

COS 116
The Computational Universe
Laboratory 2: Introduction to Pseudocode

Today you'll meet Scribbler, the robot we'll be using in several labs this term. Scribbler is a very capable little machine. It has two independently driven wheels, three status lights, and a small speaker. It can detect light sources, obstacles in its path, and lines on printed on the "road." Best of all, the Scribbler can easily be programmed to perform a multitude of tasks.

For this class, we've created a way to control the Scribbler using simple "pseudocode" instructions. These statements resemble English commands, and they'll help you grasp some important concepts about computation without having to understand a complete programming language.

In this lab you will learn the building blocks of pseudocode by analyzing and testing a series of pseudocode files. Then, in two short experiments, you'll use the robot and provided pseudocode to explore the robot's capabilities. This week you won't be writing any pseudocode, but that will be the focus of the next lab.

Your TA will issue you the following items:

- The Scribbler (in box, together with a black serial cable)
- 6 AA batteries
- A blue USB-Serial adapter and software CD

These are yours to keep and experiment with until the end of the semester. *Please take good care of them!* We'll send email with instructions for installing the Scribbler software on your PC.

We will provide these additional supplies for this lab:

- Flashlight
- Ruler
- Construction paper
- Tape

Please pick them up at the beginning of the session.

General Test Procedure

In this lab you will test the robot with several pseudocode files. Keep detailed notes about each test and hand in them when you finish. Follow this procedure for each test:

- 1. Use Scribbler Control Panel to open the test file.**
- 2. Examine this pseudocode. Write in your notes what you think it will make the robot do.**
- 3. Load the file on to the robot and observe the robot's behavior.**
 - a) Attach your robot to the computer.**

Use the black cable to attach the robot to the blue USB adapter (don't tighten the thumb screws), then plug the USB adapter into the computer.
 - b) Switch the robot on.**
 - c) Download the pseudocode to the robot.**

In the Tools menu, click Download to Robot.
 - d) Unplug the cable from the robot.**
 - e) Place the robot where it will have enough room to run the test. (For some tests, you will need to use the floor.)**
 - f) Press the robot's button twice (rapidly) to start it.**
 - g) Observe the robot's behavior. Some tests will provide additional instructions.**
 - h) If the robot is still moving when you are finished with your observations, press the button once more to stop it.**
 - i) To conserve the batteries, you should turn off the robot if you're not going to use it for a few minutes.**
- 4. Did the robot's behavior differ from what you predicted? If so, figure out why and write about it in your notes.**

Part 1: Basic Motion, Lights, and Sounds

1. Test the robot with the file “01 Forward, Back”

```
1 Move Forward for 1s
2 Pause 0.5s
3 Move Back for 1s
4 END
```

Remember, you should use the testing procedure described on the previous page for all the tests in this week’s lab.

2. Test the file “02 Spin Left, Spin Right”

```
1 Spin Left for 1s
2 Pause 0.5s
3 Spin Right for 1s
4 END
```

3. Test the file “03 Turn Left, Turn Right”

```
1 Turn Left for 1s
2 Pause 0.5s
3 Spin Left for 0.7s
4 Pause 0.5s
5 Turn Right for 1s
6 END
```

In your notes, explain the difference between spinning and turning. Hint: Carefully observe the motion of the robot’s wheels while performing a spin and a turn.

4. Test the file “04 LEDs”

```
1 LED: ON, OFF, OFF
2 Pause 1s
3 LED: ON, ON, OFF
4 Pause 1s
5 LED: ON, ON, ON
6 Pause 1s
7 LED: OFF, OFF, OFF
8 END
```

Notice that, unlike the motor commands, the LED (“Light Emitting Diode”) commands have a lasting effect on the state of the LEDs.

5. Test the file “05 Sound – Scale”

```
1 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 262Hz
2 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 294Hz
3 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 330Hz
4 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 349Hz
5 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 392Hz
6 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 440Hz
7 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 494Hz
8 Play Sound for 0.5s at Frequency 523Hz
9 END
```

Part 2: Sensors and Branches

1. Test the file “06 If, Light”

```
1 If <Light from any 1 side> Then
2 {
3   Play Sound for 1s at Frequency 440Hz
4 }
5 Else
6 {
7   LED: ON, ON, ON
8 }
9 END
```

First try starting the robot with your hand covering its light sensors, then try starting it while holding a flashlight close to the sensors. What happens after you stop shining light on the sensors? Remember, pseudocode commands are performed *in sequence*.

