# Path Finding

- as used in Rescuing Robots -

Project Report

1-ED3

Aalborg University
Electronics and Computer Engineering

We used LaTeXfor typesetting this report, Code::Blocks for prototyping the code and IAR-Workbench for programming the microcrontroller.

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**Abstract:**

This project is about path finding on a grid based map. To test our theoretical work, we decided to build a small four wheeled robot. Therefore we needed to think of a way to move the robot, a way to observe our surroundings and a way to manage the collected data.

# Contents

# Todo list

# Preface

This report was made by three students from Aalborg University Esbjerg attending the Electronics and Computer Engineering course, with the purpose of completing the P3 project in the third semester. From this point on, every mention of we refers to the three co-authors listed below.

Aalborg University, December 12, 2017

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# Chapter 1

# Introduction

In this project we want to talk about path finding algorithms, with the main focus of building an example implementation on a small scale.

We expect the reader to have a basic understanding of math, programming and simple physics. But will explain the applied topics.

write introduction, should include Problem statement, general idea,

how to reference to another chapter: Read more about path finding in Chapter 5.

## 1.1 Examples

You can also have examples in your document such as in example 1.1.

> **Example 1.1 (An Example of an Example)**
> Here is an example with some math
>
> $$0 = \exp(i\pi) + 1 \; . \tag{1.1}$$
>
> You can adjust the colour and the line width in the `macros.tex` file.

## 1.2 How Does Sections, Subsections, and Subsections Look?

Well, like this

### 1.2.1 This is a Subsection

and this

### This is a Subsubsection

and this.

**A Paragraph** You can also use paragraph titles which look like this.

**A Subparagraph** Moreover, you can also use subparagraph titles which look like this. They have a small indentation as opposed to the paragraph titles.

Is it possible to add a subsubparagraph?

I think that a summary of this exciting chapter should be added.

# Chapter 2

# Movement

For our robot to be able to show the results of path finding, it needed to be able to move. We decided to move only along a simple 2D grid-like structure, therefore wheels were the easiest solution.

## 2.1 Stepper Motors

A stepper motor is a motor that moves one step at a time, with its step defined by a step angle.

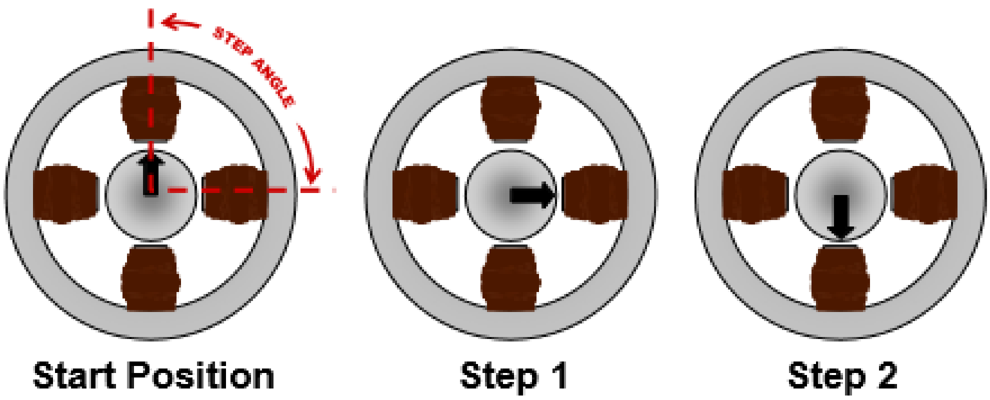



**Figure 2.1:** Step Angle

Figure 2.1 represents a stepper motor that requires 4 steps to complete a 360 degrees rotation. This determines the step angle to be 90 degrees. The main components of a stepper motor are represented in Figure 2.2, and they consist of stators, windings(phases), and rotor. Attached to the output axle is the rotor, depending on the type of motor it can be magnetized.

By applying a voltage across one of the windings, current will start flowing

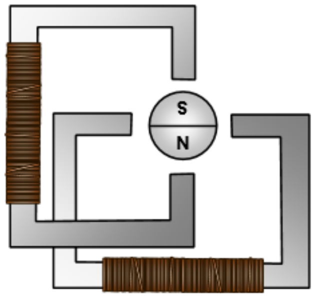
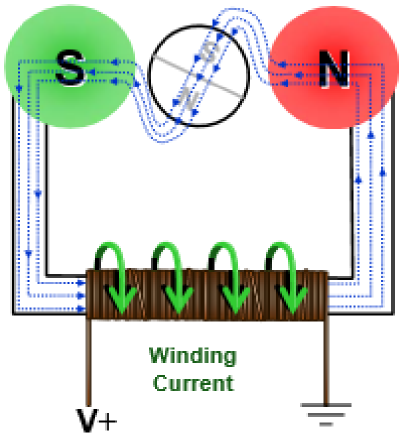
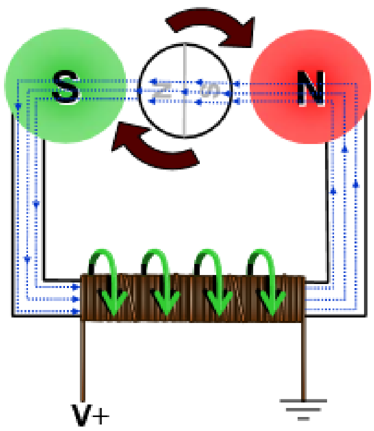



**Figure 2.2:** Main Components

through it. By using the right-hand rule, the direction of the magnetic flux can be determined. The flux will want to travel through the path that has the least resistance. This determines the rotor to change its position to minimize resistance. This is shown in Figure 2.3.




