

# Mobile Computing Microcontrollers, Sensors & Actuators

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Slides: [tmb.gr/mc-mcu](http://tmb.gr/mc-mcu)

# Overview

These slides introduce *microcontrollers*.

We learn how to run a program on one.

And how to use *sensors* and *actuators*.

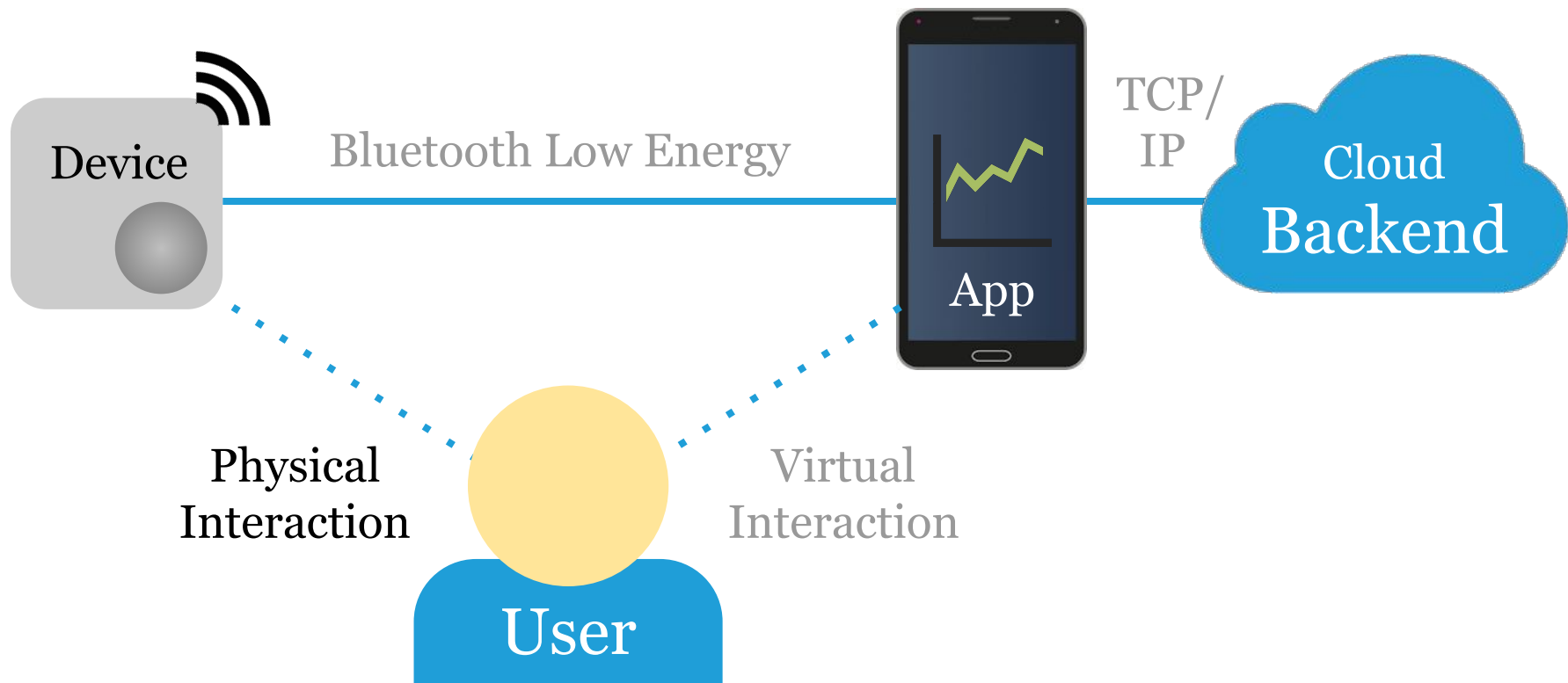
# Prerequisites

Install the Arduino IDE and set up microcontrollers:

Check the Wiki entry on [Installing the Arduino IDE](#).

[Set up the Feather nRF52840 Sense](#) for Arduino.

# Reference model



# Let's look at physical computing

On device sensing/control, no connectivity.

Sensor  $\rightarrow$  Device, e.g. logging temperature.

Device  $\rightarrow$  Actuator, e.g. time-triggered buzzer.

Sensor  $\rightarrow$  Device  $\rightarrow$  Actuator, e.g. RFID door lock.

