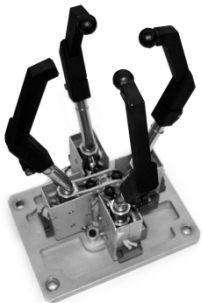


Robot Construction: Effectors and Actuators

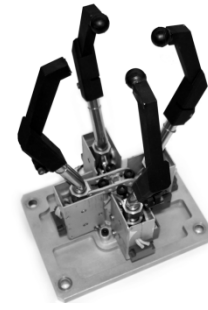
Arms, Legs, Wheels, Tracks and What
Really Drives Them



ACTUATORS



Effectors



- An ***effector***: any device on a robot that has an effect (impact or influence) on the physical environment.
 - Wheels on a mobile robot
 - Or legs, wings, fins...
 - Whole body might push objects
 - Grippers on an assembly robot
 - Or welding gun, paint sprayer
 - Speaker, light, tracing-pen

Replicating fossil paths with toilet roll

[Prescott & Ibbotson (1997)]



- A spiral 'foraging' trail generated by the robot trace-maker.
 - Control combines thigmotaxis (stay near previous tracks) & phototaxis (avoid crossing previous tracks)
 - Thigmotaxis: motion in response to a touch stimulus
 - Phototaxis: change in the direction of locomotion in response to a given stimulus

Actuators



- Actuator: the mechanism that enables the effector to execute an action or movement.
 - In animals and humans:
 - muscles and tendons are the actuators
 - make the arms and legs and the backs do their jobs.
 - In robots:
 - actuators include electric motors and various other technologies.
 - Connected via transmission:
 - System gears, brakes, valves, locks, springs...

Effectors and Actuators

- terms are often used interchangeably to mean: “whatever makes the robot take an action”
 - but they aren’t the same thing

Effectors and Actuators

- most simple actuators control one degree of freedom
 - i.e., a single motion
 - e.g., up-down; left-right; in-out

Effectors and Actuators

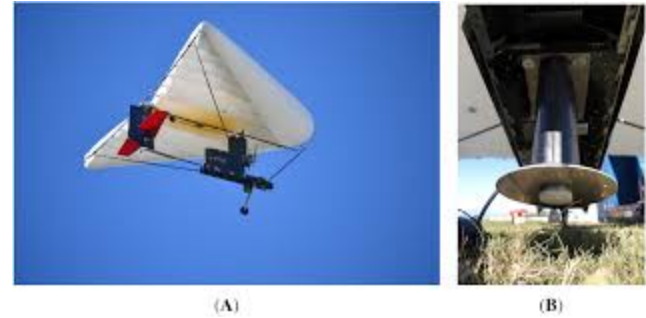
- how many degrees of freedom a robot has is very important in determining how it can affect its world, and therefor how well, if at all, it can accomplish its task
- More on D.O.F. later...

Passive vs. Active Actuation



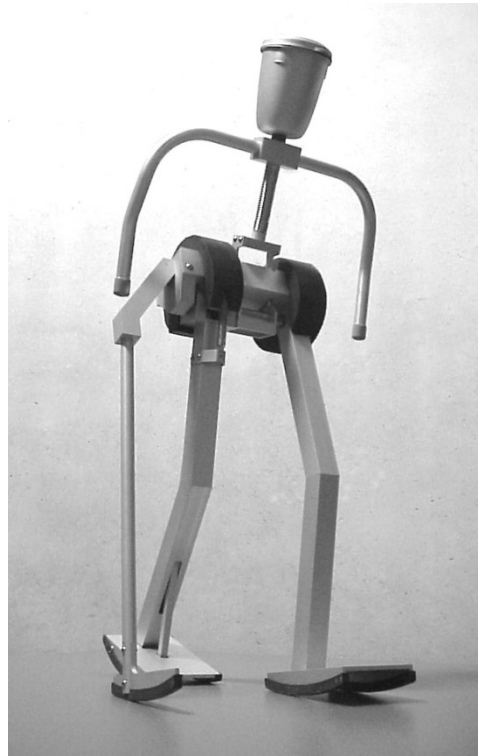
- The action of actuators and effectors requires some form of energy to provide power.
- Some actuators use *passive actuation*

Passive Actuation



- Utilizing potential energy (usually gravity) of the effector and its interaction with the environment
 - Instead of active power consumption.
- A glider is an example of this
- Advantage:
 - No need for extra weight required by energy source (battery, gasoline, etc) and complicated actuators.
- Disadvantage:
 - Dependence on a motivating source that may be transient.
 - For example, weather may affect glider movement

Movement



A passive walker: a robot that uses gravity and clever mechanics to balance and walk without any motors.*

*The robotics primer, Mataric

Types of Actuators

- Electric motors
 - speed proportional to voltage
 - voltage varied (by pulse width modulation)
- Hydraulics
 - Pressurized liquid
- Pneumatics
 - Pressurized air
- Others, including:
 - Photo-reactive materials
 - Chemically reactive materials
 - Thermally reactive materials
 - Piezoelectric materials
 - Crystals create a charge when pushed or pressed.



