LaserTag

An Agent-Based Game Simulation for Testing Intelligent and Goal-Oriented Behavior

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Version notes

Version 2.2 includes:

- documentation: added a section on how to prepare and run a simulation in src-gen and how to configure external simulation settings. See 2.1 and 2.2.
- The passive methods GetX and GetY are now "USER METHODS". This allows agents to retrieve their teammates' current positions.

Version 2.1 includes:

- info: added clarification to goTo(real, real) documentation about calling the method with destination coordinates (x, y) that have a Barrier (such that battleground.GetIntegerValue(x, y) === 1) on them. See "Note" in goTo(real, real) method description under 5.2.
- info: project structure has been changed to make working in the IDE more comfortable. Each agent is now stored in a separate file. Passive agents are still in lasertag.mars.
- feature: a new "USER METHOD" getDistance(real, real) and getDistance(Agent) has been added. It allows the caller to determine the distance (in grid-cells) from his current position to the specified grid-cell (x, y) or another agent, respectively. See method description under 5.2.
- feature: team members can now get each other's member IDs. This can be done by calling the new "USER METHOD" getMemberID(Agent). See method description under 5.2.
- feature: movement direction can now be changed while agent is still moving towards a previously specified goal. This can be done by calling goto(real, real) with new coordinates. See method description under 5.2.
- documentation update: added clarification on how previously entered destination coordinates can be retrieved in subsequent ticks. See goTo(real, real) method description in 5.2.
- feature: agents may now retrieve each other's current stance (currStance) value by calling the passive method GetStance() on each other.
- bug fix: this bug fix pertains to the Version 2.0 update that allowed for sharing of Barrier, Hill, and Ditch agents to team members. The solution implemented initially resulted in occasional concurrency issues and exceptions. An alternative solution has been implemented, wherein team members can get each other's attribute lists barriers, hills, and ditches by calling a new

"USER METHOD" called getInfoFromTeam(string, Agent). See method description under 5.2.

Version 2.0 includes:

- bug fix: correctly reset visualRange, visibilityRange, and movementDelay when energy === 0
- bug fix: reset tagged and wasTagged to false when taggedCounter === 0 and wasTaggedCounter === 0, respectively
- bug fix: flooring input parameters of goTo(real, real) to make sure they are processed as whole real numbers (avoiding potential infinite loops). See 5.2 for documentation.
- feature: forwarding locations (x, y) of Barriers, Hills, or Ditches to team members (if they don't already have them) when applicable exploreEnv(string) call is made. See 5.2 for documentation.
- feature: forwarding locations (x, y) of opponent agents to team members when exploreEnemies() is called. See 5.2 for documentation. Locations are stored until end of current tick (duplicate entries possible) in new attribute enemiesFromTeam: List<Tuple<real, real>> (see 4.3).
- labeled hasBeeline as a "USER METHOD". See 5.2 for description.

For documentation of older version releases, please see the directory "OldVersionDocs" in the repository.

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1 Introduction

The LaserTag Framework provides an agent-based game simulation that is inspired by the real-world recreational shooting sport known as laser tag. LaserTag is written in the MARS domain-specific language (DSL). A number of methods are provided to serve as an interface between agents and the game world (Battleground) and game mechanisms. These methods should be used to play the game as they allow agents to manage their states, move through the Battleground, and interact with other agents upon encountering them.

1.1 Objective

The game's objective is based on a point system. Let X and Y be agents, each with 100 energy, on different teams:

- When X tags Y, X receives 10 points and Y loses 10 energy.
- When X's tag causes Y's energy to become less than or equal to 0, X receives an additional 10 points and Y loses 10 points.

At the end of the simulation, the points of each team member on a team are added together. The team with the highest sum of points wins the game.

2 Project and Simulation Setup

The project is available in the GitLab repository MARS Laser Tag Game. To use the LaserTag framework, a working installation of the MARS DSL plug-in in Eclipse is needed. Installation instructions can be found in the MARS modeling handbook.

2.1 Preparing and Running a Simulation

The game is designed to be played with three or four teams. A freshly cloned repository, by default, contains files in the directory src-gen such that a simulation with four teams is run. To change the simulation setup, a map file with a corresponding config.json and corresponding agent input files is needed. Please follow these steps:

- 1. Go to the directory Maps. The files needed to set up a simulation with three teams or four teams are located in the directory Triangular_Maps or Rectangular_Maps, respectively.
- 2. Map files contain "Battleground" in the file name. Agent input files contain "in" in the file name. The simulation configuration file is a .json file.
- 3. A simulation with three teams can be run on two types of maps:
 - an upward-pointing triangle: files for this format contain the phrase "tritop"
 - a downward-pointing triangle: files for this format contain the phrase "tribottom"
- 4. Once the necessary files have been selected, they need to be copied to the directory src-gen and renamed as follows:
 - The map needs to be named Battleground.csv.

