

Accellera SystemVerilog Assertions

| Design Working Group - Working Proposal (Rev0.79)

1/22/03

Section 11 Assertions

This is a working proposal for SystemVerilog Assertions. There are still a number of issues to be settled, but this is an attempt to document what has been proposed and/or agreed to by the DWG. There are a number of outstanding issues still to be decided:

NOTE: Following issues are still open for discussion, and have not been decided.

- Mixing clock expressions in a single sequential expression
- Recognizing sequences from one clock domain in a different clock domain

11.1 Introduction (informative)

System Verilog adds features to specify assertions (or properties) of a system. An assertion specifies a specific behavior of the system. There are two kinds of assertions: concurrent or immediate.

Immediate assertions follow event semantics for their execution and get executed like a statement in a procedural block. Immediate assertions are primarily intended to be used with simulation.

Concurrent assertions are based on clock semantics and use sampled values of variables. One of the goals of SystemVerilog assertions is to provide a common semantic meaning for assertions so that they may be used to drive various design and verification tools. Many tools, such as formal verification tools, evaluate circuit descriptions using a cycle-based semantic which typically relies on a clock signal or signals to drive the evaluation of the circuit. Any timing or event behavior between clock edges is abstracted away. Concurrent assertions incorporate this clock semantics. While this approach generally simplifies the evaluation of a circuit description, there are a number of scenarios under which this cycle-based evaluation provides different behavior from the standard event-based evaluation of SystemVerilog.

This chapter describes both types of assertions.

11.2 Immediate assertions

The immediate assertion statement is a test of an expression performed when the statement is executed in the procedural code. The expression is treated as a condition like in an if statement. The syntax of the immediate assertion statement is as follow.

```

immediate_assertion ::=
    [ identifier ':' ] 'check' '(' expression ')' action_block
action_block ::=
    statement_or_null [ 'else' statement_or_null ]
statement_or_null ::=
    statement
    | ';'

```

The statement associated with the success of the assert statement is called pass statement, and is executed if the expression evaluates to true. As with the **if** statement, if the expression evaluates to 'X', 'Z' or '0', then the

assertion fails. The pass statement may, for example, record the number of successes for a coverage log, but may be omitted altogether. If the pass statement is omitted, then no user specified action is taken when the assert expression is true. The statement associated with **else** is called fail statement, and is executed if the assertion fails (i.e. the expression does not evaluate to a known, non-zero value) and can be omitted. The optional assertion label (identifier and colon) creates a named block around the assertion statement (or any other SystemVerilog statement) and can be displayed using the `%m` format code.

```
assert_foo : check (foo) $display("%m passed"); else $display("%m failed");
```

Since the assertion is a statement that something must be true, the failure of an assertion shall have a severity associated with it. By default, the severity of an assertion failure is “error”. Other severity levels may be specified by including one of the following severity system tasks in the fail statement.

- **\$fatal** is a run-time Fatal, which terminates the simulation with an error code. The first argument passed to **\$fatal** shall be consistent with the argument to **\$finish**.
- **\$error** is a Run-time Error.
- **\$warning** is a Run-time Warning, which can be suppressed in a tool-specific manner.
- **\$info** indicates that the assertion failure carries no specific severity.

The syntax for these system tasks is shown in section 16.4 of System Verilog3.0 LRM.

All of these severity system tasks shall print a tool-specific message indicating the severity of the failure, and specific information about the specific failure, which shall include the following information:

- The file name and line number of the assertion statement,
- The hierarchical name of the assertion, if it is labeled, or the scope of the assertion if it is not labeled.

For simulation tools, these tasks shall also include the simulation run-time at which the severity system task is called.

Each system task can also include additional user-specified information using the same format as the Verilog **\$display**.

If more than one of these system tasks is included in the **else** clause, then each shall be executed as specified.

If an assertion fails and no **else** clause is specified, the tool shall, by default, call **\$error**, unless a tool-specific command-line option is enabled to suppress the failure.

If the severity system task is executed at a time other than when the assertion fails, the actual failure time of the assertion can be recorded and displayed programmatically. For example:

```
time t;

always @(posedge clk)
    if(state == REQ)
        check(req1 || req2)
        else begin
            t = $time;
            #5 $error("assert failed at time %0t",t);
        end
```

If the assertion fails at time 10, the error message will be printed at time 15, but the user-defined string printed will be “assert failed at time 10”.

The display of messages of warning and info types can be controlled by a tool-specific command-line option.

Since the fail statement, like the pass statement, is any legal SystemVerilog procedural statement, it can also be

used to signal a failure to another part of the testbench.

```
check (myfunc(a,b)) count1 = count + 1; else ->event1;
check (y == 0); else flag = 1;
```

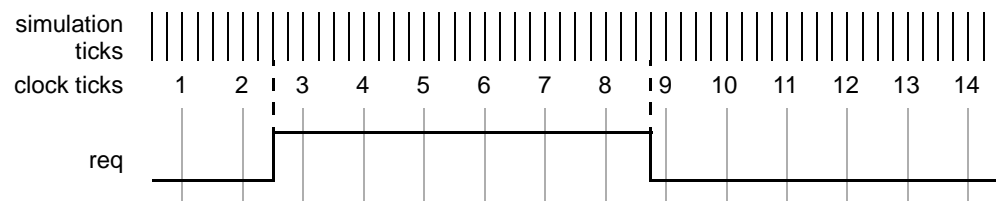
11.3 Concurrent assertions

Concurrent assertions describe behavior that spans over time. The evaluation model is based on a clock such that a concurrent assertion is evaluated only at the occurrence of a clock tick. The values of variables used in the evaluation are the sampled values. This way, a predictable result can be obtained from the evaluation, regardless of the simulator's internal mechanism of ordering events and evaluating events. This model of execution also corresponds to the synthesis model of hardware interpretation from an RTL description.

The timing model employed in concurrent assertion specification is based on clock ticks, and uses a generalized notion of clock cycles. The definition of a clock is explicitly specified by the user, and can vary from one expression to another. In addition, a user can choose to use the simulation time as a clock to express asynchronous events.

A clock tick is an atomic moment in time and implies that there is no duration of time in a clock tick. It is also given that a clock may tick only once at any simulation time. The value of a variable in an expression at a clock tick is sampled at the end of one simulation timestep (i.e. at read-only synchronization time, as defined by the PLI) before the clock tick. In an assertion, the sampled value is the only valid value of a variable at a clock tick. Figure 11-1 shows the values of a variable as the clock progresses. The value of signal `req` is low at clock ticks 1 and 2. At clock tick 3, the value is sampled as high and remains high until clock tick 9. The value of variable `req` at clock tick 9 is low and remains low.

Figure 11-1—Sampling a Variable on Simulation Ticks



The sampled value of a signal with respect to its clock is the value of the variable at the end of the simulation time (i.e. read-only sync) before the clock event occurs.

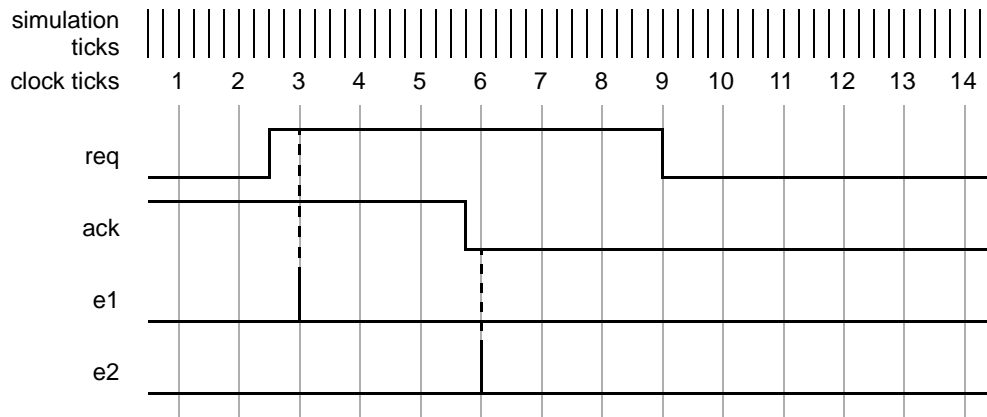
An expression is always tied to a clock definition. The values of variables are sampled only at clock ticks. These values are used to evaluate edge expressions (such as `rose` and `fell`) or boolean sub-expressions that are required to determine a match with respect to a sequence expression.

A value change expression at a clock tick detects the change in value of an expression from the value of that expression at the previous clock tick. The result of a value change expression is true or false, and can be used as a boolean expression.

For example, when a signal changes its value from low to high (a rising edge), it is considered a `$rose` edge. Figure 11-2 illustrates two examples of edges:

- value change expression `e1` is defined as (`$rose req`)
- value change expression `e2` is defined as (`$fell ack`)

Figure 11-2—Value Change Expressions



The clock used for sampling the events is different than the simulation ticks. Assume, for now, that this clock is defined in this language elsewhere. At clock tick 3, edge e1 occurs because the value of `req` at clock tick 2 was low and at clock tick 3, the value is high. Similarly, edge e2 occurs at clock tick 6 because the value of `ack` was sampled as high at clock tick 5 and sampled as low at clock tick 6.

NOTE: A vertical bar, in figures like Figure 11-2, without an arrow on the top or the bottom of the bar indicates an occurrence of an edge expression.

NOTE: The two words “clock tick” and “sampling event” are used synonymously in this document.

The clock expression that controls evaluation of a sequence may be more complex than just a single signal name. An expression such as `(clk && gate)` could be used to represent a gated clock. Other more complex expressions are possible. In order to ensure proper behavior of the system and conform as closely as possible to truly cycle-based semantics, the signals in a clock expression must be glitch-free and may only transition once at any simulation time. The clock expressions must be evaluated with zero delay.

11.4 Sequences

A sequence is a list of SystemVerilog boolean expressions in a linear order of increasing time. These boolean expressions must be true at those specific points in time for the sequence to be true over time. A boolean expression at a point in time is a simple case of a sequence with time length of one unit. To determine a match of a sequence, the boolean expressions are evaluated at each successive sample point to satisfy the sequence. If all expressions are true, then a match of the sequence occurs.

A sequence expression describes one or more sequences by using *regular expressions* that concisely specify a range of possibilities of when an expression needs to hold true. These sequential regular expressions can actually describe a set of one or more sequences that satisfy the sequential expression.

The basic composition of a sequence consist of a boolean expression concatenated by another boolean expression. The concatenation specifies a delay between the two boolean expressions. Following is the syntax for sequence concatenation.

```
sequence_expr ::=
    sequence_phrase { ';' sequence_phrase }
sequence_phrase ::=
    sequence_element
    | range sequence_element
```

```

sequence_element ::=
    boolean_item
    | '('sequence_expr ')'
boolean_item ::=
    boolean_expr
    | 'true'
range ::=
    '[' constant_range_expression ']'
    | '[' constant_range_expression ':' constant_range_expression ']'
    | '[' constant_range_expression ':' inf '['

```

constant_range_expression can be 0 or greater.

true unconditionally evaluates to true boolean value.

