Ray Tracing & Ray Casting

Realistic Graphics Inpsired by Nature

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The Story of Light

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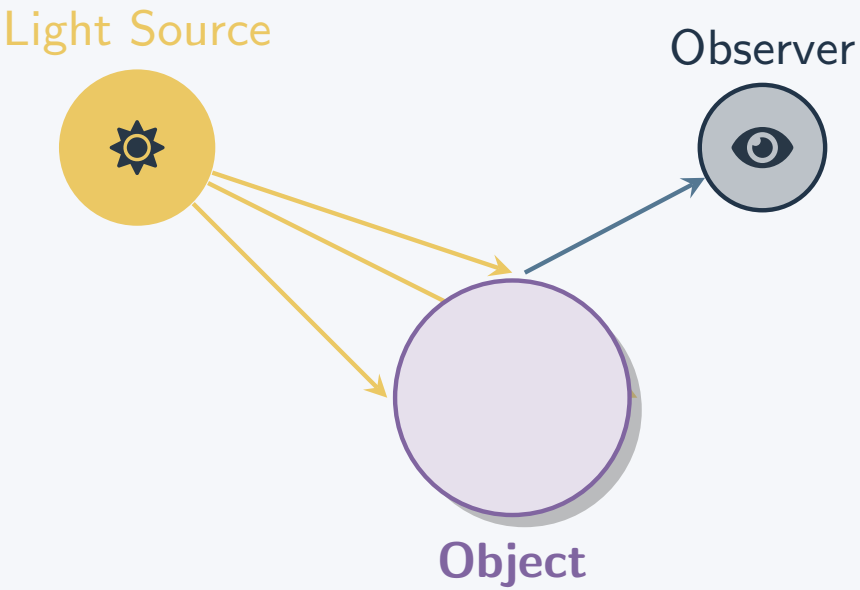
The Story of Light

How Do We See?



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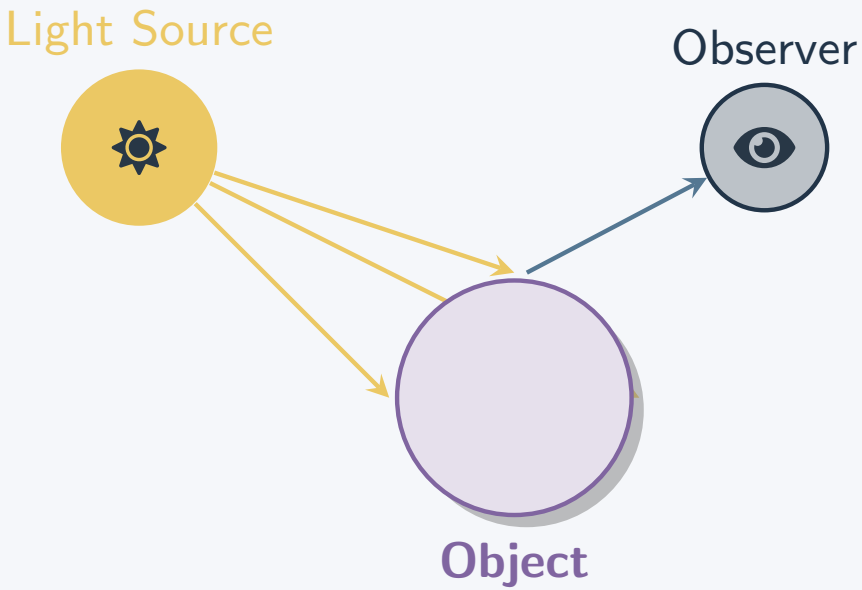

Natural Process

1. Light travels from source
2. Light hits objects
3. Light bounces to our eyes
4. Our brain interprets the signal

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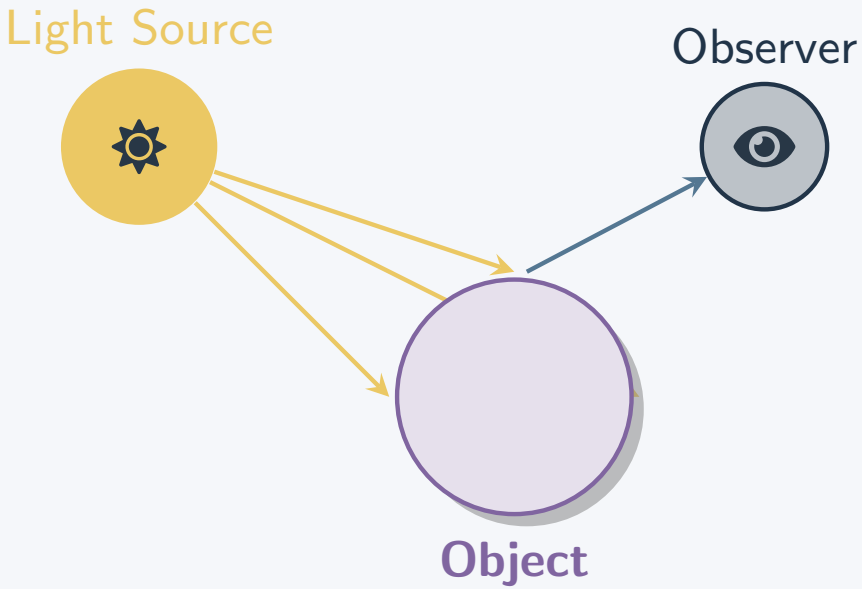
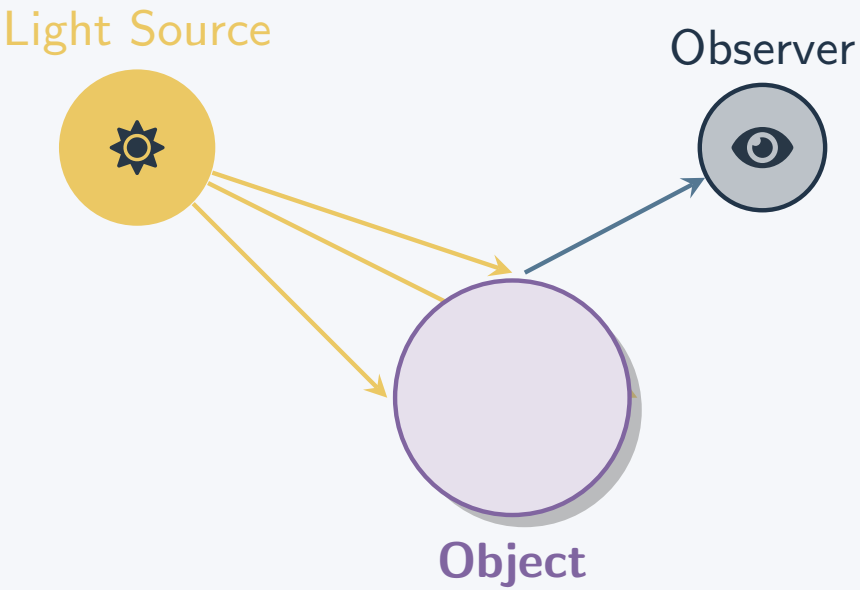


