

Getting started with the Raspberry Pi Build HAT

Control LEGO® Technic™ devices with Raspberry Pi

Colophon

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Introduction

The Raspberry Pi Build HAT is an add-on board that connects to the 40-pin GPIO header of your Raspberry Pi, which was designed in collaboration with LEGO® Education to make it easy to control LEGO® Technic™ motors and sensors with Raspberry Pi computers.

It provides four connectors for LEGO® Technic™ motors and sensors from the SPIKE™ Portfolio. The available sensors include a distance sensor, a colour sensor, and a versatile force sensor. The angular motors come in a range of sizes and include integrated encoders that can be queried to find their position.

The Build HAT fits all Raspberry Pi computers with a 40-pin GPIO header, including – with the addition of a ribbon cable or other extension device – Raspberry Pi 400. Connected LEGO® Technic™ devices can easily be controlled in Python, alongside standard Raspberry Pi accessories such as a camera module.

The Raspberry Pi Build HAT power supply, available separately, is designed to power both the Build HAT and Raspberry Pi computer along with all connected LEGO® Technic™ devices.

The LEGO® Education SPIKE™ Prime Set 45678 and SPIKE™ Prime Expansion Set 45681, available separately from LEGO® Education resellers, include a collection of useful elements supported by the Build HAT.

NOTE

The HAT works with all 40-pin GPIO Raspberry Pi boards, including Raspberry Pi 4 and Raspberry Pi Zero. With the addition of a ribbon cable or other extension device, it can also be used with Raspberry Pi 400.

- Controls up to 4 LEGO® Technic™ motors and sensors included in the SPIKE™ Portfolio
- Easy-to-use Python library to control your LEGO® Technic™ devices
- Fits onto any Raspberry Pi computer with a 40-pin GPIO header
- Onboard RP2040 microcontroller manages low-level control of LEGO® Technic™ devices
- External 8V PSU available separately to power both Build HAT and Raspberry Pi

Preparing your Raspberry Pi

Raspberry Pi recommend the use of [Raspberry Pi Imager](#) to install an operating system on your SD card. You will need another computer with an SD card reader to install the image.

Using Raspberry Pi Imager

Raspberry Pi have developed a graphical SD card writing tool that works on Mac OS, Ubuntu 18.04, and Windows called [Raspberry Pi Imager](#); this is the easiest option for most users since it will download the image automatically and install it to the SD card.

Download the latest version of [Raspberry Pi Imager](#) and install it. If you want to use Raspberry Pi Imager from a second Raspberry Pi, you can install it from a terminal using `sudo apt install rpi-imager`. Then:

- Connect an SD card reader with the SD card inside.
- Open Raspberry Pi Imager and choose the required OS from the list presented.
- Choose the SD card you wish to write your image to.
- Review your selections and click on the **Write** button to begin writing data to the SD Card.

i NOTE

If using Raspberry Pi Imager on Windows 10 with controlled folder access enabled, you will need to explicitly allow Raspberry Pi Imager permission to write the SD card. If this is not done, the imaging process will fail with a "failed to write" error.

You can now insert the SD card into the Raspberry Pi and power it up. For Raspberry Pi OS, if you need to manually log in, the default user name is **pi**, with password **raspberry**, and the default keyboard layout is set to [United Kingdom \(UK\)](#).

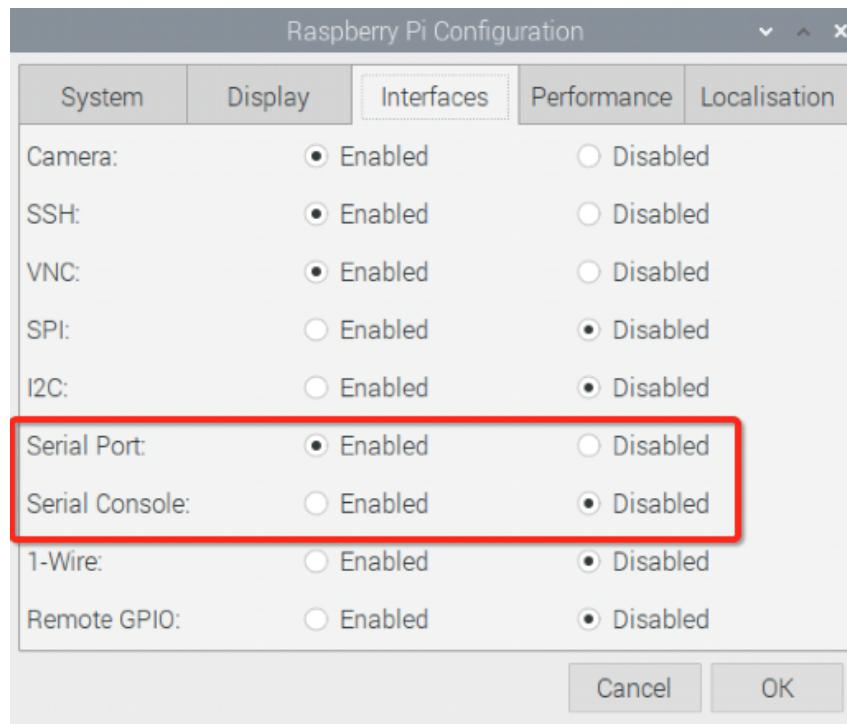
You should change the default password straight away to ensure your Raspberry Pi is secure.

