DATA FLOW

SWIFTUI HANDBOOK 2026

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First edition: April 2026
www.swiftyplace.com

Pre-requisitions

- **Swift Fundamentals** - Comfortable with Swift syntax, protocols, and generics
- **Basic SwiftUI Knowledge** - You've built a simple app or two
- **Xcode 26** - Using the latest SwiftUI features
- **iOS 17+** - Targeting modern APIs (with notes for iOS 16 where relevant)

Who is this book for?

iOS developers who want to build professional SwiftUI apps.

You've followed the tutorials. You've built a few practice apps. But when you try to build something real, you hit walls:

- State management becomes a tangled mess
- You're not sure which pattern to use
- Your app feels sluggish
- Views update when they shouldn't (or don't update when they should)
- Performance problems appear and you don't know why

This book tries to fill the gap between "hello world" tutorials and production-ready applications.

Why This Book?

SwiftUI is deceptively simple on the surface. Apple's tutorials show you how to build basic apps, but they don't teach you:

- How SwiftUI actually works under the hood
- Why your app is slow and how to fix it
- How to structure state in complex apps
- How to debug performance issues
- Patterns that scale beyond toy examples

This book is the guide I wish I had when I started building real SwiftUI apps. It's based on years of experience building apps with SwiftUI, making mistakes and lots of trial and error. I will show you SwiftUI code that actually works in real-world scenarios.

What You'll Learn

By the end of this book, you'll understand:

- **How SwiftUI renders views** - The mental model that makes everything else make sense
- **State management mastery** - When to use each property wrapper and why
- **Performance optimization** - How to profile, debug, and fix slow views
- **Real-world patterns** - Data flow that scales from small to large apps
- **Professional techniques** - The patterns used in production apps

What Makes This Book Different?

Not another tutorial. This is a deep dive into how SwiftUI actually works and how to build professional apps.

Practical focus. Every concept is tied to real problems you'll face and how to solve them.

Performance first. You'll learn to build apps that are not just functional, but fast and responsive.

Honest advice. I'll tell you when something is overkill, when to break the rules, and what actually matters in production.

How to Use This Book

Read sequentially first. Each chapter builds on previous concepts. The rendering model chapter is foundational for everything else.

Keep Xcode open. Try the examples. Break them. Fix them. That's how you learn.

Use it as a reference. Come back to specific chapters when you face those problems in your own apps.

Build alongside. Apply these concepts to a real project as you learn them.

What You Won't Find

This isn't a comprehensive SwiftUI reference. I assume you know the basics of SwiftUI views, modifiers, layout and controls. We're focusing on the professional aspects: architecture, performance, and patterns that matter in production.

Ready? Let's build some professional SwiftUI apps.

1. SWIFTUI RENDERING

Foundation - How SwiftUI Actually Works

What you need to know to build production level SwiftUI apps

You change a `@State` variable and three unrelated views update. Or nothing updates and you start shuffling code around, switching property wrappers, adding `.id()` modifiers until something works. You ship it without knowing why. Next week the same problem appears somewhere else.

This keeps happening because SwiftUI makes update decisions automatically, and without knowing how those decisions are made, you are left guessing. More guessing is not the answer. Understanding the system is.

When your app launches, SwiftUI builds a data structure from your views called the attribute graph. Every view becomes a node. Every piece of state a view reads becomes a tracked dependency. When state changes, SwiftUI walks the graph, finds every view that depends on that state, re-evaluates those views, diffs the result, and commits only what changed. Views with no dependency on the changed state are never touched.

Once you see how the graph works, unexpected re-renders stop being mysterious. A view that updates when it shouldn't has a dependency you didn't intend to create. A view that won't update is missing one. These stop being random and start being specific problems with specific causes.

One honest caveat before we go further. Apple does not publish the implementation details of the attribute graph or the rendering pipeline. What you will find in this chapter is reconstructed from WWDC sessions, documented behavior, and careful experimentation. The picture is incomplete in places. But it is complete enough to explain the bugs you are hitting and give you a reliable way to reason about code before you write it.

This chapter covers the attribute graph in detail: how it gets built from your view types, how state changes propagate through it, what SwiftUI does during a render pass, and what the timing constraints of the render loop mean for your code. Every chapter that follows builds directly on this foundation. Identity is about how SwiftUI tracks nodes in the graph. State management is about how dependencies get registered. Lifecycle methods fire based on what happens to those nodes. You need this foundation first.

1.1 SWIFTUI RENDERING ENGINE

Have you ever wondered why sometimes your SwiftUI view updates instantly, and other times it feels sluggish? Or why moving `@State` from one view to another can dramatically change performance? To understand this, you need to peek under the hood at SwiftUI's rendering engine.

The code you write in SwiftUI is just a lightweight description of what the UI should look like. Below the surface, there's actually quite a sophisticated system of components involved in creating the pixels you see on screen.

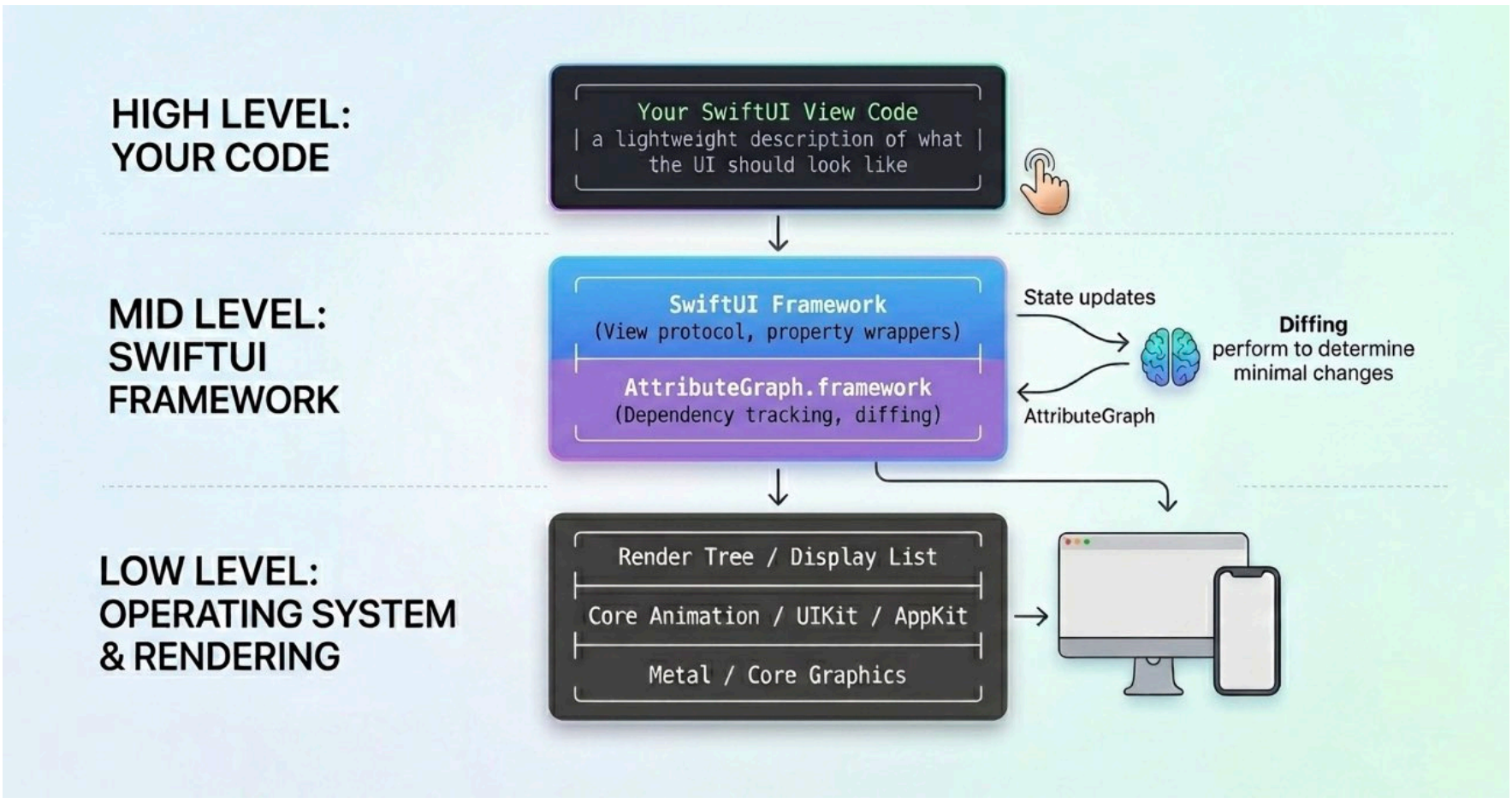
1.1.1 UNDERSTANDING THE RENDERING STACK

If you look at the rendering engine, it's responsible for taking your code and translating it into pixels at the right point, at the right time, in the most efficient way possible.

At the very lowest level, you have:

- Core Animation
- UIKit and AppKit
- Metal and Core Graphics

But there's a critical middle layer between your code and these low-level frameworks. Your code relies on SwiftUI, which includes the View protocol and property wrappers. At the heart of everything that controls what updates and when is a private framework called the **Attribute Graph**.



The Attribute Graph: SwiftUI's Secret Weapon

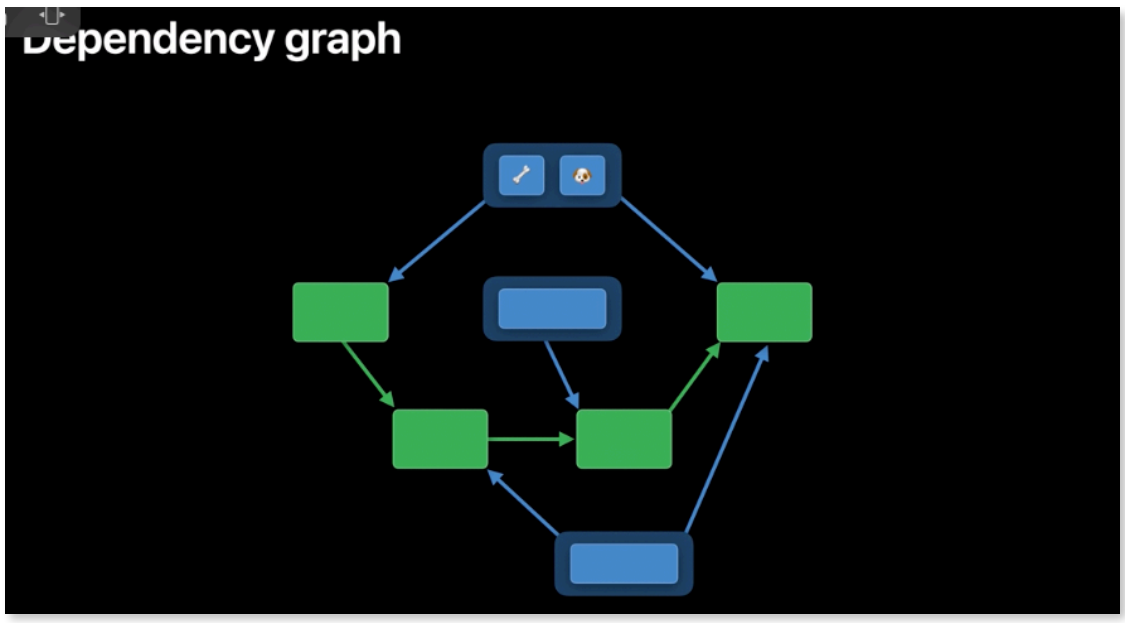
This component is actually keeping track of what changes and what to update, then passes this information down to the render tree and the actual UI components.

This is quite a sophisticated system, and I'll spend quite a bit of time on it. Apple doesn't talk much about it. There are a few WWDC talks where they hint at it, and there are also some third-party efforts where people try to rewrite the attribute graph to understand it through reverse engineering.

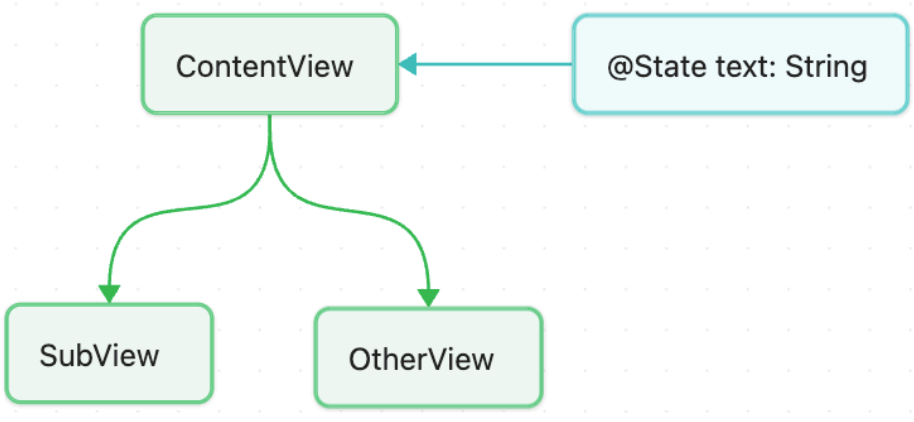
Think of the attribute graph as a spreadsheet that tracks:

- What changed
- What was there before
- What depends on what
- If this changes, what else needs to change

If you look at screenshots from WWDC21 ”Demystify SwiftUI”, you'll see a graph with nodes inside representing attributes. **Each view is represented as a node (green)**, and **each state is represented as a node (blue)**. Apple calls these nodes attributes, hence the name attribute graph.



This is also a dependency graph. You can see the **arrows pointing from blue state nodes towards green view nodes, expressing that this view depends on this state.** You can also see that green view nodes depend on other green view nodes. These dependencies are also used to passed data from one view to its child views.



The edges between these nodes describe dependencies and are used to track and decide what needs updating to the visible UI. The main challenge here is you don't want to redraw things too often. You want

very fine-grained control of only updating what's necessary. To do this, you need to track a lot of details, which is what this graph represents.

The Wedding Planner Analogy

Think of it like a bride who hires a wedding planner. The bride is your SwiftUI code—you just want to say what you want: the cake with which icing, which decoration, which colors. The wedding planner (the attribute graph) orchestrates the whole operation and passes work down to the executors (UIKit and the rendering system).

The wedding planner probably has a very big spreadsheet, checking: "She said this before, and now she wants a different color. Now she wants a different flavor for the cake. Who depends on this cake? The bakery? Did they already make the cake? Do they need to redo the whole thing? Which part needs to be redone?"

You end up with a very sophisticated attribute graph doing the overhead planning so that your SwiftUI code, which is just a description, doesn't need to deal with this complexity.

Building the Attribute Graph

We take the following code as example. Both views are represented as nodes in the attribute graph. The state property text is another node in the attribute graph:

```
struct ContentView: View {

   @State private var text: String = "hello world" // text attribute

    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            Button("Clear") {
                text = ""
            }

            SubView(text: text)
            OtherView()
        }
    }
}

struct SubView: View {
    let text: String
    var body: some View {
        Text("Entered Text: \(text)")
    }
}
```

When you launch the app, SwiftUI will first build the full attribute graph from your SwiftUI code. In this example it will create 3 view nodes. It also sees the property wrapper `@State` and assigns a node in the attribute graph to track it. It also creates edges between the state node and the view to register a data dependency.

I will go into more detail about the attribute graph components in section 1.3 Building the Attribute Graph.

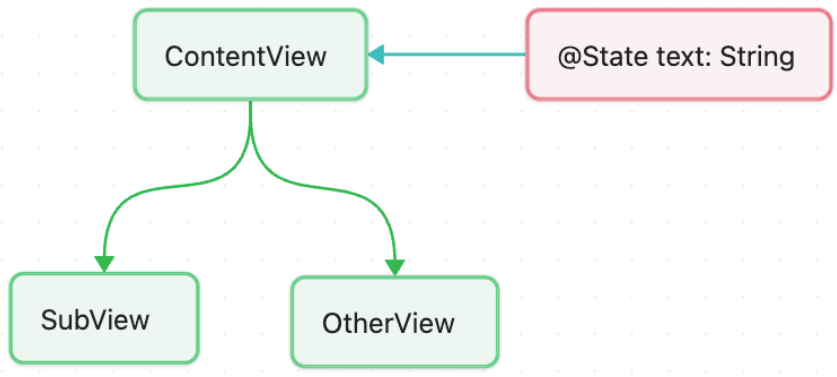
1.1.2 THE UPDATE PROCESS: STEP BY STEP

Lets now walk through the updating process. When you tap the “clear” button that changes state and the UI needs to be updated to the empty state.

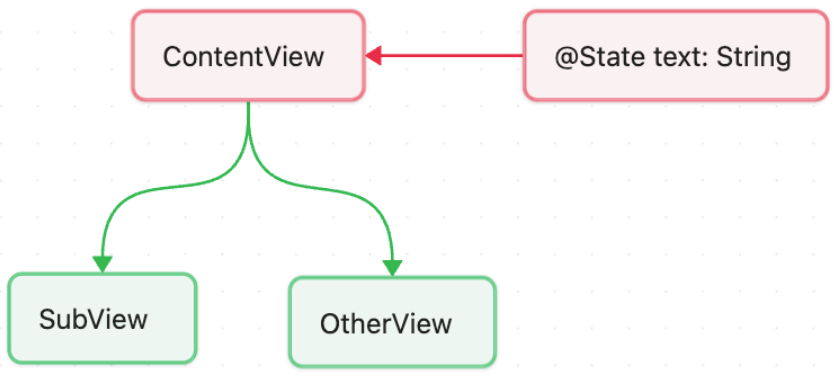
Step 1: Marking Dependencies as Dirty/Invalid

When the state changes, the attribute graph has a node for this state. It then:

1. Marks this state as **dirty** (shown below in red color)



2. Walks the graph to find views that depend on it (edges/arrows shown below in red)
3. Marks these views as **invalid**



Instead of dealing with all views and updating all pixels directly, we now have a **first guess of what might need to be redraw.** This helps in minimizing the necessary updates. The data dependencies/ attributes in the graph are an easy and quick way of tracking updates.

Why "might"? Because marking a view as invalid doesn't mean it will definitely re-render. That's just SwiftUI saying "this view needs checking." The actual decision happens in the next step when SwiftUI compares the old body to the new body.

Step 2: Body Evaluation and Diffing

To know if the UI changes, you need to look at the thing that describes the actual UI: your `body` properties.

For views marked invalid, SwiftUI calls the body to get the current state of what should be displayed. It then takes this new view, the new blueprint of the UI, and compares it to the old one. This process is called **diffing**.

Diffing helps minimize actual UI work by **determining what really changed**.