Physical Process

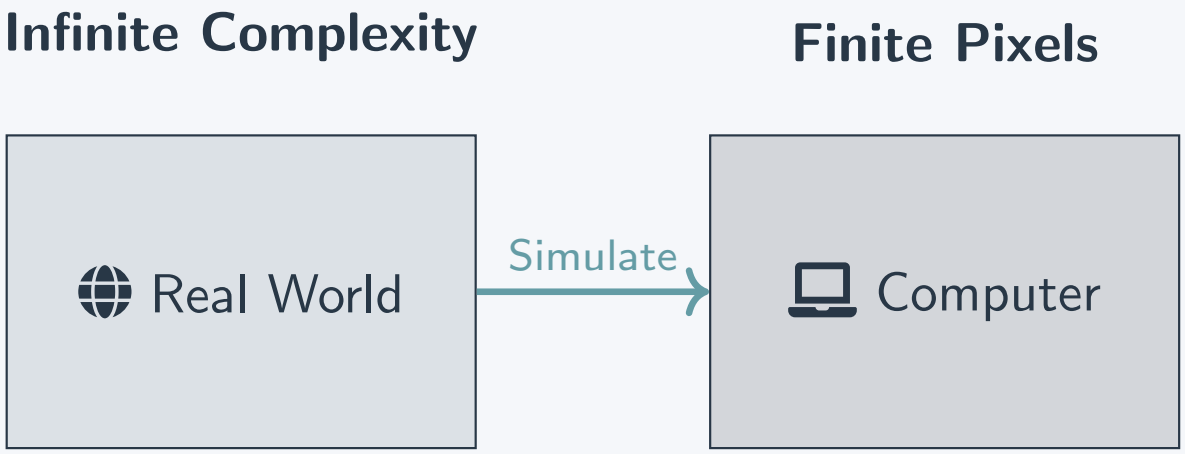
1. Photon is emitted from source
2. Photon hits objects
3. Part of the photon is reflected or absorbed
4. The reflected photons reach our eyes
5. The rods and cones in our retina detect the photons
6. Our brain interprets the signal
7. **Colour**: The wavelength of the photons
8. **Brightness**: The number of photons

How Do We See?



Question: How do we simulate this?

The Computer Graphics Challenge



Challenges:

- Infinite light rays/photons
- Complex physics
- High computational cost

Ray Casting: Foundation

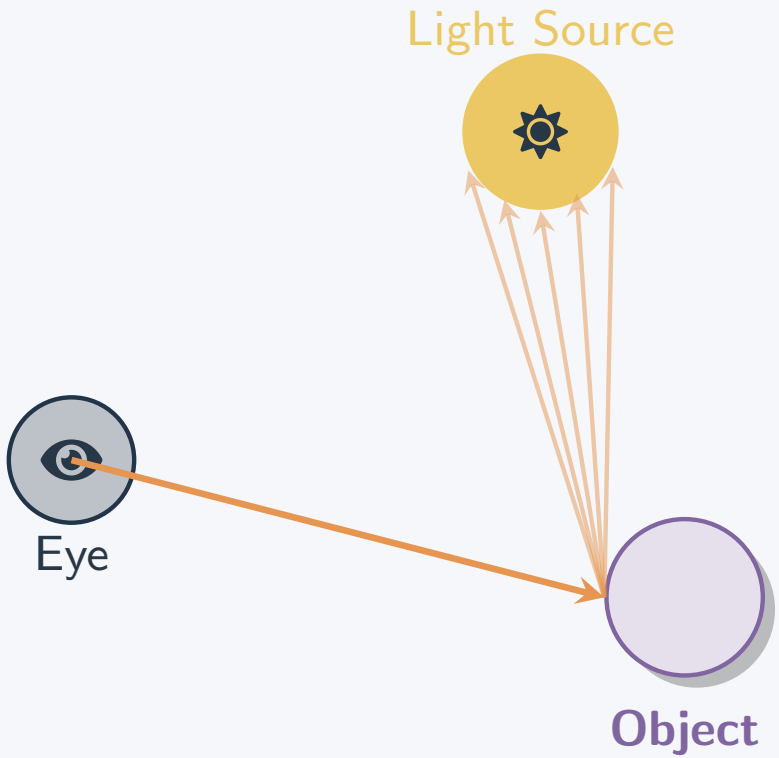
The Key Insight

1. Reverse Engineering

Instead of following light rays from light sources —

Let's trace backwards!

Shoot rays from the eye, find where it hits and find out how much light reaches there.



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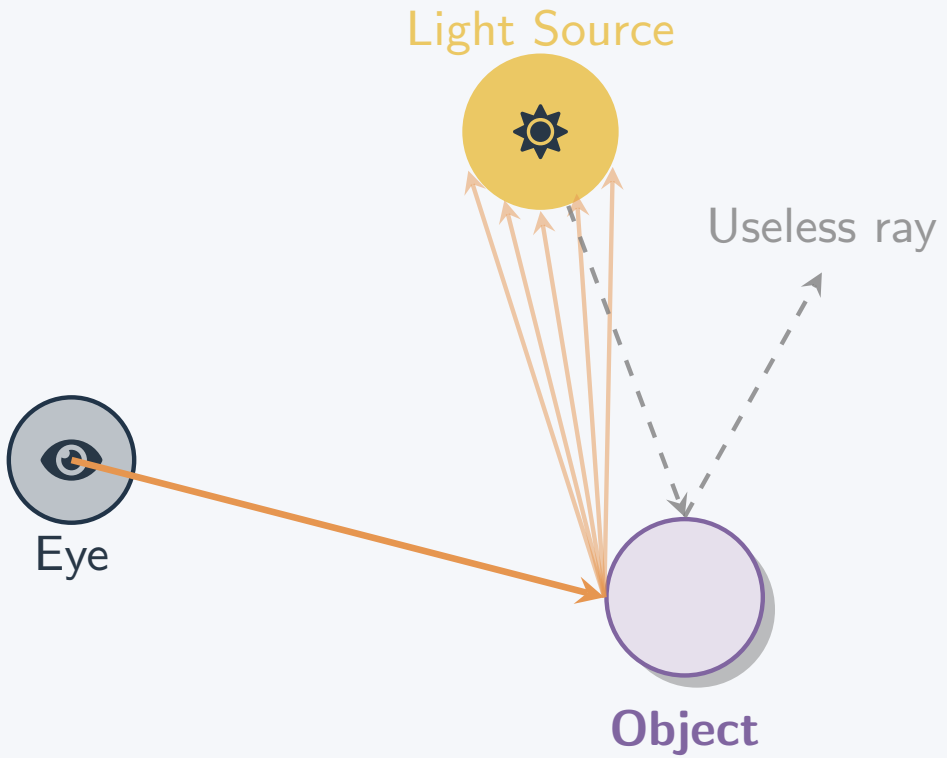