- The agent input files need to be named in_<agentcolor>.csv (agent color may be "green", "red", "blue", or "yellow").
- The simulation configuration file needs to be named config.json.
- **Note:** if there are already files in **src-gen** with equal names, those files need to be removed from the directory or replaced by the renamed files.
- 5. The simulation can be run by opening a terminal, navigating to the src-gen directory, and entering the following command:

dotnet run -sm config.json -project lasertag.csproj

2.2 Simulation Configuration Settings and External Agent Input Settings

The simulation configuration file **config.json** contains external configuration settings pertaining to the simulation. The following parameters can be adjusted as needed:

- simulation time (default: 1800 time steps)
- length and unit of one time step, also known as a tick in the DSL (default: one second)
- input file name for the map (layer) to be used by the agents (default: Battleground.csv)
- number of agent teams (default: four teams, named Green, Red, Blue, and Yellow)
- number of team members for each team (default: three)

In addition, each agent's spawn coordinates (xSpawn and ySpawn) and team member ID (memberID) can be defined in the corresponding in_<agentcolor>.csv file. For information on agent attributes and attribute values, see 4.

2.3 Visualization and Analysis

The simulation produces *.csv output files in the src-gen directory. The repository includes a couple of Python scripts that can be used to visually analyze simulation output, helping trace the events that occurred during the simulation flow and allowing players to study their agents' behavior to inform decisions on how to adjust agent logic.

To start a visualization, navigate to the Analysis directory in the repository and run the csv_creator script. This generates a agents.csv and a map.csv file in the Analysis directory. (Note: if the directory already contains such files from previous visualizations, they will be overwritten by the new files and should therefore be saved elsewhere if needed). Once the two files are available, run the vis.py script to start the visualization tool. The tool offers play, pause, and other toggle features to run through the simulation tick-by-tick or in a time lapse to observe agent behavior.

The visualization tool is a modified version of a tool implemented by Finn-Lasse Joergensen.

3 Rules

In order to play the game as intended, any agent behavior specified in the tick method must meet the following requirements:

- 1. Only methods labeled with "USER METHOD" in a comment above the method signature may be called:
 - exploreEnv(string)
 - exploreTeam() : Agent[]
 - exploreEnemies() : Tuple<Agent[], Agent[]>
 - goTo(real, real): bool
 - changeStance(string)
 - tag(Agent)
 - tag(real, real)
 - reload()
 - hasBeeline(real, real) : bool
 - getMemberID(Agent) : integer
 - getInfoFromTeam(string, Agent) : List<Tuple<real, real>>
 - getDistance(real, real) : real
 - getDistance(Agent) : real
 - GetStance() : string
 - GetX() : real
 - GetY() : real
- 2. The following MARS DSL keywords may not be used: distance, explore, kill, move, nearest, pos at, and spawn.
- 3. Agent attributes may be queried, but may **not** be set. The only attribute whose value may be set during the tick method is stage.
- 4. No use of setter methods pertaining to the battleground layer. DimensionX, DimensionY, and getter methods pertaining to the battleground layer may be used.
- 5. No loops that are known not to terminate after a reasonable time (example: while(true)) may be included.

4 Agent Attributes and Values

An agent in a LaserTag simulation is described by a set of attributes. Below is a list of the most important attributes for AI developers:

4.1 General attributes

- xSpawn and ySpawn: the x- and y-coordinate of the grid cell on which the agent spawns at the start of the simulation.
- memberID: an integer that uniquely identifies the agent within his team
- color: the agent's color, corresponding to the agent type name.
- energy: the agent's maximum energy level is 100 and decreases if the agent gets tagged by an opponent. If the energy level is less than or equal to zero, the agent is positioned at (xSpawn, ySpawn) with energy = 100.
- actionPoints: an integer that specifies the number of points the agent has in order to complete actions during the current tick. Each action costs a specific number of actionPoints (see 5.2 for more details). At the end of each tick, actionPoints is reset to 10.
- stage: an integer attribute that can be used by AI developers to track their agent's current state and guide their decision-making processes and behaviors accordingly. This is the only attribute whose value may be set during the tick method.
- points: the agent's score, which is increased by tagging opponents. Each tag increases the score by 10 points. If a tag causes the opponent's energy to be less than or equal to 0, he loses 10 points and an additional 10 points are awarded to the tagger as a bonus. The agent with the highest score at the end of the simulation time wins the simulation.