In the above example, the elements that need updating are inside `SubView`. The tree is walked from top to bottom, which means the system first calls the body of `ContentView`.

```
struct ContentView: View {
    @State private var text: String = "hello world” // text attribute
    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            Button("Clear") {
                text = ""
            }
            SubView(text: text)
            OtherView()
        }
    }
}
```

The return value for ContentView before and after are something like this:

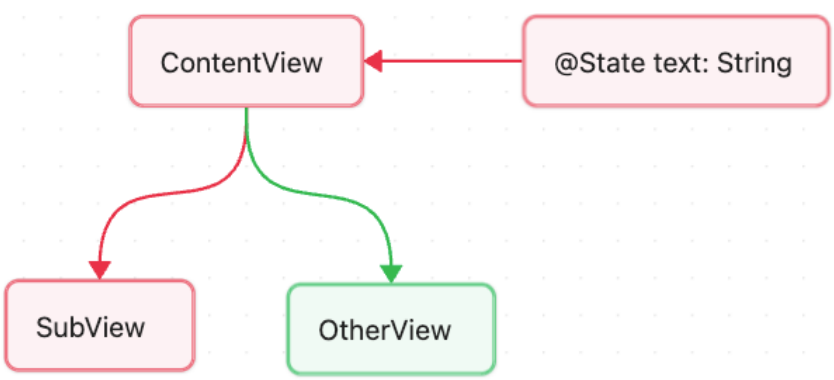
```
// Before:
VStack<TupleView<(Button<Text>, SubView, OtherView)>> {
    Button<Text>(action: { text = "" }) {
        Text("Clear")
    }
    SubView(text: "hello world")
    OtherView()
}

// After the Button Tap:
VStack<TupleView<(Button<Text>, SubView, OtherView)>> {
    Button<Text>(action: { text = "" }) {
        Text("Clear")
    }
    SubView(text: "")  // ← THIS CHANGED
    OtherView()
}
```

The `body` property returns **lightweight struct values** that describe what should be on screen. These structs contain the data needed to render (like strings, colors, etc.).

When SwiftUI compares:

- Old: `SubView(text: "hello world")`
- New: `SubView(text: "")`

It's comparing two **struct instances** where the `text` property has different values. During the comparison / diffing phase, it finds changes. In this case only `SubView` has changes.



Next, it looks at `SubView` and calls its body:

```
struct SubView: View {
    //Dependency on text from parent
    let text: String

    var body: some View {
        Text("Entered Text: \(text)")
    }
}
```

Then when it evaluates SubView's body, it compares:

- Old: `Text("Entered Text: hello world")`
- New: `Text("Entered Text: ")`

Again, two **struct instances** with different string storage. In this case it finds a SwiftUI view Text has a new text value. This information is used in the next steps to actually changes in pixels.
One big topic for diffing is how SwiftUI knows which view is which and how they change, so it can know how to update the underling views. You will learn more about this in 1.4 Walking the Tree.

> **SwiftUI Views Are Just Descriptions**
>
> Remember: these returned body values are **not** the actual UI elements. They're descriptions. The actual `UILabel` that shows the text lives much longer and gets updated based on these comparisons.
>
> The body calls and diffing is used to find changes to UI elements.

Step 3: The Commit Phase

In this step, the system takes what it learned from diffing (what actually changed and how). For example, if a text label changed, you need to pass this down.

This is where things get passed down to the UIKit views that are behind your SwiftUI views. If a text changed, there's probably a `UILabel` whose text needs to update. You don't necessarily want to create a new `UIView` or `UILabel`. You might just want to update it. This is part of the complication of writing an automatic framework.

Step 4: The Render Phase

After you've figured out what you want, the render pass happens. The system actually turning something into pixels.

The Hierarchy of Updates

```
User taps button
       |
       ▼
@State var text changes
       |
       ▼
AttributeGraph marks 'text' as dirty
       |
       ▼
Graph walks outward to find dependents
       |
       ▼
Views that depends on 'text' are marked dirty `invalid`
       |
       ▼
Those bodies are re-invoked (lazily, on next render pass)
1️⃣ Body evaluation (your code runs)
       |
       ▼
new body values are diffed against previous values
2️⃣ Diffing (comparison)
       |
       ▼
3️⃣ Render tree updates (actual work)
Commit pass: Actuall changes are committed to the render tree. This is
where actual CALayer or UIView updates happen.
       |
       ▼
Render pass: Core Animation takes over, composites layers, and
presents to screen.
```

Should You Optimize?

Before you start refactoring all your code, let me be clear: SwiftUI is *really good* at this. Most of the time, you don't need to think about any of this.

You should only care about rendering performance when:

- You're seeing visible stuttering during scrolling
- Instruments shows you're dropping frames
- You have complex views that update frequently (like animations or real-time data)

If your app feels smooth, don't optimize. But when you *do* need to optimize, understanding this mental model tells you exactly where to look.

Key Takeaways

In the following sections, I'm going to come back to these steps quite often. The important parts to remember:

- You have **state** that the graph manages
- The graph tracks **dependencies** to know which views to update
- It's smarter than just updating everything. It uses a **diffing process** for fine-grained control
- It determines which underlying components actually need to update

Although the SwiftUI body (the actual struct instance) is very short-lived, it does have an underlying actual component. When I talk about data and the whole application and say "view," I'm not talking about the short-lived struct instance. I'm talking about the representation in the attribute graph and the underlying UIKit implementation.

If you remember these key concepts: state, body evaluation, diffing, and then the commit phase, you'll understand the core of SwiftUI's rendering engine. There's probably a lot more involved (e.g. I didn't talk about layout), but I'm focusing here on performance and data flow.

1.3 WALKING THE TREE - HOW STATE CHANGES PROPAGATE

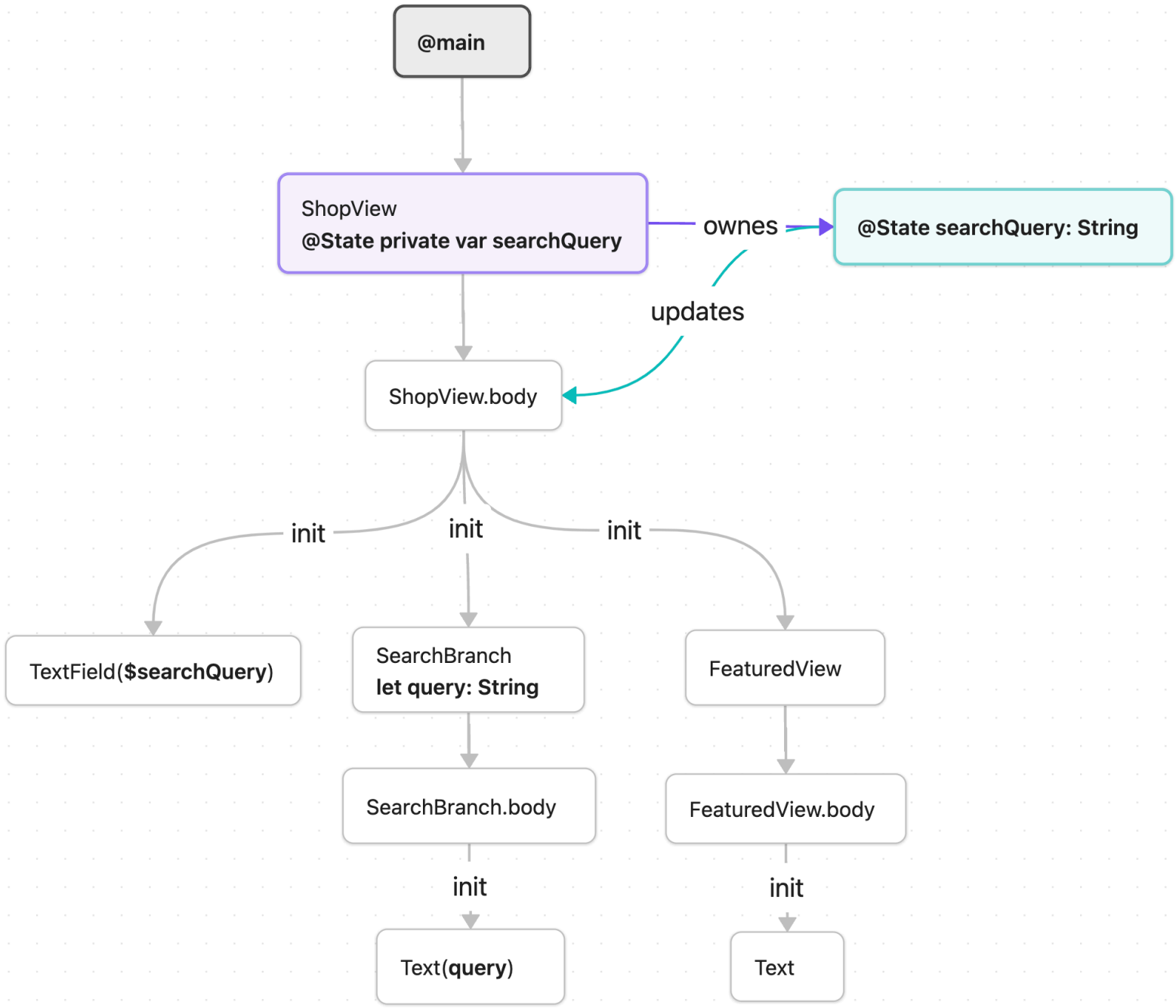
You already know that when a dependency changes, SwiftUI invalidates the affected node and re-runs its body. What happens next determines the actual scope of every re-render in your app. Re-running one body produces new view values for all of that node's children, and SwiftUI has to decide what to do with each of them. That decision process is the tree walk.

1.3.1 VALUE TYPES

Let's start with the simplest possible case. A parent that owns one piece of state, two children:

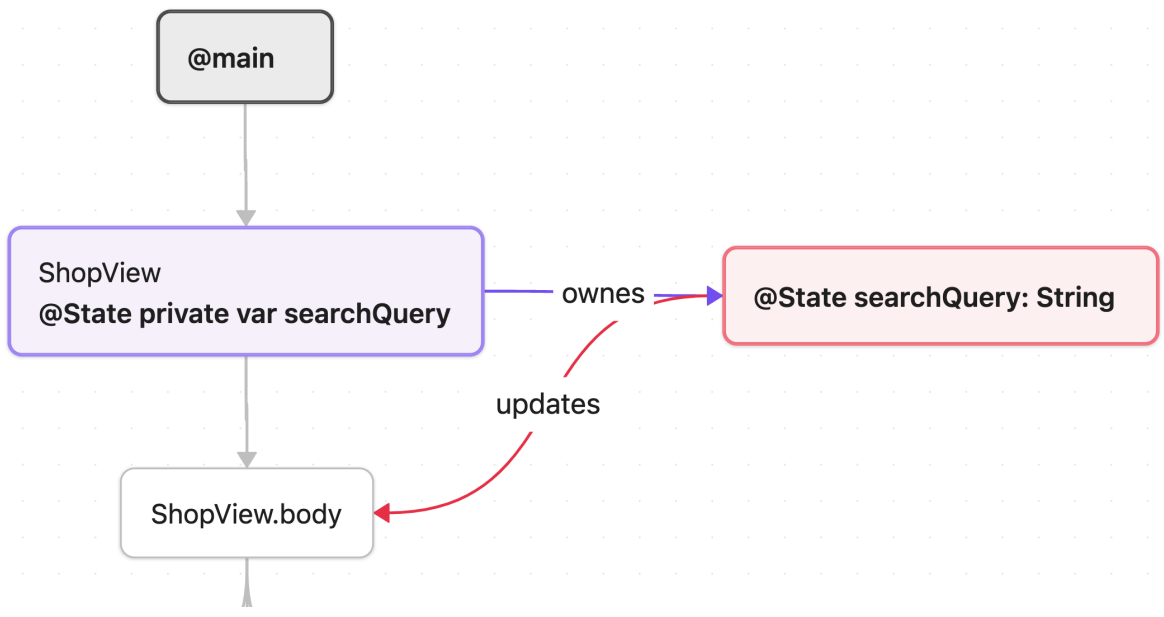
```
@main struct MyProjectApp: App {
    var body: some Scene {
        WindowGroup {
            ShopView()
        }
    }
}

struct ShopView: View {
    @State private var searchQuery = ""
    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            SearchBranch(query: searchQuery)
            FeaturedView()
            TextField("search Query",
                      text: $searchQuery)
        }
    }
}

struct SearchBranch: View {
    let query: String
    var body: some View {
        Text("Searching: \(query)")
    }
}

struct FeaturedView: View {
    var body: some View {
        Text("Featured Products")
    }
}
```

I am going to use the following visual representation of the attribute graph to highlight each step and what is called:

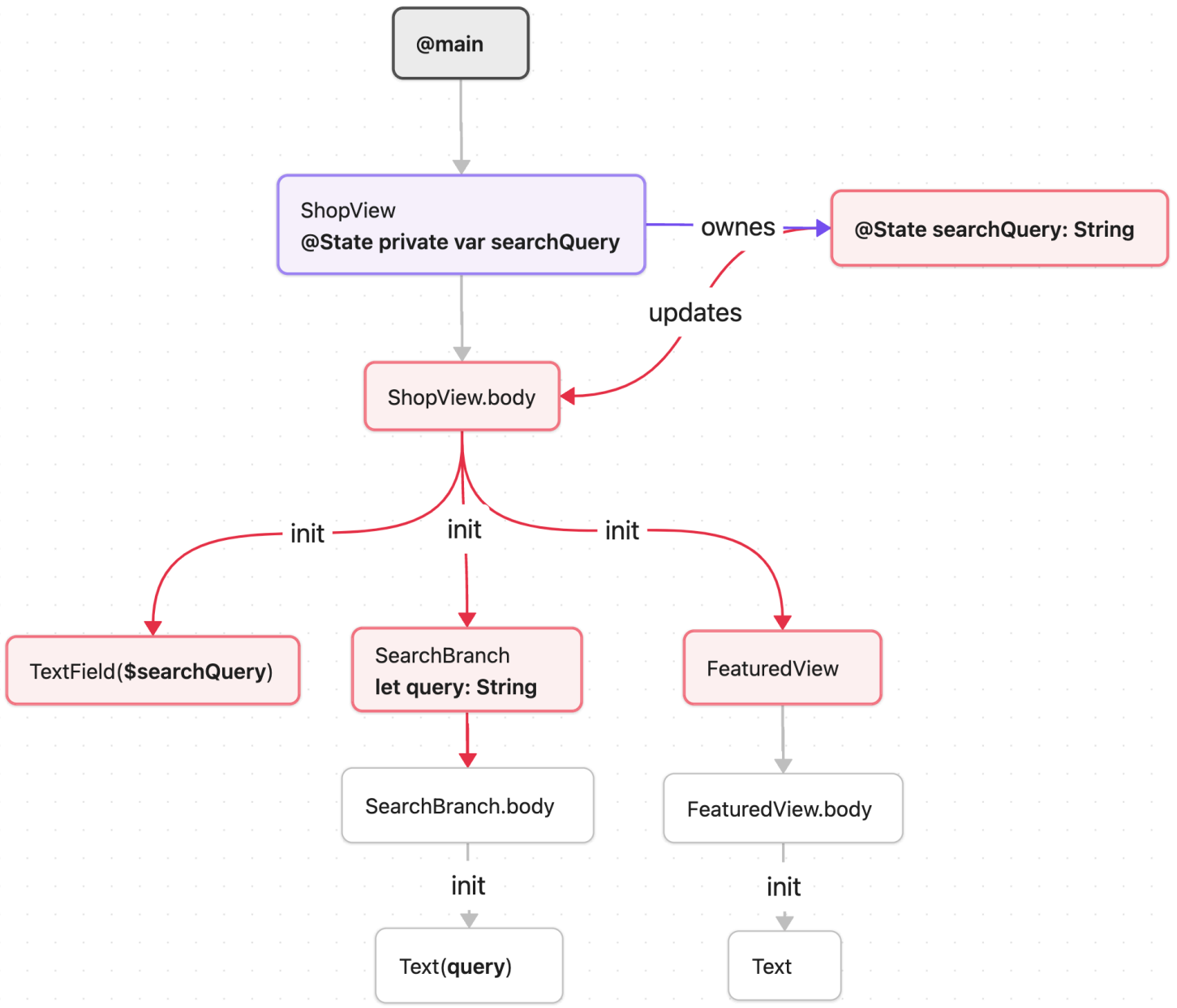


I added separate nodes for bodies of each views, so we see when they are called vs e.g. init calls. You can also see that I added an edge for the ownership of the state for `searchQuery`. This indicate that as long as `ShopView` lives, the associated state also stays alive, but more on this in 2.1 View Lifetime.

Let's have a look at how the updating process works, when you change the `searchQuery`. The node for `searchQuery` and all view bodies that depend on it are marked as invalidated:



SwiftUI re-runs `ShopView body`. That produces new values for all child view structs and compares the new value against the old one:



Old	New	Diffing
TextField("search Query", text: “”)	TextField("search Query", text: “shoes”)	Display text changed, update underlying view, SwiftUI leaf view - walking ends
SearchBranch(query: “")	SearchBranch(query: "shoes")	query changed, need to check subview
FeaturedView()	FeaturedView()	no change - walking ends

`FeaturedView` takes no inputs. The new value is identical to the old one. SwiftUI stops there, `FeaturedView`'s `body` does not run.

