Mobile Computing Microcontrollers, Sensors & Actuators

Slides: tmb.gr/mc-mcu

Source on GDocs

Overview

These slides introduce *microcontrollers*.

We learn how to run a program on one.

And how to use *sensors* and *actuators*.

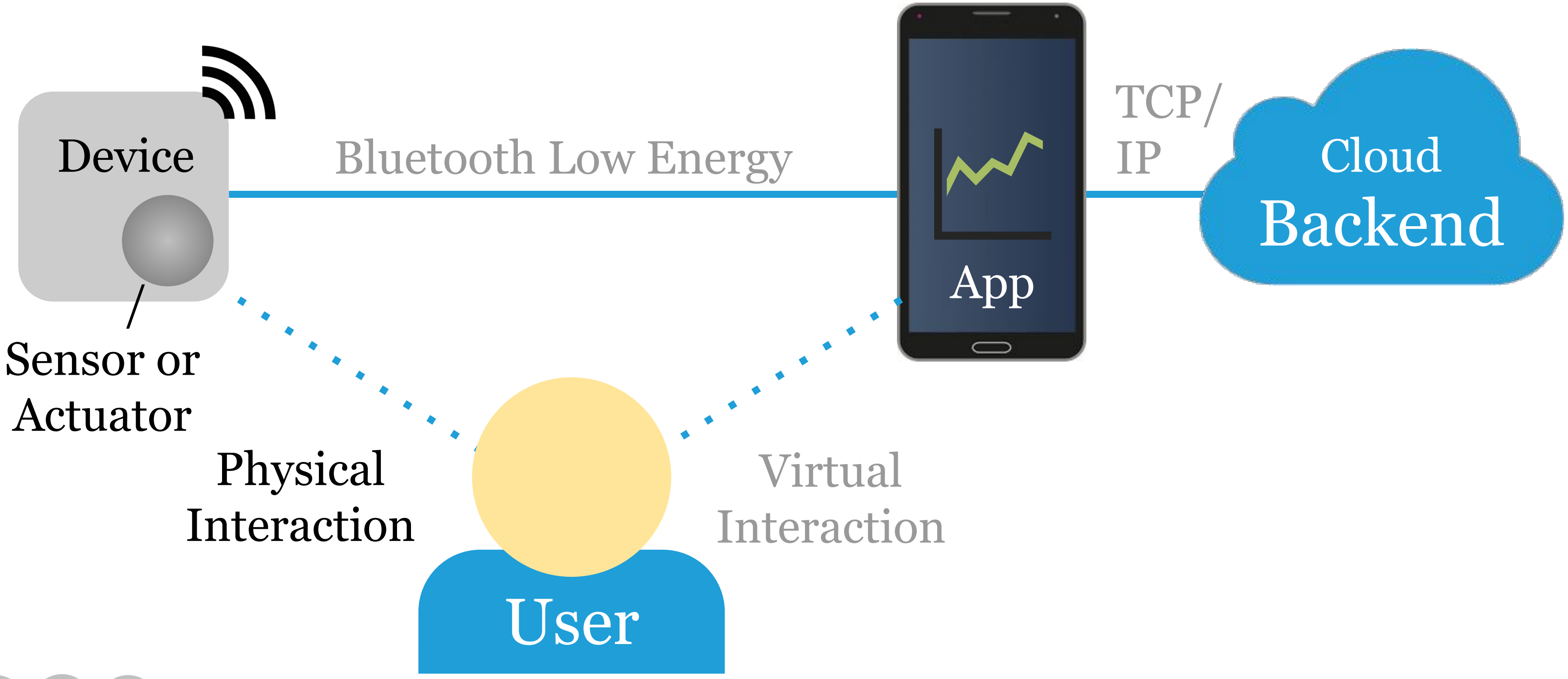
Prerequisites

Install the Arduino IDE and set up microcontrollers.

Check the Wiki entry on Installing the Arduino IDE.

Set up the Feather nRF52840 Sense for Arduino.

Reference model



Let's look at physical computing

On device sensing/control, no connectivity.

Sensor → Device, e.g. logging temperature.

Device → Actuator, e.g. time-triggered buzzer.

Sensor → Device → Actuator, e.g. RFID door lock.

