

Forward Kinematics

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Google DeepMind

Apr 7, 2025

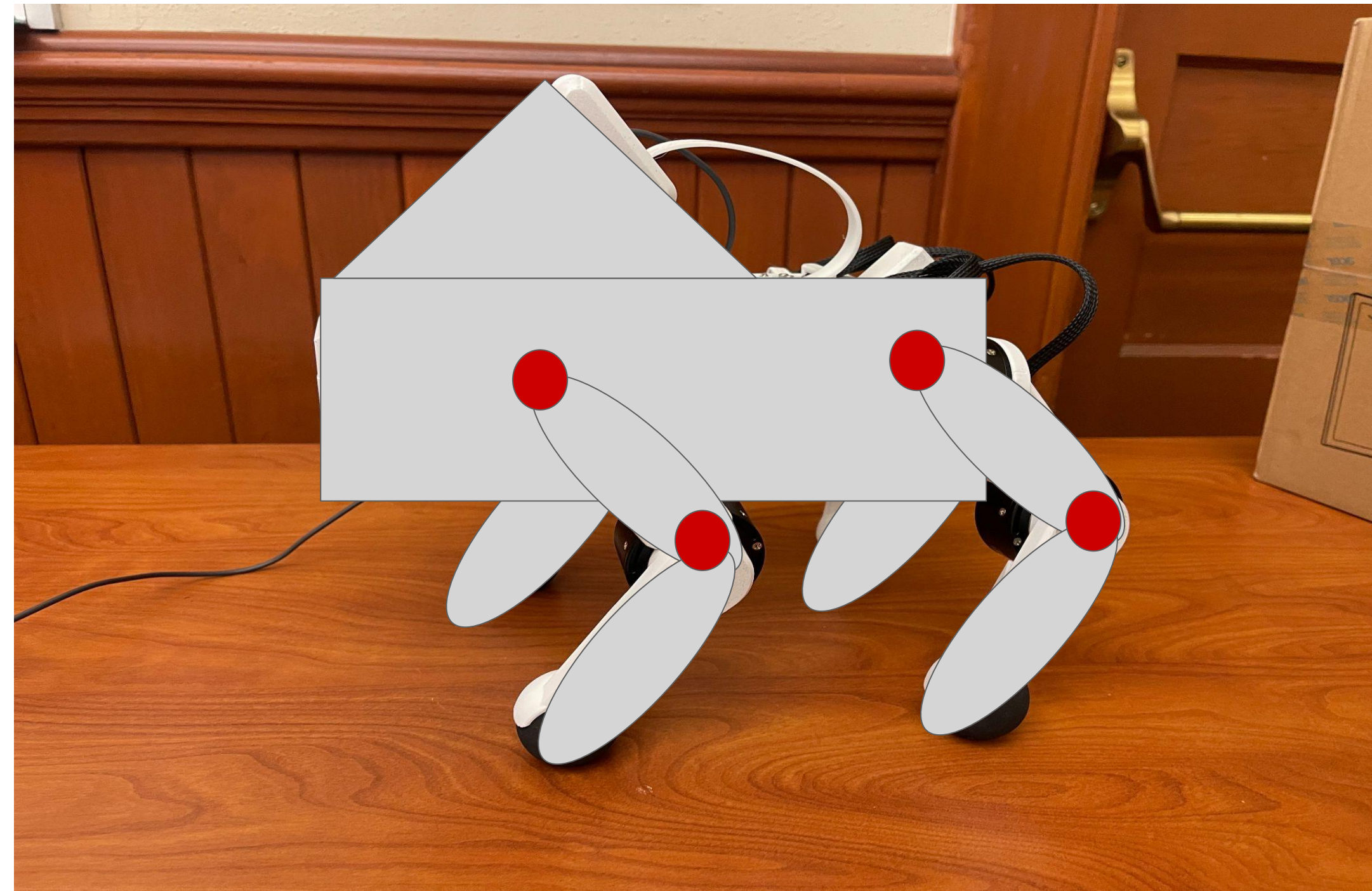
Goal

What is Forward Kinematics (FK)?

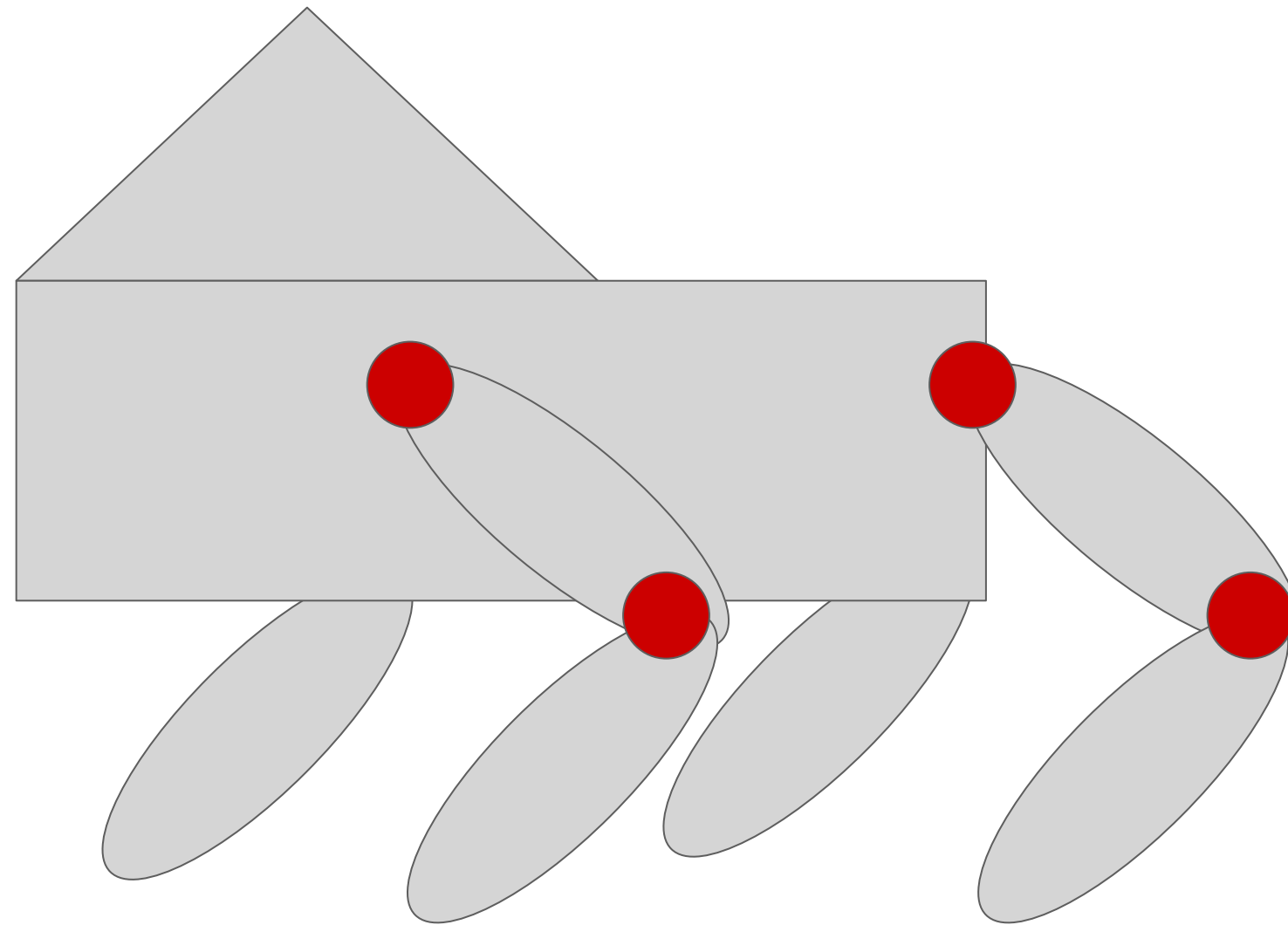
Why is FK important in robotics?

How to calculate FK?

Problem Statement

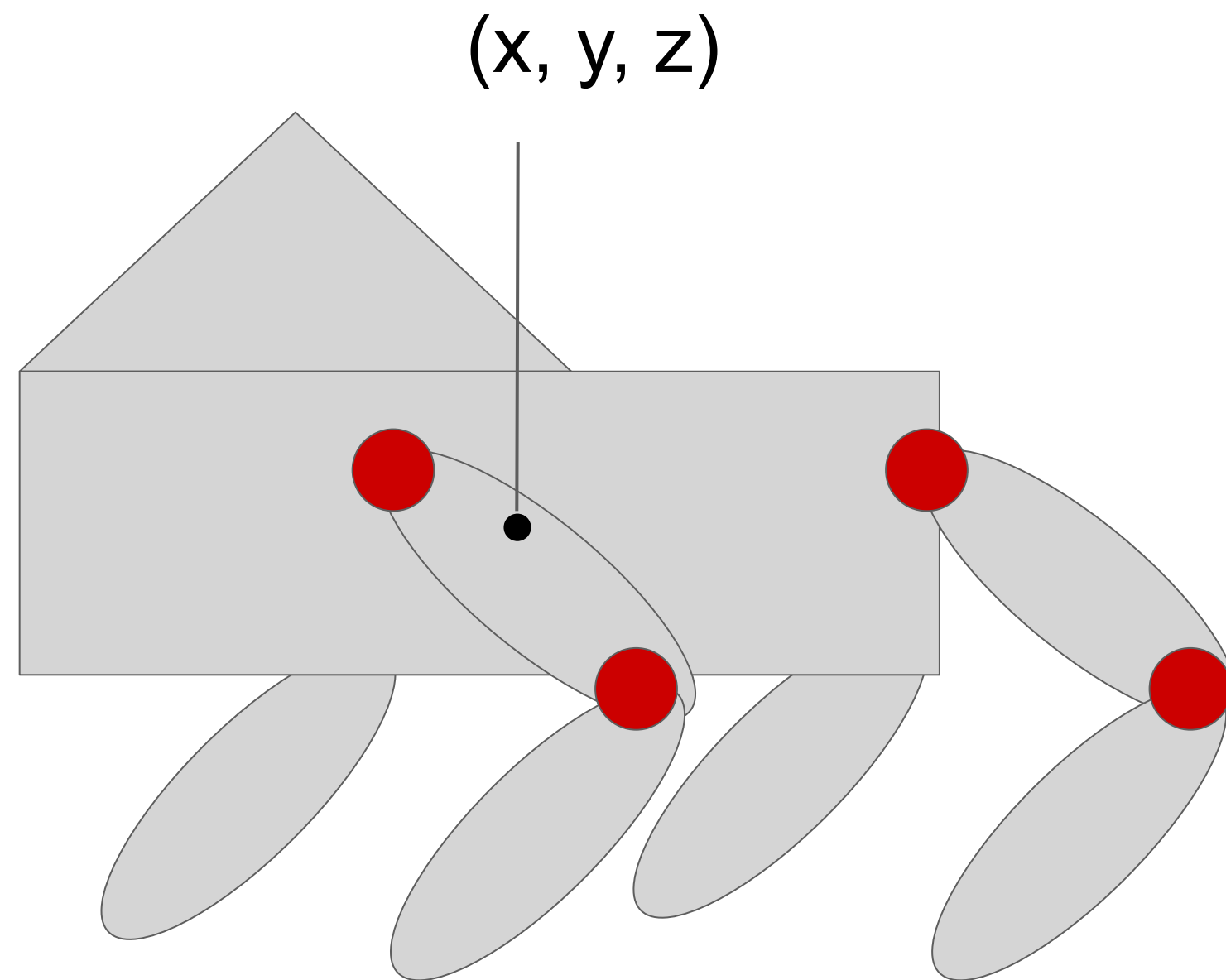


Problem Statement



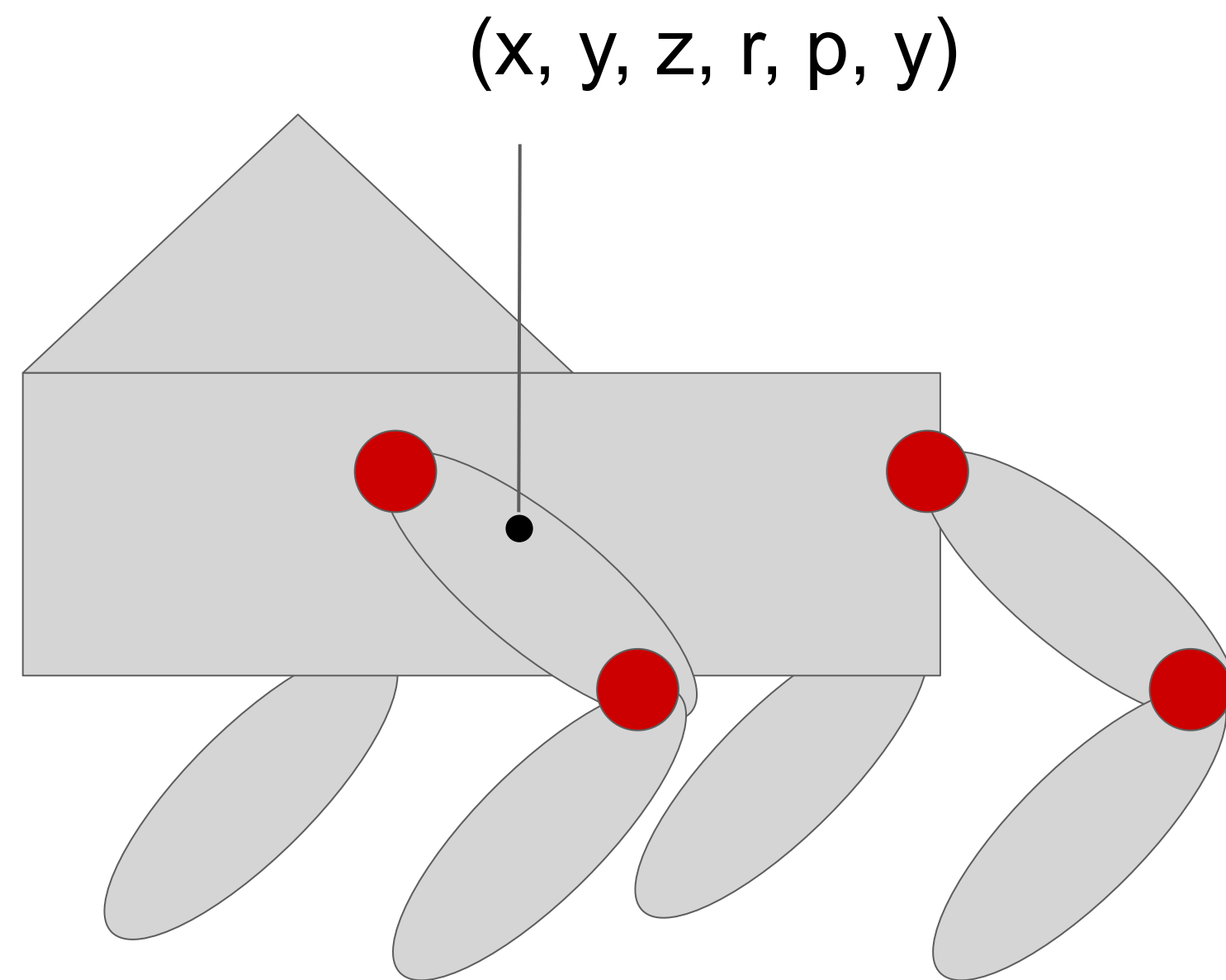
Pose: $\mathbf{q} = ?$

Problem Statement



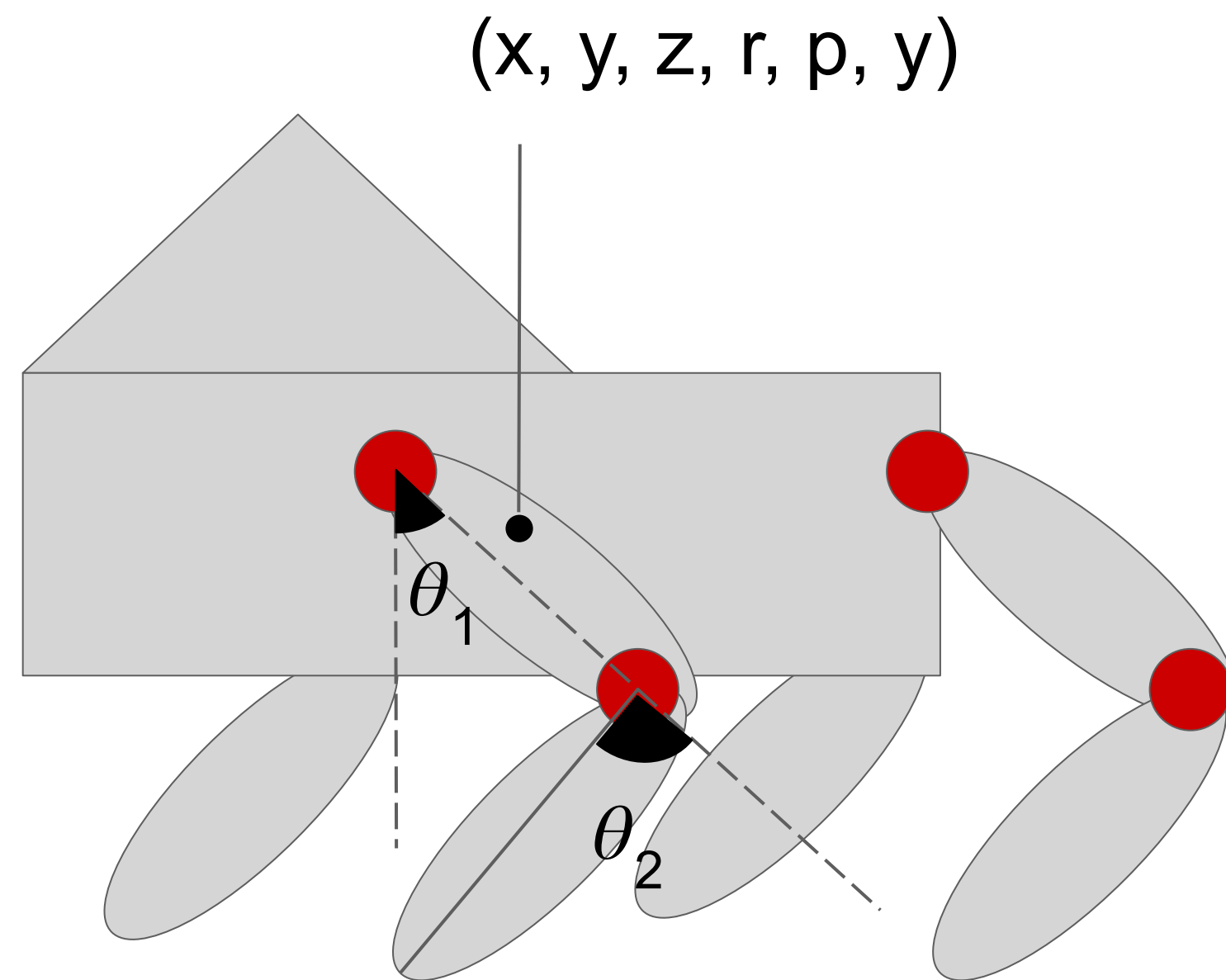
Pose: $\mathbf{q} = [x, y, z, \dots$

Problem Statement



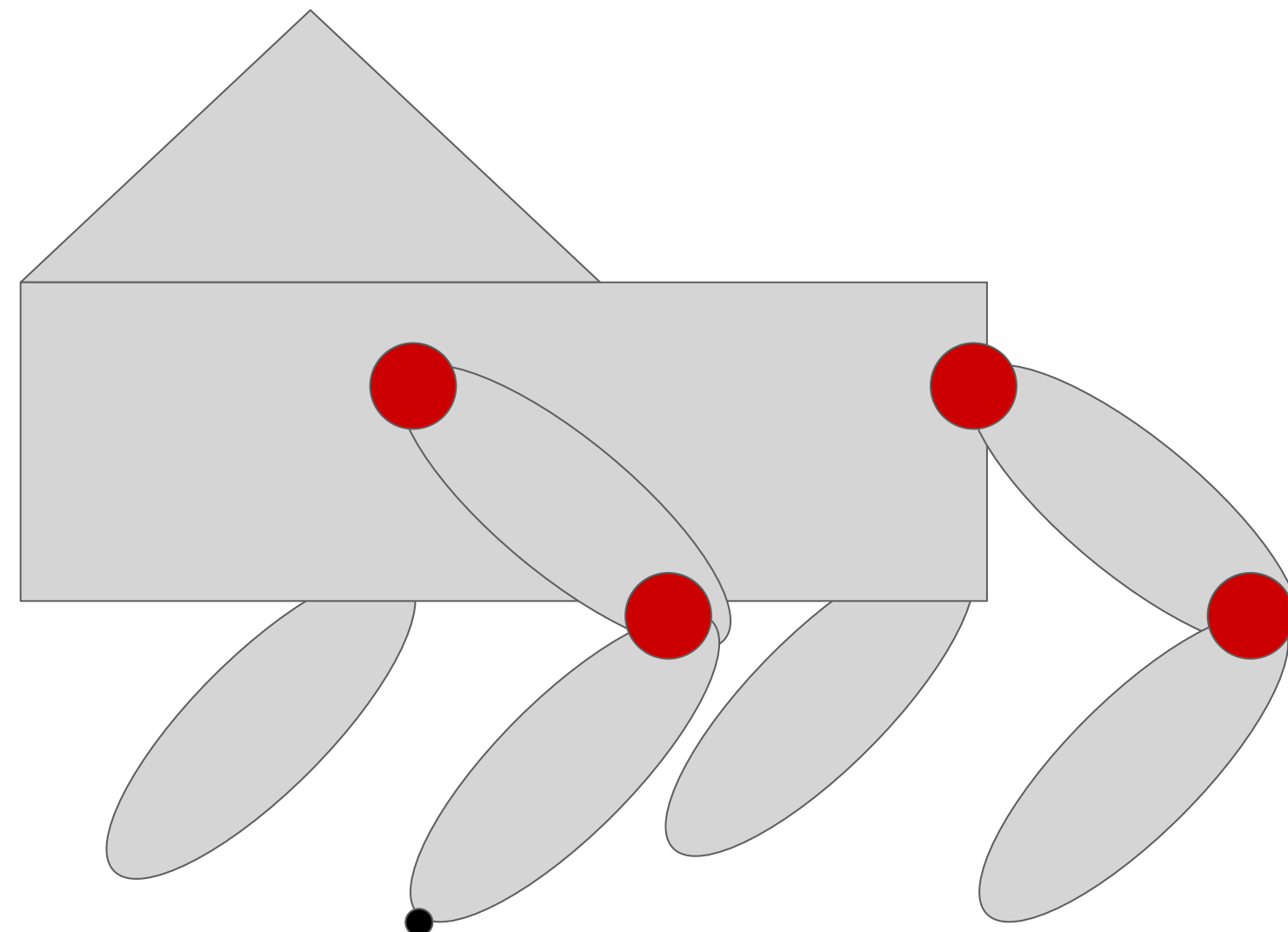
Pose: $\mathbf{q} = [x, y, z, r, p, y, \dots]$