4.2 Movement attributes

- currStance: a string that specifies the agent's current stance. An agent can assume three stances: "standing", "kneeling", and "lying". Each stance affects the attributes visualRange, visibilityRange, and movementDelay differently.
- movementDelay: an integer that is set based on the value of currStance and that specifies the number of ticks that need to pass before the agent can move to another grid cell. If an agent's movementDelay === 0, then the agent can move. The mapping from currStance to movementDelay is as follows:
 - "standing" $\rightarrow 0$
 - "kneeling" $\rightarrow 1$
 - "lying" $\rightarrow 2$
- hasMoved: a boolean that states if the agent has already made a move during the current tick. An agent can make only one move per tick. At the end of each tick, hasMoved is reset to false.

4.3 Exploration attributes

- visualRange: an integer that is set based on the value of currStance and that specifies the agent's current range of sight. The mapping from currStance to visualRange is as follows:
 - "standing" $\rightarrow 10$
 - "kneeling" $\rightarrow 8$
 - "lying" $\rightarrow 5$

- visibilityRange: an integer that is set based on the value of currStance and that specifies the maximum distance from which the agent can currently be seen by other agents. The mapping from currStance to visibilityRange is as follows:
 - "standing" $\rightarrow 10$
 - "kneeling" $\rightarrow 8$
 - "lying" $\rightarrow 5$
- barriers: a list of tuples of x- and y-coordinates of barriers that the agent has so far encountered during exploration. New barrier locations are added to the list as they are found.
- hills: a list of tuples of x- and y-coordinates of hills that the agent has so far encountered during exploration. The locations of newly found hills are added to the list as they are found.
- ditches: a list of tuples of x- and y-coordinates of ditches that the agent has so far encountered during exploration. The locations of newly found hills are added to the list as they are found.
- enemiesFromTeam: a list of tuples of x- and y-coordinates of opponents that were spotted by the agent's team members. The list is emptied at the end of each tick.

4.4 Tagging attributes

- magazineCount: an integer that specifies the agent's currently available opportunities to tag an opponent. If the agent's magazineCount === 0, then a reload process needs to be initiated.
- wasTagged: a boolean that specifies if the agent was tagged during the previous tick.
- tagged: a boolean that specifies if the agent tagged an opponent during the previous tick.

These are the attributes needed by AI developers to guide their agent(s) through the game. For a full list of attributes, see the source code.

5 Framework Description

The framework's main components are the Battleground and the methods that serve as an interface for the agents to interact with their environment and with each other.

5.1 The Arena: Battleground

The Battleground is a square-shaped grid-layer. In order to effectively simulate the indoor nature of real-world laser tag, the Battleground is "fenced in". This forces agents to remain within the bounds of the grid's dimensions and prevents them from disappearing on one end and reappearing on another end of the grid. To add texture and complexity to the Battleground and to allow agents to interact with it in meaningful ways, it features barriers, rooms, hills, and ditches.

5.1.1 Battleground Example

Below is a bird's eye view of an example of a square-shaped map at the start of the simulation. The following sections describe each of the objects of interest (OOI). For more information on OOI, see 5.3.1, 5.3.3, and 5.3.4.

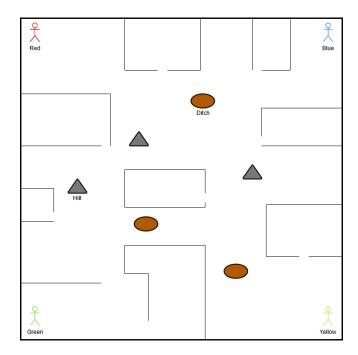


Figure 1: Example of square-shaped map (Battleground) at simulation start (not drawn to scale)

5.1.2 Barrier

A barrier is represented by a Barrier agent. In 1, barriers are drawn as straight lines for simplicity. A barrier blocks any direct movement or vision through it. For example, an agent X cannot move through a barrier or see through a barrier, and therefore cannot interact with an agent Y who is positioned behind the barrier relative to X's position.

5.1.3 Room

A room is a section of the grid-layer that is enclosed by barriers, leaving only one or more small gaps to enter and exit the enclosed section.