Keyword **inf** is used to indicate the end of simulation. For formal verification tools, **inf** is interpreted as infinity.

The context in which a sequence occurs determines when the sequence is evaluated. The first element in a sequence is checked at the first occurrence of the clock at or after the event that triggered evaluation of the sequence. Each successive element (if any) in the sequence is checked at the next subsequent occurrence of the clock.

A ';' followed by an optional range specifies that the sequence_expr should occur later than the 'current' cycle. A range of [1] indicates that the next element should occur a single cycle later than the 'current' cycle. A range of [0] specifies that the next element should occur in parallel with the 'current' cycle.

When a range specifier appears at the start of the sequence without ';', its meaning is identical to as if the ';' is prepended to the sequence. The semantics are the same.

The following are examples of unary delay expressions. A unary delay, i.e. an expression with delay as the prefix, must be enclosed in parenthesis.

```

([0] a) ==> a
([1] a) ==> true; a
([2] a) ==> true;true;a
([0:3]a) ==>(a) or (true;a) or (true;true;a) or (true;true;true;a)

```

An example of binary delay expressions is

```
a:[2] b ==> a ; true ; b
```

Note that the following two are not equivalent:

```

a; [2] b ==> a ; true ; b
a; ([2] b) ==> a ; true ; true ; b

```

A sequence

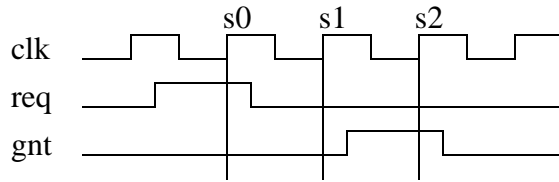
```
req; gnt;!req
```

specifies that **req** be true on the current clock tick, **gnt** will be true on the first subsequent tick and **req** will be false on the next tick after that. The ';' operator specifies one clock tick separation. When a number is appended to semicolon, The number of samples is prepended to the expression in the sequence, as in

```
req:[2]gnt
```

This specifies that req will be true on the current sample, and gnt will be true on the second subsequence sample, as shown in figure Figure 11-3.

Figure 11-3—Concatenation



The following specifies that 'b' will be true on the Nth sample after 'a'.

```
a:[N]b      // check b on the Nth sample
```

To specify concatenation of overlapped sequences, where the end point of one sequence coincides with the start of the next sequence, a value of 0 samples is used as shown below.

```
a ;b ;c // first sequence seq1
d ;e ;f // second sequence seq2
seq1 ;[0] seq2 // overlapped concatenation
```

In the above example, c is the endpoint of sequence seq1, and d is the start of sequence seq2. When concatenated with [0] sampling, c and d must occur at the same time, resulting in the concatenated sequence being equivalent to:

```
a ;b ;c&&d ;e ;f
```

In cases where the concatenation can occur anytime between two points in time, a time window can be specified as

```
req:[4:32] gnt
```

In the above case, signal gnt must be true at some sampling event between sampling events ranging from 4 to 32 after the current sample.

The time window can extend to the end of simulation in the example below.

```
req:[4:inf] gnt
```

A sequence can be unconditionally extended by using **true**.

```
a ;b ;c ;[3]true
```

After signal c, the signal length is extended by 3 sample events. Such adjustments in the length of sequences are required when complex sequences constructed by combining simpler sequences.

11.5 Declaring Sequences

Sequences can be reused by declaring them as objects of type **seq** with optional parameters:

```
seq_declaration ::=
    'seq' [event_control] named_seq { ';' named_seq } ';'
named_seq ::=
    identifier [ '(' identifier { ';' identifier } ')' ] '=' '(' sequence_expr ')'
```

The event_control specifies the clock for the sequence.

The declaration can optionally include arguments that allow the same sequence to be instantiated multiple times with different argument values.

Note that variables referenced within a seq that are not formal arguments to the sequence are resolved hierarchically from the scope in which the seq is instantiated.

```
seq @(posedge clk) s1 = (a;b;c), s2 = (d;e;f);
seq @(negedge clk) s3 = (g;h;i);
```

In this example, sequences s1 and s2 are sampled on each successive posedge clk. The sequence s3 is sampled on negedge clk.

A sequence can be referred in properties by referencing its name. A hierarchical name can be used consistent with the System Verilog naming conventions.

11.6 Sequence Operations

11.6.1 Repetition in Sequences

Following is the syntax for sequence concatenation.

```
sequence_phrase ::=
    sequence_element '*' range
    | boolean_expr '=' '*' '['range']
```

The repetition counts are specified with range and must be literals or constant expressions.

To specify the repetition of an expression within a sequence, the expression may simply be repeated, as:

```
a;b;b;b;c
```

or the number of repetitions may be specified with a trailing “*[N]”, as:

```
a;b*[3];c
```

A repeat specifies that the item or expression should occur a specified number of times. Each repeated item is concatenated (with a delay of 1 clock tick) to the next repeated item. A repeat of N specifies that the sequence should occur N times in succession - e.g.,

```
a*[3] ==> a ; a ; a
```

The syntax allows combination of a delay and a repeat in the same sequence with no separation by ‘;’, but requires that the repeated item be delimited by parentheses. The following are both allowed:

```
[3](a*[3]) ==> true;true;true;a;a;a
([3]a)*[3] ==>(true ; true ; true; a) *[3]
([2]a)*[3]==>([2]a);([2]a);([2]a) ==> true;true;a;true;true;a;true;true;a
[2](a*[3]) ==>true; true; a ; a ; a
```

As an example, with named sequences

```
seq seq1 = [2]a ==> true ; true ; a
seq seq2 = b ; Seq1 ==> b;([2]a) ==> b;(true ; true ; a) ==> b ;true ;true ;a
```

A sequence can be repeated as

```
(a ; b)*[5]
```

is same as,

```
a;b;a;b;a;b;a;b;a;b
```

A repetition with a range of maximum and minimum number of times can be expressed with a trailing *[min:max]. As an example, the following two expression are equivalent.

```
(a ; b)*[1:5]
(a;b)or(a;b;a;b;)or(a;b;a;b;a;b)or(a;b;a;b;a;b;a;b)or(a;b;a;b;a;b;a;b;a;b)
```

The following two expression are also equivalent.

```
(a*[0:3];b;c)
(b;c) or (a;b;c) or (a;a;b;c) or (a;a;a;b;c).
```

To specify potentially infinite number of repetitions, the keyword **inf** is used. So,

```
a; b*[1:inf];c
```

means ‘a’ is true on the current sample, then ‘b’ will be true on every subsequent sample until ‘c’ is true. On the sample in which ‘c’ is true, ‘b’ does not have to be true.

The “*[N]” notation indicates consecutive repetition of an expression. It is also possible to specify non-consecutive repetition of a *boolean* expression with

```
a;b*=[min:max];c
```

This is equivalent to

```
a;( (!b*[0:inf];b) )*[min:max];c
```

Adding the range specification to this allows the construction of useful sequences containing a boolean expression that is true for at most N samples:

```
a;b*=[1:N];c // a followed by at most N occurrences of b, followed by c
```

The rules for specifying repeat counts are summarized as:

- Each form of repeat count specifies a minimum and maximum number of occurrences
- `expr*[n:m]`, where n is the minimum, m is the maximum
- `expr*[n]` is the same as `expr*[n:n]`
- The sequence as a whole cannot be empty
- If n is 0, then there must be either a prefix, or a post fix concatenation term

11.6.2 Value change functions

Three functions are provided to detect changes in values between two adjacent clock ticks: **\$rose**, **\$fell** and **\$stable**.

```
value_change_functions ::=
    '$rose' '(' expression ')'
    | '$fell' '(' expression ')'
    | '$stable' '(' expression ')'
```

These functions compare the value of the expression between their current value and the value at the last clock tick. Based on this comparison, a value of true or false is returned.

\$rose returns true if the least significant bit of the expression changed from 0 to 1. Otherwise, it returns false.

\$fell returns true if the least significant bit of the expression changed from 1 to 0. Otherwise, it returns false.

\$stable returns true if the value of the expression did not change. Otherwise, it returns false.

11.6.3 AND operation

The binary operator **and** is used when both operand expressions are expected to succeed, but the end times of the operand expressions may be different.

```
sequence_expr ::=
```


sequence_expr **and** sequence_expr

The two operands of **and** are sequence expressions. The requirement for the success of the **and** operation is that both the operand expressions must succeed. When one of the operand expressions succeeds, it waits for the other to succeed. The end time of the composite expression is the end time of the operand expression that completes last.

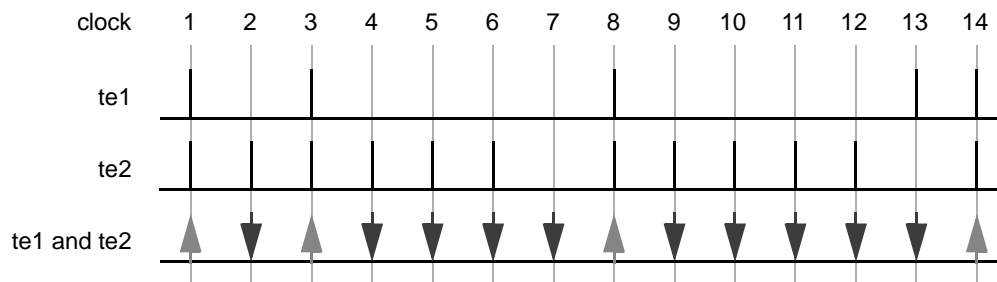
For the expression:

te1 and te2

If te1 and te2 are sampled booleans (not sequences), the expression succeeds if te1 and te2 are both evaluated to be true.

An example is illustrated in Figure 11-4 to show the results for attempt at every clock tick. The expression matches at clock tick 1, 3 and 8 because both te1 and te2 are simultaneously true. At all other clock ticks, the **and** operation fails because either te1 or te2 is false.

