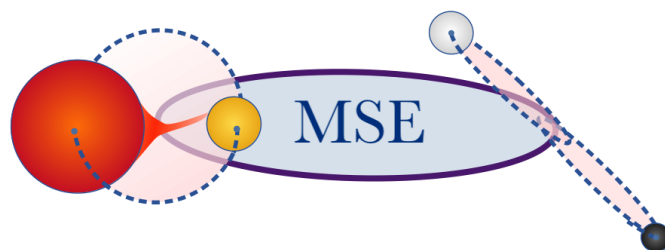


# User guide to the Multiple Stellar Evolution (MSE) code

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November 11, 2020



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# 1 Introduction

This is the user guide to the Multiple Stellar Evolution (MSE) code. MSE models the long-term evolution of hierarchical multiple-star systems (binaries, triples, quadruples, and higher-order systems) from the main sequence until the remnant stages. It takes into account gravitational dynamical evolution, stellar evolution (using the SSE tracks), and binary interactions (such as mass transfer and common-envelope evolution). It includes routines for external perturbations from flybys in the field, or (to limited extent) encounters in dense stellar systems such as galactic nuclei.

## 2 Installation

MSE is written primarily in C++ but also links to some FORTRAN routines (from SSE, and a small number from BSE). A PYTHON interface is included for convenience. The source code is available online<sup>1</sup> at <https://github.com/hamers/mse>. To download it, you can use the following command (it is assumed that you have git installed; see, e.g., this url for general installation instructions of git):

```
git clone https://github.com/hamers/mse.git
```

This will create a new directory mse within your current directory.

To install (i.e., compile) MSE, C++ and FORTRAN compilers are required, as well as<sup>2</sup> PYTHON 3 in order to use the PYTHON interface. A Makefile is included which should be used for compilation. By default, it assumes that g++ and gfortran are available on the system. To compile, simply type

```
make
```

If g++ and/or gfortran are not available, you will need to modify the lines

```
CXX = g++  
FC = gfortran
```

in the Makefile accordingly to correspond to the C++ and FORTRAN compilers that you would like to use.

**The default CPPFLAGS line in the Makefile includes optimisation. When using a debugger (e.g., gdb), the alternative CPPFLAGS line should be activated (this will make the code run slower).**

The compilation will typically take ~10–20 seconds. If compiled successfully, you should see the message

```
The shared library mse has been created successfully.
```

In order to use the PYTHON interface, the numpy package is required. Also, Matplotlib is needed to produce plots in some of the scripts provided with the code.

**To remove previously compiled binary files, type**

```
make clean
```

**This is usually necessary when copying a compiled version of the code to another system. Also, it can be useful when mixed compilers were accidentally used, and errors occur.**

<sup>1</sup>At the moment of writing, the GitHub repository is private. Access will be given on a per-request basis (please contact the author). In the future, the repository will be made public.

<sup>2</sup>The code is tested with PYTHON 3; there is no guaranteed compatibility with older versions of PYTHON.

### 3 Testing the installation

To make sure that the code has been properly installed, you can use a PYTHON test script which is included. In the main directory of MSE, simply type

```
python3 test_mse.py
```

This will run a number of tests, producing some output. If all tests ran successfully, you should see the message

```
All tests passed!
```

Specific tests (see test\_mse.py for details) can be initiated by passing the `--t X` command line argument to test\_mse.py, where X is the number of the test to run. In addition, some tests have a ‘detailed’ mode which is more extensive, but takes significantly longer to run. The detailed mode can be activated by adding the command line argument `--m 1`.

### 4 Code usage within PYTHON

MSE can be used with the PYTHON interface (recommended for most users), but also directly within C++ (recommended for advanced users only)<sup>3</sup>. In this section, we describe usage within PYTHON.

#### 4.1 Basic

##### 4.1.1 From the command line: run\_system.py

The easiest way to run a system in MSE is by using the included run\_system.py script. This script has the convenience of being fully accessible within the command line. It produces basic plots with the time evolution of some quantities, mobile diagrams, positions of the stars/bodies, and an HR diagram.

For example, a hierarchical triple can be simply run with the following command shown in Code snippet 1.

```
python3 run_system.py --configuration "fully_nested"
--masses 40 10 2 --metallicities 0.02 0.02 0.02
--smas 15 120 --es 0.1 0.2 --is 0.001 1.4
--LANs 0.01 0.01 --APs 0.01 0.01
--tend 2e7 --Nsteps 2000 --plot_filename "figs/mytriple"
```

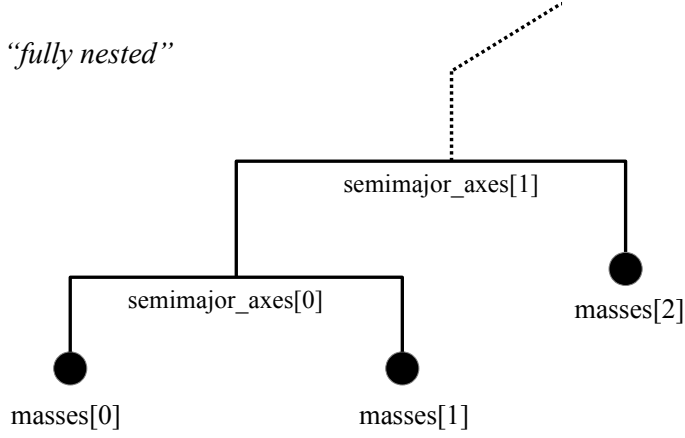
Code snippet 1: Example usage of run\_system.py for a triple.