Problem Statement



Pose: $\mathbf{q} = [x, y, z, r, p, y, \theta_1, \dots, \theta_{12}]$

Problem Statement



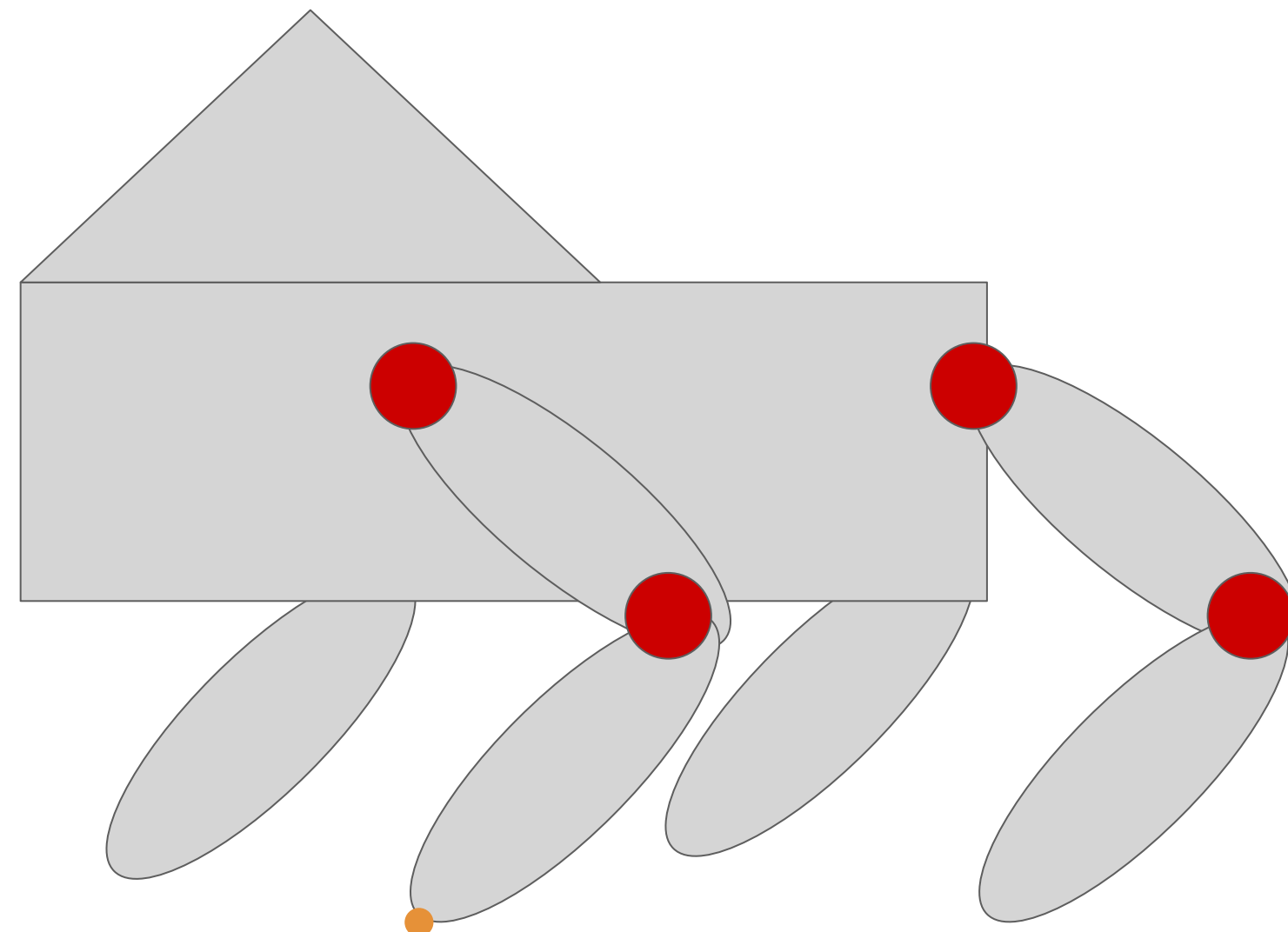
End effector

$$\mathbf{x} = (x_e, y_e, z_e)$$

Pose: \mathbf{q}

Position: $\mathbf{x} = (x_e, y_e, z_e)$

Problem Statement



End effector

$$\mathbf{x} = (x_e, y_e, z_e)$$

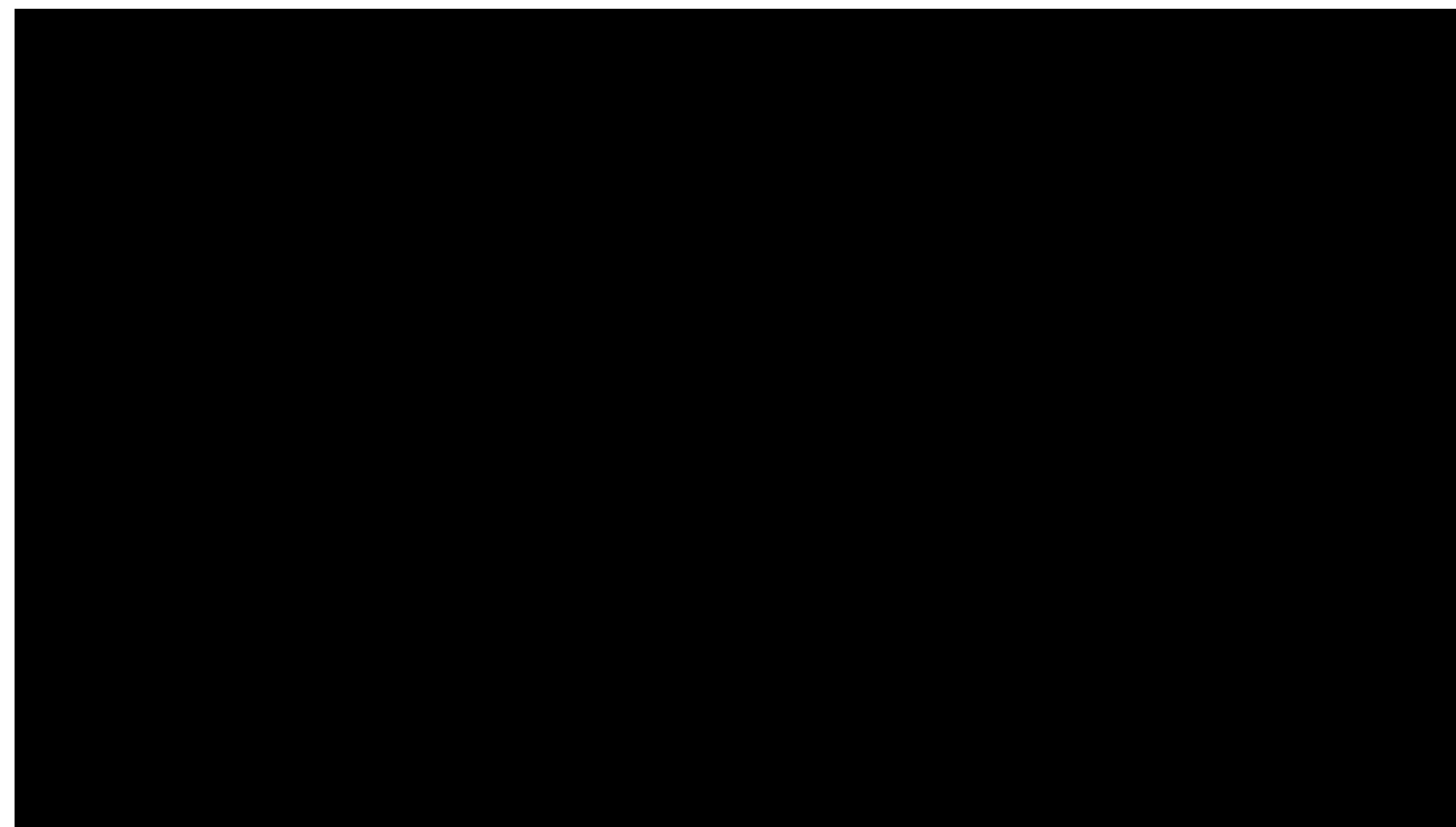
$$\mathbf{x} = \text{FK}(\mathbf{q})$$

$$\mathbf{q} = \text{IK}(\mathbf{x})$$

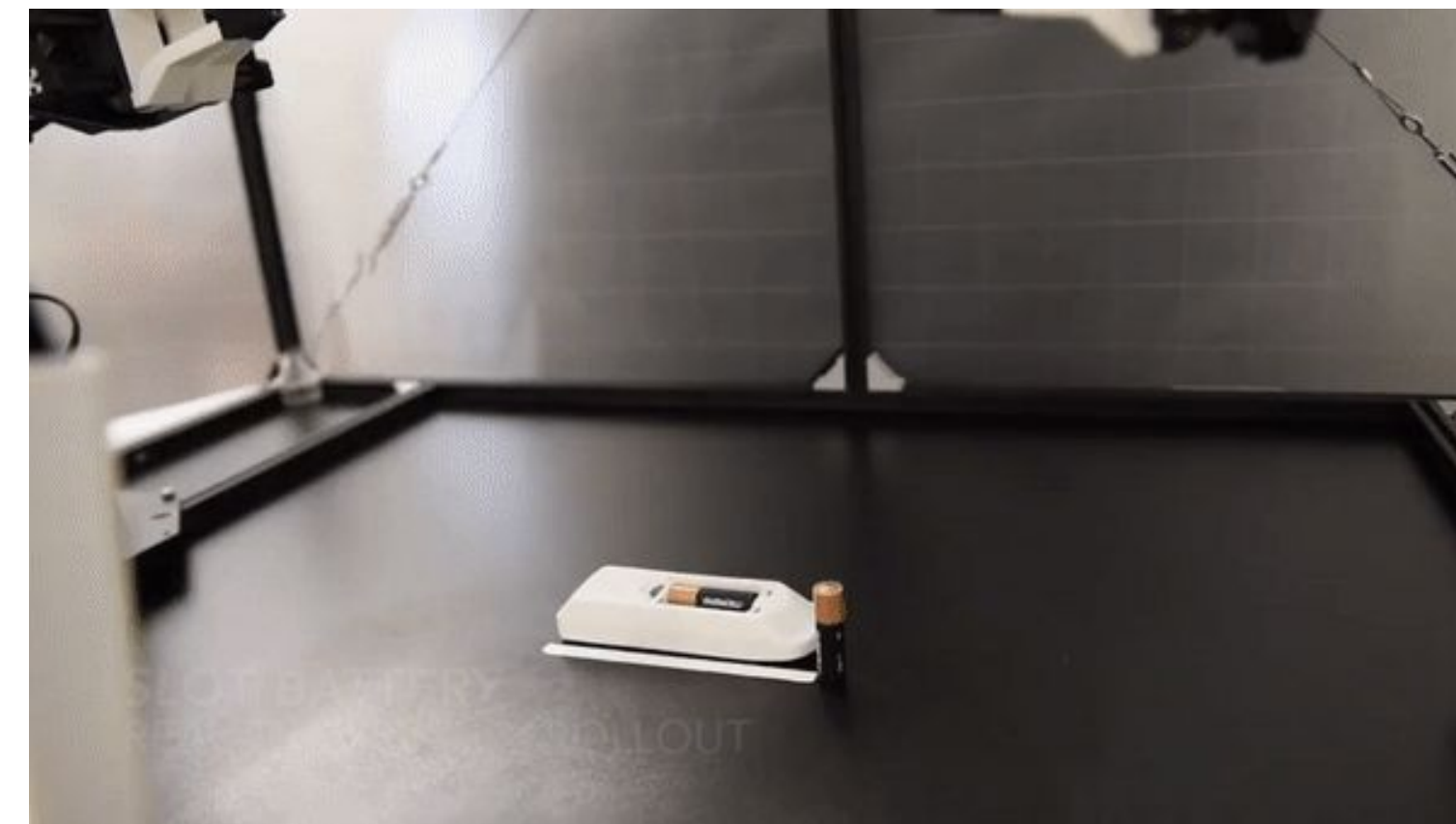
Why Forward Kinematics?



[Legs as Manipulator: Pushing Quadrupedal Agility Beyond Locomotion](#), Cheng et al. ICRA 2023



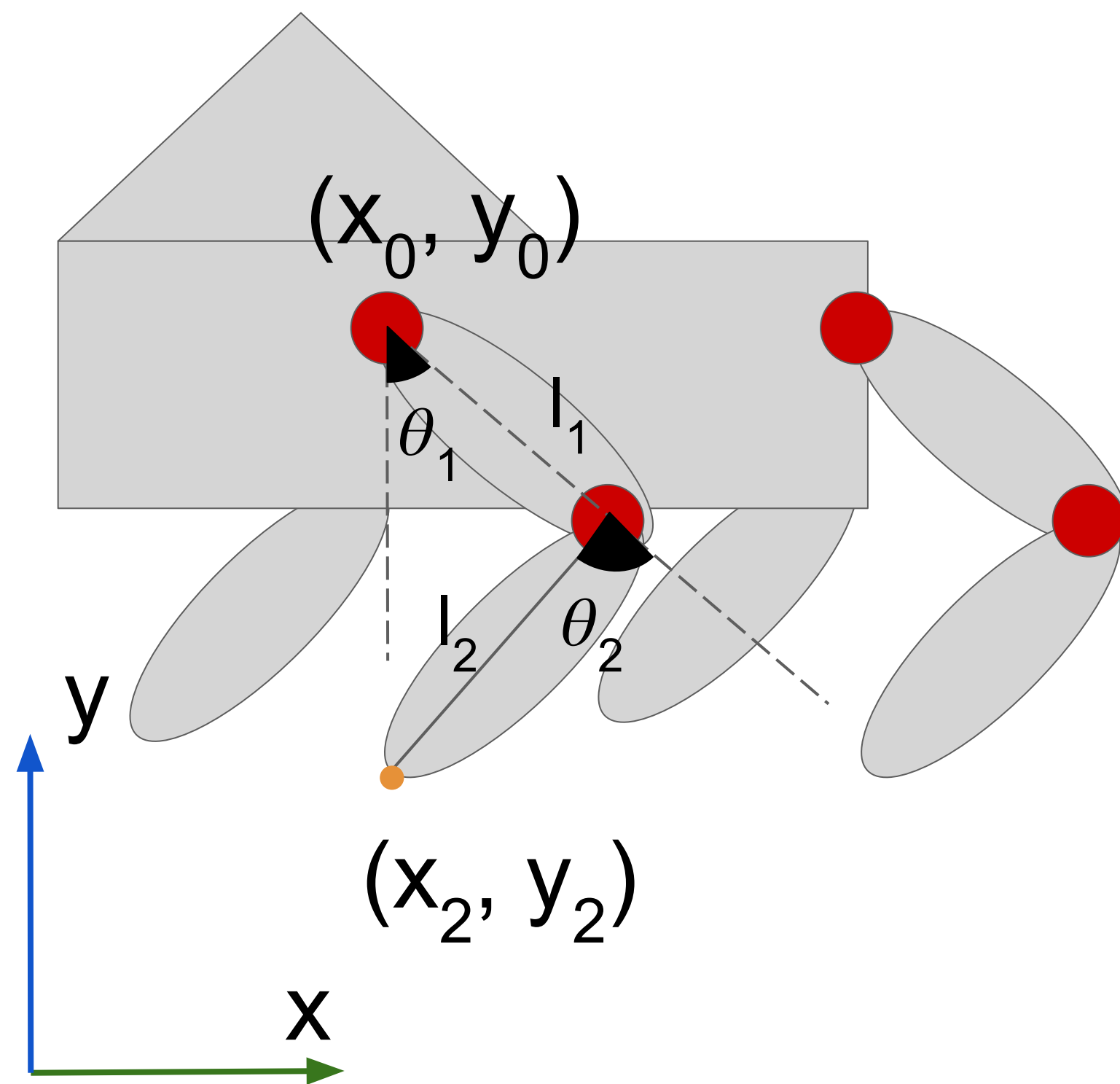
[Learning Agile Soccer Skills for a Bipedal Robot with Deep Reinforcement Learning](#), Haarnoja et al. 2023



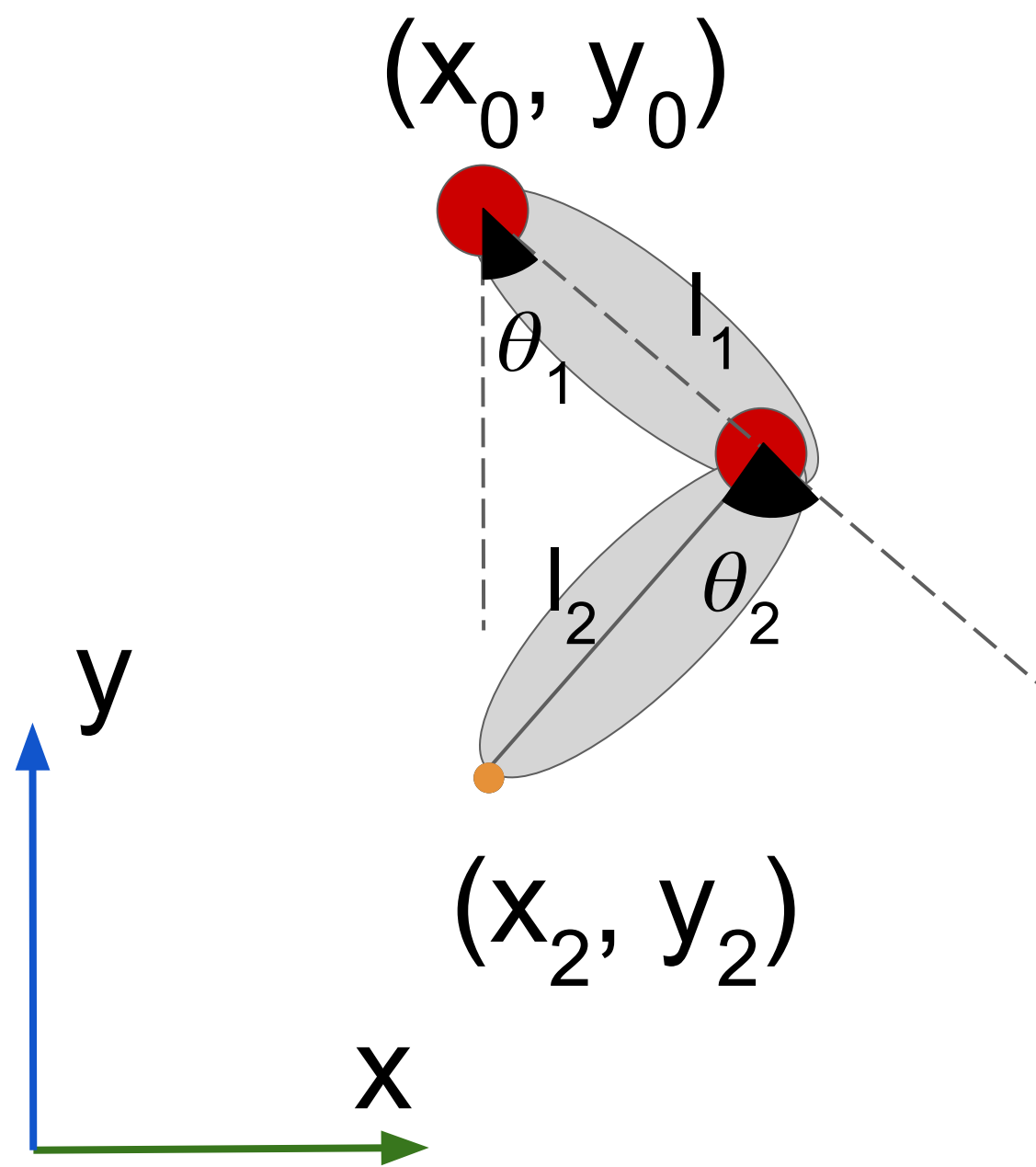
[Learning Fine-Grained Bimanual Manipulation with Low-Cost Hardware](#), Zhao et al. RSS 2023

- Knowing end effector positions are critical for robotic tasks
- Onboard sensors only provide (motor) joint angles