Figure 11-4—ANDing (and) Two Sequences



When te1 and te2 are sequences, then the expression:

te1 **and** te2

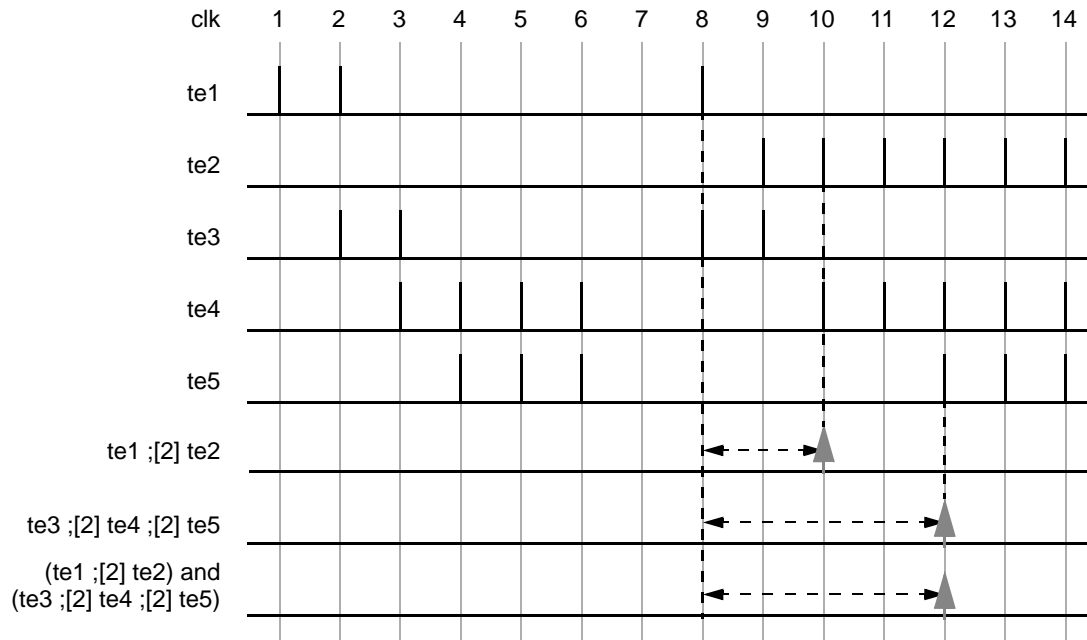
- Succeeds if te1 and te2 succeed.
- The end time is the end time of either te1 or te2, whichever terminates last.

First, let us consider the case when both operands are single sequence evaluations.

An example is illustrated in Figure 11-5. Consider the following expression with operator **and** where the two operands are sequences.

(te1 ;[2] te2) and (te3 ;[2] te4 ;[2] te5)

Figure 11-5—ANDing (and) Two Sequences



Here, the two operand sequences are $(te1 ;[2] te2)$ and $(te3 ;[2] te4 ;[2] te5)$. The first operand sequence requires that first $te1$ evaluates to true followed by $te2$ two clock ticks later. The second sequence requires that first $te3$ evaluates to true followed by $te4$ two clock ticks later, followed by $te5$ two clock ticks later. Figure 11-5 shows the evaluation attempt at clock tick 8.

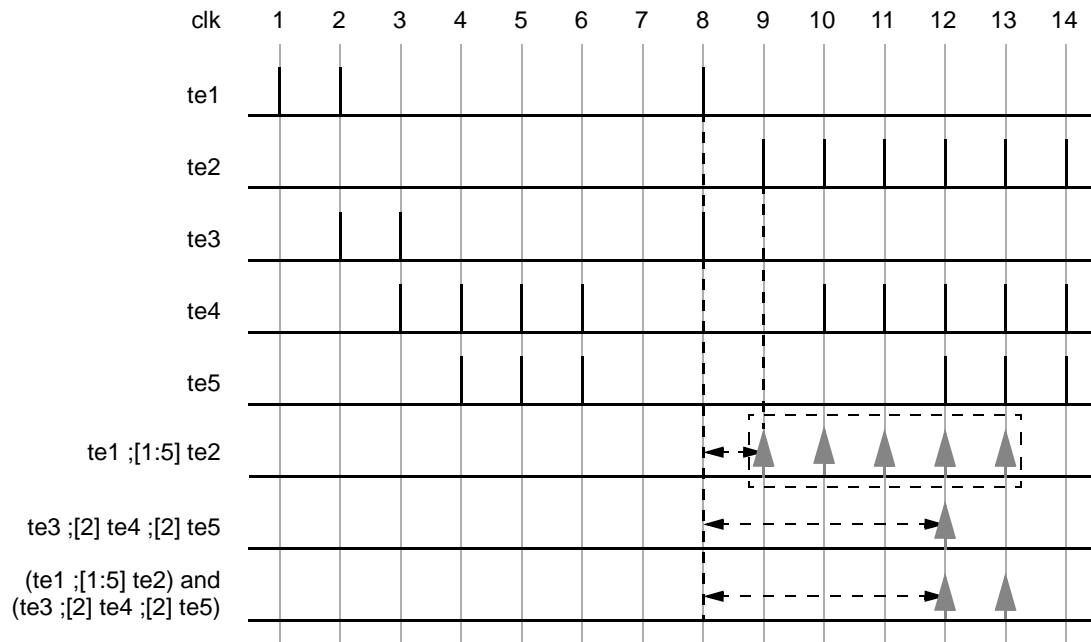
This attempt results in a match since both operand sequences match. The end times of matches for the individual sequences are clock ticks 10 and 12. The end time for the entire expression is the last of the two end times, so a match is recognized for the expression at clock tick 12.

Now, consider an example where an operand sequence is associated with a range of time specification, such as:
 $(te1 ;[1:5] te2)$ and $(te3 ;[2] te4 ;[2] te5)$

The first operand sequence consists of an expression with a time range from 1 to 5 and implies that when $te1$ evaluates to true, $te2$ must follow 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 clock ticks later. The second operand sequence is the same as in the previous example. To consider all possibilities of a match, following steps are taken:

- The first operand sequence starts five sequences of evaluation.
- The second operand sequence has only one possibility of match, so only one sequence is started.
- Figure 11-6 shows the attempt to examine at clock tick 8 when both operand sequences start and succeed. All five sequences for the first operand sequence match, as shown in a time window, at clock ticks 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 respectively. The second operand sequence matches at clock tick 12.
- To compute the result for the composite expression, each successful sequence from the first operand sequence is matched against the second operand sequence according to the rules of the **and** operation to determine the end time for each match.

The result of this computation is five successes, four of them ending at clock ticks 12, and the fifth ends at clock tick 13. Figure 11-6 shows the two unique successes at clock ticks 12 and 13.

Figure 11-6—ANDing (and) Two Sequences Including a Time Range

11.6.4 Intersection (AND with length restriction)

The binary operator **intersect** is used when both operand expressions are expected to succeed, and the end times of the operand expressions must be the same.

```
sequence_expr ::=
    sequence_expr 'intersect' sequence_expr
```

The two operands of **intersect** are sequence expressions. The requirements for the success of the **intersect** operation are:

- Both the operand expressions must succeed.
- The length of the two operand sequences must be the same.

The additional requirement on the length of the sequences is the basic difference between **and** and **intersect**.

When there are multiple matches for each operand sequence expression, the results are computed as follows.

- A match from the first operand is paired with a match from the second operand with the same length (end time).
- If no such pair is found, the result of **intersect** is no match.
- If such pairs are found, then the result consists of matched sequences, one for each pair. The end time of each match is determined by the pair.

11.6.5 OR operation

The operator **or** is used when at least one of the two operand sequences is expected to match.

```
sequence_expr ::=
    sequence_expr 'or' sequence_expr
```

The two operands of **or** are sequence expressions.

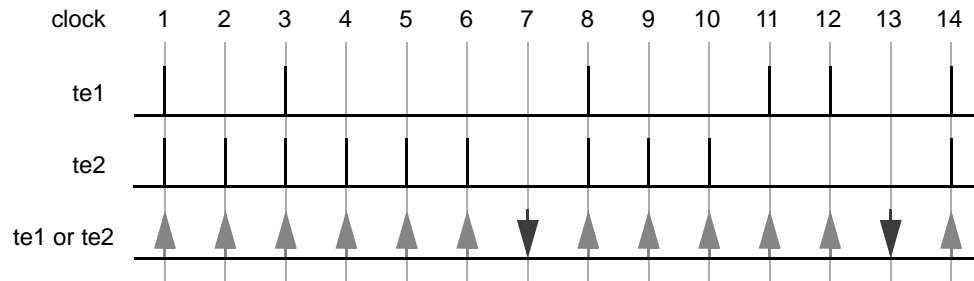
Let us consider these operand expressions as values, events and sequences separately to illustrate the details of **or** operations. For the expression

`te1 or te2`

when the operand expressions `te1` and `te2` are events or values, the expression matches whenever at least one of two operands `te1` and `te2` is evaluated to true.

Figure 11-7 illustrates **or** operation using `te1` and `te2` as simple values. The expression does not match at clock ticks 7 and 13 because `te1` and `te2` are both false at those times. At all other times, the expression matches, as at least one of the two operands is true.

Figure 11-7—ORing (or) Two Sequences



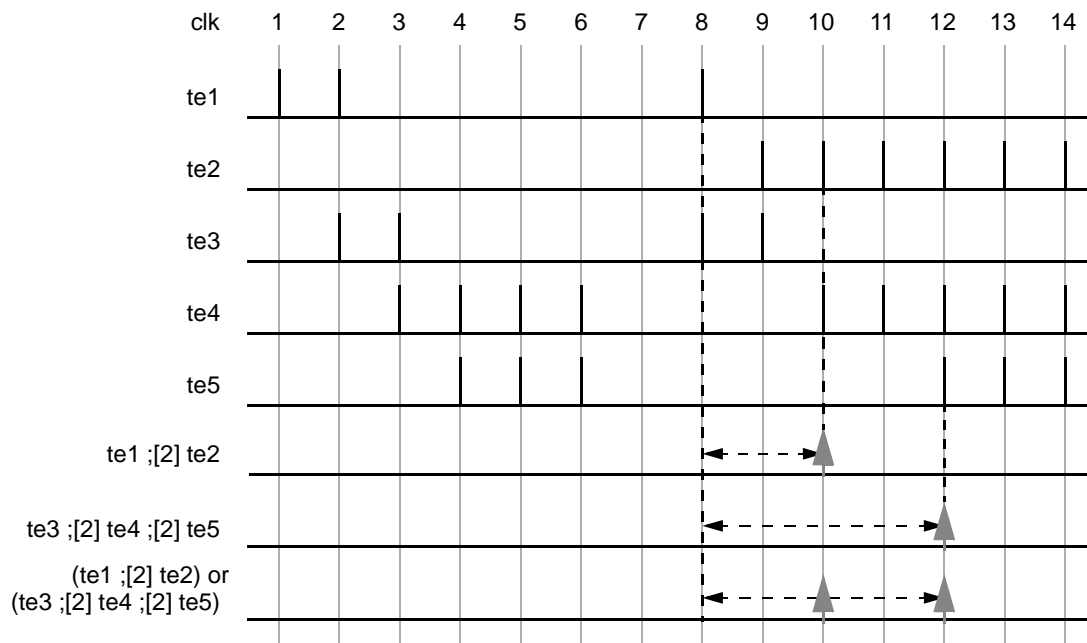
When `te1` and `te2` are sequences, then the expression

`te1 or te2`

matches if at least one of the two operand sequences `te1` and `te2` match. To evaluate this expression, first, the successfully matched sequences of each operand are calculated and assigned to a group. Then, the union of the two groups is computed. The result of the union provides the result of the expression. The end time of a match is the end time of any sequence that matched.