2. Test the file “07 If, Obstacle”

```
1 If <Obstacle on Either Side> Then
2 {
3   Play Sound for 1s at Frequency 440Hz
4 }
5 Else
6 {
7   LED: ON, ON, ON
8 }
9 END
```

First start the robot where there is nothing in front of it for several feet. Then hold your hand about three inches ahead of the robot and try again. What happens after you move your hand away?

3. Test the file “08 If Not”

```
1  If Not <No Obstacle> Then
2  {
3    Play Sound for 1s at Frequency 440Hz
4  }
5  Else
6  {
7    LED: ON, ON, ON
8  }
9  END
```

Compare this test to the previous one. Are they logically equivalent? Is there any difference in the robot’s behavior? Can you think of another way to express line 1 in the pseudocode from step 1 above?

Part 3: Loops

1. Test the file “09 Do For n Times”

```
1  Do for 3 Times
2  {
3    Play Sound for 0.25s at Frequency 392Hz
4  }
5  Play Sound for 1.5s at Frequency 330Hz
6  END
```

2. Test the file “10 Do While”

```
1  Do While <No Obstacle>
2  {
3    Move Forward for 0.2s
4  }
5  Play Sound for 1s at Frequency 440Hz
```

Before you start the robot, place it at least three feet away from an obstacle (your bag, the wall, etc.). Allow the robot to move forward until it encounters the obstacle. When do you hear the sound?

3. Test the file “11 Do Forever”

```
1 Do forever
2 {
3   If <Obstacle on Either Side> Then
4   {
5     Play Sound for 1s at Frequency 440Hz
6   }
7   Else
8   {
9     Move Forward for 0.2s
10  }
11 }
12 END
```

This time place the robot at least three feet from a *movable* obstacle. After the robot encounters the obstacle, remove the obstacle and note the robot’s behavior. What happens if you place the object back in the robot’s path?

4. Test the file “12 Loop, Line Sensor”

```
1 Do forever
2 {
3   If <Line on Either Side>
4   {
5     LED ON, OFF, OFF
6   }
7   Else
8   {
9     LED OFF, OFF, OFF
10  }
11 }
12 END
```

The line sensor is best used within a loop, as shown here. To test it, draw a heavy black line (at least 1 inch thick) on a sheet of construction paper. Slowly move the robot back and forth over the line and observe the behavior of the LED.

(The line sensor is very sensitive. If it doesn’t behave the way you expect, ask the TA for help.)

Part 4: Experiments

Experiment I: How consistent is the robot's motion?

The movement commands you have seen so far operate by sending a certain amount of power to the robot's motors for a set length of time. In this experiment you will determine how accurately the robot can repeat a sequence of movements.

- 1. Tape a piece of construction paper to the lab table so that it doesn't slip.**
- 2. Insert a pen into the robot's center hole and place the robot on the construction paper.**
- 3. Load the "01 Forward, Backward" pseudocode. Run it and allow the robot to trace out its path with the marker. Does the robot return exactly to its starting position?**
- 4. Repeat the trace five more times. Start in a different spot each time.**
- 5. Find the average distance the robot traveled in 1 second of motion. How much variation was there between trials?**
- 6. Examine the traces. Are they identical? Speculate in your notes about what might cause any differences you observe. If you were building a more sophisticated robot, how might you correct for such differences?**

Experiment II: Using the robot to measuring reflectance

The robot's obstacle sensor detects objects in the robot's path. It works by projecting a beam of infrared light in front of the robot. If an obstacle is present, some of this light is reflected back towards the robot where it is detected by a sensor.

At what distance will the robot detect an object? The answer depends on how much infrared light the object reflects. Objects that reflect little light are hard for the sensor to "see", so the robot will only notice them at close range. The robot can sense highly reflective objects from farther away, since they send back more light. You can use this behavior to measure how much infrared light different objects reflect.

- 1. Pick three objects that reflect different amounts of light.**
For example, you might use a white sheet of construction paper, a dark colored notebook, and your hand. (Infrared reflectance is sometimes, but not always, correlated with reflectance of visible light.)
- 2. Load the file "07 If, Obstacle" on to your robot.**

- 3. Point the obstacle sensor at the first object and start the robot. Find the closest distance where the robot reliably detects the object.**
- 4. Repeat for the other two objects.**
- 5. Compare the distances you observed. Which object reflected the most infrared light? Did any of your measurements surprise you?**