COMPUTER SCIENCE AQA

A-LEVEL NEA

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# ANALYSIS

In an age of ever-increasing reliance on technology, with more and more people adopting a sedentary lifestyle, health and fitness have become an aspect that in many cases have become neglected. However, there is now an increasing pressure on governments and on society to change old habits of an unhealthy lifestyle, to a more active one.

Countless studies suggest that exercising not only improves physical health but also has a significant impact on improving mental health and relieving stress. One study suggests that those who exercised had 43.2% fewer days of poor mental health in a month than those who did not. [1]. This shows to us the importance of exercise, especially as one of the leading causes of death in the US and as well as for men in the UK [2] is heart disease, which can be preventable through exercise and a healthy diet.

Despite the majority of the public know the great benefits of exercising, only 63.3% of people aged over 16 consider themselves physically active doing 150 minutes or more of moderately intensive activity in a week, according to a UK government survey. [3] There remains a large portion of the public who do not exercise, for many different and respective reasons. Various reasons may include not having enough time during the day to exercise, finding a gym that is affordable, or simply not having enough motivation to work out.

Whilst a large chunk of the population remains unactive, the proportion of the population, especially among young adults, who have access to mobile smartphones continues to increase. One study suggests, that for those aged 16-24 years old, roughly 99% of respondents say they have a smartphone, for those living in the UK [4]. This is a rather stark contrast to society just 10-20 years ago, where smartphones had barely begun to break into the common consumer market. This shows to us the commonality of smartphone nowadays and how much of the UK’s population use smartphones daily, especially younger people.

My objective in this NEA is to investigate how physical activities can be tracked and detected through a device’s onboard sensors. Furthermore, at the end of this project, I aim to have a working app that gives users the interface to access exercise recognition software, to help more young people become active through their mobile phones.

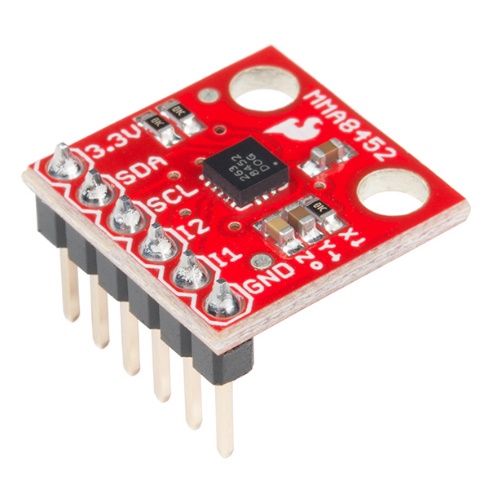
## Sensors Overview

Between devices, the physical hardware and sensors on a given device vary, depending on various factors. Over the past decade, the general progression of these sensors tends to improve over time as computational power increases with more and more devices receiving more and more sensors.

Before motion sensors were widely adopted in mobile phones, they were often used for devices such as Wii remotes, airbag deployment, aircraft, missiles, etc. During the period between about 2005-2012, the adoption of onboard sensors started to break through to mobile phones, most notably within Apple and Samsung phones. The very first phone with 3-dimensional movement recognition was the Samsung SCH-310 [5], with Apple’s first iPhone also using accelerometer technology [6]. Nowadays, it is expected of manufactures to have various sensors, including the gyroscope, accelerometer, and magnetometer.

As I am focusing my project on Android applications, I will mainly be discussing the sensors on a typical Android phone, rather than one on an IOS phone.

### Accelerometer Sensor:

As suggested by the title an accelerometer is a part of the phone which measures the acceleration on a device on a three-axis reflecting real-world movement. These axes are in the x, Y, and Z direction.