An example is illustrated in Figure 11-8. Consider an expression with **or** operator where the two operands are sequences.

`(te1 ;[2] te2) or (te3 ;[2] te4 ;[2] te5)`

Figure 11-8—ORing (or) Two Sequences

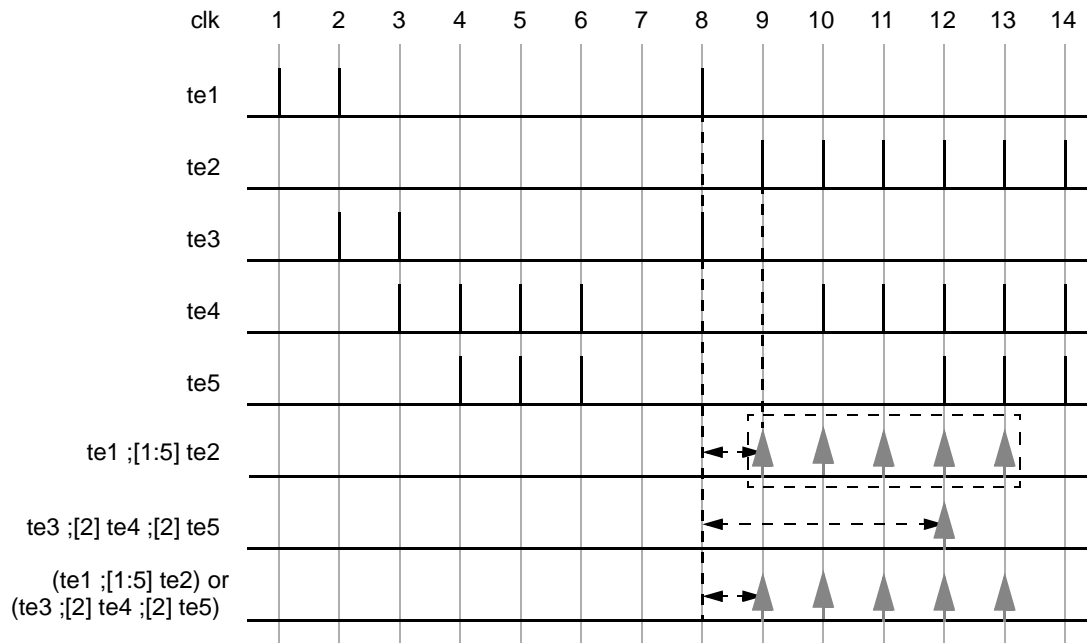
Here, the two operand sequences are: (te1 ;[2] te2) and (te3 ;[2] te4 ;[2] te5). The first sequence requires that te1 first evaluates to true, followed by te2 two clock ticks later. The second sequence requires that te3 evaluates to true, followed by te4 two clock ticks later, followed by te5 two clock ticks later. In Figure 11-8, the evaluation attempt for clock tick 8 is shown. The first sequence matches at clock tick 10 and the second sequence matches at clock tick 12. So, two matches for the expression are recognized.

Consider an example where an operand sequence is associated with time range specification, such as:

```
(te1 ;[1:5] te2) or (te3 ;[2] te4 ;[2] te5)
```

The first operand sequence consists of an expression with a time range from 1 to 5 and specifies that when te1 evaluates to true, te2 must be true 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 clock ticks later. The sequences from the second operand require that first te3 must be true followed by te4 being true two clock ticks later, followed by te5 being true two clock ticks later. At any clock tick if an operand sequence succeeds, then the composite expressions succeeds. As shown in Figure 11-9, for the attempt at clock tick 8, the first operand sequence matches at clock ticks 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13, while the second operand matches at clock ticks 12. The match of the composite expression is computed as a union of the matches of the two operand sequences, which results in matches at clock ticks 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Figure 11-9—ORing (or) Two Sequences Including a Time Range



11.6.6 first_match operation

Use the **first_match** operator when you are interested in only the first match from a sequence expression that can possibly result in multiple matches. This allows you to discard all subsequent matches from consideration. In particular, when the sequence expression is a sub-expression of a larger expression, then applying the **first_match** operator has significant effect on the evaluation of the embedding expression.

```
sequence_expr ::=
    'first_match' '(' sequence_expr ')'
```

The operand expression can be a sequence expression. `sequence_expr` is evaluated to determine the match for the (**first_match** (`sequence_expr`)) expression. For a given evaluation attempt, the composite expression matches if `sequence_expr` results in at least one match of a sequence, and fails to match if none of the sequences from the expression result in a match. Following the first successful match for the attempt, the **first_match** operator stops matching subsequent sequences for `sequence_expr`. For an attempt, if there are multiple matches with the same end time as the first detected match, then all those matches are considered as the result of the expression.

Please note that **first_match** applies to each attempt for the sequence individually.

Consider an example with a variable delay specification as shown below.

```
seq t1 = (te1 ;[2:5]te2);
seq ts1 = (first_match(te1 ;[2:5]te2));
```

Each attempt of sequence t1 can result in matches for up to four following sequences:

```
te1 ;[2] te2
te1 ;[3] te2
te1 ;[4] te2
te1 ;[5] te2
```

However, sequence ts1 can result in a match for only one of the above four sequences. Whichever of the above four sequences matches first becomes the result of sequence ts1.

11.6.7 Boolean implication (Sequences based on boolean condition)

These constructs allow a user to monitor sequences based on satisfying some criteria. Most common uses are to attach a precondition to a sequence, and to select a sequence between two alternatives, where the selection is made based on the success of a condition.

Two kinds of clauses are provided:

```
sequence_expr ::=
    boolean_expr '=>' sequence_expr
```

This clause is used to precondition monitoring of a sequence expression. The condition `boolean_expr` must be satisfied in order to monitor `sequence_expr`. If the condition `boolean_expr` fails then `sequence_expr` is skipped for monitoring and results in a sequence true of length one. `boolean_expr` is a logical expression that results in true or false, and `sequence_expr` is a sequence expression that can result in one or match sequence matches. *If the expression evaluates to true, then the first element of the sequence_expr is evaluated on the same clock tick.*

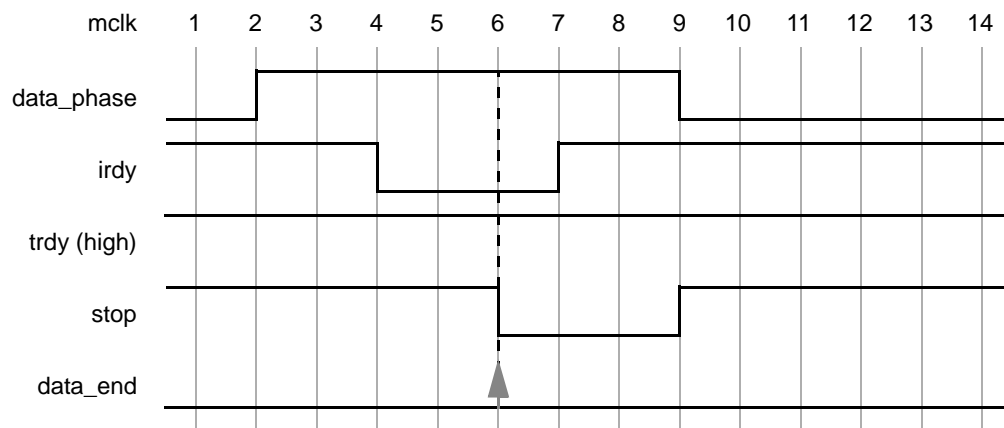
If the condition is evaluated to true, then the evaluation of `sequence_expr` is conducted. The sequence matches of `sequence_expr` become the matches of implication.

Consider a bus operation for data transfer from a master to a target device. When the bus enters a data transfer phase, multiple data phases can occur to transfer a block of data. During the data transfer phase, a data phase completes on any rising clock edge on which `irdy` is asserted and either `trdy` or `stop` is asserted. Note that an asserted signal here implies a value of low. The end of a data phase can be expressed as:

```
seq @(posedge mclk) data_end =
    ( (data_phase) => ((irdy==0)&&(fell trdy || fell stop)));
```

Each time a data phase completes, a match for `data_end` is recognized. The attempt at clock tick 6 is illustrated in Figure 11-10. The values shown for the signals are the sampled values with respect to the clock. At clock tick 6 `data_end` is matched because `stop` gets asserted while `irdy` is asserted.

Figure 11-10—Conditional Sequence Matching



`data_end` can be used to ensure that frame is de-asserted within 2 clock ticks after `data_end` occurs. Further, it is also required that `irdy` gets de-asserted one clock tick after frame gets de-asserted.

A sequence expression is written to express this condition as shown below.

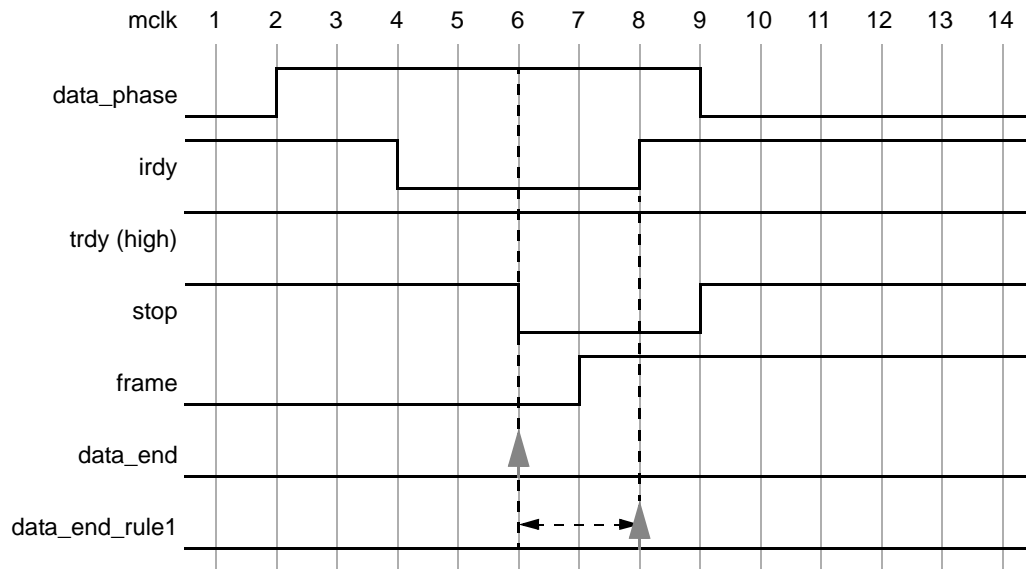
```
seq @(posedge mclk)
    data_end = ( data_phase &&((irdy==0) && (fell trdy || fell stop)) ),
    data_end_rule1 =( (ended data_end1) => ([1:2] $rose frame ; $rose irdy) );
```

seq data_end_rule1 first evaluates data_end at every clock tick to test if its value is true. If the value is false, then that particular attempt to evaluate data_end_rule1 is considered a smatch with a sequence true of length one.. Otherwise, the following sequence expression is evaluated. The sequence expression

```
[1:2] $rose frame ; $rose irdy
```