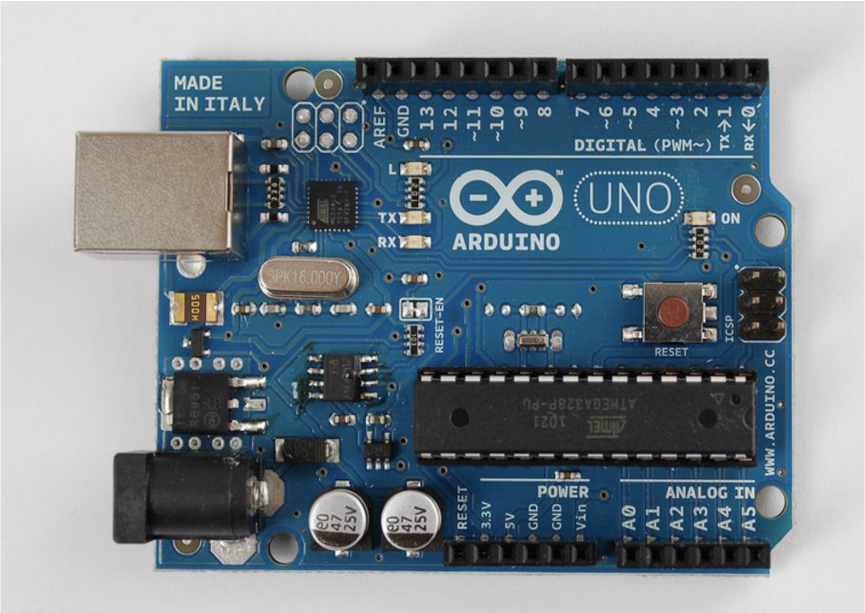
A → B: measurement or control data flow.

Arduino, a typical microcontroller

Microcontrollers (MCU) are small computers that run a single program.

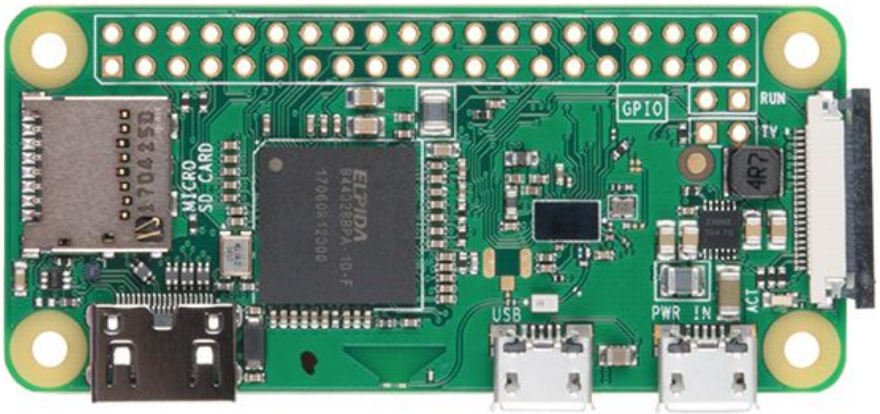
Arduino is an MCU for electronics prototyping.

Here's a video about it with Massimo Banzi.



Raspberry Pi, a single-board computer

Single-board computers like the *Raspberry Pi* are *not* microcontrollers.



They run a full Linux OS, have a lot of memory and use way more power.

Here's a video on the Pi.

MCU vs. single-board computer

An MCU has limited memory and a slow processor.

But there's no operating system, i.e. less overhead.

This means an MCU can react faster, in real-time.

Use microcontrollers for simple, low latency tasks.

We'll use a microcontroller (and a smartphone).

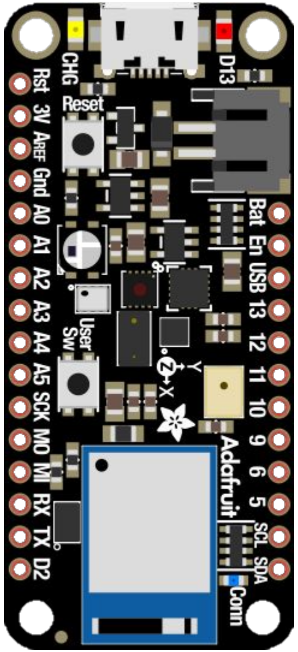
Feather nRF52840 Sense

Microcontroller with Bluetooth 5 (and more).

Nordic nRF52840 System on Chip (SoC).

32-bit ARM Cortex-M4 CPU with FPU.

1 MB flash memory, 265 kB RAM.



For details, check the Wiki page.

Programming a microcontroller

Microcontrollers are programmed via USB.

Code is (cross-) *compiled* on your computer.

The *binary* is *uploaded* to the microcontroller.

The uploaded program then runs "stand-alone".

Arduino IDE settings

Connect your board via USB and make sure that

Tools > *Board* is set to your microcontroller,

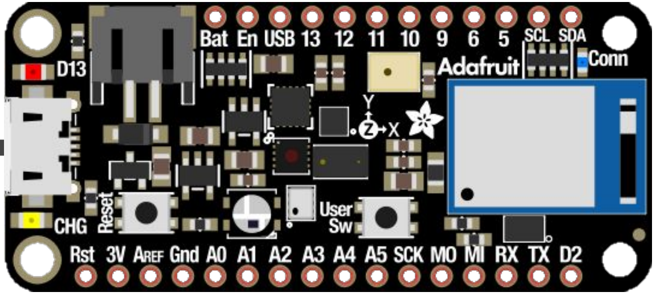
Tools > *Port* matches the current USB port.