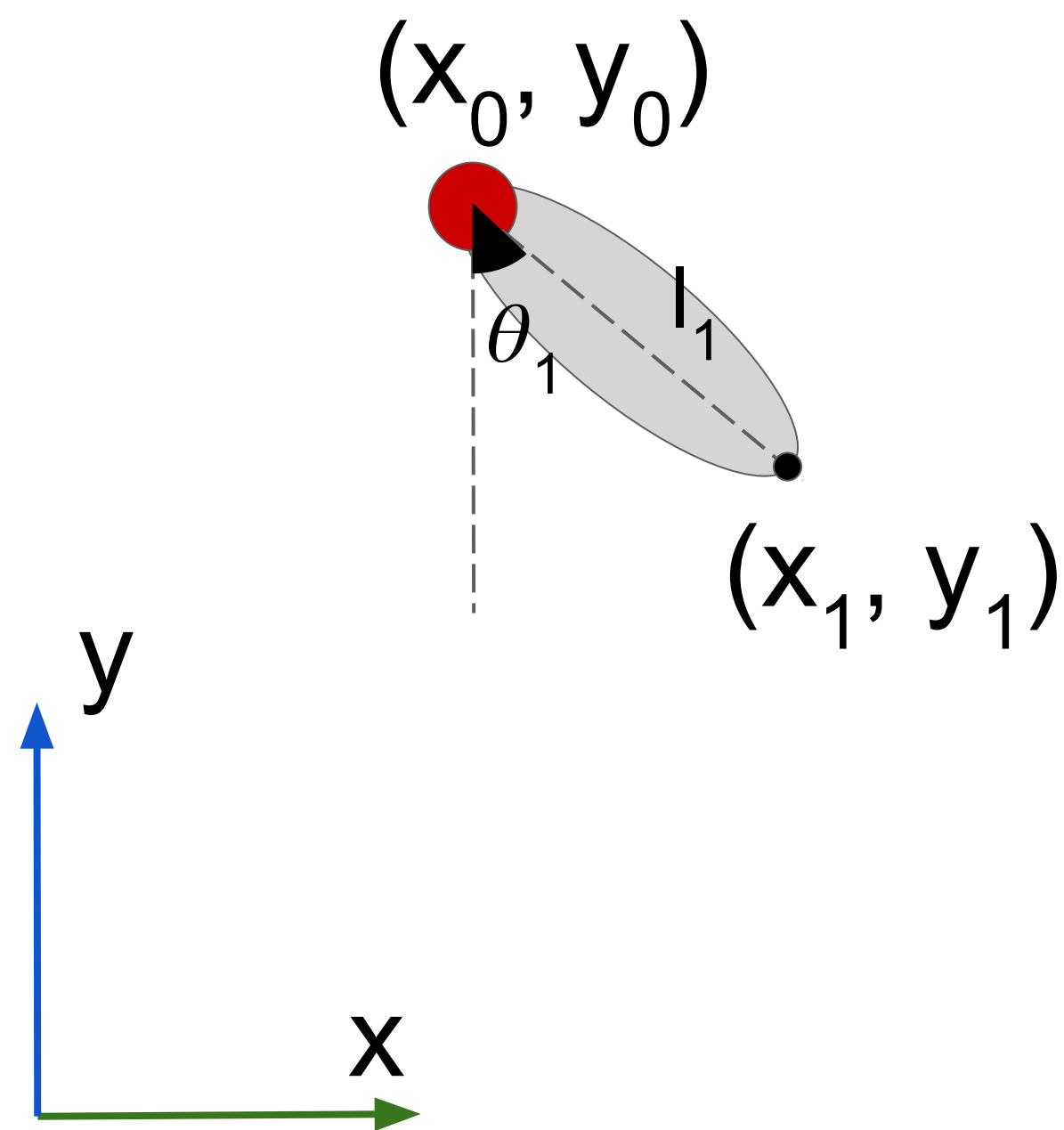
A Simple Example



A Simple Example



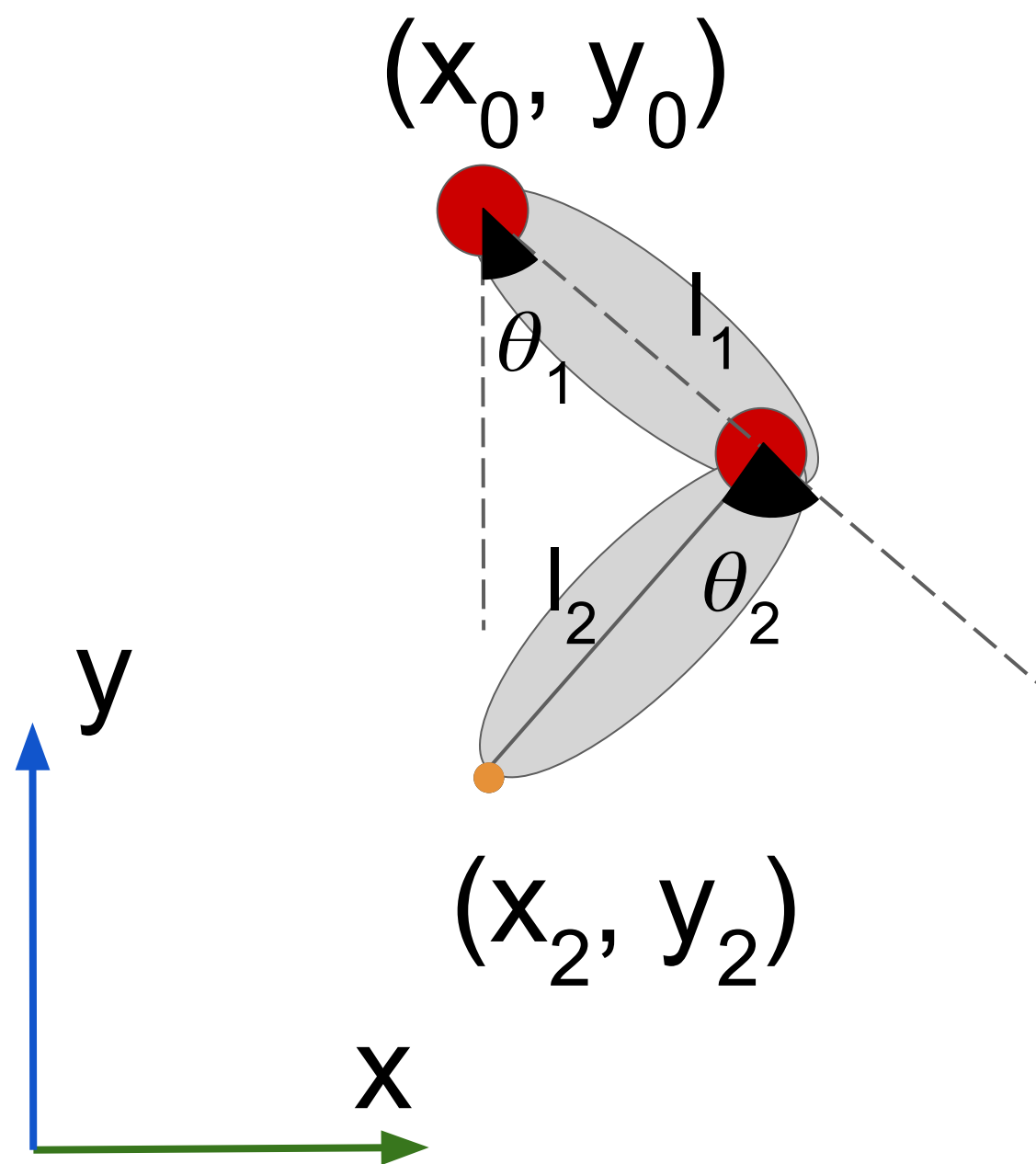
A Simple Example



$$x_1 = l_1 \sin(\theta_1) + x_0$$

$$y_1 = -l_1 \cos(\theta_1) + y_0$$

A Simple Example



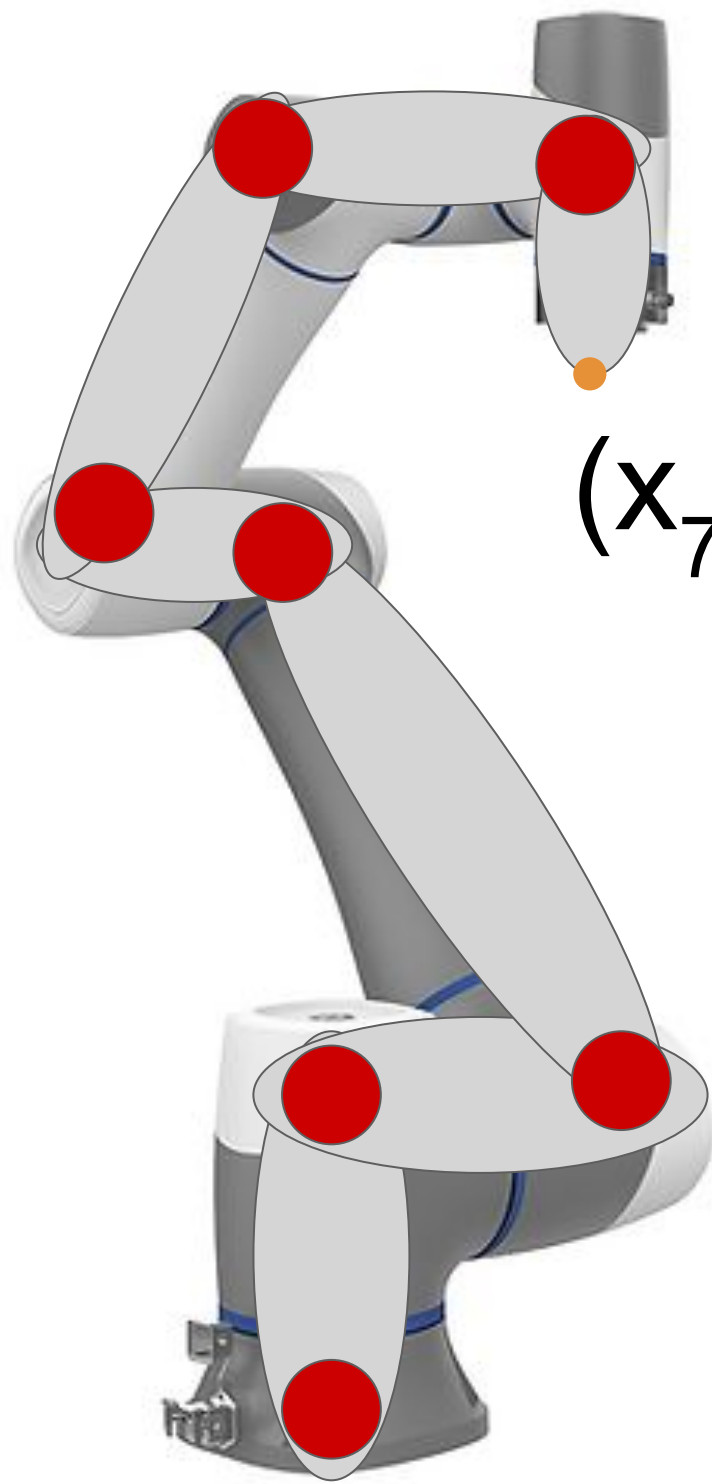
$$x_1 = l_1 \sin(\theta_1) + x_0$$

$$y_1 = -l_1 \cos(\theta_1) + y_0$$

$$x_2 = x_1 - l_2 \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) = l_1 \sin(\theta_1) - l_2 \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) + x_0$$

$$y_2 = y_1 - l_2 \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) = -l_1 \cos(\theta_1) - l_2 \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) + y_0$$

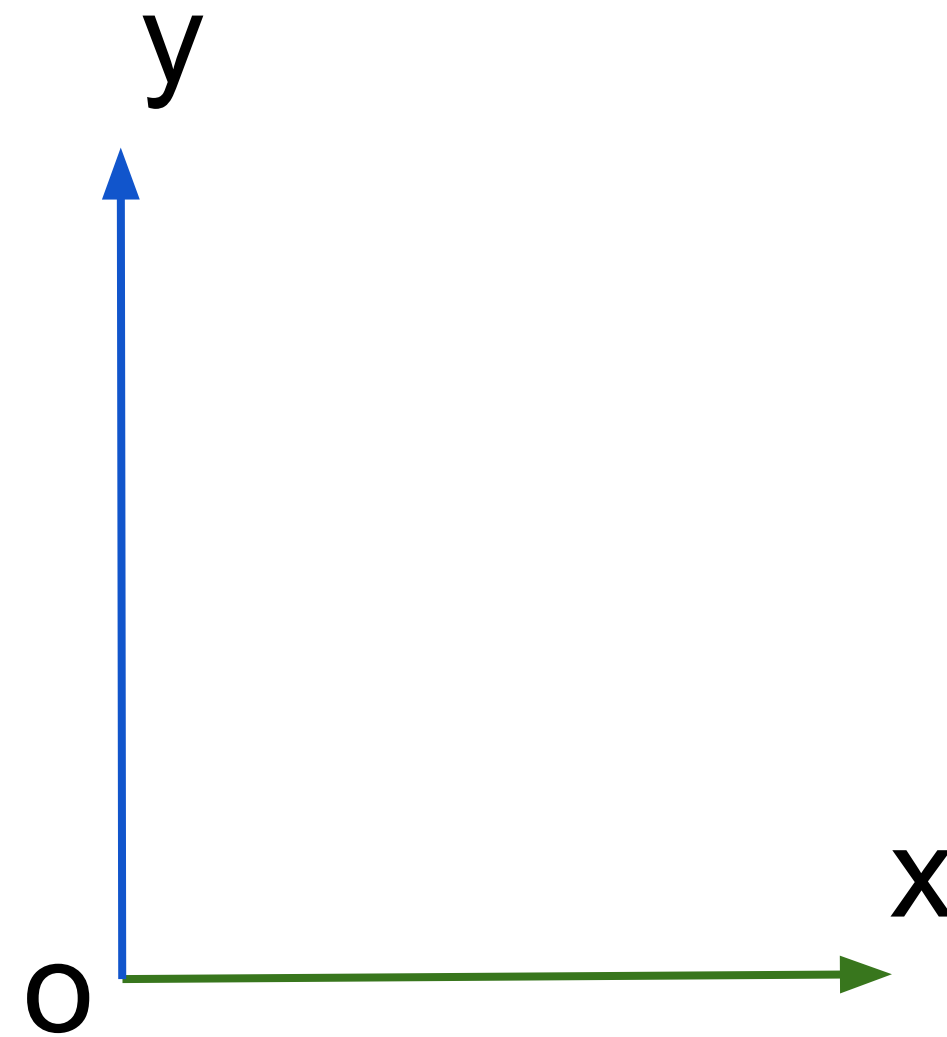
A Complex Example



$$(x_7, y_7) = ?$$

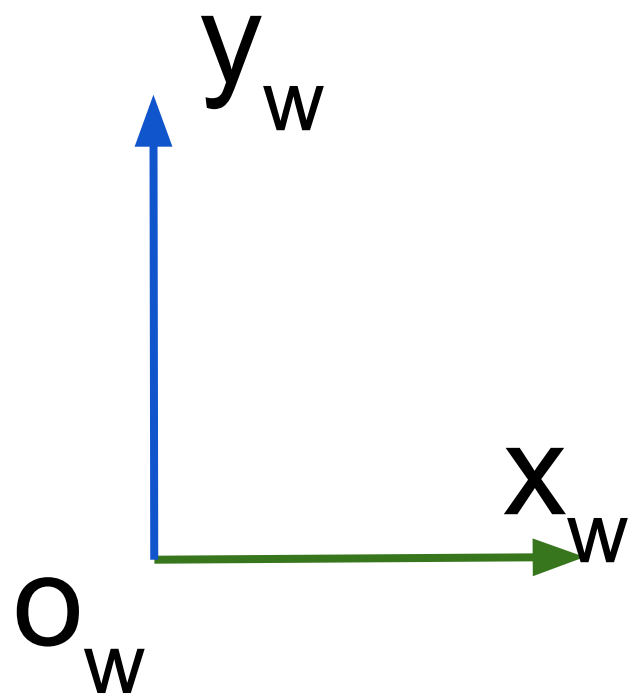
Coordinate Systems

Coordinate system: Origin and Axes



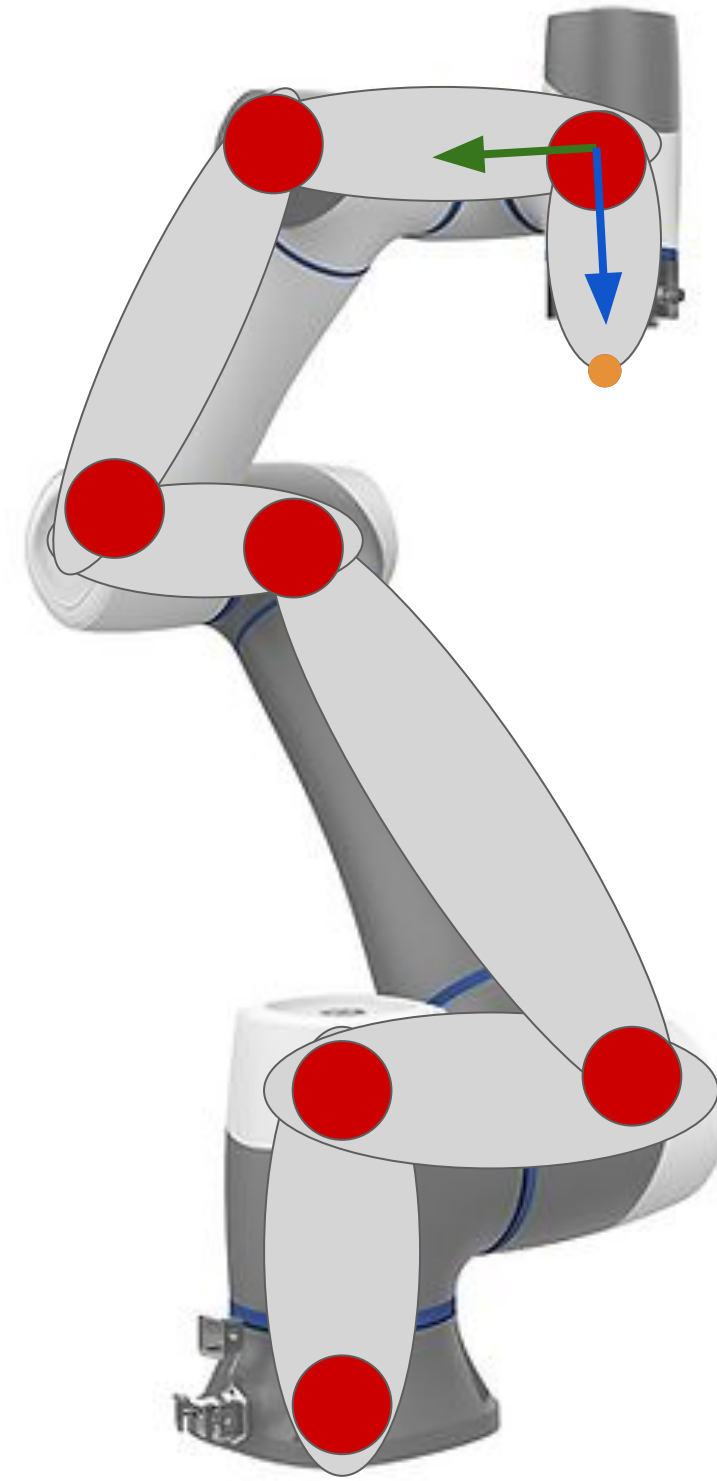
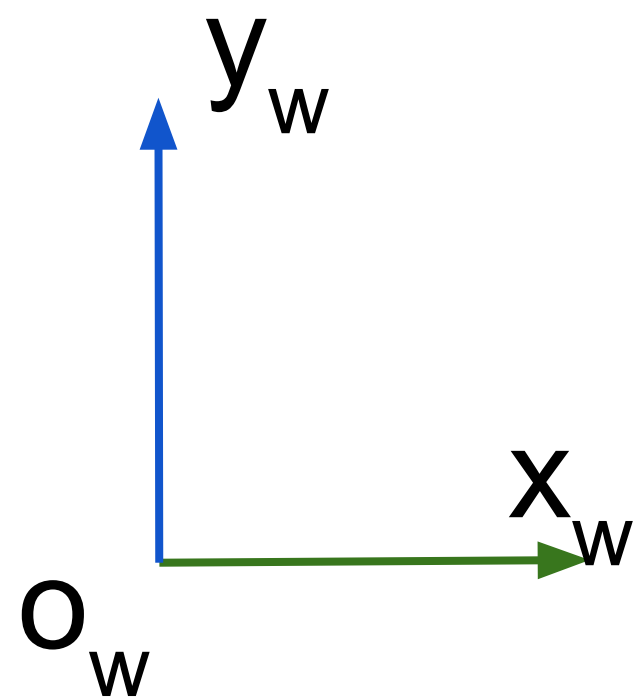
Coordinate Systems