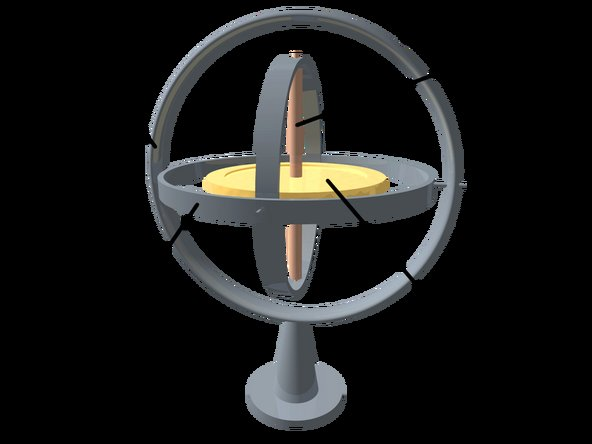
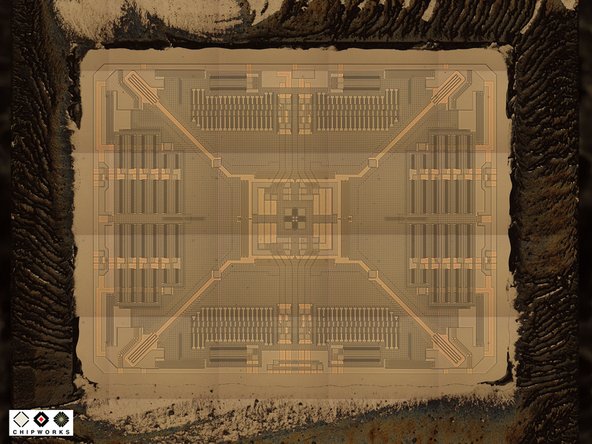
The data provided by an event from an Android device is given in meters per second squared (unit for acceleration). This provides a force along the X, Y, and Z vectors. [7]

The accelerometer is often used to detect motion within a given axis, especially to measure the translation of a device.

I am in this investigation, to research more on how I can use the accelerometer to track the distance of a given motion exercise, like walking or treadmilling.

Sparkfun Triple Axis Accelerometer https://www.sparkfun.com/products/13926

### Gyroscope Sensor:



GK10A MEMS die (oscillating plate) https://www.ifixit.com/Teardown/iPhone+4+Gyroscope+Teardown/3156

A Mechanical Gyroscope https://guide-images.cdn.ifixit.com/igi/nmNv4u3uHqZ5VNIR.large

A gyroscope measures the rate of rotation around the three axes, often known as yaw, pitch, and roll. [7] Early versions of a gyroscope included three spherical axes that span around a rotor, being able to rotate freely in three axes. The gyroscope nowadays in phones is much more compact and consists of a tiny vibrating plate in a chip that is pushed around and is detected by the device processor. [8] can be used for a variety of different applications for a mobile phone. The most common is determining the orientation of a phone, whether it is being held in landscape or portrait mode, which was first well utilized in Apple’s iPhone 4. [9]

To my investigation, I am more interested in how a gyroscope can be used to determine an exercise being done by a user. For example, when a user puts a mobile phone in their pocket and goes for a run, how can I use the data from the gyroscope sensor to determine whether the user is running, based on the rate at which the device rotates in a repeated pattern of harmonic motion.

### Magnetometer Sensor:



First Magnetometer https://nationalmaglab.org/education/magnet-academy/history-of-electricity-magnetism/museum/magnetometer

The magnetometer is responsible for measuring the strength and direction of magnetic fields, often used to figure out the spatial position of a device in a given space. They utilize the Earth’s magnetic orientation to calibrate a given device to a specific position. [10]

It is often used as a device in spacecraft measuring magnetic fields and metal detectors. More specifically, mobile phones, it is used to help judge a device’s position, relative to the north pole of the Earth. [9]

In my investigation, I hope to be able to utilize the gyroscope as means to calibrate the device correctly to the north, as a reference to the direction of travel of a device. Furthermore, by using the gyroscope of a device in tandem with the GPS, I hope to be able to show how such data can be used to map out the exact route of an exercise (one which the user travels).

### Global Positioning System Receiver:



Source: National Coordination Office for Space-Based Positioning, Navigation, and Timing

GPS is a radio navigation system developed and owned by the US government, which uses radio waves between satellites in space and receivers on a device to triangulate a device’s position on Earth. The original GPS used in earlier mobile phones required multiple satellites to pinpoint the position of a phone, which often took a lot of power and was often very slow as radio waves often became obstructed between satellites and receivers.