Note that multivalued entries (such as `--masses`) are to be input using spaces to separate values. All masses should be given in  $M_{\odot}$ , all semimajor axes in AU, times should be given in yr, and all orbital angles in rad. When `--configuration` is given as "fully\_nested", the number of bodies in the system is inferred from the number of values given to the `--masses` argument. If, instead, `--configuration` is given as "2+2\_quadruple", a 2+2 quadruple is assumed (so four stars with two binaries orbiting each other’s center of mass). Other configurations can also be input (see Section 4.1.1 below).

In the above example Code snippet 1, three masses are given, so the system is assumed to be a hierarchical triple. For multivalued entries, the order of the values should be consistent with

<sup>3</sup>At the moment of writing, MSE has been most tested with the PYTHON interface. Calling the code directly within C++ is less tested.

*“fully nested”*



*“2+2 quadruple”*

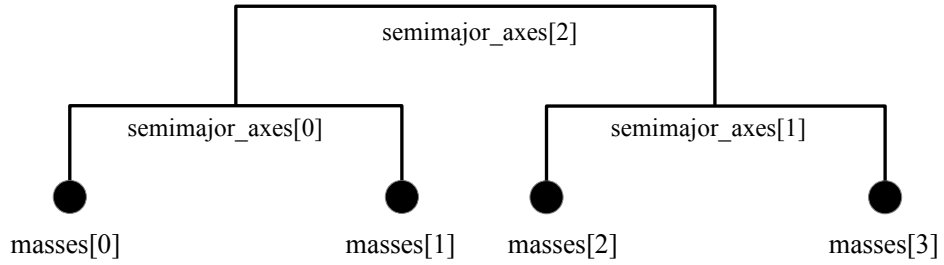


Figure 1: Illustration of the `fully_nested` and `2+2_quadruple` configurations that can be used the `run_system.py` script and the `evolve_system()` wrapper function by specifying the configuration parameter. Also shown are designations within the argument lists (displayed are `masses` and `semimajor_axes`, but the same orders apply to other properties of bodies/orbits). Top: a ‘fully nested’ configuration (explicitly showing the simplest case of a triple). Bottom: a 2+2 quadruple system. Note that other configurations can also be specified (see Section 4.1.1).

the order as indicated in Fig. 1. That is, for our example, the initial masses of the two stars in the inner binary are 40 and 10  $M_{\odot}$ , respectively, and the tertiary mass is 2  $M_{\odot}$ . The metallicities (`--metallicities` or `--zs`) are 0.02 for all stars. The inner and outer orbital semimajor axes (`--smas` or `--semimajor_axes`) are 15 and 120 AU, respectively, and the eccentricities (`--es` or `--eccentricities`) are 0.1 and 0.2 for the inner and outer orbits, respectively. The inclinations (`--is` or `--inclinations`) of the inner and outer orbits are 0.001 and 1.4 rad, respectively. The longitudes of the ascending node (`--LANs` or `--longitudes_of_ascending_node`) and the arguments of periapsis (`--APs` or `--arguments_of_pericentre`) are all 0.01 for the inner and outer orbits, respectively.

Some of the arguments in `run_system.py`, for example the metallicities, arguments of periapsis, or the longitudes of the ascending nodes, can be omitted. In that case, default or random values will be assumed. A full summary of the assumed initial conditions is printed when starting the evolution.

By default, the bodies in the system are assumed to be stars. Optionally, evolved stars (using the SSE stellar type integers) can be specified with the argument list `--stellar_types` (with the order corresponding to `--masses`). Note that the starting stellar type should be consistent with the initial mass (it is determined by running the star in isolation until the desired stellar type is reached). For example, it is not possible to set the stellar type to 14 (BH) if the initial mass is, say, 0.8  $M_{\odot}$ , or 7 (stripped He star) since the latter requires binary interaction in MSE. If the specified stellar type is inconsistent, then another initial stellar type will be assigned (depends on the situation).

Planets (and, in the future, other objects) can be specified with the optional argument `--object_types`, which should be a list of integers corresponding to `--masses`; an integer value of 1 (default value) indicates a star, and an integer value of 2 indicates a planet. For a given star the `stellar_type` are not used when `object_type` is not 1.

In `run_system.py`, orbital angles are used to describe the initial orbital orientations (internally, the code uses orbital vectors). See, e.g., <https://mitpress.ubli.sh.com/ereader/9943/?preview#page/27> for a brief introduction to orbital angles (if the link in this document does not work, please try pasting it directly into your browser). In particular, note that the *relative* or *mutual* inclination between two orbits,  $i_{\text{rel}}$ , depends on both the individual inclinations and longitudes of the ascending node of those two orbits. Specifically, using  $i_k$  and  $\Omega_k$  to denote the inclination and longitude of the ascending node of an orbit  $k$ , the mutual inclination between two orbits labeled '1' and '2' is given by

$$\cos(i_{\text{rel}}) = \cos(i_1) \cos(i_2) + \sin(i_1) \sin(i_2) \cos(\Omega_1 - \Omega_2). \quad (1)$$

The main use case of MSE is to model initially hierarchical and dynamically stable systems. However, it is possible to start with initially unstable systems (as determined by the stability criterion implemented in the code). In the latter case, MSE will immediately switch to direct  $N$ -body integration.

The duration of the integration is specified with the `--tend` argument. The number of output steps (this is not the same as the number of steps taken internally within MSE) is given by `--Nsteps`. After completing the simulation, four plots are saved using filenames based on the `plot_filename` argument (note that the directory `figs` should exist for the example in Code snippet 1). The three plots are:

- `[plot_filename].pdf`: time evolution of the masses (top panel), orbital separations and radii (middle panel), and stellar types (bottom panel).
- `[plot_filename]_mobile.pdf`: mobile diagrams of the system during important stages of the evolution.