World coordinate: An absolute coordinate system that is fixed in space



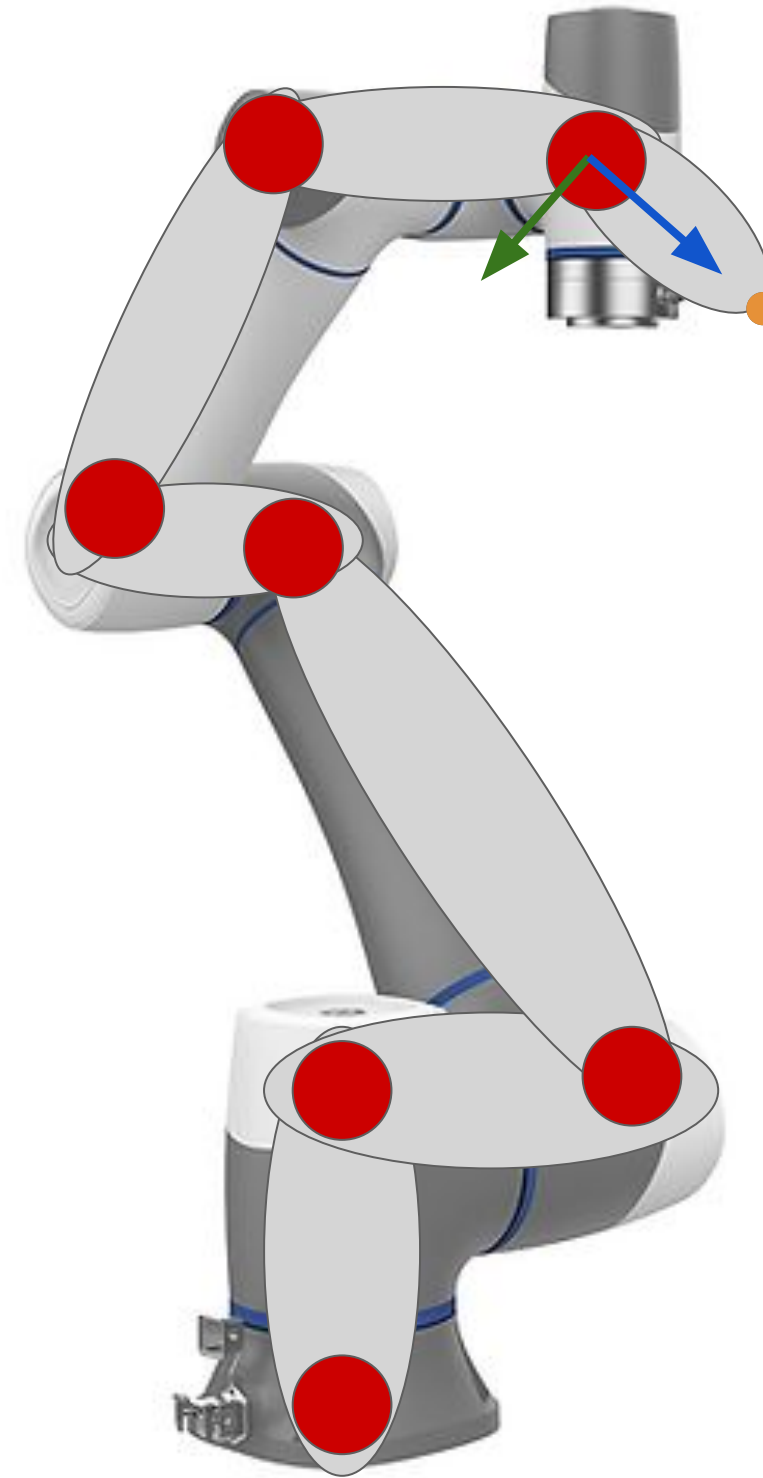
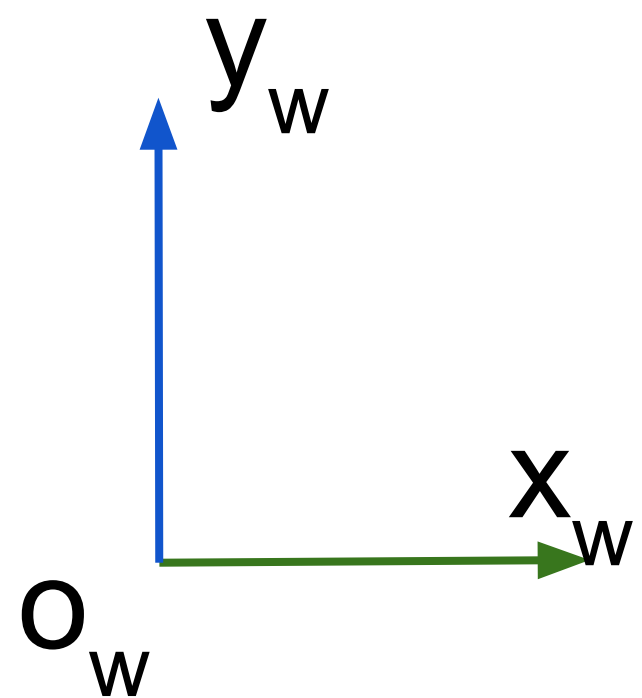
Coordinate Systems

Local coordinate: A coordinate system that is attached to a robot link



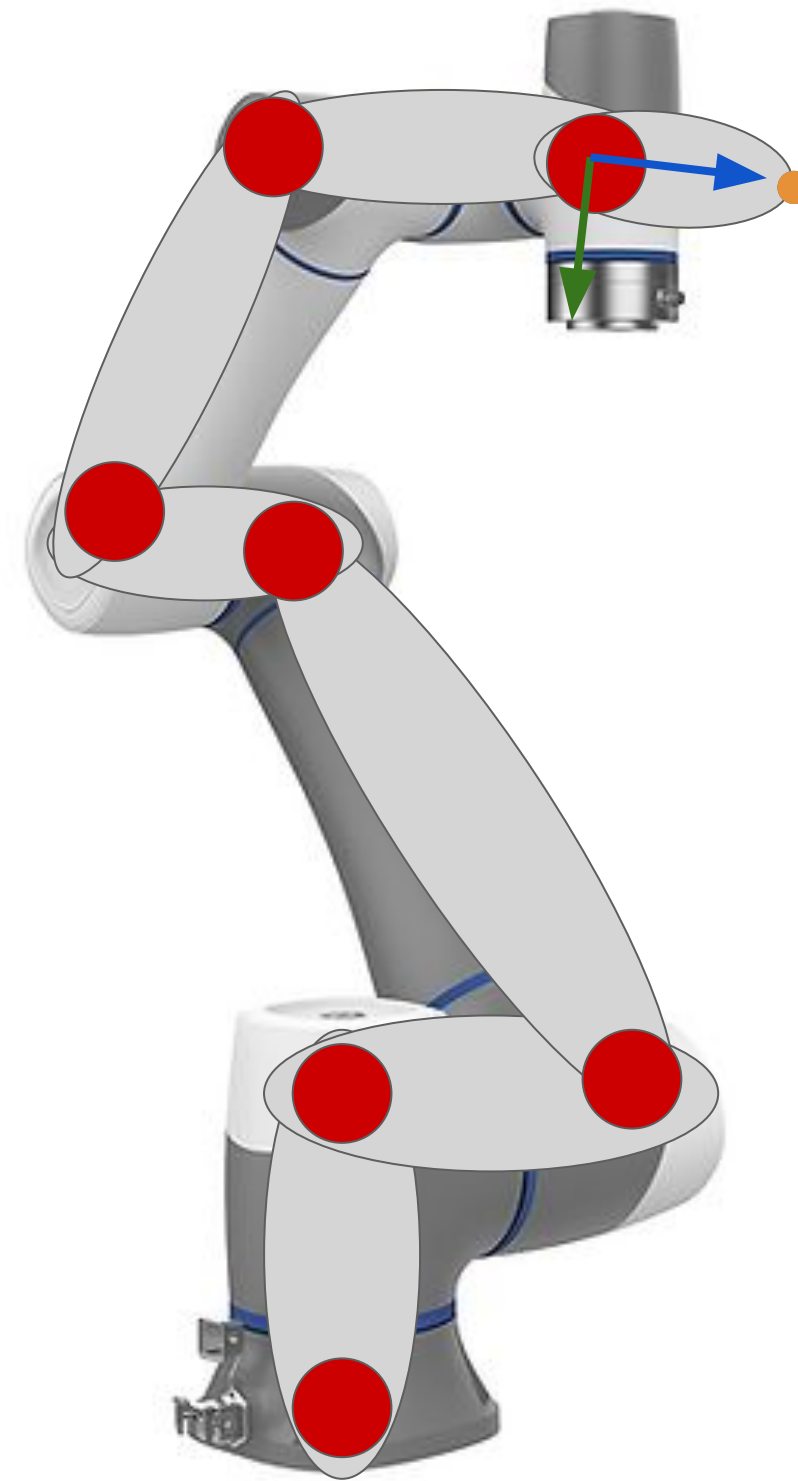
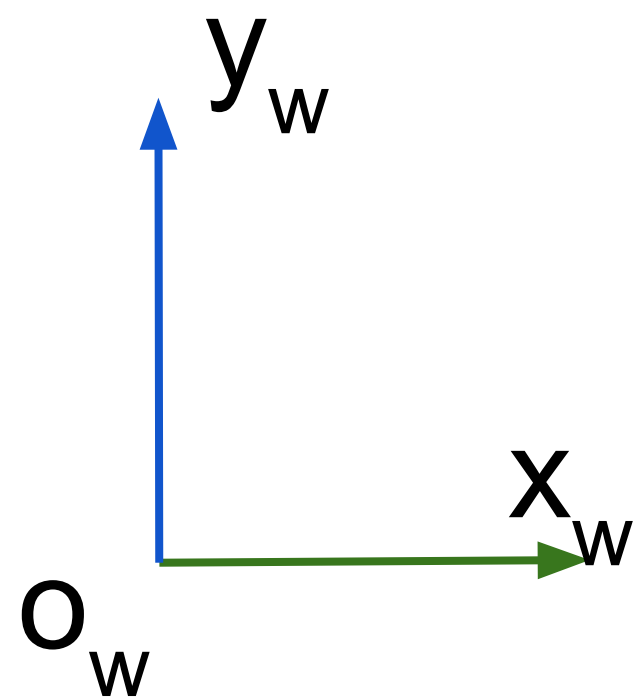
Coordinate Systems

Local coordinate: A coordinate system that is **attached to a robot link**

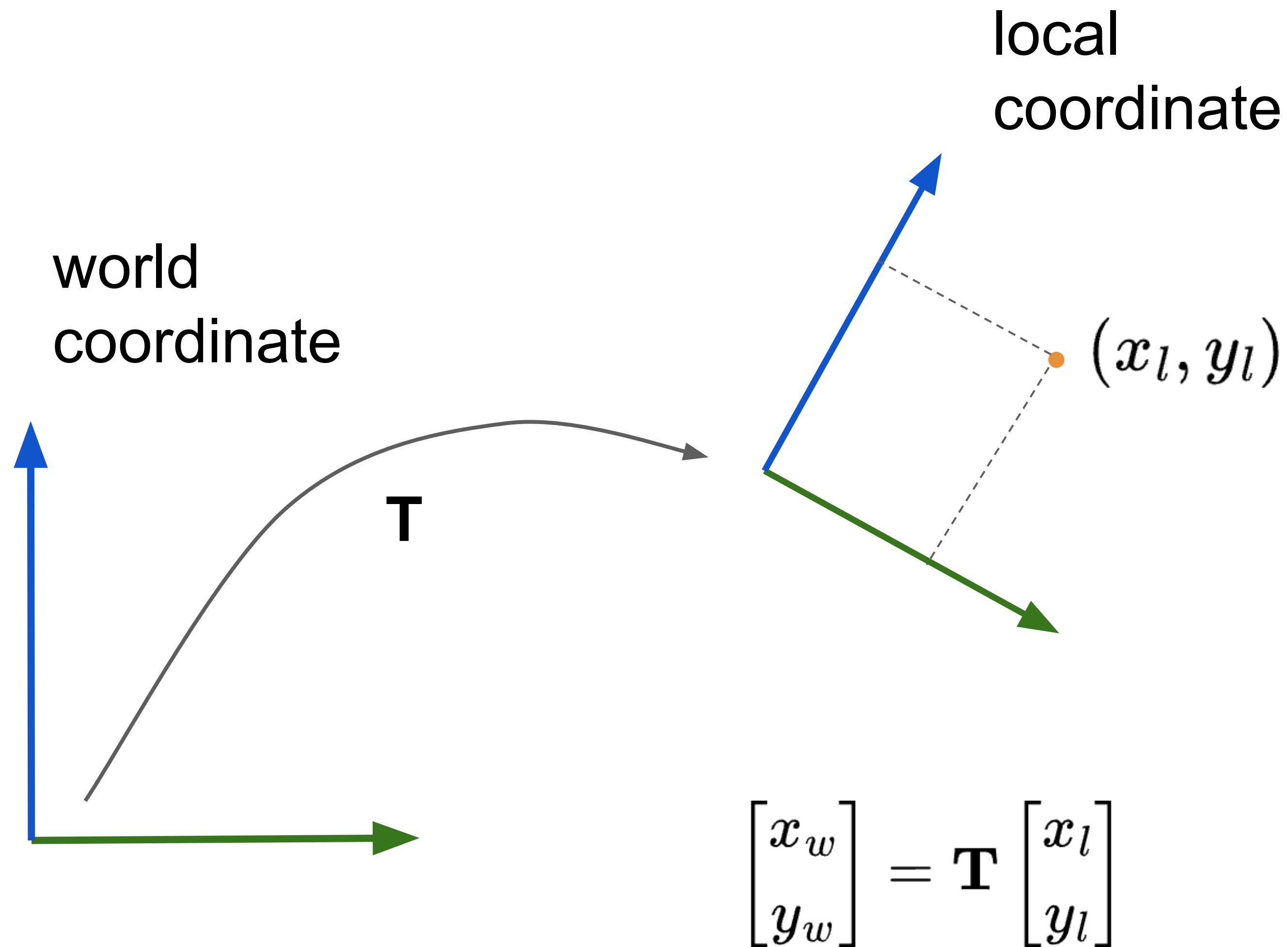


Coordinate Systems

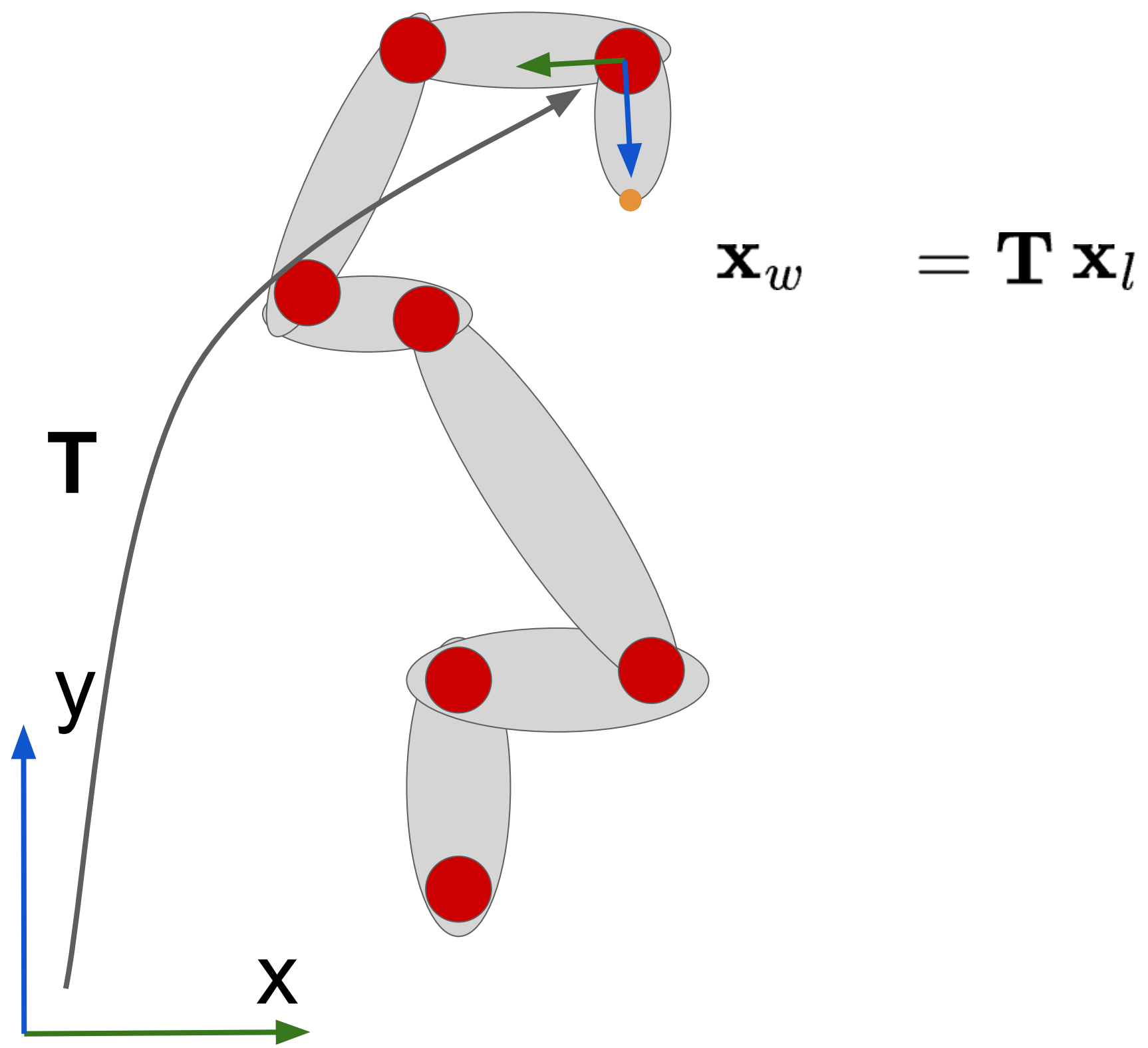
Quiz: Does the end-effector coordinate change in local vs. world coordinate?



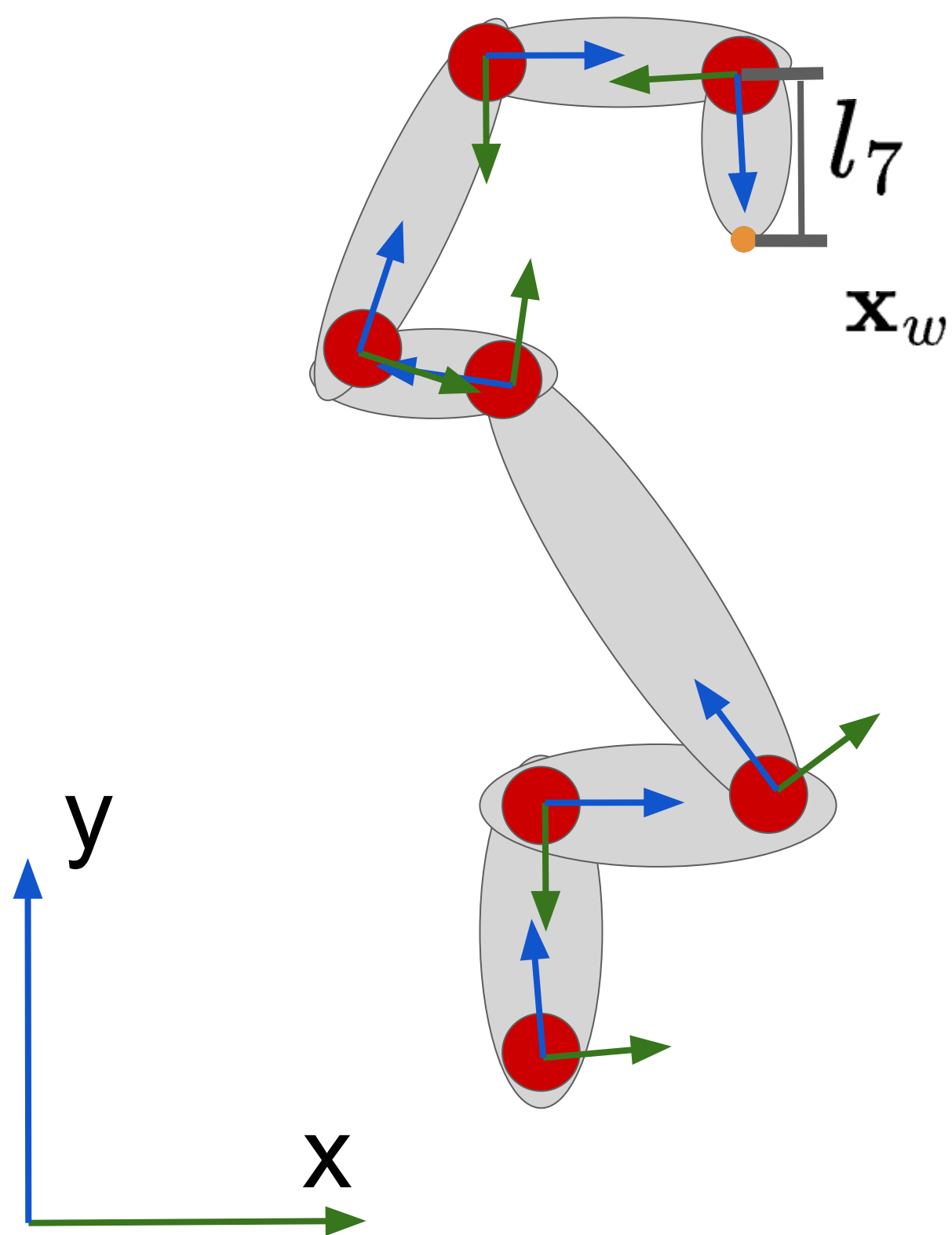
Transformation between Coordinate Systems