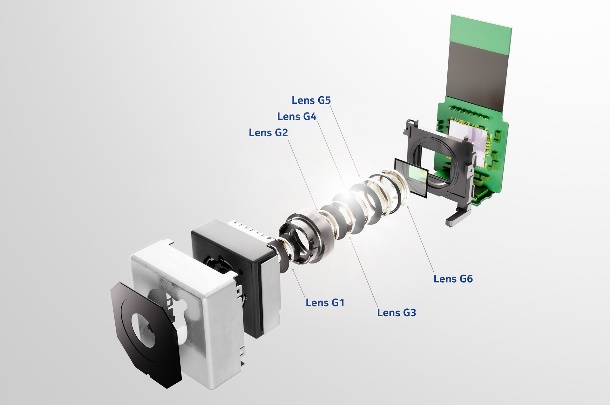
However, nowadays most mobile phones use AGPS (Assisted Global Positioning System), which is an improved version of GPS.

AGPS works by introducing data from cellular services and cell towers to “ping” the location of a device. This entirely depends on how many cell towers are near a device, but it is often quite reliable in triangulating a device’s position.

In tandem with the magnetometer, AGPS can be used to track the distance, location, and route of an exercise.

### Camera Sensor

The camera sensors found within phones is a complex feat of engineering, refined through the decades. We started with cameras using light and physical films, to now being able to use digital cameras in our mobile phones.



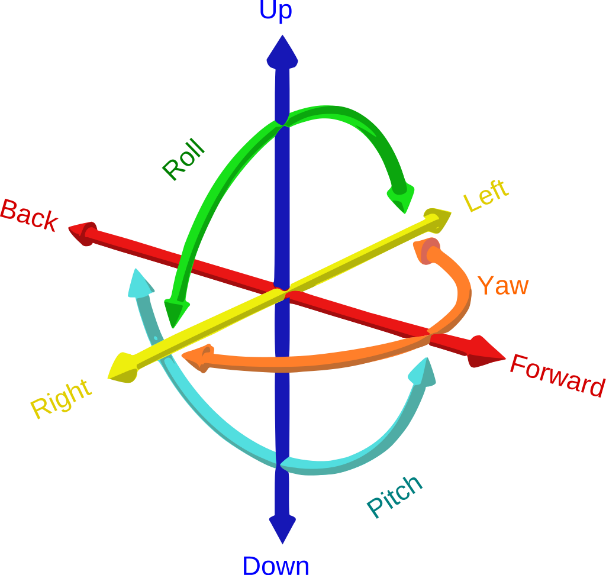
Example of camera sensor – Techspot https://www.techspot.com/guides/850-smartphone-camera-hardware/

The sensors found within most mobile phones today works by using CMOS (complementary metal-oxide-semiconductor) technology. Photodetectors separate a given image into individual pixels and measure analogue information to determine a value for each pixel. As there are millions of these photodetectors on the sensor, real-life images can be replicated digitally by stitching up the respective pixels into one single image. The role of the lens is to focus light onto the area of the sensor so that images are crisp and clear. [11]

For my investigation, I will focus on how we can use a camera on a mobile phone to detect patterns in the live image data to determine what exercise is being performed by the user. This will help me to understand the realm of computer vision and how we can make computers become able to recognise patterns within data.

### Six degrees of freedom:

In my research of these sensors, one concept that kept being mentioned was the notion of 6 degrees of freedom. This is the idea of combining both translation and rotation in all 3 dimensions, to make a rigid body freely move in a given space. [12]



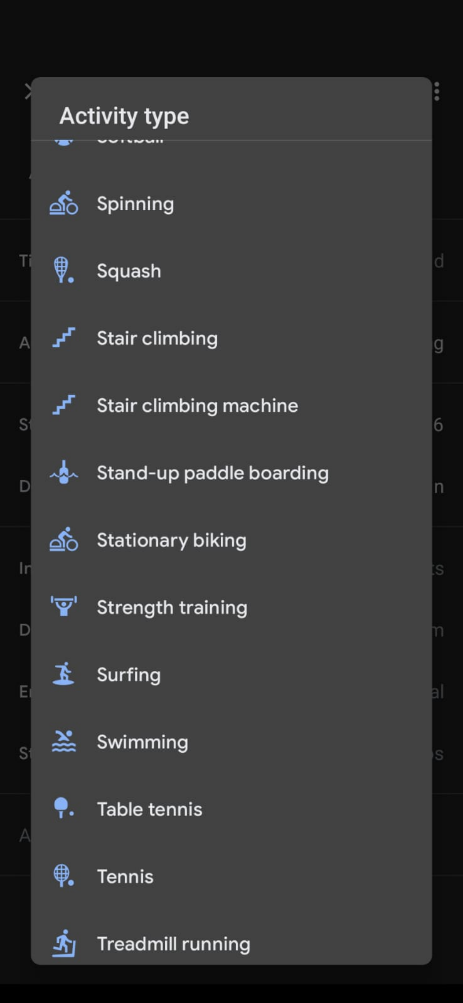
By GregorDS - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=38429678