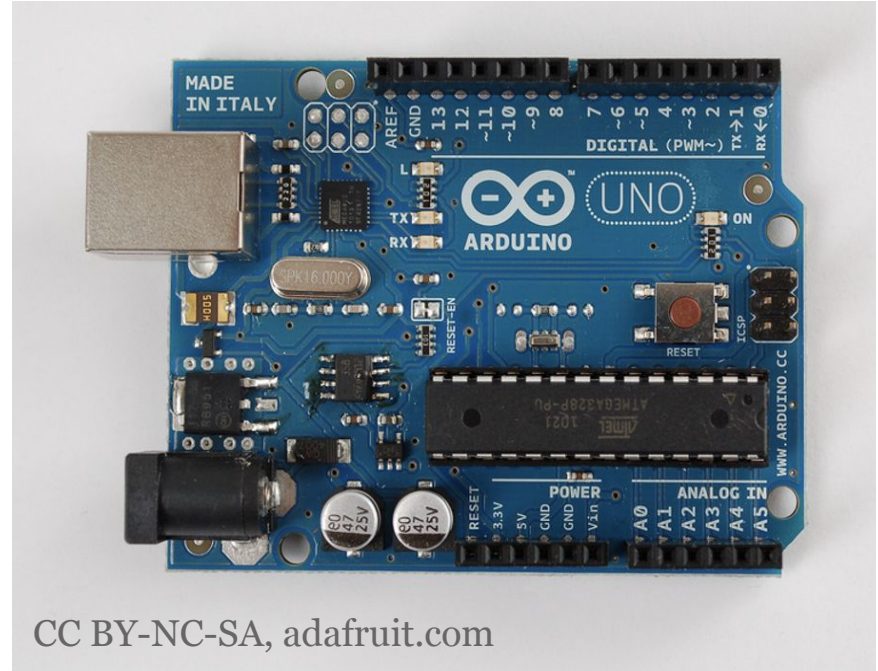
A  $\rightarrow$  B: measurement or control data flow.

# Arduino, a typical microcontroller

*Microcontrollers* (MCU) are small computers that run a single program.

*Arduino* is an MCU for electronics prototyping.

Here's a [video](#) about it with Massimo Banzi.



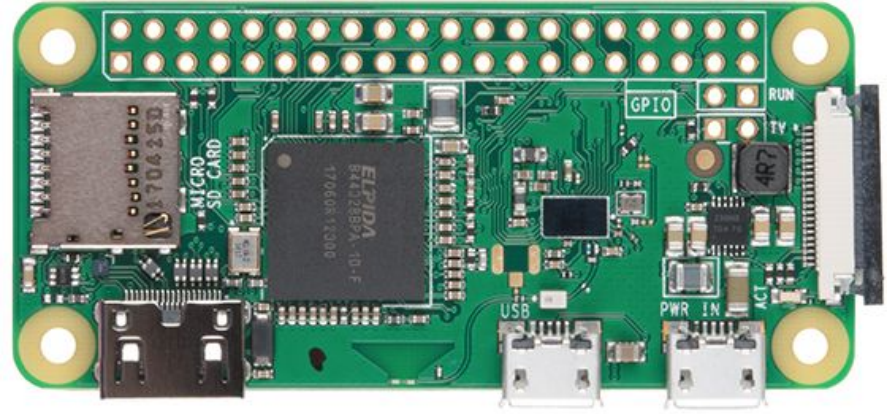
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# Raspberry Pi, a single-board computer

*Single-board computers like the Raspberry Pi are not microcontrollers.*

They run a full Linux OS, have a lot of memory and use way more power.

Here's a [video](#) on the Pi.



# Prototyping hardware form factors

Some modular prototyping hardware *form factors*:

Arduino ([Uno](#) and [MKR](#)) with "shield" extensions.

Adafruit [Feather](#) with [FeatherWing](#) extensions.

[Wemos](#), stackable modules based on ESP8266.

[M5Stack](#), a modular system based on ESP32.

We use Feather compatible microcontrollers.



# Feather nRF52840 Sense

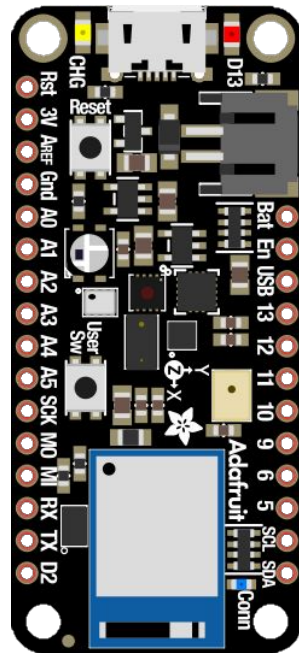
Microcontroller with [Bluetooth 5](#) (and more).

Nordic [nRF52840](#) System on Chip (SoC).

32-bit [ARM Cortex-M4](#) CPU with FPU.

1 MB [flash](#) memory, 265 kB RAM.

For details, check the [Wiki page](#).



# Programming a microcontroller

Microcontrollers are programmed via USB.

Code is (cross-) *compiled* on your computer.

The *binary* is *uploaded* to the microcontroller.

The uploaded program then runs "stand-alone".

# Arduino IDE settings

Connect your board via USB and make sure that

*Tools > Board* is set to your microcontroller,

*Tools > Port* matches the current USB port.