Some boards require additional settings.

Arduino IDE program upload

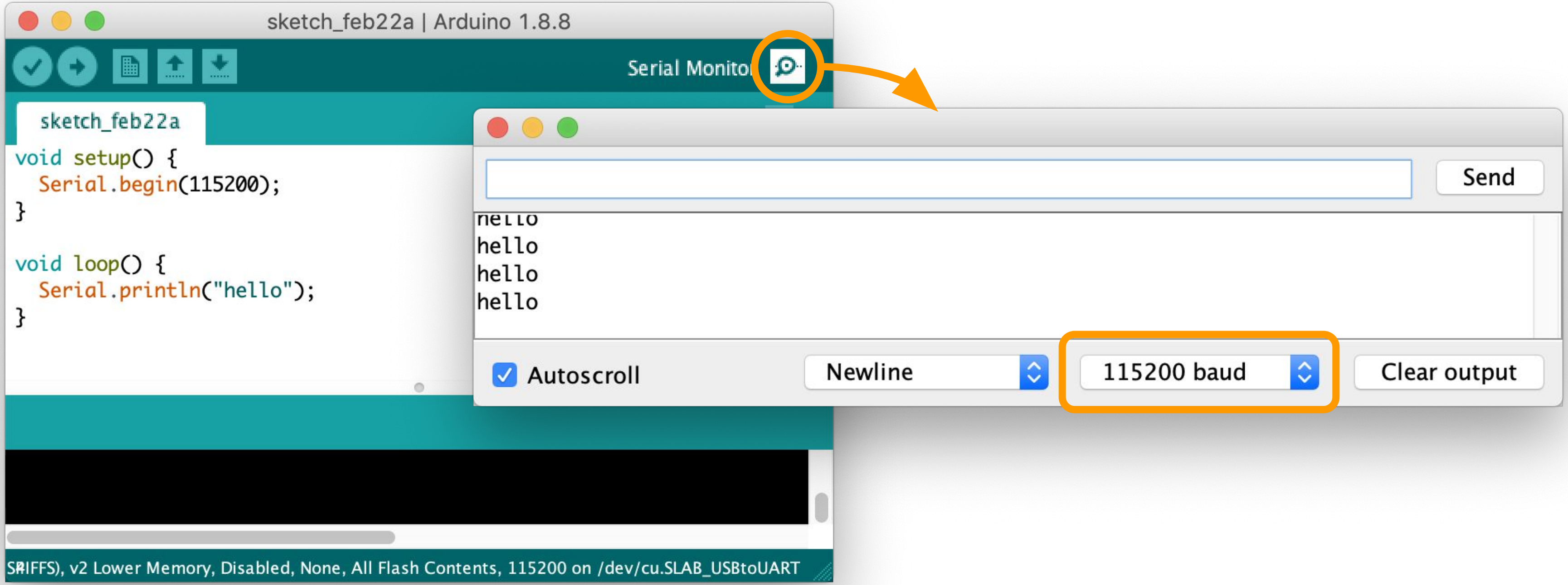
The *Upload* button compiles and uploads the code.

USB



Arduino IDE serial console

Make sure the baud rate matches *Serial.begin()*.



A typical program in Arduino C

```
#include "Adafruit_TinyUSB.h" // nRF52840 only

void setup() { // called once at startup
  Serial.begin(115200); // set baud rate
}

void loop() { // called in a loop
  Serial.println("Hello, World!");
}
```

Arduino language

The Arduino language uses a subset of C/C++.

The user exposed code looks a bit like Java.

There is a string type and a String class.

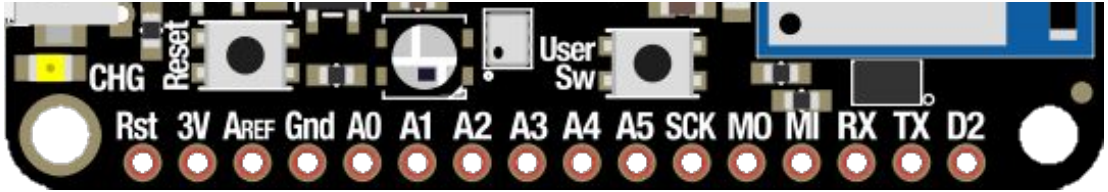
Libraries are programmed in C++.

For details, check the language reference.

General purpose input and output

Microcontrollers can "talk to" the physical world through general purpose input and output (GPIO).

GPIO *pins* allow a MCU to measure/control signals.



E.g. power, ground, analog pins, digital pin.

GPIO pin names

In Arduino, digital *pin names* are just numbers, e.g. pin *2*, while analog pins start with an *A*, like pin *A0*.

Which pins are available depends on the device.

The map of available pins is called *pinout*.

A pin can have multiple functions.