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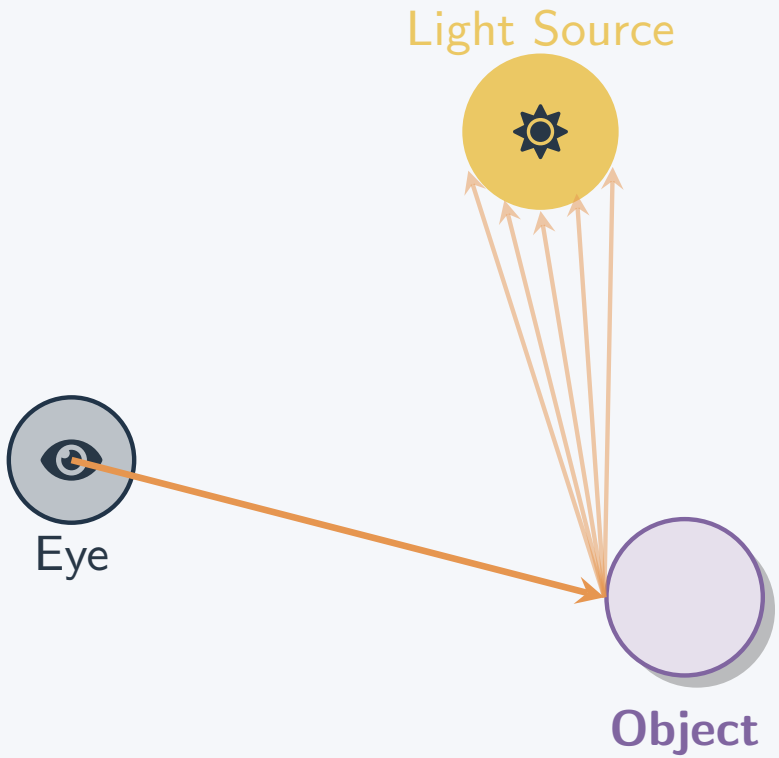

This is the opposite of what happens in reality. **Why does this work?**

- Most light never reaches our eyes
- Only trace rays that matter
- Much more efficient!

From Infinite Rays to Finite Pixels

2. Cutting Costs

Instead of tracing infinite rays —

Trace one ray per pixel.

This comes with little tradeoff, because:

* We will discuss more advanced techniques later that improve quality

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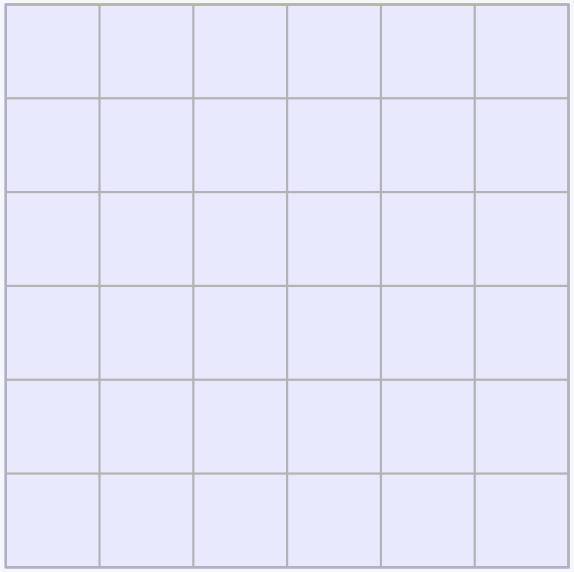

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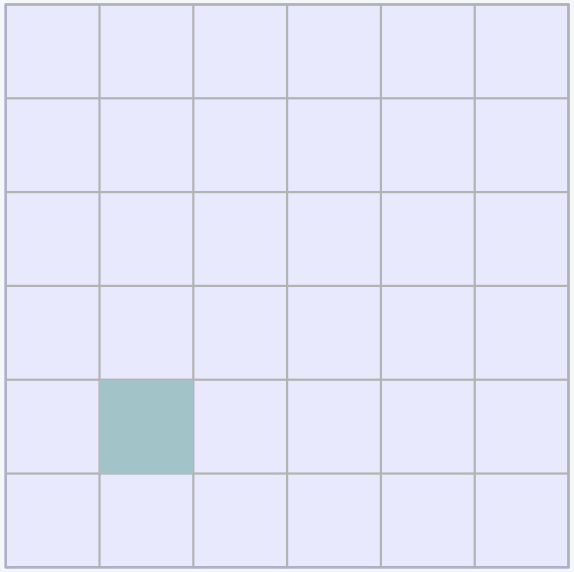

This comes with little tradeoff, because:

- An image is just a grid of pixels
- Each pixel can only be of one color

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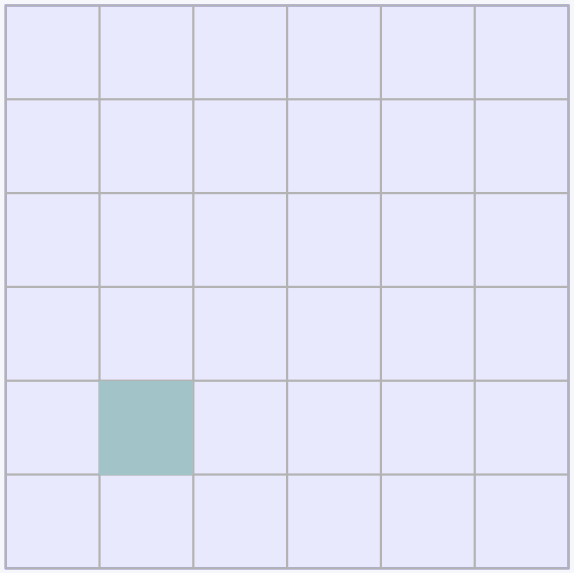

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- In the end, we just need to know the *color of each pixel*

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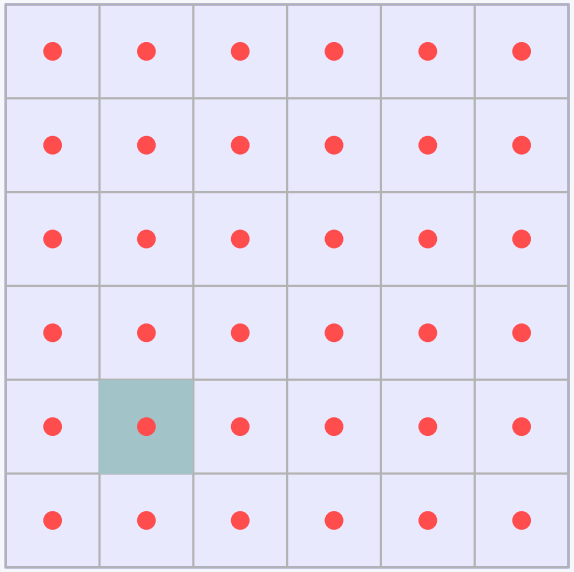