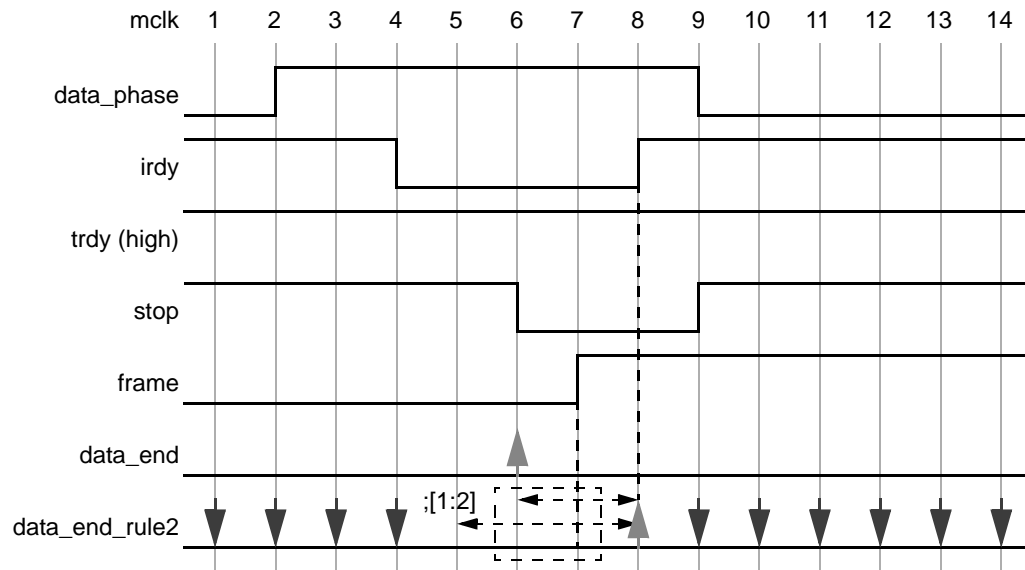
specifies looking for the rising edge of frame within two clock ticks in the future. After frame toggles high, irdy must also toggle high after one clock tick. This is illustrated in Figure 11-11. Sequence data_end is acknowledged at clock tick 6. Next, frame toggles high at clock tick 7. Since this falls within the timing constraint imposed by [1:2], it satisfies the sequence and continues to monitor further. At clock tick 8, irdy is evaluated. Signal irdy transitions to high at clock tick 8, satisfying the sequence specification completely for the attempt that began at clock tick 6.

Figure 11-11—Conditional Sequences



Generally, assertions are associated with preconditions so that the checking is performed only under certain specified conditions. As seen from the previous example, the => clause provides this capability to specify preconditions with sequences that must be satisfied before continuing to match those sequences. Let us modify the above example to see the effect on the results of the assertion by removing the precondition for the sequence. This is shown below and illustrated in Figure 11-12.

```
seq @(posedge mclk) data_end_rule2 = ( ([1:2] $rose frame) ; $rose irdy );
```


Figure 11-12—Results without the Condition

The sequence is evaluated at every clock tick. For the evaluation at clock tick 1, the rising edge of signal `frame` does not occur at clock tick 1 or 2, so the evaluation fails and the result for the sequence is a failed match at clock tick 1. Similarly, there is a failure at clock ticks 2, 3, and 4. For attempts starting at clock ticks 5 and 6, the rising edge of signal `frame` at clock tick 7 allows checking further. At clock tick 8, the sequences complete according to the specification, resulting in a match for attempts starting at 5 and 6. All later attempts to match the sequence fail because `rose frame` does not occur again. That also means that there is no match at 5, 6 and 7.

As one can see from Figure 11-12, removing the precondition of checking event `data_end` from the assertion causes failures that are not relevant to the verification objective. It becomes important from the validation standpoint to determine these preconditions and use them in the assertion to filter out inappropriate or extraneous situations.

Multi-way conditions are expressed by disjunction, using the **or** operator as illustrated by the example below.

```
seq s(len) = ((!trans * [1:inf] ;trans) * [len]);
seq word_trans = ((len_parm == BLK1)=> s(BLK1)) or
                  ((len_parm == BLK2)=> s(BLK1)) or
                  ((len_parm == BLK3)=> s(BLK1)) or
                  (((lp!=BLK1) || (lp!=BLK2) || (lp!=BLK3))=> s(BLK_DEFAULT)));
```

11.6.8 Sequential implication (sequences based on sequential conditions)

A sequential implication can also be specified using the `=>` clause from the preceding section. The syntax is:

sequence_expr::=

sequence_expr_cond '=>'sequence_expr1

sequence_expr_cond can be any sequence expression.

When the condition is a sequence expression. This feature is useful for chaining sequential implications.

Following points should be noted for sequential implication.

- sequence_expr_cond can result in multiple successful sequences.
- If no sequence succeeds, implication succeeds vacuously by returning a true sequence of length one.

- For each successful match of `sequence_expr_cond`, `sequence_expr1` is separately evaluated, beginning at the end point of the match. That is, the end point of matching sequence from `sequence_expr_cond` coincides with start point of `sequence_expr1`
- All matches of `sequence_expr_cond` must also match `sequence_expr1`.

For example,

```
(a;b;c) => (d;e)
```

If the sequence (a;b;c) matches then the sequence (d;e) must also match. On the other hand, if the sequence (a;b;c) does not match, then the result is true.

Consider now,

```
(a:[1:3] b;c) => (d;e)
```

In the above example, all matches of (a:[1:3] b; c) must match (d;e). If there are no matches of (a:[1:3] b; c), then there is a vacuous match for the entire expression, resulting in true.

The following example illustrates chaining of sequential implications.

```
seq next_event(e) = (!e * [1:inf] ; e);
property pl6 =
    ((write_en & data_valid) =>
        ((next_event(write_en && (retire_address[0:4] == addr))) =>
            ([3:8] write_en && !data_valid && (write_address[0:4] == addr))));
```

11.6.9 Conditions over sequences

Sequences of events often occur under the assumptions of some conditions for correct behavior. A logical condition must hold true, for instance, while processing a transaction. Also frequently, occurrence of certain events is prohibited while processing a transaction. Such situations can be expressed directly using the following construct:

```
sequence_expr ::=
    'throughout' boolean_expr 'within' sequence_expr
```

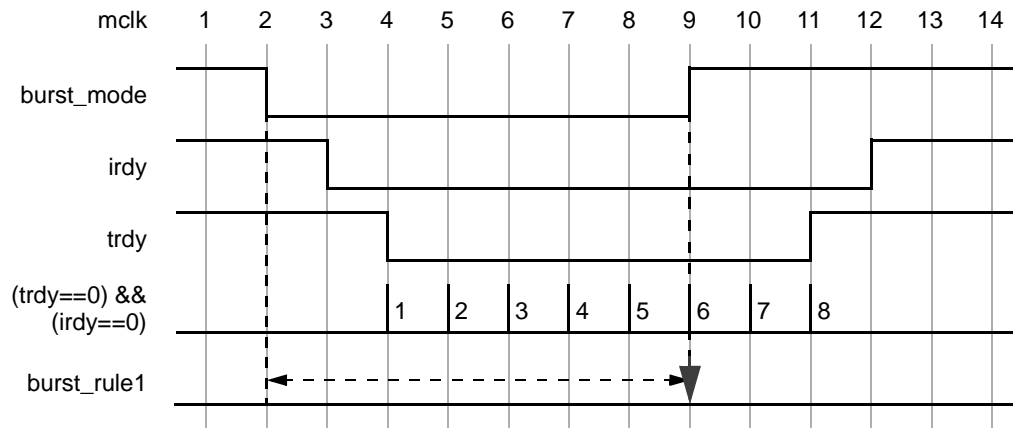
`expression` is an expression which must evaluate true at every clock tick while monitoring `sequence_expr`. If a sequence for `sequence_expr` starts at time `t1` and ends at time `t2`, then `expression` must hold true from time `t1` to `t2`. If either the sequence expression does not match or the boolean expression becomes false while the sequence is being evaluated, the composite sequence does not match and a property stated over this composite sequence would declare a failure.

The **throughout** construct is an abbreviation for writing

```
(boolean_expr) *[0:inf] intersect sequence_expr
```

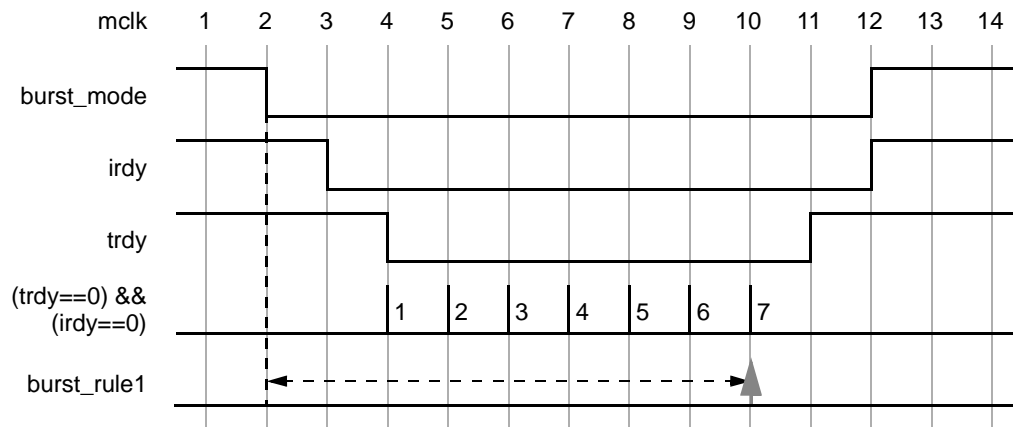
Consider the example illustrated in Figure 11-13. If an additional constraint were placed on the expression as shown below, then the checker `burst_rule` would fail at clock tick 9.

```
seq @(posedge mclk) burst1 =
    ((fell burst_mode) =>
        throughout (!burst_mode) within ([2] ((trdy==0)&&(irdy==0)) * [7]) );
property burst_rule1 = (burst1) ;
```

Figure 11-13—Match with throughout-within Restriction Fails

In the above expression, the value of signal `burst_mode` is required to be low during the sequence (from clock tick 2 to 11), and is checked at every clock tick during that period. At clock ticks from 2 to 8, signal `burst_mode` remains low and matches the expression at those clock ticks. At clock tick 9, signal `burst_mode` becomes high, thereby failing to match the expression for `burst_rule1`.

If signal `burst_mode` were to be maintained low until clock tick 11, the expression would result in a match as shown in Figure 11-14.

Figure 11-14—Match with throughout-within Restriction Succeeds

11.6.10 Sequence occurrence within another sequence

The containment of a sequence expression within another sequence is expressed as

```
sequence_expr ::=
    sequence_expr1 'within' sequence_expr2
```

The sequence `sequence_expr1` must occur entirely within the sequence `sequence_expr2`.