Pinout diagram

Feather nRF52840 Sense

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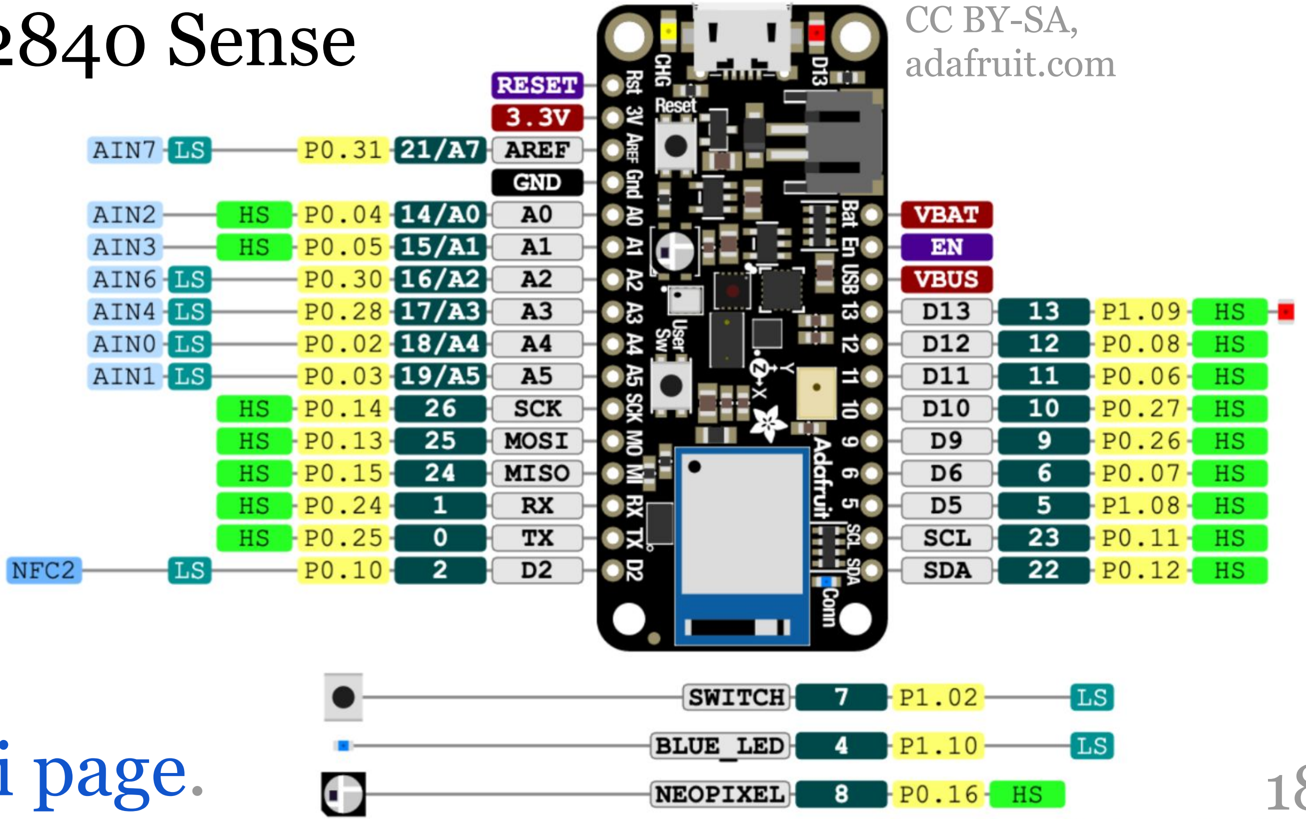
- Power
- GND
- Control
- CircuitPython Name
- Arduino Name
- GPIO
- High Speed
- Low Speed
- ADC
- Special



More, see Wiki page.

Sensors read the real world

Convert physical properties to electrical *input* signals.

E.g. temperature, humidity, brightness or orientation.

Input can be *digital* (0 or 1) or *analog* (e.g. 0 - 2^10).

Measuring = *reading* sensor values from input pins.

Actuators control the real world

Convert electrical *output* signals to physical properties.

E.g. light, current with a relay or motion with a motor.

Output can be *digital* (0 or 1) or *analog* (with PWM).

Controlling = *writing* actuator values to output pins.

Wiring sensors to the MCU

Sensors and actuators exchange signals with the MCU.

For prototyping, we use wires to achieve this, e.g.