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- An image is just a grid of pixels
- Each pixel can only be of one color
- In the end, we just need to know the *color of each pixel*
- Hence, one ray from the mid-point of each pixel should be a good approximation*

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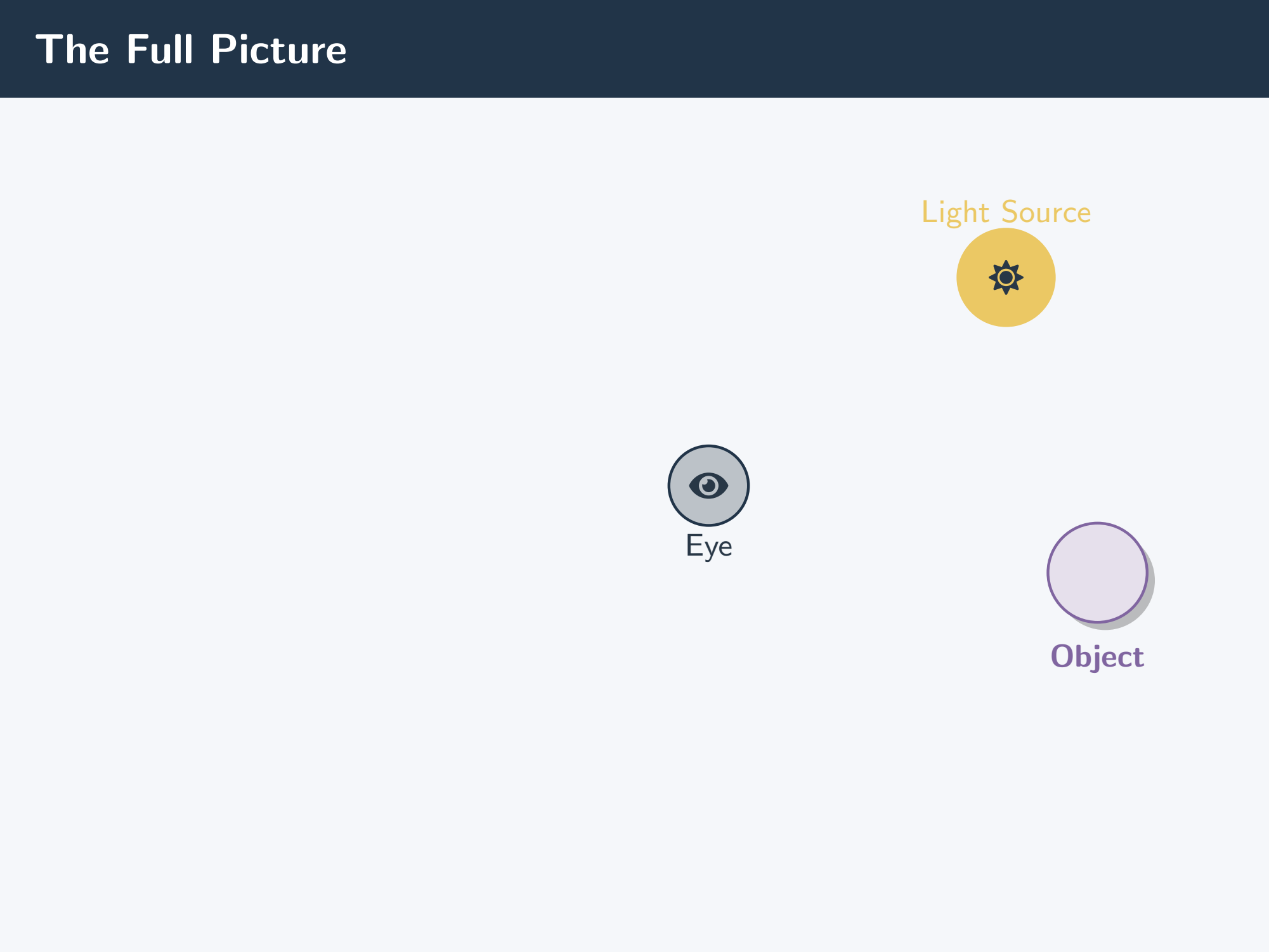
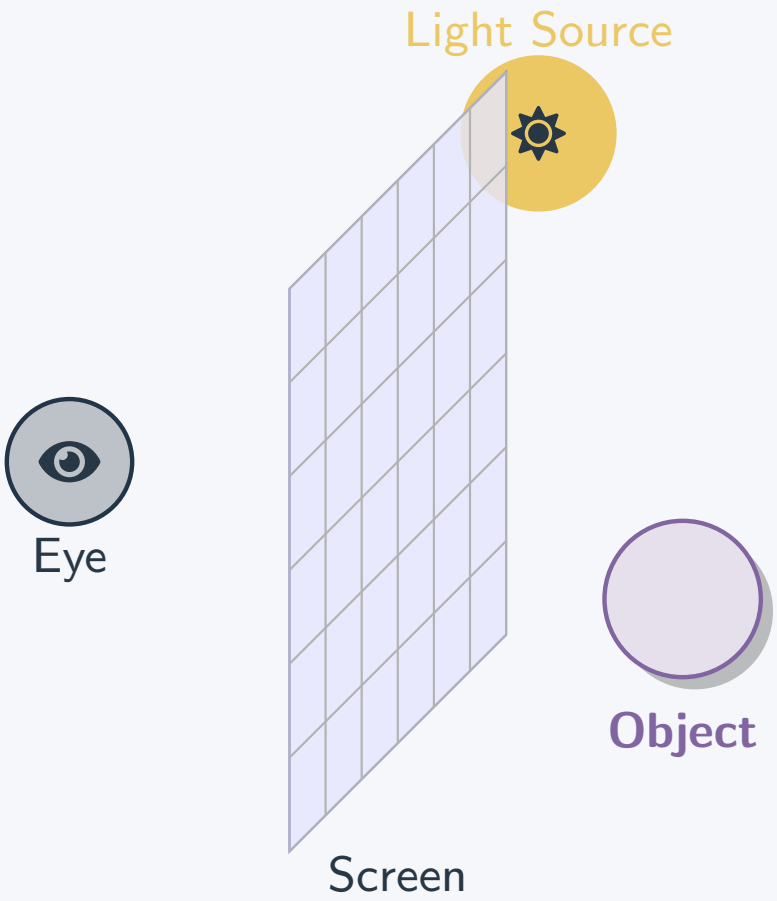
The Full Picture



