




# SpeedyWeather.jl: Reinventing atmospheric general circulation models towards interactivity and extensibility

Milan Klöwer <sup>1,2¶</sup>, Maximilian Gelbrecht <sup>3,4</sup>, Daisuke Hotta <sup>5,6</sup>, Justin Willmert <sup>7</sup>, Simone Silvestri<sup>1</sup>, Gregory L Wagner <sup>1</sup>, Alistair White <sup>3,4</sup>, Sam Hatfield <sup>6</sup>, Tom Kimpson <sup>2,8</sup>, Navid C Constantinou <sup>9</sup>, and Chris Hill<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, USA <sup>2</sup> University of Oxford, UK <sup>3</sup> Technical University of Munich, Germany <sup>4</sup> Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Germany <sup>5</sup> Japan Meteorological Agency, Tsukuba, Japan <sup>6</sup> European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, Reading, UK <sup>7</sup> University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, USA <sup>8</sup> University of Melbourne, Australia <sup>9</sup> Australian National University, Canberra, Australia ¶ Corresponding author

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## Software

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## Summary

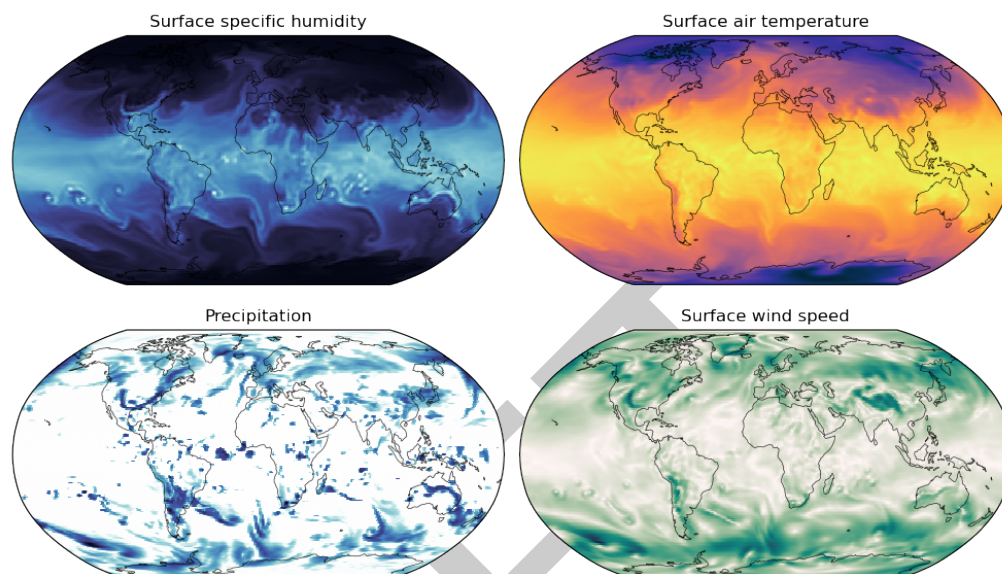
SpeedyWeather.jl is a library to simulate and analyze the global atmospheric circulation on the sphere. It implements several 2D and 3D models which solve different sets of equations:

- the primitive equations with and without humidity ([Figure 1](#)),
- the shallow water equations ([Figure 2](#)), and
- the barotropic vorticity equation.

The primitive equation model in SpeedyWeather.jl is an atmospheric general circulation model ([Kucharski et al., 2013](#)) with simple parameterizations for unresolved physical processes including precipitation or boundary layer mixing. It can be thought of as a conceptual reinvention of the Fortran SPEEDY model ([Molteni, 2003](#)) in the Julia programming language ([Bezanson et al., 2017](#)). However, all models here are written in a modular way to make its components easily extensible. For example, a new parameterization can be externally defined and passed as an argument to the model constructor. Operators used inside SpeedyWeather.jl are exposed to the user, facilitating analysis of the simulation data. SpeedyWeather.jl is therefore, beyond its main purpose of simulating atmospheric motion, also a library for the analysis of gridded data on the sphere. Running and analyzing simulations can be interactively combined, enhancing user experience and productivity.

