
RobotPy Documentation

Release 2019

RobotPy development team

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1	Projects	3
1.1	Getting Started	3
1.2	2020 Notes	4
1.3	Installation	6
1.4	Programmer’s Guide	18
1.5	Robot Code Frameworks	40
1.6	Hardware & Sensors	51
1.7	Camera & Vision	52
1.8	Troubleshooting	58
1.9	Support	62
1.10	FAQ	63
1.11	Developer Documentation	66
2	Indices and tables	73



Welcome! RobotPy is a project created by a community of FIRST mentors and students dedicated to developing python-related projects for the FIRST Robotics Competition. This documentation site contains information about various projects that RobotPy supports, including guides and API references.

Note: RobotPy is available for 2020, but some of our documentation is out of date due to significant changes in RobotPy this year. We'll try to update the docs soon.

See the [2020 Notes](#) for important information about RobotPy in 2020.

Note: RobotPy is a community project and the tools we create are not officially supported by FIRST. Please see the [FAQ](#) for more information.

The primary reason RobotPy exists is to support teams that want to write their FRC robot code using Python, and we have several projects related to this:

- [robotpy-wpilib](#): the python implementation of WPILib for FRC
- [pyfrc](#): provides unit testing, realtime robot simulation, and easy upload capabilities for your RobotPy code
- [roborio-packages](#): Various python packages for the RoboRIO platform installable by opkg, including the python interpreter and numpy
- [robotpy-wpilib-utilities](#): Community focused extensions for WPILib

Additionally, RobotPy is home to several projects that are useful for all teams, even if they aren't writing their robot code in python:

- [pynetworktables](#): python bindings for NetworkTables that you can use to communicate with SmartDashboard and/or your robot.
- [pynetworktables2js](#): Forwards NetworkTables traffic to a web page, allowing you to write custom dashboards for your robot using HTML/Javascript
- [pynetconsole](#): A simple netconsole implementation in python
- [robotpy-cscore](#): Python bindings for cscore, a powerful camera/streaming library
- [roborio-vm](#): Scripts to create a QEMU virtual machine from the RoboRIO image file

There is a lot of good documentation, but there's still room for improvement. We welcome contributions from all members of the FIRST community!

1.1 Getting Started

RobotPy WPILib is a set of libraries that are used on your roboRIO to enable you to use Python as your main programming language for FIRST Robotics robot development. It includes support for almost all components that are supported by WPILib's C++ implementation.

Note: Work on 2020 RobotPy is ongoing, but we're hoping to support all WPILib C++ features by the end of the season!

See the [2020 Notes](#) for important information about RobotPy in 2020.

You can run RobotPy-based programs either on your computer or on a robot. There are a lot of different ways you can get started with RobotPy, but we recommend the following steps:

- [Install the Robot Simulator and related tools](#)
- Learn how to write Python-based robot code via [Anatomy of a robot](#) and the various sections of the [programmer's guide](#)

Once you've played around with some code in simulation, then you should [install RobotPy on your robot](#).

If you're looking to use `pynetworktables` on the driver station or on a coprocessor, then check out the [pynetworktables install docs](#).

1.2 2020 Notes

Here are things to know about 2020 that are different from prior years. If you find things that are different that aren't in this list, please submit a bug report.

Note: Most importantly, the API documentation has NOT been upgraded for 2020 yet. However, our goal is that most API should be identical/close to the 2019 API. If you find something that is different, please file a bug report!

1.2.1 Why is everything so different this year?

From 2015-2020, RobotPy maintained a pure python version of WPILib and bindings around third party vendor libraries. However, maintaining RobotPy is a lot of work, and as WPILib and third party vendors add even more features it was becoming slowly impossible to keep up.

In 2020, we switched to using mostly automatically generated wrappers around C++ libraries. Ideally, once completed, this will significantly lower the amount of work needed to update/maintain RobotPy in the future. Unfortunately in the short term, there's a lot of work needed to get there (however – we're most of the way there as of this writing!).

See this [github issue](#) for a longer discussion about this.

2020 has been a bit bumpy, but with your help hopefully we can smooth out the rough spots and make 2021 a seamless transition!

1.2.2 Upgrading from prior years

You should uninstall the following packages manually:

```
py -3 -m pip uninstall robotpy-hal-sim robotpy-hal-base
```

1.2.3 Windows-specific notes

- The [Visual Studio 2019 redistributable](#) package is required to be installed.

- CTRE and REV do not support simulation in 32-bit programs, so you must have a 64-bit Python installed.

1.2.4 OSX-specific notes

CTRE and REV do not support simulation on OSX, so these packages do not work at this time. You can work around this by checking for an import error:

```
try:
    import ctre
except ImportError:
    ctre = None

...

if ctre is not None:
    ..
```

A mock solution could be provided for simulation. If you're interested in developing something, contact us!

1.2.5 Class inheritance

When inheriting from RobotPy provided objects, and you provide your own `__init__` function, you *must* call the base class' `__init__` function. If you don't have your own `__init__` function, there is no need to add one, Python will do the right thing automatically.

Here are some examples using the command framework objects, but this applies to any RobotPy object that you might inherit from:

```
from wpilib.command import Command

class GoodCommand(Command):

    # no custom __init__, nothing extra required

    def foo(self):
        pass

class AlsoGoodCommand(Command):

    def __init__(self):

        # Call this first!!
        Command.__init__(self)

        # custom stuff here
        self.my_cool_thing = 1

class BadCommand(Command):
    def __init__(self):
        self.my_cool_thing = 1

        # BAD!! you forgot to call Command.__init__, which will result
        # in a difficult to diagnose crash!

class MaybeBadCommand(Command):
```

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```
def __init__(self):  
    # This is not recommended, as it may fail in some cases  
    # of multiple inheritance. See below  
    super().__init__()  
    self.my_cool_thing = 1
```

The `pybind11` documentation recommends against using `super().__init__()`:

Note that a direct `__init__` constructor should be called, and `super()` should not be used. For simple cases of linear inheritance, `super()` may work, but once you begin mixing Python and C++ multiple inheritance, things will fall apart due to differences between Python's MRO and C++'s mechanisms.

1.2.6 Where is physics and tests?

We are working on the 2020 implementation, and then once completed will focus on adding support for these.

Some community members have expressed interest in fixing support for testing/physics, but the work still has not been completed.

1.3 Installation

Writing Robot code in Python:

- To install RobotPy on your robot, see the *RobotPy installation documentation*.
- If you wish to deploy code or use the Robot Simulator, see the *pyfrc installation documentation*.

Using NetworkTables from Python:

- To install `pynetworktables` on a system that does not have RobotPy or `pyfrc` installed on it (such as a coprocessor like the Raspberry Pi), see the *pynetworktables installation documentation*.

Using `cscore` from Python:

- See the *robotpy-cscore installation documentation*.

Installing extra software packages on the RoboRIO:

- You can install third party packages such as OpenCV, NumPy, `robotpy-cscore`, `robotpy-ctre`, and other python packages on your RoboRIO using the *RobotPy Installer*.

1.3.1 Robot Installation

These instructions will help you get RobotPy installed on your RoboRIO, which will allow you to write robot code using Python. If you install RobotPy on your RoboRIO, you are still able to deploy C++ and Java programs without any conflicts.

Note: If you're looking for instructions to use NetworkTables from Python, you probably want the *pynetworktables installation documentation*.

Automated installation

Warning: This guide assumes that your RoboRIO has the current legal RoboRIO image installed. If you haven't done this yet, see [the screensteps documentation](#) for imaging instructions. To image the RoboRIO for RobotPy, you only need to have the latest FRC Update Suite installed.

RobotPy is truly cross platform, and can be installed from Windows, most Linux distributions, and from Mac macOS also. To install/use the installer, you must have Python 3.6+ installed. You should install the installer via pip (requires internet access). The recommended way to install this is bundled in *pyfrc*, but the following will show individual installation

On Windows:

```
py -3 -m pip install robotpy-installer
```

On Linux/macOS:

```
pip3 install robotpy-installer
```

There are two stages to installing RobotPy. First, download the artifacts. Open up a command line, change to a directory you'd like to store the downloaded artifacts, and run this:

```
Windows: py -3 -m robotpy_installer download-robotpy
Linux/macOS: robotpy-installer download-robotpy
```

Once everything has downloaded, you can switch to your Robot's network, and use the following commands to install.

Windows: `py -3 -m robotpy_installer install-robotpy`

Linux/macOS: `robotpy-installer install-robotpy`

It will ask you a few questions, and copy the right files over to your robot and set things up for you.

Next, you'll want to create some code (or maybe use one of our [examples](#)), and upload it to your robot! Refer to our *Programmer's Guide* for more information.

Upgrading

From the same directory that you unzipped previously, you can run the same installer script to upgrade your robotpy installation. You need to do it in two phases, one while connected to the internet to download the new release, and one while connected to the Robot's network.

When connected to the internet:

```
Windows: py -3 -m robotpy_installer download-robotpy
Linux/macOS: robotpy-installer download-robotpy
```

Then connect to the Robot's network:

```
Windows: py -3 -m robotpy_installer install-robotpy
Linux/macOS: robotpy-installer install-robotpy
```

If you want to use a beta version of RobotPy (if available), you can add the `-pre` argument to the download/install command listed above.

Manual installation (release)

Warning: This isn't recommended, so you're on your own if you go this route.

If you really want to do this, it's not so bad, but then you lose out on the benefits of the automated installer – in particular, this method requires internet access to install the files on the roboRIO in case you need to reimage your roboRIO.

- Connect your roboRIO to the internet
- SSH in, and copy the following to `/etc/opkg/robotpy.conf`:

```
src/gz robotpy http://www.tortall.net/~robotpy/feeds/2020
```

- Run this:

```
opkg update
opkg install python38-wpilib netconsole-host
```

Note: When powered off, your roboRIO does not keep track of the correct date, and as a result pip may fail with an SSL related error message. To set the date, you can either:

- Set the date via the web interface
- You can login to your roboRIO via SSH, and set the date via the date command:

```
date -s "2015-01-03 00:00:00"
```

Upgrading requires you to run the same commands, but with the appropriate flags set to tell pip3/opkg to upgrade the packages for you.

1.3.2 pyfrc install

Installing pyfrc will install all of the packages needed to help you write and test Python-based Robot code on your development computer. These tools include WPILib, pynetworktables, unit testing support, and the *robot simulator*.

pyfrc requires Python 3.6 or greater to be installed on your computer. On Windows, the [Visual Studio 2019 redistributable](#) package is required to be installed.

- [Python for Windows](#)
- [Python for macOS](#)

Install via pip on Windows

Note: pip typically requires internet access

The easiest installation is by using pip. pip is installed by default with Python 3.5+. Run the following command from the command line:

```
py -3 -m pip install pyfrc
```

To upgrade, you can run this:

```
py -3 -m pip install --upgrade pyfrc
```

If you don't have administrative rights on your computer, either use [virtualenv/virtualenvwrapper-win](#), or or you can install to the user site-packages directory:

```
py -3 -m pip install --user pyfrc
```

Install via pip on macOS/Linux

Note: pip typically requires internet access

The easiest installation is by using pip. pip is installed by default with Python 3.5 (though on Linux it may not be installed). On a Linux or macOS system that has pip installed, just run the following command from the Terminal application (may require admin rights):

```
pip3 install pyfrc
```

To upgrade, you can run this:

```
pip3 install --upgrade pyfrc
```

If you don't have administrative rights on your computer, either use [virtualenv/virtualenvwrapper](#), or or you can install to the user site-packages directory:

```
pip3 install --user pyfrc
```

Manual install (without pip)

While this is possible to do, due to the large number of dependencies this is not recommended nor is it supported.

code coverage support

If you wish to run code coverage testing, then you must install the [coverage](#) package. It requires a compiler to install from source. However, if you are using a supported version of Python and a modern version of pip, it may install a binary wheel instead, which removes the need for a compiler.