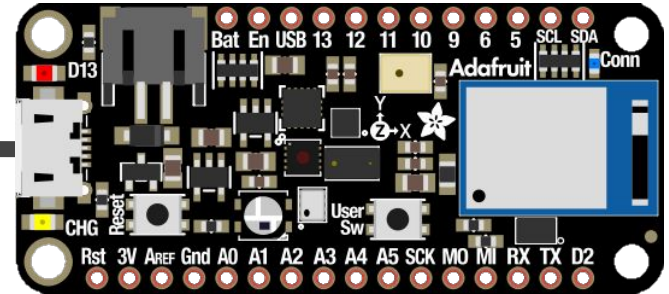
Some boards require additional settings.

# Arduino IDE program upload

The *Upload* button compiles and uploads the code.



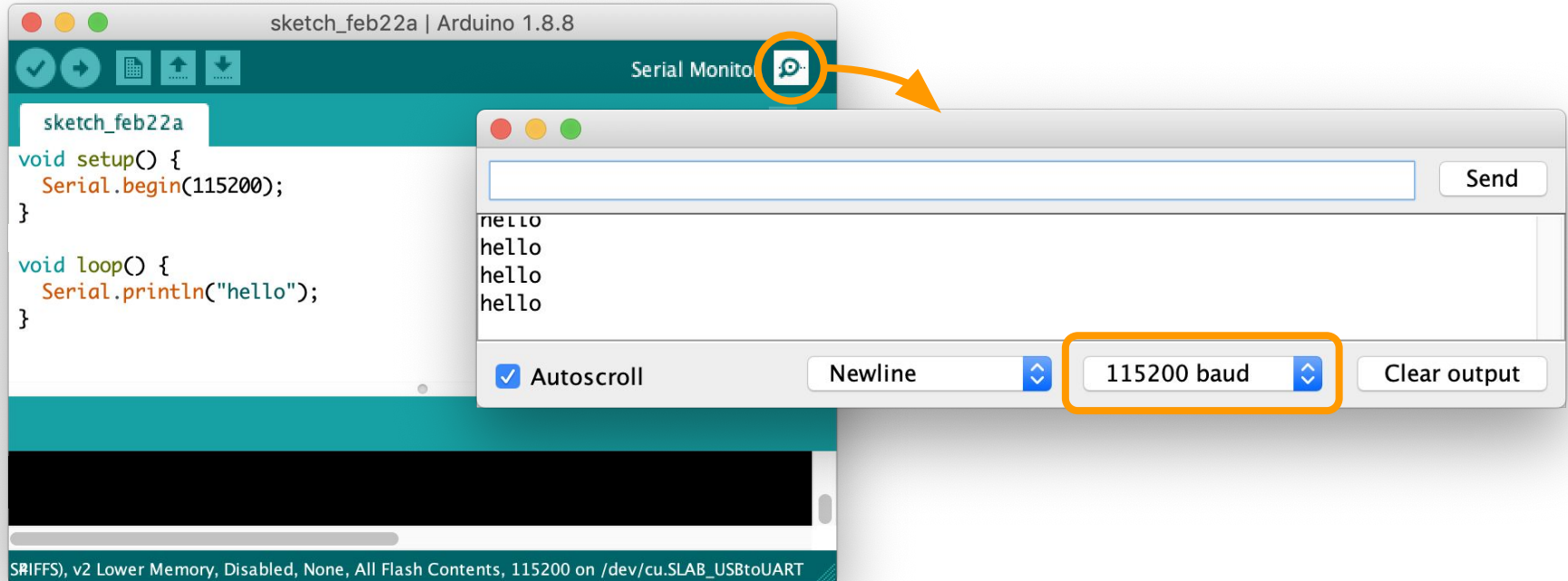
USB



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# Arduino IDE serial console

Make sure the baud rate matches *Serial.begin()*.



# A typical program in Arduino C

```
void setup() { // called once at startup
    Serial.begin(115200); // set baud rate
}
```

```
void loop() { // called in a loop
    Serial.println("Hello, World!");
}
```

# Arduino language

The [Arduino language](#) uses a subset of C/C++.

The user exposed code looks a bit like Java.

There is a [string](#) type and a [String](#) class.

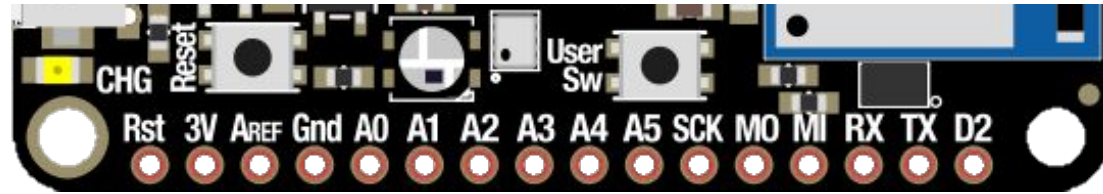
[Libraries](#) are programmed in C++.

For details, check the [language reference](#).

# General purpose input and output

Microcontrollers can "talk to" the physical world through general purpose input and output (GPIO).

GPIO *pins* allow a MCU to measure/control signals.