It is by using the gyroscope and accelerometer in person, that a mobile phone can fully track the exact movements and rotations that a user makes with a mobile device. Furthermore, I hope to be able to use this idea of 6 degrees of freedom in my investigation, to make exercise detections more accurate and defined.

It is due to all these various sensors, that we can now use algorithms to track and trace various activities and I hope to be able to use them as part of my investigation in exercise detection.

## Exercises and Activities

There are many different exercises and activities out there. From within Google Fit’s activity tracking app alone, there are over 50 different types of activities which can be recorded on their app. Some can be easily tracked, whereas others are harder to detect by Google’s algorithm. For example, Google Fit can easily detect and track someone going for a run, with the specific step count, distance etc. However, when it comes to tracking an activity such as rowing, Zumba or even scuba diving, this becomes significantly more complex.



Some Activity types found within Google Fit

For simplicity’s sake, I will split the different types of exercises into two main categories: aerobic exercise, and strength exercises. For aerobic exercises these are ones which motion is needed, and the use of the accelerometer, gyroscope and GPS is required.

For strength exercises, these are activities such as push-ups, planks and pull ups. I aim to use the camera sensor on a mobile device and some version of a neural network to track these activities and exercises.

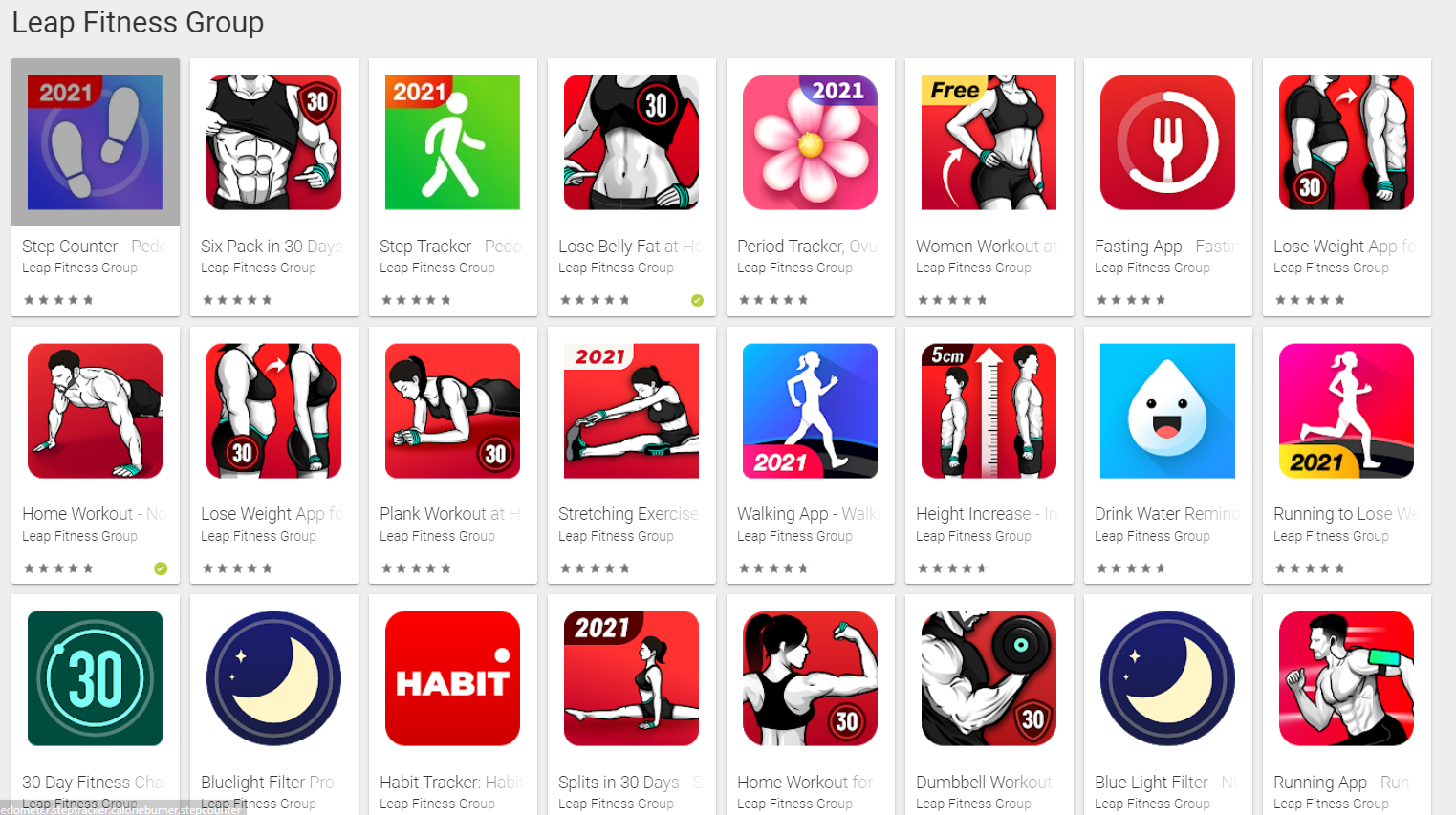