The Full Picture

Place screen in front of eye



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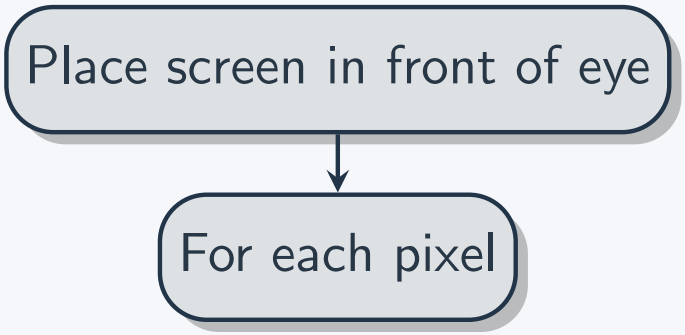

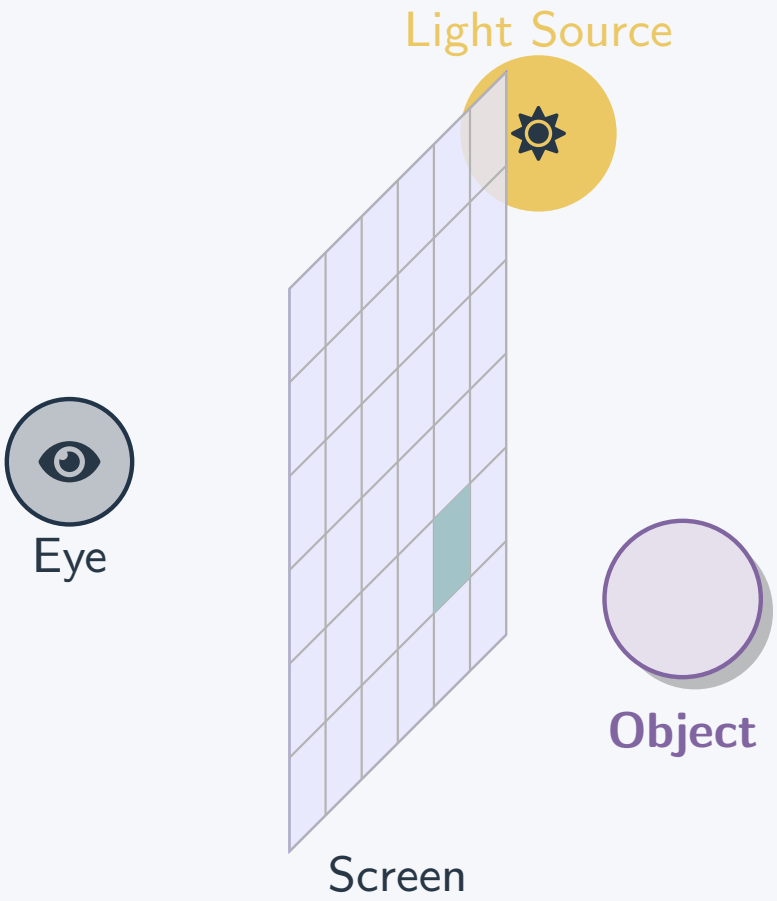

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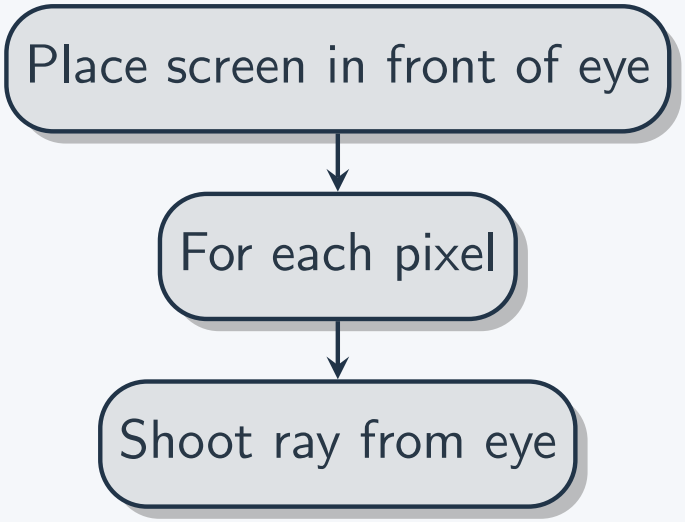