- [plot\_filename]\_pos.pdf: positions of all bodies in the  $(X, Y)$ -plane.
- [plot\_filename]\_HRD.pdf: Hertzsprung-Russell diagram of all stars in the system.

Choosing a very large `--Nsteps` (say,  $\gg 10^4$ ) will produce very smooth-looking plots, but will tend to slow down the integration because communication between PYTHON and C++ is involved for each output step. In practice, it is best to find a balance between quality of presentation, and speed.

**Custom configurations** Configurations other than ‘fully nested’ and ‘2+2 quadruple’ can be specified with the `--configuration` command line argument, which should be a string. Below, we explain how to translate a given hierarchical multiple system (as represented in a mobile diagram) into a configuration string.

1. Draw the tree diagram of your hierarchy, as shown in the examples in Fig. 2. As much as possible, try to keep the most number of sub-binaries in the right branches (there can be *only* two branches per node).
2. While initializing the configuration parameter, any *binary* (two children) must be enclosed in square brackets. For a single child, no square brackets should be used.
3. If the hierarchy is *fully nested*, the configuration parameter should be set to ‘N’, where N is the total number of stars (see Fig. 2(a)). Even if any sub-branch is fully nested, a similar notation can be followed (see Fig. 2(b)).
4. For *almost* fully nested configurations (i.e. fully nested upto a point, after which one branch has a different configuration), use the ‘{N+other}’ notation (see Fig. 2(c)). The meaning of this notation is as follows – ‘{N+other}’  $\equiv$  ‘[1, . . . [1, other] . . . ]’, where the . . . represent a repetition of N times. This notation can also be used multiple times (see Fig. 2(d)), but keep proper bracketing in mind !
5. The indexing of masses and binary nodes is done from the bottom right. It is crucial to follow this numbering while initializing the list parameters such as masses, metallicities, semimajor axes, eccentricities, inclinations, longitudes of the ascending node, and arguments of periapsis.

#### 4.1.2 The `evolve_system()` wrapper function

The code can also be used in a similar fashion as described above within a user-created PYTHON script (i.e., not using the command line directly with `run_system.py`). In fact, as can be readily inferred from inspection of `run_system.py`, the latter script simply parses the command line arguments and passes them to the `evolve_system()` function which is part of the `Tools` class (provided with MSE). Usage of `evolve_system()` is, therefore, very similar to the above. For example, to run the same example system, the PYTHON code as shown in Code snippet 2 could be used. Note that the order of the arguments given to `evolve_system()` is important.

```
Tools.evolve_system("fully_nested"
, 3, [40, 10, 2], [0.02, 0.02, 0.02], \
  [15, 120], [0.1, 0.2], [0.001, 1.4], [0.01, 0.01], [0.01, 0.01], \
  2.0e7, 2000, plot_filename="figs/mytriple")
```

Code snippet 2: Example usage within PYTHON of `evolve_system.py` for a triple.