That is `sequence_expr1` must satisfy the following:

- The start point of `sequence_expr1` must be between the start point and the end point of `sequence_expr2`

- The end point of `sequence_expr1` must be between the start point and the end point of `sequence_expr2`

11.6.11 Detecting and using endpoint of a sequence

There are two ways in which a complex **seq** can be decomposed into simpler sub-expressions.

To use **seq** as a sub-expression, or a part of the expression is by simply referencing its name. The evaluation of a sequence expression that references a **seq** expression is performed the same way as if the **seq** expression was a lexical part of the expression. In other words, the sequence expression is “invoked” from the expression where it is referenced. An example is shown below:

```
seq @(rose sysclk) s = (a; b;c),
rule = ((trans) => (start_trans;s;end_trans));
This is equivalent to:
seq @(rose sysclk)
s = (a;b;c),
rule = ((trans) => (start_trans;a;b;c;end_trans)) ;
```

Another way to use the **seq** expression is to detect its end point in another sequence. The end point of a sequence is reached whenever there is a match on its expression. The occurrence of the end point can be tested in any sequence expression by using the clause **ended**. An example is shown below:

```
seq @(posedge sysclk) e1 = ($rose ready;procl;proc2),
rule = ((reset) => (inst;ended e1;branch_back));
```

In this example sequence expression `e1` must end successfully one clock tick after `inst`. If the keyword **ended** wasn't there, sequence expression `e1` starts one clock tick after `inst`.

11.7 Declaring Boolean Expressions

Because sequences are composed of boolean expressions, it is useful to allow boolean expressions to be declared as objects of type **bool**.

```
bool_declaration ::=
    'bool' [range_or_type] named_bool { ',' named_bool } ;
named_bool ::=
    identifier [ '(' identifier { ',' identifier } ')'] '=' expression
```

The boolean object can then be declared as:

```
bool b1(a,b) = a && b && c;
```

and used in a sequence as:

```
(b1(foo,bar);c;d)
(b1(.a(f1),.b(b1));c;d)
```

Note that, in the boolean expression `b1`, the formal arguments ‘a’ and ‘b’ are replaced by the corresponding actual arguments when the `bool` is instantiated. Any variables referenced within the `bool` that are not formal arguments get resolved via standard rules from the scope in which the `bool` is instantiated.

A `bool` expression can be referred in properties by referencing its name. A hierarchical name can be used consistent with the System Verilog naming conventions.

11.8 Manipulating Data in a Sequence

The use of System Verilog variables implies that only one copy exists. Therefore, if data values need to be checked in pipelined designs, then for each data entering the pipeline we may need a separate variable to store the predicted output of the pipeline for later comparison when the result actually exits the pipe. We can build such a storage by using an array of variables arranged in a shift register to mimic the data propagating through a pipeline. However, in more complex situations where the latency of the pipe is variable and out of order, this construction could become very complex and error prone. In other words, we need variables that are local to and are used within a particular transaction check which can span an arbitrary interval of time and may overlap with other transaction checks. Such a variable must thus be dynamically created when needed within an instance of a sequence and removed when the end of the sequence is reached.

The dynamic variable creation and destruction can be achieved using the variable declaration at the head of a sequence:

```
sequence_expr ::=
    '(' '(' {variable_declaration {',' variable_declaration}} ')' sequence_expr ')'
variable_declaration ::=
    type identifier '=' expression
```

The type of name is explicitly specified. The value of the expression is sampled at the time of the beginning of sequence_expression and stored in the dynamically created variable var_name. Inside sequence_expr, the value of the variable remains unchanged for the entire duration of the sequence. Variable with name identifier can be used in sequence_expr as any other variable. For every attempt, a new instance of variable named identifier is created for the sequence_expr.

For example, assume a pipeline that has a fixed latency of 5 clock cycles. The data enters the pipe on pipe_in when valid_in is true and the value computed by the pipeline appears 5 clock cycles later on the signal pipe_out1. The data as transformed by the pipe is predicted by a function that increments the data. The following sequence expression verifies this behavior.

```
seq e = ((valid_in) =>
    ((int x = pipe_in) ([5] (pipe_out1 == (x+1)))));
```

Suppose now that the output of this pipe is chained to another pipe of latency 3 that computes the value as predicted by data and pipe_val. The transfer to the second pipe happens only if the result of the first pipe satisfies some Boolean variable pipe_cont. We can modify and extend the above example as follows:

```
seq e_two_pipes =
    ( (valid_in) => ((int x = pipe_in)
        ([5] ( pipe_out1 == (x+1)));
        (pipe_out1==pipe_cont)=>
        ((int y == x+1)
            ([3](pipe_out2==(y+pipe_val))))));
```

The nested variable declaration uses the variable name y which is assigned a value from the enclosing declared variable x.

Note that, for practical debugging and verification performance reasons, it may be preferable to verify each of the two pipelines by a separate sequence rather than in one single sequence as in the above example.

If the pipeline supported out-of-order execution in which the outputs can exit with variable latency and in a different order than the data entered, it is a simple matter to add an id to each input data and then check that data is correct when the id appears on the output. The first example modified to include the id on input and output is as follows:

```
seq e_with_id = ((valid_in) => ((int x = pipe_in, int id = id_in)
    ([1:inf] ((id_out == id && valid_out)=>
        (pipe_out1 == x+1)))));
```

In this example, notice the use of two dynamic variables, `x` and `id`, assigned in the same declaration by separating them by a comma.

11.9 System Functions

In addition to accessing values of signals at the time of evaluation of a boolean expression, the past values can be accessed with the **\$past** function.

```
$past '(' expression [ ';' number_of_ticks ] ')'
```

The argument `number_of_ticks` specifies the number of clock ticks in the past. If `number_of_ticks` is not specified, then it defaults to 1. **\$past** returns the sampled value of the expression that was present `number_of_ticks` prior to the time of evaluation of **\$past**.

If the specified clock tick in the past is before the start of simulation, the returned value from the **\$past** function is `'x'`.

Another useful function provided for the boolean expression is **\$countones**, to count the number of 1s in a bit vector expression.

```
$countones '(' expression ')'
```

The `'x'` and `'z'` value of a bit is not counted towards the number of ones.

11.10 The Property Definition

A property defines a behavior of the design. A property can be used for verification as an assumption, a checker or a coverage specification. In order to use the behavior for verification, a verification directive must be used. A property declaration by itself does not produce any result.

To declare a property, the **property** construct is used as shown below.

```
prop_declaration ::=
    'property' named_prop { ';' named_prop } ;
named_prop ::=
    identifier [ '(' identifier { ';' identifier } ')' ] '=' prop_expr
prop_expr ::=
    ['initial'] ['accept' '(' expression ')'] ['never'] clocked_sequence
    | identifier [ '(' expression_list ')' ] // identifier must be a property
clocked_sequence ::=
    [event_control] sequence_expr
```

A **property** declaration is parameterized, like a **seq** and **bool** declaration. When a property is instantiated, actual arguments can be passed to the property. The property gets expanded with the actual arguments by replacing the formal arguments with the actual arguments. The semantic checks are performed to ensure that the expanded property with the actual arguments is legal.

The **accept** clause allows you to specify asynchronous resets. For a particular attempt, if the accept boolean expression becomes true at any time during the evaluation of the attempt, then the attempt for the property is considered to be a success.

The **never** clause states that the expression associated with the property must never evaluate to true. Effectively, it negates the property expression. For each attempt, `clocked_sequence` results in either true or false,

based on whether there is a match for the sequence. The **never** clause reverses the result of `clocked_sequence`. It should be noted that there is no complementation or any form of negation for the sequence itself.

The **initial** clause states that the property should only be evaluated on the first clock tick. Thereafter, there should be no evaluation of the property. Without the **initial** clause the property is evaluated for every clock tick.

This allows for the following examples:

```
property rule1 = @(posedge clk) ((a) => (b;c;d));
property rule2 = (accept = foo) never @(clk) ((a) => (b;c;d));
```

A property can be referred in directives by referencing its name. A hierarchical name can be used consistent with the System Verilog naming conventions.

A property by default is not evaluated for checking the expression. A verification directive states the verification function to be performed on the property. The directive can be one of the following:

- **assert** to specify the property as a checker to ensure that the property holds for the design
- **cover** to monitor the property evaluation for coverage

```
property_directive ::=
    [identifier ':' ] assert prop_expr action_block
    | [identifier ':' ] cover prop_expr statement_or_null
```

The **assert** directive is used to enforce a property as a checker. When the property for the **assert** directive is evaluated to be true, the pass statements of the action block are executed. Otherwise, the fail statements of the action block are executed. For example,

```
property abc(a,b,c) = accept(a==2) never @clk (b;c);
env_prop: assert abc(rst,in1,in2) pass_stat else fail_stat;
```

When no action is needed, a null statement (i.e. ;) is specified.

To monitor sequences and other behavioral aspects of the design for coverage, the same syntax is used with the **cover** directive. The tools can gather information about the evaluation and report the results at the end of simulation. When the property for the **cover** directive is successful, the pass statements may specify a coverage function, such as monitoring all paths for a sequences.

A directive can directly specify an expression, without first declaring it as a property. For example,

```
input_prop: assert accept(in1=2) never @clk (f;g);
cover_item: cover @clk2 (m;n) pass_stat;
```

In the above example, two properties are specified, one with the **assert** clause and the other with the **cover** clause.

Note that a property specification can be just a bool or a sequence.

A directive can be referred by referencing its optional name. A hierarchical name can be used consistent with the System Verilog naming conventions. When a name is not provided, a tool must assign a name to the directive.

11.10.1 Declaring Properties Outside Of Procedural Code

The property block can be used directly within a module as a *module_item* or within *interface* as an *interface_item*. For example,

```

module top(input bit clk);
  reg a,b,c;
  property rule3 = @(posedge clk) ((a)=> (b;c));
  ...
endmodule

```

rule3 is a property declared in module top.

11.10.2 Embedding Properties in Procedural Code

The property block can be declared or instantiated directly in a procedural block as in:

```

always @(posedge clk) begin
  property rule = (a;b;c);
  <statements>;
  <statements>;
end

```

A procedural property is equivalent to a declarative property in syntax and semantics. No assumptions are made from the procedural context.

11.11 Grouping Assertions as a Library

The syntax for library groupings is as follows:

```

template_declaration ::=
    'template' template_identifier ['(' 'template_formal_list ')'] ';'
    { template_item_declaration }
    'endtemplate' [ ':' template_identifier ]
template_formal_list ::=
    task_formal_arg { ',' task_formal_arg }
task_formal_arg ::=
    [data_type] formal_identifier ['=' boolean_expr | sequence_expr | event_expr | string]
template_item_declaration ::=
    property_decl
    | property_directive
    | seq_decl
    | bool_decl
    | var_declaration
    | nonblocking_assignment

```

This section describes how to group statements to construct a library of properties and expressions. Such a group is called **template** which is given a name and can be instantiated with parameters. When instantiated with parameters, the parameters provide the binding to the actual design objects or other definitions specified elsewhere in the description.