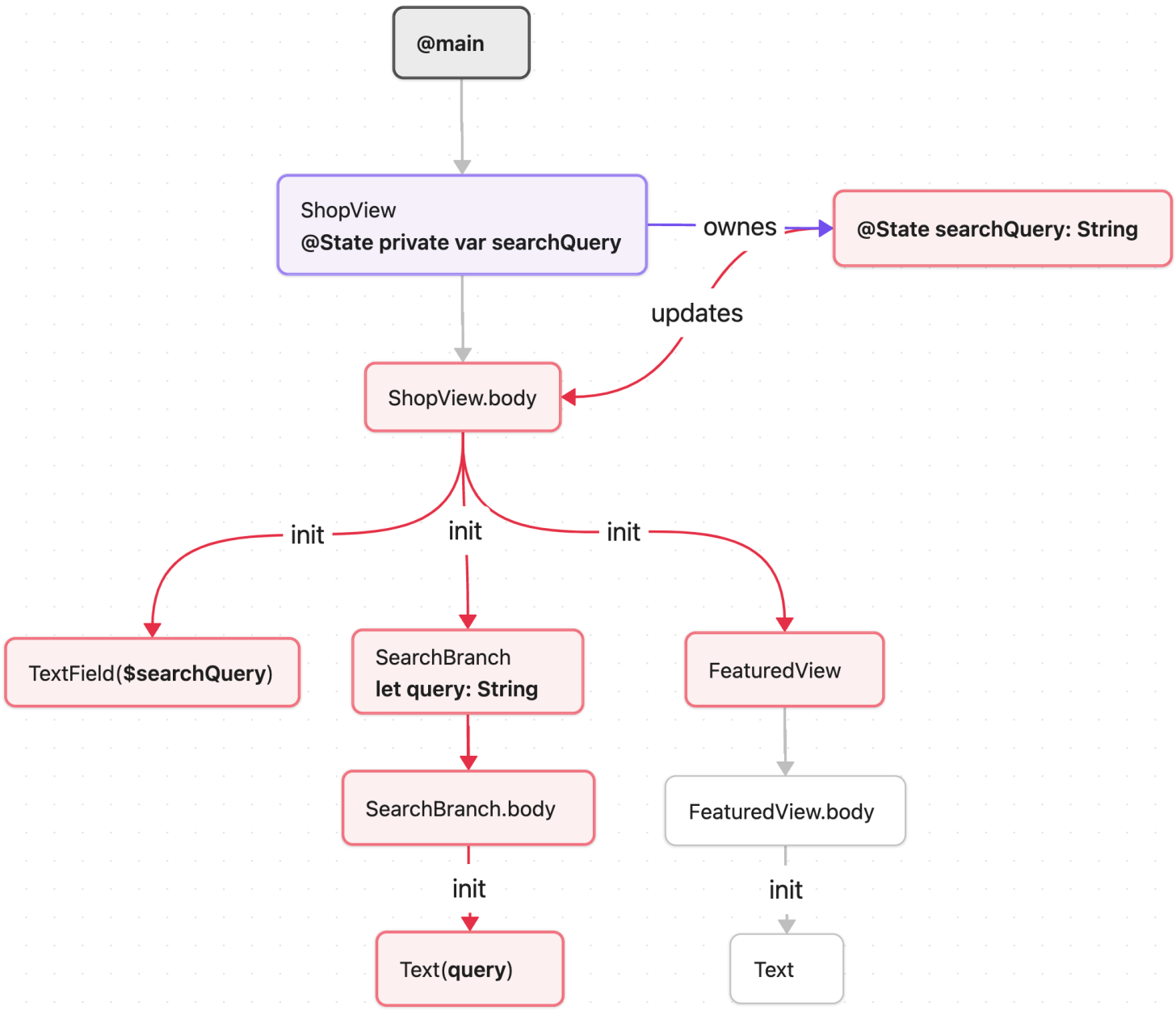
`SearchBranch` received a new `query` value so its `body` re-runs. `SearchBranch` body finds a `Text` views input changed. Because this is a leaf view and there are now more subviews it also stops:

Old	New	Diffing
Text(“"Searching:”)	Text(“”Searching: shoes”)	Text input changed

This is the core mechanic: **at each child, compare new value against old value. If equal, stop. If different, continue with child. Re-run `body` and keep walking.**

SwiftUI started the updating process at the state attribute/node. It used the dependencies in the attribute graph to walk down and find visual changes to the UI. In this example. The `TextField` inside `ShopView` needs updating and the `Text` inside `SearchBranch` view.

Instead of walking the full view tree, SwiftUI only checked a subset of views. For example `FeatureView` does not depend on the change attribute `searchQuery` and therefore its body can be skipped. However in order to know if it can be skipped, SwiftUI had to call `FeatureView init` one time, when its parents body was called:



Thinking About init vs body

This is a crucial point that people misunderstand. When SwiftUI walks the tree and calls body, it also calls the init of all views in body. You can see this in action if you add `Self._printChanges()` statements:

```
struct ShopView: View {
    @State private var searchQuery = ""
    var body: some View {
       Self._printChanges()
       return VStack {
            SearchBranch(query: searchQuery)
            FeaturedView()
        }
    }
}

struct SearchBranch: View {
    let query: String
    init(query: String) {
        self.query = query
        print("SearchBranch init")
    }

    var body: some View {
        Self._printChanges()
        return Text("Searching: \(query)")
    }
}

struct FeaturedView: View {
    init() {
        print("FeaturedView init")
    }

    var body: some View {
        Self._printChanges()
        return Text("Featured Products")
    }
}
```

When you launch this, first SwiftUI creates all views and thus need walk the full tree. You see calls to all views. The print statements come from calling `Self._printChanges()` show @identity, for views that have been newly created (and thus get a new identity):

```
ShoppingView: @self, @identity, _searchQuery changed. // ShoppingView created
SearchBranch init                 // called during body of ShoppingView
FeaturedView init                 // called during body of ShoppingView

SearchBranch: @self, @identity, _searchQuery changed. // SearchBranch created
FeaturedView: @self, @identity                        // FeaturedView created
```

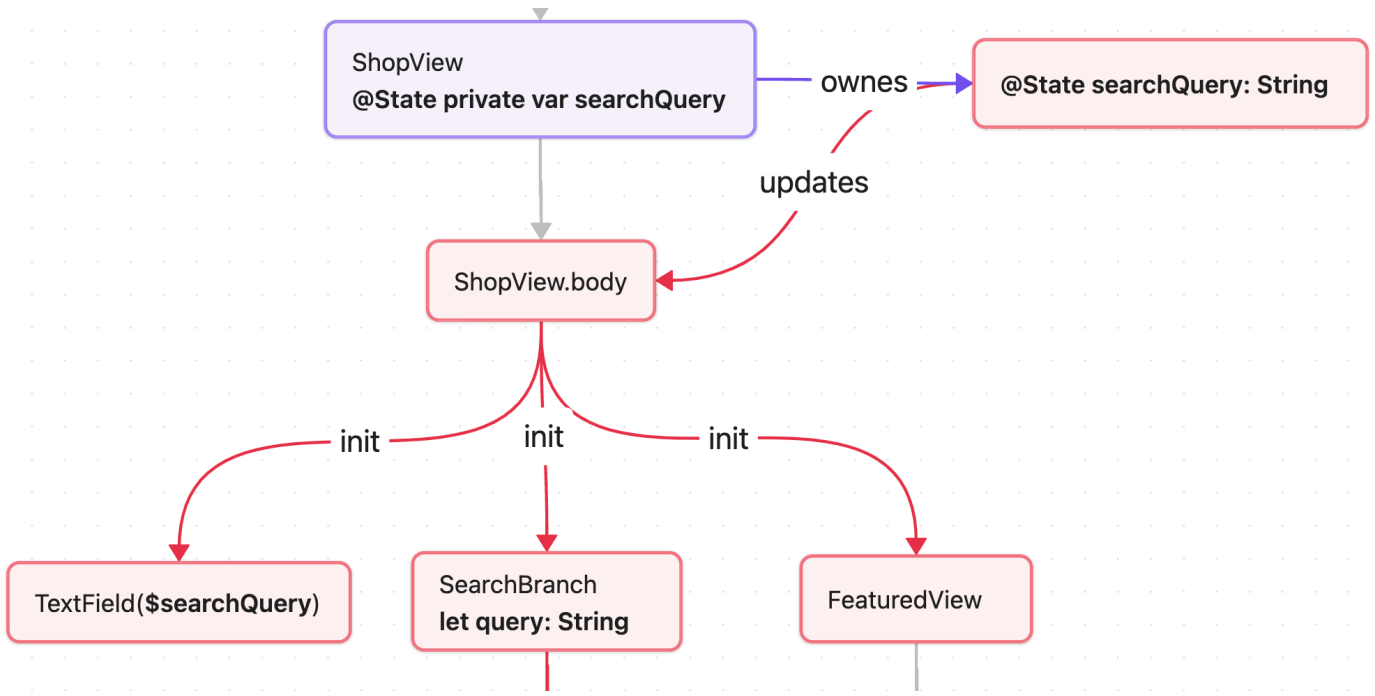
During the call of `ShoppingView` body, it also creates the structure instances for `FeaturedView` and `FeaturedView`, which you can see from calling init.

Next, type in the textfield and watch the following console output:

```
ShoppingView: _searchQuery changed. // Level 1
SearchBranch init                   // 1.A
FeaturedView init                   // 1.B

SearchBranch: _searchQuery changed. // Level 2
```

1. `ShoppingView` body is called because `_searchQuery` changed,
   - (1.A - 1.B) during which both subview inits are called again.
   - Next it finds during the diff that `SearchBranch`´s input changed
2. It needs to run SearchBranch body (it was called because `_searchQuery` changed)
   - and finds that a primitive type `Text` has a new input

I added more details to illustrate this to the following diagram. `init` arrows go to both `SearchBranch` AND `FeaturedView`, but `run body` only goes down from `SearchBranch`



So the sequence is:

- Parent `body` runs
- Swift calls `init` on every child described in that `body.` This is unavoidable, these are just struct initializers
- SwiftUI compares each new child value against the old one
- Only children where the comparison differs get their `body` called

This means:

- `init` **can run often**. It runs even when the view doesn't re-render
- **Never do heavy work in** `init` - use `onAppear` or `task` instead
- `body` **is not the same as** `init` **is not the same as pre-render.** SwiftUI protects it with the comparison

The Walk Per Branch

The comparison happens independently for each child. SwiftUI makes an individual decision per node, not a single pass/fail for the whole level.

Let's add a second piece of state and a proper second branch:

```
struct ShopView: View {
    @State private var searchQuery = ""
    @State private var cartItemCount = 0

    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            SearchBranch(query: searchQuery)
            CartBranch(itemCount: cartItemCount)
        }
    }
}

struct SearchBranch: View {
    let query: String
   var body: some View {
        Text("Searching: \(query)")
    }
}

struct CartBranch: View {
    let itemCount: Int
    var body: some View {
        Text("\(itemCount) items in cart")
    }
}
```

When `cartItemCount` changes `ShoppingViews` body is called and compared:

Old	New	Comparison
SearchBranch(query: "shoes")	SearchBranch(query: "shoes")	no change → STOP
CartBranch(itemCount: 0)	CartBranch(itemCount: 1)	itemCount changed → run body

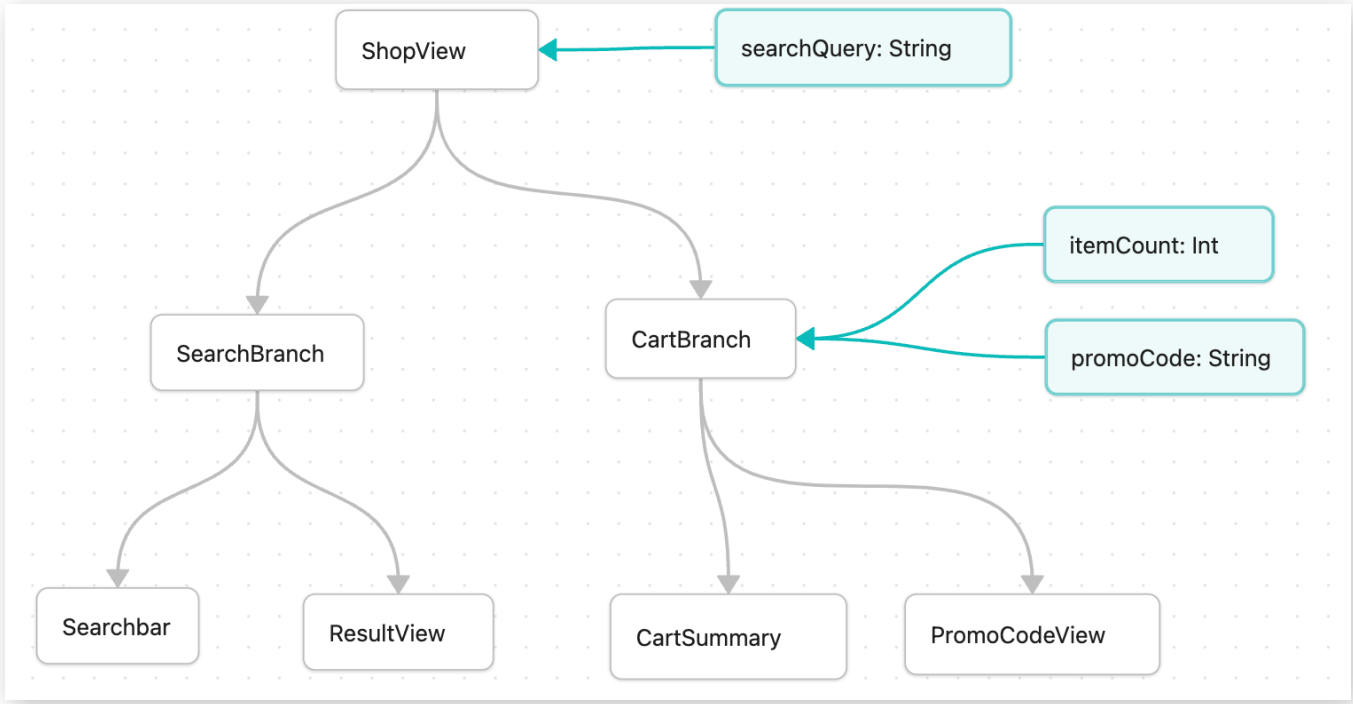
This time the entire left branch is stopped in one comparison. The walk fans out from the invalidated node but stops as soon as it hits a child where nothing changed.

The Walk Can Stop Mid-Tree

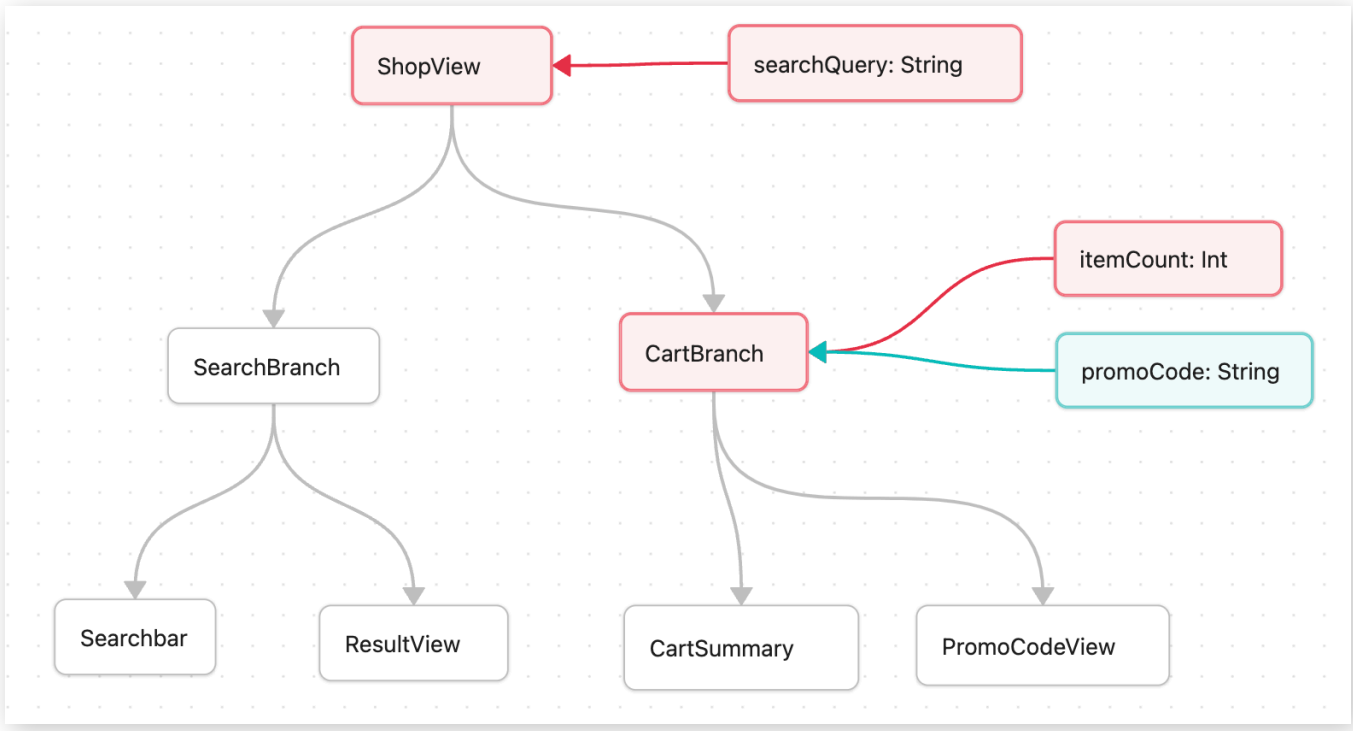
Early stopping doesn't only happen at the top level. It can happen anywhere in the tree, including deep inside a branch that did start re-rendering.

Multiple State Changes - One Tree Walk

Often your app will have multiple state changes per frame. These changes are typed to different views in your view tree hierarchy:



When two state changes are register (transaction list), they are processed together in one render pass. First, all views that depend on these update state nodes will be invalidated:



Next, the system will **walk the tree from top to bottom**, starting with the invalided view highest in the tree:

> run body of ShopView

> diff: find sub views that might have changes

> mark subviews invalid

> walk subview branch one by one

> find all changes and pass to commit phase

This ensures that the system has consistently updated the UI and does this very efficiently.

2. VIEW IDENTITY AND LIFETIME

Understanding When Views Live and Die

How does SwiftUI know which view is which?

When your state changes and SwiftUI re-renders, it doesn't redraw everything from scratch. It compares the new view descriptions against what already exists and asks: is this the same view as before, just updated, or is it a completely different view that should start fresh? To answer that question, SwiftUI needs a way to recognize views across renders. That's identity: the mechanism SwiftUI uses to track whether a view is the same one it saw last time.

Identity determines lifetime. A view's lifetime is the period between SwiftUI deciding it exists and deciding it's gone. While a view is alive, its `@State` is preserved, its `task`s keep running, and its place in the UI is stable. When SwiftUI decides a view's identity has changed, it destroys the old one and creates a new one. `@State` resets. Tasks cancel. Everything starts fresh.

This is the root cause behind a whole class of bugs that look like something else. You've probably hit one: a user fills out a form, navigates away, comes back, and the fields are empty. Or a list reloads and the wrong row is expanded. The state looks wrong, so you debug the state. But the state was fine. SwiftUI just decided the view was new, so it threw the old state away.

Understanding identity also sets up the next two chapters. State management in chapter 3 is really about ownership within a view's lifetime. The lifecycle methods in chapter 4, `task` especially, only make sense once you know precisely what "the view disappears" actually means to SwiftUI.

2.1 VIEW LIFETIME: THE ATTRIBUTE GRAPH NODE

Here's the thing that trips up almost every SwiftUI developer at some point and it's not because the concept is complicated. It's because the language we use is imprecise.

When someone says "*the view's lifetime*", what do they mean? In chapter one I told you that your view structs are created and thrown away constantly. They're short-lived value types, stamped out during the rendering loop and discarded almost immediately. So when a colleague says "*this view is alive*", are they talking about the struct? Because that struct is already gone.

No. They're not talking about the struct.

> **The view lifetime is the attribute graph node, not the struct.**
> **And everything else, state, lifecycle methods, identity hangs off that.**

This is the core idea of this entire chapter. Let's unpack it properly.

