

Estimated time to completion: 30 minutes

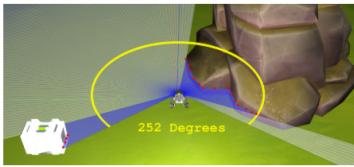
3.3 Explore the Mars Rover Topics

So far, so good! You've learned how to list the `topics` in your ROS 2 system, search for a specific `topic`, and gather information about it. Now, let's dive deeper into working with `topics`. For this, we'll explore the topics provided by the **Mars Rover** robot!

- Example 3.2 -

MISSION: Detect Obstacles for the Mars Rover

- To prevent the Mars Rover from colliding with obstacles during its missions, we need to detect nearby objects.
- A great option for this task is a laser sensor, which measures the distance to objects both in front of and on the sides of the robot.
- Here's its range:



- You can see that each laser beam will measure the distance to the first object detected.
- You can see where the distance is lower than the laser's maximum range with those **red dots**.
- All this information is **PUBLISHED**, or as it is called in ROS2, inside the `topic /laser_scan`.
- This laser data is published inside the `/laser_scan` topic so that any other system can use it.
- It uses an `interface` called `sensor_msgs/msg/LaserScan`, which we discovered previously using the `ros2 topic info /laser_scan` command.
- `sensor_msgs` is the package installed in the system that defines this `LaserScan`.
- We need to understand the data structure of this `LaserScan` `topic` interface.
- To do this, use the **ROS2 command** `ros2 interface show`:

In []: ros2 interface show <package_name>/msg/<interface_name>

- In our case:
 - `package_name = sensor_msgs`
 - `interface_name = LaserScan`
- Let's execute the command:

Execute in Terminal #1

In []: ros2 interface show sensor_msgs/msg/LaserScan

Terminal #1 Output

```
# single scan from a planar laser range-finder
#
# If you have another ranging device with different
# behavior (e.g. sonar
# array), please find or create a different message,
# since applications
# will make fairly laser-specific assumptions about
# this data

std_msgs/Header header # timestamp in the header is
# the acquisition time of
# built-in ranges/Time stamp
# int32 sec
# uint32 nanosec
string frame_id
# the first ray in the
scan.
# in frame frame_id, an
gles are measured around
# the positive Z axis
# (counterclockwise, if Z is up)
# with zero angle being
forward along the x axis

float32 angle_min
# start angle of the sc
an [rad]
float32 angle_max
[rad]
float32 angle_increment
# angular distance betw
een measurements [rad]

float32 time_increment
# time between measurem
ents [seconds] - if your scanner
# is moving, this will
be used in interpolating position
# of 3d points
float32 scan_time
# time between scans [s
seconds]

float32 range_min
# minimum range value
[m]
float32 range_max
# maximum range value
[m]

float32[] ranges
# range data [m]
# (Note: values < range
min or > range_max should be discarded)
float32[] intensities
# intensity data [devic
especific units], if your
```

```
specifying which it is, you      # device does not provide
de intensities, please leave    # the array empty.
```

- The terminal shows the structure of a `LaserScan` message. Complicated? Let's break it down a bit.

Take note of the most critical information:

- `angle_min`: Refers to the minimum angle at which the laser operates. It can also be seen as the starting angle of the scan.
- `angle_max`: Refers to the maximum angle at which the laser operates. It can also be seen as the ending angle of the scan.
- `angle_increment`: Refers to the angular distance between measurements [rads].

This information is useful because it will help you calculate the indices for each sensor position.

- For example, for this sensor, you can calculate the number of samples and their angle positions using these formulas:

$$\text{number_of_samples} = \frac{(\text{angle_max} - \text{angle_min})}{\text{incremental_angle}}$$

$$\text{angle_position(index)} = \text{angle_min} + (\text{index} * \text{incremental_angle})$$

Also, you have:

- `range_min`: Minimum range of the laser [meters].
- `range_max`: Maximum range of the laser [meters].
- `ranges`: An array containing laser distance detections of each of the laser samples [meters].

Each value in the `ranges` array represents the sensor's reading in a specific direction. Thus, each direction is represented by a position in this array.