A formal parameter is used to replace a name in the template body. The formal parameter can have an optional specification of type and direction. `data_type` refers to the System Verilog data types.

The default values for a formal parameter can be specified by using an equal sign with the left-hand side of the equal sign as the formal parameter name and right-hand side as the default value. For example,


```

template hold(exp, min = 0, max = 15, clk);
    seq @(posedge clk) ova_e_hold = ( past(exp)==exp)*[min:max] );
endtemplate

```

The body of the template may contain:

- **property**, **seq** and **bool** declaration
- directives
- variable declaration
- non blocking assignments

A **template** is instantiated with the following syntax:

```

template_instantiation ::=
    template_identifier [instance_name] [(list_of_port_connections)];

```

The actual parameters can be given as an ordered list, as a named list. In an ordered list, the parameters are listed in the same order as in the template definition.

For example, the hold template defined above can be instantiated with:

```
hold ordered(counter, 2, 5, rose clk);
```

Or it can be instantiated with:

```
hold named(.exp(counter), .min(2), .max(5), .clk(rose clk));
```

The template instance name is optional. When the name is not specified, the name is the global sequence number of the instance in the form *seq_number*. For example, the first template instance compiled would be assigned the name t1.

As template instances are expanded, the names of declarations in the template body are constructed by appending the definition name with the template instance name and a dot character. Such an expansion of a name uniquely identifies its definition. The following example illustrates the name expansion of definitions.

```

template range();
    bool c1 = ( enable );
    seq @(posedge clk2) crange_en = ((c1) => (minval <= expr) );
    range_chk: assert (crange_en);
endtemplate
range t1();
range t2();
property term_check = ((t1.c1) => (p_low ; p_end));

```

The definitions c1, crange_en, and range_chk are expanded as shown below.

```

bool t1.c1 = ( enable );
seq @(rose clk2) t1.crange_en = ((t1.c1) => (minval <= expr) );
t1_range_chk: assert (t1.crange_en);
bool t2.c1 = ( enable );
@ (rose clk2) seq t2.crange_en = ((t2.c1) => (minval <= expr) );
t2_range_chk: assert (t2.crange_en);
property term_chk = ((t1.c1) => (p_low ; p_end));

```

Using this naming scheme, an expression defined within a template can be referenced outside the template via a standard hierarchical reference.

The actual parameters may not resolve all signals specified within the template. When the template is instantiated, the parameters and the unresolved signals get bound to the design objects in the instantiating scope.

If a formal parameter is specified with a default value in the template definition, then the corresponding actual parameter may be optionally omitted. In the example below, the formal parameter max is not supplied when the template is instantiated.

```
template hold(exp, min = 0, max = 15, clk);
```

```
seq @(rose clk) e_hold = ( ($past(exp) == exp) * [min:max] );
endtemplate
hold hold_instance(s, 5, , rose clk);
```

If the default parameter value is not declared in the template definition, omission of the corresponding actual parameter value in the template instantiation will result in an error.

11.12 Binding Properties to Scopes or instances

To facilitate verification separate from the design, it is possible to specify properties and bind them to specific modules or instances. Following are the goals of providing this feature.

- It allows verification engineers to verify with minimum changes to the design code/files.
- It allows a convenient mechanism to attach verification IP to a module or an instance.
- No semantic changes to the assertions are introduced due to this feature. It is equivalent to writing properties with XMRs.
- It disallows design code to be attached along with the property.

With this feature, a user can bind a program, where the program contains a group of properties, to a module or an instance.

The syntax of the **bind** construct is:

```
bind_directive ::=
    'bind' module_instance_name program instantiation ';'
module_instance_name ::=
    name of a module or instance
program instantiation ::=
    program_name program_instance_name '(' port_arguments ')'
```

A program contains non-design code (either testbench or properties) and executes in the verification phase (The details of the program construct are being discussed in sv-ec committee)

Example of binding to a module:

```
bind cpu fpu_props fpu_rules_1(a,b,c);
```

- cpu is the name of module.
- fpu_props is the name of the program containing properties fpu_rules_1 is the program instance name.
- Ports (a, b,c) get bound to signals (a,b,c) of module cpu .
- Every instance of cpu gets the properties.

Example of binding to a specific instance of a module:

```
bind cpu1 fpu_props fpu_rules_1(a,b,c);
```

- cpu1 is the name of module instance (cpu1 is an instance of module of module cpu)
- fpu_props is the name of the program containing properties.
- fpu_rules_1 is the program instance name.
- Ports (a, b,c) get bound to signals (a,b,c) of module instance cpu1.
- Only cpu1 instance of cpu gets the properties.

By binding a program to a module or an instance, the program becomes part of the bound object. The names of assertion related declarations can be referenced using the System Verilog hierarchical naming conventions.

Appendix A

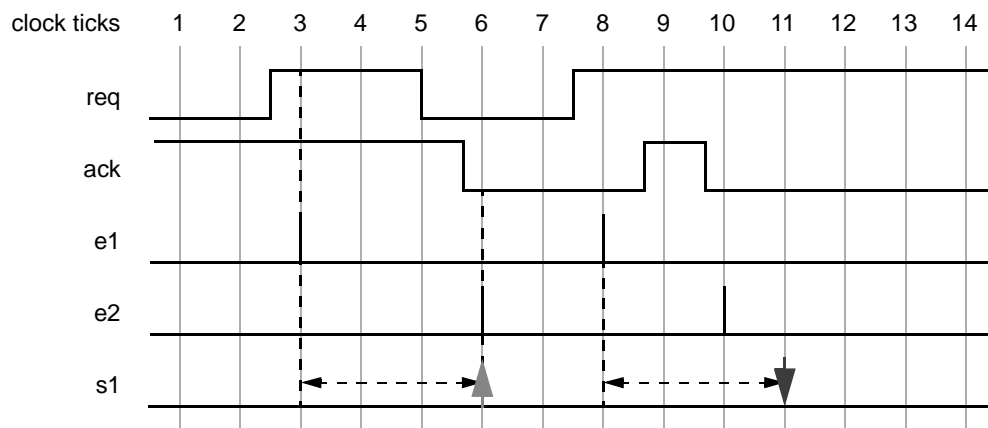
Matching a Sequence

Generally, at any given time, there may be several simultaneous evaluations of an assertion taking place. Although these evaluations are overlapped in time, each evaluation is independent of one another. To test the assertion at a clock tick, a new evaluation attempt for the expression is carried out, independent of any attempt at a previous clock tick. The results of each attempt determine the success/failure of an assertion for that clock tick. Because of the independence of each evaluation, we will be discussing one attempt when we describe the behavior of the language constructs.

Consider the sequence of boolean expressions, $s1$, in Figure 11-15. $s1$ is defined as:

$e1 ; [3] e2$

Figure 11-15—Matching a Sequence



The above example says that $e2$ is expected to occur at the third clock tick after the occurrence of $e1$. Figure 11-15 illustrates this process for an attempt starting at clock tick 3 and shows how the time is advanced for the attempt. $e1$ is evaluated to be true at clock tick 3. The outcome of this result is the continuation of checking the expression for the next checkpoint, which is $e2$ at clock tick 6. No evaluation or checking is performed at clock ticks 4 and 5 for this attempt. Thus, variables can take on any values during these clock ticks. Expression $e2$ occurs at clock tick 6, so the sequence is said to match for the attempt starting at clock tick 3. However, the evaluation attempt at clock tick 8 does not result in a match, as $e2$ is false at clock tick 11.

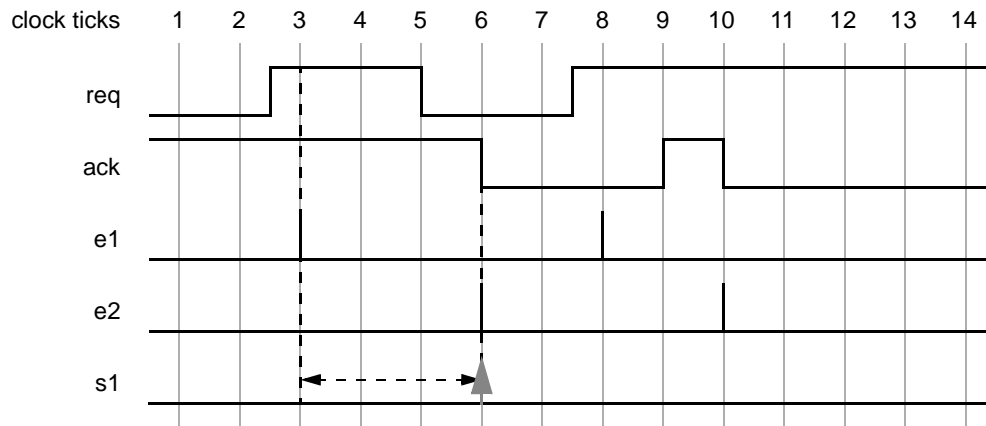
NOTE: A sequence match is indicated as an upward arrow and a no match is indicated as a downward arrow. At all other points in time where there is no upward or downward arrow, the expression is in the process of evaluating a match. A time line is shown with a dashed horizontal line $\leftarrow \text{---} \text{---} \text{---} \rightarrow$ with a left and a right arrow to indicate that an evaluation is in progress during that time period.

Start and End Time of A Sequence

Each sequence has a start time and an end time. As seen from the example in Figure 11-15, while monitoring sequences the reference time (current time) is advanced according to the clock ticks between the checkpoints.

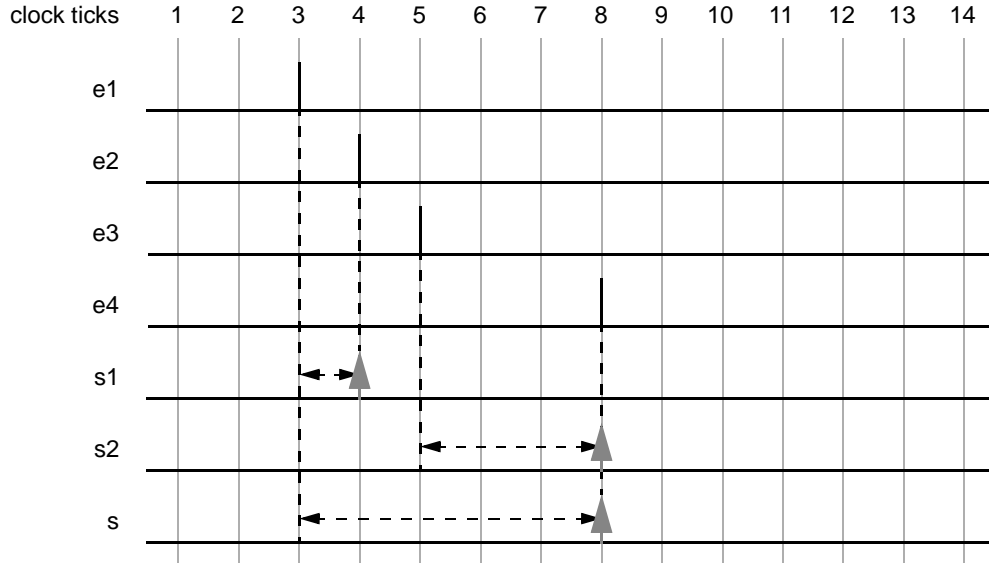
The start time for a sequence match is the time from which a new evaluation attempt of the sequence expression begins. The end time for that evaluation attempt is the time at which a match or a no-match for the sequence is detected. Let us examine the start and end times of the evaluation attempt at clock tick 3 for the example illustrated in Figure 11-16. The attempt starting at clock tick 3 matches at clock tick 6, so the start and end times are clock ticks 3 and 6 respectively.