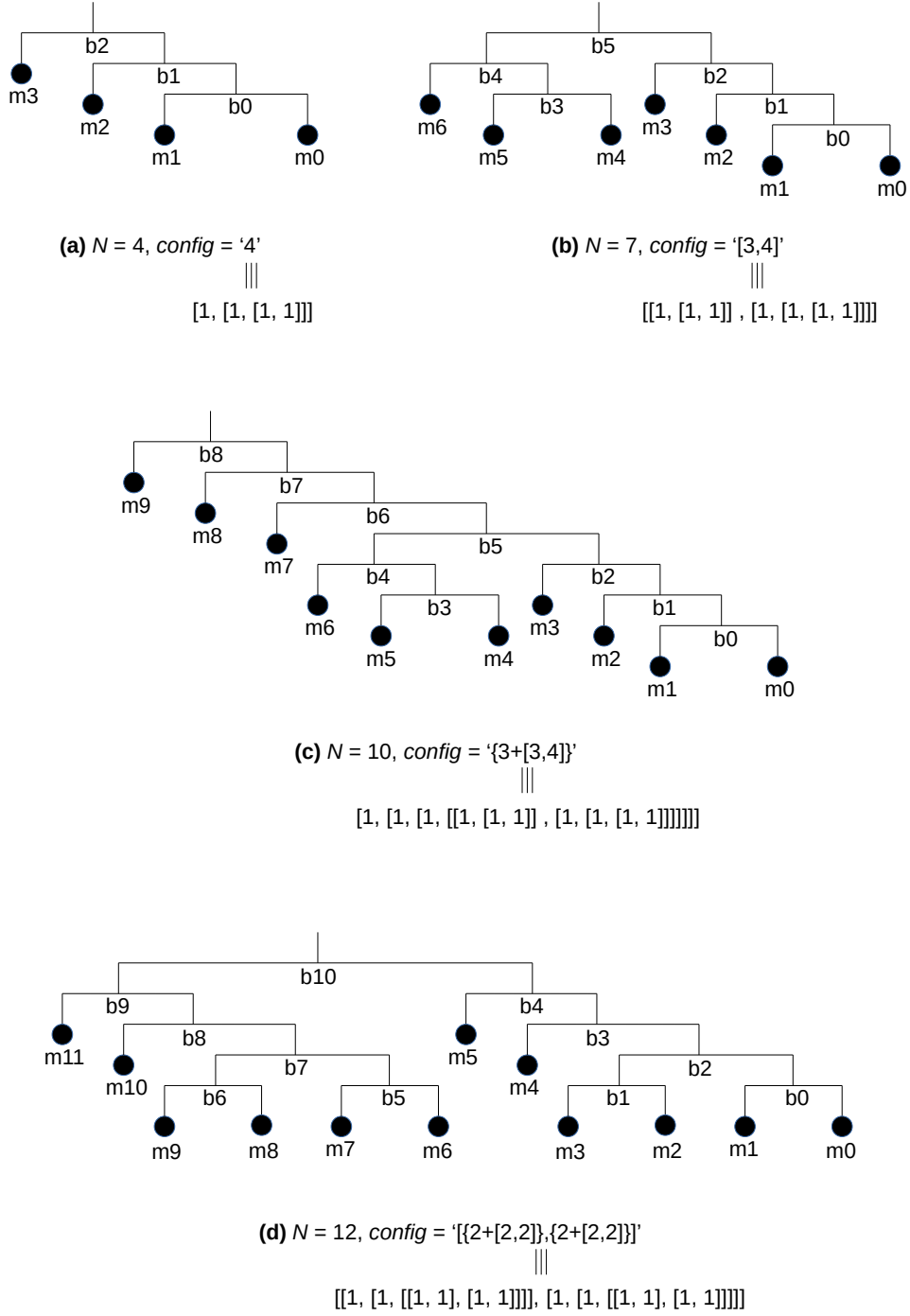


Figure 2: Selected tree diagrams of multiple star system hierarchies to explain the notation. Note the indexing of the masses ( $mX$ ) and binaries ( $bX$ ), where  $X$  denotes the index. Also, note the verbose configuration list corresponding to each configuration. (a) A fully nested hierarchy. (b) A hierarchy, with two sub-branches, both of which are fully nested. (c) An *almost* fully nested hierarchy. (d) Two *almost* fully nested hierarchies. (note the indexing!)



## 4.2 More advanced: custom usage

Although the basic usage options (Section 4.1) can be convenient, they do not give much control over the simulation. If more customisation is needed, it is possible to call MSE more directly. The usage of the code in this manner is inspired by the syntax used in the AMUSE framework<sup>4</sup>.

```
1 from mse import MSE,Tools,Particle
2
3 N_bodies=3
4 masses = [40,10,2]
5 metallicities = [0.02,0.02,0.02]
6 semimajor_axes = [15 ,120]
7 eccentricities = [0.1,0.2]
8 inclinations = [0.001,1.4]
9 arguments_of_pericentre = [0.01,0.01]
10 longitudes_of_ascending_node = [0.01,0.01]
11
12 particles = create_fully_nested_multiple(N_bodies,masses,\
13     semimajor_axes,eccentricities,inclinations,\
14     arguments_of_pericentre,longitudes_of_ascending_node,\
15     metallicities=metallicities)
16
17 code = MSE()
18 code.add_particles(particles)
19
20 Nsteps = 2000
21 tend = 2.0e7
22 t = 0.0
23 dt = tend/float(Nsteps)
24
25 while t<tend:
26     t+=dt
27     code.evolve_model(t)
28
29     particles = code.particles
30     orbits = [x for x in particles if x.is_binary==True]
31     bodies = [x for x in particles if x.is_binary==False]
32
33     print( 't/Myr',t*1e-6,'es',[o.e for o in orbits],'smas',\
34         [o.a for o in orbits])
35
36 print("log",code.log)
37 code.reset()
```

Code snippet 3: Custom usage example within PYTHON for a triple.

We give a simple example in Code snippet 3, initialising and running the same system that was given in Section 4.1. The function `create_fully_nested_multiple()` from the `Tools` class is used (lines 12-15) to generate particles. Here, `particles` is a PYTHON list containing

---

<sup>4</sup>amusecode.org

Particle objects; the particles represent the entire system (see Section 6 for more information). An instance of the code is created (line 17), and the particles are added to the code (line 18).

Lines 25–34 constitute a time loop in which the code is called repeatedly with `evolve_model()` until reaching the desired end time. In line 29, the particles set local to the user is updated from the particles set in MSE. The subsequent lines, 30–31, separate the particles out into orbits, i.e., particles representing orbits, and bodies, i.e., particles representing bodies/stars. In lines 33–34, the eccentricities and semimajor axes of all orbits are printed. Any other time-dependent data from the particles can also be accessed at this point.

Note that MSE determines its own internal time-steps dynamically at runtime. In principle, changing `Nsteps` should not affect the result. However, because systems are often chaotic and because of unavoidable numerical errors, the outcome of a particular system can actually often depend on `Nsteps`.

In line 36, the `code.log` is printed. This contains detailed information on ‘interesting’ events during the evolution. Its purpose is to be able to track important events, without the risk of missing them when running the high-level time loop (lines 25–34 in Code snippet 3), which is particularly useful for population synthesis studies. The contents of `code.log` are described in detail in Section 7.

The particles set is dynamic and can change as the system is evolving. For example, particles can be removed if stars merge into one. If the structure of the system changed when calling `evolve_model()`, this is indicated with the parameter

```
code.structure_change
```

which will be `True` (default value `False`). When the structure changes, one should bear in mind for analysis purposes that the particles will be different (different number of bodies, different hierarchy, etc.).

Lastly, when finished with the code, care should be taken to call `code.reset()`. Failing to do so can result in unexpected behaviour when running the code repeatedly.