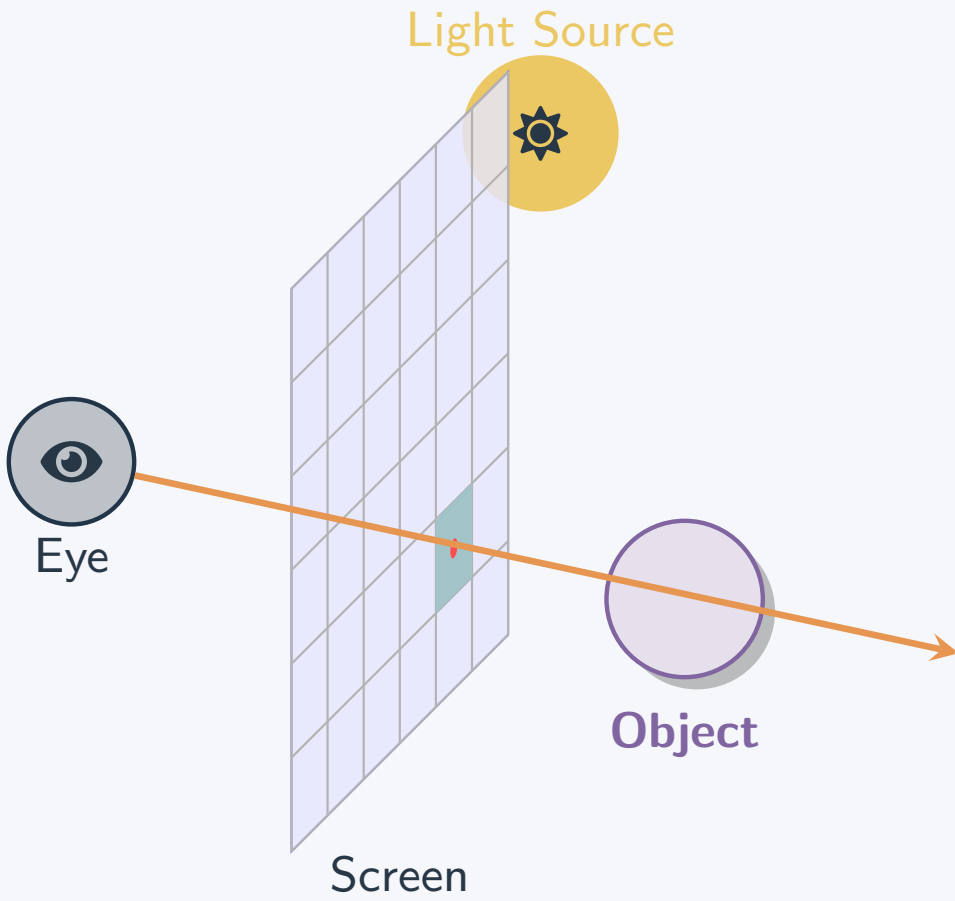

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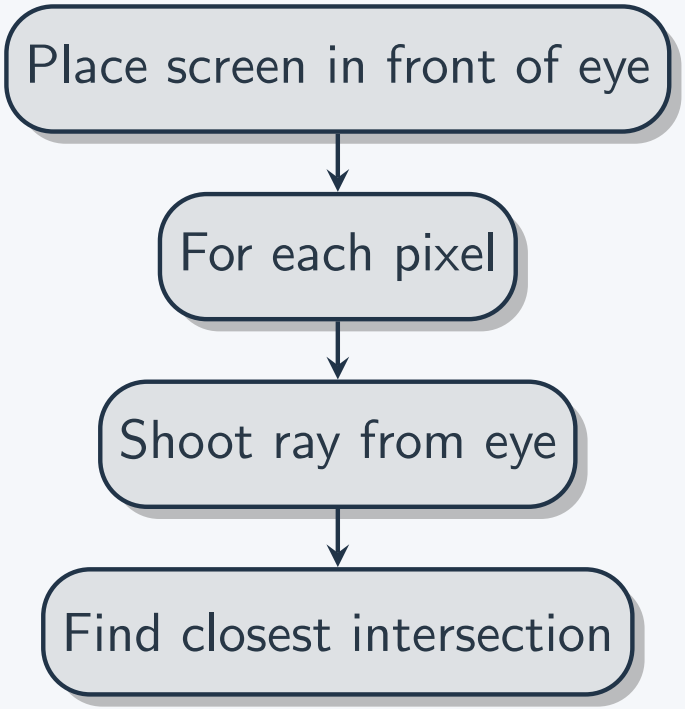

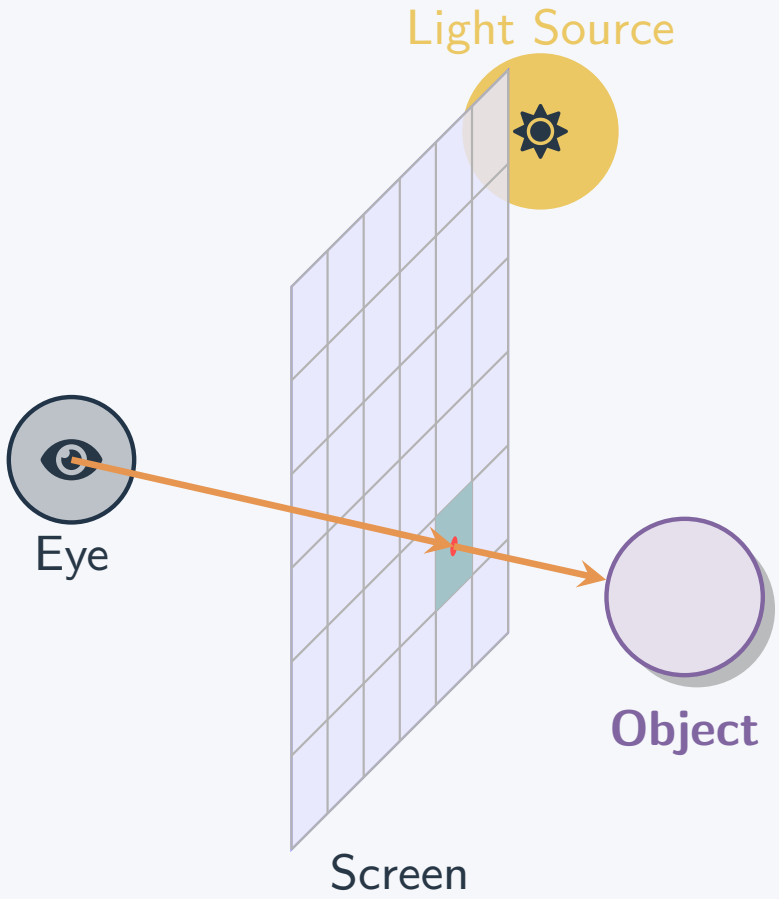

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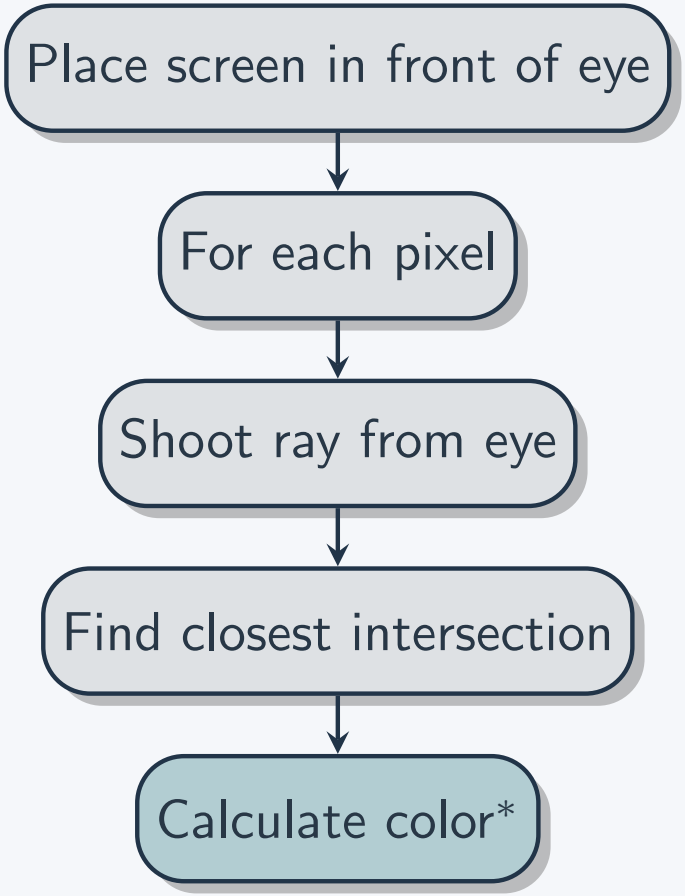