Configuring the Serial Port

Once the Raspberry Pi has booted, open the Raspberry Pi Configuration tool by clicking on the Raspberry Menu button and then selecting "Preferences" and then "Raspberry Pi Configuration".

Click on the "interfaces" tab and adjust the Serial settings as shown below:

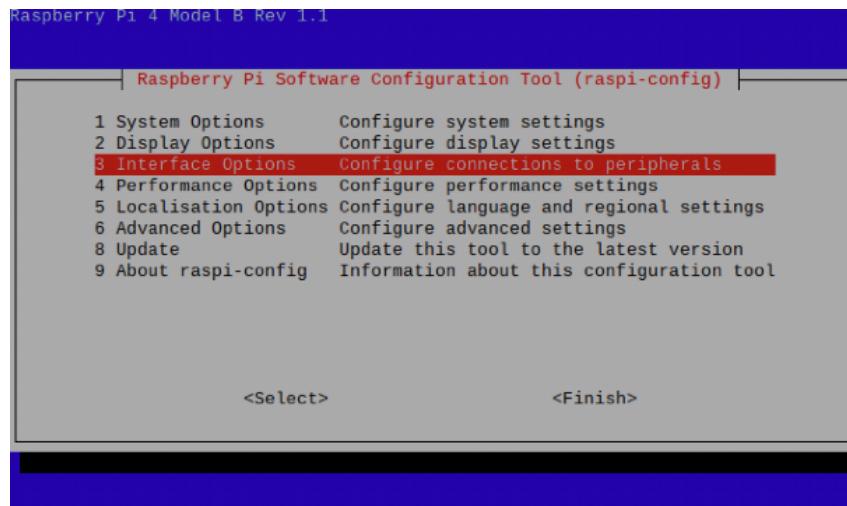
Figure 1. Configuring the serial connection to the Raspberry Pi Build HAT.



Using a Headless Raspberry Pi

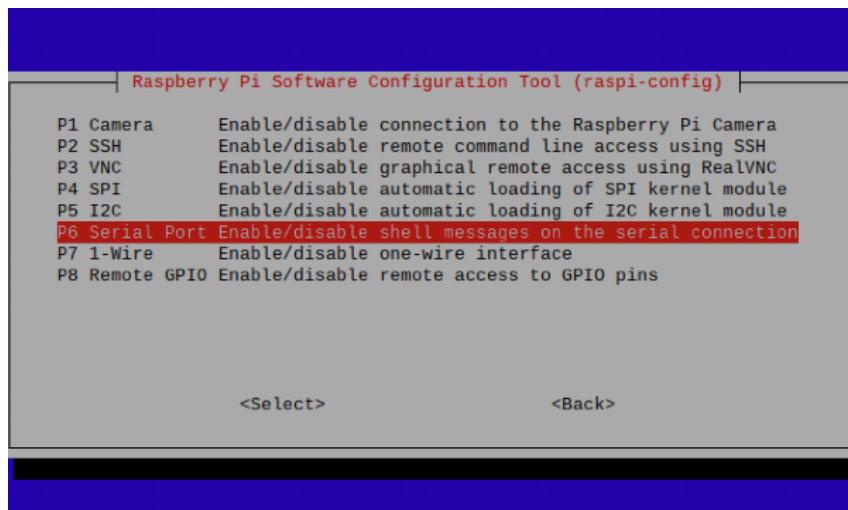
If you are running your Raspberry Pi [headless](#) and using [raspi-config](#), select “interface options from the first menu”.

Figure 2. Configuring the serial connection to the Raspberry Pi Build HAT using raspi-config.