The Struct Is Not the View

When you write a SwiftUI view, you write a struct:

```
struct ChildView: View {
    @State private var text = ""

    var body: some View {
        TextField("Enter something", text: $text)
    }
}
```

SwiftUI calls `body` on this struct, reads the result, and uses it to figure out what to draw. Then the struct is gone. It served its purpose. SwiftUI might create another instance of `ChildView` a few milliseconds later to compare what changed, and again, that instance is thrown away.

This is by design. Structs are cheap. Creating and destroying them is fast. SwiftUI uses them as a *description* of the UI, not as the UI itself.

What Is View Lifetime, Then?

The **lifetime of a view** is the period during which its node exists in the attribute graph.

- The node is **created** when SwiftUI first adds the view to the hierarchy.
- The node **persists** for as long as the view remains in the hierarchy.
- The node is **destroyed** when the view is removed from the hierarchy.

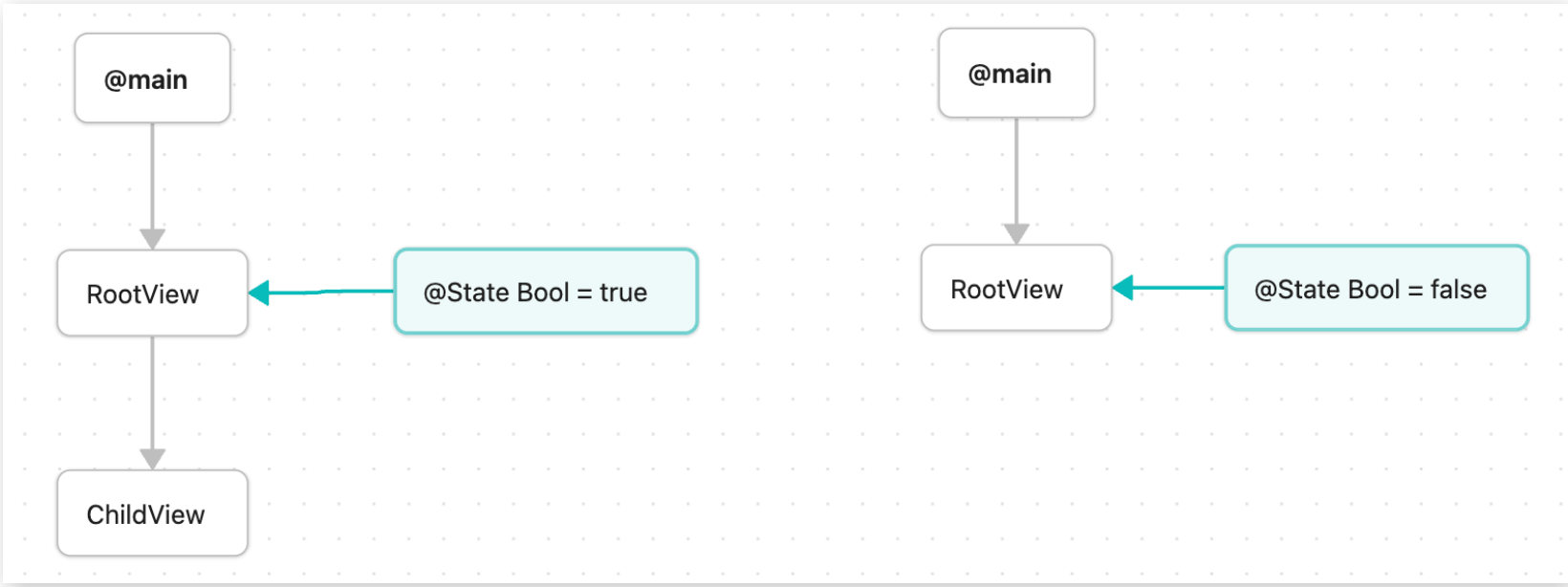
The struct instances that SwiftUI creates to evaluate `body`? They're not the lifetime. They come and go constantly, completely independent of whether the node is alive or not.

2.1.1 WHAT CAN END A VIEW'S LIFETIME?

Several things cause a node to be destroyed:

Conditional branches: the most common case. When a view moves in or out of an `if` branch, its node is created or destroyed:

```
struct RootView: View {
    @State private var showChild = true
    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            Toggle("Show child", isOn: $showChild)

            if showChild {
            // node created when true, destroyed when false
                ChildView()
           }
        }
    }
}
```



For `switch` **statements** each branch is a different view. Switching between them destroys one node and creates another:

```
switch selectedTab {
case .home:
    HomeView()
case .profile:
    ProfileView()  // different node, different lifetime
}
```

Sheets and navigation — the view inside a sheet gets a node when the sheet appears, and that node is destroyed when the sheet is dismissed.

```
.sheet(isPresented: $showSheet) {
    SheetView()  // node created on present, destroyed on dismiss
}
```

Same for navigation destinations when you pop back:

```
NavigationStack {
    ProductBrowserListView()
        .navigationDestination(for: Product.self) { product in
            ProductDetailView(for: product)
           // node created on push, destroyed on pop back
        }
}
```

`ForEach` **in long lists:** rows are created on demand as you scroll. If you scroll far enough, off-screen rows may have their nodes removed:

```
ForEach(items) { item in
    RowView(item: item)
    // node may be removed when scrolled far off screen
}
```

The `.id()` **modifier** changing the value passed to `.id()` tells SwiftUI to treat this as a completely different view, destroying the old node and creating a new one:

```
ChildView()
    .id(resetToken)
    // change resetToken → old node destroyed, new node created
```

All of these situations have one thing in common: when the node goes, everything attached to it goes too. And that brings us to state.

2.1.2 VIEW LIFETIME → STATE LIFETIME

Each view in your hierarchy gets a **node** in the graph. But `@State` doesn't just get stored *inside* that node. It gets its own **separate attribute** in the graph. This is a subtle but important distinction.

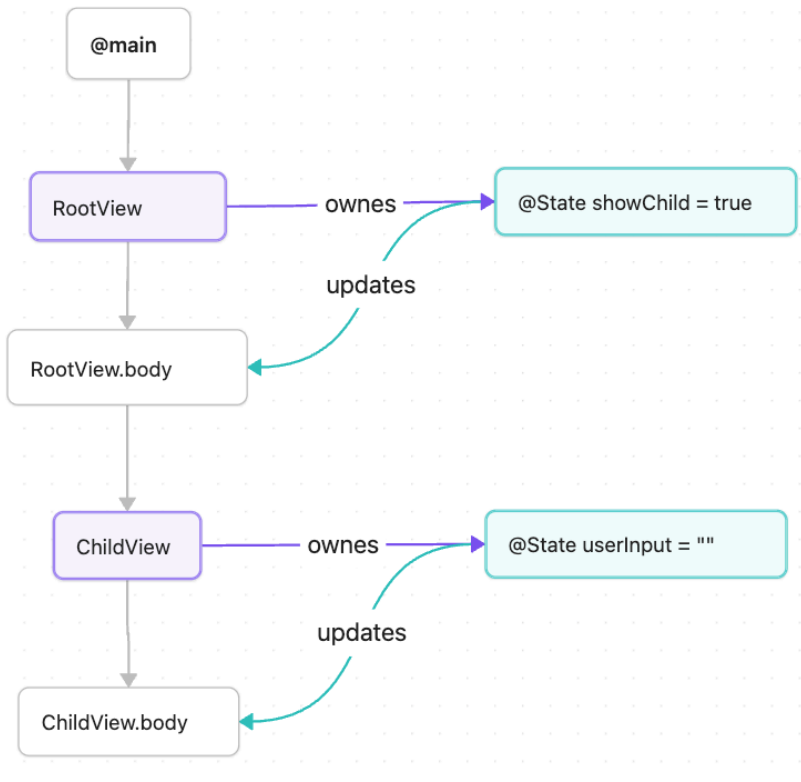
Each `@State` attribute is anchored to its view's node. So its lifetime is directly tied to the node's lifetime:

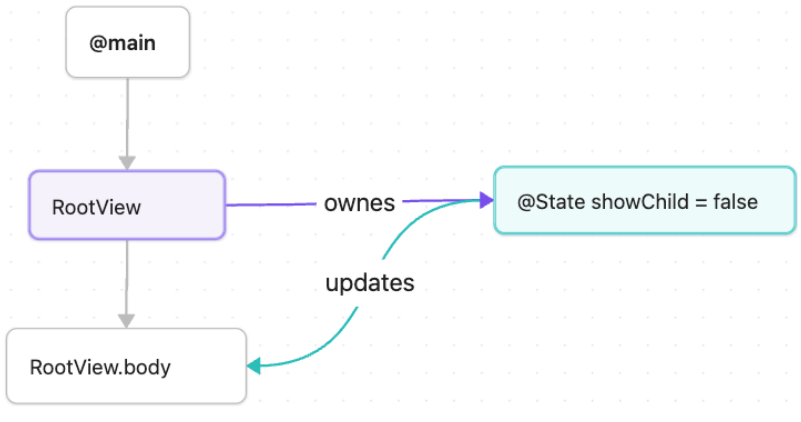
- Node created → `@State` attribute initialized with your default value
- Node alive → `@State` persists across every struct recreation
- Node destroyed → `@State` attribute removed from the graph

Let's take the following as an example, where we have two views:

```
struct RootView: View {
    @State private var showChild = true
    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            Toggle("Show child", isOn: $showChild)
            if showChild {
                ChildView()
            }
        }
    }
}

struct ChildView: View {
    @State private var userInput = ""
    var body: some View {
        TextField("Type something...",
                  text: $userInput)
    }
}
```

For which the attribute graph representation looks as following (left is the initial state on launch and right for bidding the `ChildView`):





How SwiftUI Knows Which State to Tear Down When a View Is Removed

When SwiftUI connects a `@State` attribute to its view in the attribute graph, it creates two distinct edges, not one.

The Ownership Edge goes from the view node to the state attribute. This edge says: "I own this state. It belongs to me. When I'm removed from the graph, destroy it too

The Dependency Edge goes the other direction. From the state attribute to the view's body output. This edge says: "This view's body reads my value. When I change, mark that body dirty and re-evaluate it."

These two edges serve completely different purposes:

Edge	Direction	Purpose
Ownership (purple)	View → State	Lifetime management "When I die, destroy this."
Dependency (cyan)	State → View.body	Invalidation / redraw "When I change, re-run this."
Structural (gray)	View → Children	Tree structure. "My body produced these."

This separation is *why* state survives body re-evaluation. When the dependency edge fires and the body is re-run, the ownership edge is untouched. The view node is still there, so the state stays alive. The struct gets recreated, body runs again, but the state attribute in the graph hasn't moved.

Conversely, when a view node is removed from the tree entirely (like our `if/else` example), SwiftUI walks the ownership edges and destroys every state attribute that node owned. That's how it knows *which* state to clean up. It's following pointers.

Try this:

1. Type something into the text field.
2. Toggle `showChild` to `false`.
3. Toggle it back to `true`.

Your text is gone.

This isn't a bug. When `showChild` becomes `false`, the `if` branch removes `ChildView` from the view tree. SwiftUI removes its node from the attribute graph and with it, all state that it owns e.g. the `@State: userInput` attribute. When `showChild` becomes `true` again, a brand new node is created, and `@State` is initialized fresh with `""`.

This is the lifetime rule in action. **The state lives exactly as long as the node that owns it.**

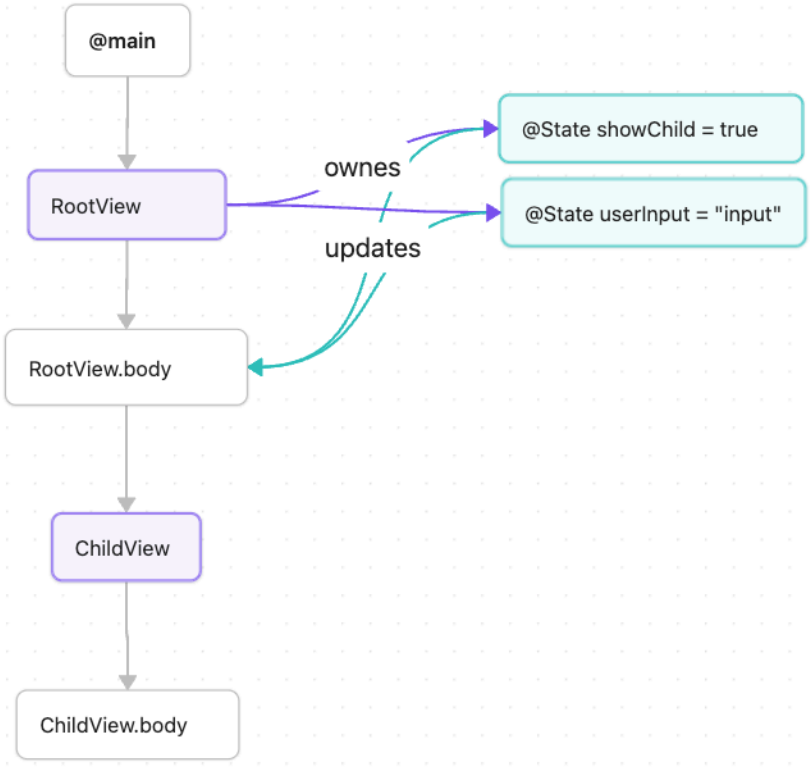
Each `@State` is its own attribute. A separate, independently tracked piece of storage in the graph. This is exactly *why* state survives after the struct instance is gone. The struct was just the messenger. The attribute graph is where the data actually lives.

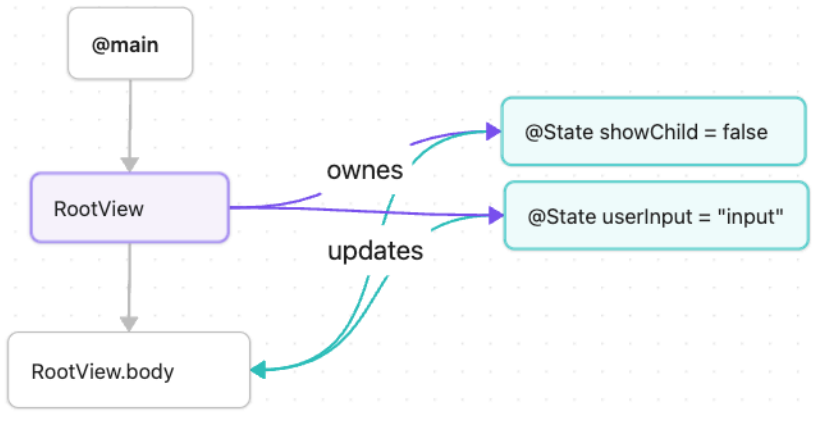
Keeping State Alive: Move It Up in the View Tree

Once you understand that state lifetime equals node lifetime, the fix for unwanted state loss becomes obvious: **move the state to a node with a longer lifetime**.

```swift
struct RootView: View {
    @State private var showChild = true
    @State private var userInput = ""  // moved up to RootView
    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            Toggle("Show child", isOn: $showChild)
            if showChild {
                ChildView(userInput: $userInput)  // passed as @Binding
            }
        }
    }
}

struct ChildView: View {
    @Binding var userInput: String
    var body: some View {
        TextField("Type something...", text: $userInput)
    }
}
```

The attribute graph now looks like this:



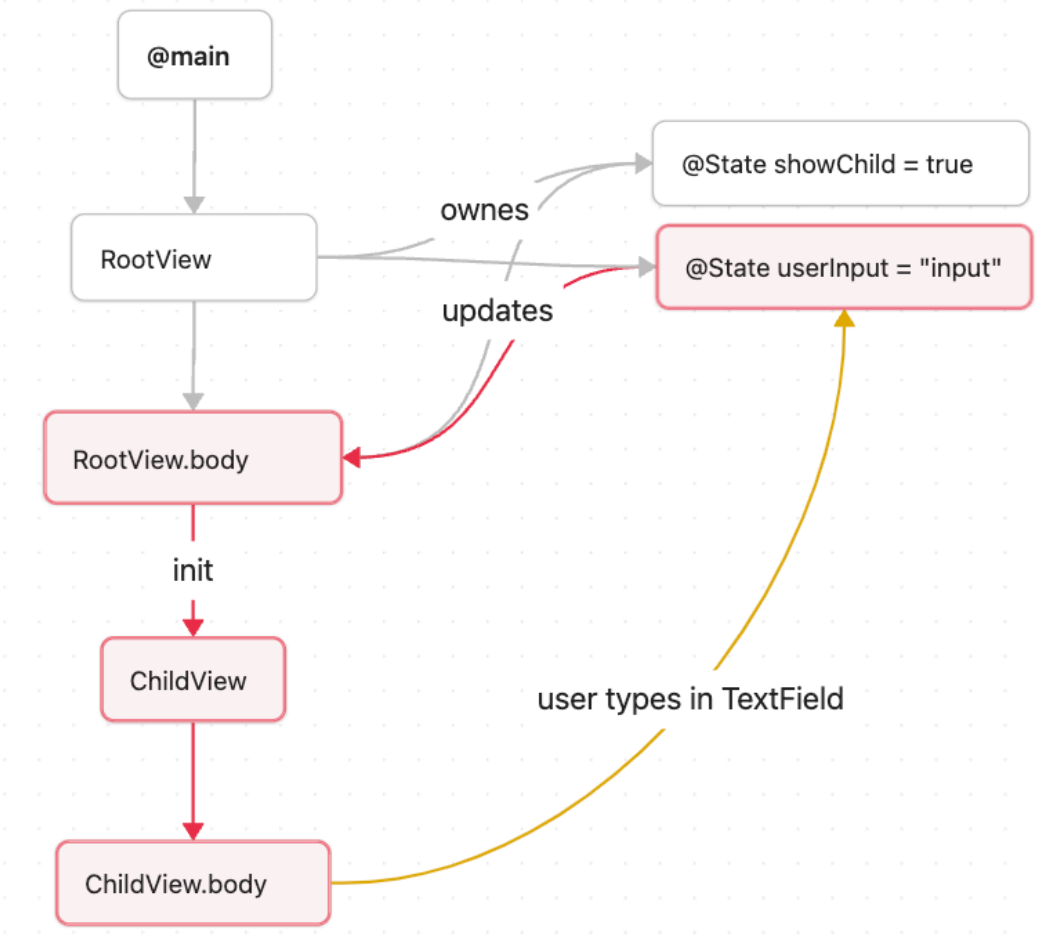


If you put `@State` in a parent view, it's anchored to the parent's node. The parent's node lives longer than the child's. So the state survives the child being removed and re-added.

When `ChildView` is removed, its node disappears but `userInput` is safe in `RootView`'s attribute. When `ChildView` comes back, the `@Binding` reconnects to the same attribute and the text is still there.

`@Binding` doesn't create any new storage in the graph. There's no second copy of the value. It's just a way for the child to reach back and read from and write to the parent's `@State`. We'll look at exactly how that works in Chapter 3, but for now the important thing is: **one piece of storage, one node, one lifetime.**

When the child writes through the binding, it writes to the original `@State` attribute (yellow arrow indicated in diagram).