## Current Market and Applications

In the current market, various businesses and competitors offer a wide assortment of fitness and exercise apps. Some include activity and exercise tracking, whilst others simply display exercise for people to follow. Here are some of the most noticeable apps:

Leap Fitness Group:

Currently, as of 2021, one of the most common and prominent companies producing fitness/health apps in Android and IOS platforms is the “Leap Fitness Group”. Their apps have a consistent design, UI, and theming that makes them recognizable, especially amongst the Google Play Store. Furthermore, they do not have a niche market, but produce apps that are wide-ranging with various activities and demographics – there is always an app made by them that covers the wide appeal of the general public.

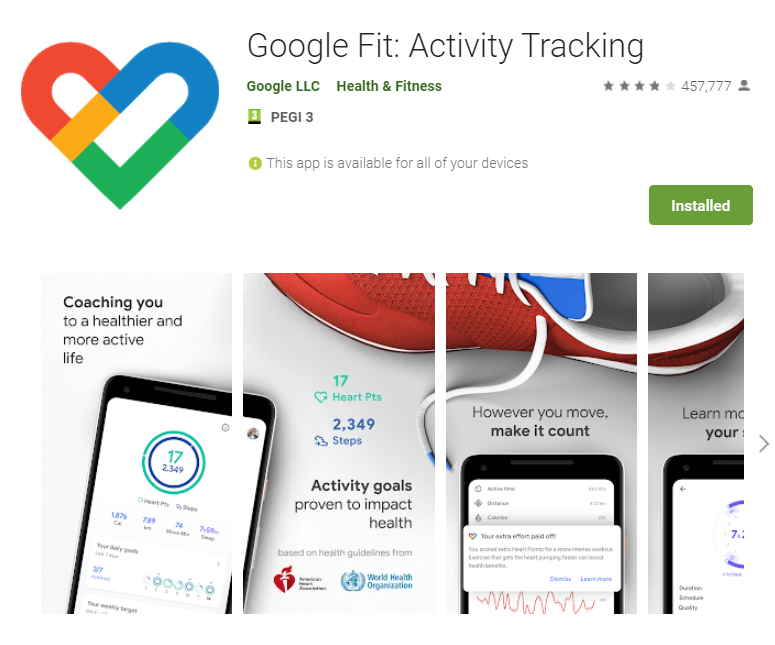
This incentive of producing as many apps as they can for fitness/health be one of the reasons why they are so successful in the Google Play Store because they can cover so many different aspects of fitness and exercise. From this, they use advertisements and monetization to gain profits



Apps by Leap Fitness Group on the Google Play Store https://play.google.com/store/apps/developer?id=Leap+Fitness+Group&hl=en\_GB&gl=US

Google Fit:

Google Fit is a widely used tracking app that mainly focuses on detecting what activity you may have done. The app displays to users their step count, their activity history, calorie burnt as well as data from other devices, such as smartwatches. Google fit is very well integrated with Google Play Services, through Google’s Fitness API. This API is easily accessed by developers who also want to extract and use data from a person’s device for their android app, or certain web applications.