**(a)** High Resistance



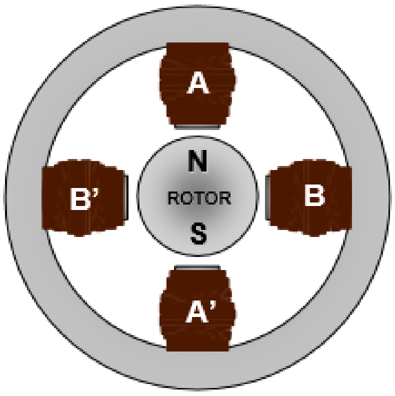

**(b)** Low Resistance

**Figure 2.3:** Direction of Magnetic Flux

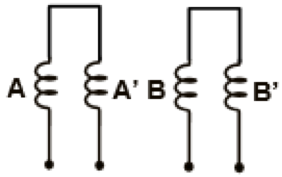
### 2.1.1 Types of Stepper Motors

#### Permanent Magnet Motor

This type of stepper motor has a magnetized rotor. Each winding will be subdivided into two, to better understand how to motor functions. Figure 2.4 represents the windings, and how they are distributed inside a stepper motor.



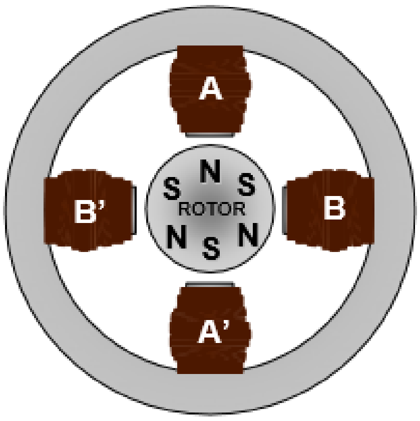

**(a)** Rotor



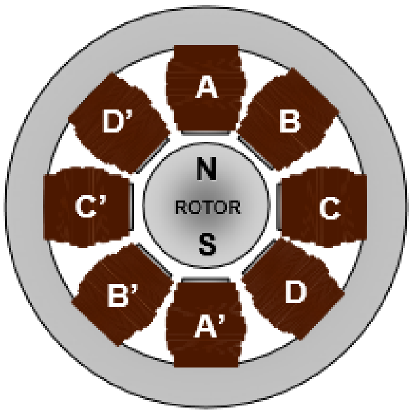

**(b)** Winding

**Figure 2.4:** Basic Structure of a Motor

The resolution of the motor can be improved in two ways, either by increasing the number of pole pairs in the rotor itself, or by increasing the number of phases as shown in Figure 2.5.



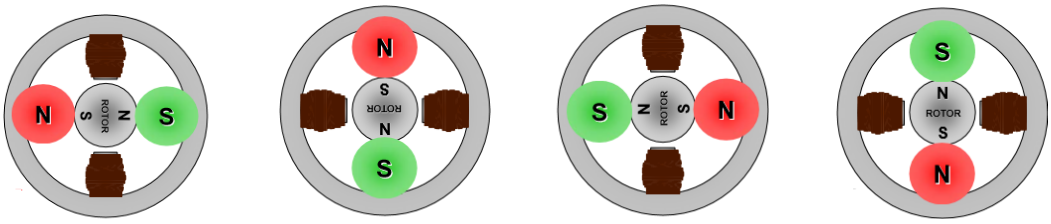

**(a)** Increased Pole Pairs



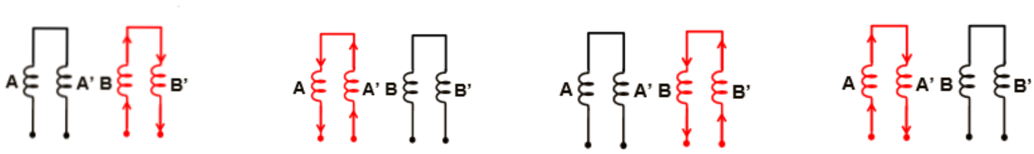

**(b)** Increased Number of Winding

**Figure 2.5:** Increased resolution

To rotate the motor, simply apply a voltage across the windings in a sequence. A full rotation is shown in Figure 2.6, with the corresponding phases energized.




