

# Guide for recreating experiments and using this benchmarking platform.

These experiments have been created and tested using Ubuntu 16.04 with python>=3.6, support for alternative systems is not currently provided.

## Running Experiments in Simulation

It is recommended that you run experiments in simulation before setting up any physical experiments, this will ensure that algorithm logic works.

### Setting up

```
# requires python>=3.6

# It is recommended that you use a virtual environment for this set up

# clone the repo (this may take a while)
https://github.com/ac-93/soft-actor-critic.git

# add the repo to the pythonpath

# install Spinningup from openAI
git clone https://github.com/openai/spinningup.git
cd spinningup
pip install -e .

# install common robot interface
git clone https://github.com/jlloyd237/cricle.git
cd cricle
python setup.py install

# install video stream processor
git clone https://github.com/jlloyd237/vsp.git
cd vsp
python setup.py install

# install python3-v4l2capture
git clone https://github.com/atarea/python3-v4l2capture.git
cd python3-v4l2capture
python setup.py install

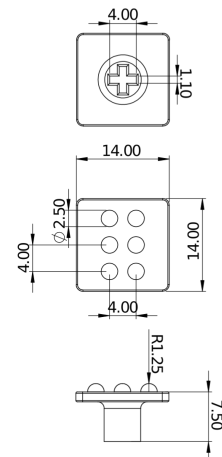
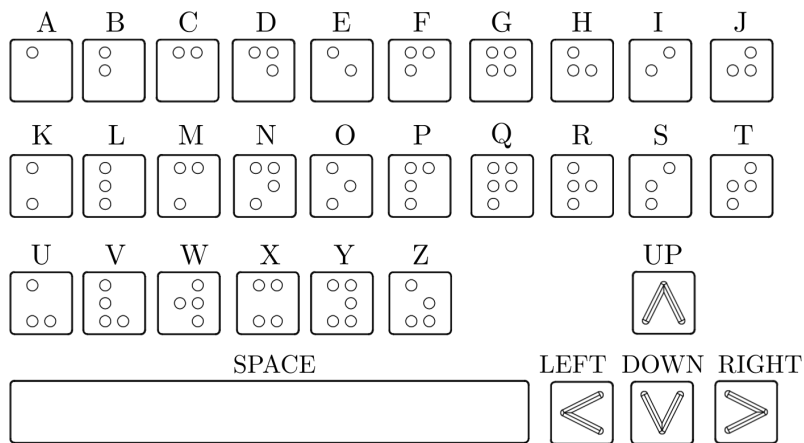
# install some additional packages
pip install -r requirements.txt
```

```
# test the installation by running a training script in simulation, from
python algos/dd_dqn_algo/train_discrete_model.py
```

## Recreating Experiments in Simulation

## Running Experiments on Physical Platform

### Keyboard



The keyboard used for these experiments is the DREV0 Excalibur 84 Key Mechanical Keyboard with Cherry MX Black switches ([available here](#)).

The 3d printable keycaps are designed to fit on Cherry MX switches, the Black switches have been used as they offer a relatively stiff switch (requiring 60N for actuation) making the task slightly easier.

We printed the keycaps using a high precision 3d printer (Stratasys Objet260 Connex), this ensures that the features to be interpreted are accurate and consistent.

Ideally, recreating these experiments will use the same keyboard or the same key switches, if these components are unavailable a similar experiment can be created using alternatives but differences should be noted. If using an alternative keyboard be sure that evdev accesses the right keyboard by specifying the correct keyboard name in `ur5GymEnv.py` files.