Variables Affecting Actuators Choice

- Load (e.g. torque to overcome own inertia)
- Speed (fast enough but not too fast)
- Accuracy (will it move to where you want?)
- Resolution (can you specify exactly where?)

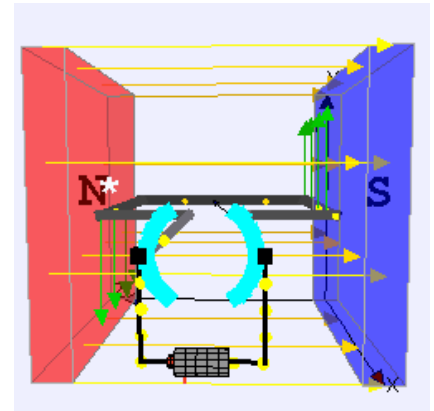


Variables Affecting Actuators Choice

- Repeatability (will it do this every time?)
- Reliability (mean time between failures)
- Power consumption (how to feed it)
- Energy supply & its weight

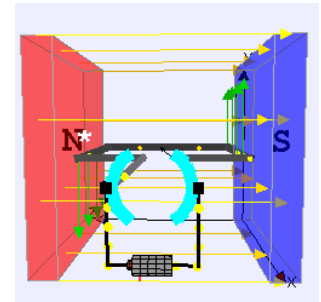


Motors



- Compared with all other types of actuators, ***direct current (DC) motors*** are simple, inexpensive, easy to use, and easy to find.
- Motors have a copper wire wound in a way that creates magnetic fields
 - These “push” the rotor inside of the motor around in a circle.