E.g. power, ground, analog pins, digital pin.



# GPIO pin names

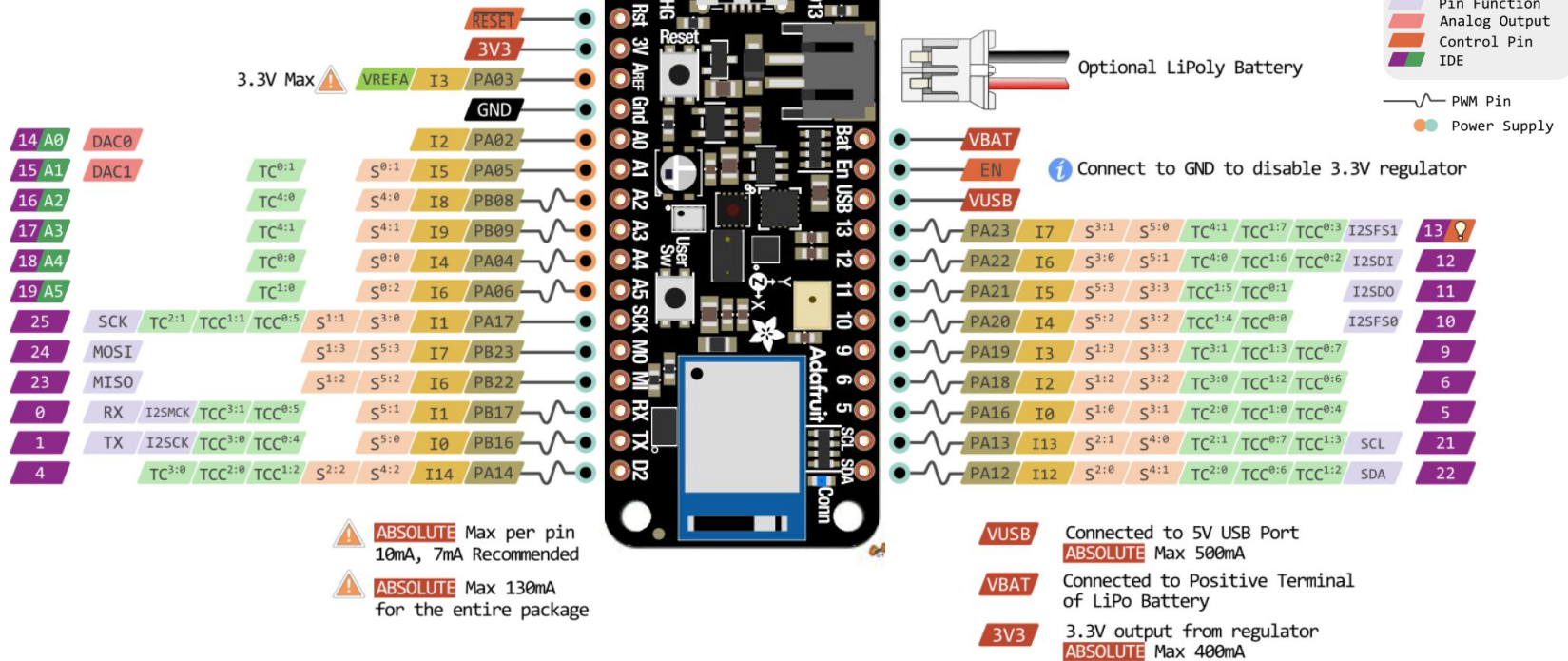
In Arduino, digital *pin names* are just numbers, e.g. pin 2, while analog pins start with an *A*, like pin *A0*.

Which pins are available depends on the device.

The map of available pins is called *pinout*.

A pin can have multiple functions.

# nRF52840



# Sensors read the real world

Convert physical properties to electrical *input* signals.

E.g. temperature, humidity, brightness or orientation.

Input can be *digital* (0 or 1) or *analog* (e.g. 0 -  $2^{10}$ ).

Measuring = *reading* sensor values from input pins.

# Actuators control the real world

Convert electrical *output* signals to physical properties.

E.g. light, current with a relay or motion with a motor.

Output can be *digital* (0 or 1) or *analog* (with PWM).

Controlling = *writing* actuator values to output pins.

# Wiring sensors to the MCU

Sensors and actuators exchange signals with the MCU.

For prototyping, we use wires to achieve this, e.g.

