

Handling of plasticity in physics engine

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1 Introduction

The application of modern computer game techniques enables the description of complex dynamic systems such as military vehicles with a high level of detail while still solving the equations in real-time. Film production and war games, in particular, is a key area that have benefited from simulation technology. In practice, games are often accomplished using an open-source platform such like ODE - Smith (2001-2007), Bullet Physics - Coumans (2003-2016) and Box2D - Catto (2007-2015).

Computational methods used in physics engines are divided to modules that handle collision detection and contact description and modules that handle solution of equations in real-time. Equations need to be solved can further be subdivided to be associated to motion, constraints and collisions. Velocity-based formulation is typically used in constraint based rigid body simulation. Friction is typically taken into account and mechanical joints are handled by constraint equations. Detailed description of various components can be found in e.g. Erleben (2005).

Plasticity is not typically taken into account in gaming solutions. Breaking of various objects typically takes place based on collision or impulse. Nevertheless, breaking of steel or reinforced concrete structures using this approach is not appropriate making a simulation to look unrealistic. Theory for handling of plasticity has been presented already in Terzopoulos and Fleischer (1998). Müller et al. (2004) and Müller et al. (2005) present a method for modeling and animating of elastic and plastic objects in real-time using point based animation. This approach is not been widely used in simulation applications. On major issue is collision handling of deformable objects.

This study will introduce an approach to account plastic deformation in game applications. In the introduced method, the plastic deformation takes place if force or moment exceeds given limit, deformation absorbs energy and joint breaks if plastic capacity is exceeded. The approach is based on using joint motors to model plasticity. Erleben (2005, p. 90) suggests similar method for modelling friction in joints. Adjacent objects are connected by motors. Motor power production limits are estimated based on plastic section modulus. Joint breaking is accounted by summing plastic deformation and comparing it to predefined material based limit. Elastic part of deformation is modelled by employing spring description which is based on modification of existing constraint in Bullet Physics.

Approach presented in this work can be used in gaming industry to provide more realistic simulations without significant extra work. For gaming purposes presented method works best in scenarios where connected parts are relatively heavy. This allows normal integration timestep to be used without stability issues. This kind of methodology also opens large area of combining old structural analysis methods to modern simulation frameworks.

2 Adding plasticity to physics engine

In this section, key concepts related to the introduced model are explained. Main differences between traditional structural analysis and physics engines are reviewed and discussed.

Velocity-based formulation is not often used in structural or mechanical engineering while, however, it is popular within physics based game developers and film production teams. Erleben (2005, p. 45) provides reasoning and theoretical details on why velocity-based formulation is popular in constraint-based rigid body simulation. Main reason is that collision handling can be done without additional procedures. Acceleration-based formulations need to stop at collision and switch to an impulse based method. In structural analysis, a formulation and associated numerical solution procedure are selected based on needed features. For most complex scenarios finite element method is used. In most cases, static solution with assumption of linear strain-displacement relation small displacement solution using displacement based boundary conditions is used. Bathe (1975) provides description for handling of various nonlinearities. In large displacement analysis, formulation may be based on updated formulation (Eulerian) or Lagrangian formulation where initial configuration is used. Further enhancements are material nonlinearity and dynamic analysis. Physics engine provides dynamic analysis with large large reference translations and rotations.

Material plasticity has typically taken into account in games by using suitable coefficient of restitution. This provides reasonable means to simulate loss of energy in collisions. Simulation of breaking of objects made of ductile material can be made more realistic by splitting rigid bodies to multiple bodies which are connected by energy absorbing joints. Typical engineering stress-strain curve of ductile steel is shown in 2.1. E.g. Dowling (2007) provides detailed descriptions of engineering and true stress-strain curves. Stress-strain curve is not drawn to scale as elastic strain could not be seen as it is typically 0.001 to 0.005.

In this work elastic-fully plastic material model is used in most scenarios. It allows realistic simulations for most scenarios. Having elastic part allows elastic displacements for slender structures. Elastic part is ignored in method suggested in this work if deformation is related to higher frequency than integration stability would allow. Strain hardening part of stress-strain curve could probably be taken into account but it has not been tried in this work. It should be noted that geometry of objects is not updated during analysis and thus engineering stress-strain properties should be used even with strain hardening.