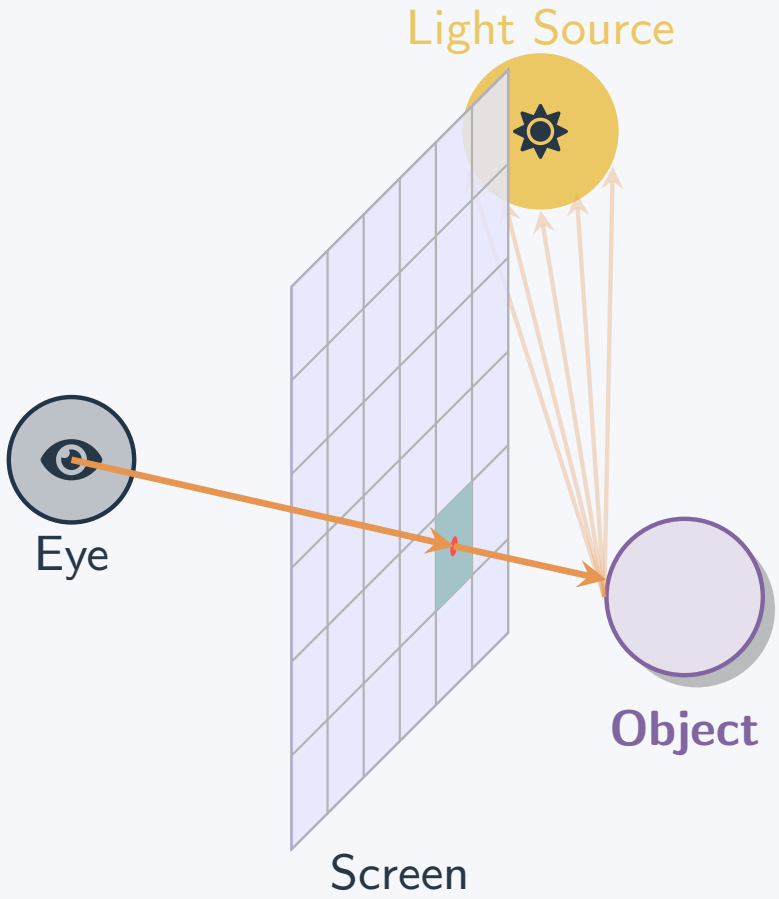

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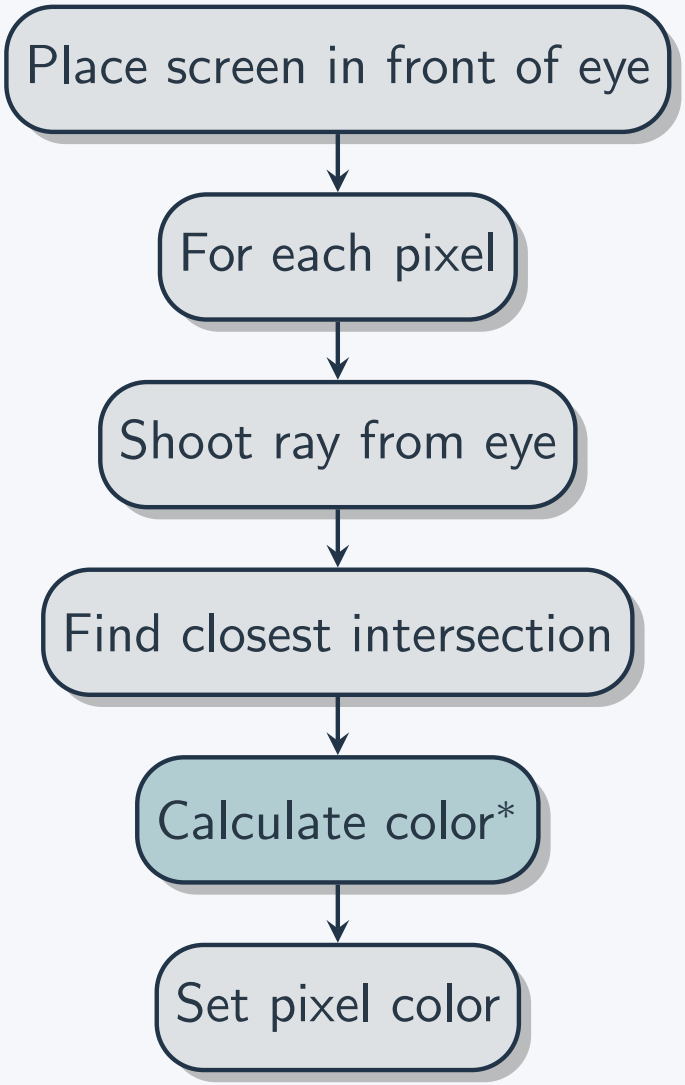