```
Windows: py -3 -m pip install coverage
```

```
Linux/macOS: pip3 install coverage
```

If you run into compile errors, then you will need to install a compiler on your system.

- On Windows you can download the Visual Studio compilers for Python (be sure to download the one for your version of Python).
- On macOS it requires XCode to be installed

- On Linux you will need to have python3-dev/python3-devel or a similar package installed

1.3.3 pynetworktables install

pynetworktables is a python package that allows FRC teams to use Python to communicate with their robots via NetworkTables. It should work without issues on your Driver Station, on a coprocessor such as a Raspberry Pi, or anywhere else that you might install Python.

pynetworktables requires Python 2.7 or 3.3 or greater to be installed on the system that you'll be using it on.

Note: You only need to install pynetworktables separately if you're using it on a system that doesn't already have pyfrc or RobotPy installed on it (such as a coprocessor)

Install via pip on Windows

The latest versions of Python on Windows come with pip, but you may need to install it by hand if you're using an older version. Once pip is installed, run the following command from the command line:

```
Python 2.7: py -2 -m pip install pynetworktables
Python 3.x: py -3 -m pip install pynetworktables
```

To upgrade, you can run this:

```
Python 2.7: py -2 -m pip install --upgrade pynetworktables
Python 3.x: py -3 -m pip install --upgrade pynetworktables
```

If you don't have administrative rights on your computer, either use [virtualenv/virtualenvwrapper-win](#), or you can install to the user site-packages directory:

```
Python 2.7: py -2 -m pip install --user pynetworktables
Python 3.x: py -3 -m pip install --user pynetworktables
```

Install via pip on macOS/Linux

On a Linux or macOS system that has pip installed, just run the following command from the Terminal application (may require admin rights):

```
Python 2.7: pip install pynetworktables
Python 3.x: pip3 install pynetworktables
```

To upgrade, you can run this:

```
Python 2.7: pip install --upgrade pynetworktables
Python 3.x: pip3 install --upgrade pynetworktables
```

If you don't have administrative rights on your computer, either use [virtualenv/virtualenvwrapper-win](#), or you can install to the user site-packages directory:

```
Python 2.7: pip -m pip install --user pynetworktables
Python 3.x: pip3 -m pip install --user pynetworktables
```

Manual install (without pip)

Note: It is highly recommended to use pip for installation when possible

You can download the source code, extract it, and run this:

```
python setup.py install
```

If you are using Python 2.7, you will need to also install the [monotonic package from pypi](#)

Getting Started

See the [NetworkTables guide](#) to learn more about using pynetworktables to communicate with your robot.

1.3.4 robotpy-cscore install

RoboRIO installation

If you have robotpy-installer on your computer, then installing `robotpy-cscore` is very simple:

```
# While connected to the internet
robotpy-installer download-opkg cscore

# While connected to the network with a RoboRIO on it
robotpy-installer install-opkg cscore
```

For additional details about running robotpy-installer on your computer, see the [robotpy-installer documentation](#).

Non-robRIO installation (compiling from source)

If you're not installing on a RoboRIO, then installation of `cscore` has a few additional steps that you need to do:

1. Install a newer C++ compiler that supports C++14

Note: `robotpy-cscore` has not been tested on Windows

2. Install Python 3 (`cscore` is not supported on Python 2) and development headers
3. Ensure that you have a recent version of pip3/setuptools installed (either via pip3 or using a Linux package manager)
 - It has been reported that build failures may occur with certain combinations of pip/setuptools installed
4. Install Numpy (either via pip3 or using a Linux package manager)
5. Install OpenCV (either via a Linux package manager or compile from source)
 - If you compile from source, you **must** enable shared library support, `cscore` cannot use a statically compiled OpenCV python module at this time
6. Install `robotpy-cscore` via pip3. It should be as easy as running `pip3 install --no-build-isolation robotpy-cscore` – though be warned, it takes several minutes to compile!

In the future we may provide binaries that can be installed on commonly used platforms, but there are a number of technical challenges that need to be solved and so that won't be until at least 2018 if not later.

Warning: Currently, robotpy-cscore does not support using the OpenCV module that comes with the `opencv-python` package distributed on Pypi. Long term, I'd like to get that to work, but it's going to take a bit of work. To track this issue, see <https://github.com/skvark/opencv-python/issues/22>

Next steps

See our *cscore documentation* for examples and deployment thoughts.

1.3.5 robotpy-ctre install

Setup (tests/simulator)

If you intend to use robotpy-ctre in your *robot tests* or via the robot *simulator*, you must install this package locally:

```
pip3 install -U robotpy-ctre
```

Or on Windows:

```
py -3 -m pip install -U robotpy-ctre
```

Setup (RoboRIO)

Even if you have robotpy-ctre installed locally, you **must** install it on your robot **separately**. See below.

Python package

You really don't want to compile this yourself, so don't download this from pypi and install it. Instead, you can download a pre-packaged version from our opkg repository. Use the RobotPy installation script (comes with the RobotPy download), and run the following on your computer while connected to the internet:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer download-opkg robotpy-ctre
```

Then, when connected to the roborio's network, run:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer install-opkg robotpy-ctre
```

For additional details about running robotpy-installer on your computer, see the *robotpy-installer documentation*.

NI Web Dashboard (optional)

CTRE Phoenix can integrate with the NI Web Dashboard on the RoboRIO. This is not required to run robotpy-ctre on the RoboRIO, but it can be a useful diagnostic tool. To install this, you will need to use the CTRE Lifeboat tool to install it separately.

Refer to the [CTRE documentation](#) for more details.

1.3.6 robotpy-navx install

Setup (tests/simulator)

If you intend to use robotpy-navx in your *robot tests* or via the *pyfrc simulator*, you must install this package locally:

```
pip3 install -U robotpy-navx
```

Or on Windows:

```
py -3 -m pip install -U robotpy-navx
```

Setup (RoboRIO)

Even if you have robotpy-navx installed locally, you **must** install it on your robot **separately**.

Use the RobotPy installation script (comes with the RobotPy download), and run the following on your computer while connected to the internet:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer download-opkg robotpy-navx
```

Then, when connected to the roboRIO's network, run:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer install-opkg robotpy-navx
```

For additional details about running robotpy-installer on your computer, see the [robotpy-installer documentation](#).

1.3.7 robotpy-rev install

Note: The robotpy-rev bindings are new for 2019, and we're still working through issues with them. Please try them out and report any problems you may find!

Setup (tests/simulator)

If you intend to use robotpy-rev in your *robot tests* or via the *pyfrc simulator*, you must install this package locally:

```
pip3 install -U robotpy-rev
```

Or on Windows:

```
py -3 -m pip install -U robotpy-rev
```

Setup (RoboRIO)

Even if you have robotpy-rev installed locally, you **must** install it on your robot **separately**. See below.

Python package

You really don't want to compile this yourself, so don't download this from pypi and install it. Instead, you can download a pre-packaged version from our opkg repository. Use the RobotPy installation script (comes with the RobotPy download), and run the following on your computer while connected to the internet:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer download-opkg robotpy-rev
```

Then, when connected to the roborio's network, run:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer install-opkg robotpy-rev
```

For additional details about running robotpy-installer on your computer, see the [robotpy-installer documentation](#).

REV Firmware and Diagnostics

robotpy-rev supports all the control features of the C++ Spark Max library. Firmware, diagnostics, and other things must be installed separately using the tools released by REV.

Refer to the [REV C++ documentation](#) for more details.

1.3.8 robotpy-rev-color install

Setup (tests)

If you intend to use the color sensor with your tests or with the simulator, you'll need to install this package:

```
pip3 install -U robotpy-rev-color
```

Or on Windows:

```
py -3 -m pip install -U robotpy-rev-color
```

Setup (RoboRIO)

You **must** install this package on your robo if you intend to use it.

Python package

So you don't have to compile this yourself, you can download a pre-packaged version of this from our opkg repository. Use the [robotpy-installer](#) and run the following when connected to the internet:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer download-opkg robotpy-rev-color
```

Then, when connected to the roborio's network, run:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer install-opkg robotpy-rev-color
```

For additional details about running robotpy-installer on your computer, see the [robotpy-installer documentation](#).

Usage

Using the color sensor is simple. The following code shows how to get the Red, Green, Blue, and the IR (infrared) values from the sensor, as well as the proximity:

```
import wpilib
from rev.color import ColorSensorV3

class MyRobot(wpilib.TimedRobot):
    def robotInit(self):
        self.colorSensor = ColorSensorV3(wpilib.I2C.Port.kOnboard)

    def robotPeriodic(self):
        # Get the sensor attributes
        color = self.colorSensor.getColor()
        ir = self.colorSensor.getIR()

        # Get the individual components of the color
        red = color.red
        blue = color.blue
        green = color.green