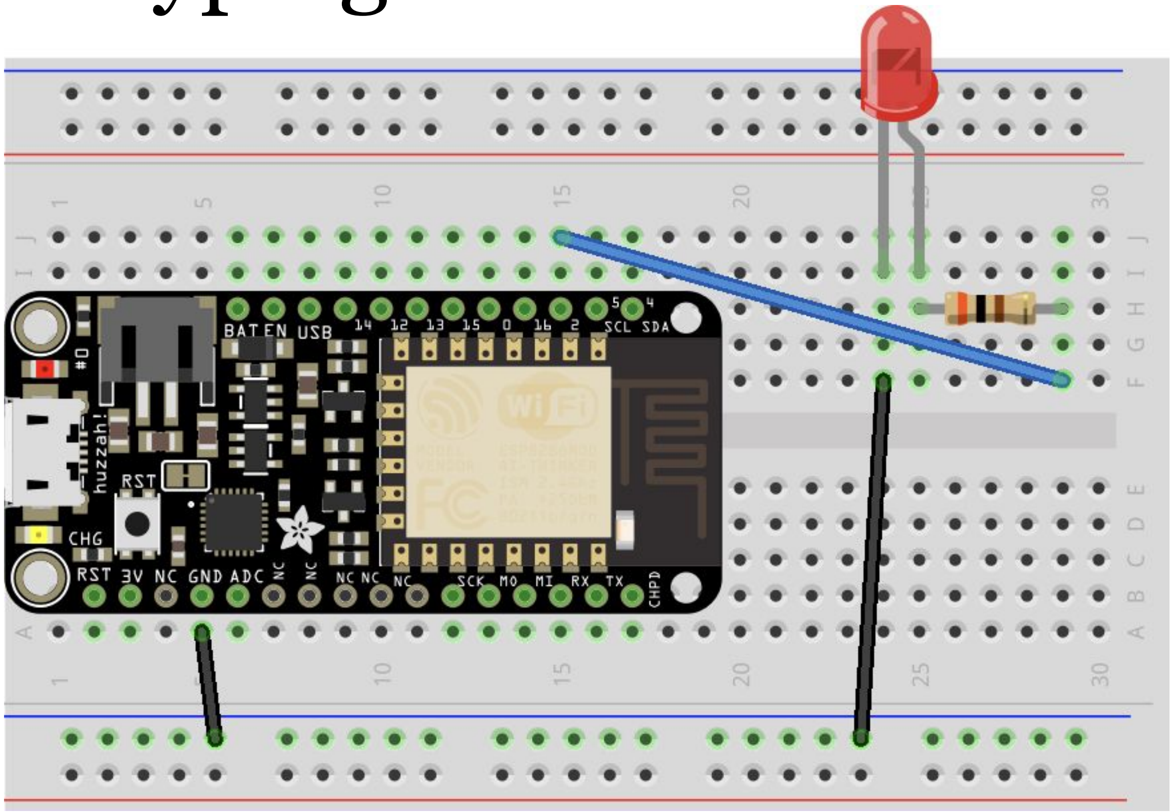
Breadboard and wires, or the Grove standard.

For products, custom PCBs are designed.

Breadboard prototyping

Wire electronic components, no soldering.

Under the hood, the columns are connected, also the power rails.

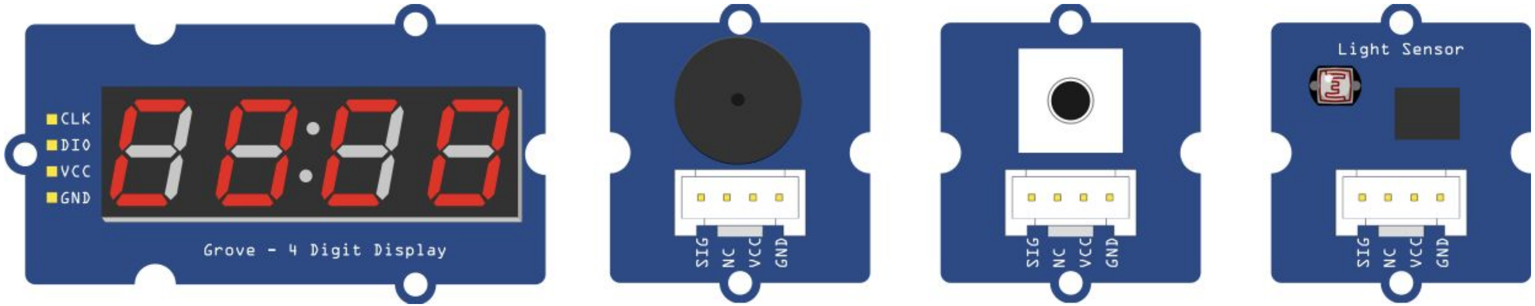


Grove wiring standard

Grove is a simple way to wire sensors and actuators.

It defines wires for power, ground and two signals.

Signals can be digital, analog, UART serial or I2C.



Arduino example code

Each Arduino library comes with example code.

And there are a number of basic examples.

See *Arduino IDE > File > Examples*

GPIO pin numbers may vary.

Use the nRF52480 Sense pinout or adapter pins.