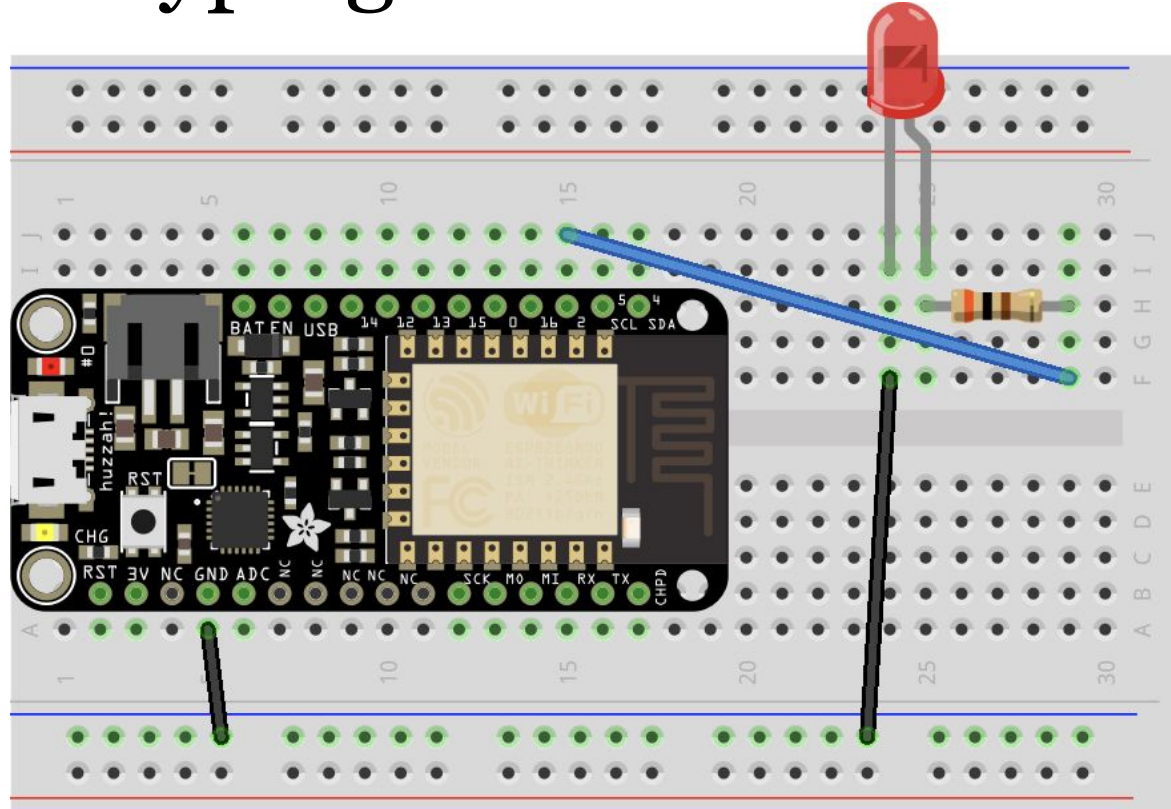
Breadboard and wires, or the Grove standard.

For products, custom PCBs are designed.

# Breadboard prototyping

Wire electronic components, no soldering.

Under the hood, the columns are connected, also the power rails.

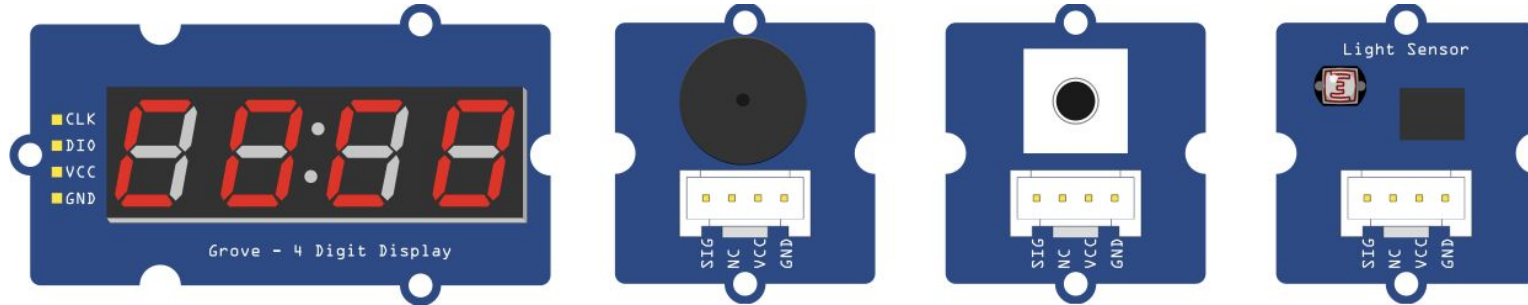


# Grove wiring standard

**Grove** is a simple way to wire sensors and actuators.

It defines wires for power, ground and two signals.

Signals can be digital, analog, UART serial or I2C.



# Arduino example code

Each Arduino library comes with example code.

And there are a number of basic examples.

See *Arduino IDE > File > Examples*

GPIO pin numbers may vary.

Use the nRF52480 Sense pinout or adapter pins.