**(a)** 1st Step **(b)** 2nd Step **(c)** 3rd Step **(d)** 4th Step

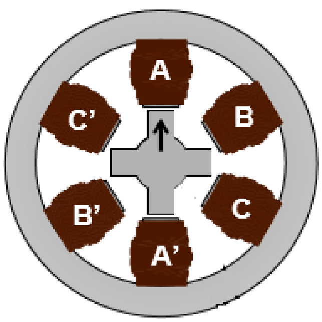



**(e)** 1st Step Winding **(f)** 2nd Step Winding **(g)** 3rd Step Winding **(h)** 4th Winding

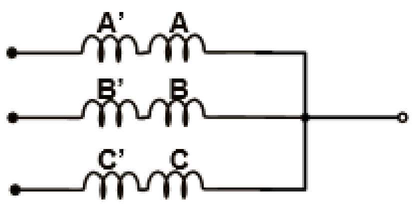
**Figure 2.6:** Stepping a Permanent Magnet Motor

### Variable Reluctance Motor

This type of motor, uses a rotor that is not magnetized, and has a number of teeth as seen in Figure 2.7. The windings are configured differently, as depicted in 2.7(b), all having a common voltage source but separate ground connections. They usually have 3 or 5 windings. Greater precision can be achieved by adding more teeth to the rotor.




**(a)** Non Magnetized Rotor

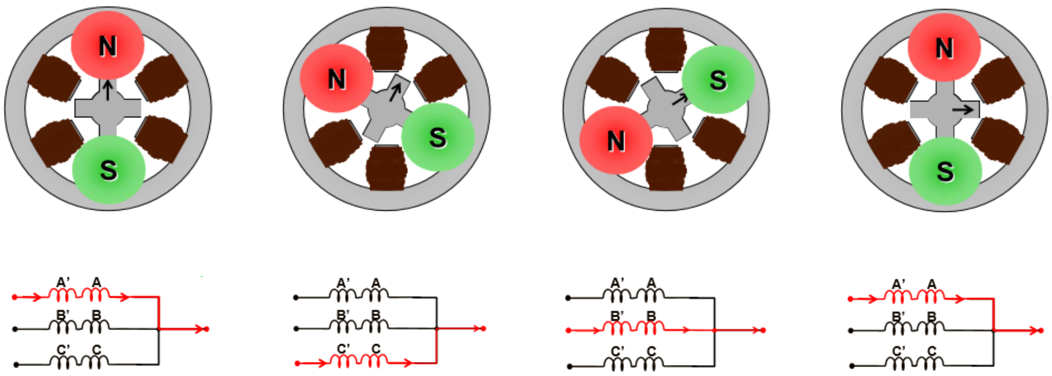



**(b)** Windings

**Figure 2.7:** Variable Reluctance Motor Components

To spin the motor, each winding is energized one at a time, and the rotor rotates to minimize reluctance as explained before. Some of the differences, between this type of stepper motor and the permanent magnet motor, are that, in order to spin the motor in a direction, the windings have to be energized in a reverse sequence as opposed to the direction of the spin, as depicted in Figure 2.8.

In addition, variable reluctance motors have twice the precision of permanent magnet motors with the same amount of windings.




**(e)** 1st Step **(f)** 2nd Step **(g)** 3rd Step **(h)** 4th Step

**Figure 2.8:** Stepping Variable Reluctance Motor

**Hybrid Stepper Motor**

Hybrid stepper motors borrow characteristics from both previously mentioned types.

Figure 2.9 shows the two the main components of the hybrid stepper motor. On the left side, the stator can be seen consisting of 8 poles. On the right side the rotor. The rotor consists of two sets of teeth, corresponding to the two poles, north and south.

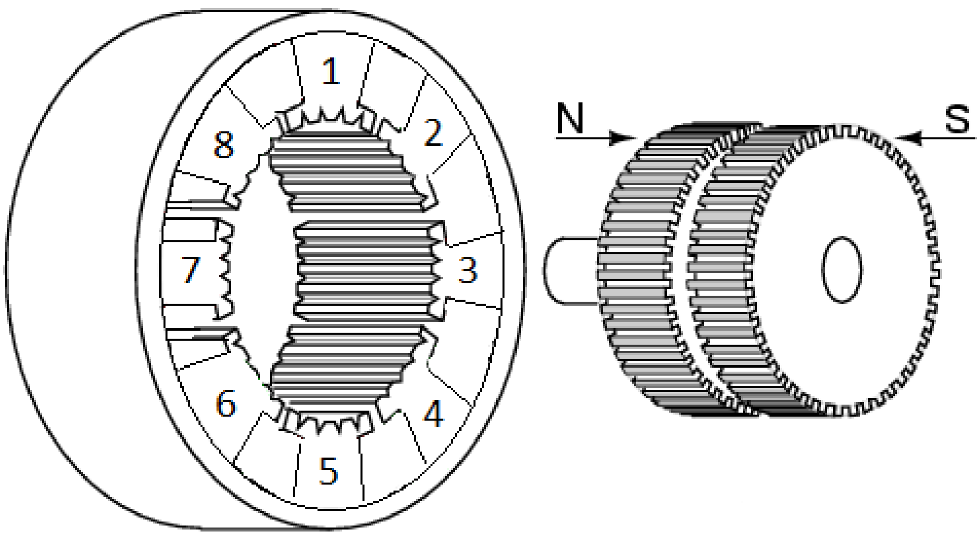



**Figure 2.9:** Stator and Rotor

It is important to notice two additional things. The first, is that the teeth on the rotor are not aligned but are interleaved. The second, is the placement of the stator teeth in respect to those of the rotor. Both can be observed in Figure 2.10.