        # Get the approximate proximity of an object
        proximity = self.colorSensor.getProximity()

if __name__ == "__main__":
    wpilib.run(MyRobot)
```

There's also a more in depth example found at [the example folder for the library](#)

1.3.9 RoboRIO Package Installer

Note: This is not the RobotPy installation guide, see *Robot Installation* if you're looking for that!

Most FRC robots are not placed on networks that have access to the internet, particularly at competition arenas. The RobotPy installer is designed for this type of 'two-phase' operation – with individual steps for downloading and installing packages separately.

The RobotPy installer supports downloading external packages from the python package repository (pypi) via pip, and installing those packages onto the robot. We cannot make any guarantees about the quality of external packages, so use them at your own risk.

Note: If your robot is on a network that has internet access, then you can manually install packages via opkg or pip. However, if you use the RobotPy installer to install packages, then you can easily reinstall them on your robot in the case you need to reimage it.

If you choose to install packages manually via pip, keep in mind that when powered off, your roboRIO does not keep track of the correct date, and as a result pip may fail with an SSL related error message. To set the date, you can either:

- Set the date via the web interface
- You can login to your roboRIO via SSH, and set the date via the date command:

```
date -s "2015-01-03 00:00:00"
```

Each of the commands supports various options, which you can read about by invoking the `--help` command.

Installing/Executing the installer

To install/use the installer, you must have Python 3 installed. You should install the installer via pip.

On Windows:

```
py -3 -m pip install robotpy-installer
```

On Linux/macOS:

```
pip3 install robotpy-installer
```

To upgrade the installed version of the installer, you need to add the `-U` flag to pip.

Executing the installer

Once you have the installer program installed, to execute the installer on Windows you can do:

```
py -3 -m robotpy_installer [command..]
```

On Linux/macOS:

```
robotpy-installer [command..]
```

RobotPy

These commands allow you to install/upgrade RobotPy without needing to download a new version from github.

install-robotpy

```
robotpy-installer install-robotpy
```

This will copy the appropriate RobotPy components to the robot, and install them. If the components are already installed on the robot, then they will be reinstalled. You must already have the RobotPy components downloaded (via `download-robotpy`), or this command will fail.

download-robotpy

```
robotpy-installer download-robotpy
```

This will update the cached RobotPy packages to the newest versions available.

Python Packages

If you want to use a python package hosted on Pypi in your robot code, these commands allow you to easily download and install those packages.

Note: Some binary packages such as NumPy need to be installed as opkg packages

download-pip

```
robotpy-installer download-pip PACKAGE [PACKAGE ..]
```

Specify python package(s) to download, similar to what you would pass the ‘pip install’ command. This command does not install files on the robot, and must be executed from a computer with internet access.

You can run this command multiple times, and files will not be removed from the download cache.

You can also use a *requirements.txt* file to specify which packages should be downloaded.

```
robotpy-installer download-pip -r requirements.txt
```

install-pip

```
robotpy-installer install PACKAGE [PACKAGE ..]
```

Copies python packages over to the roboRIO, and installs them. If the package already has been installed, it will be reinstalled.

You can also use a *requirements.txt* file to specify which packages should be downloaded.

```
robotpy-installer install-pip -r requirements.txt
```

Warning: The ‘install’ command will only install packages that have been downloaded using the ‘download’ command, or packages that are on the robot’s pypi cache.

Warning: If your robot does not have a python3 interpreter installed, this command will fail. Run the *install-robotpy* command first.

IPK (binary) packages

The RobotPy project maintains a number of custom binary packages that are useful for FRC teams. For a list of packages that you can install, see <https://www.tortall.net/~robotpy/feeds/2020/>. These commands can be used to install those and other precompiled Linux packages that NI makes available.

download-opkg

```
robotpy-installer download-opkg PACKAGE [PACKAGE ..]
```

Downloads an ipk file from the RobotPy and NI's online opkg repositories, along with the dependencies for the package.

You can also use a *requirements.txt* file to specify which packages should be downloaded:

```
robotpy-installer download-opkg -r requirements.txt
```

This file is a list of packages to install, similar to the syntax of a standard pip *requirements.txt*.

```
# Example requirements.txt file

# Vendor dependencies for motor controllers
python38-robotpy-ctre
python38-robotpy-rev
```

install-opkg

```
robotpy-installer install-opkg PACKAGE [PACKAGE ..]
```

Copies ipk files over to the roboRIO, and installs them and their dependencies. If the package already has been installed, it will do nothing.

You can also use a *requirements.txt* file to specify which packages should be downloaded:

```
robotpy-installer install-opkg -r requirements.txt
```

Warning: The `install-opkg` command will only install packages that have been downloaded using the `download-opkg` command, or packages that are already in the robot's opkg cache

1.4 Programmer's Guide

- If you don't know python very well (or at all), start with *Introduction to Python*
- Otherwise, start with *Anatomy of a robot*

1.4.1 Introduction to Python

Note: This is intended to be a *very* brief overview/reference of the various topics you need to master in order to program Python. This is not an exhaustive guide to programming with python. We recommend other resources to really learn that in-depth:

- [List of various guides to learn Python](#)
- [CodeAcademy](#)
- [Python 3.5 Tutorial](#)

If you want to practice some of these concepts, try out [pybasictraining!](#)

Language elements

Comments

Comments are not functional and do not do anything. They are intended to be human readable things that help others understand what the code is doing. Comments should be indented at the same level as surrounding code

```
# This is a comment. It starts with a '#' character
```

Indentation

All code should be indented in multiples of 4 spaces. Tab characters should be avoided. Anytime you see a `:` character at the end of a line, the next line(s) should have another level of indentation. This is a visual indicator to show that the following lines are part of a block of code associated with the previous line. For example:

```
# this is good
if x == True:
    do_something()

# this is bad and will not work
if x == True:
do_something()
```

Pass

pass is a null operation — when it is executed, nothing happens. It is useful as a placeholder when a statement is required syntactically, but no code needs to be executed. **Most finished code will not use pass for anything.**

```
if False:
    pass
```

Numbers

You can use numbers in Python, and perform computations on them.

```
# A number
1

# Multiplying two numbers
2*2
```

Strings

Strings are groups of words that you can use as variables, and the program can manipulate them and pass them around.

```
"This is a string"  
'This is also a string'  
'''This is a string that can  
    be extended to multiple lines'''  
"""This is also  
    a multiline string"""
```

Booleans

Boolean values are those that are True or False. In python, True and False always have the first letter capitalized.

Variables

Variables are used to store some information (strings, numbers, objects, etc). They can be assigned values, and referred to later on.

```
x = 1  
x = 'some value'
```

Control Flow

If

If statements allow you to control the flow of the program and make decisions about what the program should do next, based on information retrieved previously. Note that the body of the if statement is indented:

```
if statement is True:  
    # do_something here  
elif other_statement is True:  
    # do something lese here  
else:  
    # otherwise do this
```

Also see the [python documentation](#).

Operations

Python supports various types of operations on variables and constants:

```
# Addition  
1 + 2  
x + 1  
  
# Multiplication  
1 * 2  
x * 2  
  
# Equality operator (evaluated to True or False)  
1 == 1  
x == 1
```

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```
# Less than
x < 2

# Lots more!
```

Functions

Functions are blocks of code that can be reused and are useful for grouping code. They can return a value to the caller. The code that is contained inside of a function is not executed until you call the function.

Defintion

To define a function, you start with the word `def`, followed by the name of the function, and a set of parentheses:

```
def function_name():
    '''String that describes what the function does'''
    pass
```

Functions can accept input from their callers, allowing them to be reused for many purposes. You place the names of the parameters inside the parentheses:

```
def function_name(parameter1, parameter2):
    pass
```

After computing a result, you can return it to the caller. You can also return constants or variables:

```
def function_returns_computation(parameter1, parameter2):
    return parameter1 + parameter2

def function_returns_a_variable():
    x = 1
    return x

def function_returns_a_value():
    return True
```

Calling a function

The code that is contained inside of a function is not executed until you call the function. You call it by specifying the name of the function, followed by parentheses:

```
# Calling a function that takes no parameters
function_name()
```

If you wish to pass data to the function, you place the variable names (or constants) inside of the parentheses:

```
# Calling a function with two constant parameters
return_value = function_name(1, 2)

# Calling a function with two variables
return_value = function_name(x, y)
```

Classes

A collection of functions (also called methods) and variables can be put into a logical group called a ‘class’.

Definition

A class named Foo:

```
class Foo(object):
    '''String that describes the class'''

    def __init__(self):
        '''Constructor -- this function gets called when an instance is created'''

        # store a variable in the class for use later
        self.variable = 1

    def method(self, parameter1, optional_parameter=None):
        '''A function that belongs to the Foo class. It takes
        two arguments, but you can specify only one if you desire'''
        pass
```

A class named Bar

```
class Bar(Foo):
    '''This class inherits from the Foo class, so anything in
    Foo is transfered (and accessible) here'''

    def __init__(self, parameter1):
        pass
```

Creating an instance

To actually use a class, you must create an instance of the class. Each instance of a class is unique, and usually operations on the class instances do not affect other instances of the same class.

```
foo = Foo()

# These are two separate instances of the Bar class, and operations on one
# do not affect the other
bar1 = Bar(1)
bar2 = Bar(1)
```

Accessing variables stored in a class instance

```
x = Foo()          # creates an instance of Foo
y = x.variable     # get the value from the instance
x.variable = 1    # set the value in the instance
```

Calling functions (methods) on a class instance

```
x = Foo()      # this creates an instance of Foo
x.method()    # this calls the function
```

Loops

for

```
for i in a_list_of_things:
    print(i)
```

while

```
while statement is True:
    do_this_until_statement_is_not_true()
```

Exceptions

```
try:
    do_something_that_might_cause_an_exception()
    if bad_thing is True:
        raise SomeException()
except ExceptionType as e:
    # this code is only executed if an ExceptionType exception is raised
    print("Error: " + e)
finally:
    # This is always executed
    clean_up()

try:
    import wpilib
except ImportError:
    import fake_wpilib as wpilib
```

Future topics

- Lists, dictionaries, tuples
- Scope

Next Steps

Learn about the basic structure of Robot code at *Anatomy of a robot*.

1.4.2 Anatomy of a robot

Note: The following assumes you have some familiarity with python, and is meant as a primer to creating robot code using the python version of wpilib. See our *python primer* for a brief introduction to the python programming language.

This tutorial will go over the things necessary for very basic robot code that can run on an FRC robot using the python version of WPILib. Code that is written for RobotPy can be ran on your PC using various simulation tools that are available.

Create your Robot code

Your robot code must start within a file called `robot.py`. Your code can do anything a normal python program can, such as importing other python modules & packages. Here are the basic things you need to know to get your robot code working!