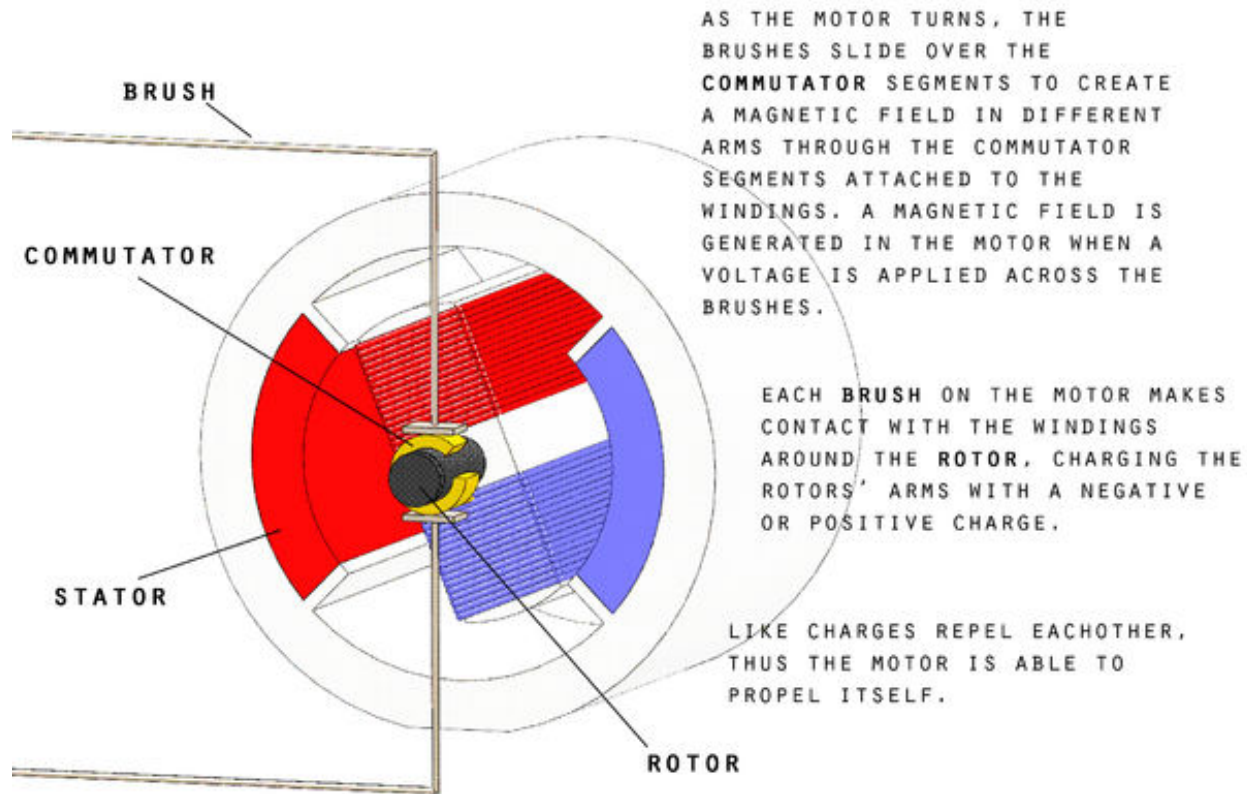
Motors



- To make a motor run, you need to provide it with electrical power in the right voltage range.
 - Low voltage, slower movement.
 - Higher voltage, faster movement
 - but more wear on the motor and can burn out if run fast for too long.
 - Like a lightbulb on a battery. More voltage means a brighter light.

Motors

ELECTRIC MOTORS



Gearing of motors



- Combining different *gears* is used to change the speed and torque (turning force) of motors.

Locomotion and Manipulations

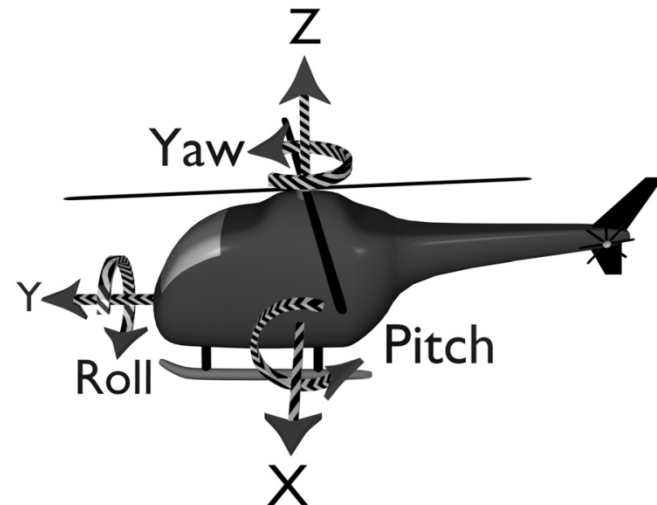
- Choice of effectors and actuators sets the limits on what the robot can do
- Usually categorized as locomotion or manipulation
 - Locomotion: vehicle moving itself
 - Manipulation: An arm moving things
- In both cases can consider the *degrees of freedom* in the design

Degrees of freedom (D.O.F.)

- Definition: How many independent factors needed to specify the motion of the system?
 - The specific number of axes that a rigid body is able to freely move in three-dimensional space
 - For robots: directions of independent motions

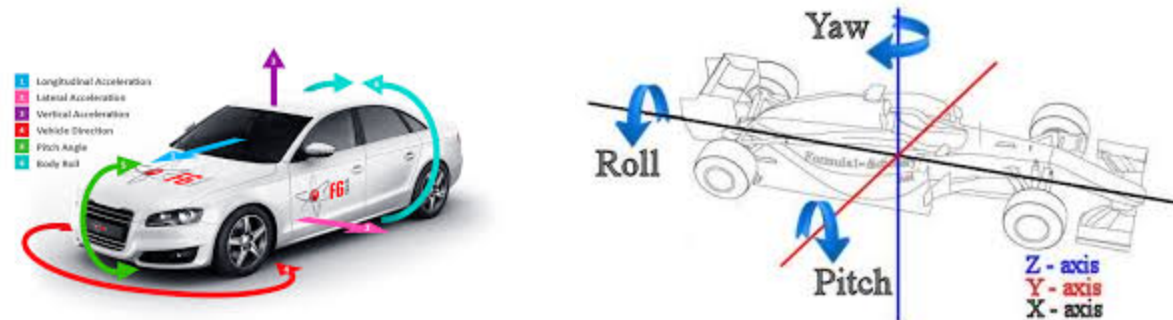
Degrees of freedom (D.O.F.)