## 5 Code usage within C++

Using the code within C++ gives most customisability and eliminates any potential overhead losses caused by the PYTHON interface. However, we only recommend it for more advanced use cases. We give a simple example for a triple in Code snippet 4.

```
1 ParticlesMap particlesMap;
2 int N_bodies = 3;
3 double masses[3] = {40.0, 10.0, 2.0};
4 int stellar_types[3] = {1, 1, 1};
5 double smas[2] = {15.0, 120.0};
6 double es[2] = {0.1, 0.2};
7 double TAs[2] = {0.01, 0.01, 0.01};
8 double INCLs[2] = {0.001, 1.4};
9 double APs[2] = {0.01, 0.01};
10 double LANs[2] = {0.01, 0.01};
11
12 create_nested_system(particlesMap, N_bodies, masses, \
13     stellar_types, smas, es, TAs, INCLs, APs, LANs);
14
15 initialize_code(&particlesMap);
```

```

16
17 double t=0.0;
18 double tend = 2.0e7;
19 int Nsteps = 2000;
20 double dt = tend/ ((double) Nsteps);
21 double output_time, hamiltonian;
22 int state, CVODE_flag, CVODE_error_code;
23
24 while (t<tend)
25 {
26     evolve(&particlesMap, t, t+dt, &output_time, \
27           &hamiltonian, &state, &CVODE_flag, &CVODE_error_code, \
28           &integration_flag);
29     print_system(&particlesMap, integration_flag);
30     t += dt;
31 }
32
33 clear_particles(&particlesMap);

```

Code snippet 4: Example usage within C++ for a triple.

## 6 Particle sets

In MSE, the structure of the system at any time is specified by a set of particles. A particle can represent a body (a star, compact object, or planet), or a binary/orbit. Each orbit has two ‘children’, which themselves can be bodies or orbits. By linking the children of each orbit to other members of the set of particles, any hierarchical structure consisting of nested orbits can be specified. For example, a hierarchical triple-star system is represented by a set of five particles; three of which represent the three stars, and two of which represent the inner and outer orbits.

The code comes with several functions that automatically produce particles in PYTHON. In particular, `create_fully_nested_multiple()` produces the particles representing a fully nested system (see the top panel in Fig. 1). As with `run_system.py` and `evolve_system()`, care should be taken that the parameters are entered in the correct order. Also included are `create_2p2_quadruple_system()`, which generates a 2+2 quadruple system, and `create_hierarchy()`, which can be used to generate *any* nested hierarchical configuration (see Section 4.1.1).

Nevertheless, we here give a description to produce particles sets in general, for those users wanting to generate particles sets on their own. As mentioned above, any hierarchical configuration is allowed in MSE, as long as it consists of binary orbits. As an example, we show in Code snippet 5 how in PYTHON a system can be generated that represents a ‘(2+2)+1’ quintuple system. A simple representation of this system in a mobile diagram is given in Fig. 3.

```

1 N_bodies = 5
2 N_binaries = N_bodies-1
3
4 particles = []
5
6 ### Add the bodies ###
7 for index in range(N_bodies):

```

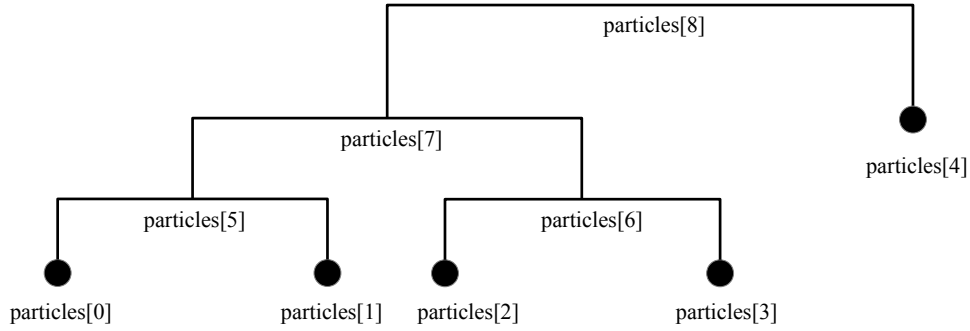


Figure 3: Mobile diagram of a hierarchical quintuple. Indicated are which elements of the particles set the bodies/binaries are assigned to.

```

8      particle = Particle(is_binary=False, mass=masses[index])
9      particles.append(particle)
10
11  ### Add the binaries ###
12  for index in range(N_binaries):
13      if index==0: ### corresponds to particles[5]
14          child1 = particles[0]
15          child2 = particles[1]
16      elif index==1: ### corresponds to particles[6]
17          child1 = particles[2]
18          child2 = particles[3]
19      elif index==2: ### corresponds to particles[7]
20          child1 = particles[5]
21          child2 = particles[6]
22      elif index==3: ### corresponds to particles[8]
23          child1 = particles[7]
24          child2 = particles[4]
25
26      particle = Particle(is_binary=True, child1=child1, \
27                          child2=child2, a=semimajor_axes[index], \
28                          e=eccentricities[index], INCL=inclinations[index], \
29                          AP=arguments_of_pericentre[index], \
30                          LAN=longitudes_of_ascending_node[index])
31      particles.append(particle)

```

Code snippet 5: Example of how to generate a particle set in Python representing a hierarchical quintuple in the  $(2+2)+1$  configuration. It assumes that the parameters are pre-defined in the variables `masses`, `semimajor_axes`, `eccentricities`, `inclinations`, `arguments_of_pericentre`, and `longitudes_of_ascending_node`. See also Fig. 3.

In lines 7–9 of Code snippet 5, the bodies are added first, and the binaries are added later.