Then “P6 Serial Port”.

Figure 3. Configuring the serial connection to the Raspberry Pi Build HAT using raspi-config.



Disable the serial console:

Figure 4. Configuring the serial connection to the Raspberry Pi Build HAT using raspi-config.



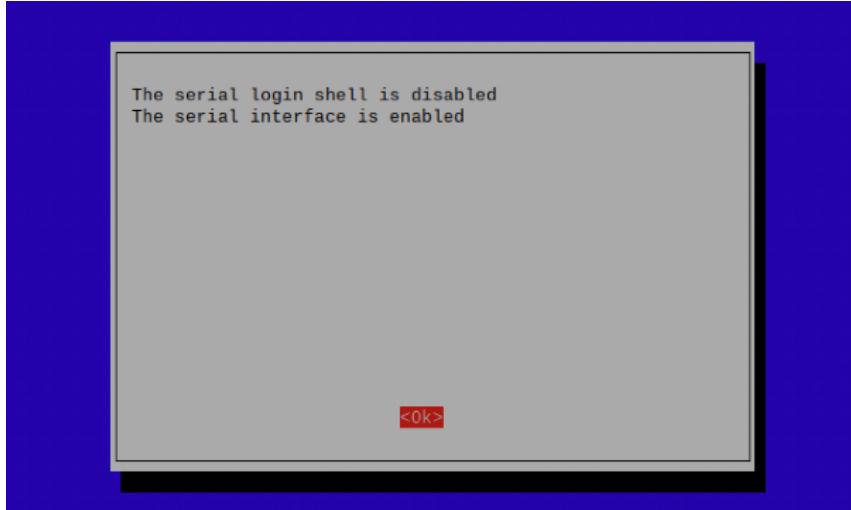
And enable the serial port hardware.

Figure 5. Configuring the serial connection to the Raspberry Pi Build HAT using raspi-config.



The final settings should look like this.

*Figure 6. Configuring
the serial connection
to the Raspberry Pi
Build HAT using
raspi-config.*



You will need to reboot at this point if you have made any changes.

Preparing the Build HAT

Attach 9mm spacers to the bottom of the board. Seat the Raspberry Pi Build HAT onto your Raspberry Pi. Make sure you put it on the right way up. Unlike other HATs, all the components are on the bottom, leaving room for a breadboard or LEGO elements on top.

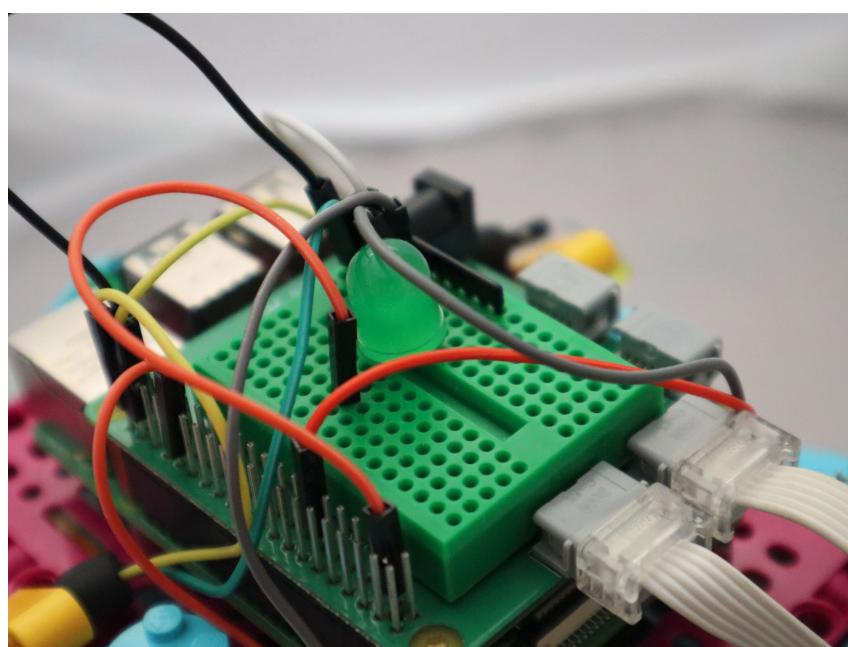
Figure 7. Fitting the Build HAT to your Raspberry Pi



Access the GPIO Pins

If you want to access the GPIO pins of the Raspberry Pi, you can add an optional tall header and use 15 mm spacers, see [Figure 8](#).