As you can see, the data flow is unidirectional and thus predictable. It all comes together with the state attributes. One side is the state mutations (yellow) and the other is the ui updates from the state (red).

Every view below the ownership view node can receive the state. The data flows from top to bottom. Where you place the state, depends on how long the state should live and which views need to use it.

> Chapter 3 goes more into detail on how state is managed and gives you examples of how to organize state ownership.

2.1.3 VIEW LIFETIME → LIFECYCLE METHOD

The same node lifetime that controls `@State` also determines when certain lifecycle methods fire but not all of them work the way you'd expect.

There are two distinct concepts:

- **Node lifetime** is when the node is created and destroyed in the attribute graph. This happens once. `@State` is initialized when the node is created and torn down when the node is destroyed.
- **View appearance** is when a view becomes visible or hidden. This can happen multiple times for the same node.

Let's look at the simple case first: a conditional view where lifetime and appearance happen to align.

```
struct ParentView: View {
    @State private var showChild = true

    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            Toggle("Show Child", isOn: $showChild)
            if showChild {
                ChildView()
            }
        }
    }
}
```

```
struct ChildView: View {
    @State private var userInput = ""

    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            TextField("Type something", text: $userInput)
            Text("I am alive")
        }
        .onAppear {
             print("onAppear")
        }
        .onDisappear {
             print("onDisappear")
        }
        .task {
              print("task started")
              try? await Task.sleep(for: .seconds(60))
              print("task finished")
        }
    }
}
```

Try this:

1. Type something into the text field.
2. Toggle `showChild` to `false`.
3. Toggle it back to `true`.
4. Your text is gone.

Here's what happened:

Toggle off:

1. The `if` branch removes `ChildView` from the view tree.
2. The node is destroyed — `@State userInput` is torn down.
3. `onDisappear` fires.
4. `task` is cancelled.

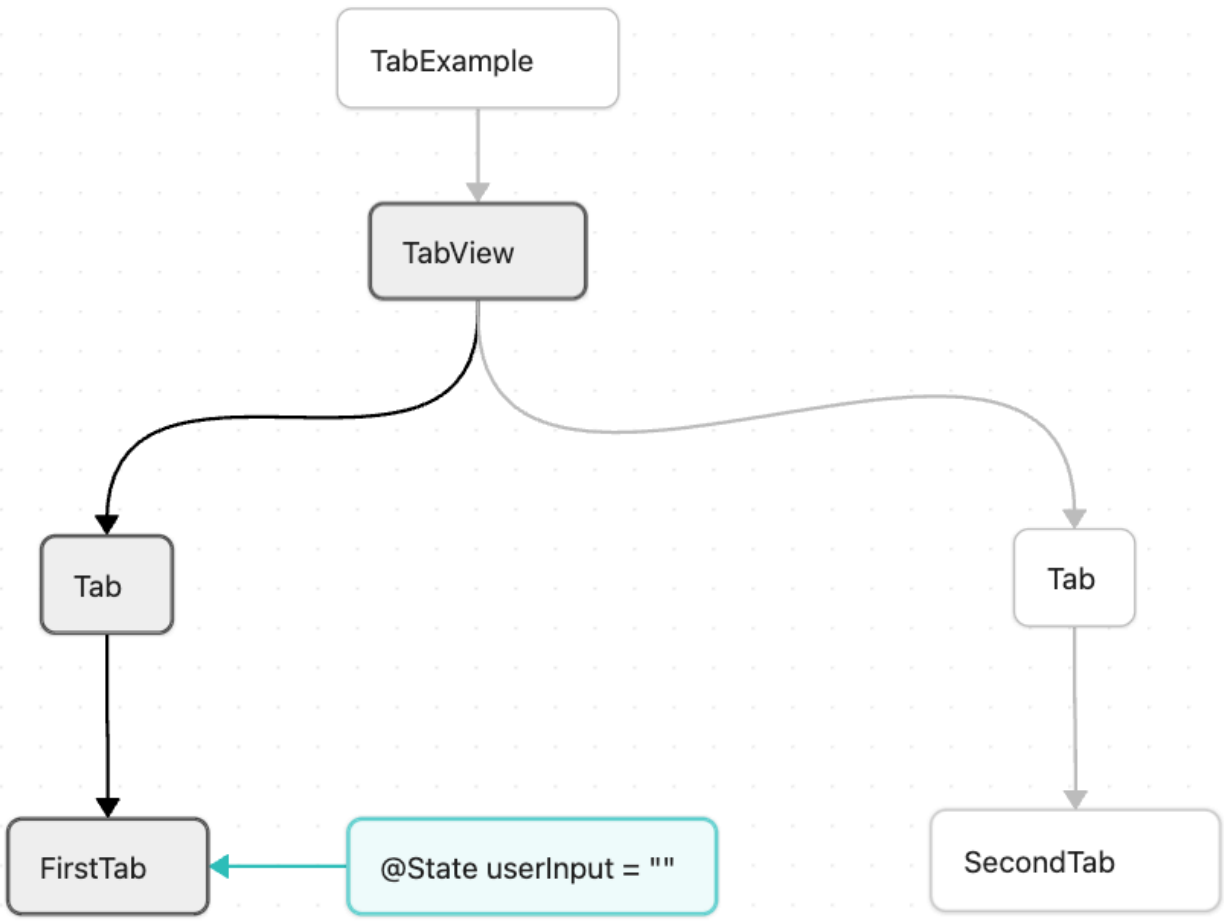
Toggle on:

1. A new node is created — `@State userInput` is initialized fresh as `""`.
2. `onAppear` fires.
3. `task` starts.

In this case, lifetime and appearance are the same event. The node is created and destroyed each time. Every lifecycle method fires exactly once per lifetime.

This is not always the case. In containers like `TabView` and `NavigationStack`, a view can disappear and reappear without its node being destroyed. Here's a quick preview of why that matters:

```
struct TabExample: View {
    var body: some View {
        TabView {
            Tab("First", systemImage: "1.circle") {
                FirstTab()
            }
            Tab("Second", systemImage: "2.circle") {
                SecondTab()
            }
        }
    }
}

struct FirstTab: View {
    @State private var userInput = ""

    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            TextField("Type something", text: $userInput)
            Text("First Tab")
        }
        .onAppear {
            print("FirstTab onAppear")
        }
        .onDisappear {
            print("FirstTab onDisappear")
        }
    }
}

struct SecondTab: View {
    var body: some View {
        Text("Second Tab")
    }
}
```



Try this:

1. Type something in the text field.
2. Switch to the second tab, `onDisappear` prints.
3. Switch back, `onAppear` prints **again**.
4. Your text is **still there**.

`onDisappear` fired, but the state survived. The node was never destroyed — the view just became not visible. `onAppear` and `onDisappear` responded to appearance, not lifetime.

This is the key distinction. `@State` is tied to the node's lifetime. `onAppear` and `onDisappear` are tied to visibility. In the `if/else` case they happen to align. In `TabView`, they don't.

> We'll revisit this thoroughly in Chapter 4, where we'll walk through exactly how lifecycle methods behave in `TabView, NavigationStack, List`, and other containers.

3. STATE MANAGEMENT

How state works, where it lives, and who owns it.

Every SwiftUI app has the same fundamental problem: your UI needs to reflect your data, and your data changes over time. SwiftUI's answer to this is a clear contract. **State flows down the view tree, and when it changes, the views that depend on it update automatically**. Simple in principle. The tricky part is understanding the machinery behind it, because when something goes wrong e.g. a view not updating, state resetting unexpectedly, changes not propagating, the fix almost always comes down to understanding how that machinery works.

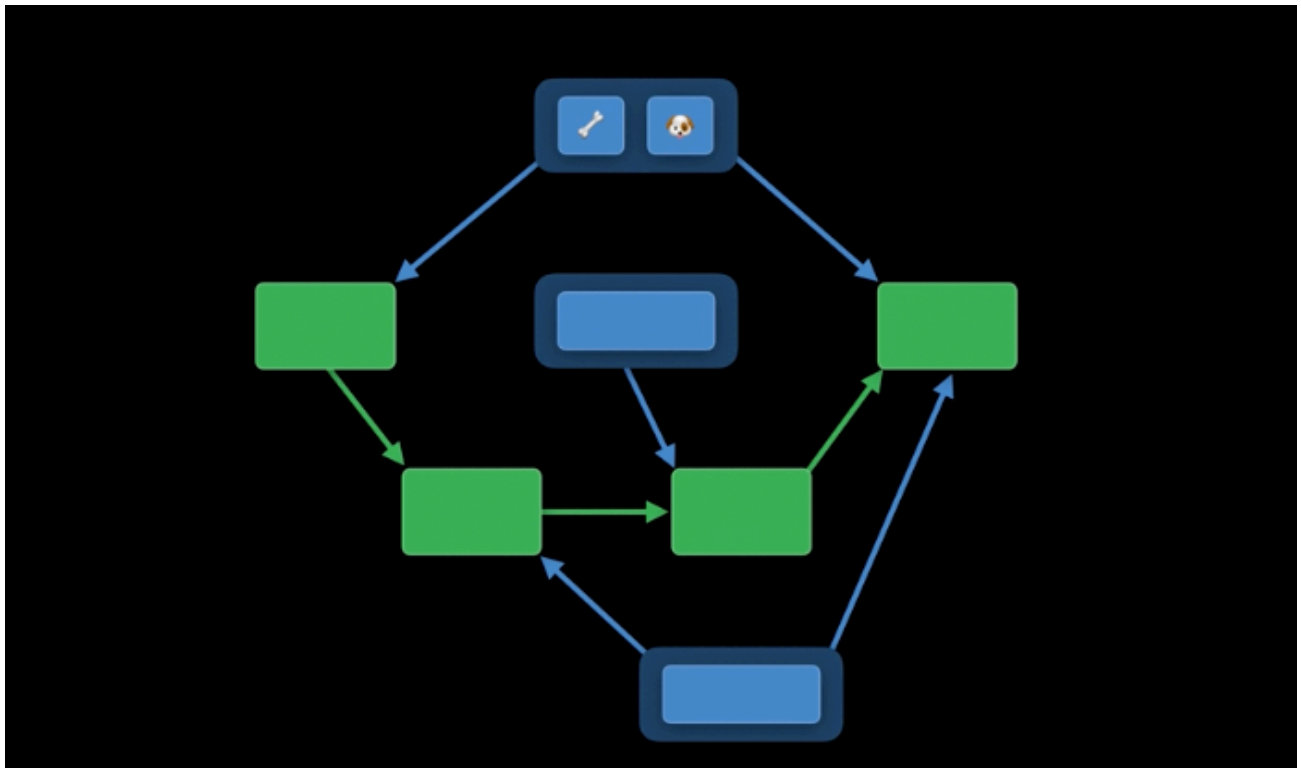
This chapter is about getting that machinery right. We'll start with the mental model: what unidirectional data flow actually means and why it makes your app predictable. Then we'll look at the property wrappers. These tools create a specific kind of relationship in the attribute graph. Once you see them that way, the right choice in any situation becomes obvious rather than a guess.

We'll also cover the parts that trip people up even after they've been writing SwiftUI for a while: initializing state correctly when you have dependencies, deciding where in the tree state should live, and the common mistakes that lead to duplicate state and subtle sync bugs.

By the end of this chapter you'll have a clear model for structuring state in any SwiftUI app. Chapter 6 will build on that foundation. Taking everything here and stress-testing it against the real-world complexity of async work, concurrent updates, and flows that need to stay correct even when things happen out of order.

3.1 DEPENDENCY TRACKING

In chapter 1 you learned about the **Attribute Graph.** An internal dependency graph that tracks exactly which views depend on which pieces of state. When state changes, SwiftUI walks the graph, finds only the views that care about that specific state, and re-evaluates only those.



There are three players in this graph:

- **State Nodes:** hold your data. Created by `@State`, `@StateObject`, or `@Observable` properties.
- **View Nodes:** represent a view's `body`. They get marked dirty when their dependencies change.
- **Edges:** the connections between them. When state changes, SwiftUI follows the edges to find which view nodes to invalidate.

SwiftUI doesn't re-render your entire app every time something changes. That would be catastrophically slow. It uses the edges / dependencies of state to view node to decide what needs to be checked for updates. `@State`, `@Observable`, `@ObservedObject`, `Environment` are just different ways of creating edges in that graph.

If you get these wrong the system can:

- perform unnecessary view updates and those lead to poor performance
- Not update the UI to the newest values
- The UI showing inconsistent data and state

To get the correct behavior of your app, you must think of the edges in the dependency graph. Which leads to the critical question: **where does the dependency (edge) come from?**

The answer depends entirely on which state system you're using. And the systems work very differently from each other, which can be difficult to wrap your head around. In the following pages I will go through the different tracking mechanism and show you the edges/dependencies for different examples.

We will focus on these areas:

- value types with @State, @Binding (including collections, arrays and dictionaries)
- Reference types with `@StateObject`, `@ObservedObject` (including nested objects)
- Reference types with `Observable` and the shift to property-level edges
- Using the `Environment` to pass data

3.1.1 VALUE TYPES WITH @STATE, @BINDING

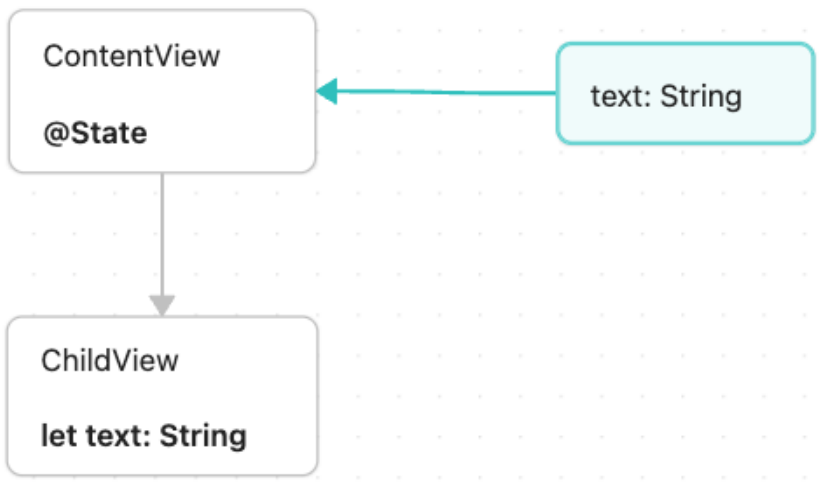
Let's start with the simplest case which are value types. Strings, Ints, structs, enums, arrays, dictionaries, optionals. The bread and butter of most SwiftUI state.

The rule: **the @State declaration creates the node in the attribute and the dependency for the view node.** Children don't have a direct edge to the state node. They just get caught in the tree walk when their parent re-evaluates.

Example: Reading the Value

Here's the most common case. A parent owns some state, passes it to a child, and the child displays it:

```
struct ContentView: View {
    @State private var text: String = “Hello" // dependency (edge)

    var body: some View {
        DisplayView(text: text)
    }
}

struct DisplayView: View {
    let text: String // declaration creates the update path

    var body: some View {
        Text("Value: \(text)")
    }
}
```



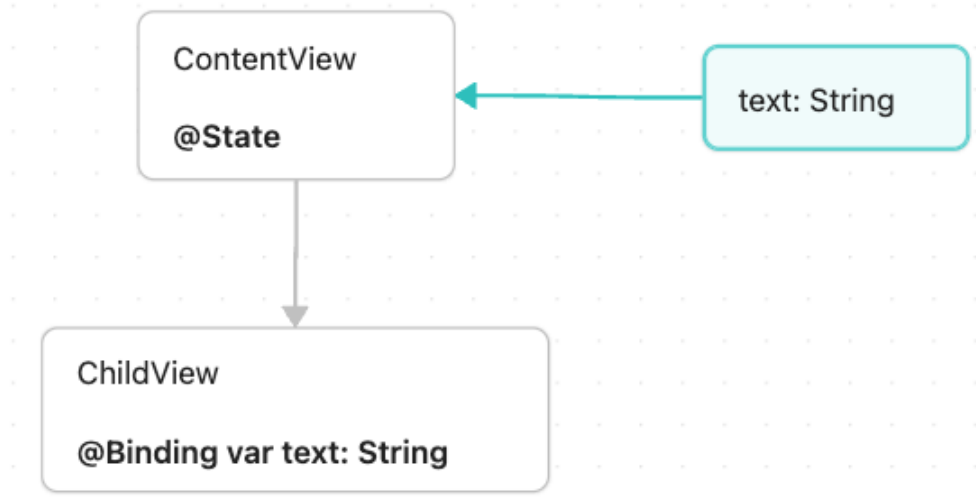
The edge lives between the `@State` node and `ContentView`. When `text` changes, that node is invalided and all view that dependent on it e.g. `ContentView.` Then `Content.body` runs. SwiftUI then walks into `DisplayView` and runs its `body` too, because it declared `text` as a property. Makes sense, the value changed, the display should update.

`DisplayView` just gets caught in the downstream tree walk, it does not have a direct edge to the state node.

Example: Writing via a Binding

How does the attribute graph and the edges look like if you use `@Binding` in the subview:

```
struct ContentView: View {
    @State private var text: String = "Hello"

    var body: some View {
        WriteView(text: $text)
    }
}

struct WriteView: View {
    @Binding var text: String
    var body: some View {
        Button("Update") {
            text = "new value" // write to state
        }
    }
}
```



`@Binding` doesn't create any new storage in the attribute graph. But it's also not a pointer or reference to the parent's `@State` attribute. It's simpler than that.

A `@Binding` is a **get/set pair,** two closures that read from and write to someone else's state. You can see this for example, when you need to write a custom binding:

```
struct ContentView: View {
    @State private var username: String? = nil

    var usernameBinding: Binding<String> {
        Binding(
            get: { username ?? "" },
            set: { username = $0.isEmpty ? nil : $0 }
        )
    }

    var body: some View {
        TextField("Enter username", text: usernameBinding)
    }
}
```

`@State` owns a `String?`. `TextField` needs a `Binding<String>`. So we build a bridge, a computed var that returns a `Binding` with a custom `get` and `set`.

- **get**: unwraps the optional, falling back to "" if it's `nil`
- **set**: writes back, turning an empty string back into `nil`

`TextField` doesn't know or care that the underlying storage is optional. It just calls `get` to read, and `set` to write. That's the whole contract.

When you write `$text` to pass a binding down, you're handing the child view a way to **reach back** and read/write the parent's `@State`. The child never knows or cares where the storage lives. It just calls `get` and `set`.

This is why `@Binding` doesn't create a new node in the attribute graph. There's no new storage to track. The dependency edge still points from the original `@State` attribute to every view body that reads it including the child that reads it through the binding.