5.1.4 Hill

A hill is represented by a Hill agent. An agent X can climb onto a hill to gain an extended visual field and be able to see other agents from farther distances. However, being exposed on a hilltop also makes X an easier-to-tag target for other agents and having to tag agents across long distances also lowers X's accuracy.

5.1.5 Ditch

A ditch is represented by a Ditch agent. An agent X can jump into a ditch to become less easily visible to other agents. However, X's visual range is also affected by being inside the ditch.

5.1.6 Spawner

The Spawner is not accessible to the players. This agent is responsible for spawning OOIs at the beginning of the simulation. The spawn locations are specified by the cells values in the .csv file that is used as the grid-layer for the agents to move on. The mapping from cell value to OOI is as follows:

- $0 \rightarrow \text{nothing}$
- $1 \rightarrow \mathtt{Barrier}$
- $2 \rightarrow \text{Hill}$
- $3 \rightarrow \text{Ditch}$

5.2 Agent Interfaces and Methods

A number of methods are available for the agents to interact with the environment and with each other. In the source code, they are labeled with a comment "USER METHOD" above the method signature. These methods' internal logic supplies both the mechanisms needed for the agent to play the game and the maintenance and management of the agent's attribute values based on his current state. The following component diagram aims to illustrate the connection points made available to the agents.

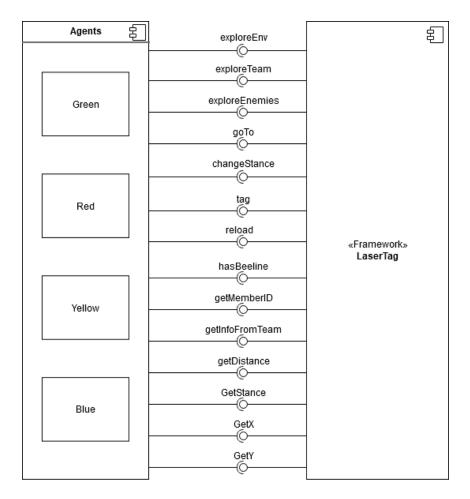


Figure 2: LaserTag Component Diagram showing interfaces made available to agents by framework

Below are the methods that may be called by the agent during his tick method:

- exploreEnv(string): void: this method takes a string and, based on its value, initiates an exploration of part of the agent's environment. The string may be "barriers", "hills", or "ditches". The method will explore Barrier, Hill, or Ditch agents in the agent's field of vision. Any exploration results are stored in the agent's attributes barriers, hills, or ditches, respectively. Each exploration costs one actionPoint.
- exploreTeam(): Agent[]: this method generates an array with references to all of the calling agent's team members, regardless their location relative to the calling agent. Unlike the return values of exploreEnv(string) calls, the result of an exploreTeam() call does not persist beyond the simulation tick in which the call was made. Each exploration costs one actionPoint.
- exploreEnemies(): Tuple<Agent[], Agent[], Agent[]>: this method performs an exploration of opponents in the agent's field of vision. Opponents are stored in the array that matches their type and forwarded to the exploring agent's team members who store the opponents' x-and y-coordinates in the attribute enemiesFromTeam (this list is emptied at the end of each tick). Unlike the return values of exploreEnv(string) calls, the result of an exploreEnemies() call does not persist beyond the simulation tick in which the call was made. Each exploration costs one actionPoint.
- goTo(real, real): bool: this is the main method for the framework's path-finding, movement, and path readjustment algorithm. When the agent calls the method with a desired destination (x-coordinate and y-coordinate, rounded down to the nearest whole real number),

the algorithm devises a path from the agent's current position to the destination. From then on, each call to goTo(real, real) with the same x- and y-coordinate will, if possible, move the agent one step along the path closer to the destination until the destination is reached. The destination coordinates that were most recently entered can be retrieved from the agent attribute sGoal. This tuple stores the destination coordinates in the first two tuple entries, making them retrievable by calling sGoal.Item1 and sGoal.Item2, respectively.

In order for the agent to change his path before having reached his current destination, goTo(real, real) must be called with different destination coordinates. For example, if the agent is currently moving towards (a, b), this movement process can be interrupted and replaced by a new movement process by calling goto(c, d), where c !== a and d !== b.

Movement is possible only when the agent's attribute hasMoved == false and when movementDelay === 0. A recalculation of the path occurs automatically in case of an unforeseen obstacle. The method returns true when a move was made and false when, for any reason, a move was not made. Note: if the coordinates goTo(real, real) is called with refer to a grid-cell that is inaccessible (because there is a Barrier on it), then the agent does not calculate a path and does not begin moving towards the grid-cell and hasMoved is set to true, forcing the agent to wait until the next tick before another movement attempt can be made.