**(a)** Interleaved Teeth **(b)** Stepper Motor Inside

**Figure 2.10:** Hybrid Stepper Motor

Figure 2.10, the windings with numbers 1 and 5 are completely aligned with the teeth of the rotor. Windings number 3 and 7 are completely unaligned, while the others are half aligned. This results in higher precision and higher torque offered by the hybrid stepper motor, depending on the stepping method used.

Figures 2.11, 2.12, 2.13 represent the way this motor operates.

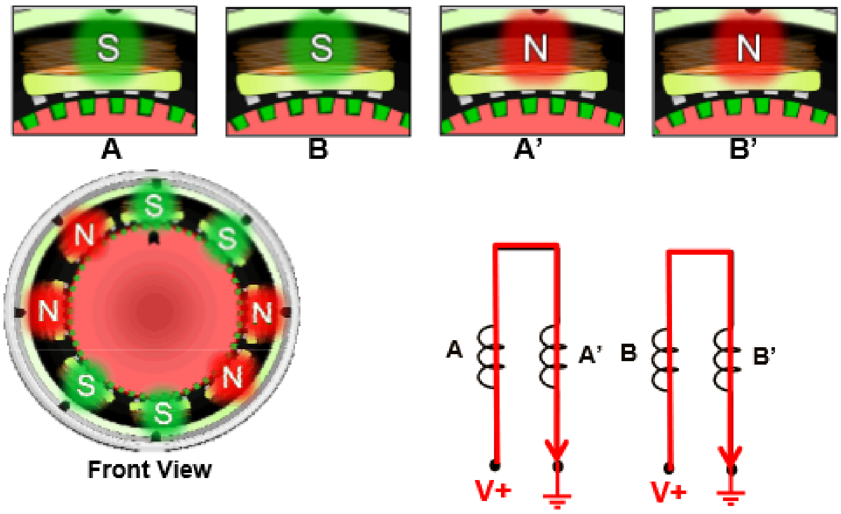



**Figure 2.11:** First Step

By applying a voltage to both windings, the current flow can be controlled, thereby controlling the polarity of each stator pole, thus controlling the direction of the motor. Notice that, initially, poles A and A′ are completely aligned, and poles B and B′ are half aligned.

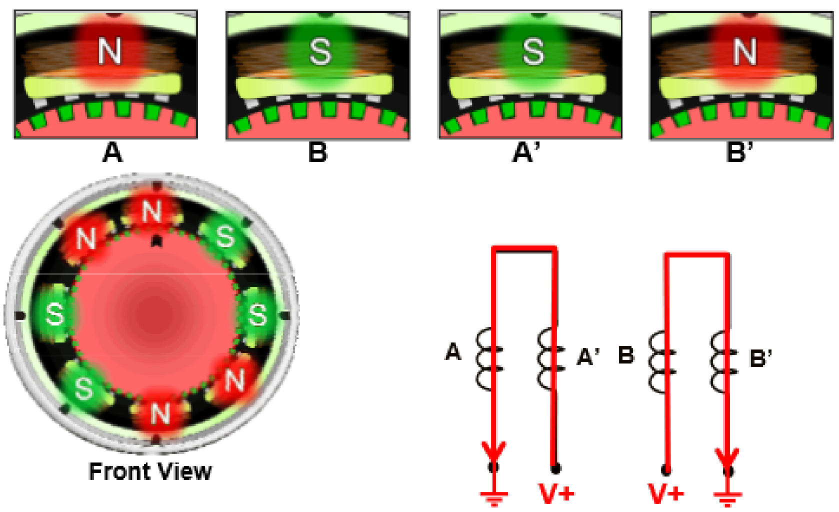



**Figure 2.12:** Second Step

Next step involves changing the direction of the current in winding A by applying a voltage at the other end of the winding. Even though only the current in winding A has been changed, all stator poles are aligned differently. Poles A and A′ are now half aligned, and poles B and B′ are completely aligned.

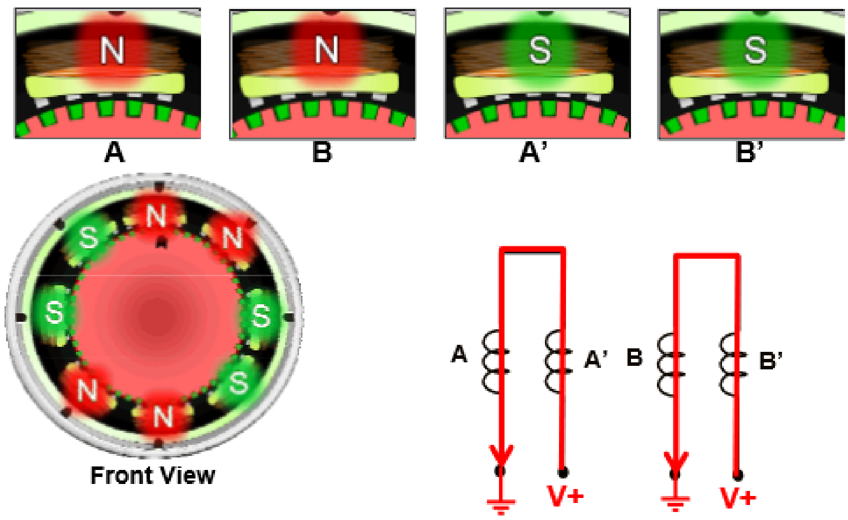



**Figure 2.13:** Third Step

Now, changing the direction of the current in winding B, changes the polarity of the stator poles B and B′, again, determining a change in the alignment of all stator poles. A and A′ are now completely aligned, and stator poles B and B′ are half aligned. The positions of the stator poles now correspond to those of the first step.