Importing necessary modules

All of the code that actually interacts with your robot's hardware is contained in a library called WPILib. This library was originally implemented in C++ and Java. Your robot code must import this library module, and create various objects that can be used to interface with the robot hardware.

To import wpilib, it's just as simple as this:

```
import wpilib
```

Note: Because RobotPy implements the same WPILib as C++/Java, you can learn a lot about how to write robot code from the many C++/Java focused WPILib resources that already exist, including FIRST's official documentation. Just translate the code into python.

Robot object

Every valid robot program must define a robot object that inherits from `wpilib.IterativeRobot`, `wpilib.TimedRobot`, or `wpilib.SampleRobot`. These classes define a number of functions that you need to override, which get called at various times.

- `wpilib.IterativeRobot` functions
- `wpilib.TimedRobot` functions
- `wpilib.SampleRobot` functions

Note: It is recommended that inexperienced programmers use the `TimedRobot` class, which is what this guide will discuss.

An incomplete version of your robot object might look like this:

```
class MyRobot (wpilib.TimedRobot) :
    def robotInit (self) :
        self.motor = wpilib.Jaguar(1)
```

The `robotInit` function is where you initialize data that needs to be initialized when your robot first starts. Examples of this data includes:

- Variables that are used in multiple functions
- Creating various wpilib objects for devices and sensors
- Creating instances of other objects for your robot

In python, the constructor for an object is the `__init__` function. Instead of defining a constructor for your main robot object, you can override `robotInit` instead. If you do decide that you want to override `__init__`, then you must call `super().__init__()` in your `__init__` method, or an exception will be thrown.

Adding motors and sensors

Everything that interacts with the robot hardware directly must use the wpilib library to do so. Starting in 2015, full documentation for the python version of WPILib is published online. Check out the API documentation ([wpilib](#)) for details on all the objects available in WPILib.

Note: You should *only* create instances of your motors and other WPILib hardware devices (Gyros, Joysticks, Sensors, etc) either during or after `robotInit` is called on your main robot object. If you don't, there are a lot of things that will fail.

Creating individual devices

Let's say you wanted to create an object that interacted with a Jaguar motor controller via PWM. First, you would read through the table ([wpilib](#)) and see that there is a `Jaguar` object. Looking further, you can see that the constructor takes a single argument that indicates which PWM port to connect to. You could create the `Jaguar` object that is using port 4 using the following python code in your `robotInit` method:

```
self.motor = wpilib.Jaguar(4)
```

Looking through the documentation some more, you would notice that to set the PWM value of the motor, you need to call the `Jaguar.set()` function. The docs say that the value needs to be between -1.0 and 1.0, so to set the motor full speed forward you could do this:

```
self.motor.set(1)
```

Other motors and sensors have similar conventions.

Robot drivetrain control

For standard types of drivetrains (2 or 4 wheel, mecanum, kiwi), you'll want to use the various included class to control the motors instead of writing your own code to do it. For most standard drivetrains, you'll want to use one of three classes:

- `wpilib.DifferentialDrive` for differential drive/skid-steer drive platforms such as 2 or 4 wheel platforms, the Kit of Parts drive base, "tank drive", or West Coast Drive.

- `wpiplib.KilloughDrive` for Killough (Kiwi) triangular drive platforms.
- `wpiplib.MecanumDrive` for mecanum drive platforms.

For example, when you create a `DifferentialDrive` object, you can pass in motor controller instances:

```
l_motor = wpiplib.Talon(0)
r_motor = wpiplib.Talon(1)
self.robot_drive = wpiplib.drive.DifferentialDrive(l_motor, r_motor)
```

Or you can pass in motor controller groups to use more than one controller per side:

```
self.frontLeft = wpiplib.Spark(1)
self.rearLeft = wpiplib.Spark(2)
self.left = wpiplib.SpeedControllerGroup(self.frontLeft, self.rearLeft)

self.frontRight = wpiplib.Spark(3)
self.rearRight = wpiplib.Spark(4)
self.right = wpiplib.SpeedControllerGroup(self.frontRight, self.rearRight)

self.drive = wpiplib.drive.DifferentialDrive(self.left, self.right)
```

Once you have one of these objects, it has various methods that you can use to control the robot via joystick, or you can specify the control inputs manually.

See also:

Documentation for the `drive` module, and the FIRST WPILib Programming Guide.

Robot Operating Modes (TimedRobot)

During a competition, the robot transitions into various modes depending on the state of the game. During each mode, functions on your robot class are called. The name of the function varies based on which mode the robot is in:

- `disabledXXX` - Called when robot is disabled
- `autonomousXXX` - Called when robot is in autonomous mode
- `teleopXXX` - Called when the robot is in teleoperated mode
- `testXXX` - Called when the robot is in test mode

Each mode has two functions associated with it. `xxxInit` is called when the robot first switches over to the mode, and `xxxPeriodic` is called 50 times a second (approximately – it's actually called as packets are received from the driver station).

For example, a simple robot that just drives the robot using a single joystick might have a `teleopPeriodic` function that looks like this:

```
def teleopPeriodic(self):
    self.robot_drive.arcadeDrive(self.stick)
```

This function gets called over and over again (about 50 times per second) while the robot remains in teleoperated mode.

Warning: When using the `TimedRobot` as your `Robot` class, you should avoid doing the following operations in the `xxxPeriodic` functions or functions that have `xxxPeriodic` in the call stack:

- Never use `Timer.delay()`, as you will momentarily lose control of your robot during the delay, and it will not be as responsive.
- Avoid using loops, as unexpected conditions may cause you to lose control of your robot.

Main block

Languages such as Java require you to define a ‘static main’ function. In python, because every .py file is usable from other python programs, you need to define a code block which checks for `__main__`. Inside your main block, you tell WPILib to launch your robot’s code using the following invocation:

```
if __name__ == '__main__':
    wpilib.run(MyRobot)
```

This simple invocation is sufficient for launching your robot code on the robot, and also provides access to various RobotPy-enabled extensions that may be available for testing your robot code, such as `pyfrc` and `robotpy-frcsim`.

Putting it all together

If you combine all the pieces above, you end up with something like this below, taken from one of the samples in our github repository:

```
#!/usr/bin/env python3
"""
    This is a good foundation to build your robot code on
"""

import wpilib
import wpilib.drive

class MyRobot(wpilib.TimedRobot):

    def robotInit(self):
        """
            This function is called upon program startup and
            should be used for any initialization code.
        """
        self.left_motor = wpilib.Spark(0)
        self.right_motor = wpilib.Spark(1)
        self.drive = wpilib.drive.DifferentialDrive(self.left_motor, self.right_motor)
        self.stick = wpilib.Joystick(1)
        self.timer = wpilib.Timer()

    def autonomousInit(self):
        """This function is run once each time the robot enters autonomous mode."""
        self.timer.reset()
        self.timer.start()

    def autonomousPeriodic(self):
        """This function is called periodically during autonomous."""

        # Drive for two seconds
        if self.timer.get() < 2.0:
```

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```
        self.drive.arcadeDrive(-0.5, 0) # Drive forwards at half speed
    else:
        self.drive.arcadeDrive(0, 0) # Stop robot

    def teleopPeriodic(self):
        """This function is called periodically during operator control."""
        self.drive.arcadeDrive(self.stick.getY(), self.stick.getX())

if __name__ == "__main__":
    wpilib.run(MyRobot)
```

There are a few different python-based robot samples available, and you can find them in our [github examples repository](#).

See also:

RobotPy comes with various frameworks that make it easier to create your robot code. See the page on [Robot Code Frameworks](#).

Next Steps

This is a good foundation for building your robot, next you will probably want to know about [Running robot code](#).

1.4.3 Running robot code

Now that you've created your first Python robot program, you probably want to know how to run the code. The process to run a python script is slightly different for each operating system.

Note: This section assumes that you've already *installed pyfrc*. If you haven't, now's a great time to do so!

How to execute the script**Windows**

On Windows, you will typically execute your robot code by opening up the command prompt (cmd), changing directories to where your robot code is, and then running this:

```
py -3 robot.py
```

Linux/macOS

On Linux/macOS, you will typically execute your robot code by opening up the Terminal program, changing directories to where your robot code is, and then running this:

```
python3 robot.py
```


Eclipse

If you're using pydev with Eclipse, there are a couple of ways to run the code.

- Right click on the file in project explorer, and select PyDev -> Run As -> Python Run
- Right click on the text editor and select Run As -> Python Run

After running the python script the first time, you'll want to pass it arguments (see below). To edit the arguments, click on the little arrow next to the green play button, and select "Run Configurations". Under "Python Run", you can select your configuration, and then select the "arguments" tab.

Commands

When you run your code without additional arguments, you'll see an error message saying something like `robot.py: error: the following arguments are required: command`. RobotPy tools install various commands that you can run from your robot code. To discover the various features that are installed, you can use the `--help` command:

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py --help
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py --help
```

Note: RobotPy supports an extension mechanism that allows advanced users the ability to create their own custom `robot.py` commandline options. For more information, see [Adding options to robot.py](#)

Next steps

There are two ways you can run the code: on the robot, and on the simulator:

- *Deploying to the robot*
- *Robot Simulator*

Note: If you're just starting out with RobotPy, you'll probably find it faster (and more instructive) to start playing with your code in the simulator before you actually deploy it to a robot.

1.4.4 Deploying to the robot

- *Immediate feedback via Netconsole*
- *Skipping Tests*
- *Starting deployed code at boot*
- *Manually deploying code*
- *Next Steps*

The easiest way to install code on the robot is to use the deploy command provided by pyfrc. This command will first run any unit tests on your robot code, and if they pass then it will upload the robot code to the roboRIO. Running the tests is really important, it allows you to catch errors in your code before you run it on the robot.

1. Make sure you have RobotPy installed on the robot (*RobotPy install guide*)
2. Make sure you have pyfrc installed (*pyfrc install guide*)
3. Once that is done, you can just run the following command and it will upload the code and start it immediately.