- Let's see the real data **PUBLISHED** by our Mars Rover laser sensor in the topic `/laser_scan`.
- To do this we will use another ROS2 command named `ros2 topic echo`:

Execute in Terminal #1

In []:

```
ros2 topic echo /laser_scan
```

- Your terminal may be flooded with many messages. Remember, you can press `Ctrl+C` to stop the command from running.
- Once you do that, look for a message similar to the following

Terminal #1 Output

```
headers:
  stamp:
    sec: 7587
    nanosec: 989000000
  frame_id: laser_scan_frame
angle_min: -2.200000047683716
angle_max: 2.200000047683716
angle_increment: 0.022110553458333015
time_increment: 0.0
scan_time: 0.0
range_min: 0.10000000149011612
range_max: 20.0
ranges:
  - inf
  - inf
  ...
  [REMOVED FOR PREVETY]
  - inf
  - inf
  - inf
  - inf
  - 1.15325630594462
  - 1.15325630594462
  ...
  [REMOVED FOR PREVETY]
  - 0.7254517674446106
  - 0.7442454695701599
  ...
intensities:
  - 0.0
  ...
  [REMOVED FOR PREVETY]
  - 0.0
  - 0.0
  ...
  ...
  ...
```

- This is **REAL LASER DATA FROM THE Mars Rover laser sensor!**
- Let's comment on some values:
 - `ranges .inf .inf` means that the laser beam didn't detect anything beyond its `range_max`.
 - `angle_min: -2.200000047683716, angle_max: 2.200000047683716, angle_increment: 0.022110553458333015`: These values allow us to calculate the number of samples and angle direction of each of the samples:

$$\text{number_of_samples} = \frac{(\text{angle_max} - \text{angle_min})}{\text{incremental_angle}} = \frac{(2.2 - (-2.2))}{0.02211} = 200 \text{ samples}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{angle_position(index)} &= \text{angle_min} + (\text{index} * \text{incremental_angle}) = -2.2 + (\text{index} * 0.02211) \\ \text{middle_index_sample} &= \text{number_of_samples}/2.0 = 100 \\ \text{angle_position(index = middle_index_sample)} &= -2.2 + (100 * 0.02211) \approx 0.0 \end{aligned}$$

- In this case, we have **200 samples**.
- And if we want the sample right in the middle of the range, which is the **FRONT of the Mars Rover**, we get a direction of **0.0 degrees**.

- TIP -

- You can read only a **SINGLE** latest ROS2 interface message from a `topic` using the following:

▶ Execute in Terminal #1

```
In [ ]:
```

- You can only echo a **certain field** from the `interface` of a topic.
 - For example, we know that the `LaserScan` interface has an element named `ranges`, which is the only one we are really interested in because it contains the distance detection data.
 - So, let's **ONLY echo** that field using the `--field` argument:

--field FIELD

- Echo a selected field of a message.
 - Use `!`` to select sub-fields.
 - For example, to echo the seconds field of a `sensor_msgs/msg/LaserScan` message:
 - `ros2 topic echo /laser_scan --field header.stamp.sec`
 - In our case, we want the `ranges` field

Execute in Terminal #1

```
In [ ]:
```

Terminal #1 Output

- You now **ONLY** see the `ranges` data.
 - Let's make the Mars Rover turn using the **keyboard teleoperation node** and see how the values change.
 - Press the keyboard key `i` to make the **Mars Rover turn**.

▶ Execute in Terminal #2

In []:



- You should see how the `inf` values get replaced by normal measurements, which makes sense when turning around.

- If you want to know all the optional arguments for `ros2 topic echo` or any other **ROS2 command**, just type the command and `--help`:

 Execute in Terminal #1

```
In [ ]: ros2 topic echo --help
```

END TIP

- Self-paced example 3.1 -

Investigate the structure of the camera topic

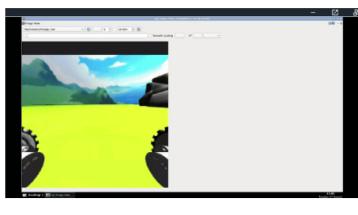
- We need to know how the **Mars Rover camera** topic /leo/camera/image_raw works.

- Execute the necessary commands to be able to:
 - Determine the structure of the `image` message used by `/leo/camera/image_raw` topic.
 - See only the `image` data field. Be careful to `CTRL+C` to stop the infrom stream because images hold a lot of data and in slow internet connections might cause lag.
 - You can visualize the `image` topics `data` graphically using this tool, which essentially performs a ROS2 `topic echo` and uses the `image` data to display it in a more comprehensible way than just an array of numbers:

 Execute in Terminal #1

```
In [ ]: ros2 run rqt_image_view rqt_image_view /leo/camera/image_
```

- You should see the following:



- RESULTS expected -

 Execute in Terminal #1

```
In [ ]:  
ros2 topic info /leo/camera/image_raw
```

Terminal #1 Output

```
Type: sensor_msgs/msg/Image  
Publisher count: 1  
Subscription count: 0
```

▶ Execute in Terminal #1

```
In [ ]:  
ros2 interface show sensor_msgs/msg/Image
```

Terminal #1 Output

```

# This message contains an uncompressed image
# (0, 0) is at top-left corner of image

std_msgs/Header header # Header timestamp should be
acquisition time of image
    builtin_interfaces/time stamp
        int32 sec
        uint32 nanosec
    string frame_id

d be optical frame of camera # Header frame_id should
    # origin of frame should
d be optical center of camera # x should point to th
e right in the image # ty should point down
in the image # tz should point into
to plane of the image # If the frame_id here
and the frame_id of the CameraInfo # message associated wi
th the image conflict # the behavior is undef
ined

uint32 height # image height, that is,
s, number of rows
uint32 width # image width, that is,
number of columns

# The legal values for encoding are in file src/imgag
e_encodings.cpp
# If you want to standardize a new string format, jo
in
# ros-users@lists.ros.org and send an email proposin
g a new encoding.

string encoding # Encoding of pixels -- channel
l meaning, ordering, size
    # taken from the list of strin
gs in include/sensor_msgs/image_encodings.hpp

uint8 is_bigendian # is this data bigendian?
uint32 step # Full row length in bytes
uint8[] data # actual matrix data, size is
( step * rows )

```

▶ Execute in Terminal #4

```
In [ ]: ros2 topic echo /leo/camera/image_raw --field data
```

Terminal #1 Output

```
55, 48, 220, 255, 48, 220, 255, 48, 220, 255, 48, 22  
0, 255, 48, 220, 255, 48, 220, 255, 48, 220, 255, 4  
8, 220, 255, 48, 220, 255, 48, 220, 255, 48, 220, 25  
5, 48, 220, 255, 48, 220, 255, 48, 131, 148, 45, 41,  
41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41, 41,  
41])
```

- End Self-paced example 3.1 -

- Example 3.3 -

- Let's now have a look at the `topic` of `/cmd_vel`, which is used to move the Mars Rover:

► Execute in Terminal #1

In []:

```
ros2 topic echo /cmd_vel
```

 Terminal #1 Output

- Strange. Nothing appears.
- Is something wrong?
- Okay. Don't panic.
- There is nothing wrong with the command you just typed.
- There is nothing broken in your workspace, either.
- What happens here is that at this moment, nobody is publishing any data to the Topic `/cmd_vel`.
- In the previous two topics `/laser_scan` and `/leo_camera/Image_raw`, the sensors were **PUBLISHING** data into those topics.
- But now, no one is publishing, only listening or what is known as **SUBSCRIBING**, as we saw when we executed the command of `ros2 topic info /cmd_vel`.

 Execute in Terminal #1

- In this case, the `topic_name = /cmd_vel`

In []:

```
ros2 topic info /cmd_vel
```

Terminal #1 Output

Type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Publisher count: 0
Subscription count: 2

- So, let's publish something to this topic .

- To publish something to this `topic`, you need to **first check what type of interface the Topic uses**.
 - In this case, we know it's the `geometry_msgs/msg/Twist`
 - We can check all the available `interfaces` using the command `ros2 interface list`:

 Execute in Terminal #1

In []:

```
ros2 interface lis
```

- The output is much longer but we show here just a small part of it:

```

Messages:
  ackermann_msgs/msg/AckermannDrive
  ackermann_msgs/msg/AckermannDriveStamped
  action_msgs/msg/GoalArray
  ...
  geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
  ...
  visualization_msgs/msg/MeshFile
  visualization_msgs/msg/UVCoordinate
Services:
  action_msgs/srv/CancelGoal
  cartographer_ros_msgs/srv/FinishTrajectory
  ...
  visualization_msgs/srv/GetInteractiveMarkings
Actions:
  action_tutorials_interfaces/action/Fibonacci
  control_msgs/action/FollowJointTrajectory
  ...
  turtlebot3_msgs/Action/RobotPosition
  turtlesim_msgs/Action/RobotVelocity

```

- Notes -

The `ros2 interface list` command prints a list of all available interfaces.