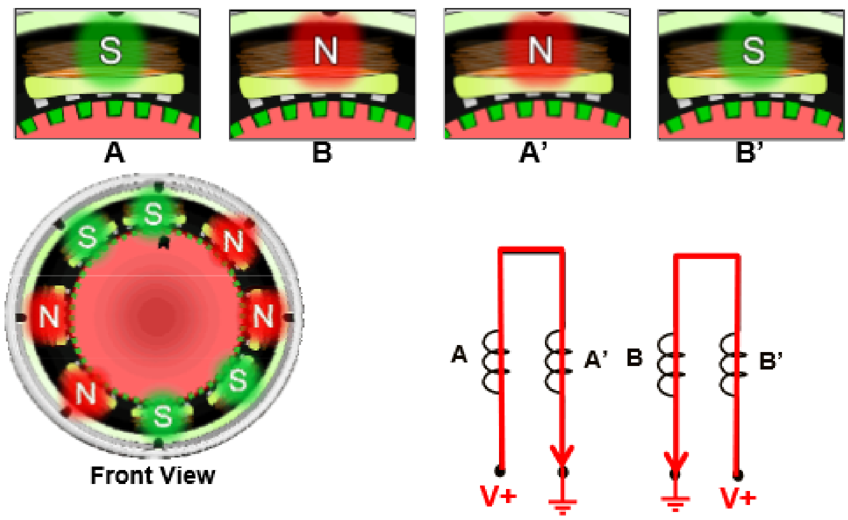


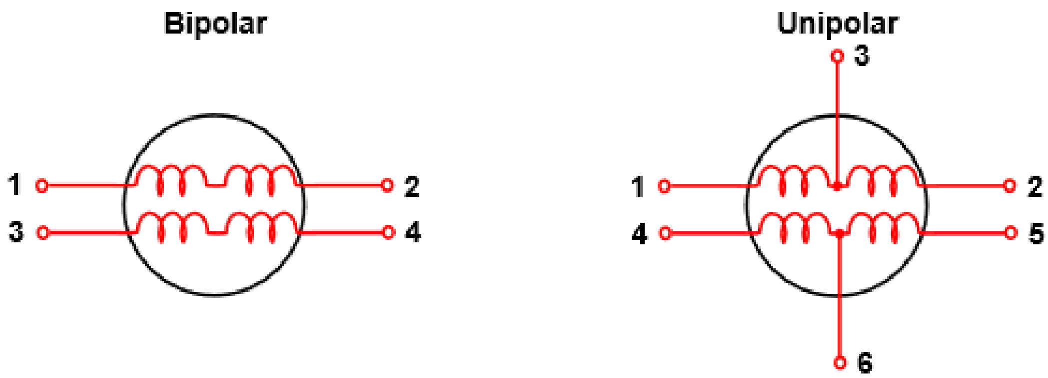

**Figure 2.14:** Forth Step

Finally, again changing the direction of the current in winding A, determines the rotor to move another step. Notice the alignment of the stator poles. A and A′ are half aligned, while B and B′ are fully aligned. By changing the direction of the current in winding B, the motor arrives in the initial state, thus repeating the sequence.

### 2.1.2 Unipolar And Bipolar Stepper Motors

Another classification of stepper motors, is depending on the way the windings are configured. Even though, nowadays, almost every stepper is both. Meaning that unipolar and bipolar, are rather modes in which the stepper motor can be driven. Exception being, stepper motors which have only four wires coming out of them, corresponding to bipolar stepper motors.

Figure 2.15 below represent the configuration of the windings in both unipolar and bipolar stepper motors.