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py deploy
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py deploy
```

You can watch your robot code's output (and see any problems) by using the netconsole program (you can either use NI's tool, or `pynetconsole`). You can use netconsole and the normal FRC tools to interact with the running robot code.

If you're having problems deploying code to the robot, check out the *troubleshooting section*

Immediate feedback via Netconsole

Note that when you run the deploy command like that, you won't get any feedback from the robot whether your code actually worked or not. If you want to see the feedback from your robot without launching a separate NetConsole window, a really useful option is `--nc`. This will cause the deploy command to show your program's console output, by launching a netconsole listener.

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py deploy --nc
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py deploy --nc
```

Skipping Tests

Now perhaps your tests are failing, but you really need to upload the code, and don't care about the tests. That's OK, you can still upload code to the robot:

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py deploy --skip-tests
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py deploy --skip-tests
```

Starting deployed code at boot

If you wish for the deployed code to be started up when the roboRIO boots up, you need to make sure that "Disable RT Startup App" is **not** checked in the roboRIO's web configuration. See the [FIRST documentation](#) for more information.

Manually deploying code

Generally, you just use the steps above. However, if you really want to, then see *How to manually run code*.

Next Steps

Let's talk about *the robot simulator* next.

1.4.5 Robot Simulator

Important: As of 2020, this simulator isn't being used, as the default wpilib simulator is wrapped in robotpy. Older versions of robotpy (<2020) will still use this simulator but will no longer receive support.

An important (but often neglected) part of developing your robot code is to test it! Because we feel strongly about testing and simulation, the RobotPy project provides tools to make those types of things easier through the `pyfrc` project.

The `pyfrc` robot simulator allows very simplistic simulation of your code in real time and displays the results in a (ugly) user interface. To run the simulator, run your `robot.py` with the following arguments:

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py sim
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py sim
```

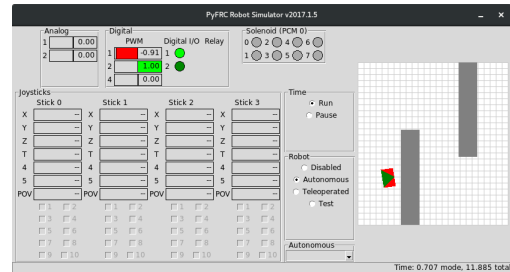


Fig. 1: Screenshot of `pyfrc` simulator

As there is interest, we will add more features to the simulator. Please feel free to improve it and submit pull requests!

A new feature as of version 2014.7.0 is the addition of showing the robot's simulated motion on a miniature field in the UI. This feature is really useful for early testing of autonomous movements.

Note: For this to work, you must implement a physics module (it's a lot easier than it sounds!). Helper functions are provided to calculate robot position for common drivetrain types (see below for details). There are physics examples provided in the [RobotPy Examples Repository](#) for each supported drivetrain type.

Customizing The Simulator and Making Fields.

When you load your physics engine and copy the 'sim' folder from the example repository you should have a file in the 'sim' folder called `config.json`. The contents of `config.json` should look something like this:

```
{
  "pyfrc": {
    "robot": {
      "w": 2,
      "h": 3,
      "starting_x": 2,
      "starting_y": 20,
      "starting_angle": 0
    },
    "field": {
      "w": 25,
      "h": 27,
      "px_per_ft": 10,
      "objects": [
        { "color": "grey",
```

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```
        "points": [ [7.25,11.21], [10.333,11.21], [10.333,27], [7.25,27] ] }
    ↪ ,
        { "color": "grey",
          "points": [ [16.83, 0], [19.90, 0], [19.90, 15.75], [16.83, 15.75] ]
        ↪ }
    ] }
  }
}
```

This file is in JSON object format. To learn more about JSON read here https://www.w3schools.com/js/js_json_intro.asp

The “pyfr” object is the main object which holds all the other values. “robot” contains specifics about the dimensions and starting position of the robot on the grid. “field” contains specifics for the field. The width, height, and pixels per foot. In here you can add a property called “image” and assign it a string with a path to an image in gif or png format like so.

```
"field": {
  "w": 25,
  "h": 27,
  "px_per_ft": 10,
  "image": "/path/to/your/code/sim/pic.png",
```

You can still draw shapes on top of the image in the “objects” property.

Communicating via NetworkTables

The simulator launches a NetworkTables server (just as the robot does), so it can be communicated with via standard NetworkTables tools (such as OutlineViewer, Shuffleboard, or SmartDashboard).

For this to work, you need to tell the client to connect to the IP address that your simulator is listening on (this will be localhost or 127.0.0.1).

pynetworktables2js

pynetworktables2js will automatically connect to localhost if no arguments are given.

OutlineViewer

You can type an address in when OutlineViewer launches, then tell it to start in client mode.

Shuffleboard

Shuffleboard can be configured to connect to localhost in the preferences.

SmartDashboard

Using SmartDashboard, you need to launch the jar using the following command:

```
$ java -jar SmartDashboard.jar ip 127.0.0.1
```

Real Joystick support via pygame

If you have pygame installed for Python 3, when you run the simulator any supported joysticks you have plugged in should automatically provide joystick input to the simulator.

Note: The easiest way to install pygame is to install one of the precompiled wheels available on pypi via `pip install pygame`. This should work on macOS, Windows, and Linux.

Installing pygame from source requires having a compiler installed, as it has many binary dependencies. It can be a tricky thing to accomplish, please refer to the pygame documentation for the right way to install it for your platform.

New in version 2015.3.6.

Gazebo simulation

This is currently experimental, and hasn't been updated in awhile. If you want to play with it now (and help us fix the bugs!), check out the [robotpy-frcsim github repository](#).

Next Steps

The next section discusses a very important part of writing robot code – *Unit testing robot code*.

1.4.6 Unit testing robot code

pyfrc comes with robot.py extensions that support testing robot code using the py.test python testing tool. To run the unit tests for your robot, just run your robot.py with the following arguments:

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py test
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py test
```

Your tests must be in a directory called 'tests' either next to robot.py, or in the directory above where robot.py resides. See 'samples/simple' for an example test program that starts the robot code and runs it through autonomous mode and operator mode.

Builtin unit tests

pyfrc comes with testing functions that can be used to test basic functionality of just about any robot, including running through a simulated practice match. As of pyfrc 2016.1.1, to add these standardized tests to your robot code, you can run the following:

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py add-tests
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py add-tests
```

Running this command creates a directory called 'tests' if it doesn't already exist, and then creates a file in your tests directory called pyfrc_test.py, and put the following contents in the file:

```
from pyfrc.tests import *
```

Unlike previous years, all tests work on all types of robots now.

As of pyfrc 2015.0.2, the `--builtin` option allows you to run the builtin tests without needing to create a tests directory.

Writing your own test functions

Often it's useful to create custom tests to test specific things that the generic tests aren't able to test. When running a test, `py.test` will look for functions in your test modules that start with `'test_'`. Each of these functions will be ran, and if any errors occur the tests will fail. A simple test function might look like this:

```
def two_plus(arg):
    return 2 + arg

def test_addition():
    assert two_plus(2) == 4
```

The `assert` keyword can be used to test whether something is True or False, and if the condition is False, the test will fail.

Pytest supports something called a 'fixture', which allows you to add an argument to your test function and it will call the fixture and pass the result to your test function as that argument. `pyfrc` has a custom `pytest` plugin that it uses to provide this special functionality to your tests.

For more information:

- [RobotPy example code](#)
- [py.test documentation](#)

code coverage for tests

`pyfrc` supports measuring code coverage using the `coverage.py` module. This feature can be used with any `robot.py` commands and provide coverage information.

For example, to run the 'test' command to run unit tests:

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py coverage test
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py coverage test
```

Or to run coverage over the simulator:

```
Windows:  py -3 robot.py coverage sim
Linux/macOS: python3 robot.py coverage sim
```

Running code coverage while the simulator is running is nice, because you don't have to write unit tests to make sure that you've completely covered your code. Of course, you *should* write unit tests anyways... but this is good for developing code that needs to be run on the robot quickly and you need to make sure that you tested everything first.

When using the code coverage feature, what actually happens is `robot.py` gets executed *again*, except this time it is executed using the `coverage` module. This allows `coverage.py` to completely track code coverage, otherwise any modules that are imported by `robot.py` (and much of `robot.py` itself) would not be reported as covered.

Note: There is a `pytest` module called `pytest-cov` that is supposed to allow you to run code coverage tests. However, I've found that it doesn't work particularly well for me, and doesn't appear to be maintained anymore.

Note: For some reason, when running the simulation under the code coverage tool, the output is buffered until the process exits. This does not happen under `pytest`, however. It's not clear why this occurs.

Next Steps

Learn more about some *Best Practices* when creating robot code.

1.4.7 Best Practices

This section has a selection of things that other teams have found to be good things to keep in mind to build robot code that works consistently, and to eliminate possible failures.

- *Make sure you're running the latest version of RobotPy!*
- *Don't use the print statement/logger excessively*
- *Don't die during the competition!*
- *Consider using a robot framework*

If you have things to add to this section, feel free to submit a pull request!

Make sure you're running the latest version of RobotPy!

Seriously. We try to fix bugs as we find them, and if you haven't updated recently, check to see if you're out of date! This is particularly true during build season.

Don't use the print statement/logger excessively

Printing output can easily take up a large proportion of your robot code CPU usage if you do it often enough. Try to limit the amount of things that you print, and your robot will perform better.

Instead, you may want to use this pattern to only print once every half second (or whatever arbitrary period):

```
# Put this in robotInit
self.printTimer = wpilib.Timer()
self.printTimer.start()

..

# Put this where you want to print
if self.printTimer.hasPeriodPassed(0.5):
    self.logger.info("Something happened")
```

Remember, during a competition you can't actually see the output of Netconsole (it gets blocked by the field network), so there's not much point in using these except for diagnostics off the field. In a competition, disable it.

Don't die during the competition!

If you've done any amount of programming in python, you'll notice that it's really easy to crash your robot code – all you need to do is mistype something and BOOM you're done. When python encounters errors (or components such as WPILib or HAL), then what happens is an exception is raised.

Note: If you don't know what exceptions are and how to deal with them, you should read [this](#)

There's a lot of things that can cause your program to crash, and generally the best way to make sure that it doesn't crash is **test your code**. RobotPy provides some great tools to allow you to simulate your code, and to write unit tests that make sure your code actually works. Whenever you deploy your code using pyfrc, it tries to run your robot code's tests – and this is to try and prevent you from uploading code that will fail on the robot.

However, invariably even with all of the testing you do, something will go wrong during that really critical match, and your code will crash. No fun. Luckily, there's a good technique you can use to help prevent that!

What you need to do is set up a generic exception handler that will catch exceptions, and then if you detect that the FMS is attached (which is only true when you're in an actual match), just continue on instead of crashing the code.