General Approach



General Approach



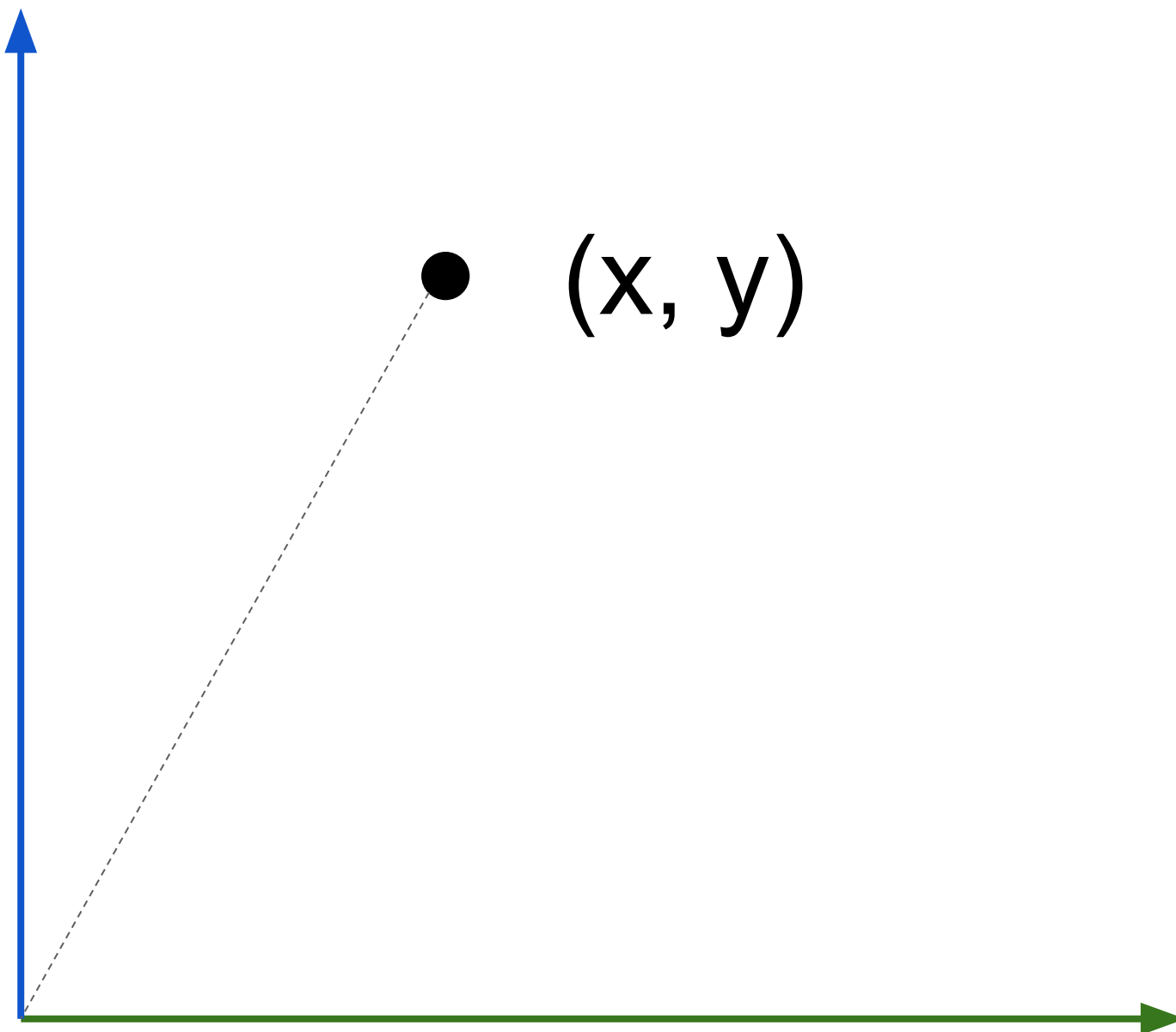
$$\mathbf{x}_w = \mathbf{T} \mathbf{x}_l$$

$$= T_{w \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2} T_{j_2 \rightarrow j_3} T_{j_3 \rightarrow j_4} T_{j_4 \rightarrow j_5} T_{j_5 \rightarrow j_6} T_{j_6 \rightarrow j_7} \mathbf{x}_l$$

$$= T_{w \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2} T_{j_2 \rightarrow j_3} T_{j_3 \rightarrow j_4} T_{j_4 \rightarrow j_5} T_{j_5 \rightarrow j_6} T_{j_6 \rightarrow j_7} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_7 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

Homogeneous Coordinate

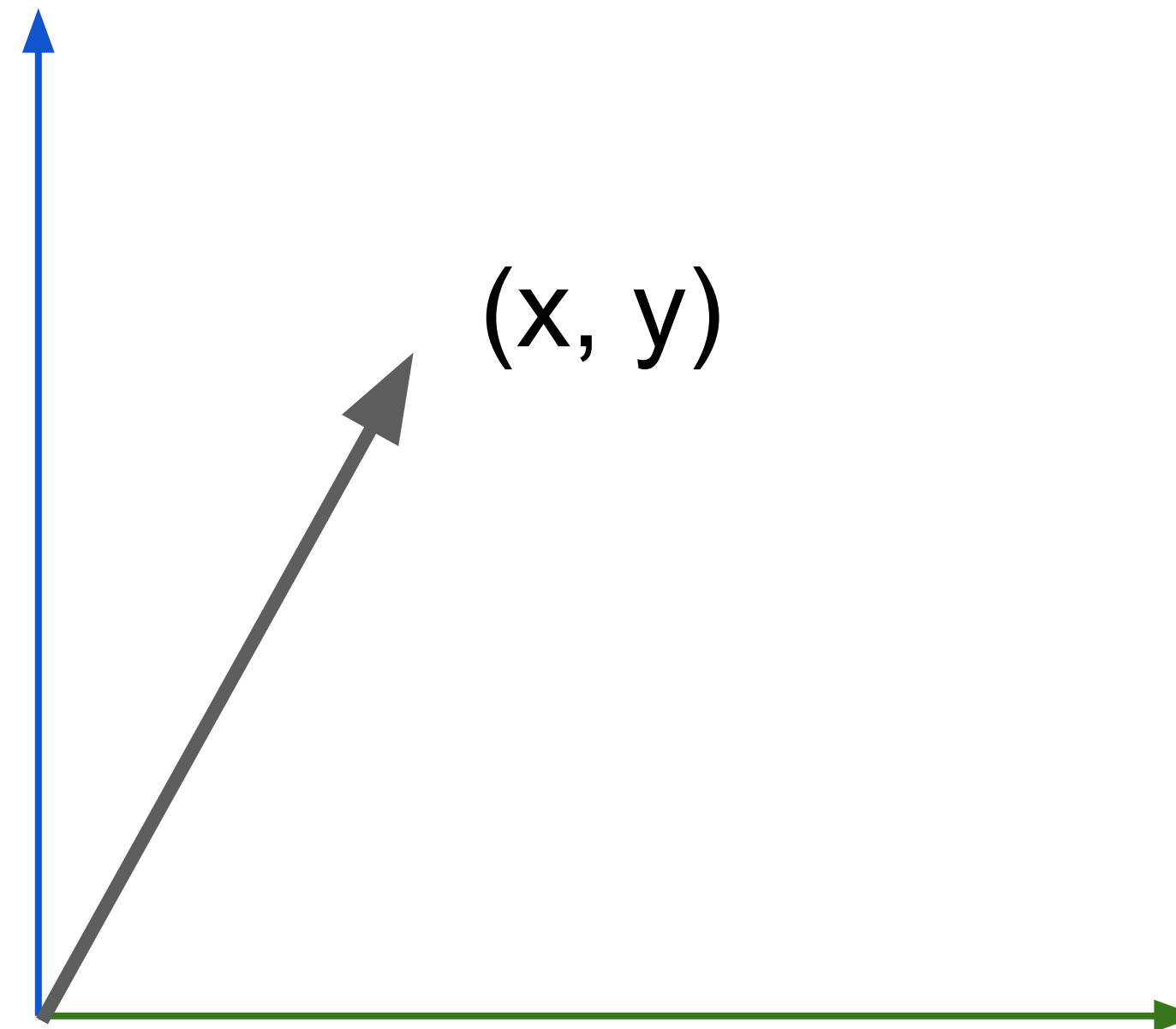
Point



$$\begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

Homogeneous
Coordinate:

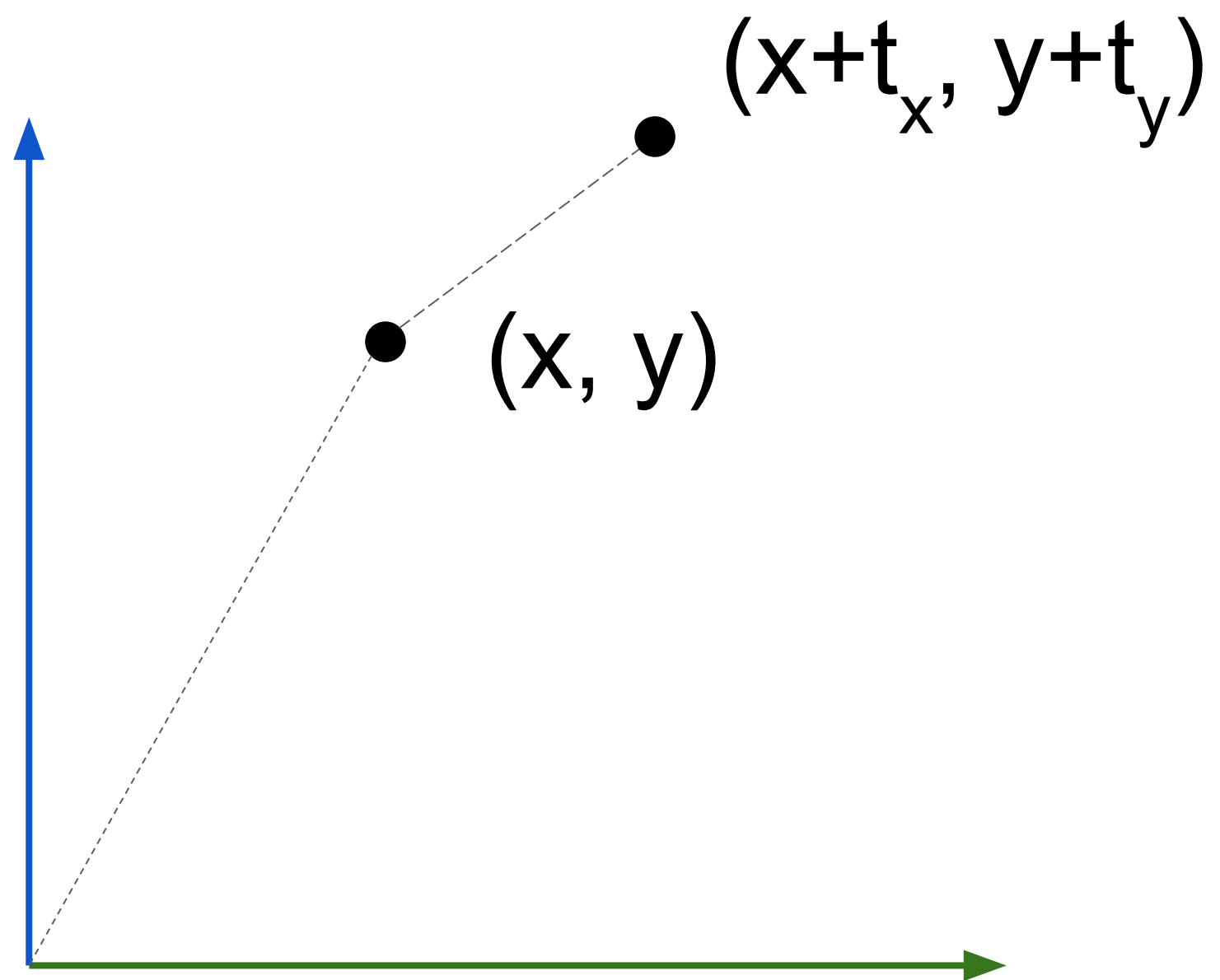
Vector



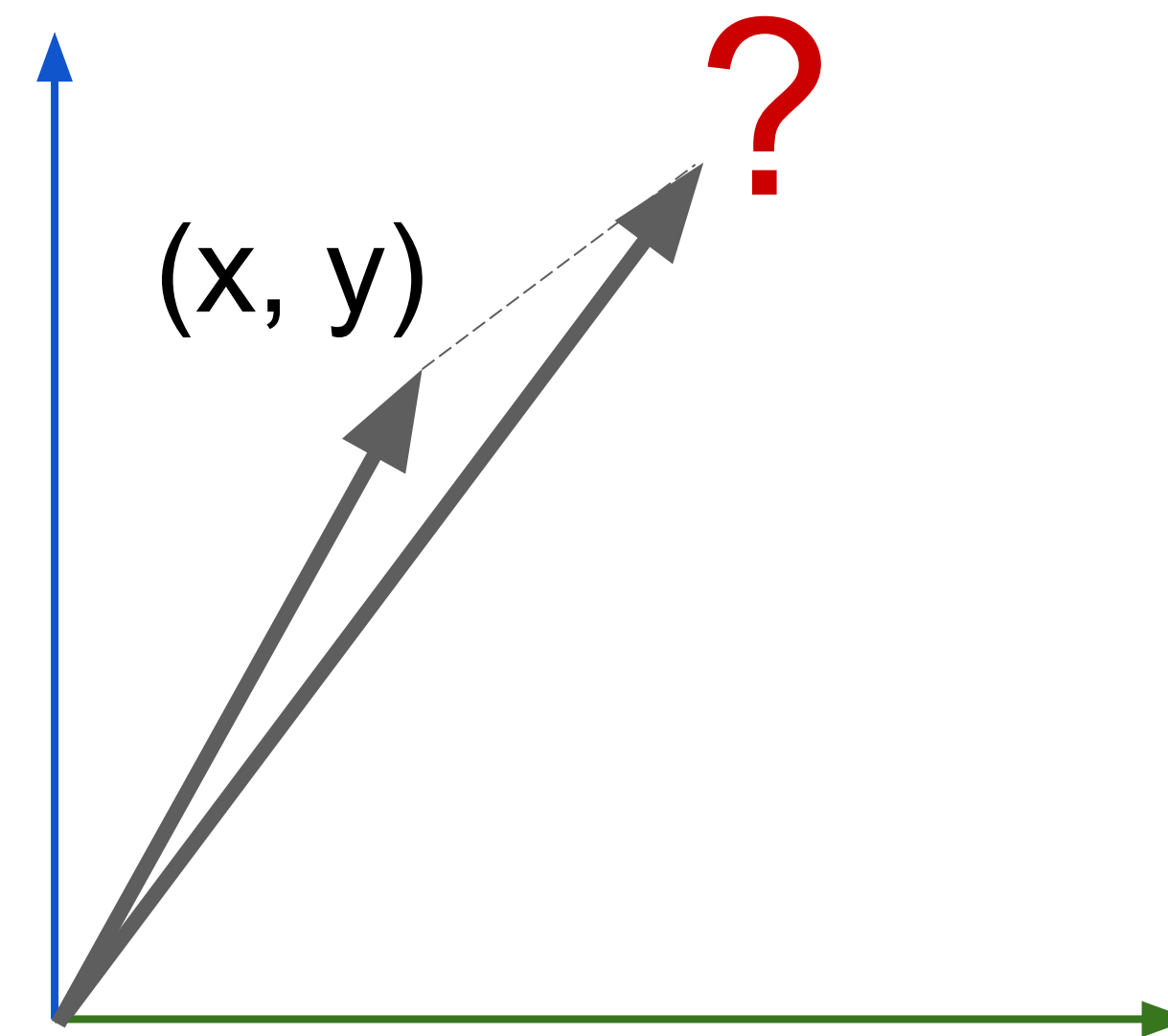
$$\begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Transformation Matrix

Translation Matrix



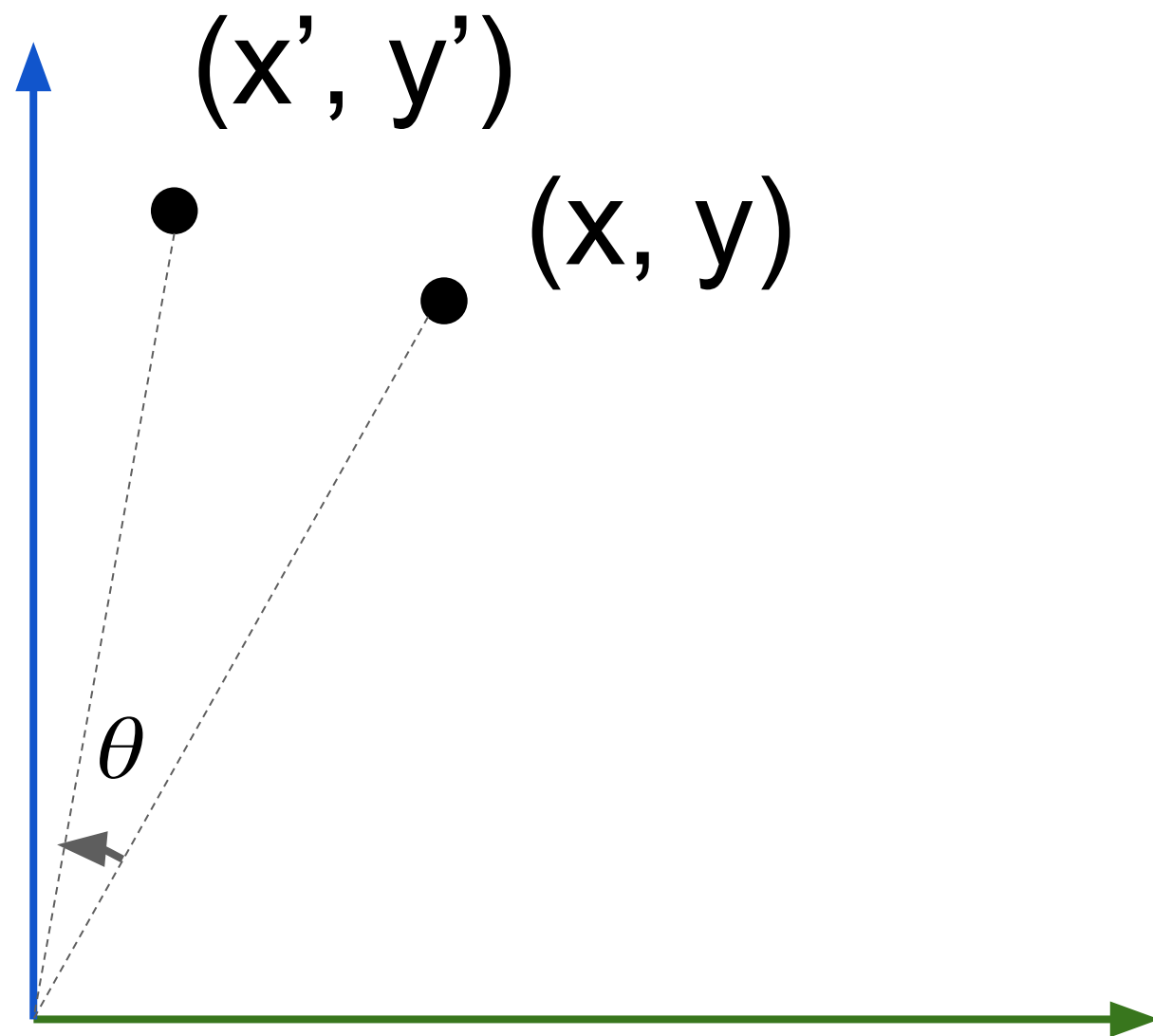
$$\begin{bmatrix} x + t_x \\ y + t_y \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & t_x \\ 0 & 1 & t_y \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



$$\begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & t_x \\ 0 & 1 & t_y \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Transformation Matrix

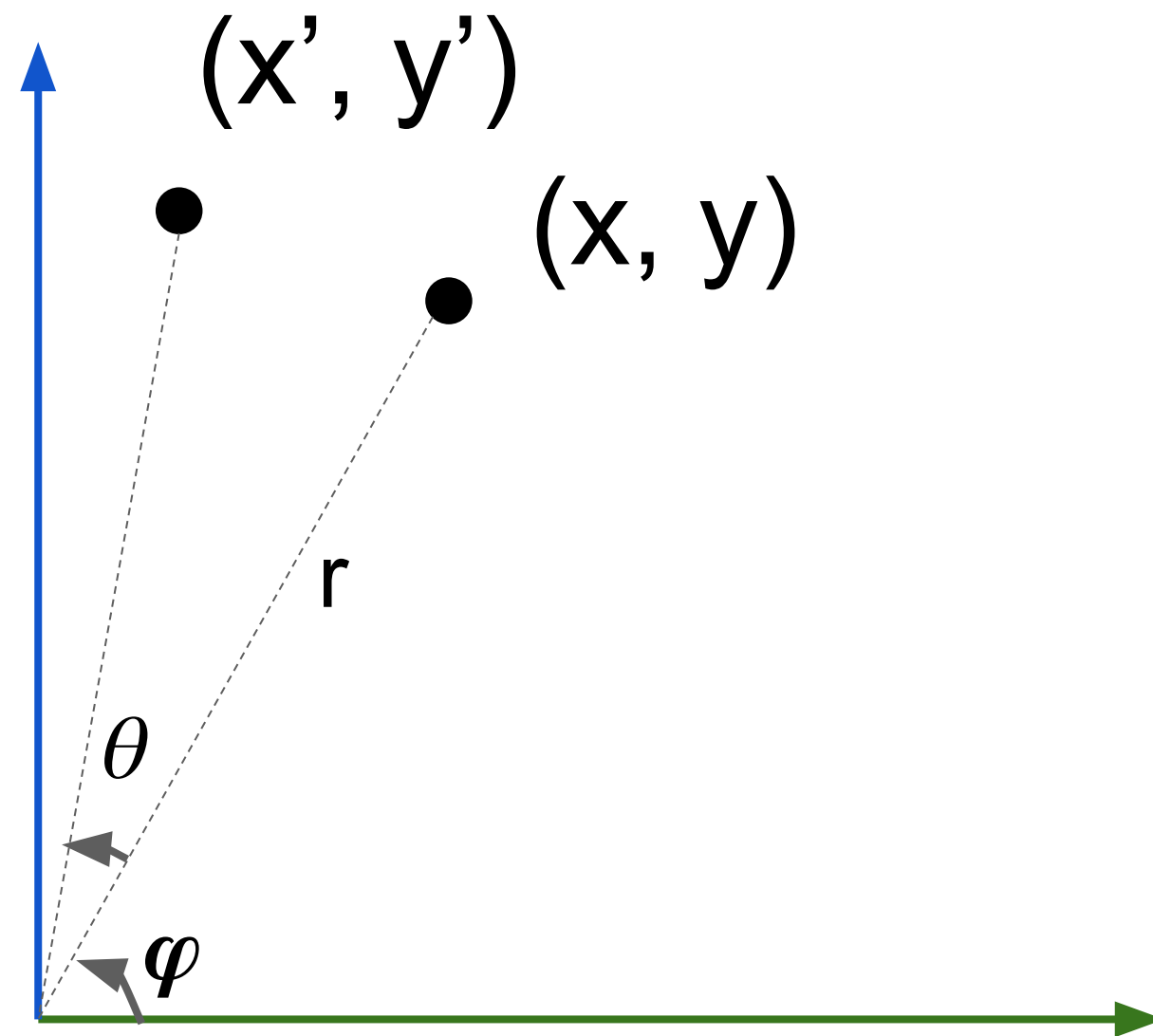
Rotational Matrix



$$\begin{bmatrix} x' \\ y' \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta & -\sin \theta & 0 \\ \sin \theta & \cos \theta & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

