ECE 590-03: Enterprise Storage
Fall 2016
Homework 1

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1. You are optimizing software where the bottleneck is random I/O access to a hard disk drive. You identify two possible improvements: (a) a change to the on-disk data structure so that related data is closer together and often contiguous, or (b) a change so that each record is compressed to a smaller size, but the on-disk layout is otherwise unaffected. Without knowing any additional facts, which do you guess is worth trying first? Why?

2. You have a workload that requires 20 TB of capacity and 200,000 IOPS of random I/O performance. You're going to support it with a storage array, and are deciding between buying Samsung 850 EVO 2TB SSDs or Western Digital Black-series 6TB HDDs.

    a. Research the two drives, and identify published benchmarks for IOPS performance (don't trust manufacturer datasheets). Hint: IOmeter is a common benchmark used for this purpose, and makes a good Google term. You can assume the I/O size is 4kB. Include a link to your sources.

    b. Identify the current street price for each drive. Include a link to your sources.

    c. Ignoring RAID effects and assuming performance is simply additive, how many SSDs are needed? Is this number driven by capacity or performance?

    d. Ignoring RAID effects and assuming performance is simply additive, how many HDDs are needed? Is this number driven by capacity or performance?

    e. How much would each option cost, and which is cheaper?

3. Here's a quick bunch of RAID layout questions.

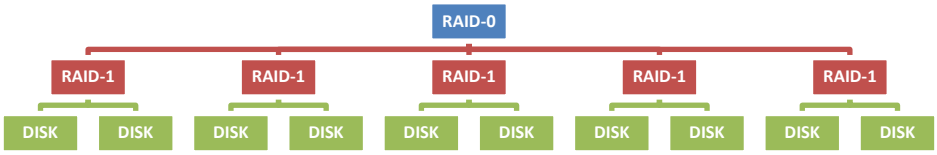
    a. How many disks can fail in a 4-disk RAID-0 without data loss? What fraction of the storage is dedicated to redundancy? What is the read throughput relative to using a single disk? What is the write throughput?

    b. How many disks can fail in a 2-disk RAID-1 without data loss? What fraction of the storage is dedicated to redundancy? What is the read throughput relative to using a single disk? What is the write throughput?

    c. How many disks can fail in a 6-disk RAID-5 without data loss? What fraction of the storage is dedicated to redundancy? What is the read throughput relative to using a single disk?

d. How many disks can fail in a 18-disk RAID-6 without data loss? What fraction of the storage is dedicated to redundancy? What is the read throughput relative to using a single disk?

e. Assume a RAID-1+0 with 10 disks organized into a RAID-0 of five 2-disk RAID-1 sets, as shown below:



What is the minimum number of disk failures that can cause data loss? What is the maximum that can fail *without* data loss? What fraction of the storage is dedicated to redundancy?

4. What role do *hot spares* play in RAID deployments?

5. Why is a RAID configuration **not** the same as a backup solution? Describe a scenario in which data loss could occur without disk failure.

6. Many vendors have developed extensions to the standard RAID levels, and studying these can offer interesting insight into the engineering trade-offs involved in designing a storage subsystem. Choose **two** of the questions below to research and answer. The Wikipedia article "Non-standard RAID Levels" can be a good starting point in your research.

   a. The Linux software RAID driver ("md") has a dedicated RAID-10 mode that offers some unique features. In this approach, describe the "near" and "far" layouts. What benefits to these techniques have?

   b. What is RAID-1E? What is the storage overhead for this approach? For a 5-disk RAID-1E, what is the minimum number of disk failures needed to cause data loss, and *which* disks must fail in this scenario? What is the maximum number of disks that can fail *without* data loss? What performance effects does this approach have?

   c. What is the primary advantage of RAID 5E, 5EE, and 6E? What are the disadvantages? What factors would influence you to choose one of these approaches over a traditional RAID approach?

   d. BeyondRAID is an approach taken in the Drobo line of consumer storage devices. It allows drives of varying capacity to be used while still providing single-disk-failure redundancy. How does this technology work? How could you replicate a BeyondRAID-style layout using nothing but normal partitioning and a software RAID system, e.g. Linux "md"?