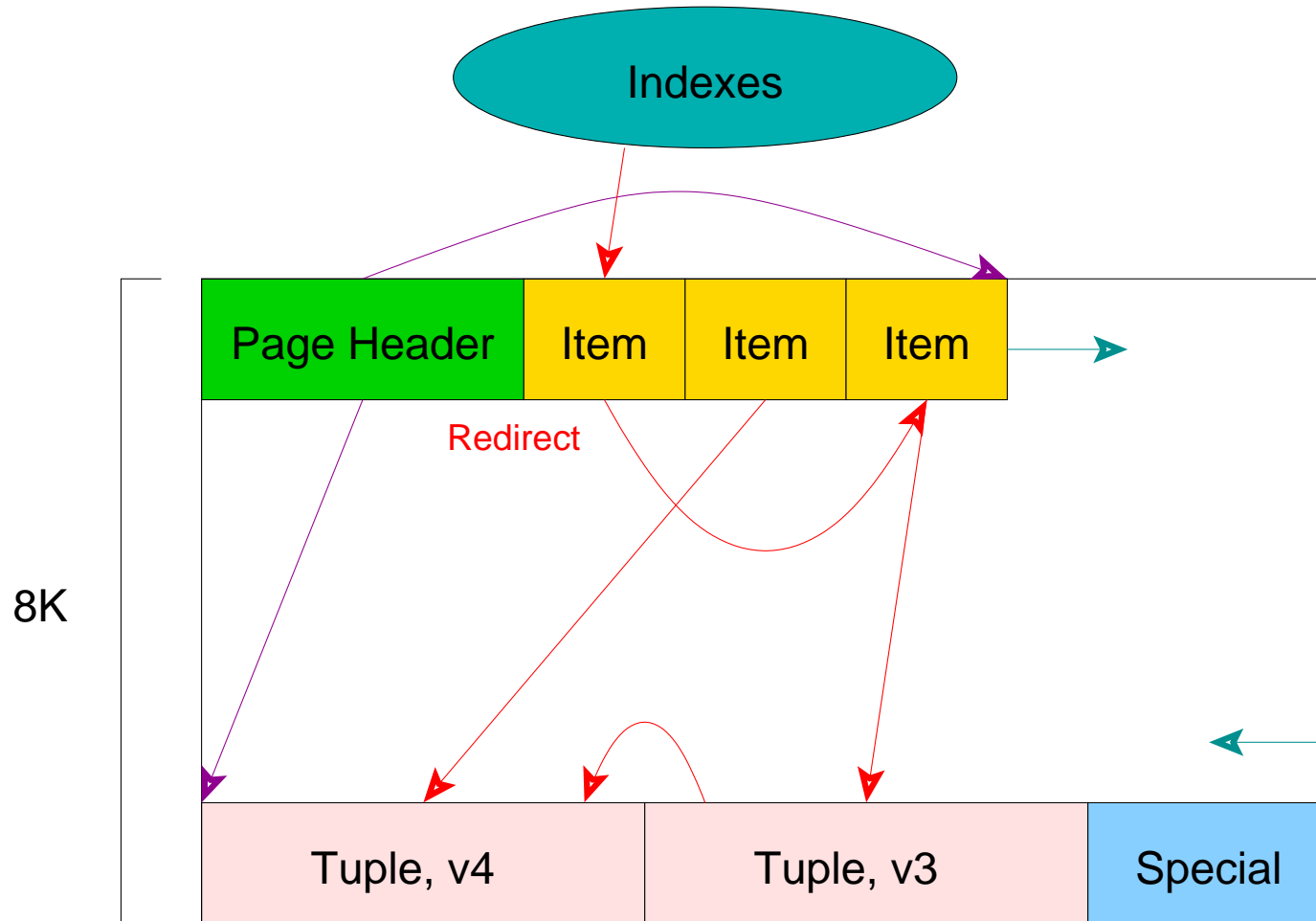
```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Redirect to 243			
(0,242)	Normal	5440	0	(0,242)
(0,243)	Normal	5439	5440	(0,242)

(3 rows)

# Same as this Slide



# Cleanup of Old Updated Rows

-- transaction now committed, HOT chain allows tid to be marked as ''Unused''

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo  
OFFSET 1000;
```