Transformation Matrix

Rotational Matrix



$$\begin{bmatrix} x' \\ y' \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta & -\sin \theta & 0 \\ \sin \theta & \cos \theta & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\underline{x = r \cos(\phi)}$$

$$\underline{y = r \sin(\phi)}$$

$$x' = r \cos(\phi + \theta)$$

$$= \underline{r \cos(\phi) \cos(\theta)} - \underline{r \sin(\phi) \sin(\theta)}$$

$$= x \cos(\theta) - y \sin(\theta)$$

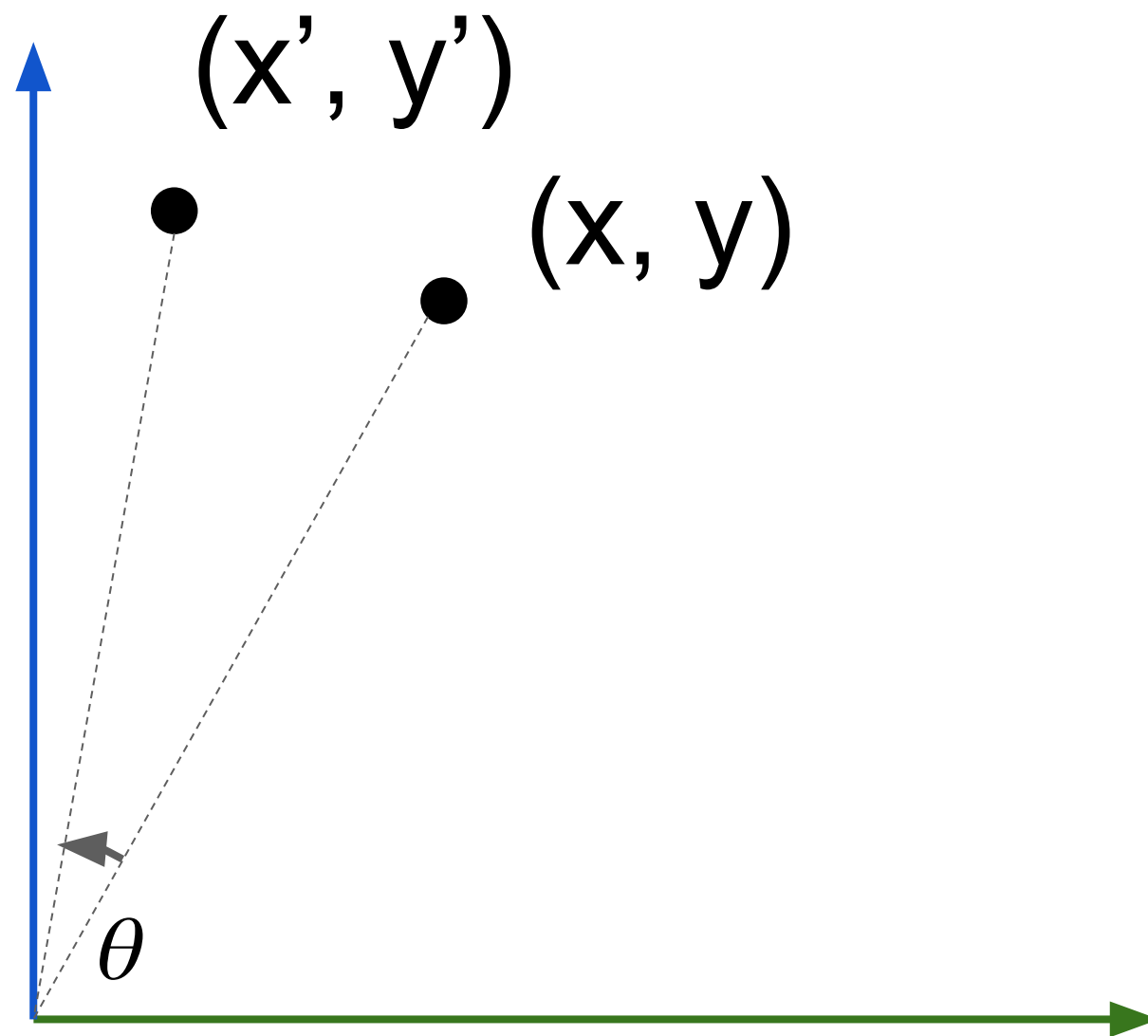
$$y' = r \sin(\phi + \theta)$$

$$= r \sin(\phi) \cos(\theta) + r \cos(\phi) \sin(\theta)$$

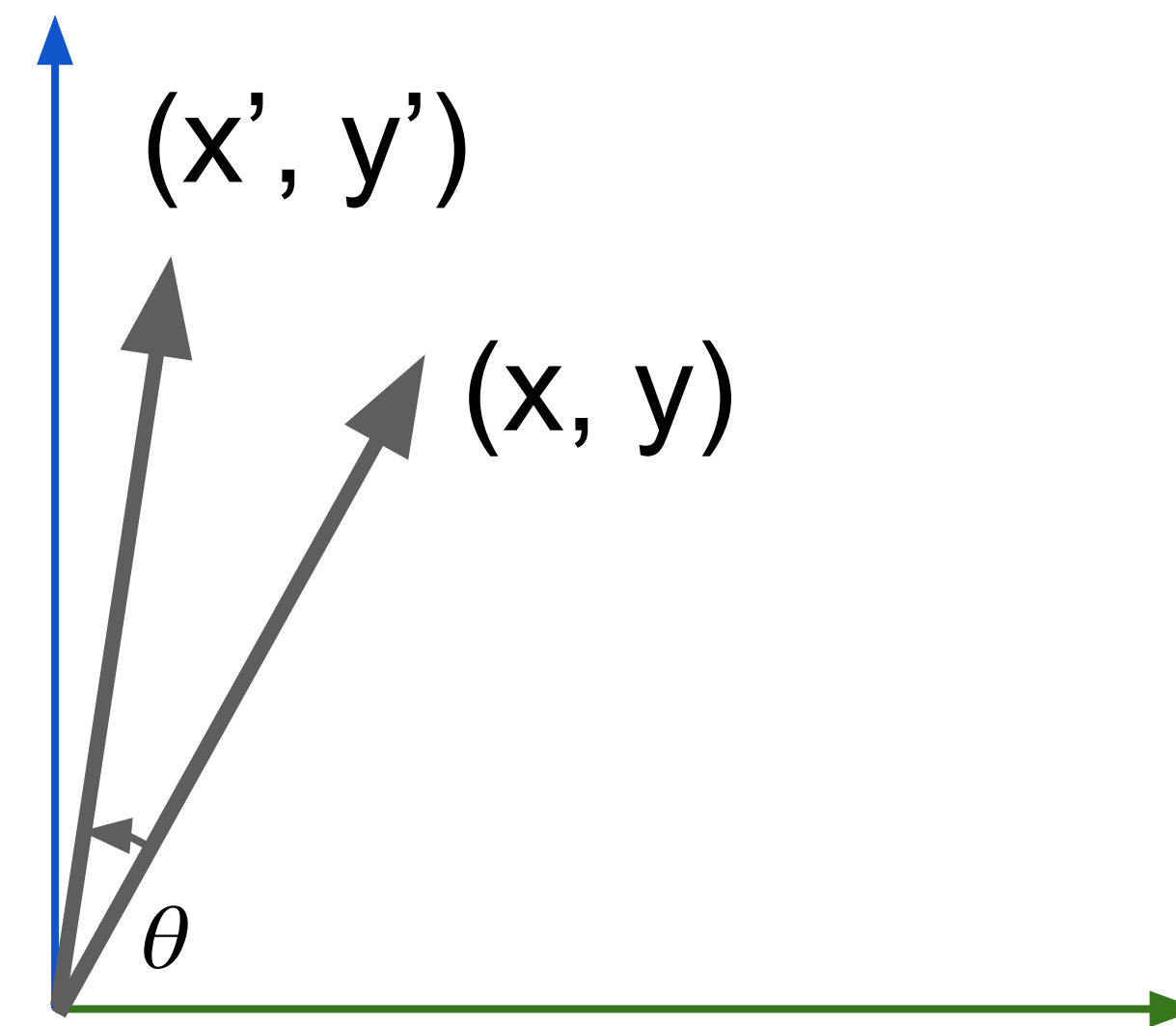
$$= x \sin(\theta) + y \cos(\theta)$$

Transformation Matrix

Rotational Matrix



$$\begin{bmatrix} x' \\ y' \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta & -\sin \theta & 0 \\ \sin \theta & \cos \theta & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



$$\begin{bmatrix} x' \\ y' \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta & -\sin \theta & 0 \\ \sin \theta & \cos \theta & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Transformation Matrix

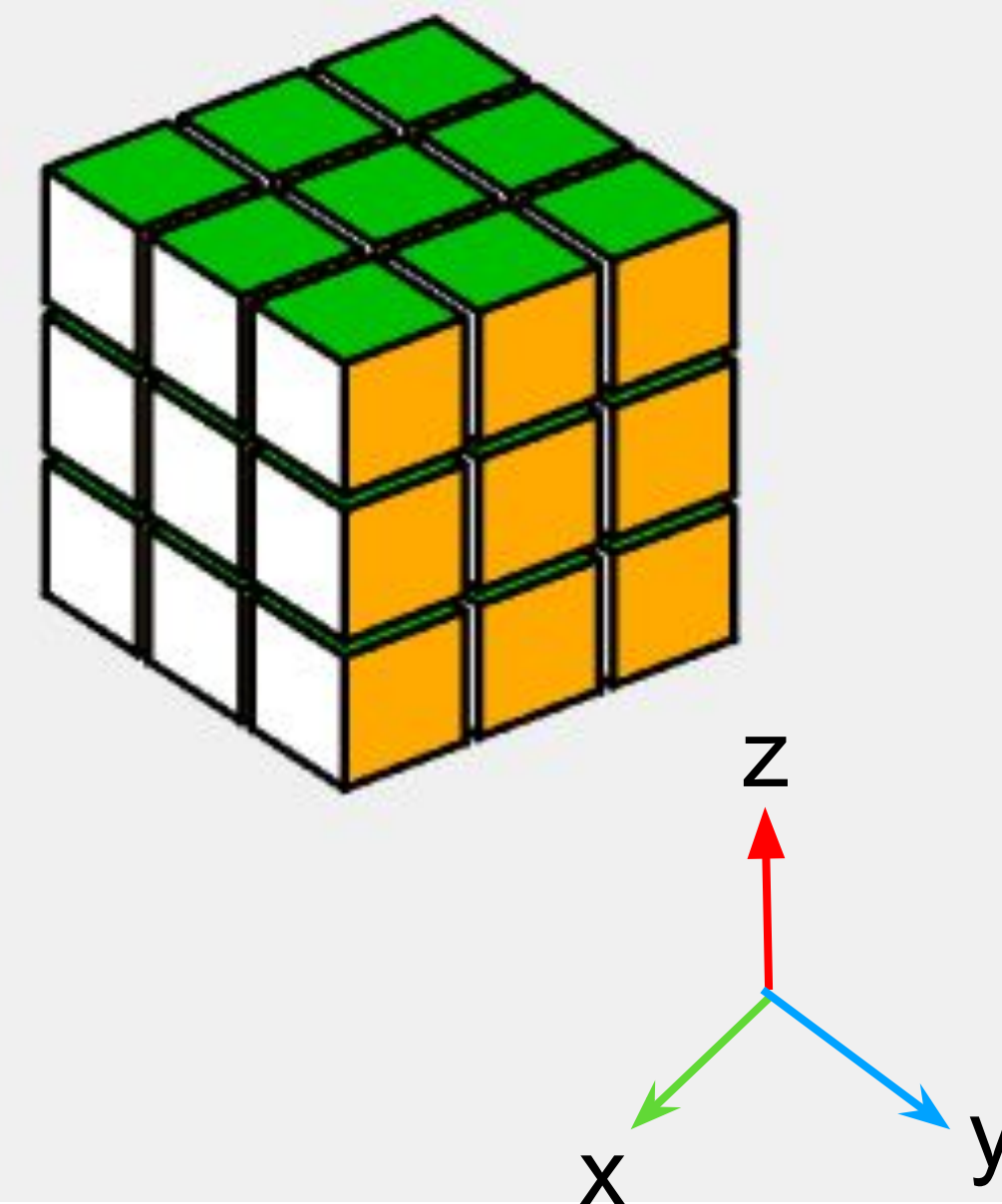
Rotational Matrix in 3D

$$\text{Rot}_x(\theta_x) = \left(\begin{array}{ccc|c} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \cos \theta_x & -\sin \theta_x & 0 \\ 0 & \sin \theta_x & \cos \theta_x & 0 \\ \hline 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{array} \right)$$

$$\text{Rot}_y(\theta_y) = \left(\begin{array}{ccc|c} \cos \theta_y & 0 & \sin \theta_y & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ -\sin \theta_y & 0 & \cos \theta_y & 0 \\ \hline 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{array} \right)$$

$$\text{Rot}_z(\theta_z) = \left(\begin{array}{ccc|c} \cos \theta_z & -\sin \theta_z & 0 & 0 \\ \sin \theta_z & \cos \theta_z & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ \hline 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{array} \right)$$