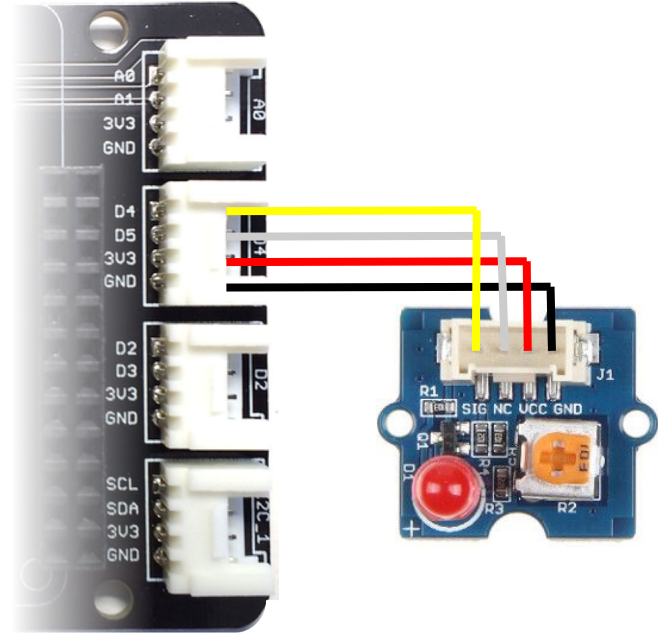
# Blinking a LED (digital output)

Try *Examples > Basics > Blink*

Use *LED\_BUILTIN*, i.e. pin 13.

Or wire a LED to Grove port *D4*.

*D4* maps to nRF52840 pin 9.



The same code works with the buzzer.

# Blinking a LED (digital output)

```
pin = 13; // or 9 for Grove D4

void setup() { // called once
  pinMode(pin, OUTPUT); // configure pin
}

void loop() { // called in a loop
  digitalWrite(pin, HIGH); // switch pin on
  delay(500); // ms
  digitalWrite(pin, LOW); // switch pin off
  delay(500); // ms
}
```

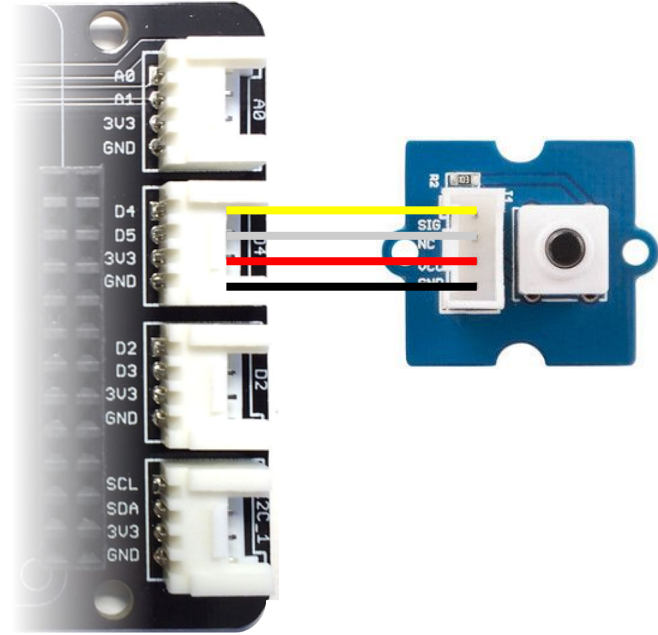
# Reading a button (digital input)

Try *Basics* > *DigitalReadSerial*

Use the onboard button, pin 7.

Or wire a button to Grove *D4*.

*D4* maps to nRF52840 pin 9.



Use the serial console to see output.

# Reading a button (digital input)

```
pin = 7; // or 9 for Grove D4

void setup() { // called once
  pinMode(pin, INPUT_PULLUP); // or INPUT
  Serial.begin(9600);
}

void loop() { // called in a loop
  int value = digitalRead(pin);
  Serial.println(value);
  delay(500); // ms
}
```

# Hands-on, 15': Button-triggered LED

Use blue onboard LED, pin 4, and the button, pin 7.

Combine the previous examples to switch the LED.

Or wire a LED to Grove port *D2* and a button to *D4*.

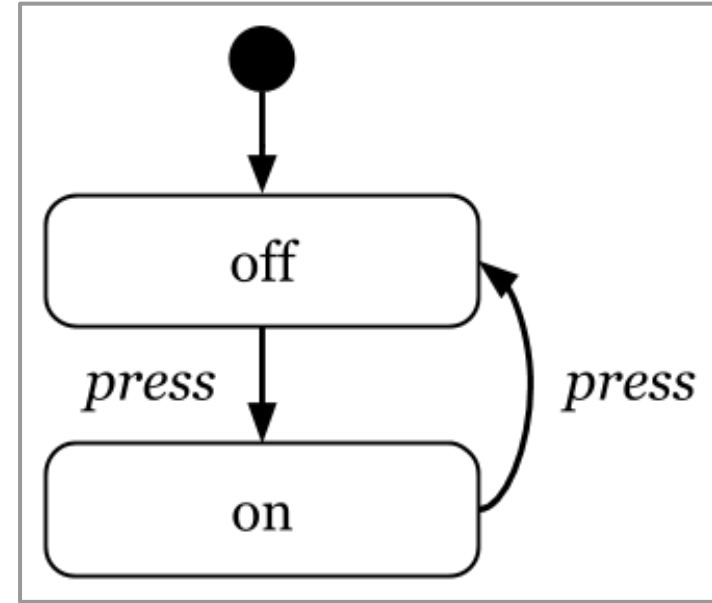
Use the [pin mapping](#) to adapt the pin numbers.