val

-----

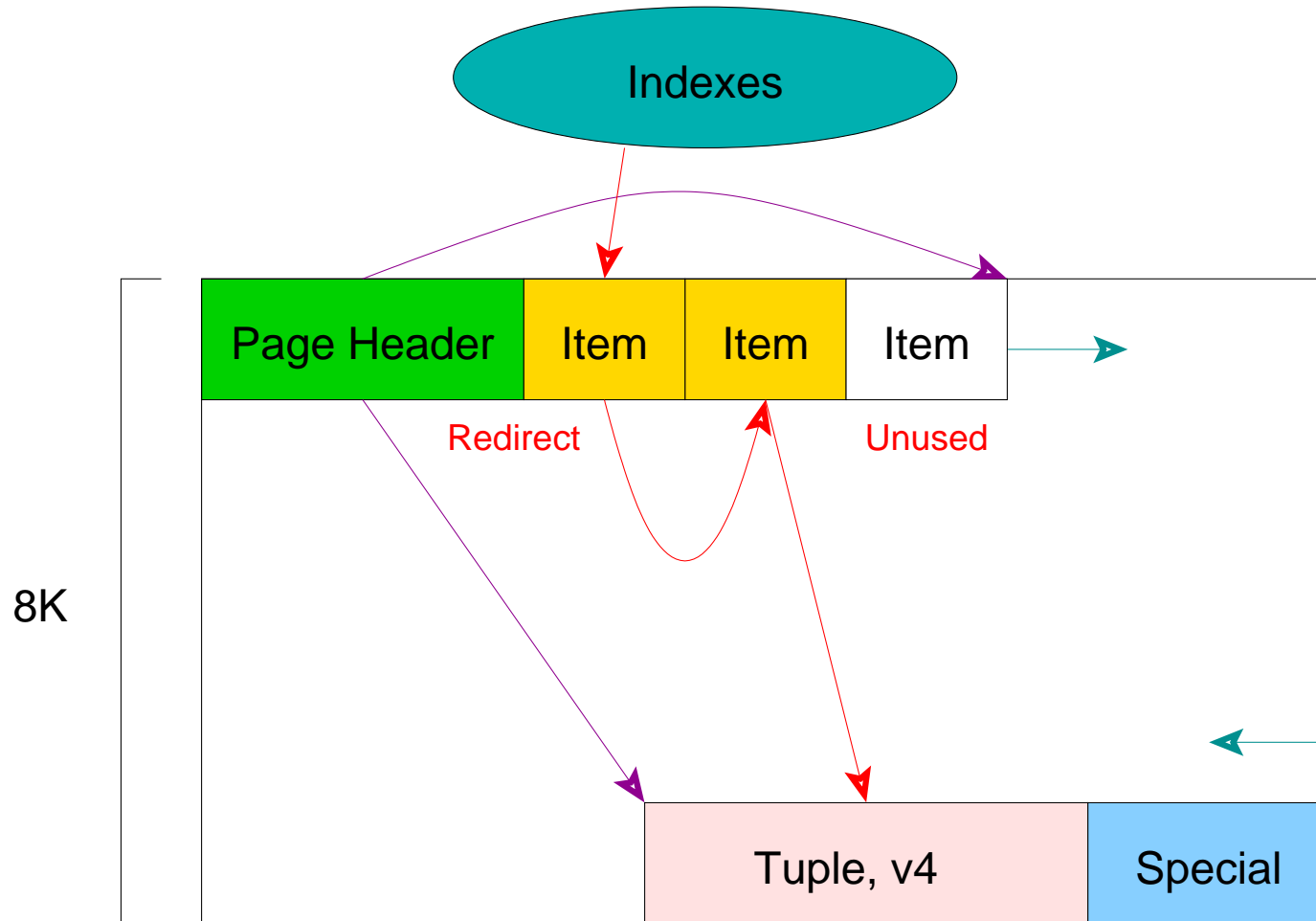
(0 rows)