- End of Notes -

- **Messages:** Can be found as .msg files. They are simple text files that describe the fields of a ROS message. You can use them to generate source code for messages.
 - **Services:** Can be found as .srv files. They are composed of two

- **Actions:** Can be found as `.action` files. They are composed of three parts: a goal, a result, and feedback. Each part contains a

- You are now interested in messages, which are the `interfaces` under `topics`, so let us go a little deeper into what they are.
 - There are two ways to find the descriptions and definitions for

- In the `.msg` files and the `msg/` directory of a ROS package. The `.msg` files are composed of two parts: **fields** and **constants**. You can find more information about this in the official [ROS 2 documentation](#).

Resume what you were doing with the `/cmd_vel` Topic. Then, looking at the list of `interfaces` you displayed, you will find the following:

```
geometry_msgs/Empty.msg
geometry_msgs/Float32.msg
geometry_msgs/Float32Stamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Float64.msg
geometry_msgs/Float64Stamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Int32.msg
geometry_msgs/Int32Stamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Int64.msg
geometry_msgs/Int64Stamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Quaternion.msg
geometry_msgs/QuaternionStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Pose.msg
geometry_msgs/PoseStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/PoseWithCovariance.msg
geometry_msgs/PoseWithCovarianceStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Polygon.msg
geometry_msgs/PolygonStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Pose2D.msg
geometry_msgs/Pose2DStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Twist.msg
geometry_msgs/TwistStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Wrench.msg
geometry_msgs/WrenchStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/WrenchWithCovariance.msg
geometry_msgs/WrenchWithCovarianceStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Vector3.msg
geometry_msgs/Vector3Stamped.msg
geometry_msgs/Vector3D.msg
geometry_msgs/Vector3DStamped.msg
geometry_msgs/WrenchWithTorque.msg
geometry_msgs/WrenchWithTorqueStamped.msg
```

As you may remember, when you were looking for information about the `/cmd_vel` Topic, you saw that this Topic uses a type called `geometry_msgs/Twist`. As you now know, it is a message-type `interface`.

- Now we need to get some data about this specific type.
- You can execute the `ros2 interface show` command.

```
In [ ]: ros2 interface show geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Terminal #1 Output
# This expresses velocity in free space broken into linear and angular components.
# It consists of a 3-dimensional vector for the linear velocity and another 3-dimensional vector for the angular velocity.
```

What an exciting thing discovery! The last command output shows that the `Twist` message comprises two `Vector3` messages. It consists of a 3-dimensional vector for the linear velocity and another 3-dimensional vector for the angular velocity.

- Now we need an example of how to fill in this message so we can **publish** it to the `/cmd_vel` topic.
- For that we can use the command `ros2 interface proto`.
- This command shows you a prototype (example) of the `interface` that you can use.
- Execute the following line in your Terminal 1:

-Notes -

The `ros2 interface proto` structure is:

```
In [ ]: ros2 interface proto <package_name>/msg/<interface_name>
- End of Notes -
```

Execute in Terminal #1

```
In [ ]: ros2 interface proto geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
*linear:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
*angular:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
```

- Analyze the result obtained by executing this last command `ros2 interface proto`.
- You can see that the structure for writing a message to the topic `/cmd_vel` is composed of **two three-dimensional vectors**.
- One vector is called `linear` with positions for the axes (x, y, z), and another is called `angular` with positions for the same axes (x, y, z).
- Recall that using the `ros2 interface show` command, you verified that the `Twist` message is composed of two messages of type `Vector3`.
- You will use the `/cmd_vel` Topic to send a message composed of these velocity vectors to move the **Mars Rover**.

- All right. You have enough information to start **publishing messages** to the `cmd_vel` Topic.
- To do this, you will use the `geometry_msgs/msg/Twist` interface.

To publish a message to a particular Topic, use the following command:

- Notes -

The `ros2 topic pub` command is used to publish messages to a Topic. The command structure is as follows:

In []:

```
ros2 topic pub <topic_name> <interface_name> <message>
```

- End of Notes -

- In our case:
 - `topic_name = /cmd_vel`
 - `interface_name = geometry_msgs/msg/Twist`
 - `message = "({linear: {x: 0.1, y: 0.0, z: 0.0}, angular: {x: 0.0, y: 0.0, z: 1.0}})"`
- The message value was copied from the `ros2 interface proto geometry_msgs/msg/Twist` output.
- But now we set `linear.x = 1.0`, which will move the robot forward, and `angular.z = 1.0` will turn the robot. Combined, these should make the robot move forward while turning.