Note: Most of the time when you write code, you never want to create generic exception handlers, but you should try to catch specific exceptions. However, this is a special case and we actually do want to catch all exceptions.

Here's what I mean:

```
try:
    # some code goes here
except:
    if not self.isFmsAttached():
        raise
```

What this does is run some code, and if an exception occurs in that code block, and the FMS is connected, then execution just continues and hopefully everything continues working. However (and this is important), if the FMS is not attached (like in a practice match), then the `raise` keyword tells python to raise the exception anyways, which will most likely crash your robot. But this is good in practice mode – if your driver station is attached, the error and a stack trace should show up in the driver station log, so you can debug the problem.

Now, a naive implementation would just put all of your code inside of a single exception handler – but that's a bad idea. What we're trying to do is make sure that failures in a single part of your robot don't cause the rest of your robot code to not function. What we generally try to do is put each logical piece of code in the main robot loop (`teleopPeriodic`) in its own exception handler, so that failures are localized to specific subsystems of the robot.

With these thoughts in mind, here's an example of what I mean:

```
def teleopPeriodic(self):

    try:
        if self.joystick.getTrigger():
            self.arm.raise_arm()
    except:
        if not self.isFmsAttached():
            raise

    try:
        if self.joystick.getRawButton(2):
            self.ball_intake.()
```

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```
except:
    if not self.isFmsAttached():
        raise

# and so on...

try:
    self.robot_drive.arcadeDrive(self.joystick)
except:
    if not self.isFmsAttached():
        raise
```

Note: In particular, I always recommend making sure that the call to your robot's drive function is in its own exception handler, so even if everything else in the robot dies, at least you can still drive around.

Consider using a robot framework

If you're creating anything more than a simple robot, you may find it easier to use a robot framework to help you organize your code and take care of some of the boring details for you. While frameworks sometimes have a learning curve associated with them, once you learn how they work you will find that they can save you a lot of effort and prevent you from making certain kinds of mistakes.

See our documentation on [Robot Code Frameworks](#)

1.4.8 Using NetworkTables

NetworkTables is a communications protocol used in FIRST Robotics. It provides a simple to use mechanism for communicating information between several computers. There is a single server (typically your robot) and zero or more clients. These clients can be on the driver station, a coprocessor, or anything else on the robot's local control network.

- *Robot Configuration*
- *Server initialization (Robot)*
- *Client initialization (Driver Station/Coprocessor)*
- *Theory of operation*
 - *Code Samples*
 - *Troubleshooting*
- *External tools*

Robot Configuration

Note: These notes apply to all languages that use NetworkTables, not just Python

FIRST introduced the mDNS based addressing for the RoboRIO in 2015, and generally teams that use additional devices have found that while it works at home and sometimes in the pits, it tends to not work correctly on the field at events. For this reason, if you use pynetworktables on the field, we strongly encourage teams to *ensure every device has a static IP address*.

- Static IPs are 10.XX.XX.2
- mDNS Hostnames are roborio-XXXX-frc.local (don't use these!)

For example, if your team number was 1234, then the static IP to connect to would be 10.12.34.2.

For information on configuring your RoboRIO and other devices to use static IPs, see the [WPILib screensteps documentation](#).

Server initialization (Robot)

WPILib automatically starts NetworkTables for you, and no additional configuration should need to be done.

Client initialization (Driver Station/Coprocessor)

Note: For install instructions, see [pynetworktables installation instructions](#)

As of 2017, this is very easy to do. Here's the code:

```
from networktables import NetworkTables
NetworkTables.initialize(server='10.xx.xx.2')
```

The key is specifying the correct server hostname. See the above section on robot configuration for this.

Warning: NetworkTables does not connect instantly! If you write a script that calls `initialize` and immediately tries to read from NetworkTables, you will almost certainly not be able to read any data.

To write a script that waits for the connection, you can use the following code:

```
import threading
from networktables import NetworkTables

cond = threading.Condition()
notified = [False]

def connectionListener(connected, info):
    print(info, '; Connected=%s' % connected)
    with cond:
        notified[0] = True
        cond.notify()

NetworkTables.initialize(server='10.xx.xx.2')
NetworkTables.addConnectionListener(connectionListener, immediateNotify=True)

with cond:
    print("Waiting")
    if not notified[0]:
        cond.wait()

# Insert your processing code here
print("Connected!")
```

Theory of operation

In its most abstract form, `NetworkTables` can be thought of as a dictionary that is shared across multiple computers across the network. As you change the value of a table on one computer, the value is transmitted to the other side and can be retrieved there.

The keys of this dictionary **must** be strings, but the values can be numbers, strings, booleans, various array types, or raw binary. Strictly speaking, the keys can be any string value, but they are typically path-like values such as `/SmartDashboard/foo`.

When you call `NetworkTables.getTable`, this retrieves a `NetworkTable` instance that allows you to perform operations on a specified path:

```
table = NetworkTables.getTable('SmartDashboard')

# This retrieves a boolean at /SmartDashboard/foo
foo = table.getBoolean('foo', True)
```

There is also an concept of subtables:

```
subtable = table.getSubTable('bar')

# This retrieves /SmartDashboard/bar/baz
baz = table.getNumber('baz', 1)
```

As you may have guessed from the above example, once you obtain a `NetworkTable` instance, there are very simple functions you can call to send and receive `NetworkTables` data.

- To retrieve values, call `table.getXXX(name, default)`
- To send values, call `table.putXXX(name, value)`

`NetworkTables` can also be told to call a function when a particular key in the table is updated.

Code Samples

There are many code samples showing various aspects of `NetworkTables` operation. See the [pynetworktables examples page](#).

See also:

[NetworkTables API Reference](#)

Troubleshooting

See also:

[pynetworktables troubleshooting](#)

External tools

WPILib's `OutlineViewer` (requires Java) is a great tool for connecting to `networktables` and seeing what's being transmitted.

- [Download OutlineViewer](#)

WPILib's Shuffleboard (requires Java) is the new (as of 2018) tool to replace SmartDashboard for creating custom NetworkTables-enabled dashboards.

- [Download Shuffleboard](#)

WPILib's SmartDashboard (requires Java) is an older tool used by teams to connect to NetworkTables and used as a dashboard.

- [Download SmartDashboard](#)

1.4.9 Example Code

Sometimes the documentation just isn't enough. To help you get started, the RobotPy project provides many example programs that can be a good starting point.

- [Robot Code examples](#)
- [NetworkTables samples](#)
- [RobotPy CScore examples](#)

1.5 Robot Code Frameworks

After creating code for a few robots, you'll notice that there are a lot of similarities between the code. Robot code frameworks are a collection of patterns and ideas that are generally useful for creating robot code.

While frameworks sometimes have a learning curve associated with them, once you learn how they work you will find that they can save you a lot of effort and prevent you from making certain kinds of mistakes.

- *Command Framework*: this framework comes with WPILib
- *MagicBot Framework*: Created as a pythonic alternative to the Command framework

1.5.1 Command Framework

If you're coming from C++ or Java, you are probably familiar with the [Command based robot paradigm](#). All of the pieces you're used to are still here, but this guide might help save you a bit of time as you make the transition.

If you're starting Command based programming in Python and have no experience with it in other languages, make sure you familiarize yourself with it before proceeding. This guide only covers differences between Python and the other languages's versions of that paradigm.

For the impatient, a [fully-working example program](#) is available. You can start with that and modify it to meet your needs.

The Basics

The structure of a Command based program is simple and predictable. You inherit from the `IterativeRobot` class, configure the robot in `robotInit()`, and then run the `Scheduler` inside the `*Periodic()` methods.

Writing it can be done rather quickly, but the `robotpy-wpilib-utilities` package contains a pre-built skeleton class you can inherit, meaning that your program only needs to implement functions unique to your robot. Here is an example:

```

import wpilib
from commandbased import CommandBasedRobot

from commands import AutonomousCommandGroup

class MyRobot (CommandBasedRobot) :

    def robotInit (self) :
        '''Initialize things like subsystems'''

        self.autonomous = AutonomousCommandGroup()

    def autonomousInit (self) :
        self.autonomous.start()

```

Setting up the scheduler and running it are handled by the `CommandBasedRobot` class. You only need to write the code for `*Init()` methods you want to use. Since you are overriding that class, you can easily change any functionality that doesn't work for your robot, though [the default implementation](#) should work for most cases.

Error Handling

Crashes happen. Even the most careful programmer can write a command that breaks under unexpected conditions. Normally this will cause your program to reboot, costing precious seconds during a competition. With this in mind, the `Scheduler` is run inside an exception handler. If a crash happens inside a `Command` while your robot is connection to the Field Management System (i.e. - during a competition) the exception will be caught, running commands will be canceled, the error will be printed on the driver's station, and the `Scheduler` loop will continue running normally.

If you need more advanced error handling functionality, you can override the `handleCrash()` method in your `robot.py`.

Pythonic Command Based Programming

All the classes you know from C++ and Java still exists in Python, allowing you to directly port your code with minimal changes. However, you can use some of the advantages of Python to make a few things a bit easier.

Subsystems

In C++ and Java, the recommended way of making subsystems available to `Commands` is to instantiate them in the `init()` method of a class that subclasses `Command`, and then use that as the base class for all of your classes. Even in those languages that can be a bit unwieldy, especially if you want your commands to inherit from multiple base classes.

A more appropriate method in Python is to instantiate your subsystems inside a module, then import that module anywhere you need subsystems. Here is a simple example of that module, which we will call `subsystems`:

```

from subsystemtype import SubsystemType

subsystem1 = None

def init():
    global subsystem1

    subsystem1 = SubsystemType()

```

You can import this module in your `robot.py` and then call `subsystems.init()` inside `robotInit()` before any commands are instantiated. Then you can access your subsystem from any Command like this:

```
import subsystems
from wpilib.command import InstantCommand

class ExampleCommand(InstantCommand):

    def __init__(self):
        self.requires(subsystems.subsystem1)

    def initialize(self):
        subsystems.subsystem1.do_something()
```

By using this method you can override any Command provided by WPILib or robotpy-wpilib-utilities, with pythonic namespacing. For even better structure, make `subsystems` a package that holds the code for all of your subsystems, as demonstrated in the [example program](#).

RobotMap

Having a single place to store your robot's configuration can be very helpful, and this is why most Command based robots integrate a `RobotMap.*` file to store port numbers. In Python you can create a `robotmap` module that will act similarly. There are many different possible ways to manage your ports:

1.) Raw variables:

```
drive_front_left = 1
drive_front_right = 2
drive_rear_left = 3
drive_rear_right = 4
```

2.) Dictionary:

```
drive = {
    'front_left': 1,
    'front_right': 2,
    'rear_left': 3,
    'rear_right': 4
}
```

3.) Object Properties:

```
class PortList():
    pass

drive = PortList()

drive.front_left = 1
drive.front_right = 2
drive.rear_left = 3
drive.rear_right = 4
```

Whichever method you choose, you can utilize it simply by importing:

```
import robotmap
from wpilib.command import Subsystem
```

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```
class DriveSubsystem(Subsystem):
    def __init__():
        front_left_motor = robotmap.drive_front_left
```

Flow Control

Command groups are great tools for writing complex behaviors, especially for the autonomous period. A few commands can be strung together effortlessly, creating a readable flow of behavior. It is possible to run multiple commands at the same time using the parallel scheduling, or force them into order with sequential scheduling.