Figure 8. The Raspberry Pi Build HAT connected using the optional tall header and 15mm spacers.



The following pins are used by the Build HAT itself and you should not connect anything to them.

GPIO	Use	Status
GPIO0/1	ID prom	
GPIO4	Reset	

GPIO	Use	Status
GPIO14	Tx	
GPIO15	Rx	
GPIO16	RTS	unused
GPIO17	CTS	unused

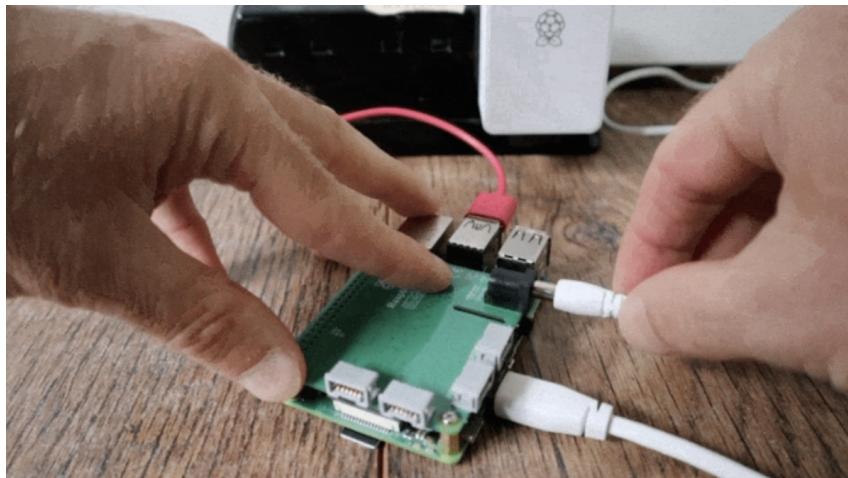
Powering the Build HAT

Connect an external power supply - the official Raspberry Pi Build HAT power supply is recommended. You don't need to connect a USB power supply to the Raspberry Pi as well, see [Figure 9](#)

NOTE

The Build HAT can not power the Raspberry Pi 400 as it does not support being powered via the GPIO headers.

Figure 9. Powering the Build HAT using the Raspberry Pi Build HAT power supply.



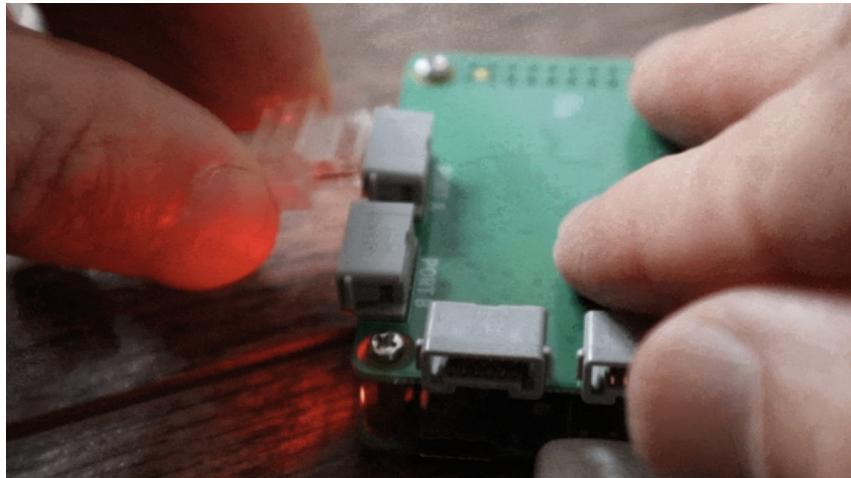
NOTE

The LEGO® Technic™ motors are very powerful; so to drive them you'll need an external 8V power supply.

Connecting a Motor

Connect a motor to port A on the Build HAT. The LPF2 connectors need to be inserted the correct way up. If the connector doesn't slide in easily, rotate by 180 degrees and try again.

*Figure 10. Connecting
a motor to Port A of
the Build HAT*



Installing the Software

Install the Build HAT Python library. Open a [Terminal window](#) and type,

```
$ pip3 install buildhat
```

For more information about the Build HAT Python Library see <https://buildhat.readthedocs.io/>.

