

# Mustafa Shaikh

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Robotics and machine learning practitioner focusing on object tracking with experience in robotics, specifically optimal control and motion planning. I have 5 years of industry experience in data science working closely with business stakeholders. I have lead projects end to end, from identifying a problem and designing a solution, to implementation and delivery.

## EDUCATION

### M.S. Electrical and Computer Engineering

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Specialization: Robotics and Intelligent Systems

San Diego, CA | 2022 - 2024

### B.A.Sc. Engineering Science

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Toronto, ON | 2013 - 2017

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### GRADUATE RESEARCHER | CELL BIOLOGY AND NEUROSCIENCE, UC SAN DIEGO/SALK San Diego, CA | 2024 -

**Key Skills:** Multi-object tracking, cell tracking, transformers, ResNet, Hungarian matching

**Goal:** Implement a reliable transformer based multiple object tracking system for microscopy and animal video data

**Applications:** Studying motion of organelles and animals to understand effects of neurodegenerative diseases

- Performed **ablations** and experiments, including with state of the art model pipelines, to identify areas for improving model performance as: **boost position signal** vs. visual for microscopy; **pretrain** on large public cell datasets vs. curated in-house data; **classical post-processing** methods lead to >10% improved performance
- Acquired and processed **large public cell tracking** datasets **30x larger** than previous in-house dataset; trained model on a single GPU with memory reducing methods to **improve key metric** ID switches by **40%** vs. baseline
- Implemented features to improve model learning capacity, training ability, and usability including: **rotary** positional and temporal **embeddings**, mixed dataset training with crop size selection, customizable feature extractor factory, and learning rate schedulers
- Proposed** and **implemented global tracking accuracy** metric to address gaps in multi-object tracking metrics with regards to downstream biological analysis
- Created **value proposition** for our method, selected **tracking** and **biological metrics** to compare to existing methods
- Proposed automatic **error detection** system to assist users with finding **inference-time tracking errors**

### GRADUATE RESEARCHER | EXISTENTIAL ROBOTICS LAB, UC SAN DIEGO

San Diego, CA | 2023 - 2024

**Key Skills:** Model predictive control, control barrier function, casADi, CVX, JAX, automatic differentiation, QP, Extended Kalman Filter, motion planning (RRT\*), collision avoidance, ROS, Jackal robot, LiDAR, depth camera, HectorSLAM

**Goal:** Determine the optimal trajectory for an autonomous robot with limited field-of-view to keep a target within view while avoiding collisions with obstacles

**Applications:** Search-and-rescue, field crew support in dangerous environments, various security applications

**Paper:** "Control Strategies for Pursuit-Evasion Under Occlusion Using Visibility and Safety Barrier Functions" submitted to ICRA 2025. **Arxiv:** <https://arxiv.org/abs/2411.01321>

- Formulated and implemented** a **model predictive controller** using a **Quadratic Program (QP)** with CBF constraints to compute the optimal trajectory of the 'seeking' robot in order to keep the target within the field of view
- Implemented features to improve the **stability, reliability, and performance** of the controller, including: **trajectory smoothing** to reduce sudden changes in direction; **adaptive tuning** of CBF hyperparameter to improve collision avoidance; **slack variables** to improve feasibility of solution
- Demonstrated **>95% tracking** in **real world experiments** with Jackal wheeled robot in a cluttered environment
- Operated lightweight controller at 50Hz onboard the robot; fused sensor data from 3D LiDAR and RGB camera for SLAM and target detection

- Implemented **Extended Kalman Filter** to estimate target's position and velocity using camera detections

## DATA SCIENTIST, SR. DATA SCIENTIST | WALMART CANADA

Toronto, ON | 2019 - 2022

**Key Skills:** Natural Language Processing - Spacy, Named Entity Recognition, BERT, human-in-the-loop systems, AutoML, ARIMA, Prophet, xgboost, PySpark, SQL, MLOps, Python, Pandas, Numpy, Keras, Google Cloud Platform, Airflow

**Project lead - Automated Attribute Assignment** (2021 - 2022). **Goal:** Extract product features from item descriptions to populate missing data for products on walmart.ca to improve search quality

- Developed **named entity recognition pipeline** (Spacy, BERT) to learn **context-aware** features from product descriptions; led to **>\$1MM CAD revenue increase** annually by populating features for over 500,000 items
- Recognized need for **high quality custom annotated data**; pitched and integrated a **human-in-the-loop** annotation tool (Prodigy); setup **active labelling** loop with **least confident predictions** annotated
- **Coordinated Jr. Data Scientist**, and guided the implementation of an **asynchronous orchestration layer**
- Worked closely with business stakeholders to guide problem framing, roadmap, execution and production support

### Other Projects (2019 - 2021)

- Developed and deployed **hierarchical model factory** (xgboost) to categorize 3rd party vendor items on walmart.ca; increased **categorization rate from 90% to 97%** which increased product views for previously 'unfindable' items
- Lead developer for data-driven, rules based online **grocery substitutions recommendation** engine; **300bps improvement in customer satisfaction**
- Created and maintained **fulfillment centre forecast** (ARIMA, Prophet, AutoML) to optimize labour; **>90% accuracy** up from 75% previously, **>\$1MM annual labour savings** by achieving high accuracy during holiday period
- Designed and implemented **randomized control test** to test optimal email voucher strategy for grocery customers; **saved \$100,000 in marketing spend** for a single 3-month campaign

## SR. DATA ANALYST | SHOPPERS DRUG MART

Toronto, ON | 2017 - 2019

**Key Skills:** Data engineering, systems engineering, performance metrics, workflow improvements

- Developed **ETL pipeline** and a large SQL application that **transform event triggers** into key pharmacy **workflow metrics** such as customer wait times, rework rates and labour heatmaps, to enable store performance tracking
- Used metrics to create business cases and guided rollout of **\$1MM CAD in workflow improvements**

## PROJECTS

### DEEP LEARNING, ROBOTICS AND SOFTWARE

UC SAN DIEGO, 2023 - 2024

**Key Skills:** Extended Kalman Filter (EKF), Particle Filter, IMU, LiDAR, encoder, stereo camera features, intrinsics, sensor fusion, odometry, disparity, occupancy grid, texture map, SIFT, point cloud registration, PyTorch, C++, RAI, smart pointers, design patterns, templates, variants, STL

- **PointNet-based neural network** in PyTorch to solve the **point cloud registration** problem, and achieved performance close to **Iterative Closest Point** (ICP) method on basic trajectories in Eden dataset
- **Visual-Inertial SLAM** for a car moving in an urban environment with an Extended Kalman Filter using **IMU data** and **stereo camera features** to map landmarks and plot the trajectory of a car in an urban environment
- **Particle Filter SLAM** for a differential drive robot moving through a building, in order to create an **occupancy grid map** and color **texture map** using **structure from motion**
- (C++) **String library** with underlying buffer manager from scratch. **Achieved 33% lower memory usage than C++ std::string** for common string operations: append, replace, insert, erase, search
- (C++) Graph-based **in-memory JSON datastore** with query capability
- (C++) **Compressing archive tool** with add, extract, retrieve capability

## SKILLS

C++, Python, SQL, Numpy, Pandas, PyTorch, Keras, CVX, JAX, OpenCV, Open3D, GCP, PySpark, Hadoop, Airflow