For more information on goTo(real, real), see 5.3.2.

- changeStance(string): void: this method takes a string and allows the agent to change between three possible stances: "standing", "kneeling", and "lying". Stance changes affect the values of the agent's attributes visualRange, visibilityRange, and movementDelay. Each change of stance costs two actionPoints.
- tag(Agent): void: this method takes an agent (usually from the calling agent's result of exploreEnemies()) and attempts to tag that agent. Tagging is implemented as a probability-based process that is influences by both agents' stance and current positions (ground, hill, or ditch). For example, an agent in the "lying" stance has higher accuracy, but shorter visualRange. If an agent is tagged, his energy is decreased by 10 and the attribute wasTagged is set to true. The tagging agent's points is increased by 10 and the attribute tagged is set to true. Each tag attempt costs five actionPoints. For more information on tagging, see 5.3.3.
- tag(real, real): void: this method takes an x- and y-coordinate and checks if an opponent is located at the corresponding grid cell. If yes, and if the line of sight from the agent to the grid cell is unobstructed, then the calling agent will attempt to tag the agent located at that grid cell in the same manner as outlined in the above method description tag(Agent). This method, however, allows the calling agent to potentially tag an opponent agent from any distance. Each tag attempt costs five actionPoints.
- reload(): void: this method is part of the tag interface. It is called automatically when an agent's magazineCount === 0, but may also be called manually by the agent if needed. Reloading refills the magazineCount to five and costs three actionPoints.
- hasBeeline(real, real): bool: this method may be called by the agent to check if the line of sight between the grid cell he currently stands on (xcor, ycor) and the grid cell denoted by the two input parameters (x: real, y: real) is free from vision-blocking obstacles (i.e., barriers or hills). If it is, the method returns true; otherwise, it returns false.
- getMemberID(Agent): integer: this method returns a team member's memberID to the caller.
- getInfoFromTeam(string, Agent): List<Tuple<real, real>>: this method returns a team member's attribute list barriers, hills, or ditches to the caller, depending on whether the string entered is "barriers", "hills", or "ditches", respectively.

- getDistance(real, real): real: this method returns the shortest distance in grid-cells from the calling agent's current position to the coordinates entered (x, y). In order for the distance to be calculable, the grid-cell specified by (x, y) must be either visible (based on hasBeeline) or must contain a barrier, hill, or ditch that the calling agent has previously explored and stored in his corresponding attribute list. If the distance to the grid-cell specified by (x, y) is not calculable, the method returns -1.
- getDistance(Agent): real: this method returns the shortest distance in grid-cells from the calling agent's current position to the current position of the agent entered into the method. In order for the distance to be calculable, the agent must be currently visible (based on hasBeeline). If the distance to the grid-cell specified by (x, y) is not calculable, the method returns -1.
- GetStance(): string this passive method returns an agent's currStance value to the caller.
- GetX(): real this passive method returns an agent's current x-coordinate.
- GetY(): real this passive method returns an agent's current y-coordinate.

The following class diagram aims to give an overview of the agents and objects present in a LaserTag simulation as well as their relationships to each other and to the grid-layer they exist on. For readability, several attributes and methods were omitted. For more details, consult the source code.

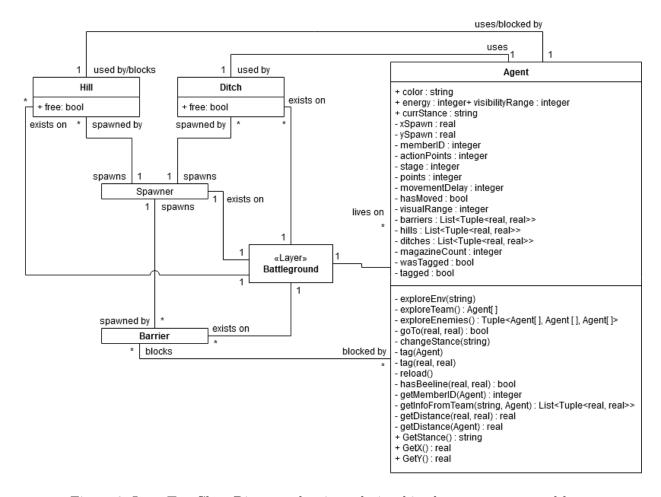


Figure 3: LaserTag Class Diagram showing relationships between agents and layer

5.3 Game Mechanisms

The following section serves to outline some of the built-in logic, mechanisms, and rules of LaserTag to help AI developers devise intelligent and feasible strategies for their agents.