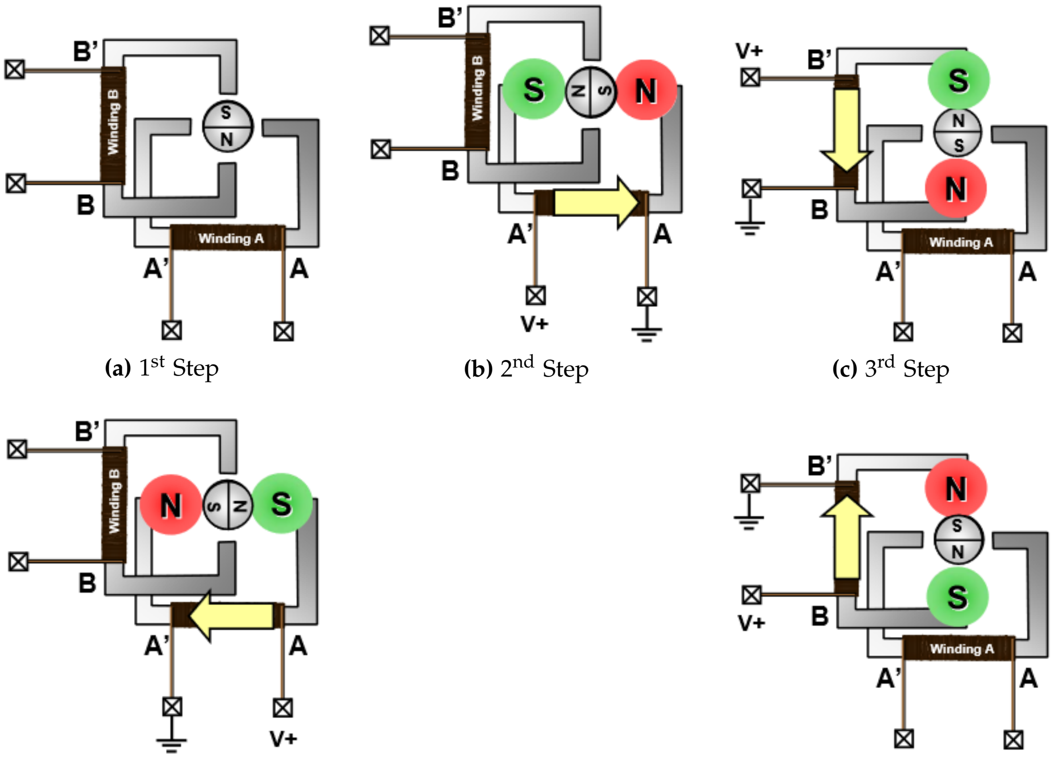

**(a)** Bipolar **(b)** Unipolar

**Figure 2.15:** Winding Configuration

Bipolar stepper motors allow current to flow in both directions through the windings, meaning the need for a center wire to provide a voltage disappears. However, the circuit needed to drive a bipolar stepper motor becomes more complicated. We use stepper motor driver boards to make the task easier.

Unipolar stepper motors allow current flow in only one direction through the winding, so a center wire has been added, that provides a voltage and determines the stator poles to either be of north or south polarity.

Note that the bipolar configuration as shown in Figure 2.16 allows the current to flow in both directions, but the voltage and ground continuously switch positions. This makes bipolar stepper motors a bit more complicated to drive, but as previously stated, motor driver boards simplify the task.




(a) 1st Step (b) 2nd Step (c) 3rd Step

(d) 4th Step (e) 5th Step

**Figure 2.16:** Bipolar Motor Spinning

### 2.1.3 Motor Driver Boards

We used motor driver boards in order to drive the motors. They provide a simple interface between the microcontroller and the motors, and make for a better alternative than directly driving the motors from the microcontroller.

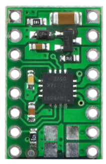


**Figure 2.17:** Driver Board

## 2.2 Wheels

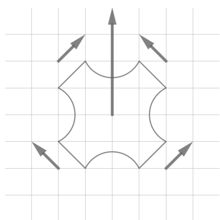
The robot should be able to move in eight directions from every position. By using traditional wheels, the robot would need to be able to steer to the desired direction, thus changing orientation. This would have been a difficult task raising a number of problems. Our solution is to use omni-wheels instead. A standard wheel and an omni-wheel are shown in Figure 2.18.

The key difference between omni-wheels and traditional wheels is their contact area. For omni-wheels it consists of smaller wheels that are able to move freely sideways, thus not generating any friction.

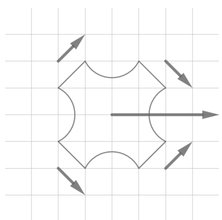
**(a)** Standard Wheel

**(b)** Omni-Wheel

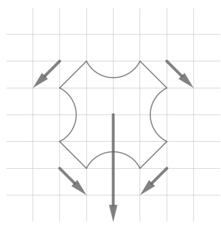
**Figure 2.18:** Wheels



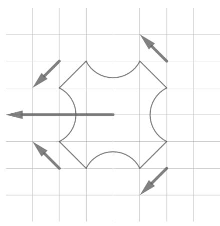
**(a)** North



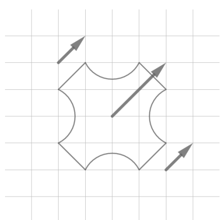
**(b)** East



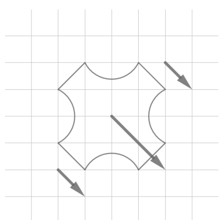
**(c)** South



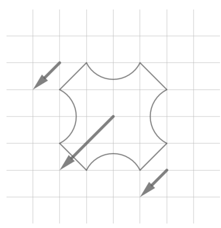
**(d)** West



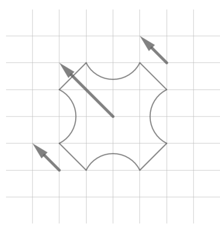
**(e)** North-East



**(f)** South-East



**(g)** South-West



**(h)** North-West

**Figure 2.19:** Forces from Multiple Wheels Added Together

It can also be observed that no two opposite motors spin in different directions, because this would lead to a rotation, which is undesired for us. This has also made our task of programming the motors more simple.

## 2.3 Direction Control

To decide the direction of the robot, we had to control which wheels turn what number of steps.

One option would have been to control each motor individually. This required four pins for each motor to step the motors, and precise timing between the four motors. Imprecise timing could introduce unintended rotation.

We decided to build our own circuit using tri-state buffers instead. The circuit will be explained after a short explanation of tri-state buffers.