Example: Not Using the Value at All

Let's push this to its logical extreme:

```
struct ContentView: View {
    @State private var text: String = "Hello"

    var body: some View {
        ChildView(text: text)
    }
}

struct ChildView: View {
    let text: String // declared but never used

    var body: some View {
        Text("I don't use the text property at all")
    }
}
```

The attribute graph and edge looks exactly to same as for the previous 2 examples.

`ChildView.body` runs every time `text` changes. Even though it completely ignores `text`. The declaration is enough to put it in the tree walk path.

This is the key insight about value types: SwiftUI doesn't track what you do with the value at runtime. It just sees that you declared it, and that's sufficient to include you in the update cycle.

If you want to avoid this. iIf you genuinely have a child view that shouldn't update when a parent's state changes, the answer is to not pass that state to the child at all. Don't declare what you don't need.

A quick note on performance: Body re-evaluations for simple views are extremely cheap. SwiftUI is designed around this. Don't reach for micro-optimizations here unless you've actually measured a problem. The concern isn't that `body` runs, it's whether the *output* of `body` causes expensive layout or rendering work. We'll dig into this properly in Chapter 7.

Collections, Arrays, and Dictionaries

Value types include collections. An `Array<Item>`, a `Dictionary<String, Int>`, a `Set<UUID>`. These all follow the exact same rules. The declaration creates the dependency.

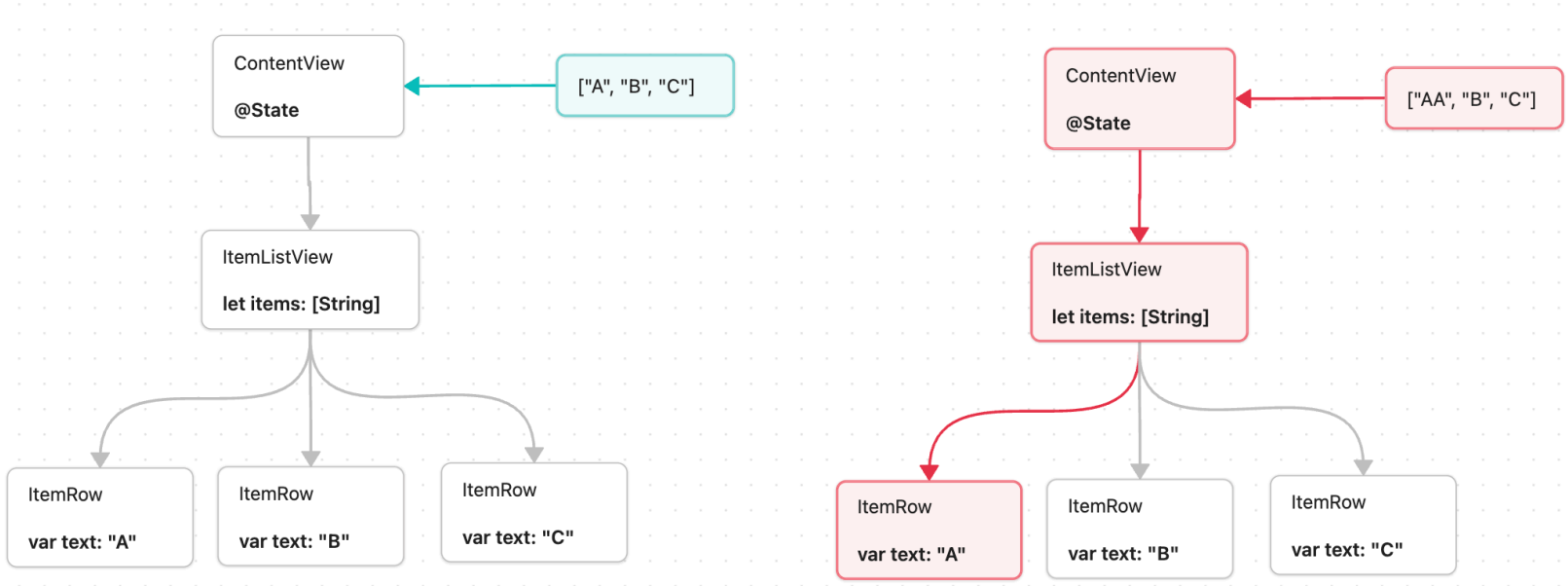
But there's a subtlety worth understanding. With `@State`, SwiftUI compares the old value to the new value to decide whether to actually trigger an update. For value types, this comparison is straightforward, two `String` values are equal or they're not. For collections, SwiftUI compares the entire collection:

```
struct ContentView: View {
    @State private var items: [String] = ["A", "B", "C"]

    var body: some View {
        ItemListView(items: items)
    }
}
```

```
struct ItemListView: View {
    let items: [String]
    var body: some View {
      List {
        ForEach(items, id: \.self) { item in
            ItemRow(item: item)
        }
      }
    }
}

struct ItemRow: View {
    let item: String
    var body: some View {
        Text(item)
    }
}
```

When you append to `items`, the array changes, `ContentView.body` runs, and `ItemListView.body` runs. When you replace an element, same thing. When you change the text for an element, same thing. **SwiftUI sees the collection as a whole**. It doesn't track individual element changes at this level.

Inside `ItemListView.body`, the `ForEach` will diff against the previous output and only update the row that changed. In this example, we have 3 rows for the 3 Strings. All are displayed to fill out the screen. When the value changed from “A” to “AA”, it sees 1 row changed and 2 stay the same. Next it will walk the child node for the `ItemRow` with the new value:



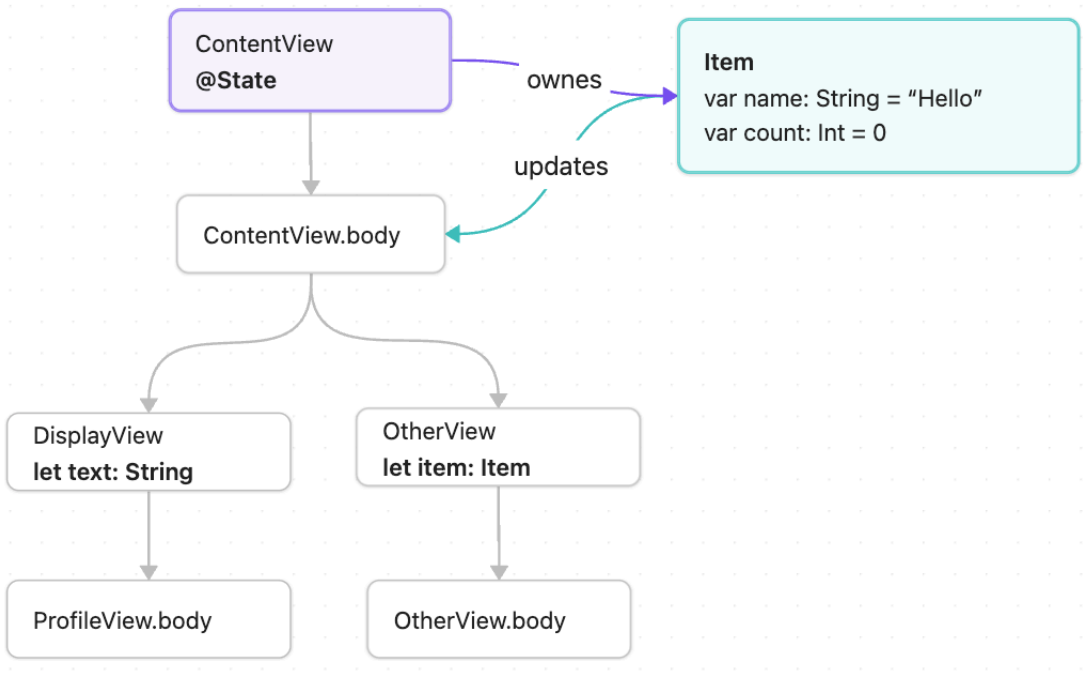
The diffing is smart enough to look at the `ForEach` and analyze which of the dynamic cells input changed.

Example: Custom Struct

If you create a struct and look at the data dependencies that are generated in the attribute graph:

```
struct Item {
  var name: String = “Hello”
  var count: Int = 0
}

struct ContentView: View {
   @State private var item = Item() // ownership & UI dependency edge
   var body: some View {
        DisplayView(text: item.name)
        OtherView(item: item)
    }
}

struct DisplayView: View {
    let text: String // declaration creates the update path

    var body: some View {
        Text("Value: \(text)")
    }
}
```

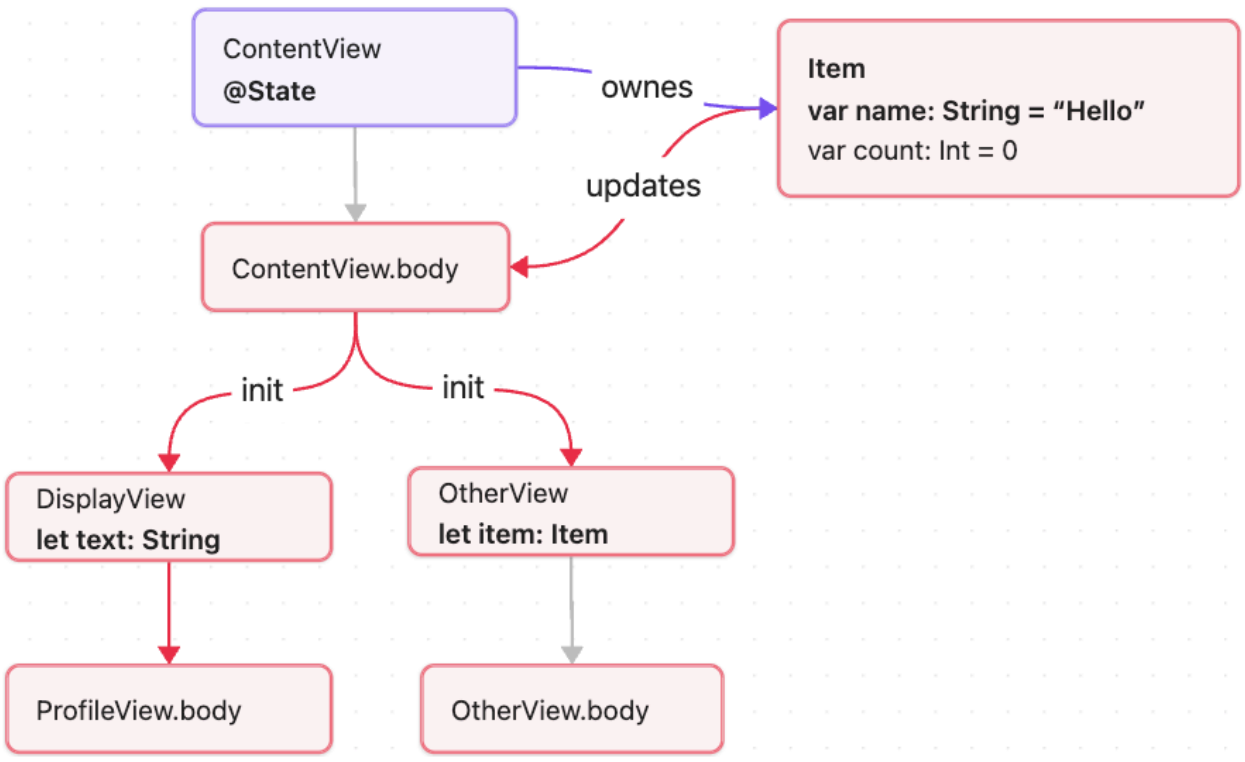
The view has a dependency to the whole struct instance with all of its properties:



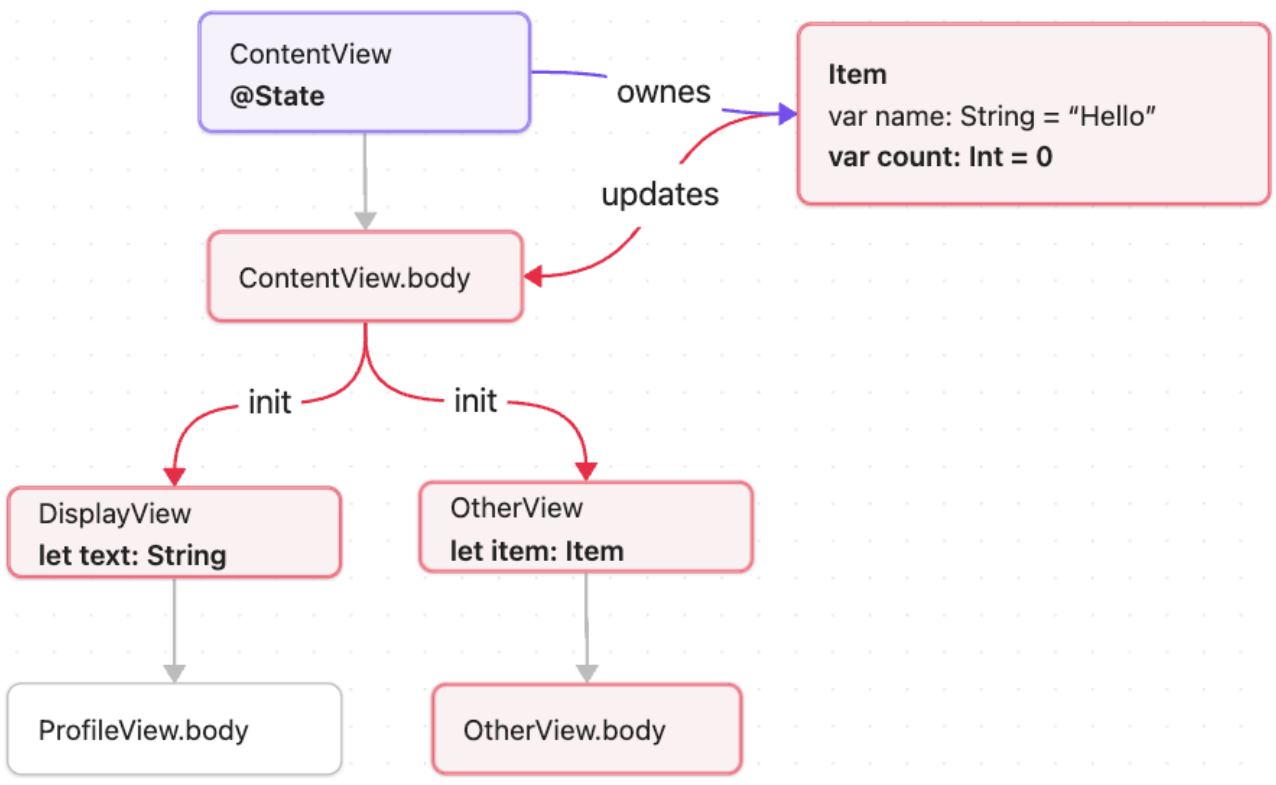
OtherView declares a dependency to the whole struct and its body will be evaluated if any of the items properties changes, even if it does not use all.

In contrast DisplayView **scopes its dependencies to only a part of the data** e.g. it only cares about the items name property.

When name property changes all view bodies are evaluated:



When count changes, all views except ProfileView are evaluated:



The Mental Model for Value Types

Before we move on, let's lock in the mental model:

- `@State` **in the owning view** → direct edge in the Attribute Graph. This is the actual dependency node.
- `let`, `var`, `@Binding` **in child views** → no direct graph edge. They're just in the tree walk path when the parent re-evaluates.
- **What you do in** `body` **doesn't matter** → for value types, the declaration is everything.

The consequence is that with value types, you can't opt a child view out of updates by being clever about what you read in `body`. The only lever you have is whether you pass the value to the child at all.

This feels limiting compared to `@Observable` and it is. But it's also predictable. You always know that if a parent's state changes, all children that received that state will update. No surprises.

Next up, we'll look at reference types with `@StateObject` and `@ObservedObject`, where the rules shift, and forgetting a single property wrapper can leave your UI silently out of date.

3.3 STATE OWNERSHIP

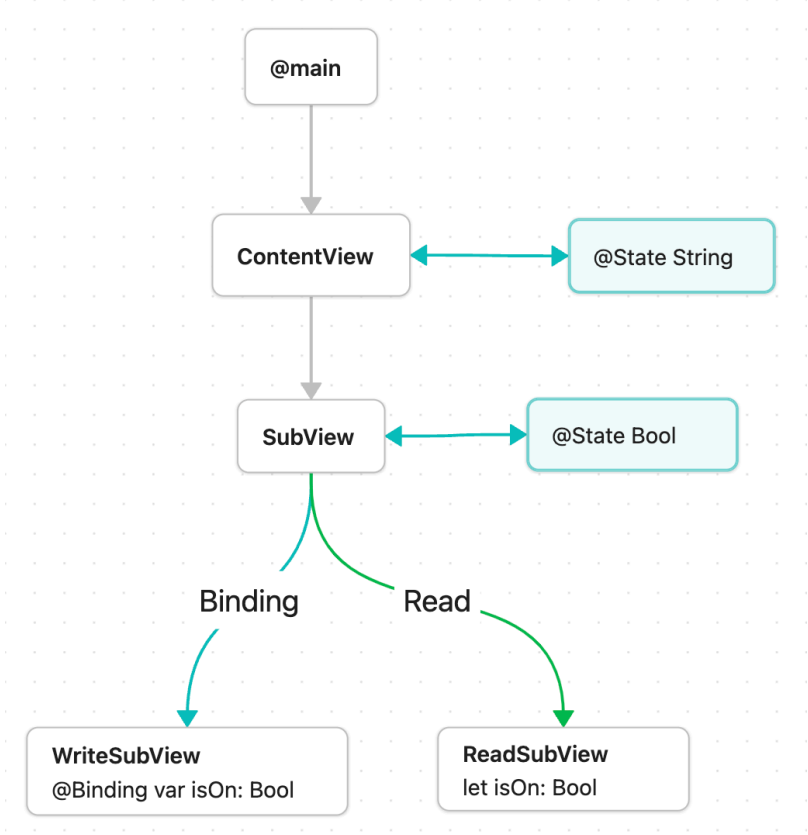
SwiftUI is a declarative framework. You have state, and SwiftUI reacts to changes in that state to update the UI. That means data flows from the top of your view hierarchy downwards. It's unidirectional. One direction, top to bottom. This makes it much easier to follow what's going on in your app.

But it also means you need to think carefully about *where* you place your state. Which view should own it? That question has real consequences for how your app behaves, how it performs, and how easy it is for you to reason about what's happening.

Everything here is centered around one core idea: **single source of truth**. There should be one place in your view hierarchy where a given piece of state is declared. One place that is the authority for what's shown on screen.

Data Flows Downward

I've shown you quite a few examples already with the view tree and the simplified attribute graph behind the scenes. The key insight is this: any view that sits *below* a state in the view tree can access that state, because you're propagating everything downwards.

