Arduino is an open source computer hardware and software company, project, and user community that designs and manufactures single-board microcontrollers and microcontroller kits for building digital devices and interactive objects that can sense and control objects in the physical and digital world. The project's products are distributed as open-source hardware and software, which are licensed under the GNU Lesser General Public License (LGPL) or the GNU General Public License (GPL),[1] permitting the manufacture of Arduino boards and software distribution by anyone. Arduino boards are available commercially in preassembled form, or as do-it-yourself (DIY) kits.

Arduino board designs use a variety of microprocessors and controllers. The boards are equipped with sets of digital and analog input/output (I/O) pins that may be interfaced to various expansion boards or Breadboards (shields) and other circuits. The boards feature serial communications interfaces, including Universal Serial Bus (USB) on some models, which are also used for loading programs from personal computers. The microcontrollers are typically programmed using a dialect of features from the programming languages C and C++. In addition to using traditional compiler toolchains, the Arduino project provides an integrated development environment (IDE) based on the Processing language project.

Most Arduino boards consist of an Atmel 8-bit AVR microcontroller (ATmega8,[25] ATmega168, ATmega328, ATmega1280, ATmega2560) with varying amounts of flash memory, pins, and features.[26] The 32-bit Arduino Due, based on the Atmel SAM3X8E was introduced in 2012.[27] The boards use single or double-row pins or female headers that facilitate connections for programming and incorporation into other circuits. These may connect with add-on modules termed shields. Multiple and possibly stacked shields may be individually addressable via an I²C serial bus. Most boards include a 5 V linear regulator and a 16 MHz crystal oscillator or ceramic resonator. Some designs, such as the LilyPad, run at 8 MHz and dispense with the onboard voltage regulator due to specific form-factor restrictions.

Arduino microcontrollers are pre-programmed with a boot loader that simplifies uploading of programs to the on-chip flash memory. The default bootloader of the Arduino UNO is the optiboot bootloader.[28] Boards are loaded with program code via a serial connection to another computer. Some serial Arduino boards contain a level shifter circuit to convert between RS-232 logic levels and transistor–transistor logic (TTL) level signals. Current Arduino boards are programmed via Universal Serial Bus (USB), implemented using USB-to-serial adapter chips such as the FTDI FT232. Some boards, such as later-model Uno boards, substitute the FTDI chip with a separate AVR chip containing USB-to-serial firmware, which is reprogrammable via its own ICSP header. Other variants, such as the Arduino Mini and the unofficial Boarduino, use a detachable USB-to-serial adapter board or cable, Bluetooth or other methods. When used with traditional microcontroller tools, instead of the Arduino IDE, standard AVR in-system programming (ISP) programming is used.