Here, we choose the five bodies to be represented by `particles[0]` through `particles[4]`. In general, there is no need for any particular ordering of the particles, but it is recommended to follow a set strategy of assigning particles to avoid possible confusion later on.

A mass should always be specified for a body. By default, bodies are assumed to be stars (`object_type` equal to 1). Optionally, the metallicity can be specified (`particle.metallicity = ...`). Initial stellar radii are determined from the SSE tracks. To model a planet, one should set `object_type` to be 2. The radius should then be set with `particle.radius`, as well as the tidal evolution parameters.

Lines 12–31 describe how particles representing binaries are created. When creating a `Particle` with `is_binary = True`, at least two additional arguments should be given: `child1`, and `child2`. The latter should each be a `Particle`; in the example, they are assigned to previously-created elements of `particles` in such a manner to produce the structure depicted in Fig. 3. The other arguments given to `Particle()` are the orbital parameters. Note that, in this example, the order of the elements in `semimajor_axes` etc. should correspond to the orbits in Fig. 3, i.e., from bottom to top, and from left to right.

## 7 Logs

While running, MSE generates logs of ‘interesting’ events such as stellar type changes, SNe, Roche lobe overflow, common-envelope evolution, collisions, and the onset of dynamical instability. By generating logs internally when such events happen, there is no risk of them being missed (the latter is possible when running a high-level time loop such as in lines 25–34 in Code snippet 3 and manually analysing the current particles at specific output times). The logs generated by the code are particularly useful for population synthesis studies.

Here, we describe how the logs are accessible through the PYTHON interface. Once a system has run, the log can be retrieved as

```
log = code.log
```

The `log` is a PYTHON list with each element representing an event. The elements are dictionaries (dict) which contain the following names:

- `time`: the time of the event (in yr);
- `event_flag`: an integer number describing what kind of event occurred. See Table ?? for an overview of the meanings of the various event flags.
- `index1`: if applicable, the particle index of one of the primary (inner) objects involved in the event (for example, one of the bodies involved in a collision);
- `index2`: similar to `index1`, but now pertaining to the secondary object;
- `binary_index`: if applicable, the particle index of the parent object involved in the event (for example, the orbit in which a collision occurred);
- `N_particles`: the current number of particles in the system.
- `particles`: the current particles set. Note that it contains several key parameters from the particles set used internally in the code (in C++), but not all of them.

Event flag	Description
0	Initial system
1	Stellar type change
2	Beginning of SNe event
3	End of SNe event
4	Start of Roche lobe overflow
5	End of Roche lobe overflow
6	Start of common-envelope evolution
7	End of common-envelope evolution
8	Start of collision event
9	End of collision event
10	Onset of dynamical instability in the system
11	Breakdown of the secular equations of motion (will continue using direct $N$ -body)

Table 1: Overview of the meanings of the various event flags that appear in MSE’s log output.

## 8 Code parameters

MSE has a large number of parameters. They can be separated into two types: global parameters that apply everywhere and at all times, and particle-specific parameters that only apply to specific particles (bodies or binaries).

Global parameters can be set as follows. For PYTHON, assuming that code is an instance of MSE,

```
code.parameter = value
```

Here, parameter is the name of the parameter, and value is its value. In C++, global parameters are global variables and can be set by

```
parameter = value;
```

Particle-specific properties are set in a similar way, except that they should be set as attributes to the corresponding particle. In PYTHON,

```
particle.parameter = value
```

for a particle. In C++,

```
particle.parameter = value;
```

for a particle of the Particle class.

A comprehensive overview of the global and particle-specific parameters is given at the end of this document in the form of several tables.

## 9 Citing the code in scientific publications

When using MSE for scientific publications, please cite the following paper:

- Hamers, A.S., Rantala, A., Neunteufel, P., Preece, H., Vynatheya, P. *Multiple Stellar Evolution: a population synthesis algorithm to model the stellar, binary, and dynamical evolution of multiple-star systems*. Submitted to MNRAS (<https://ui.adsabs.harvard.edu/abs/2020arXiv201104513H/abstract>).

If you would like to be thorough, you could also include the following papers that describe codes on which MSE is heavily based:

- Hurley, J.R., Pols, O.R., Tout, C. *Comprehensive analytic formulae for stellar evolution as a function of mass and metallicity*. MNRAS, Volume 315, Issue 3, pp. 543–569.
- Hurley, J.R., Tout, C., Pols, O.R. *Evolution of binary stars and the effect of tides on binary populations*. MNRAS, Volume 329, Issue 4, pp. 897–928.
- Rantala, A., Pihajoki, P., Mannerkoski, M., Johansson, P.H., Naab, T. *MSTAR - a fast parallelized algorithmically regularized integrator with minimum spanning tree coordinates*. MNRAS, Volume 492, Issue 3, p.4131–4148.
- Hamers, A.S., Portegies Zwart, S.F. *Secular dynamics of hierarchical multiple systems composed of nested binaries, with an arbitrary number of bodies and arbitrary hierarchical structure. First applications to multiplanet and multistar systems*. 2016, MNRAS, Volume 459, Issue 3, p.2827–2874.
- Hamers, A.S. *Secular dynamics of hierarchical multiple systems composed of nested binaries, with an arbitrary number of bodies and arbitrary hierarchical structure. II. External perturbations: flybys and supernovae*. 2018, MNRAS, Volume 476, Issue 3, p. 4139–4161.
- Hamers, A.S.. *Secular dynamics of hierarchical multiple systems composed of nested binaries, with an arbitrary number of bodies and arbitrary hierarchical structure. III. Suborbital effects: hybrid integration techniques and orbit-averaging corrections*. 2020, MNRAS, Volume 494, Issue 4, pp.5492–5506.
- Hamers, A.S., Dosopoulou, F. *An analytic model for mass transfer in binaries with arbitrary eccentricity, with applications to triple-star systems*. 2019, ApJ, Volume 872, Issue 2.