Working with Motors

Start the [Thonny IDE](#). Add the program code below:

```
1 from buildhat import Motor  
2  
3 motor_a = Motor('A')  
4  
5 motor_a.run_for_seconds(5)
```

Run the program by clicking the play/run button. If this is the first time you're running a Build HAT program since the Raspberry Pi has booted, there will be a few seconds pause while the firmware is copied across to the board. You should see the red LED extinguish and the green LED illuminate. Subsequent executions of a Python program will not require this pause.

Your motor should turn clockwise for 5 seconds.

Change the final line of your program and re-run.

```
5 motor_a.run_for_seconds(5, speed=50)
```

The motor should now turn faster. Make another change:

```
5 motor_a.run_for_seconds(5, speed=-50)
```

The motor should turn in the opposite (anti-clockwise) direction

Create a new program by clicking on the plus button in Thonny. Add the code below:

```
from buildhat import Motor  
  
motor_a = Motor('A')  
  
While True:  
    print("Position: ", motor_a.get_aposition())
```

Run the program. Grab the motor and turn the shaft. You should see the numbers printed in the Thonny REPL changing.

Working with Sensors

Connect a Colour sensor sensor to port B on the Build HAT, and a Force sensor to port C.

If you're not intending to drive a motor, then you don't need an external power supply and you can use a standard USB power supply for your Raspberry Pi.

Create another new program:

```
1 from signal import pause
2 from buildhat import ForceSensor, ColorSensor
3
4 button = ForceSensor('C')
5 cs = ColorSensor('B')
6
7 def handle_pressed():
8     cs.on()
9     print(c.get_color())
10
11 def handle_released():
12     cs.off()
```

Run it and hold a coloured object (LEGO elements are ideal) in front of the colour sensor and press the Force sensor plunger. The sensor's LED should switch on and the name of the closest colour should be displayed in the thonny REPL.

Appendix A: Compatibility

The Build HAT library supports all the LEGO® Technic™ devices included in the SPIKE™ Portfolio, along with those from the LEGO® Mindstorms Robot Inventor kit and other devices that use an LPF2 connector. See [Table 1](#) on the following page.

Table 1. LEGO® devices supported by the Raspberry Pi Build HAT

Description	Colour	LEGO Item Number	Supported in FW	Supported in Python	Alt Number	BrickOwl	Available In	Set Numbers	Class	Type	Device ID
Large Angular Motor	White/Cyan	6254344	Yes	Yes	45602	Link	SPIKE Prime Set, SPIKE Prime Expansion Set	45678, 45680	Motor	Active	30
Medium Angular Motor	White/Cyan	6254347	Yes	Yes	45603	Link	SPIKE Prime Set	45678	Motor	Active	31
Medium Motor	White/Grey	6299646, 6359216	Partial	Yes	436655	Link	Mindstorms Robot Inventor	51515	Motor	Active	4B
Small Motor	White/Cyan		Yes	Yes			New SPIKE Prime Set		Motor	Active	41
Light/Colour sensor	White/Black	6217705	Yes	Yes			SPIKE Prime Set, SPIKE Prime Expansion Set, Mindstorms Robot Inventor	45678, 45680, 51515	ColorSensor	Active	3D
UDS	White/Black	6302968	Yes	Yes			SPIKE Prime Set, Mindstorms Robot Inventor	45678, 51515	DistanceSensor	Active	3E
Narrow Motor	White/Grey		No				App controlled Batmobile	76112		Passive	1
Force Sensor	White/Black	6254354	Yes	Yes	45606	Link	SPIKE Prime Set	45678	ForceSensor	Active	3F
3x3 LED	White/Cyan		Yes	Yes			New SPIKE Prime Set			Active	40
System train motor	Black	6261456	Yes	?	28740, 88011-1	Link				Passive	2
Sys/Tech simple lights	Black	6240315	Yes	?						Passive	8
Medium linear motor (LPF2 TACHO Light MOTOR 4X6X3, NO. 1)	White/Grey	6261452	Yes	Yes	26913, 88008-1	Link			Motor	Active	26
Technic large motor	Grey/Grey	6318494	Yes	Yes	22169, 88013	Link				Active	2E

Description	Colour	LEGO Item Number	Supported in FW	Supported in Python	Alt Number	BrickOwl	Available In	Set Numbers	Class	Type	Device ID
Technic XL motor	Grey/Grey	6318509	Yes	Yes	22172, 88014	Link				Active	2F
Colour + distance sensor	White/Grey	6261451	Partial	?	26912, 88007	Link				Active	25
System medium motor	White/Grey	6138854	Yes	?						Passive	1
Button	?		Partial							Passive	5
Tilt sensor	White/Grey				45305	Link					



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