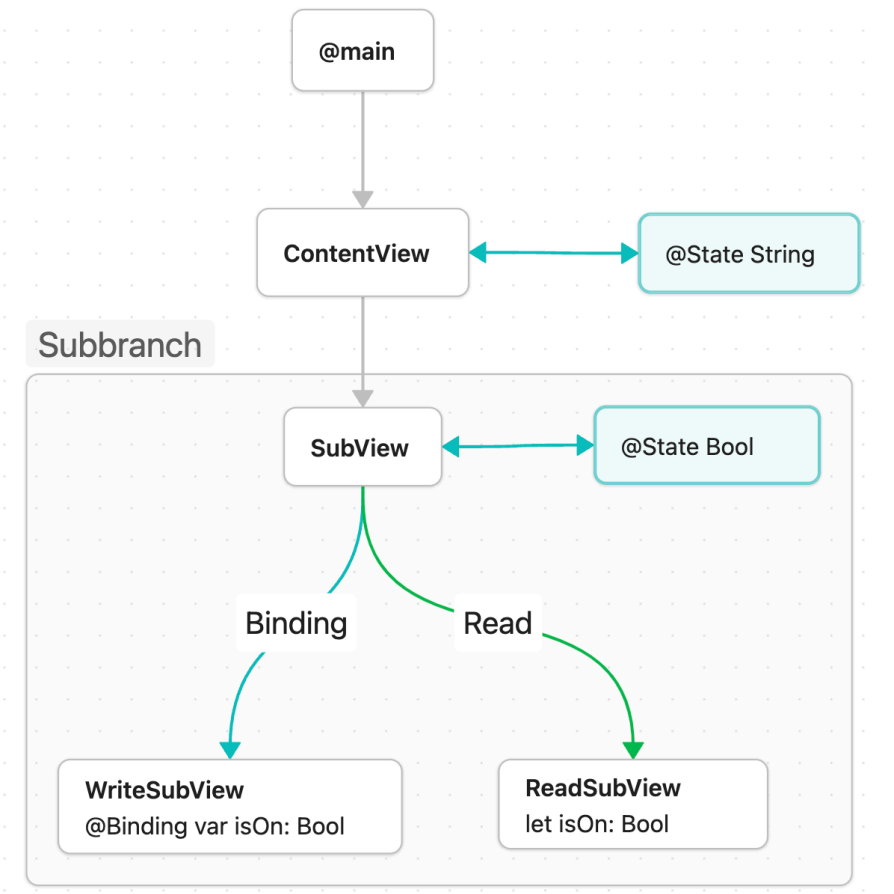


That also means a parent view *cannot* reach down and access state that's declared in a child view `ContentView` cannot reach down and see `SubViews` Boolean property. This is why Apple recommends writing `@State private var.` That `private` keyword is a reminder that this state belongs to this view and its sub-branch only. It's internal.

```
struct ContentView: View {
   @State private var text: String = "hello world"

    var body: some View {
         SubView(text: text)
    }
}
```

```
struct SubView: View {
    @State private var isOn: Bool = true

    var body: some View {
        WriteSubView(isOn: $isOn)
        RedSubView(isOn: isOn)
    }
}
```

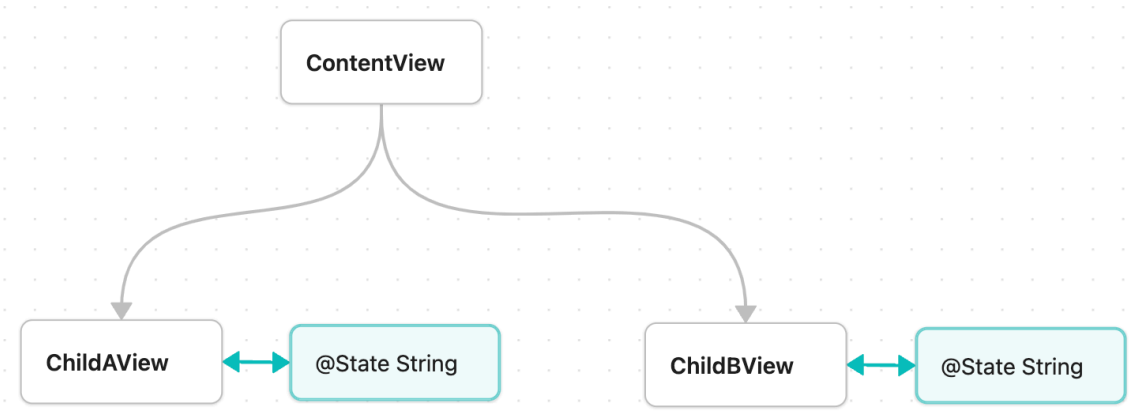
The boolean property can be passed down to all sub views below its owner `SubView`.



3.3.1 WHO NEEDS THE DATA

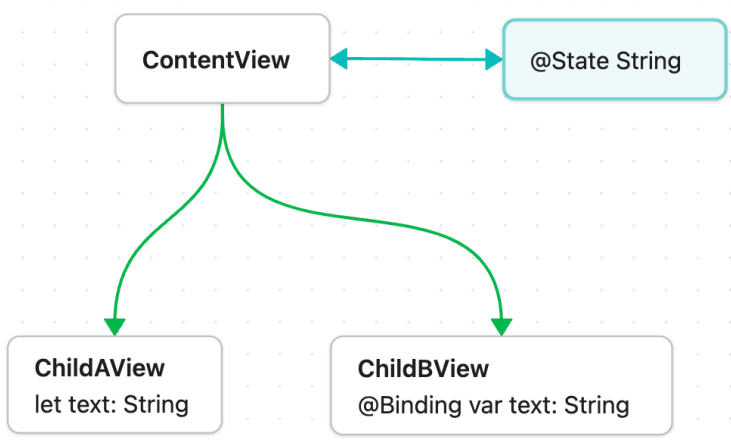
Sharing State Between Siblings

Here's a common situation. You have two child views, Child View A and Child View B, sitting inside one parent view. You want to share a string value between them. Maybe the user typed something into a text field in one view, and you want the other view to display it.



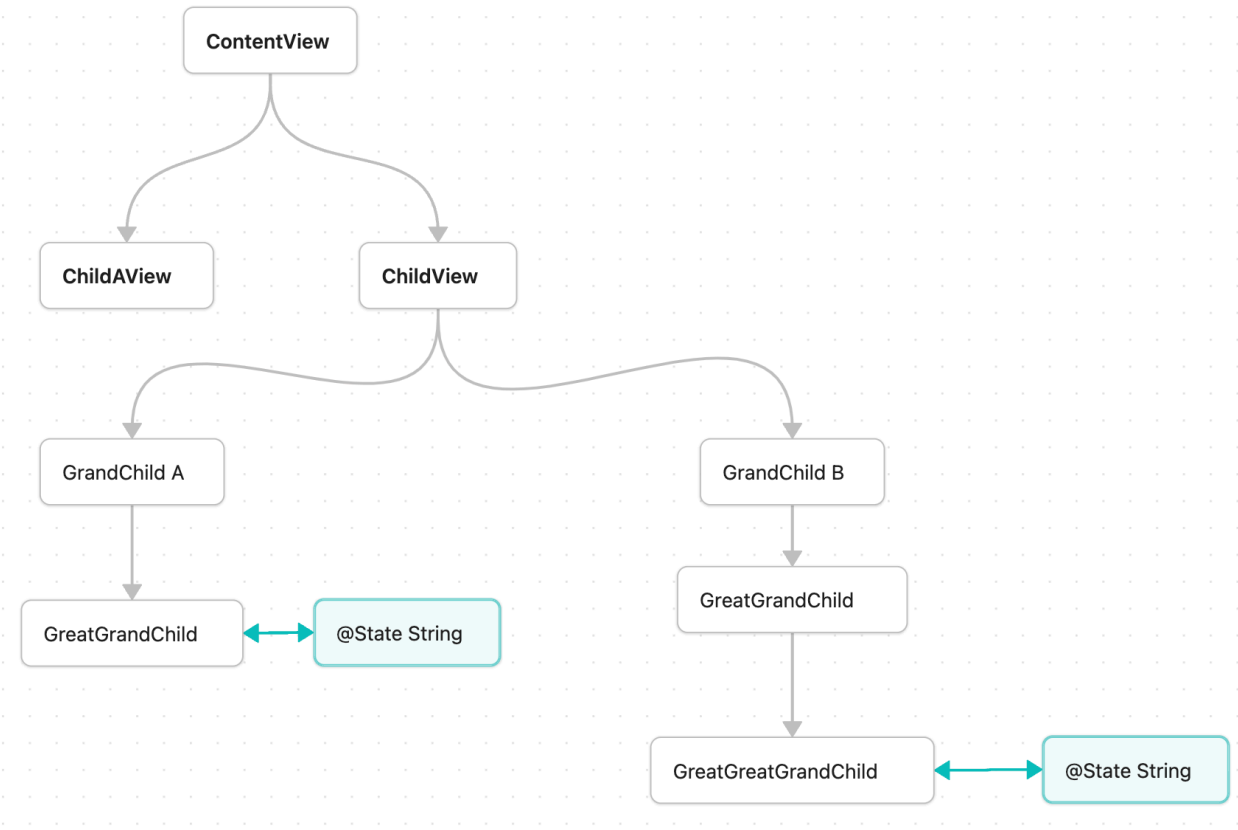
If each child view declares its own `@State` for that string, you have **duplicate state**. Two separate sources of truth. That's definitely not what you want.

The solution: **lift the state to a common ancestor**. Move it up one level to the parent view. Now the state lives once in the view tree, and because of how SwiftUI propagates data downward, you just pass it to both children. If you want to give them write access, you pass a `Binding`. But that binding still references the same single source of truth.

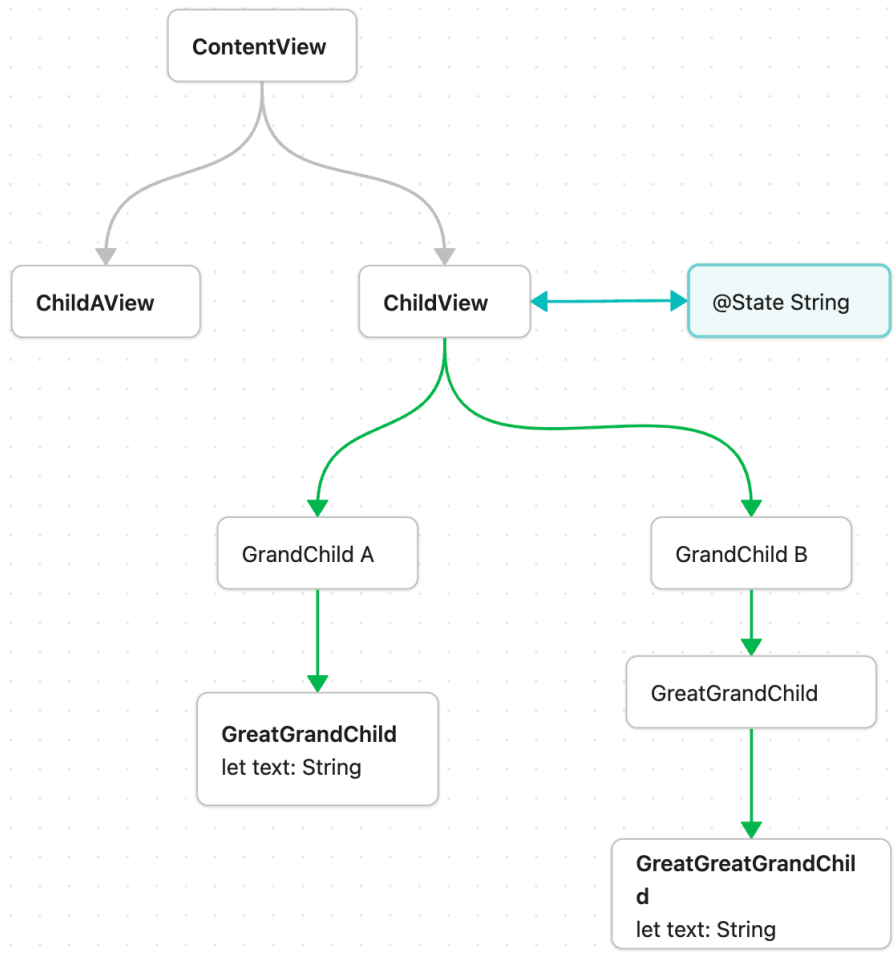


Lifting State in Deeper Hierarchies

Now scale this up. Most of the time you don't have just three views. You have child views, grandchild views, great-grandchild views. Say you want to share state between two views that are deep in different branches of the tree.



Again, you have duplicate state, and it would be really hard to fiddle this around manually. You need to lift the state up to the **nearest common ancestor.** The lowest view in the tree from which you can propagate the state down to both branches that need it.



Why Not Move It Even Higher?

You might be tempted to just throw the state all the way up to the root view. Don't. There are two good reasons to keep state as low as possible:

1. **Behavior of Locality.** Things that change together should live together. The closer your state lives to the views that actually use it, the easier it is for you to follow the data flow. Moving state higher than necessary creates distance between the state and its usage, and that makes your code harder to reason about.

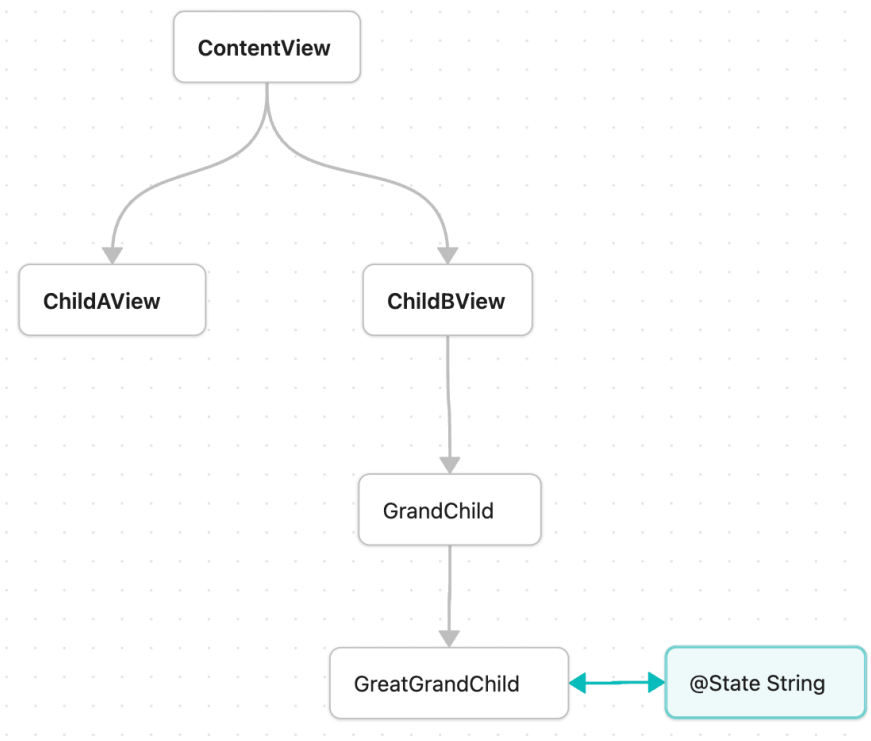
2. **Performance.** The more views that sit between your state and the views that use it, the more body evaluations SwiftUI might trigger when that state changes. You end up with more dependency tracking, more body calls, and potentially more heavy calculations. By keeping state in a sub-branch, you minimize this.

3. Reduce the **blast radius.** If you mess up a state mutation, it only affects that branch, not the entire tree. Because I can see now from this **dependency** graph, which the view tree is, that if I mutate this state in the wrong way, it'll only influence this branch and not trial a view here.

The rule of thumb: ***start with state local to a view, then move it higher only when necessary.***

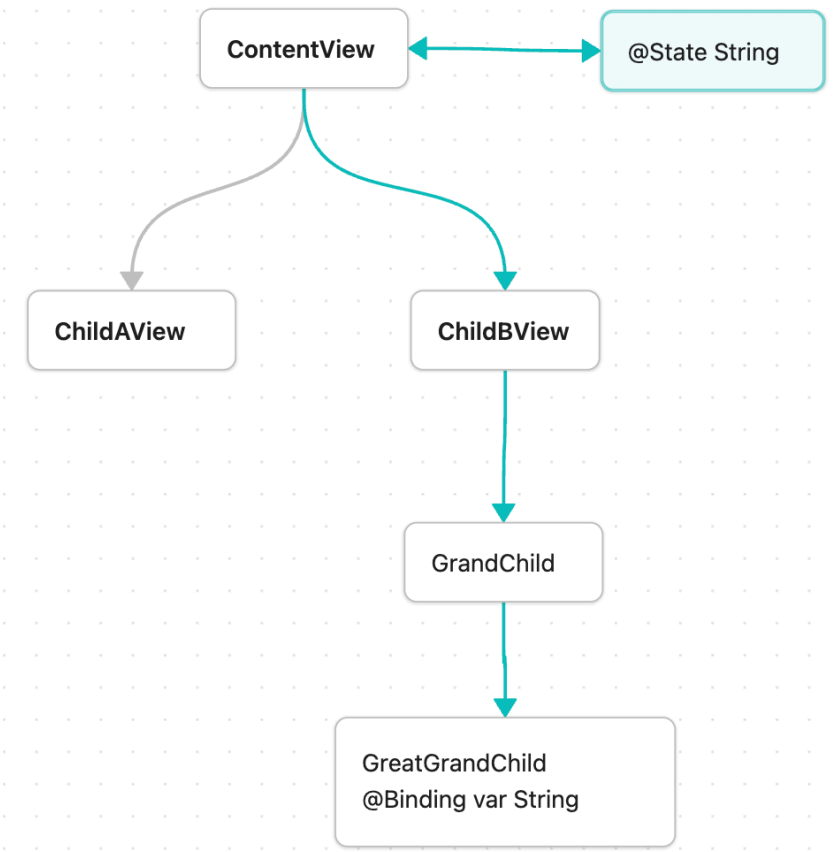
Example: How to pass/share state from child view with top level view?

For next situation, I have a state in my great-grandchild view that I want to share with a view that is higher on a view three on a top level with content view.



