The Swap Chain

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What is a Swap Chain?

In Vulkan, the Swap Chain manages one or more image objects that form a sequence of images that can be drawn into and presented to the user for viewing.

Swap Chains are tightly coupled to the window system.

After creating the Swap Chain in the first place, the process for using the Swap Chain is:
1. Ask the Swap Chain for an image
2. Render into it via the Command Buffer and a Queue
3. Return the image to the Swap Chain for presentation
4. Present the image to the viewer

What is a Swap Chain?

Because it has the word “chain” in it, let’s try to visualize the Swap Chain as a physical chain.

A bicycle chain isn’t far off. A bicycle chain goes around and around, each link in the chain taking its turn on the gear teeth, off the gear teeth, on, off, on, etc.

Because the Swap Chain is actually a ring buffer, the images in a Swap Chain go around and around too, each image taking its turn being drawn into, being presented, drawn into, being presented etc.

In the same way that bicycle chain links are “re-used”, Swap Chain images get re-used too.

Creating a Swap Chain

vkCreateSwapchain( )

VkSurfaceCapabilitiesKHR vsc;
vkGetDevicePhysicalSurfaceCapabilitiesKHR
( PhysicalDevice, Surface, OUT &vsc );
VkExtent2D surfaceRes = vsc.currentExtent;
VkSwapchainCreateInfoKHR vscci;
vscci.sType = VK_STRUCTURE_TYPE_SWAPCHAIN_CREATE_INFO_KHR;
vscci.pNext = nullptr;
vscci.flags = 0;
vscci.surface = Surface;
vscci.minImageCount = 2;  // double buffering
vscci.imageFormat = VK_FORMAT_B8G8R8A8_UNORM;
vscci.imageColorSpace = VK_COLORSPACE_SRGB_NONLINEAR_KHR;
vscci.imageExtent.width = surfaceRes.width;
vscci.imageExtent.height = surfaceRes.height;
vscci.imageUsage = VK_IMAGE_USAGE_COLOR_ATTACHMENT_BIT;
vscci.preTransform = VK_SURFACE_TRANSFORM_IDENTITY_BIT_KHR;
vscci.compositeAlpha = VK_COMPOSITE_ALPHA_OPAQUE_BIT_KHR;
vscci.imageArrayLayers = 1;
vscci.imageSharingMode = VK_SHARING_MODE_EXCLUSIVE;
vscci.queueFamilyIndexCount = 0;
vscci.pQueueFamilyIndices = (const uint32_t *)nullptr;
vscci.presentMode = VK_PRESENT_MODE_MAILBOX_KHR;
vscci.oldSwapchain = VK_NULL_HANDLE;
vscci.clipped = true;
result = vkCreateSwapchainKHR
( LogicalDevice, IN &vscci, PALLOCATOR, OUT &SwapChain );
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