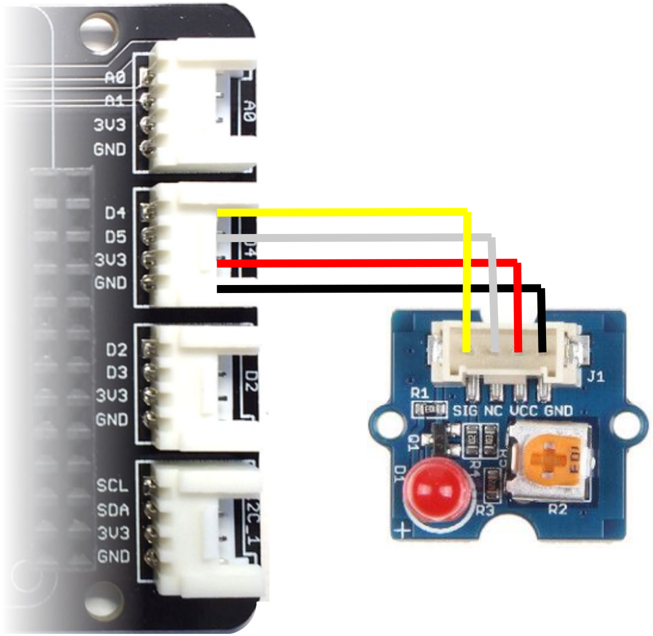
Blinking a LED (digital output)

Try *Examples > Basics > Blink*

Use *LED_BUILTIN*, i.e. pin *13*.

Or wire a LED to Grove port *D4*.

D4 maps to nRF52840 pin *9*.



The same code works with the buzzer.

Blinking a LED (digital output) .ino

```
pin = 13; // or 9 for Grove D4

void setup() { // called once
  pinMode(pin, OUTPUT); // configure pin
}

void loop() { // called in a loop
  digitalWrite(pin, HIGH); // switch pin on
  delay(500); // ms
  digitalWrite(pin, LOW); // switch pin off
  delay(500); // ms
}
```

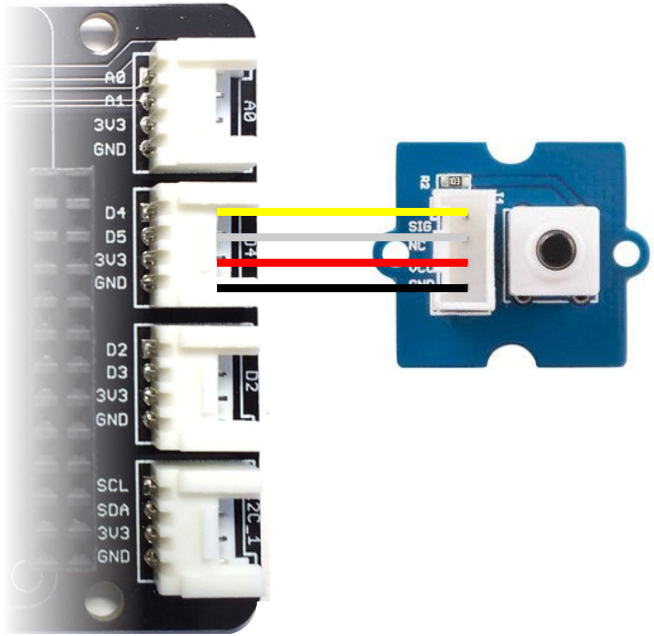
Reading a button (digital input)

Try *Basics > DigitalReadSerial*

Use the onboard button, pin 7.

Or wire a button to Grove *D4*.

D4 maps to nRF52840 pin *9*.



Use the serial console to see output.

Reading a button (digital input) .ino

```
pin = 7; // or 9 for Grove D4

void setup() { // called once
  pinMode(pin, INPUT_PULLUP); // or INPUT
  Serial.begin(9600);
}

void loop() { // called in a loop
  int value = digitalRead(pin);
  Serial.println(value);
  delay(500); // ms
}
```

Hands-on, 15': Button-triggered LED

Use blue onboard LED, pin 4, and the button, pin 7.

Combine the previous examples to switch the LED.

Or wire a LED to Grove port *D2* and a button to *D4*.

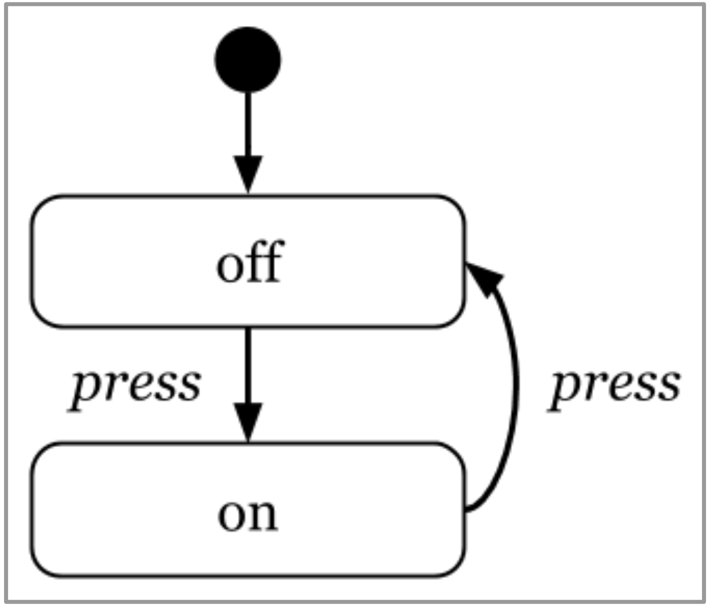
Use the pin mapping to adapt the pin numbers.