5.3.1 Vision

The framework features a vision and sight system that depends on a number of variables and circumstances. The following example aims to illustrate the process. Agent X is calling exploreEnemies() and hoping to see Agent Y. X's ability to see Y may be influenced by each of the following conditions:

- 1. the relation between distance(X, Y) and X's visualRange.
- 2. the relation between distance(X, Y) and Y's visibilityRange.
- 3. whether X or Y is currently located on a hill.
- 4. whether X or Y is currently located in a ditch.
- 5. whether the line of sight between X and Y is obstructed by a barrier or hill.

Let us examine each condition in turn:

- 1. If the distance between X and Y is less than or equal to X's visualRange, then X may be able to see Y.
- 2. If the distance between X and Y is less than or equal to Y's visibilityRange, then X may be able to see Y. Y's visibilityRange becomes obsolete when X stands either on a hill or in a ditch.
- 3. If X is located on a hill, then his visualRange is increased, making it possible for him to see Y from a farther distance. Likewise, if Y is located on a hill, then his visibilityRange is increased, making it easier for X to see him.
- 4. If X is located in a ditch, then his visualRange is decreased, which requires Y to be closer to X in order for him to be able to see Y. Likewise, if Y is located in a ditch, then his visibilityRange is decreased, requiring X to be closer to Y in order for him to be able to see Y.
- 5. A barrier or hill can block an agent's line of sight. If there is nothing blocking X's line of sight to Y, then X may be able to see Y. (For more information on line-of-sight computation, feel free to check out Bresenham's Line Algorithm which is implemented in LaserTag to determine if any of the grid-cells along the line of sight between two agents holds an object (a barrier or hill that causes an obstruction).

Conditions 1, 2, and 5 must be met in order for X to be able to see Y. Conditions 3 and 4 merely describe how standing on a hill or in a ditch might affect the vision process.

5.3.2 Movement

Agents move along the grid via a modified version of the D^* Lite Algorithm. The algorithm computes an initial (usually close-to-optimal or optimal) route from an agent's current position to the desired destination (x- and y-coordinate). Once the route has been calculated, the algorithm guides the agent along the route at a rate dependent on the agent's current values of the attributes movementDelay and hasMoved. The algorithm performs route adjustments and recalculations only if an obstacle intersects the agent's path that was not present during the initial route computation. This makes the algorithm highly efficient and perform at a better time complexity than common path-finding algorithms such as A^* .

5.3.3 Tagging

Tagging is the core game mechanic that drives LaserTag. In an attempt to simulate real-world tag-and-get-tagged interactions between laser tag players, the methods tag(Agent) and tag(real, real) rely on probability and randomization to create a balance between successful and unsuccessful tag attempts. If agent X attempts to tag agent Y, the outcome depends on the following factors:

- 1. X's currStance value
- 2. Y's currStance value
- 3. whether Y is currently positioned on a regular grid-cell, a hill, or a ditch
- 4. a dose of luck

Let us examine each factors in turn:

- 1. If X's currStance === "lying", then he is most likely to tag Y. If X's currStance === "standing", then he is least likely to tag Y.
- 2. If Y's currStance === "standing", then X is most likely to tag him. If Y's currStance === "lying", then X is least likely to tag him.
- 3. If Y is located on a hill, then his currStance cannot lower the likelihood of him being tagged. This is because being on a hill leads to more exposure than being on the ground or in a ditch. Conversely, if Y is located in a ditch, then his currStance does not increase his likelihood of being tagged. This is because a being in a ditch provides increased cover regardless of the agent's stance.
- 4. Even if factors 1-3 are in Y's favor, there is still a chance that X tags Y. On the other hand, even if factors 1-3 are in X's favor, there is still a chance that he might miss Y and not tag him. This is due to the element of randomization added to the tagging mechanism.

5.3.4 001

The Battleground features hills and ditches as objects for agents to interact with and, under certain circumstances, gain an advantage over their opponents. A hill or ditch can be occupied by only one agent at a time. Standing on a hill increases an agent's visualRange and visibilityRange by five each. Standing in a ditch lowers an agent's visualRange and visibilityRange by three each. See 5.3.1 and 5.3.3 as well as 5.1.4 and 5.1.5 for more information.