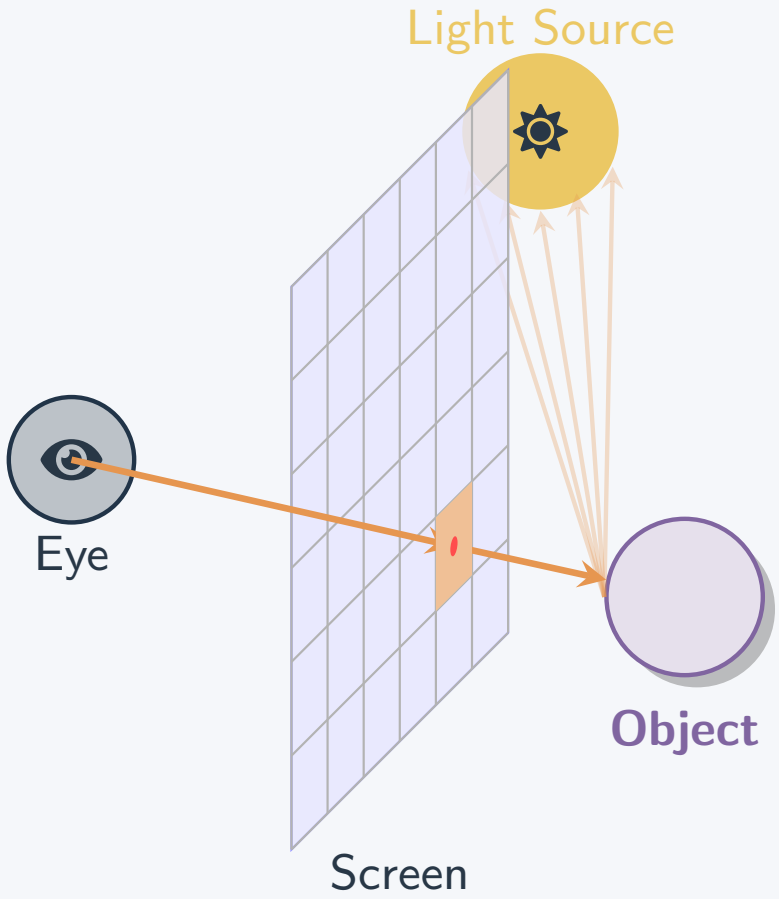

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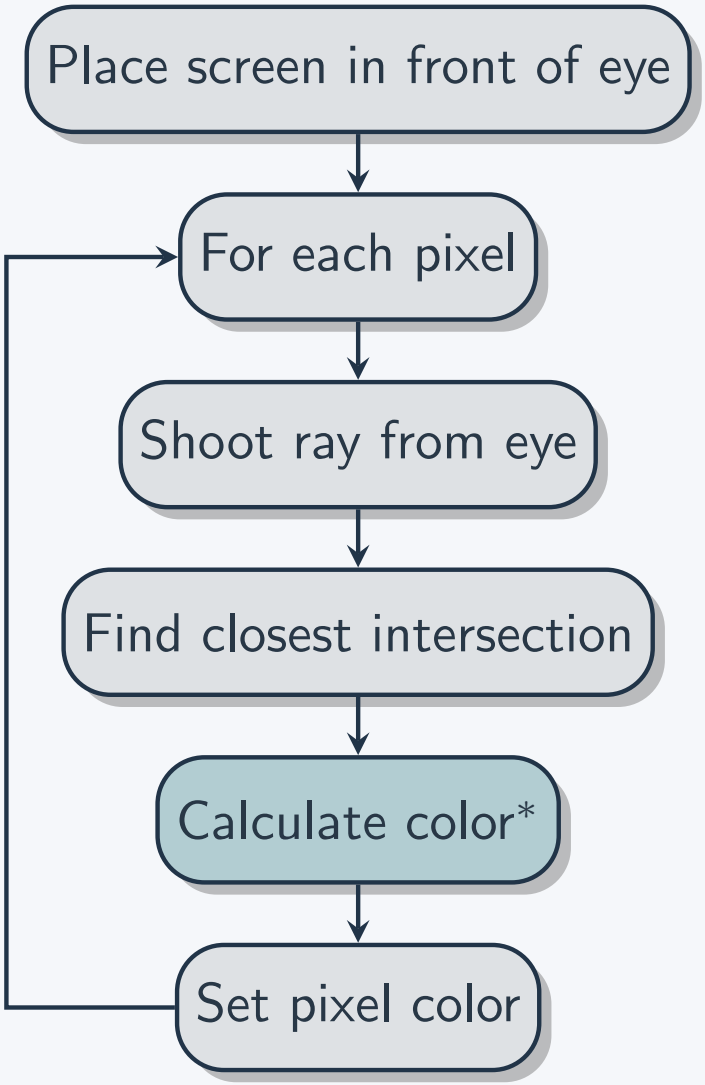
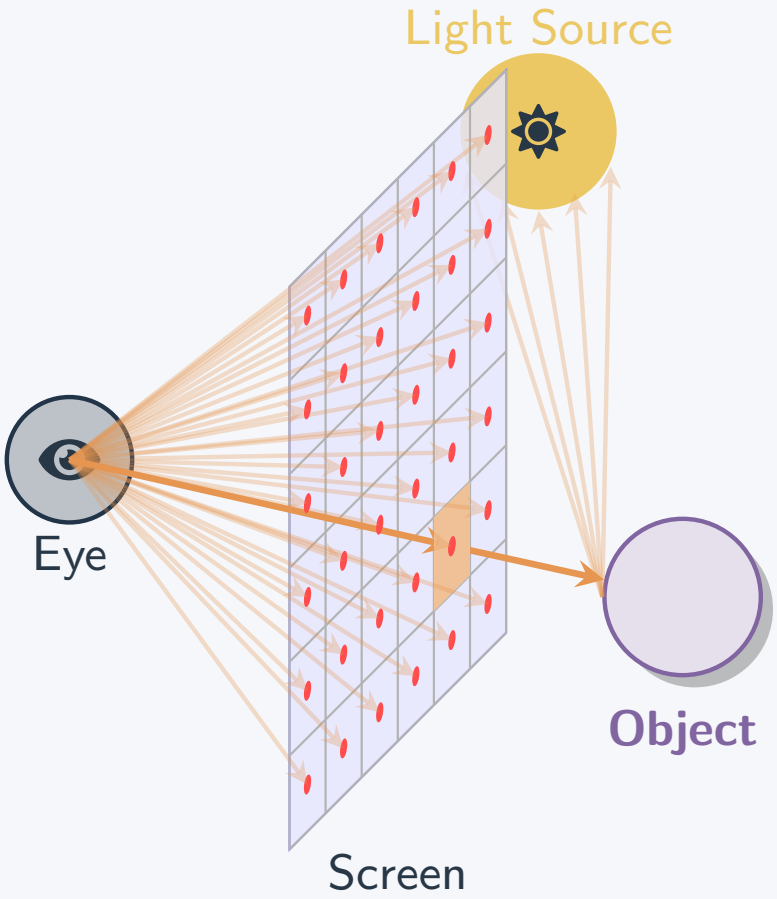
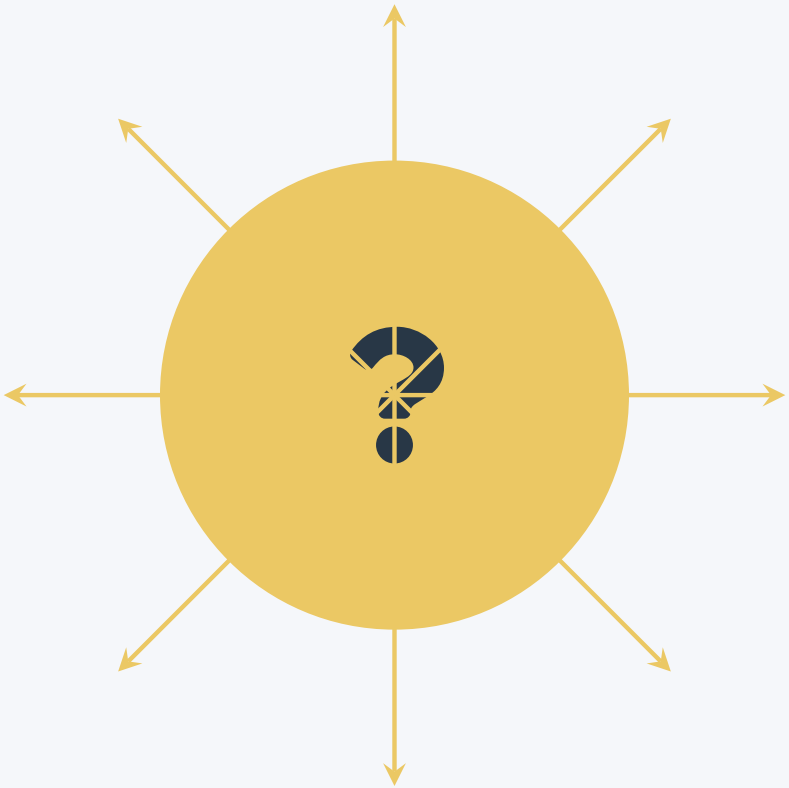




Questions?



References & Further Reading

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- Scratchapixel: Learn Computer Graphics Programming.
  scratchapixel.com