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0  
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Redirect to 242			
(0,242)	Normal	5440	0	(0,242)
(0,243)	Unused			

(3 rows)

# Same as this Slide



# VACUUM Does Not Remove the Redirect

```
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
```

```
VACUUM
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Redirect to 242			
(0,242)	Normal	5440	0	(0,242)
(0,243)	Unused			

(3 rows)

# Cleanup Using Manual VACUUM

```
TRUNCATE mvcc_demo;  
TRUNCATE TABLE  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (2);  
INSERT 0 1  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (3);  
INSERT 0 1
```

```
SELECT ctid, xmin, xmax  
FROM mvcc_demo_page0;
```

```
 ctid | xmin | xmax
```

```
-----+-----+-----
```

```
(0,1) | 5442 | 0
```

```
(0,2) | 5443 | 0
```

```
(0,3) | 5444 | 0
```

```
(3 rows)
```

```
DELETE FROM mvcc_demo;
```

```
DELETE 3
```

# Cleanup Using Manual VACUUM

```
SELECT ctid, xmin, xmax  
FROM mvcc_demo_page0;
```

ctid	xmin	xmax
(0,1)	5442	5445
(0,2)	5443	5445
(0,3)	5444	5445

(3 rows)

*-- too small to trigger autovacuum*

```
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
```

```
VACUUM
```

```
SELECT pg_relation_size('mvcc_demo');  
pg_relation_size
```

0
---

(1 row)



# The Indexed UPDATE Problem

The updating of any indexed columns prevents the use of “redirect” items because the chain must be usable by all indexes, i.e. a redirect/HOT UPDATE cannot require additional index entries due to an indexed value change.

In such cases, item pointers can only be marked as “dead”, like DELETE does.

No previously shown UPDATE queries modified indexed columns.

# Index mvcc\_demo Column

```
CREATE INDEX i_mvcc_demo_val on mvcc_demo (val);  
CREATE INDEX
```

# UPDATE of an Indexed Column

```
TRUNCATE mvcc_demo;  
TRUNCATE TABLE  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo SELECT 0 FROM generate_series(1, 240);  
INSERT 0 240  
INSERT INTO mvcc_demo VALUES (1);  
INSERT 0 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0  
OFFSET 240;  
  ctid  | case | xmin | xmax | t_ctid  
-----+-----+-----+-----+-----  
 (0,241) | Normal | 5449 | 0 | (0,241)  
(1 row)
```

# UPDATE of an Indexed Column

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val + 1 WHERE val > 0;
```

```
UPDATE 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Normal	5449	5450	(0,242)
(0,242)	Normal	5450	0	(0,242)

```
(2 rows)
```

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val + 1 WHERE val > 0;
```

```
UPDATE 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Dead			
(0,242)	Normal	5450	5451	(0,243)
(0,243)	Normal	5451	0	(0,243)

```
(3 rows)
```

# UPDATE of an Indexed Column

```
UPDATE mvcc_demo SET val = val + 1 WHERE val > 0;
```

```
UPDATE 1
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Dead			
(0,242)	Dead			
(0,243)	Normal	5451	5452	(0,244)
(0,244)	Normal	5452	0	(0,244)

(4 rows)

# UPDATE of an Indexed Column

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo  
OFFSET 1000;  
val
```

-----

(0 rows)

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0  
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Dead			
(0,242)	Dead			
(0,243)	Dead			
(0,244)	Normal	5452	0	(0,244)

(4 rows)

# UPDATE of an Indexed Column