Execute in Terminal #1

In []:

```
ros2 topic pub /cmd_vel geometry_msgs/msg/Twist "{linear:
```

You should see the robot doing the following:



- Now if we execute the `ros2 topic echo /cmd_vel`:

Execute in Terminal #2

In []:

```
ros2 topic echo /cmd_vel
```

You should see the robot doing the following:

Terminal #2 Output

```
linear:
  x: 0.1
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
angular:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 1.0
---
linear:
  x: 0.1
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
angular:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 1.0
---
```

- You were able to publish a message to the `/cmd_vel` Topic.

You can also check if the `publisher/subscriber` count for the `/cmd_vel` Topic has increased.

Execute in Terminal #3

In []:

```
source /opt/ros/humble/setup.bash
```

In []:

```
ros2 topic info /cmd_vel
```

Terminal #3 Output

```
Type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Publisher count: 1Subscription count: 3
```

So you can confirm that you have correctly published to the Topic `/cmd_vel`. As you can see, the Publisher count is now 1, since you are publishing to the Topic with the `ros2 topic pub` command. Also, the Subscription count has increased to 3, because now you are also subscribed to the Topic with the `ros2 topic echo` command.

- All this information can be accessed by executing the `ros2 topic info` with the argument `verbose`.

Execute in Terminal #3

In []:

```
source /opt/ros/humble/setup.bash
```

In []:

```
ros2 topic info /cmd_vel --verbose
```

Terminal #3 Output

```
Type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Publisher count: 1
Node name: _ros2cli_1776
Node namespace: /
```

```

Topic type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Endpoint type: PUBLISHER
[IRRELEVANT DATA at this level]

Subscription count: 3

Node name: four_diff_controller2
Node namespace: /
Topic type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Endpoint type: SUBSCRIPTION
[IRRELEVANT DATA at this level]

Node name: _ros2cli_1682
Node namespace: /
Topic type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Endpoint type: SUBSCRIPTION
[IRRELEVANT DATA at this level]

```

- We have removed the extra information that is not relevant for now.
- You can see that there are **three** topic subscribers and **one** topic publisher.
 - publisher: `_ros2cli_1776`, which is a node name automatically assigned by the ROS2 `ros2 topic pub` command. This corresponds to your **publishing command**.
 - subscribers: `four_diff_controller`, `four_diff_controller2` and `_ros2cli_1682` (which corresponds to the `ros2 topic echo` command). The other two are the nodes of the **Mars Rover** in charge of **MOVING THE WHEEL MOTORS** in the simulation.
- You might have noticed that despite stopping the `ros2 topic pub` command, the robot **STILL MOVES**
- To stop the robot, use the following command:

Execute in Terminal #1

In []:

```
ros2 topic pub --once /cmd_vel geometry_msgs/msg/Twist "{
```

- TIP -

- By now, you might have guessed that the command `ros2 run teleop_twist_keyboard teleop_twist_keyboard` is **PUBLISHING** in the topic `/cmd_vel` also.
- It's a very easy way to stop the Mars Rover because you only need to press the keyboard key `k`.
- Execute the following commands and see it for yourself:

Execute in Terminal #1

In []:

```
ros2 run teleop_twist_keyboard teleop_twist_keyboard
```

Execute in Terminal #2

In []:

```
ros2 topic echo /cmd_vel
```

Terminal #2 Output

- Depending on which keys you press, these values will be different:

```

linear:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
angular:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 1.0
...
linear:
  x: 0.5
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
angular:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
...
linear:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: 0.0
angular:
  x: 0.0
  y: 0.0
  z: -1.0
...

```

Execute in Terminal #3

In []:

```
ros2 topic info /cmd_vel --verbose
```

Terminal #3 Output

```

Type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Publisher count: 1

Node name: teleop_twist_keyboard
Node namespace: /
Topic type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Endpoint type: PUBLISHER
[IRRELEVANT DATA at this level]

Subscription count: 3

Node name: four_diff_controller
Node namespace: /
Topic type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Endpoint type: SUBSCRIPTION
[IRRELEVANT DATA at this level]

Node name: four_diff_controller2
Node namespace: /
Topic type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Endpoint type: SUBSCRIPTION
[IRRELEVANT DATA at this level]

Node name: _ros2cli_3180
Node namespace: /

```

Topic type: geometry_msgs/msg/Twist
Endpoint type: SUBSCRIPTION
[IRRELEVANT DATA at this level]

- Here, the **publishing node** is `teleop_twist_keyboard`, which is the name of the node launched with the command `ros2 run teleop_twist_keyboard teleop_twist_keyboard`.

- END TIP -

- End of Example 3.3 -

24/09/2024



← □ 3.3 - Explore the Mars Rover Topics →