The user interface of SpeedyWeather.jl is heavily influenced by the Julia ocean model Oceananigans.jl ([Ramadhan et al., 2020](#)). A monolithic interface based on parameter files is avoided in favor of a library-style interface. A model is constructed bottom-up by first defining the discretization and any non-default model components with their respective parameters. All components are then collected into a single model object which, once initialized, returns a simulation object. A simulation contains everything, the model with all parameters as constructed before but also all prognostic and diagnostic variables. Such a simulation can then be run, but also accessed before and after to analyze or visualize the current variables, or individual terms of the equations. One can also adjust some parameters before resuming the simulation. While these steps can be written into a script for reproducibility, the same steps can be executed and interacted with one-by-one in Julia's read-evaluate-print loop (REPL) or in a Jupyter or Pluto notebook. We thereby achieve an interactivity of a simulation and its various model components far beyond the options provided in a monolithic interface. At the

43 same time, defaults, set to well-established test cases, enable even inexperienced users to run  
44 simulations in just a few lines of code.



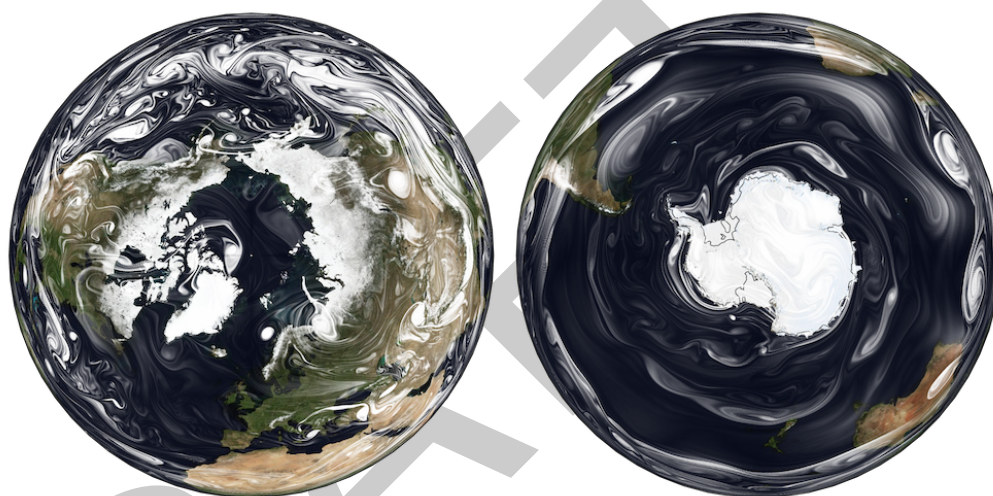
**Figure 1:** Surface humidity, air temperature, wind speed and precipitation simulated with the primitive equation model in SpeedyWeather.jl. Spectral resolution is T127 (about 100km) on an octahedral Gaussian grid (Malardel et al., 2016) with simple physics to represent unresolved processes such as surface fluxes including evaporation, and precipitation due to large-scale condensation and convection.

45 SpeedyWeather.jl relies on Julia's multiple dispatch programming paradigm (Bezanson et al.,  
46 2017) to be extensible with new components including parameterizations, forcings, drag, or  
47 even the grid. All such supported model components define an abstract type that can be  
48 subtyped to introduce, for example, a new parameterization. To define precipitation due to  
49 the physical process of large-scale condensation, one would define MyCondensation as a new  
50 subtype of AbstractCondensation. One then only needs to extend the initialize! and  
51 condensation! functions for this new type. Passing on condensation = MyCondensation()  
52 to the model constructor then implements this new model component without the need to  
53 branch off or overwrite existing model components. Conceptually similar scientific modelling  
54 paradigms have been very successful in the Python-based generic partial differential equation  
55 solver Dedalus (Burns et al., 2020), the process-oriented climate model CLIMLAB (Rose,  
56 2018), and the Julia ocean model Oceananigans.jl (Ramadhan et al., 2020).