```
VACUUM mvcc_demo;
```

```
VACUUM
```

```
SELECT * FROM mvcc_demo_page0
```

```
OFFSET 240;
```

ctid	case	xmin	xmax	t_ctid
(0,241)	Unused			
(0,242)	Unused			
(0,243)	Unused			
(0,244)	Normal	5452	0	(0,244)

(4 rows)

# Cleanup Summary

Cleanup Method	Triggered By	Scope	Reuse Heap Tuples?	Non-HOT Item State	HOT Item State	Clean Indexes?	Update FSM
Single-Page	SELECT, UPDATE, DELETE	single heap page	yes	dead	unused	no	no
VACUUM	autovacuum or manually	all potential heap pages	yes	unused	unused	yes	yes

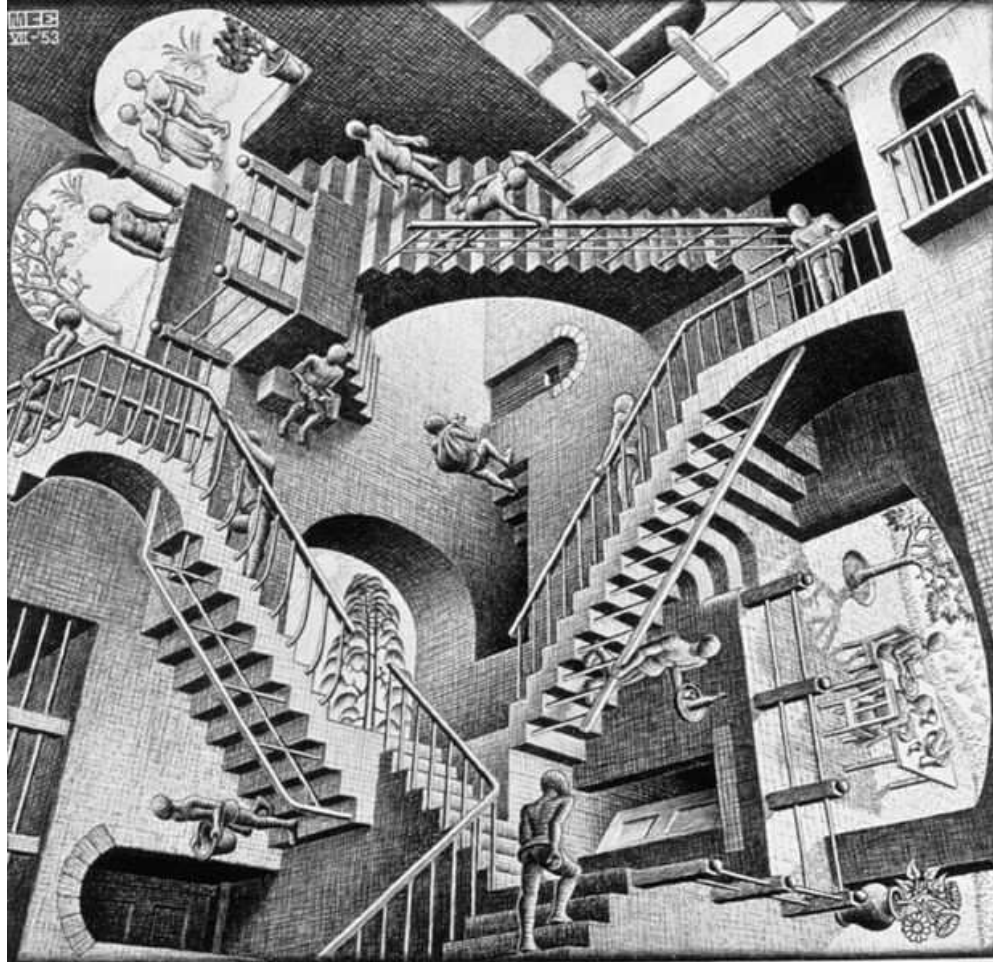
Cleanup is possible only when there are no active transactions for which the tuples are visible.

HOT items are UPDATE chains that span a single page and contain identical indexed column values.

In normal usage, single-page cleanup performs the majority of the cleanup work, while VACUUM reclaims “dead” item pointers, removes unnecessary index entries, and updates the free space map (FSM).



# Conclusion



All the queries used in this presentation are available at <http://momjian.us/main/writings/pgsql/mvcc.sql>.

*<http://momjian.us/presentations>*  
MVCC Unmasked

*Escher, Relativity*  
89