Figure 11-16—Start and End Times of a Sequence



A sequence can consist of sub-sequences, again dispersed in time. The same rules apply to sub-sequences regarding the start time and end time. Now, assume a series of expressions ($e1$, $e2$, $e3$ and $e4$) at the corresponding clock ticks (3, 4, 5 and 8). Consider a sequence s consisting of two sub-sequences $s1$ and $s2$, where $s1$ is ($e1 ; e2$) and $s2$ is ($e3 ; [3] e4$), and s is defined as ($s1 ; s2$), and shown in Figure 11-17. The time clause $;$ specifies the expectation of the occurrence of the second operand expression in the next clock tick after the occurrence of the first operand expression. The time clause $;$ $[3]$ specifies the expectation of the occurrence of the second operand expression at the third clock tick after the occurrence of the first operand expression.

Figure 11-17—Start and End Times of Sub-sequences



The sequence expression is:
($e1 ; e2$) ; ($e3 ; [3] e4$)

Let us examine the evaluation attempt at clock tick 3 in Figure 11-17.

- The attempt starting at clock tick 3 succeeds for sub-sequence $s1$ at clock tick 4.
- Next, the evaluation of $s2$ begins at the next clock tick after sub-sequence $s1$, and the start time of sub-sequence $s2$ becomes 5.

- Sub-sequence s2 terminates when expression e4 occurs, resulting in the end time for sub-sequence s2 as clock tick 8.

Single vs. Multiple Sequences of Evaluation

A more complex scenario arises when the expression evaluation branches out to compute all alternative sequences implied by a construct. In such cases, a sequence match is determined for every sequence independent of each other. The expression can result in multiple successful or failed matches. If such a sequence expression is a sub-expression of a larger expression, then the resulting matches are used to determine sequence matches of the enclosing expression.

To specify a range of possible delays between subsequent samples, the delay specifier is modified to use the standard range syntax, as in

```
a:[1:3]b;c
```

This specifies that a will be true on the current sample, followed by b on the first, second, or third subsequent sample, and c will be true on the sample following b. Thus, any of the following sequences will match this sequential expression:

```
a;b;c
a:[2]b;c
a:[3]b;c
```

In the range syntax,

```
a:[min:max]b
c:[min:max];d
```

both min and max must be a constant expression or a literal, min must be greater than or equal to zero, and max must be greater than or equal to min.

In such cases, a sequence match is determined for every sequence independent of each other. The expression can result in multiple successful or failed matches. If such a sequence expression is a sub-expression of a larger expression, then the resulting matches are used to determine sequence matches of the enclosing expression. An example of evaluating multiple sequences follows:

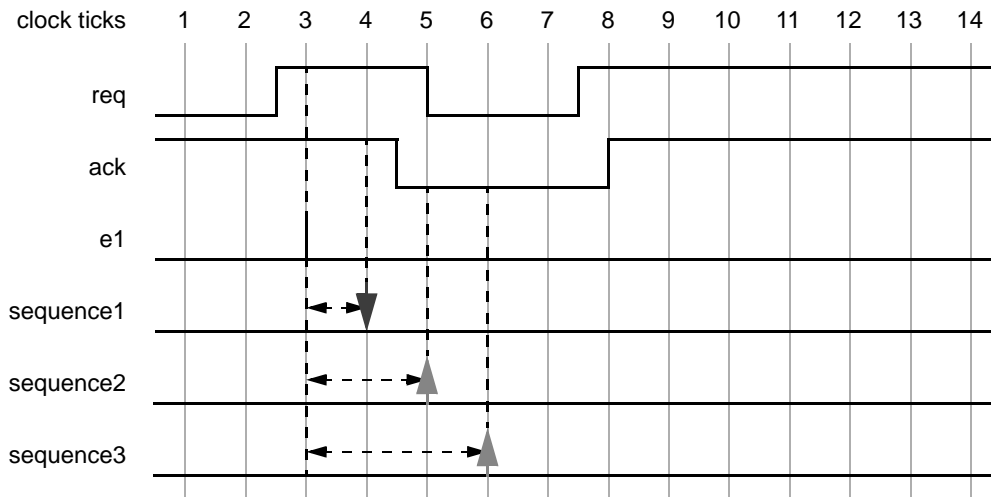
```
e1 ;[1:3] (ack==0)
```

e1 is defined as (rose req).

This statement says that signal ack must be low at the first, second, or third clock ticks after the occurrence of e1. To determine a match for each of these three cases, three separate evaluations are started. An example is illustrated in Figure 11-18. The three sequences are:

```
e1 ; (ack==0)
e1 ;[2] (ack==0)
e1 ;[3] (ack==0)
```

Figure 11-18—Evaluating Multiple Sequences



Let us consider an evaluation attempt at clock tick 3:

- At clock tick 3, **e1** occurs, so three sequences are started.
- Sequence1 fails to match at clock tick 4 as signal **ack** is 1.
- Sequence2 and sequence3 match at clock ticks 5 and 6 respectively, as signal **ack** is 0 at those clock ticks.

As shown, the sequence results in two matches for the example.

Note: When a sequence expression is used in a *property* directive that is to be verified on the design, the first match establishes the success of the property. In the example in Figure 11-18 a property verifying `e1 ; [1:3] (ack==0)` would declare success at clock tick 5.

Appendix B

This appendix describes the BNF for the assertion portion of the language.

BNF of Assertions

immediate_assertion is a **statement_item**. **statement_item** is defined in System Verilog.

concurrent_assertion_item can be a **module_item** or a **statement_item**. **module_item** is defined in System Verilog.

```

immediate_assertion ::=
    [ identifier ':' ] 'check' '(' 'expression ' ')' action_block
action_block ::=
    statement_or_null [ 'else' statement_or_null ]
statement_or_null ::=
    statement
    | ' ; '
concurrent_assertion_item ::=
    property_directive
    | prop_declaration

```

```

    | seq_declaration
    | bool_declaration
    | template_instantiation
    | template_declaration
property_directive ::=
    [identifier ':' ] assert prop_expr action_block
    | [identifier ':' ] cover prop_expr statement_or_null
prop_declaration ::=
    'property' named_prop { ',' named_prop } ;
named_prop ::=
    identifier [ '(' identifier { ',' identifier } ')' ] '=' prop_expr
prop_expr ::=
    ['initial'] ['accept' '(' expression ')'] ['never'] clocked_sequence
    | identifier [ '(' expression_list ')' ] // identifier must be a property
clocked_sequence ::=
    [event_control] sequence_expr
seq_declaration ::=
    'seq' [event_control] named_seq { ',' named_seq } ';'
named_seq ::=
    identifier [ '(' identifier { ',' identifier } ')' ] '=' '(' sequence_expr ')'
sequence_expr ::=
    sequence_instance
    | sequence_phrase { ';' sequence_phrase }
    | sequence_expr 'and' sequence_expr
    | sequence_expr 'intersect' sequence_expr
    | sequence_expr 'or' sequence_expr
    | 'first_match' '(' sequence_expr ')'
    | sequence_expr '=>' sequence_expr
    | 'throughout' boolean_expr 'within' sequence_expr
    | sequence_expr 'within' sequence_expr
    | '(' '(' { variable_declaration { ',' variable_declaration } } ')' sequence_expr ')'
variable_declaration ::=
    type identifier '=' expression
sequence_phrase ::=
    sequence_element
    | range sequence_element
    | sequence_element '*' range
    | boolean_expr '=' '*' '[' range ']'
sequence_element ::=
    boolean_expr
    | '(' sequence_expr ')'
range ::=
    '[' constant_range_expression ']'

```

```

        | '[' constant_range_expression ':' constant_range_expression ']'
        | '[' constant_range_expression ':' inf '['
boolean_expr_op ::=
    expression
    | bool_instance
    | true
    | ended seq_name
    | value_change_functions
    | $past '(' expression [ ',' number_of_ticks ] ')'
    | $countones '(' expression ')'
value_change_functions ::=
    $rose '(' expression ')'
    | $fell '(' expression ')'
    | $stable '(' expression ')'
sequence_instance ::=
    seq_identifier [ '(' expression_list ')' ]
    | bool_instance
bool_declaration ::=
    bool [ range_or_type ] named_bool { ',' named_bool } ;
named_bool ::=
    identifier [ '(' identifier { ',' identifier } ')' ] '=' boolean_expr
bool_instance ::=
    bool_identifier [ '(' expression_list ')' ]
template_declaration ::=
    template template_identifier [ '(' template_formal_list ')' ] ';'
    { template_item_declaration }
    endtemplate [ ':' template_identifier ]
template_formal_list ::=
    task_formal_arg { ',' task_formal_arg }
task_formal_arg ::=
    [data_type] formal_identifier [ '=' boolean_expr | sequence_expr | event_expr | string ]
template_item_declaration ::=
    property_decl
    | property_directive
    | seq_decl
    | bool_decl
    | var_declaration
    | nonblocking_assignment
template_instantiation ::=
    template_identifier [ instance_name ] [(list_of_port_connections)];
bind_directive ::=
    bind module_instance_name program instantiation ';'
boolean_expr ::= System Verilog expression where an operand can be System Verilog operand or
boolean_expr_op

```


`module_instance_name ::=` name of a module or instance as defined in System Verilog
`program instantiation ::=`
 `program_name program_instance_name '(' port_arguments ')'`
`program_name ::=` As defined in System verilog
`prgram_instance_name ::=` As defined in System verilog
`variable_declaration ::=` As defined in System verilog
`range_or_type ::=` As defined in System verilog
`data_type ::=` As defined in System Verilog
`expression ::=` As defined in System verilog
`prop_identifier ::=` identifier must be a property
`seq_identifier ::=` identifier must be a sequence or name
`bool_identifier ::=` identifier must be a bool name
`identifier ::=` As defined in System verilog
`constant_range_expression ::=` `constant_expression` as defined in System Verilog, but must be 0 or greater
`noblocking_assignment ::=` As defined in System verilog