State machine

A (finite-) state machine is a simple way to manage state in embedded programs.

System is in one state at a time, *inputs* trigger state *transitions*.

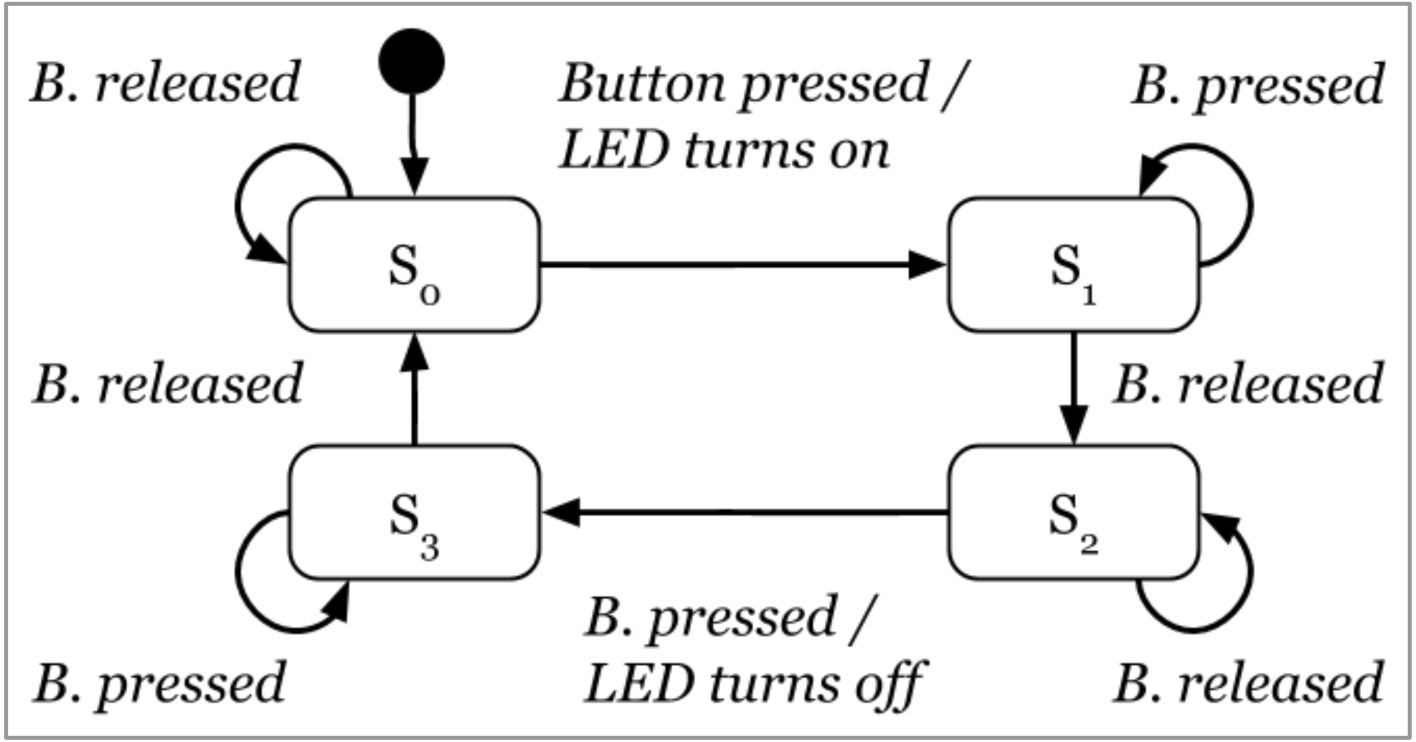
E.g. 1st button *press* => light *on*, 2nd button *press* => light *off*, 3rd => *on*, 4th => *off*, etc.



State machine (refined)

Button is pressed or released.

LED can be turned *on* or *off*.



State machine (code snippet)

```
int b = digitalRead(buttonPin);
if (s == 0 && pressed(b)) { // s is state
  s = 1; digitalWrite(ledPin, HIGH); // on
} else if (s == 1 && !pressed(b)) {
  s = 2;
} else if (s == 2 && pressed(b)) {
  s = 3; digitalWrite(ledPin, LOW); // off
} else if (s == 3 && !pressed(b)) {
  s = 0;
}
```

Hands-on, 15': State machine

Copy and complete the code of the state machine.