## 10 Q&A

### The code is slow! What can I do?

Be more patient :-). More seriously, MSE can be computationally demanding depending on the system, and the duration of the integration. For example, secular evolution could occur on a very short time-scale in a tight (but dynamically stable) triple, requiring many internal steps to be taken. Or the system could be dynamically unstable for a long time meaning that direct  $N$ -body integration is used continuously, and the latter tends to be significantly slower than the secular approach. If a system takes a very long time to run, one could try adjusting the code's tolerances. The `relative_tolerance`, used for secular integration, could be increased up to, say,  $10^{-5}$  (ideally not larger). Alternatively, if the bottleneck lies with direct  $N$ -body integration, the  $N$ -body tolerance `mstar_gbs_tolerance_default` could be increased to up to, say,  $10^{-4}$ .

It is also possible that the code completely stalls, and this is likely due to a bug. If you suspect that this is the case, please contact the author and describe the problem in detail.

### The code crashes!

Unfortunately, due to the complexity of the code, it is possible that hard crashes occur due to bugs (e.g., PYTHON giving an error, or, worse, a segmentation fault). If you do, please

report the problem, preferably by creating an *Issue* ticket on GitHub, or by sending an email. Please describe accurately the initial conditions used, the version of the code used, and give the print output prior to the error. Additional verbose output from the code can be produced by changing the `verbose_flag` code parameter accordingly (see Table 3).

In the case of segmentation faults, it would be useful if you used a debugger to get more information and to help the debugging process. First, in order to be able to use a debugger, the code should be compiled with the compiler flag `CPPFLAGS` in the `Makefile` set to the second option (where it is indicated that it supports debugging). Note that the outcome of individual systems can be different when using the different `CPPFLAGS` (this is related to slight changes in the way calculations are carried out with compiler optimisations enabled; the latter are excluded in debugging mode).

Assuming `PYTHON` usage and that you have `gdb` installed:

```
gdb
(gdb) file python3
(gdb) run X
```

Here, ‘X’ is the name of your `PYTHON` program (including command line arguments). If you are using `lldb`, the syntax would be:

```
lldb -f python3
(lldb) run X
```

**I am getting different results when running exactly the same system on different machines/environments!**

This is a known phenomenon in the code. When running on different machines/environments (or even using different compiler options), results can differ because of the way that floating points are represented and rounded. Although these effects are tiny for single operations, they can add up and become significant when the number of floating point operations is very large, which typically happens when a system is integrated in MSE for a relatively long time. For example, if a triple system undergoes a very large number of ZLK oscillations, then the exact phase of the ZLK cycle in the inner binary at an arbitrary time can differ from machine to machine. This can make the difference whether or not a star in the inner binary will fill its Roche lobe as it evolves, and such a difference will propagate further in the evolution of the entire system. This effect is compounded by the often chaotic nature of the dynamics of  $>2$ -body-systems.

In practice, this implies that the exact outcome of one specific system should not be given too much emphasis or weight. MSE is meant to be used as a population synthesis code; uncertainties due to numerical difficulties as described above are expected to average out when a large enough sample of systems is considered (what constitutes ‘large enough’ should be investigated on a case-by-case basis, by considering convergence of the statistical properties of interest with respect to the number of included systems). We also remark that, apart from the numerical difficulties described above, the exact outcome of a specific system also sensitively depends on physical processes included in the code, many of which are uncertain (for example, the precise way that an eccentric orbit responds to mass transfer).

## II Release notes

- vo.79 – first ‘official’ release



Name	Symbol	Description	Default value
<i>ODE integration parameters</i>			
relative_tolerance		Relative tolerance used in ODE integration.	$10^{-10}$
absolute_tolerance_eccentricity_vectors		Absolute tolerance used for eccentricity vectors in ODE integration.	$10^{-8}$
absolute_tolerance_angular_momentum_vectors		Absolute tolerance used for angular momentum vectors in ODE integration (in code units).	$10^{-2}$
absolute_tolerance_spin_vectors		Absolute tolerance used for spin vectors in ODE integration (in code units).	$10^{-4}$
include_quadrupole_order_terms		Include pairwise quadrupole-order terms for secular dynamics.	True
include_octupole_order_binary_pair_terms		Include pairwise octupole-order terms for secular dynamics.	True
include_octupole_order_binary_triplet_terms		Include triplet octupole-order terms for secular dynamics.	True
include_hexadecupole_order_binary_pair_terms		Include pairwise hexadecupole-order terms for secular dynamics.	True
include_dotriacontupole_order_binary_pair_terms		Include pairwise dotriacontupole-order terms for secular dynamics.	True
verbose_flag		Specifies how much terminal output the code will give (from within C++; does not strictly pertain to ODE integration). 0: no verbose output; > 0: verbose output, with increasing verbosity (>1 will slow down the code considerably).	0

Table 2: Description of global user-adjustable code parameters related to the ODE integration.