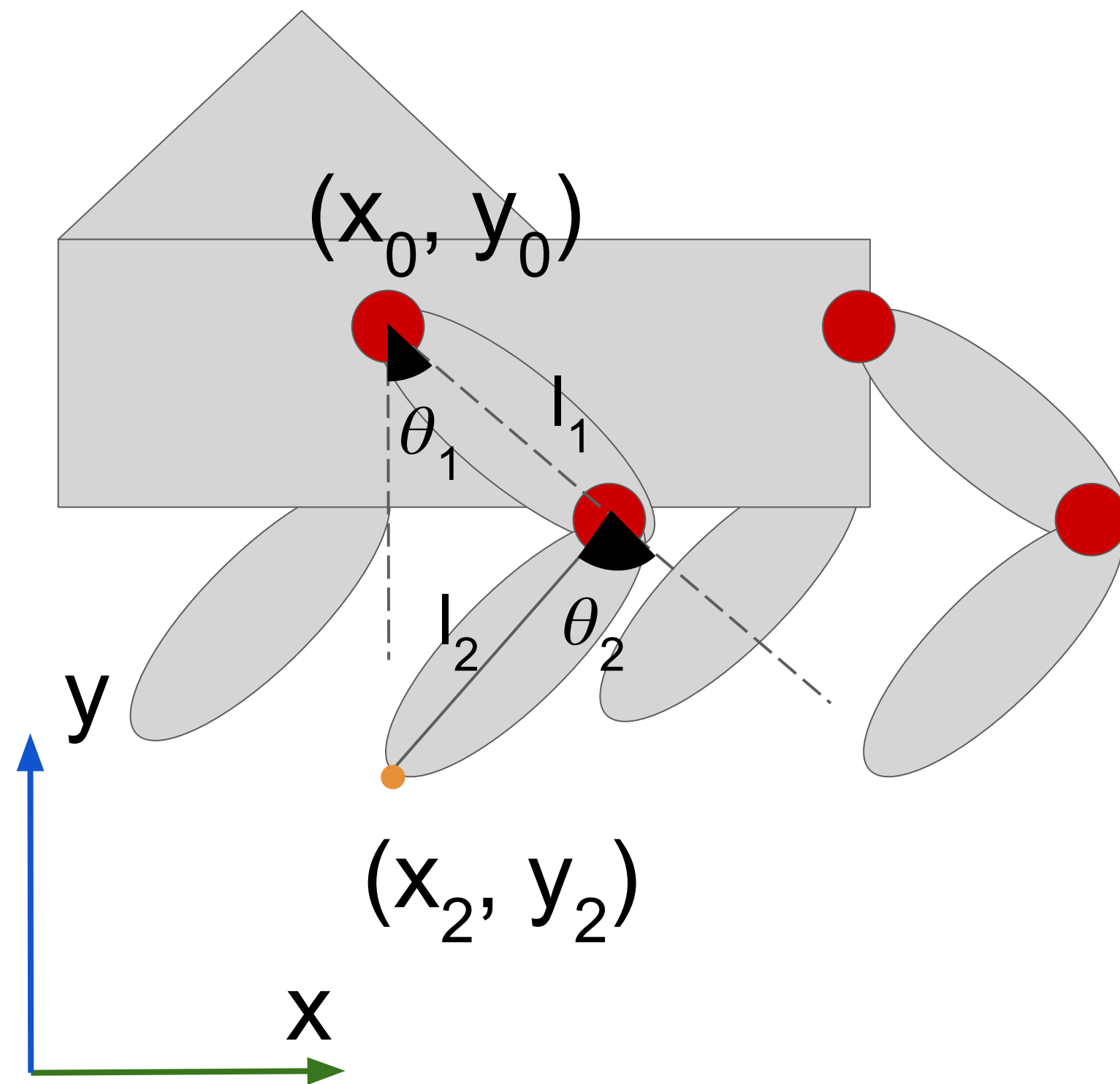
1	0	0
0	1	0
0	0	1



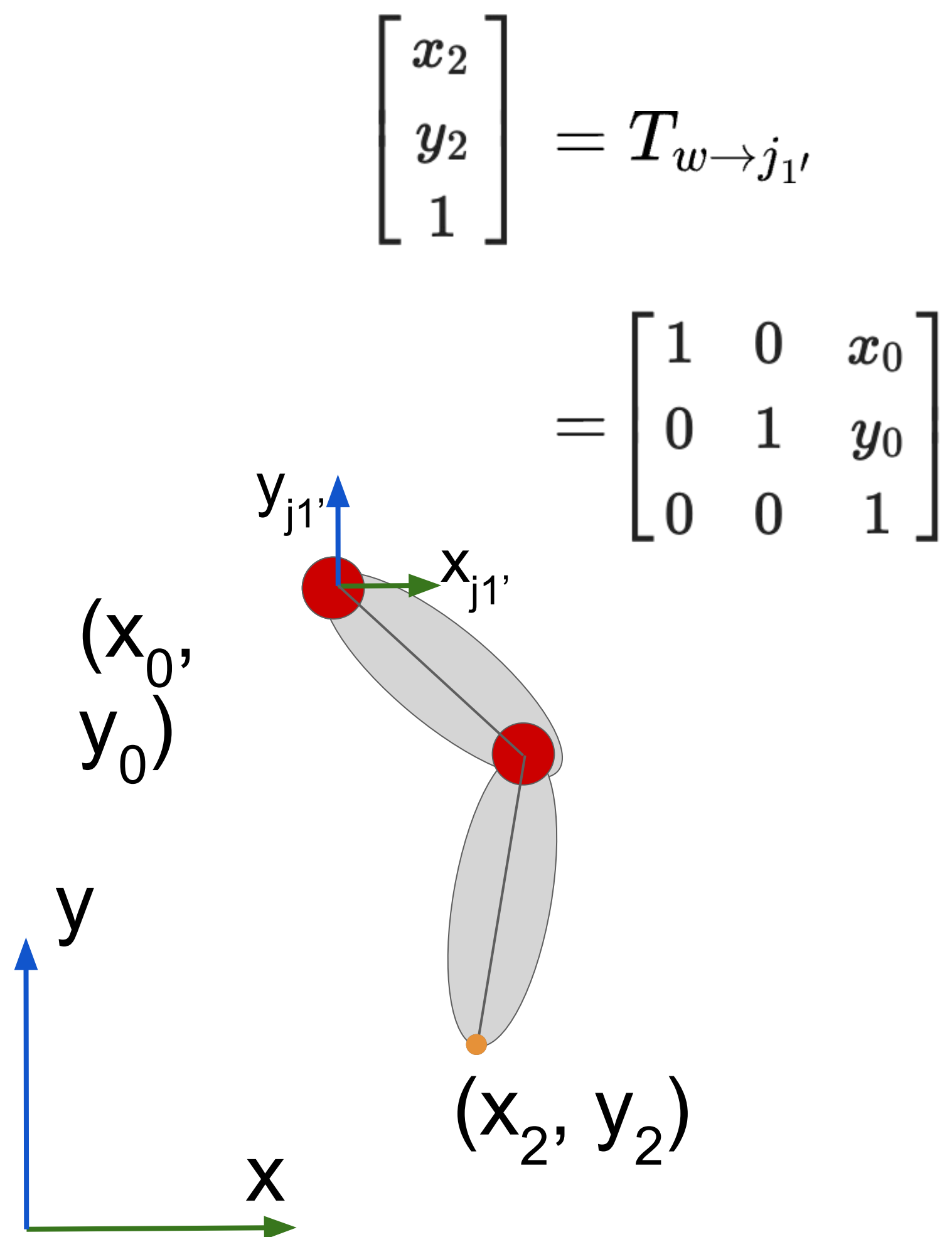
Quiz

$$T_1 T_2 == T_2 T_1?$$

A Simple Example



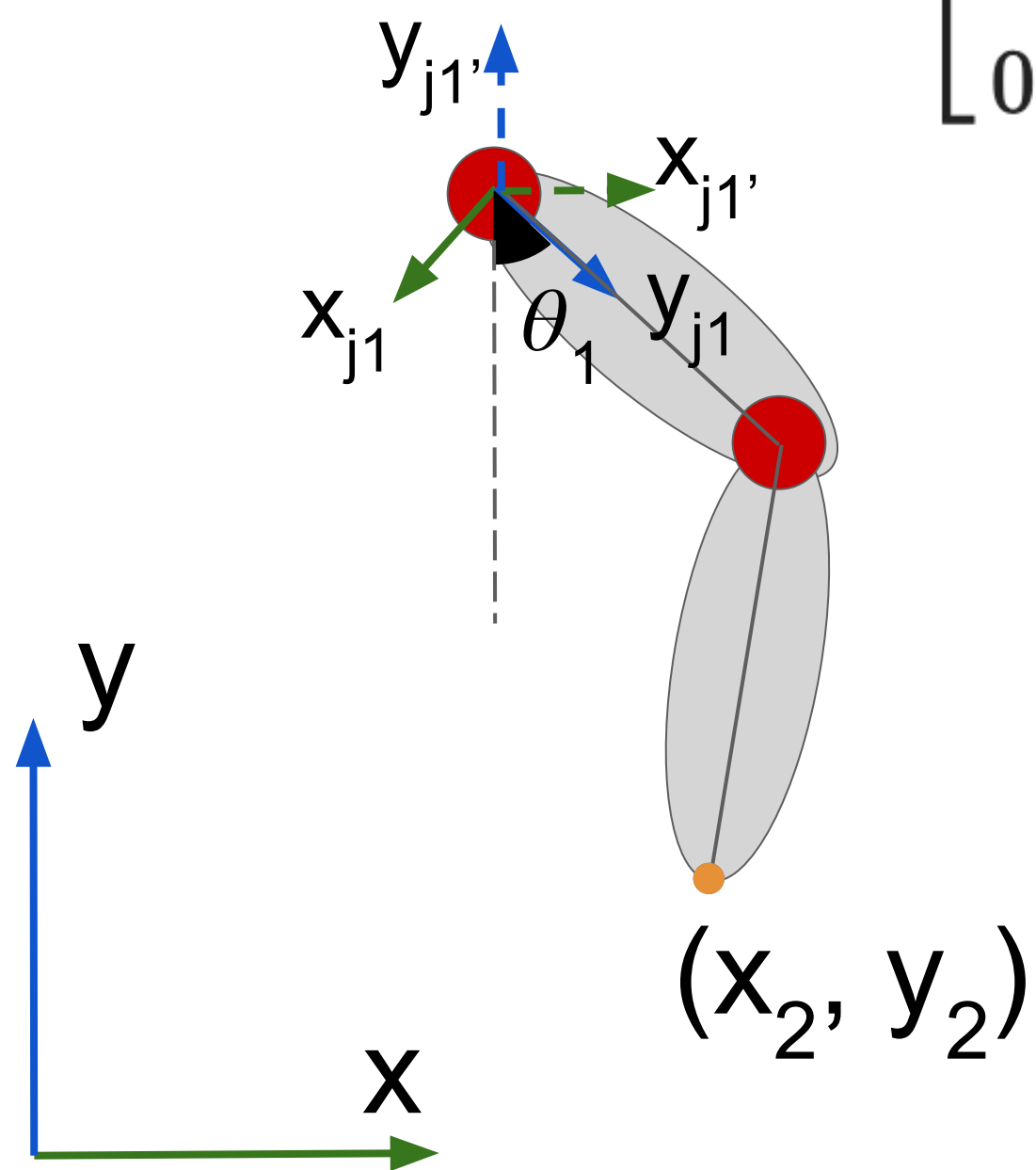
General Approach



General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1}$$

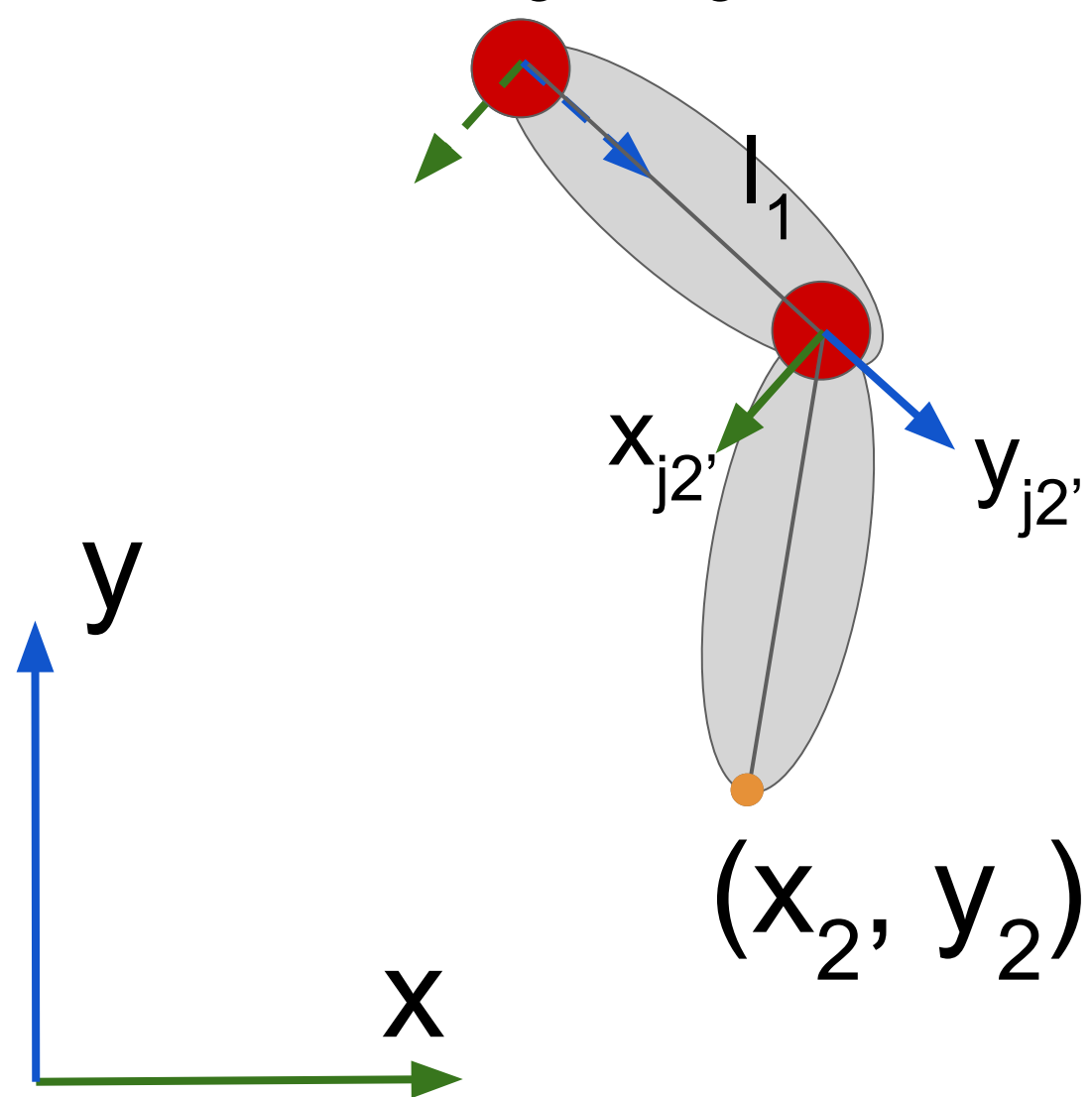
$$= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2'}$$

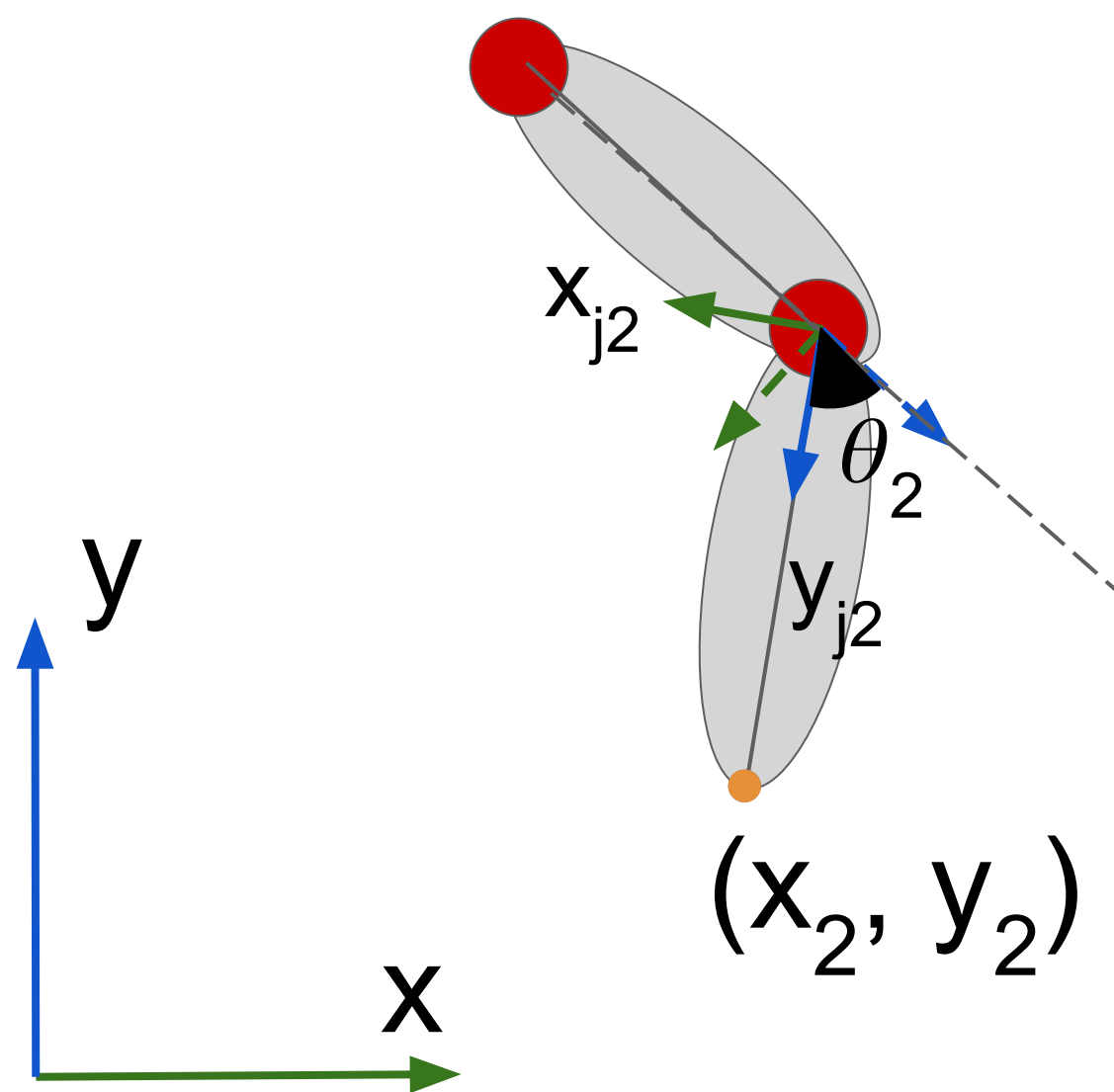
$$(x_0, y_0) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & l_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2'} T_{j_2' \rightarrow j_2}$$

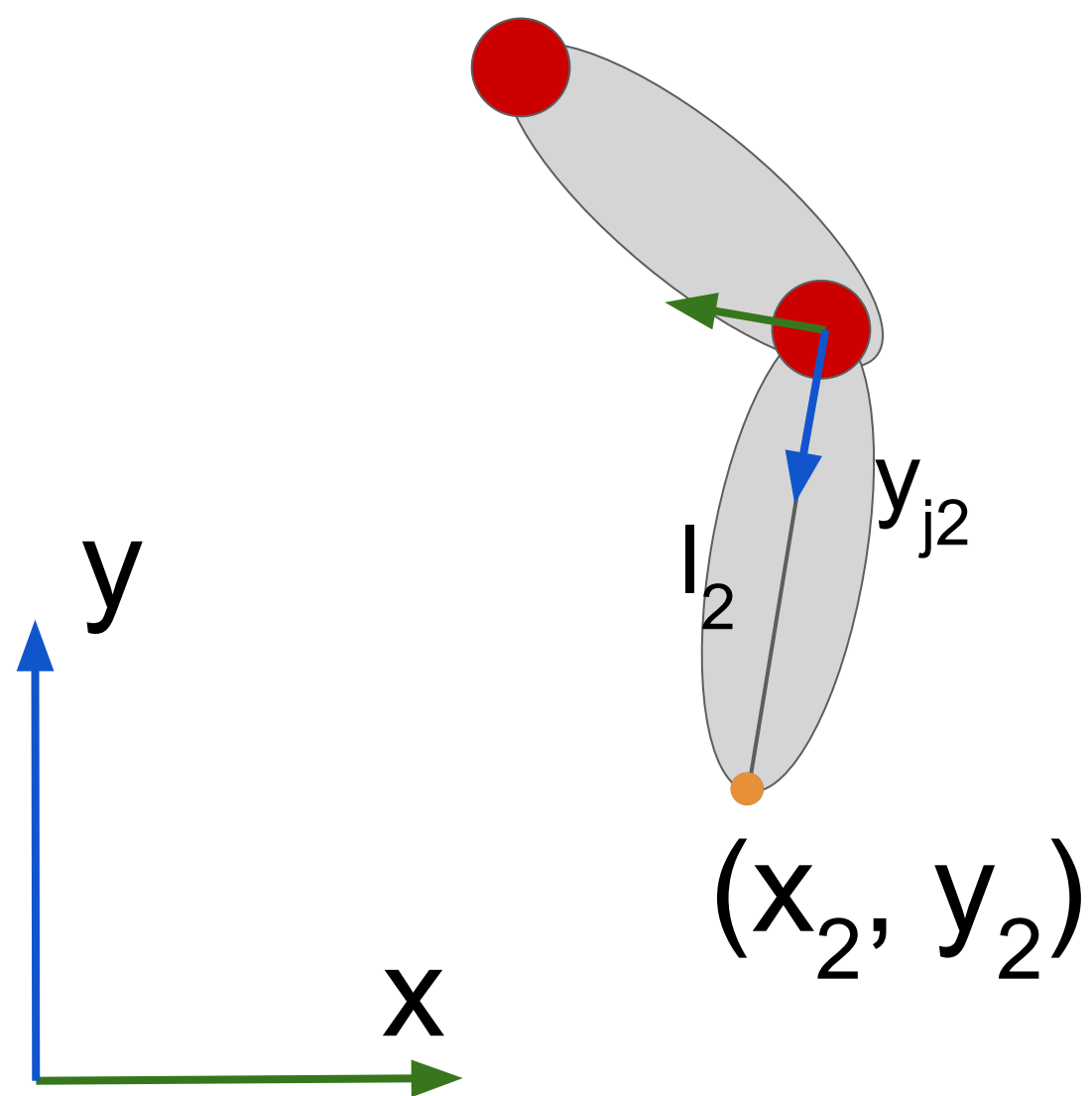
$$= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & l_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(-\theta_2) & -\sin(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ \sin(-\theta_2) & \cos(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2'} T_{j_2' \rightarrow j_2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

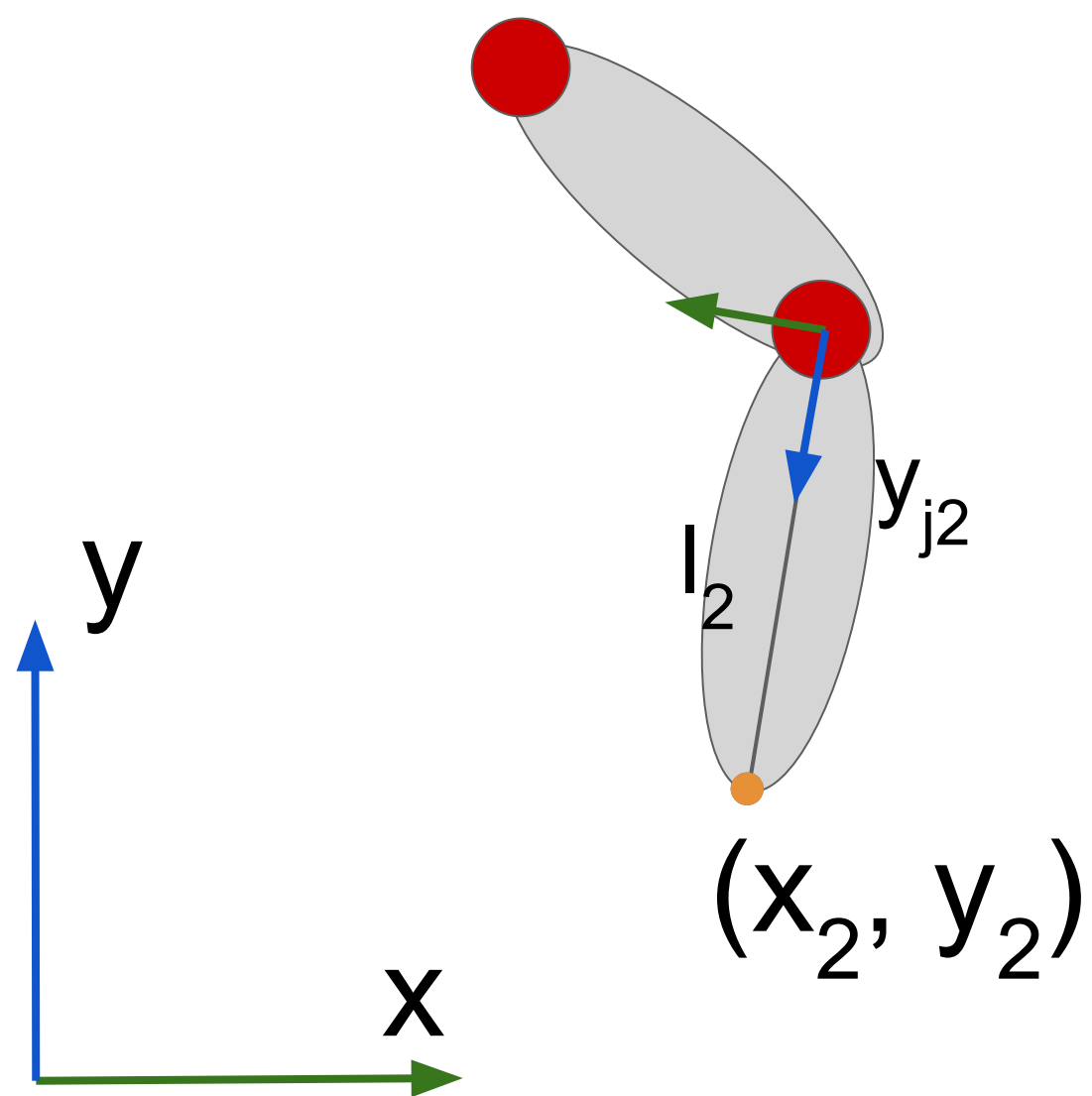
$$= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & l_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(-\theta_2) & -\sin(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ \sin(-\theta_2) & \cos(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2'} T_{j_2' \rightarrow j_2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & l_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(-\theta_2) & -\sin(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ \sin(-\theta_2) & \cos(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

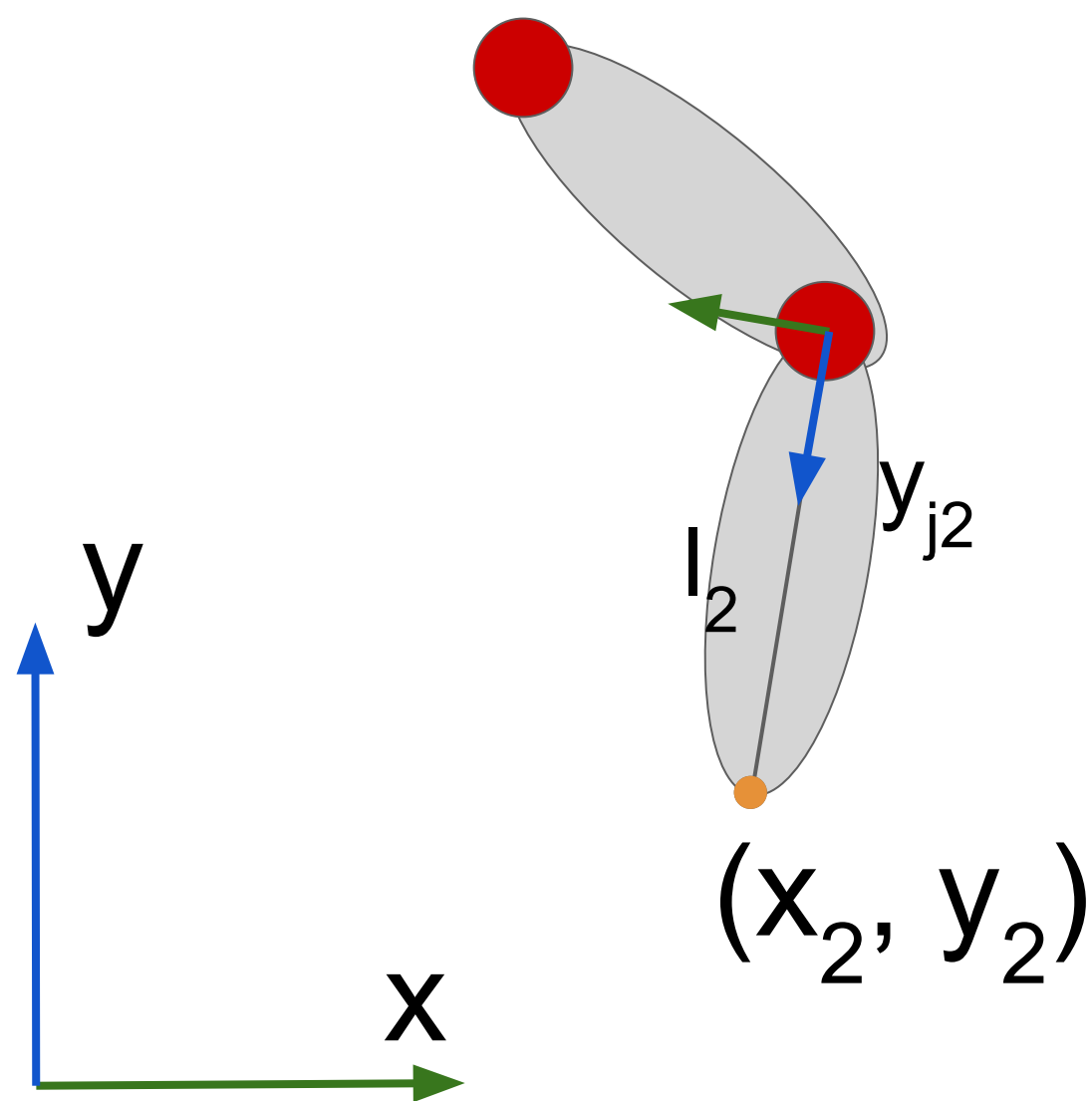


$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \cos \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 + l_2 \sin \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ -l_2 \sin \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 - l_2 \cos \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2'} T_{j_2' \rightarrow j_2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & l_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(-\theta_2) & -\sin(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ \sin(-\theta_2) & \cos(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