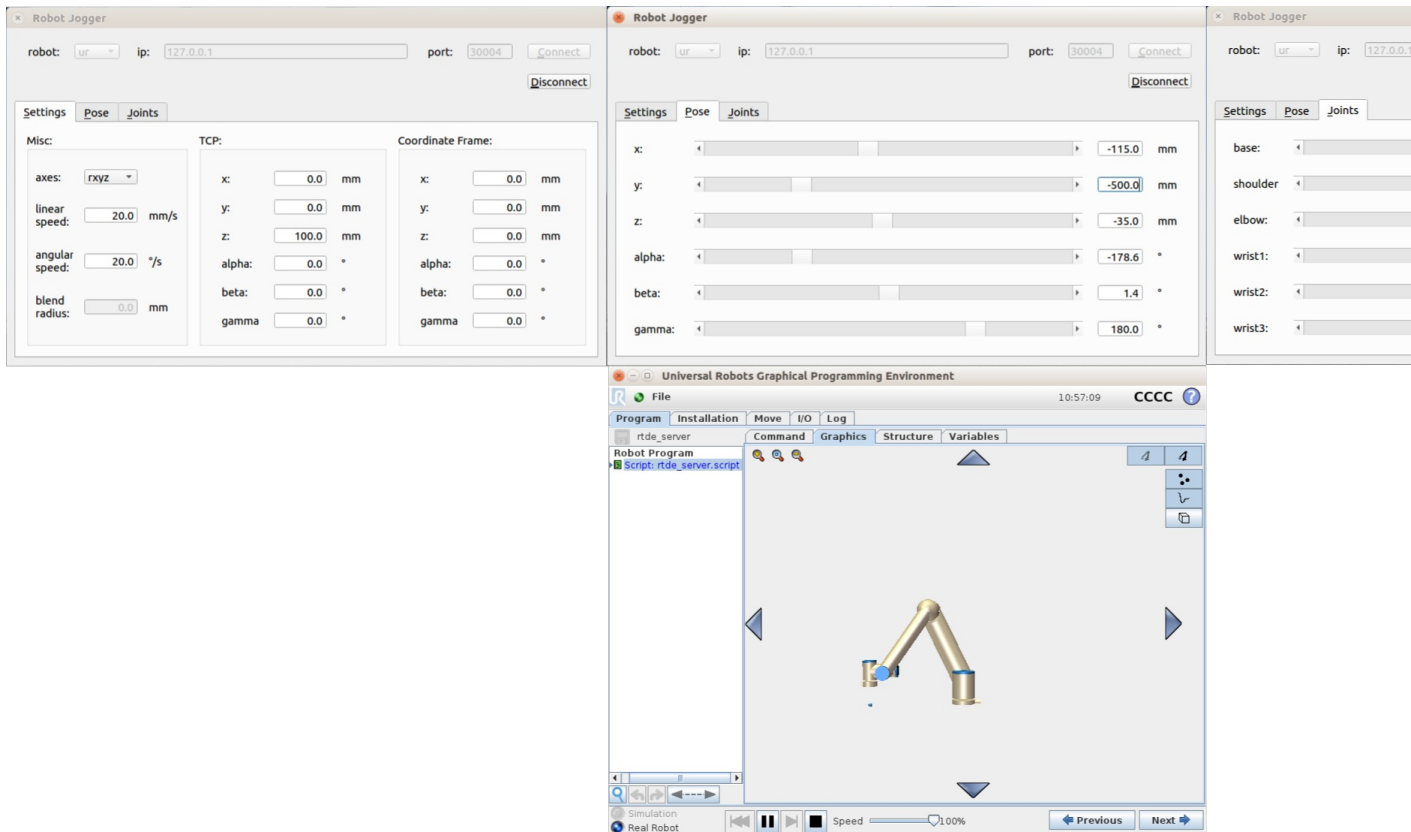
### Configuring Sensor

The tactile sensor used in this work is a modified version of the BRL tactile fingertip (TacTip), for more details on this sensor check <https://www.bristolroboticslab.com/tactile-robotics>. This sensor uses a standard USB webcam as the source for gathering tactile images. This is reliant on the Video Stream Processor (VSP) library created by co-author John Lloyd, check the [Github repo](#) for more detail.

If recreating this work with alternative tactile sensors the files that will need to be modified are `envs/robot/cont_ur5_braille_env/ur5_w_tactip.py` and `envs/robot/disc_ur5_braille_env/ur5_w_tactip.py`. These files will need to be modified such that the `get_observation()` function returns a current observation from your specific tactile sensor. If you are using an optical tactile sensor where the images are used as an observation then the VSP library should work as long as the correct `device_path` is set in the previously mentioned files. *(Note: USB cameras use frame buffers of fixed size, ensure that enough frames are processed to cycle this buffer on each iteration such that the observation is from the current time step and not lagging behind.)* To allow for more experimentation the image processing is applied later in the algorithms sections. The `algos\rl_utils.py` contains a `process_image_observation()` function where cropping, resizing, thresholding, shifting, etc can be applied to the raw images gathered from the sensor.

### **Configuring Robot Arm**

In this work the control of a the robot arm leverages the Common Robot Interface (CRI) framework developed by co-author John Lloyd, check the [Github repo](#) for more detail. This allows for common robotic arm utilities to be used across several different robot arms. The arms currently supported are ABB robot controllers, and UR controllers that implement the Real-Time Data Exchange (RTDE) protocol. Some additional support is provided for the DoBot Magician [here](#), however this arm has less functionality so not all features are supported. The functionality that we use in this project consists of relatively simple tasks such as setting up workspaces and linear moves, unsupported robot arms can be used for this project but control code will have to be re-implemented by the user. Ideally, this framework will grow and offer support for simple functionality across a broad range of robot arms. A useful robot-jogger tool is also provided with the CRI framework, this allows you to specify robot arm settings and find relative positions in joint or world coordinates. For example,



Depending on the tasks, two files will need to be edited for different robotic arm and sensor setups. These are `envs/robot/disc_ur5_braille_env/ur5_w_tactip.py` for the discrete action tasks and `envs/robot/cont_ur5_braille_env/ur5_w_tactip.py` for the continuous action tasks.

In the discrete setting be sure to check that each movement gathers a tactile observation without activating a button.

## Evaluating Trained Models