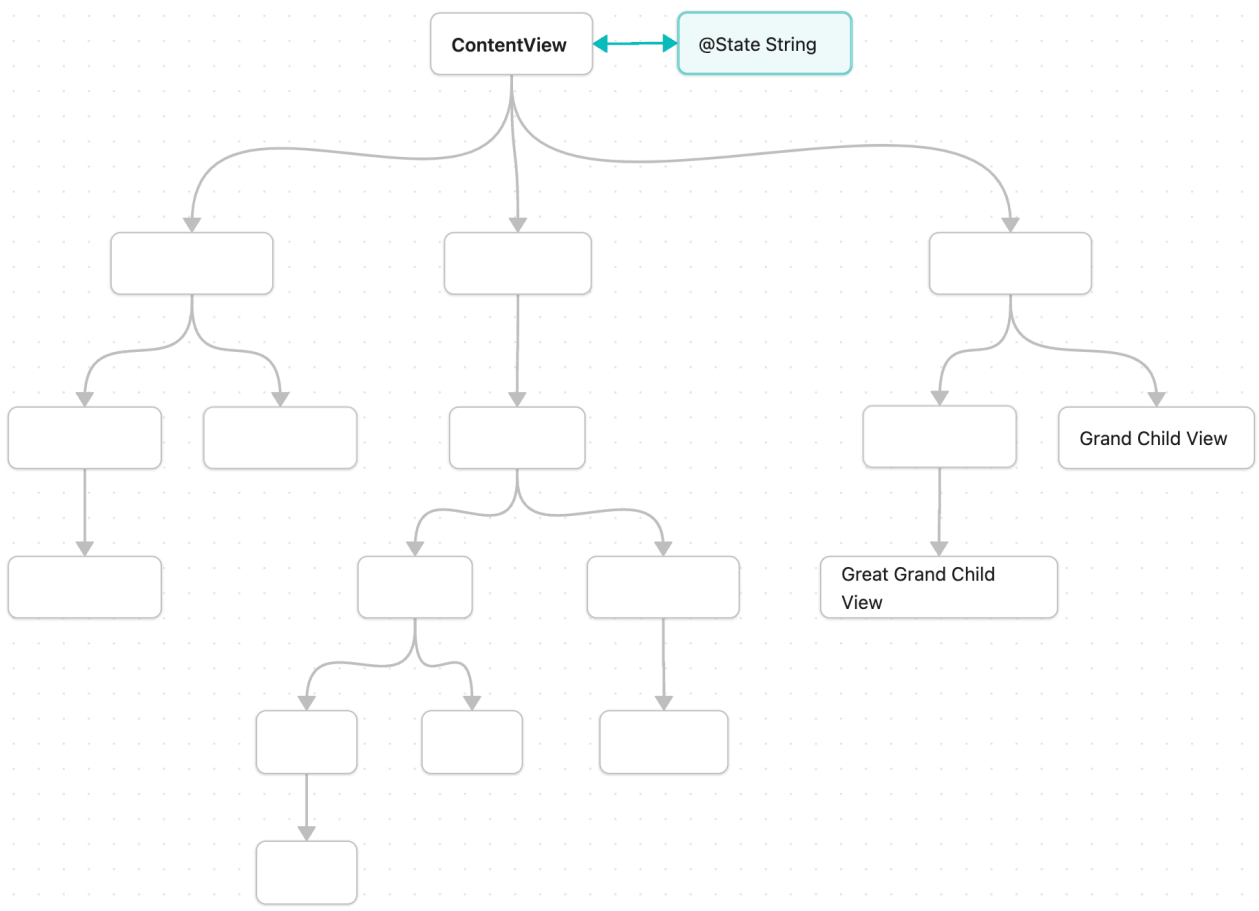
How do I share it with content view? And again, because the data flow is top to bottom, I move it. Higher in the view tree, I **lift the state to the highest vi ew that needs it**.

In this case, it's the content view. You see, I am passing it down here and because I said, and in this case I have this binding, so this view can also manipulate it.



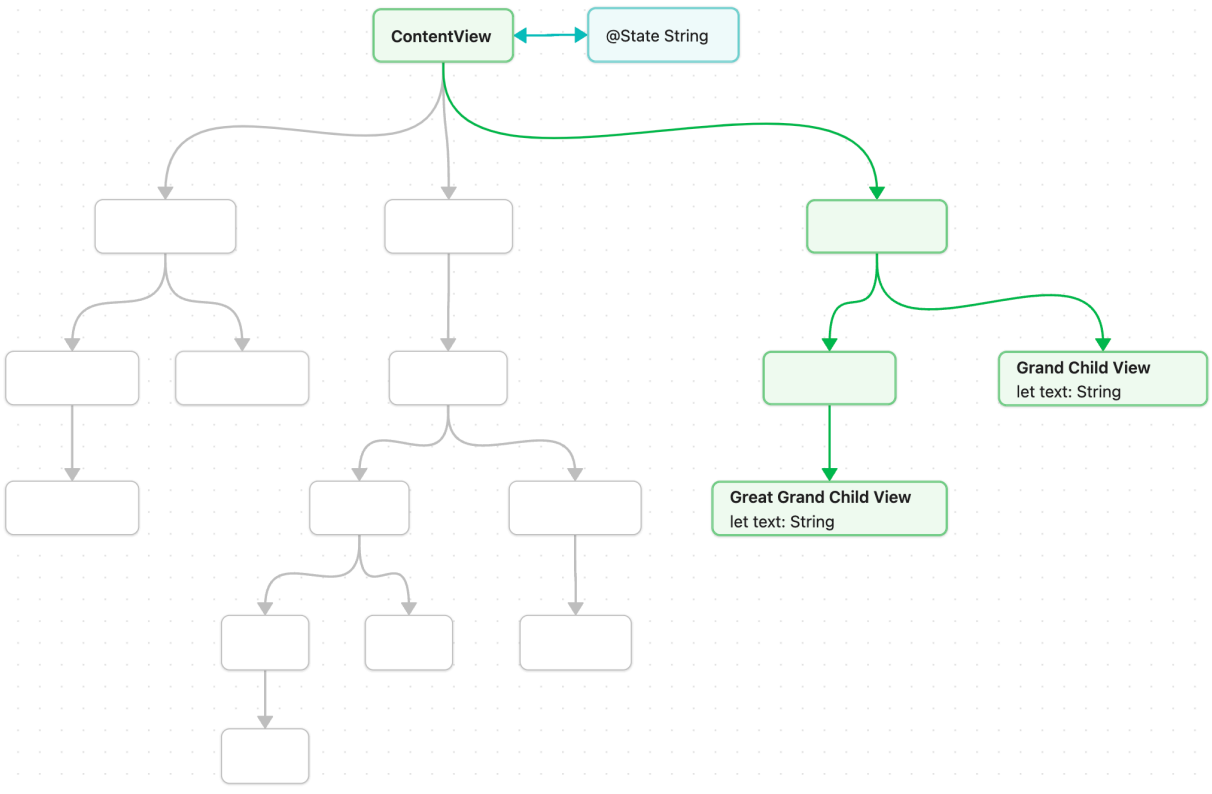
Example: How to pass/share state from top level view to views deep in hierarchy?

What if you need state from a top-level view to reach a view that's deep in the hierarchy? You have a few options, and each comes with trade-offs.



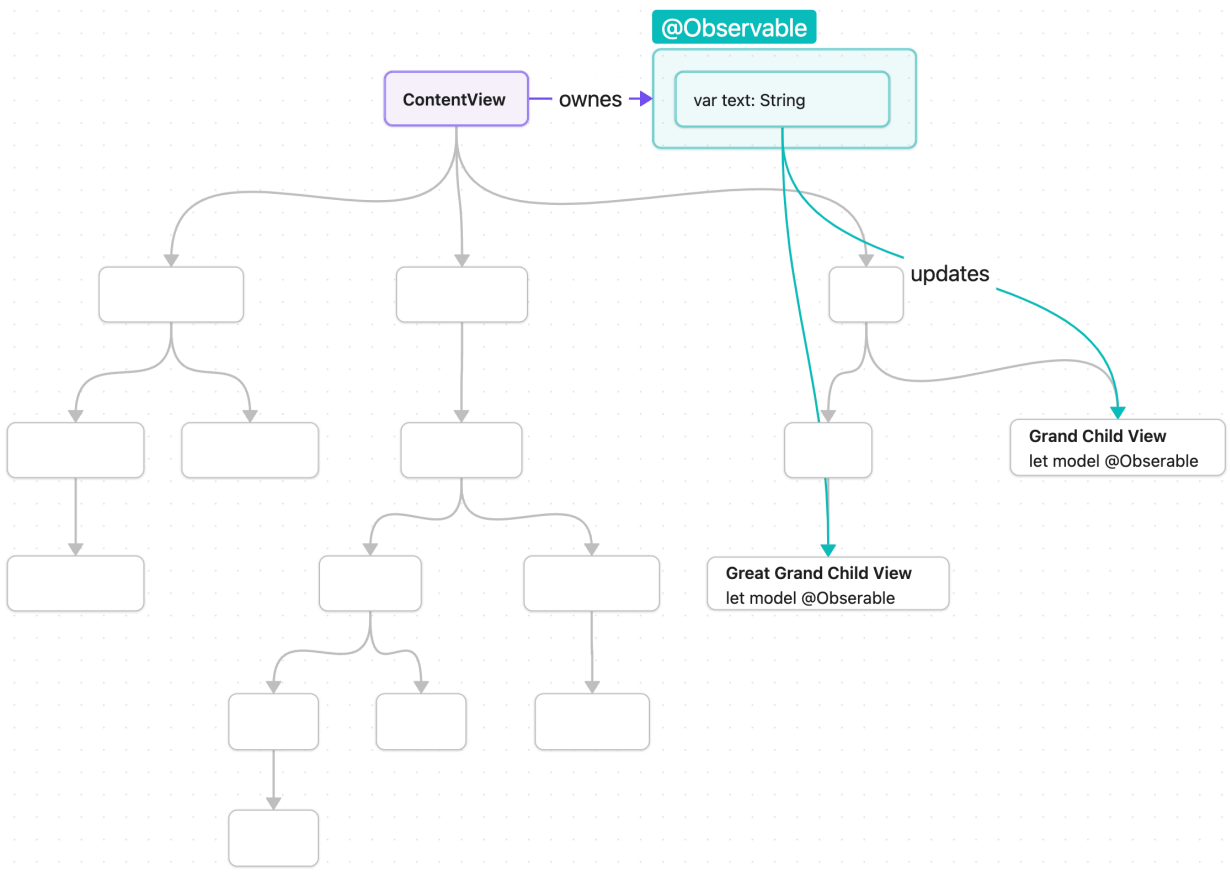
Option1: Direct Parent-to-Child Passing

You can pass the value directly through each view's initializer, from parent to child to grandchild and so on. This works. Your UI will correctly display the data. But when you pass a value type like a `String` through the view hierarchy, SwiftUI tracks dependencies by evaluating each view's `body` along the way. That means more work for every state change, even if the intermediate views don't actually care about the value.



Option 2: Wrapping in an Observable

For better performance in these situations, move the value type into an `@Observable` class. Now SwiftUI can establish a direct dependency between the observable and only the views that actually read the property in their `body`. The intermediate views pass the reference through, but they don't get invalidated when the value changes. Only the views that use the string in their UI get updated.



4. VIEW LIFETIME METHODS

Mastering Async Work and Side Effects

The first three chapters gave you a mental model: SwiftUI renders from descriptions, the attribute graph tracks dependencies, identity determines node lifetime, and node lifetime determines when state is created and destroyed. In Chapter 2, we saw a critical distinction — `onAppear` and `onDisappear` track *visibility*, not *node lifetime*. A `TabView` where `onDisappear` fired but state survived. A conditional `if/else` where both happened together.

That distinction is the foundation for everything in this chapter. Because `onAppear`, `task`, `task(id:)`, and `onChange` all have specific relationships with visibility and lifetime — and those relationships change depending on which container your view is inside.

This is where lifecycle code gets hard. Not because the modifiers are complicated — they're not. You attach `.task` to a view, put some async code in it, and it runs. The problem is what happens in production: the user switches tabs mid-load and your task gets cancelled. They scroll fast through a list and twenty image-loading tasks fire and cancel in rapid succession. They pop a navigation stack and push back in, and your "load once" logic runs twice. They type quickly in a search field and you fire a network request for every keystroke.

These are normal behaviors of lifecycle modifiers in real containers. And to properly use them, you need to understand exactly when each modifier fires, and why, so that you can design your code to handle it.

By the end of this chapter, you'll be able to:

- Predict exactly when each lifecycle modifier fires in every major container — without guessing
- **Choose the right modifier for the job** — based on whether the work is sync or async, whether it should survive disappearance, and whether it needs to react to value changes
- **Coordinate async work** with SwiftUI's automatic cancellation instead of fighting it — and know when to opt out
- **Avoid the common traps** — duplicate fetches, race conditions, tasks that outlive their views — by designing lifecycle code that's safe to call multiple times

4.3 TASK: ASYNC WORK TIED TO VISIBILITY

`task` starts an async task when the view becomes visible and **automatically cancels it** when the view stops being visible. That's the core promise. It's the async version of `onAppear` with a cancellation built in.

```
struct TaskExampleView: View {
    @State private var showChild = false
    var body: some View {
        VStack {
            Toggle("Show Child", isOn: $showChild)
                .padding()
            if showChild {
                ChildView()
            }
        }
    }
}

struct ChildView: View {
    @State private var items: [String] = []
    var body: some View {
        List(items, id: \.self) {
           Text($0)
        }
            .task {
                do {
                    let fetched = try await fetchItems()
                    items = fetched
                } catch {
                    print("Failed or cancelled: \(error)")
                }
            }
    }

    @concurrent func fetchItems() async throws -> [String]{
        try await Task.sleep(for: .seconds(3))
        return ["one", "two", "three"]
    }
}
```

Toggle on: the task starts and fetches data. Toggle off: SwiftUI cancels the task. Toggle on again: a new task starts. You don't manage any of this. No stored `Task` reference, no manual cancellation, no cleanup in `onDisappear`. SwiftUI handles it because the task is **structured:** its lifetime is bound to the view's visibility.

Compare that to the `onAppear` + manual `Task` approach we saw in the previous section. Same trigger, but you're on your own for cancellation. `task` gives you that for free.

It Runs on the Main Actor

Because your view is `@MainActor`, the `task` closure inherits that context. This means the body of your `task` runs on the main actor by default:

```
.task {
    MainActor.assertIsolated("UI updates must happen on MainActor!") // true
    let data = await fetchItems() // hops off main during the await
    MainActor.assertIsolated("UI updates must happen on MainActor!") // true again
    items = data // safe to update @State directly
}
```

This is actually convenient. You can assign to `@State` properties directly inside `task` without any `MainActor.run` dance. The `await` calls will do their work off the main thread (assuming the called function isn't itself main-actor-isolated), and when they return, you're back on main.

In the above example the fetch function runs on the global executer (runs in the background) because it is annotated with `@concurrent.` This is useful if you have CPU-heavy work that you want to keep off the main thread entirely, you need to explicitly move it:

```
@concurrent
func heavyComputation() async {
    // this runs in the background, not blocking
    …
}
```

How to Handle Task Cancellation

This is the part that trips people up. When SwiftUI cancels a task, it doesn't kill it instantly. It sets a flag. Your code has to **check** that flag. Either explicitly or by calling a throwing async API that does it for you. You can manually cancel a task like so:

```
let task = Task {
    …
    guard Task.isCancelled { // read the flag to know if it was cancelled
      // return early if task was cancelled
      return
    }
    …
}

task.cancel() // sets flag
```

When you use the task modifier, and the view disappears during a running task, it automatically calls cancel. If you're doing long-running synchronous work inside a task, check manually:

```
.task {
    for i in 0..<1_000_000_000 {
        if Task.isCancelled {
            print("Bailing out")
            return
        }
        total += i
    }
}
```

The rule: **cancellation is a request, not an order.** Apple's async APIs respect that request. Your custom code has to do the same.

You don’t always have to manually check for cancellation. Important Apple APIs are cancellation-aware. `URLSession.shared.data(from:)` throws an error when the task is cancelled. So if your `task` body is built from these APIs, cancellation works automatically:

```
.task {
    do {
        let (data, _) = try await URLSession.shared.data(from: url)
        // If the view disappears during the fetch,
        // the line above throws a cancelled error.
        // We never reach here.
        items = parse(data)
    } catch let error as URLError where error.code == .cancelled {
        print("Cancelled during url session fetch – view disappeared”)
        // don’t need to show this to the user,
        // this is just for us to stop processing
    } catch {
        print("Actual error: \(error)”)
        // handle these and show to the user
    }
}
```

`Task.sleep` throws on cancellation:

```
.task {
    do {
        try await Task.sleep(for: .seconds(10))
    } catch is CancellationError {
        print("Cancelled during sleep – view disappeared")
        // don’t need to show this to the user
    } catch {

    }
}
```

It is a good idea to catch the cancel errors from the task, since they are not errors you would normally want to show to the user. They simply left the view, where the fetched data was required. They did not stay long enough to finish the fetch. Thus, you can mostly ignore the cancelled errors. Whereas other errors from UrlSession like network availably or server error, should be handled and shown to the user in a meaningful way.

What Happens When the Task Finishes Early?

If your task completes before the view disappears, nothing special happens. The task is done. It ran, it finished, it's over.

```
.task {
    let items = try? await fetchItems()
    self.items = items ?? []
    print("Done fetching")
    // Task is complete. View is still visible. Nothing else happens.
}
```

The cancellation machinery only matters if the view disappears *while the task is still running*. If the work finishes first, cancellation is a no-op.

The Priority Parameter

`task` accepts an optional priority:

```
.task(priority: .background) {
    await precomputeSomething()
}
```

The default is `userInitiated`, which is the highest priority.. In most cases you don't need to set this, but it's there when you want to explicitly deprioritize work that isn't user-facing. Typically, executors attempt to run tasks with a higher priority before tasks with a lower priority:

- high
- medium
- low
- userInitiated
- utility
- background

Debugging Helper

The `name` parameter is a new addition in the OS versions 26.4 (iOS, macOS, watchOS, tvOS, visionOS) that lets you give a human-readable label to async tasks created by the `.task` modifier.

```
struct MyView: View {
    var body: some View {
        Text("Hello")
            .task(name: "LoadUserProfile") {
                await loadUserProfile()
            }
            .task(name: "FetchNotifications") {
                await fetchNotifications()
            }
    }
}
```

It's primarily for **debugging and profiling purposes**. When you're using Instruments or looking at task dumps, instead of seeing generic system-generated task names, you'll see the descriptive name you provided. This makes it much easier to:

- Identify which task is which in performance traces
- Debug task lifecycle issues
- Understand what's running when you have multiple `.task` modifiers

Without the `name` parameter, both tasks might show up in debugging tools with auto-generated names based on file and line number. With explicit names, you immediately know "ah, the LoadUserProfile task is taking longer than expected."

This is a quality-of-life improvement for developers working with complex SwiftUI apps that have many concurrent tasks running.

What We Know So Far

`task` is `onAppear` with structured concurrency bolted on. Same trigger: visibility, but with an async context and automatic cancellation. It runs on the main actor by default. Cancellation is cooperative, which means you need to handle the cancellation. And like `onAppear`, it can fire multiple times for the same node in containers like `TabView,` when the node becomes visible again.

5. APP LIFECYCLE

Beyond view lifecycle: app-level events

6. DATA FLOW PATTERNS

Keeping state correct when your app gets complicated.

7. PERFORMANCE AND OPTIMIZATION

Making Your App Fast