- For an object in space have:
 - The body can move straight in three dimensions:
 - on the ***X***, ***Y*** and ***Z*** axes
 - Also, it can change orientation between those axes though rotation
 - usually called ***pitch, yaw and roll***
 - Total of 6 degrees of freedom



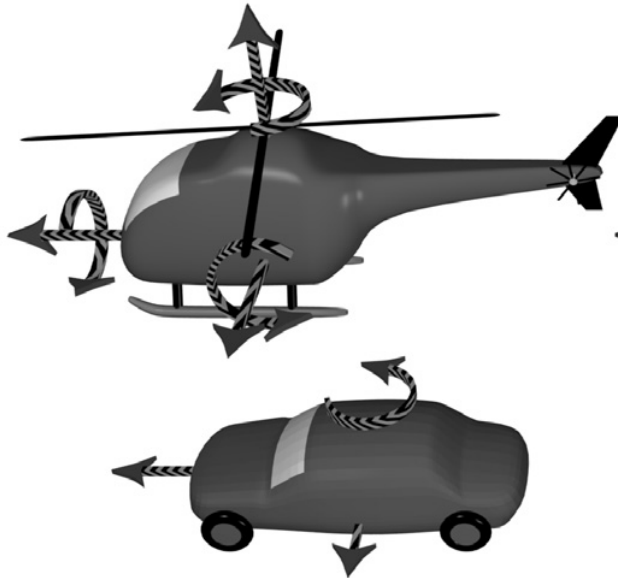
Degrees of freedom (D.O.F.)

- How many D.O.F. to specify movement of a vehicle on a flat surface?
 - Three: X,Y and yaw (turn in x-y dimension)
- How many Controllable D.O.F.'s?
 - In which direction can driver drive the car?
 - X and yaw

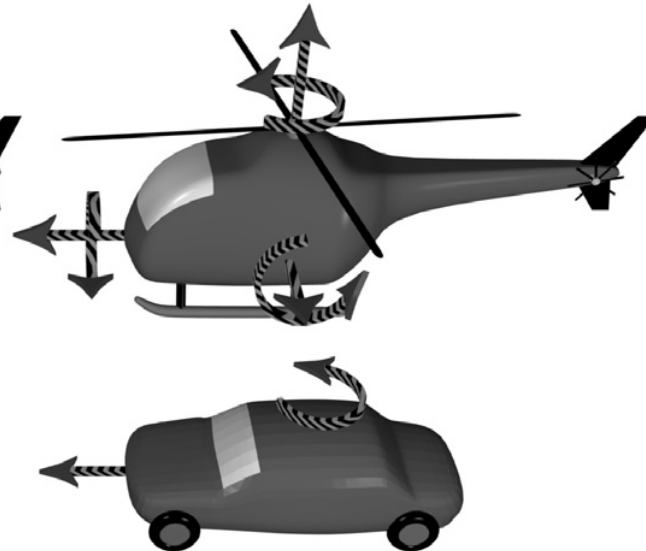


Degrees of freedom (D.O.F.)

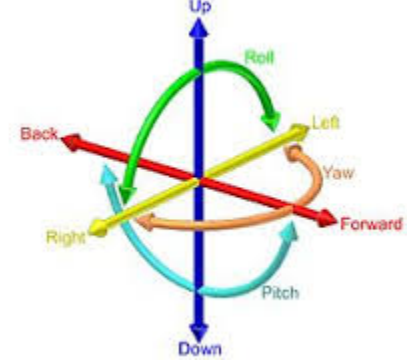
Total Degrees
of Freedom



Controllable Degrees
of Freedom

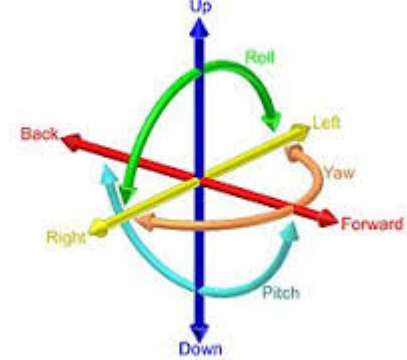


Robot's Variables Affecting D.O.F.



- Number of joints/articulations/moving parts
 - If parts are linked, fewer parameters needed to specify them.
- Number of Individually controlled moving part
 - Need parameters for each to define configuration
 - Often described as ‘controllable degrees of freedom’
 - But some may be *redundant*
 - Two movements may be in the same axis

Robot's Variables Affecting D.O.F



- How many parameters to describe the position of the whole robot or its end effector?
 - Fixed robot: D.O.F. of end-effector determined by D.O.F. of robot
 - max six D.O.F.
 - Mobile robot on a plane:
 - Can reach positions described by 3 D.O.F. (similar to a car)
 - But robot may have fewer D.O.F. by design, than it is non-holonomic

Lab time!

- Let's work with our robots!