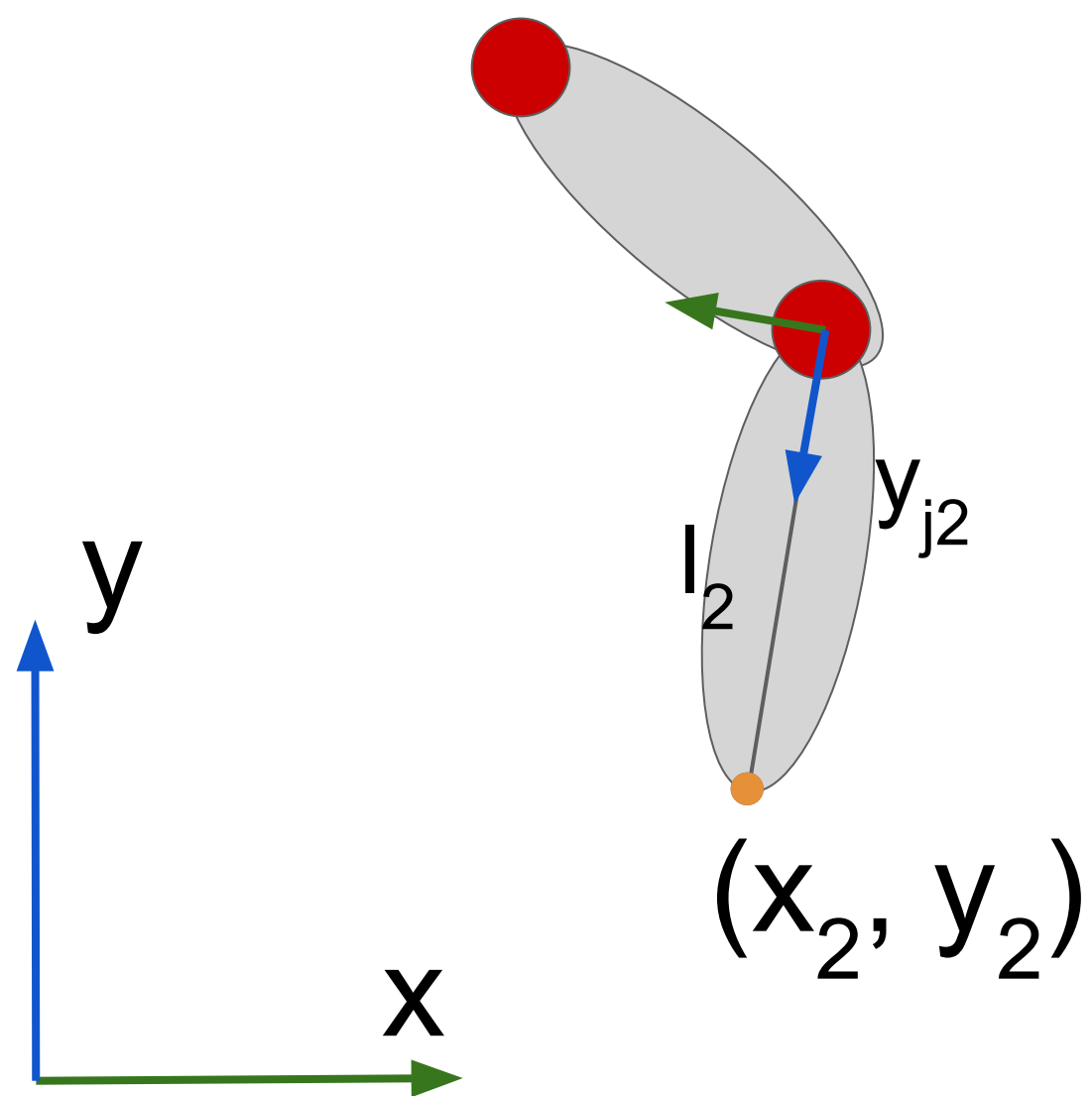
$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \cos \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 + l_2 \sin \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ -l_2 \sin \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 - l_2 \cos \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\stackrel{?}{=} \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ -l_2 \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2'} T_{j_2' \rightarrow j_2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & l_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(-\theta_2) & -\sin(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ \sin(-\theta_2) & \cos(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \cos \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 + l_2 \sin \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ -l_2 \sin \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 - l_2 \cos \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

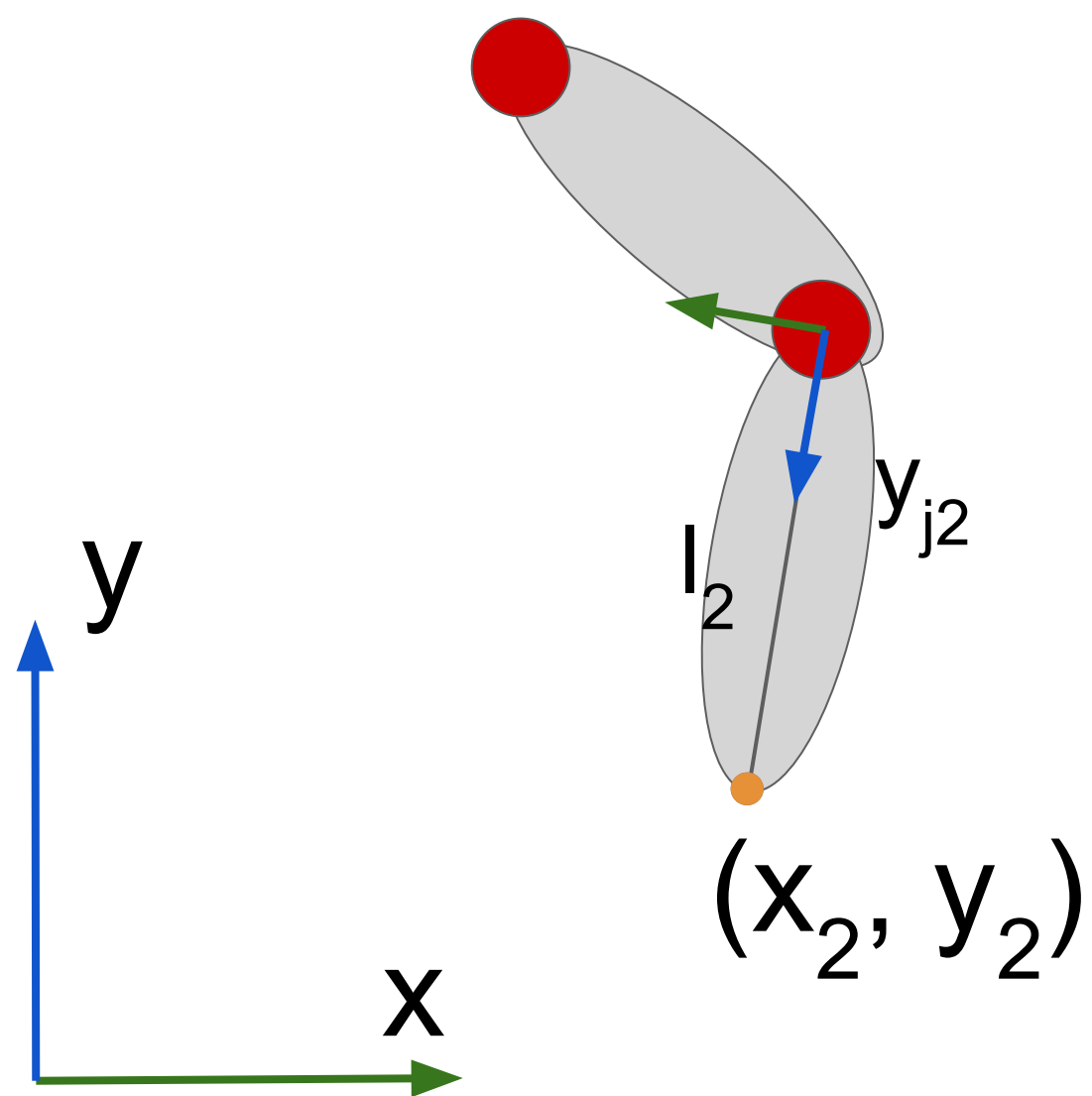
$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ -l_2 \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}, \text{ because}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) &= \sin \theta_2 \cos \theta_1 - \cos \theta_2 \sin \theta_1 \\ \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) &= \cos \theta_2 \cos \theta_1 + \sin \theta_2 \sin \theta_1 \end{aligned}$$

General Approach

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_2 \\ y_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = T_{w \rightarrow j_1'} T_{j_1' \rightarrow j_1} T_{j_1 \rightarrow j_2'} T_{j_2' \rightarrow j_2} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x_0 \\ 0 & 1 & y_0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & -\sin(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ \sin(\pi + \theta_1) & \cos(\pi + \theta_1) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & l_1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos(-\theta_2) & -\sin(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ \sin(-\theta_2) & \cos(-\theta_2) & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ l_2 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$



$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \cos \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 + l_2 \sin \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ -l_2 \sin \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 - l_2 \cos \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

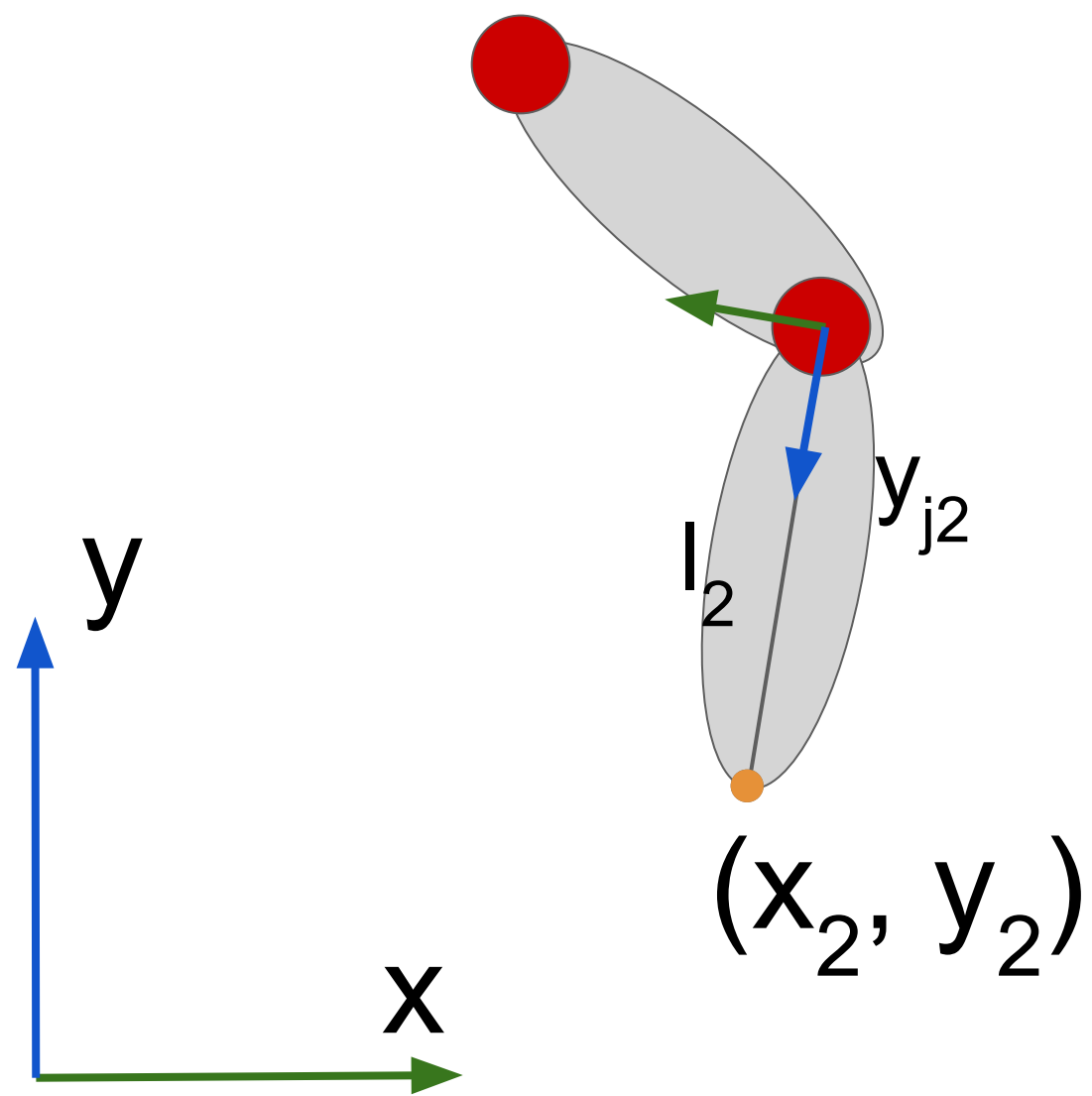
$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ -l_2 \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}, \text{ because}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) &= \sin \theta_2 \cos \theta_1 - \cos \theta_2 \sin \theta_1 \\ \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) &= \cos \theta_2 \cos \theta_1 + \sin \theta_2 \sin \theta_1 \end{aligned}$$

General Approach

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$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \cos \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 + l_2 \sin \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ \underline{-l_2 \sin \theta_1 \sin \theta_2 - l_2 \cos \theta_1 \cos \theta_2 - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0} \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= \begin{bmatrix} -l_2 \sin(\theta_2 - \theta_1) + l_1 \sin \theta_1 + x_0 \\ \underline{-l_2 \cos(\theta_2 - \theta_1) - l_1 \cos \theta_1 + y_0} \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}, \text{ because}$$

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Quiz

Is FK a linear transformation?

Pseudo-code

Function FK2D(l[], theta[], x, y):

// Input:

// l[]: Array of body length

// theta[]: Array of joint angles

// x, y: The offset of 1st joint in the world coordinate

// Output:

// pos: position of the end effector

T = TranslationMatrix(x, y) * RotationMatrix(theta[0])

for i = 1 to n-1:

 Trans = TranslationMatrix(0, l[i - 1])

 Rot = RotationMatrix(theta[i])

 T = T * Trans * Rot

pos = T * (0, l[n-1], 1)

return pos[0:2]

Considerations about Speed

$$\mathbf{x}_w = \mathbf{T}_1 \mathbf{R}_1 \dots \mathbf{T}_n \mathbf{R}_n \mathbf{x}_l$$

Time complexity?

Considerations about Speed

$$\mathbf{x}_w = \mathbf{T}_1 \mathbf{R}_1 \dots \mathbf{T}_n \mathbf{R}_n \mathbf{x}_l$$

Time complexity?

Affine transformation: combine translation and rotation

$$\mathbf{A} = \mathbf{T}(x, y) * \mathbf{R}(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & x \\ 0 & 1 & y \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta & -\sin \theta & 0 \\ \sin \theta & \cos \theta & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos \theta & -\sin \theta & x \\ \sin \theta & \cos \theta & y \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{x}_w = \mathbf{A}_1 \dots \mathbf{A}_n \mathbf{x}_l$$

Considerations about Speed

$$\mathbf{x}_w = \mathbf{T}_1 \mathbf{R}_1 \dots \mathbf{T}_n \mathbf{R}_n \mathbf{x}_l$$

Time complexity?

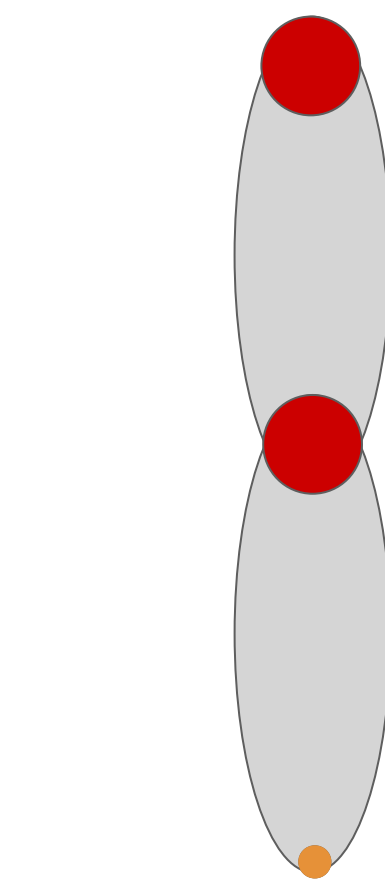
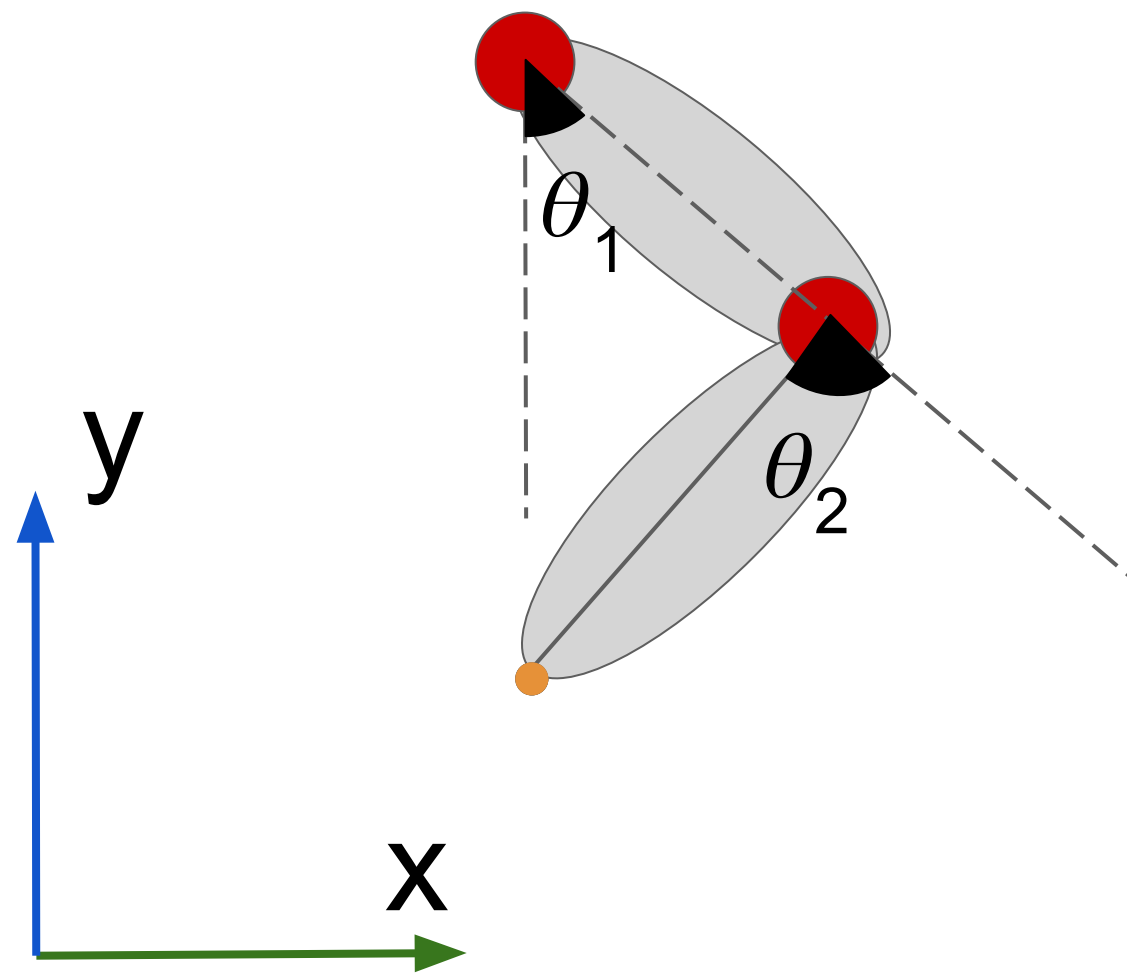
Affine transformation: combine translation and rotation

Multiply from the right!

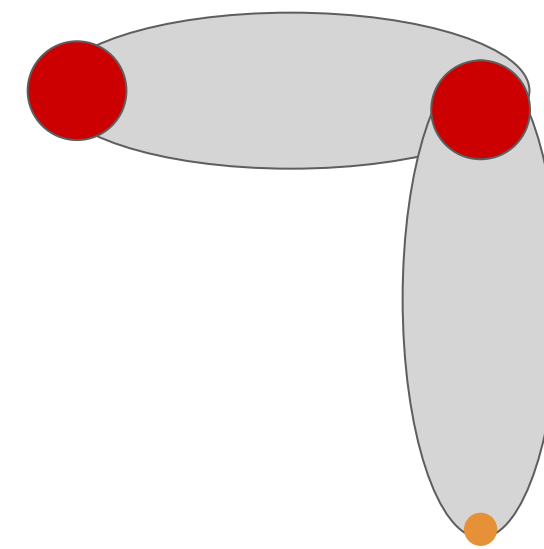
$$\mathbf{x}_w = (\mathbf{A}_1 (\dots (\mathbf{A}_n \mathbf{x}_l)))$$

Debug

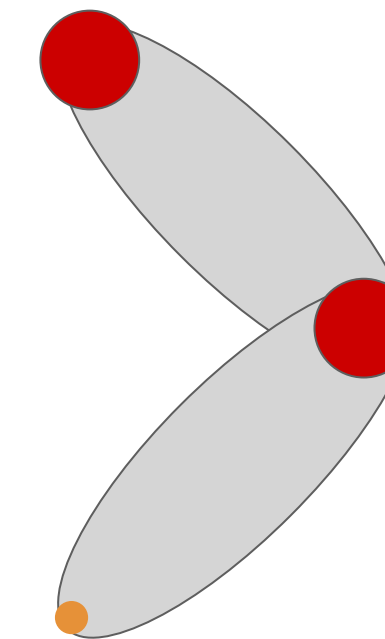
- Start with fewer links
- Do NOT just guess or try random corrections
- Write unit tests



(a) $\theta_1=0; \theta_2=0$



(b) $\theta_1=\pi/2; \theta_2=-\pi/2$



(c) $\theta_1=\pi/4; \theta_2=-\pi/2$

Summary

FK and IK are widely used in robotics, computer graphics, and many engineering applications

FK is a nonlinear mapping from joint angles to the position of end-effectors in the world coordinate

FK can be calculated efficiently via iteratively performing transformations (matrix multiplications) from one joint to the next

Office Hour

Time: This Friday 3-4 pm

Location: Outside of Karen's office (Coda E356)

Topic: Anything about AI and Robotics