Google Fit App by Google LLC on the Google Play Store https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.google.android.apps.fitness&hl=en\_GB&gl=US

## Third-Party Feedback

As my investigation revolves around exercise and fitness, I will avoid getting feedback from someone who is unable to do exercises due to age or unfortunate events. Instead, my third party will be focused on young people who are generally fit and able to do exercises. Here is a list of subjects who have agreed to give me feedback throughout this course:

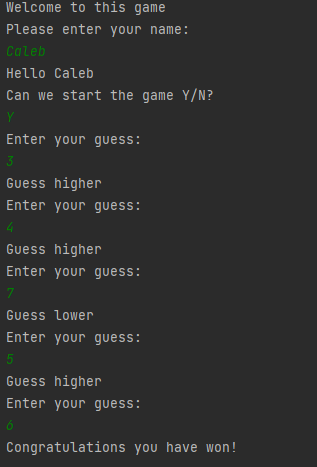
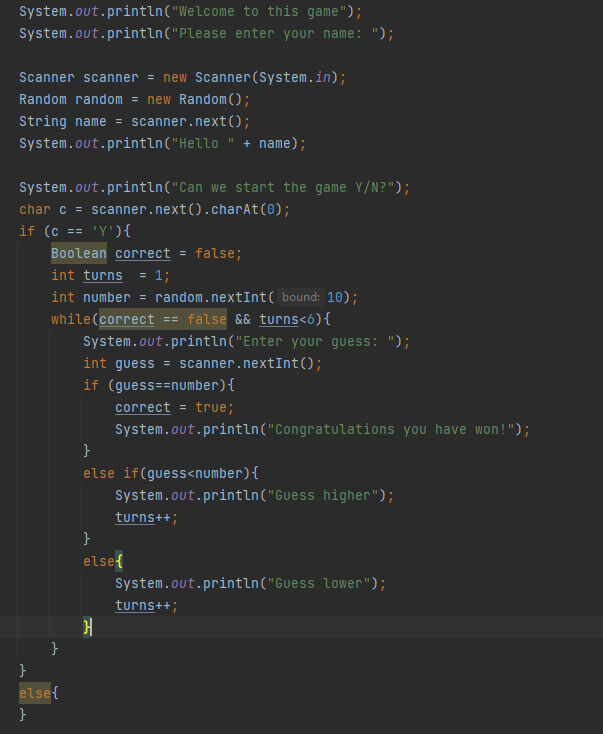
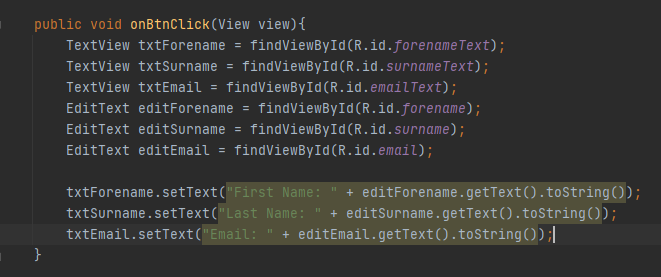
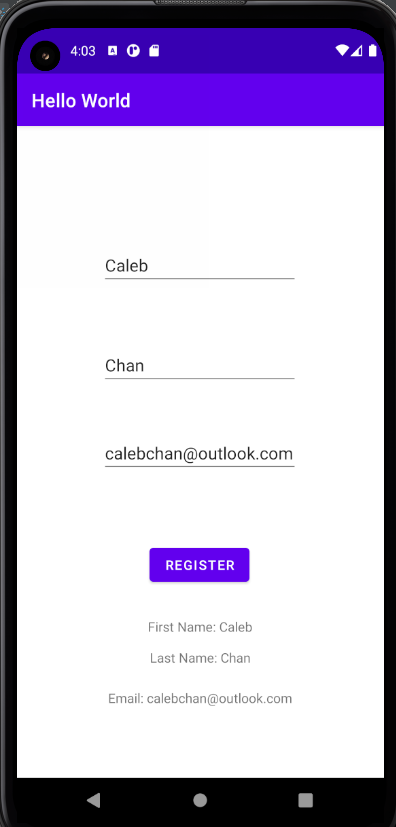
## Prototyping and Spiking

For my investigation, I aim to be able to apply my findings from exercise detection, into a working Android app. To do this, I must first learn how to code an Android app from scratch. Because of the wider documentation, I will aim to use Java in my final project, thus I need to learn Java.