### 2.3.1 Tri-State Buffer

To achieve the desired movement using as few pins as possible, we decided to use Tri-State buffers. Fewer pins make it easier to port this part of the robot to a smaller $\mu$C with fewer pins for a final product.

Tri-State buffers provide the possibility of disconnecting parts of the circuit, when not needed. This allowed us to manipulate the input to the motors dynamically.

A Tri-State buffer can be thought of as a switch. Figure 2.20 better illustrates that concept.


**(a)** Disabled **(b)** Enabled

**Figure 2.20:** Tri-State Buffer Switch Analogy

When the buffer is enabled, its output corresponds to its input, either 0 or 1, "High" or "Low". However when the buffer is a in its third state, its output is disabled, opening the circuit between the buffer and the next component. That does not mean its output corresponds to a logic “Low", but instead it is in a state of high impedance in which the output is disconnected from the rest of the circuit.

### 2.3.2 Control Circuit

Table 2.1 explains which pairs need to be activated, and their rotational direction, in order to achieve the desired movement.

introduce circuit before

| Direction | Pair A | Pair B |
|---|---|---|
| North | forward | forward |
| East | forward | backward |
| South | backward | backward |
| West | backward | forward |
| North-East | forward | off |
| South-East | off | backward |
| South-West | backward | off |
| North-West | off | forward |

| Direction | Aon | Aflip | Bon | Bflip |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| North | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| East | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| South | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| West | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| North-East | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| South-East | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| South-West | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| North-West | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

**Table 2.1:** Directions

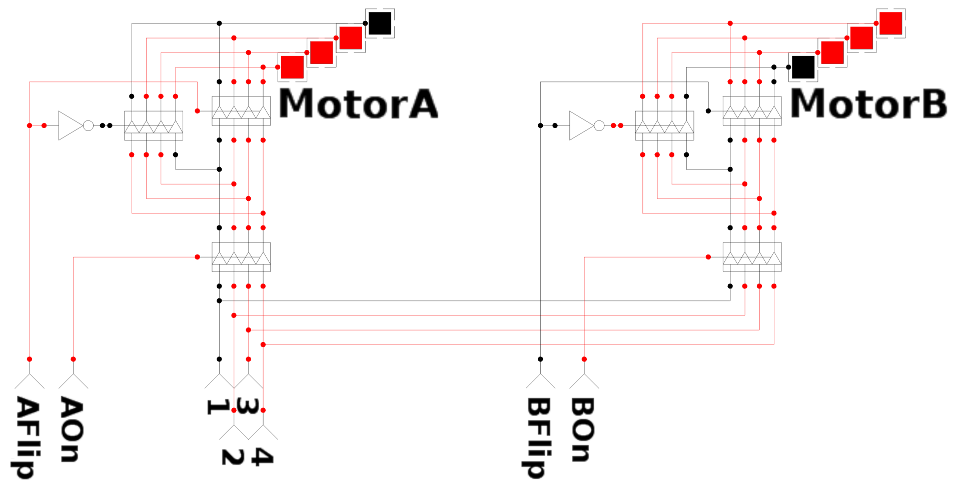



**Figure 2.21:** Motor Control Circuit

We decided to use 6 tri-state buffers as shown in figure 2.21.

# Chapter 3

# Maphandling

Pathfinding is generally the process of finding a path from a given starting point ('A') to a given destination ('B'), on a given map.

## 3.1 Section

Like with many others, is the first step in Dijkstra's algorithm to reduce the map to the necessary minimum. After this reduction, the map only consists of *nodes* and *edges*. An edge connects two nodes together and has one integer *travel cost*. In this integer is stored how much it costs to traverse along that edge, measured in the metric that should get optimized (in our case distance).

# Chapter 4

# Scan

Pathfinding is generally the process of finding a path from a given starting point ('A') to a given destination ('B'), on a given map.

## 4.1 Section

Like with many others, is the first step in Dijkstra's algorithm to reduce the map to the necessary minimum. After this reduction, the map only consists of *nodes* and *edges*. An edge connects two nodes together and has one integer *travel cost*. In this integer is stored how much it costs to traverse along that edge, measured in the metric that should get optimized (in our case distance).

# Chapter 5

# Pathfinding

Pathfinding is generally the process of finding a path from a given starting point ('A') to a given destination ('B'), on a given map.

There are different approaches to find the best path, and different ideas what the best path is.

In the case of rescue, where time is very crucial to success, the quickest path has to be considered best. [1]

In other applications 'best' could also mean shortest distance, least expensive (toll roads), most convenient or any number of other qualifiers.

Since our robot has approximately equal movement speed in all used directions, the shortest distance path can be approximated as the shortest time path.

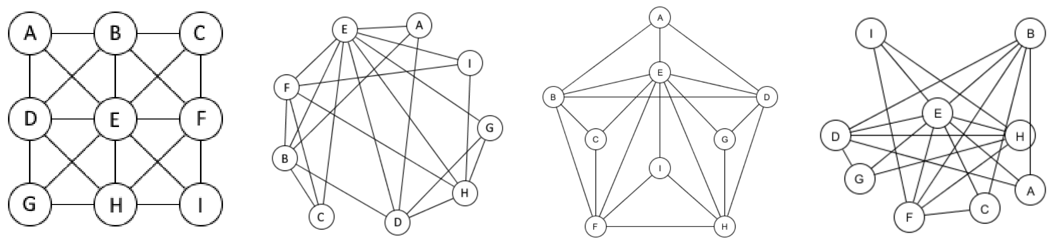
We chose to start implementing Dijkstra's shortest path algorithm, since it is fairly simple to understand and can be used as a baseline for better, more complicated algorithms, like A*.