57 The dynamical core of SpeedyWeather.jl uses established numerics (Bourke, 1972; Hoskins  
58 & Simmons, 1975; Simmons et al., 1978; Simmons & Burridge, 1981), widely adopted in  
59 numerical weather prediction. It is based on the spherical harmonic transform (Reinecke &  
60 Seljebotn, 2013; Stompor, 2011) with a leapfrog-based semi-implicit time integration (Hoskins  
61 & Simmons, 1975) and a Robert-Asselin-Williams filter (Amezcuca et al., 2011; Williams, 2011).  
62 The spherical harmonic transform is grid-flexible (Willmert, 2020). Any iso-latitude ring-based  
63 grid can be used and new grids can be externally defined and passed in as an argument. Many  
64 grids are already implemented: the conventional Gaussian grid, a regular longitude-latitude  
65 grid, the octahedral Gaussian grid (Malardel et al., 2016), the octahedral Clenshaw-Curtis grid  
66 (Hotta & Ujiie, 2018), and the HEALPix grid (Górski et al., 2005). Both SpeedyWeather.jl and  
67 its spherical harmonic transform are also number format-flexible. Single-precision floating-point  
68 numbers (Float32) are the default as adopted by other modelling efforts (Nakano et al., 2018;  
69 Váňa et al., 2017), but Float64 and other custom number formats can be used with a single  
70 code basis (M. Klöwer et al., 2020; Milan Klöwer et al., 2022). Julia will compile to the

71 choice of number format, the grid, and and other model components just-in-time. A simple  
72 parallelization across vertical layers is supported by Julia's multithreading.

73 SpeedyWeather.jl internally uses three sub-modules RingGrids, LowerTriangularMatrices,  
74 and SpeedyTransforms. RingGrids is a module that discretizes the sphere on iso-latitude  
75 rings and implements interpolations between various such grids. LowerTriangularMatrices  
76 facilitates the implementation of the spherical harmonics by organizing their coefficients in a  
77 lower triangular matrix representation. SpeedyTransforms implements the spectral transform  
78 between the grid-point space as defined by RingGrids and the spectral space defined in  
79 LowerTriangularMatrices. These three modules are independently usable and therefore  
80 support SpeedyWeather's library-like user interface. Output is stored as NetCDF files using  
81 [NCDatasets.jl](#).



**Figure 2:** Relative vorticity simulated with the shallow water model in SpeedyWeather.jl. The simulation used a spectral resolution of T1023 (about 20 km) and Float32 arithmetic on an octahedral Clenshaw-Curtis grid ([Hotta & Ujiie, 2018](#)). Relative vorticity is visualized with Matplotlib ([Hunter, 2007](#)) and Cartopy ([Met Office, 2010 - 2015](#)) using a transparent-to-white colormap to mimic the appearance of clouds. Underlaid is NASA's blue marble from June 2004.

## 82 Statement of need

83 SpeedyWeather.jl is a fresh approach to atmospheric models that have been very influential in  
84 many areas of scientific and high-performance computing as well as climate change mitigation  
85 and adaptation. Most weather, ocean and climate models are written in Fortran and have  
86 been developed over decades. From this tradition follows a specific programming style and  
87 associated user interface. SpeedyWeather.jl aims to overcome the constraints of traditional  
88 Fortran-based models. The modern trend sees simulations in Fortran and data analysis in  
89 Python, making it virtually impossible to interact with various model components directly. In  
90 SpeedyWeather.jl, interfaces to the model components are exposed to the user. Furthermore,  
91 data-driven climate modelling ([Rasp et al., 2018](#); [Schneider et al., 2023](#)), which replaces  
92 existing model components with machine learning, is more difficult in Fortran due to the lack  
93 of established machine learning frameworks ([Meyer et al., 2022](#)). In Julia, Flux.jl is available  
94 for machine learning ([Innes et al., 2019](#)) as well as automatic differentiation with Enzyme  
95 ([Moses & Churavy, 2020](#)) for gradients-based optimization.

96 With SpeedyWeather.jl we hope to provide a platform for data-driven atmospheric modelling  
97 and in general an interactive model that makes difficult problems easy to simulate. Climate  
98 models that are user-friendly, trainable, but also easily extensible will suddenly make many

99 complex research ideas possible.

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