Name	Symbol	Description	Default value
<i>N-body integration parameters</i>			
nbody_analysis_fractional _semimajor_axis_change_parameter	$\alpha_{N,a}$	Largest allowed fractional semimajor axis change for switching from <i>N</i> -body to secular integration.	0.01
nbody_analysis_fractional _integration_time	$\alpha_{N,\Delta t,an}$	<i>N</i> -body analysis timestep multiplication factor.	0.05
nbody_analysis_minimum _integration_time		Minimum integration time allowed for analysis of systems in <i>N</i> -body integration mode.	$10^1$ (yr)
nbody_analysis_maximum _integration_time		Maximum integration time allowed for analysis of systems in <i>N</i> -body integration mode.	$10^5$ (yr)
MSTAR_gbs_tolerance_default		Tolerance used in the MSTAR code.	$10^{-10}$
MSTAR_collision_tolerance		Tolerance used for collision detection in the MSTAR code.	$10^{-10}$
MSTAR_output_time_tolerance		Tolerance used for output time convergence in the MSTAR code.	$10^{-6}$
MSTAR_include_PN_X		Turn on or off specific PN terms in MSTAR (bool). Here, ‘X’ can be ‘acc_10’: 1PN acceleration; ‘acc_20’: 2PN acceleration; ‘acc_25’: 2.5PN acceleration; ‘acc_S0’: spin-orbit acceleration; ‘acc_SS’: spin-spin acceleration; ‘acc_Q’: quadrupole acceleration; ‘spin_S0’: spin-orbit terms for spin evolution; ‘spin_SS’: spin-spin terms for spin evolution; ‘spin_Q’: quadrupole terms for spin evolution.	True

Table 3: Description of global user-adjustable code parameters related to direct *N*-body integration.

Name	Symbol	Description	Default value
<i>Prescription parameters</i>			
eddington_accretion_factor	$f_{\text{Edd}}$	Eddington accretion factor.	10
nova_accretion_factor	$\epsilon_{\text{nova}}$	Nova accretion factor.	$10^{-3}$
binary_evolution_CE_energy_flag		Normally, the total primary mass is used in the CE prescription. If this flag is 3: use primary core mass instead of total mass.	0
binary_evolution_CE_spin_flag		Parameter controlling stellar spins after CE. 0: spins unaffected; 1: alignment and corotation of the spins.	1
alpha_wind_accretion	$\alpha_{\text{WA}}$	Wind accretion parameter.	1.5
beta_wind_accretion	$\beta_{\text{W}}$	Wind ejection speed parameter.	0.125
triple_mass_transfer_primary_star_accretion_efficiency_no_disk	$\alpha_{\text{TMT, no disk, prim}}$	Efficiency at which the primary star accretes mass from the tertiary star during triple mass transfer (no disk forms around inner binary).	0.1
triple_mass_transfer_secondary_star_accretion_efficiency_no_disk	$\alpha_{\text{TMT, no disk, sec}}$	Efficiency at which the secondary star accretes mass from the tertiary star during triple mass transfer (no disk forms around inner binary).	0.1
triple_mass_transfer_primary_star_accretion_efficiency_disk	$\alpha_{\text{TMT, disk, prim}}$	Efficiency at which the primary star accretes mass from the tertiary star during triple mass transfer (disk forms around inner binary).	0.9
triple_mass_transfer_secondary_star_accretion_efficiency_disk	$\alpha_{\text{TMT, disk, sec}}$	Efficiency at which the secondary star accretes mass from the tertiary star during triple mass transfer (disk forms around inner binary).	0.9
triple_mass_transfer_inner_binary_alpha_times_lambda	$(\alpha\lambda)_{\text{TMT}}$	Parameter controlling how the inner orbit responds to accretion from mass from a tertiary star.	5

Table 4: Description of global user-adjustable code parameters related to prescriptions.

Name	Symbol	Description	Default value
common_envelope_alpha	$\alpha_{\text{CE}}$	CE $\alpha$ parameter (binary CE evolution).	1.0
triple_common_envelope_alpha		CE $\alpha$ parameter (triple CE evolution).	1.0
common_envelope_timescale	$\tau_{\dot{m}, \text{CE}}$	Mass-loss timescale to shed the envelope during CE evolution.	$10^3$ (yr)
dynamical_mass_transfer_low_mass_donor_timescale	$\tau_{\dot{m}, \text{dyn, MS}}$	Mass-loss timescale for dynamical mass transfer from a low-mass MS star.	$10^3$ (yr)
dynamical_mass_transfer_WD_donor_timescale	$\tau_{\dot{m}, \text{dyn, WD}}$	Mass-loss timescale for dynamical mass transfer from a WD.	$10^3$ (yr)
compact_object_disruption_mass_loss_timescale	$\tau_{\dot{m}, \text{expl}}$	Mass-loss timescale for an explosive thermonuclear event.	$10^3$ (yr)
kick_distribution		SNe kick distribution specification. Between 1-5.	1
kick_distribution_sigma_km_s_NS		SNe kicks – default Maxwellian width for NSs	265 ( $\text{km s}^{-1}$ )
kick_distribution_sigma_km_s_BH		SNe kicks – default Maxwellian width for BHs	50 ( $\text{km s}^{-1}$ )
kick_distribution_2_m_NS		NS mass used in SNe kick prescription 2.	1.4 ( $M_{\odot}$ )
kick_distribution_4_m_NS		NS mass used in SNe kick prescription 4.	1.2 ( $M_{\odot}$ )
kick_distribution_4_m_ej		Ejecta mass used in SNe kick prescription 5.	9 ( $M_{\odot}$ )
kick_distribution_5_v_km_s_NS		Speed parameter for NSs used in kick prescription 5.	400 ( $\text{km s}^{-1}$ )
kick_distribution_5_v_km_s_BH		Speed parameter for BHs used in kick prescription 5.	200 ( $\text{km s}^{-1}$ )

Table 5: Description of particle-specific user-adjustable code parameters.