Conditional commands are a great tool for adding logic to a robotics program. With their introduction it is possible to choose which Command to run based on arbitrarily complex conditions.

Using these two great tools together, however, can be frustrating. If you attempt to use a ConditionalCommand inside a CommandGroup, you can no longer see the complete flow of your logic in a single file. Instead, you must look at a separate ConditionalCommand class. And that ConditionalCommand will reference one or two other commands, which might be command groups with more conditional commands. As the number of files grow, your project directory become more cluttered and tracing the flow becomes more of a chore.

It's not that you should not encapsulate behaviors. If you have a Command that is called from multiple places, it should be in its own class, but often these conditional commands and command groups are created to facilitate a single complex behavior. The flowcontrol module is meant to address this common issue. It allows a programmer to use common programming idioms that will be automatically converted to conditional commands and command groups.

An example:

```
import commandbased.flowcontrol as fc
from wpilib.command import CommandGroup
from wpilib import DriverStation

from .drivecommand import DriveCommand
from .turncommand import TurnCommand

def noTarget():
    # Arbitrary logic here
    return False

class Autonomous(CommandGroup):
    ds = DriverStation.getInstance()

    self.addSequential(DriveCommand(24))

    @fc.IF(lambda: ds.getAlliance() == ds.Alliance.Red)
    def turnLeft(self):
        self.addSequential(TurnCommand(90))

    @fc.ELSE
    def turnRight(self):
        self.addSequential(TurnCommand(-90))

    self.addSequential(DriveCommand(12))

    @fc.WHILE(noTarget)
    def turnAround(self):
        self.addSequential(TurnCommand(180))
```

When the above `CommandGroup` is instantiated, the decorators from the `flowcontrol` module will automatically build the correct series of conditional commands and command groups to perform the described steps. The `flowcontrol` module provides the following functions:

IF (condition) A decorator that turns the function it decorates into a `CommandGroup`, and calls that in a `ConditionalCommand` if its argument returns a `True` value. The argument to `IF` can be any Python callable, including a lambda or class method. It will be evaluated when the `ConditionalCommand` is started.

ELIF (condition) Like `IF`, but it will only happen if all previous `IF` and `ELIF` decorator's conditions returned `False` and its condition returns `True`.

ELSE Follows one or more `IF` and `ELIF` decorated functions, and only runs if all previous conditions returned `False`.

WHILE (condition) Creates a `CommandGroup` out of the function it decorates, and runs that `CommandGroup` repeatedly as long as its condition returns `True`.

BREAK () This function is not a decorator. It can be placed inline with the `addSequential` and `addParallel` directives of a `CommandGroup`. When this function is encountered, the containing loop will be canceled and execution will continue after the loop. If a number is passed to `BREAK`, that many levels of loops will be canceled.

RETURN () Like `BREAK`, this is not a decorator. When it is encountered the base `CommandGroup` in the file will be canceled. Nothing after it will be executed.

See also:

MagicBot Framework

1.5.2 MagicBot Framework

MagicBot is an opinionated framework for creating Python robot programs for the FIRST Robotics Competition. It is envisioned to be an easier to use pythonic alternative to the Command framework, and has been used by championship caliber teams to power their robots.

While MagicBot will tend to be more useful for complex multi-module programs, it does remove some of the boilerplate associated with simple programs as well.

Philosophy

You should use the `MagicRobot` class as your base robot class. You'll note that it's similar to `IterativeRobot`:

```
import magicbot
import wpilib

class MyRobot(magicbot.MagicRobot):

    def createObjects(self):
        '''Create motors and stuff here'''
        pass

    def teleopInit(self):
        '''Called when teleop starts; optional'''

    def teleopPeriodic(self):
        '''Called on each iteration of the control loop'''
```

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```
if __name__ == '__main__':  
    wpilib.run(MyRobot)
```

A robot control program can be divided into several logical parts (think drivetrain, forklift, elevator, etc). We refer to these parts as “Components”.

Components

When you design your robot code, you should define each of the components of your robot and order them in a hierarchy, with “low level” components at the bottom and “high level” components at the top.

- “Low level” components are those that directly interact with physical hardware: drivetrain, elevator, grabber
- “High level” components are those that only interact with other components: these are generally automatic behaviors or encapsulation of multiple low level components into an easier to use component

Generally speaking, components should never interact with operator controls such as joysticks. This allows the components to be used in autonomous mode and in teleoperated mode.

Components should have three types of methods (excluding internal methods):

- Control methods
- Informational methods
- An `execute` method

Control methods

Think of these as ‘verb’ functions. In other words, calling one of these means that you want that particular thing to happen.

Control methods store information necessary to perform a desired action, but **do not actually execute the action**. They are generally called either from `teleopPeriodic`, another component’s control method, or from an autonomous mode.

Example method names: `raise_arm`, `lower_arm`, `shoot`

Informational methods

These are basic methods that tell something about a component. They are typically called from control methods, but may be called from `execute` as well.

Example method names: `is_arm_lowered`, `ready_to_shoot`

execute method

The `execute` method reads the data stored by the control methods, and then sends data to output devices such as motors to execute the action. You should not call the `execute` function as `execute` is automatically called by `MagicRobot` if you define it as a magic component.

Component creation

Components are instantiated by the `MagicRobot` class. You can tell the `MagicRobot` class to create magic components by annotating the variable names and types in your `MyRobot` class.

```
from components import Elevator, Forklift

class MyRobot(MagicRobot):
    elevator: Elevator
    forklift: Forklift

    def teleopPeriodic(self):
        # self.elevator is now an instance of Elevator
        ...
```

Variable injection

To reduce boilerplate associated with passing components around, and to enhance autocomplete for PyDev, MagicRobot can inject variables defined in your robot class into other components, and autonomous modes. Check out this example:

```
class MyRobot(MagicRobot):
    elevator: Elevator

    def createObjects(self):
        self.elevator_motor = wpilib.Talon(2)

class Elevator:
    elevator_motor: wpilib.Talon

    def execute(self):
        # self.elevator_motor is a reference to the Talon instance
        # created in MyRobot.createObjects
        ...
```

As you may be able to infer, by declaring in your `Elevator` class an annotation that matches an attribute in your Robot class, Magicbot automatically notices this and adds an attribute in your component with the instance as defined in your robot class.

Sometimes, it's useful to use multiple instances of the same class. You can inject into unique instances by prefixing variable names with the component variable name:

```
class MyRobot(MagicRobot):
    front_swerve: SwerveModule
    back_swerve: SwerveModule

    def createObjects(self):
        # this is injected into the front_swerve instance of SwerveModule as 'motor'
        self.front_swerve_motor = wpilib.Talon(1)

        # this is injected into the back_swerve instance of SwerveModule as 'motor'
        self.back_swerve_motor = wpilib.Talon(2)

class SwerveModule:
    motor: wpilib.Talon
```

One problem that sometimes comes up is your component may require a lot of configuration parameters. Remember, anything can be injected: integers, numbers, lists, tuples.... one suggestion for dealing with this problem is use a

`namedtuple` to store your variables (note that attributes of `namedtuple` are readonly):

```
from collections import namedtuple

ShooterConfig = namedtuple("ShooterConfig", ["param1", "param2", "param3"])

class MyRobot(MagicRobot):

    shooter: Shooter
    shooter_cfg = ShooterConfig(param1=1, param2=2, param3=3)

class Shooter:
    cfg: ShooterConfig

    def execute(self):
        # you can access self.cfg.param1, self.cfg.param2, etc...
        ...
```

Variable injection in magicbot is one of its most useful features, take advantage of it in creative ways!

Note: Some limitations to notice:

- You cannot access components from the `createObjects` function
- You cannot access injected variables from component constructors. If you need to do this, define a `setup` method for your component instead, and it will be called after variables have been injected.

Operator Control code

Code that controls components should go in the `teleopPeriodic` method. This is really the only place that you should generally interact with a Joystick or NetworkTables variable that directly triggers an action to happen.

To ensure that a single portion of robot code cannot bring down your entire robot program during a competition, MagicRobot provides an `onException` method that will either swallow the exception and report it to the Driver Station, or if not connected to the FMS will crash the robot so that you can inspect the error:

```
try:
    if self.joystick.getTrigger():
        self.component.doSomething()
except:
    self.onException()
```

MagicRobot also provides a `consumeExceptions` method that you can wrap your code with using a `with` statement instead:

```
with self.consumeExceptions():
    if self.joystick.getTrigger():
        self.component.doSomething()
```

Note: Most of the time when you write code, you never want to create generic exception handlers, but you should try to catch specific exceptions. However, this is a special case and we actually do want to catch all exceptions.

See also:

RobotPy Guidelines

Autonomous mode

MagicBot supports loading multiple autonomous modes from a python package called 'autonomous'. To create this package, you must:

- Create a folder called 'autonomous' in the same directory as robot.py
- Add an empty file called '__init__.py' to that folder

Any .py files that you add to the autonomous package will automatically be loaded at robot startup. Each class that is in the python module will be inspected, and added as an autonomous mode if it has a class attribute named `MODE_NAME`.

Autonomous mode objects must implement the following functions:

- `on_enable` - Called when autonomous mode is initially enabled
- `on_disable` - Called when autonomous mode is no longer active
- `on_iteration` - Called for each iteration of the autonomous control loop

Your autonomous object may have the following attributes:

- `MODE_NAME` - The name of the autonomous mode to display to users (required)
- `DISABLED` - If True, don't allow this mode to be selected
- `DEFAULT` - If True, this is the default autonomous mode selected

You cannot access injected variables from component constructors. If you need to do so you can implement a `setup` function, which will be called after variables have been injected.

If you build your autonomous mode using the `AutonomousStateMachine` class, it makes it easier to build more expressive autonomous modes that are easier to reason about.

Here's an example autonomous mode that drives straight for 3 seconds.