# State machine

A (finite-) **state machine** is a simple way to manage state in embedded programs.

System is in one state at a time,  
*inputs* trigger state *transitions*.

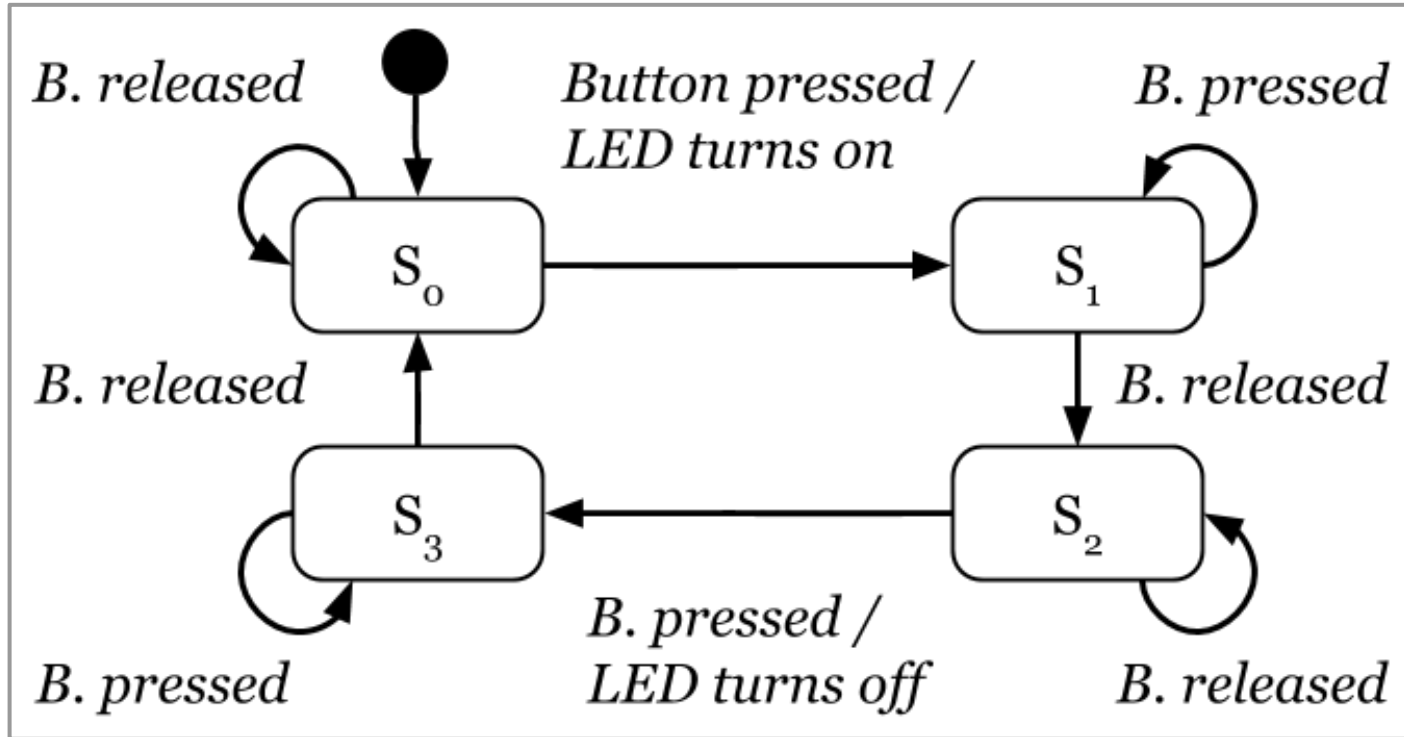
E.g. 1<sup>st</sup> button *press* => light *on*,  
2<sup>nd</sup> button *press* => light *off*,  
3<sup>rd</sup> => *on*, 4<sup>th</sup> => *off*, etc.



# State machine (refined)

Button is pressed or released.

LED can be turned on or off.



# State machine (code snippet)

```
int b = digitalRead(buttonPin);  
if (s == 0 && pressed(b)) { // s is state  
    s = 1; digitalWrite(ledPin, HIGH); // on  
} else if (s == 1 && !pressed(b)) {  
    s = 2;  
} else if (s == 2 && pressed(b)) {  
    s = 3; digitalWrite(ledPin, LOW); // off  
} else if (s == 3 && !pressed(b)) {  
    s = 0;  
}
```



# Hands-on, 15': State machine

Copy and complete the code of the state machine.

Make sure it works, with a button and LED setup.

Change it to switch off only, if the 2<sup>nd</sup> press is *long*.

Let's define long as  $> 1s$ , measure time with `millis()`.