I also aim to include a client-server model to parse data to and from devices, thus I will need to learn SQL and how to implement SQL into a Java program. This will most likely mean I will have to use an API of some sort to do this.

### Android Development Spiking:

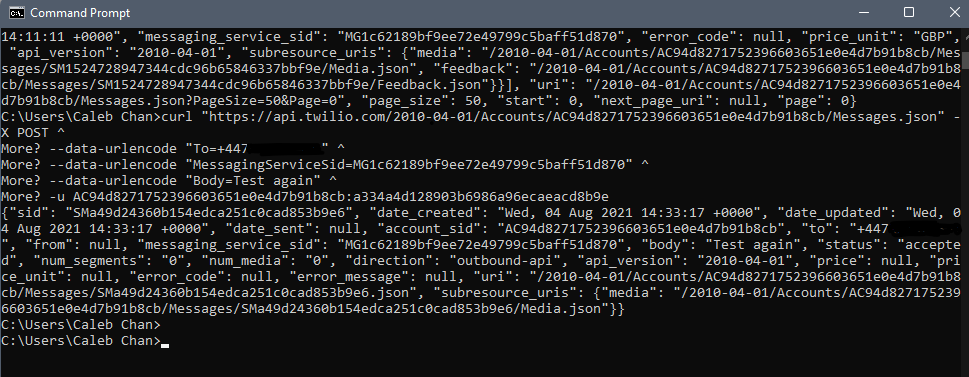
As I have had no previous experience in programming in Java as well as Android Studio, I will learn all of this from scratch. Thanks to freeCodeCamp.org I followed their comprehensive Android App Development course to learn both Java and the workings of Android.

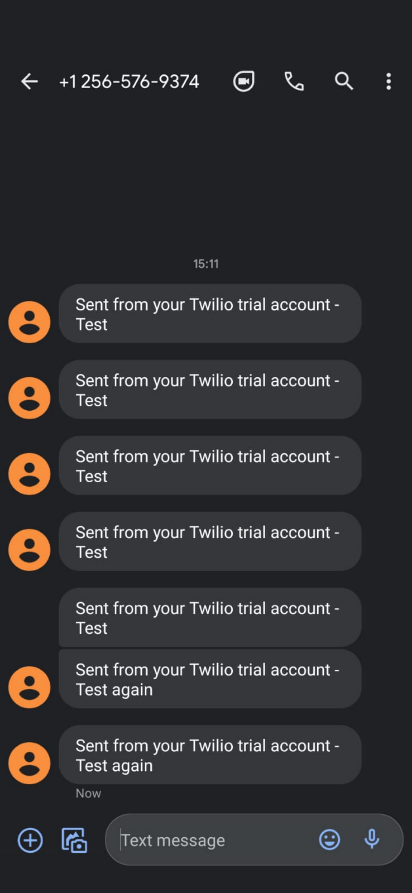


An API, stands for application programming interface, to allow a developer access to data without the need for a developer to necessarily know all how this data is formed, etc. API gives way to the abstraction of needing to program everything from scratch.

During my analysis of current fitness applications, Google Fit stood out to me, as they provided developers with their dedicated fitness API, specifically for app developers. As I have not dealt with APIs before, I wanted to learn more about APIs in general, so that I could test out their Fitness API so I could have a rough idea of how to approach developing a fitness app. Furthermore, the method of how Google detected steps and activities intrigued me, because of how easy it seemed for a developer to extract such information from the API.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZvSYJDk-us&ab_channel=freeCodeCamp.org>

First use of API through the command line, sending a text message from a phone to another phone via SMS, using Twilio.



By using the curl code provided by Twilio, I was able to send a message from the Twilio phone to my phone, via Twilio’s SMS API, as a POST request.

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