Strain hardening is taken into account in this work mainly by assuming that plasticity in bending expands, Dowling (2007, p. 672). Material that starts to yield first is hardened and yielding moves slightly. This can be seen e.g. by bending paperclip. It does not break at low angles but can take few full bends.

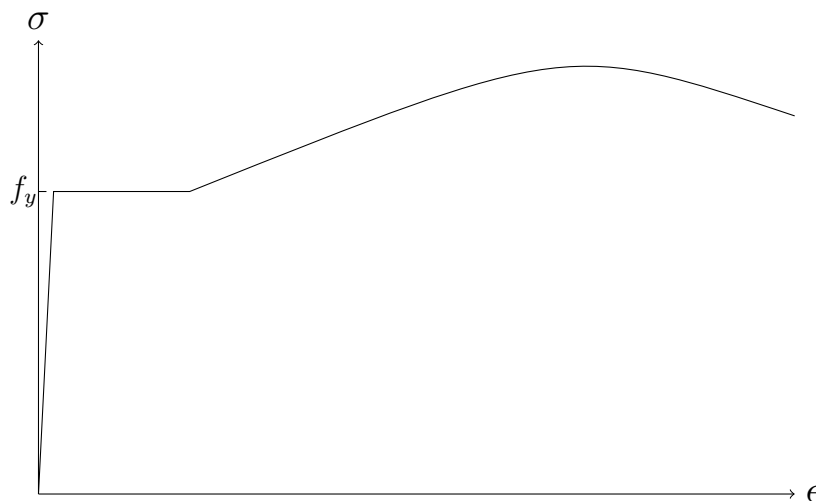


Figure 2.1: Engineering stress-strain curve of ductile steel (not to scale).

Difference between elastic and plastic section modulus is shown in 2.2. If stress is below yield limit, stress and strain are linear within material. If cross section is fully plastic, stress is assumed to be at yield level over whole cross section and so plastic section modulus is higher than elastic section modulus.

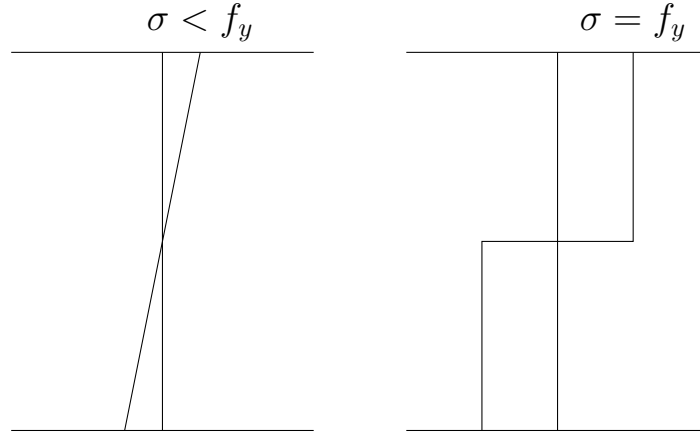


Figure 2.2: Stress distribution under elastic and plastic loads.

Basic idea in this work can be tested with any framework having motors and hinge constraints. This can be done by setting target velocity of motor to zero and limiting maximum motor impulse to plastic moment multiplied by timestep.

Further enhancements were created and tested by forking Bullet Physics source code and adding new constraints Nikula (2014-2016). Constraint processing in Bullet Physics is based on ODE, Smith (2001-2007). Mathematical background and detailed examples are available by Smith (2002). In following section, these equations will be clarified by simple example. Equations 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 are created for each constraint.

$$J_1 v_1 + \Omega_1 \omega_1 + J_2 v_2 + \Omega_2 \omega_2 = c + C\lambda \quad (2.1)$$

$$\lambda \geq l \quad (2.2)$$

$$\lambda \leq h \quad (2.3)$$

Main parameters and corresponding fields in Bullet Physics are described in table 2.1.

Parameter	Description	btConstraintInfo2 pointer
J_1, Ω_1 J_2, Ω_2	Jacobian	m_J1linearAxis, m_J1angularAxis m_J2linearAxis, m_J2angularAxis
v	linear velocity	
ω	angular velocity	
c	right side vector	m_constraintError
C	constraint force mixing	cfm
λ	constraint force	
l	low limit for constraint force	m_lowerLimit
h	high limit for constraint force	m_upperLimit

Table 2.1: Constraint parameters

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