## 5.1 Graphs

The first step in most algorithms is to reduce the map to the necessary minimum. After this reduction, the map only consists of *nodes* and *edges*, organized in a graph. An edge connects two nodes together and has a *distance*. In this integer is stored how much it costs to traverse along that edge, measured in the metric that should get optimized (in our case distance and time).

A node has a *name*, a *cost to reach* and a reference to another node *parent*. The name is used as an identifier, cost to reach sums the travelling costs to get here on the currently shortest path from the start and parent refers to what node is previous in that path.

Two nodes also have a special characteristic, the previously named starting position and the finish position.



**(a)** grid graph **(b)** circular graph **(c)** tree graph **(d)** unstructured graph

**Figure 5.1:** different representations of the same graph

Such a graph can be represented in any way, as long as none of the described characteristics change. Figure 5.1 shows four different representations of the same graph (with omitted number values).

Since our prototype is running on a grid-like map, the graph shown in figure 5.1a is our preferred representation. For the algorithm however, it doesn't matter.

## 5.2 Brute-Force

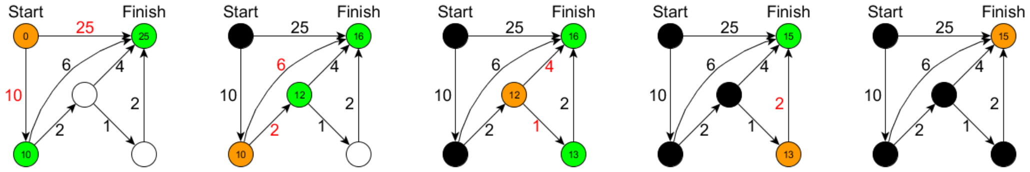
Brute-force is generally an algorithm, that only relies on computational power, instead of clever design. For path-finding that would mean looking at all possible paths, and evaluating which one is the shortest. Brute-force algorithms can be implemented to search depth first (DFS), or breadth first (BFS).

## 5.3 Flood Fill

Flood fill is looking at all neighbour nodes from the start, and looking at all their neighbours. This process then gets repeated until the finish node is reached. The name comes from visualising the algorithm, which looks fairly similar to a liquid being spilled on a map. [2]

## 5.4 Dijkstra

Dijkstra's algorithm is a small improvement on the flood-fill algorithm explained earlier. It takes into account the distances between two nodes, when deciding which node to look at next. Thus prioritising the easier to reach nodes, when going to the next iteration.




(a) 1. Step (b) 2. Step (c) 3. Step (d) 4. Step (e) 5. Step

**Figure 5.2:** Dijkstra's algorithm on a simple map

This is done by storing all nodes in a priority queue, where they are sorted by their cost to reach, lowest first.

The cost to reach gets calculated iteratively, by adding the cost to reach of the current node together with the travel cost to its neighbour. If that value is smaller than the cost to reach currently stored in that neighbour, the old value gets overwritten. This process is shown stepwise in figures 5.2a through 5.2e. Every time the algorithm needs a new node to evaluate its neighbours, it takes the first element from that list.

This approach is a huge benefit for maps, where distances between nodes vary widely. In our case distances are one of two possibilities, either 1 or $\sqrt{2}$. Thus making this effectively one implementation of a flood-fill search, with the benefit, that only one addition needs to be done to implement A*, which gets explained in section 5.5.

## 5.5 A*

A* uses Dijkstra's algorithm as a baseline, but adds a heuristic to each node.

## 5.6 Pathfinding on a grid

Pathfinding on a grid is slightly different to pathfinding on a regular map, because all nodes tend to have the same amount of neighbours, and all edges have the same or similar costs. Figure 5.3 shows the similarities between several connections on a grid-based graph. because of this, the Dijkstra algorithm is losing its major advantage over a simple flood fill.

## 5.7 Our implementation

does this belong into sec:map-handle?

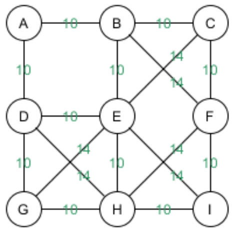



**Figure 5.3:** 3x3 grid with edge costs

For our grid we chose to allow vertical, horizontal and diagonal movement, giving us 8 possible directions to move in from every node. We decided to store those eight directions in one single byte, with the least significant nibble (LSN) corresponding to the four main directions (N,E,S,W), and the MSN corresponding to NE, SE, SW and NW.

| N | E | S | W | NE | SE | SW | NW | byte |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0x01 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0x02 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0x03 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0x0E |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0x10 |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0x20 |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0x42 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0xFF |

Just some random cites, to see how it works. [3], [4] and [5].

# Chapter 6

# Conclusion

In case you have questions, comments, suggestions or have found a bug, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can find my contact details below.

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# Appendix A

# Appendix A name

Here is the first appendix