Make sure it works, with a button and LED setup.

Change it to switch off only, if the 2nd press is *long*.

Let's define long as > 1s, measure time with millis().

Commit the resulting code to the hands-on repo.

Reading a light sensor (analog input)

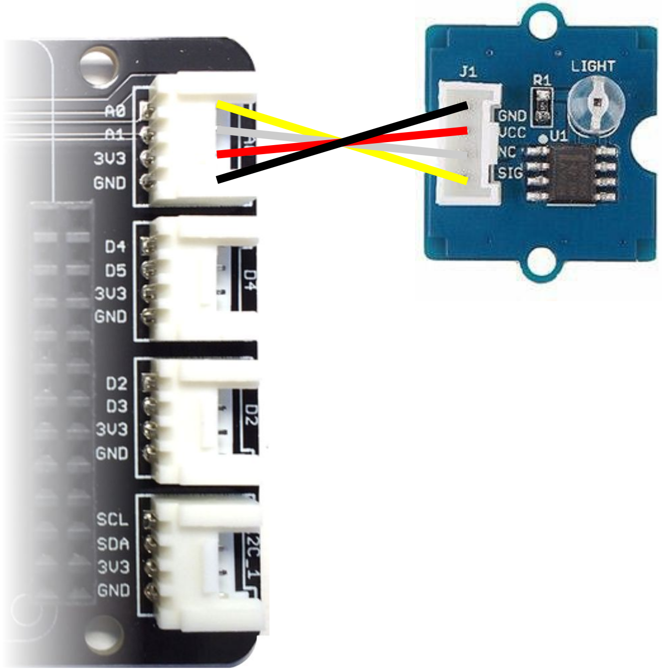
Use *Basics* > *AnalogReadSerial*

Wire the sensor to port/pin *A0*.

The analog value is, e.g. 0-1024*

```
int value = analogRead(pin);
```

Use serial plotter to see output.



*Range depends on ADC resolution.

Mapping input to value range

Sometimes mapping sensor value ranges helps, e.g.

0 - 1024 analog input => 0 - 9 brightness levels.

Arduino has a simple map() function for this:

```
int map(value, // measured input value
  fromLow, fromHigh, // from range
  toLow, toHigh); // to range
```

```
e.g. result = map(value, 0, 1024, 0, 9);
```

Measuring humidity (SHT30)

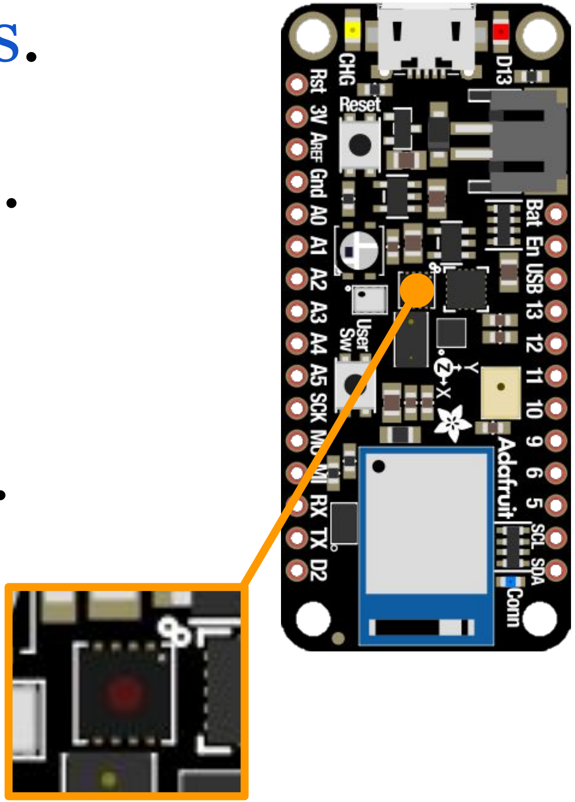
Onboard sensor, wired via I2C bus.

I2C uses *3V3*, *GND*, *SCL* and *SDA*.

I2C address of the sensor is *0x44*.

Requires *Adafruit_SHT31* library.

This, more sensors in the Wiki.



Hands-on, 15': Humidity Alert

Design a state machine with this specification:

Button press sets humidity += 10% as threshold.

Red LED turns on, as long as monitoring is active.

Once threshold has been crossed, blue LED turns on.

Button confirms alert, red led turns on for 1 s, then off.

Summary

We programmed a microcontroller in (Arduino) C.

We used digital and analog sensors and actuators.

We learned to design and code a state machine.

These are the basics of physical computing.

Next: Bluetooth Low Energy.

Challenge

Implement the humidity alert you designed before.

Commit the code and docs to the hands-on repo.

Test your device in a humid environment*.

*Never submerge or rinse electronics.

Feedback or questions?

Write me on Teams or email

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Thanks for your time.