Commit the resulting code to the hands-on repo.

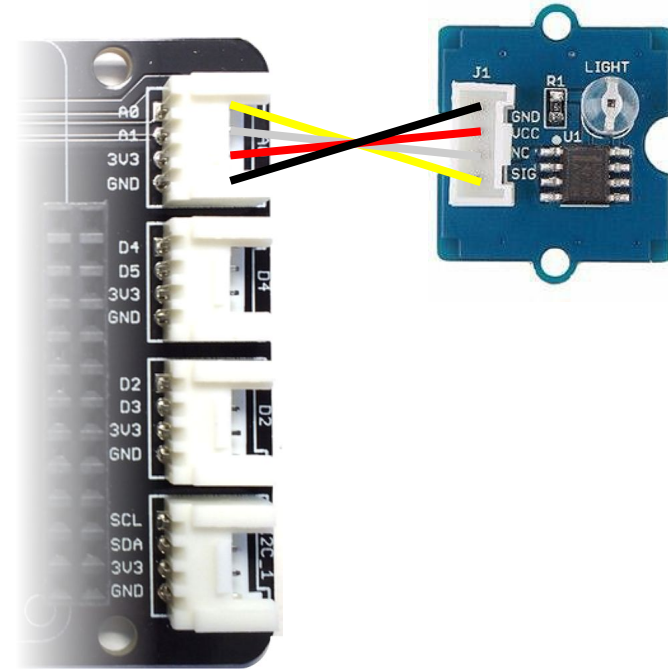
# Reading a light sensor (analog input)

Use *Basics* > *AnalogReadSerial*

Wire the sensor to port/pin A0.

The analog value is, e.g. 0-1024\*  
`int value = analogRead(pin);`

Use *serial plotter* to see output.



\*Range depends on *ADC resolution*.

# Mapping input to value range

Sometimes mapping sensor value ranges helps, e.g.

0 - 1024 analog input => 0 - 9 brightness levels.

Arduino has a simple `map()` function for this:

```
int map(value, // measured input value  
        fromLow, fromHigh, // from range  
        toLow, toHigh); // to range
```

```
e.g. result = map(value, 0, 1024, 0, 9);
```

# Measuring humidity (SHT30)

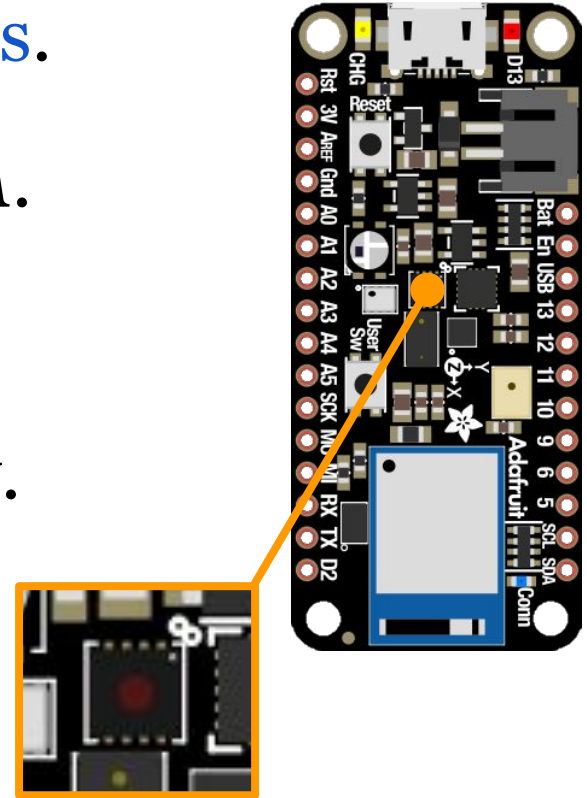
Onboard sensor, wired via **I2C bus**.

I2C uses *3V3*, *GND*, *SCL* and *SDA*.

I2C address of the sensor is *0x44*.

Requires *Adafruit\_SHT31* library.

**This, more sensors** in the Wiki.



# Hands-on, 15': Humidity Alert

Design a state machine with this specification:

Button press sets humidity  $\pm 10\%$  as threshold.

Red LED turns on, as long as monitoring is active.

Once threshold has been crossed, blue LED turns on.

Button confirms alert, red led turns on 1 s, then off.

# Summary

We programmed a microcontroller in (Arduino) C.

We used digital and analog sensors and actuators.

We learned to design and code a state machine.

These are the basics of physical computing.

Next: Bluetooth Low Energy.

# Homework, max. 3h

Implement the humidity alert you designed before.

Document the device state machine (PDF or PNG).

Commit the code and docs to the hands-on repo.

Test your device in a humid environment\*.

\*Never submerge or sprinkle electronics.

# Feedback or questions?

Join us on [MSE TSM MobCom](#) in MS Teams

Or email [thomas.amberg@fhnw.ch](mailto:thomas.amberg@fhnw.ch)

Thanks for your time.