```
from magicbot import AutonomousStateMachine, timed_state, state
import wpilib

# this is one of your components
from components.drivetrain import DriveTrain

class DriveForward(AutonomousStateMachine):

    MODE_NAME = "Drive Forward"
    DEFAULT = True

    # Injected from the definition in robot.py
    drivetrain: DriveTrain

    @timed_state(duration=3, first=True)
    def drive_forward(self):
        self.drivetrain.move(-0.7, 0)
```

Note that the `AutonomousStateMachine` object already defines default `on_enable/on_disable/on_iteration` methods that do the right thing.

Dashboard & coprocessor communications

The simplest method to communicate with other programs external to your robot code (examples include dashboards and image processing code) is using NetworkTables. NetworkTables is a distributed keystore, or put more simply, it is similar to a python dictionary that is shared across multiple processes.

Note: For more information about NetworkTables, see *Using NetworkTables*

Magicbot provides a simple way to interact with NetworkTables, using the `tunable` property. It provides a python property that has `get/set` functions that read and write from NetworkTables. The NetworkTables key is automatically determined by the name of your object instance and the name of the attribute that the tunable is assigned to.

In the following example, this would create a NetworkTables variable called `/components/mine/foo`, and assign it a default value of 1.0:

```
class MyComponent:
    foo = tunable(default=1.0)
    ...

class MyRobot:
    mine: MyComponent
```

To access the variable, in `MyComponent` you can read or write `self.foo` and it will read/write to NetworkTables.

For more information about creating custom dashboards, see the following:

- [pynetworktables2js docs](#)
- [Smartdashboard docs](#)

Example Components

Low level components

Low level components are those that directly interact with hardware. Generally, these should not be stateful but should express simple actions that cause the component to do whatever it is in a simple way, so when it doesn't work you can bypass any automation and more easily test the component.

Here's an example single-wheel shooter component:

```
class Shooter:
    shooter_motor: wpilib.Talon

    # speed is tunable via NetworkTables
    shoot_speed = tunable(1.0)

    def __init__(self):
        self.enabled = False

    def enable(self):
        '''Causes the shooter motor to spin'''
        self.enabled = True

    def is_ready(self):
```

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```

    # in a real robot, you'd be using an encoder to determine if the
    # shooter were at the right speed..
    return True

def execute(self):
    '''This gets called at the end of the control loop'''
    if self.enabled:
        self.shooter_motor.set(self.shoot_speed)
    else:
        self.shooter_motor.set(0)

self.enabled = False

```

Now, this is useful, but you'll note that it's not particularly smart. It just makes the component work. Which is great – very easy to debug. Let's automate some stuff now.

High level components

High level components are those that control other components to automate one or more of them for automated behaviors. Consider the example of the Shooter component above – let's say that you have some intake component that needs to feed a ball into the shooter when the shooter is ready. At that point, you're ready for high level components! First, let's just define what the low-level intake interface is:

- Has a function 'feed_shooter' which will send the ball to the shooter

Let's automate these two using a state machine helper:

```

from magicbot import StateMachine, state, timed_state

class ShooterControl(StateMachine):
    shooter: Shooter
    intake: Intake

    def fire(self):
        '''This function is called from teleop or autonomous to cause the
        shooter to fire'''
        self.engage()

    @state(first=True)
    def prepare_to_fire(self):
        '''First state -- waits until shooter is ready before going to the
        next action in the sequence'''
        self.shooter.enable()

        if self.shooter.is_ready():
            self.next_state_now('firing')

    @timed_state(duration=1, must_finish=True)
    def firing(self):
        '''Fires the ball'''
        self.shooter.enable()
        self.intake.feed_shooter()

```

There's a few special things to point out here:

- There are two steps in this state machine: 'prepare_to_fire' and 'firing'. The first step is 'prepare_to_fire', and it only transitions into 'firing' if the shooter is ready.

- When you want the state machine to start executing, you call the ‘engage’ method. Of course, it’s nice to have a semantically useful name, so we defined a function called ‘fire’ which just calls the ‘engage’ function for us.
- True to magicbot philosophy, the state machine will only execute if the ‘engage’ function is continuously called. So if you call engage, then prepare_to_fire will execute. But if you neglect to call engage again, then no states will execute.

Note: There is an exception to this rule! Once you start firing, if the intake stops then the ball will get stuck, so we *must* continue even if engage doesn’t occur. To tell the state machine about this, we pass the `must_finish` argument to `@timed_state` which will continue executing the state machine step until the duration has expired.

Now obviously this is a very simple example, but you can extend the sequence of events that happens as much as you want. It allows you to specify arbitrarily complex sets of steps to happen, and the resulting code is really easy to understand.

Using these components

Here’s one way that you might put them together in your `robot.py` file:

```
class MyRobot(magicbot.MagicRobot):

    # High level components go first
    shooter_control: ShooterControl

    # Low level components come last
    intake: Intake
    shooter: Shooter

    ...

    def teleopPeriodic(self):
        if self.joystick.getTrigger():
            self.shooter_control.fire()
```

API Reference

See also:

[Magicbot API Reference](#)

1.6 Hardware & Sensors

FIRST has put together a lot of great documentation that can tell you how to connect hardware devices and interact with it from robot code.

- [Using actuators \(motors, servos, and relays\)](#)
- [Using CAN Devices](#)
- [WPILib Sensors](#)
- [Driver Station Inputs and Feedback](#)

While their documentation code samples are in C++ and Java, it's fairly straightforward to translate them to python – RobotPy includes support for all components that are supported by WPILib's Java implementation, and generally the objects have the same name and method names.

If you have problems translating their code samples into Python, you can use our support resources to get help (see [Support](#)).

1.7 Camera & Vision

The RobotPy project provides `robotpy-cscore`, which are python bindings for `cscore`, a high performance camera access and streaming library introduced by FIRST in 2017. It can be used to:

- Stream a USB/HTTP camera to SmartDashboard or the LabVIEW dashboard via HTTP
- Capture images from USB or HTTP camera, modify them using OpenCV/Numpy, and send them via HTTP to SmartDashboard, the LabVIEW dashboard, or a web browser.

`robotpy-cscore` is intended to be usable on any platform supported by OpenCV and Numpy, and is a more flexible and powerful alternative to solutions such as `mjpg-streamer`.

Note: `cscore` is potentially useful outside of the FIRST Robotics Competition, as it has very high performance and ease of use compared to other solutions.

1.7.1 On the RoboRIO

Warning: Image processing is a CPU intensive task, and because of the Python Global Interpreter Lock (GIL) **we do NOT recommend using `robotpy-cscore` directly in your robot process**. Don't do it. Really.

Instead, we provide easy to use ways to launch your camera/image processing code from your Python robot code, and it won't break simulation either! See below for details.

For more information on the GIL and its effects, you may wish to read the following resources:

- [Python Wiki: Global Interpreter Lock](#)
- [Efficiently Exploiting Multiple Cores with Python](#)

Note: The following assumes you're writing your robot code and your image processing code using RobotPy. However, if you're writing your Robot code using Java, we do have an example which would allow you to launch Python image processing code from your Java Robot code. [See this file for details](#).

Installation

`robotpy-cscore` can be easily installed with the RobotPy installer. See [these instructions](#) for details.

Automatic camera streaming

If you do not wish to modify or process the images from your camera, and *only* wish to stream a single camera via HTTP to a dashboard, then you only need to add the following to your `robotInit` function:


```
wpilib.CameraServer.launch()
```

That's it! You should be able to connect to the camera using SmartDashboard, the default LabVIEW Dashboard, or if you point your browser at `http://roborio-XXXX-frc.local:1181`.

The [quick vision example](#) can be found in the RobotPy examples repository.

Image processing

Because the GIL exists (*see above*), RobotPy's WPILib implementation provides a way to run your image processing code in a separate process. This introduces a number of rules that your image processing code must follow to efficiently and safely run on the RoboRIO:

- Your image processing code must be in its own file
- Never import the `cscore` package from your robot code, it will just waste memory
- Never import the `wpilib` or `hal` packages from your image processing code

Warning: `wpilib` may not be imported from two programs on the RoboRIO. If this happens, the second program will attempt to kill the first program.

vision file

The first step you need to do is create a file – let's call it `vision.py`, and stick it in the same directory as your `robot.py` file. You can also put it in a subdirectory underneath your robot code, and the robot deploy command will copy it to the robot.

See also:

Custom Image processing

robot.py

Once you have written your `cscore` code, in the `robotInit` function in your `robot.py` file you need to add the following line:

```
wpilib.CameraServer.launch('vision.py:main')
```

The parameter provided to launch is of the form `FILENAME:FUNCTION`. For example, if your code was located in the `camera` subdirectory in a file called `targeting.py`, and your function was called `run`, then you would do:

```
wpilib.CameraServer.launch('camera/targeting.py:run')
```

Important notes

- Your image processing code will be launched via a stub that will setup logging and initialize `pynetworktables` to talk to your robot code
- The child process will NOT be launched when running the robot code in simulation or unit testing mode

- If your image processing code contains a `if __name__ == '__main__':` block, the code inside that block will NOT be executed when the code is launched from `robot.py`
- The camera code will be killed when the `robot.py` program exits. If you wish to perform cleanup, you should register an `atexit` handler.

The [intermediate vision example](#) can be found in the RobotPy examples repository.

More information

- The [WPIlib screensteps documentation for cscore](#) may be useful to explain concepts (though some details are different)
- [CSCore Troubleshooting](#)

1.7.2 Other platforms

`robotpy-cscore` is a great solution for running image processing on a coprocessor such as the Raspberry Pi or on the Driver Station. However, we do not provide precompiled packages at this time and you will need to compile binary packages for your platform.

Installation

See [installing robotpy-cscore](#).

Automatic camera streaming

If you do not wish to modify or process the images from your camera, and *only* wish to stream a single camera via HTTP to a dashboard, then you can use the `cscore __main__` module to start a `CameraServer` automatically:

```
$ python3 -m cscore
```

That's it! You can point your browser to that host at port 1181, and you should see the `cscore` default webpage.

Running a custom cscore program

See also:

[Custom Image processing](#)

The easiest way to launch a `cscore` program is via the `cscore __main__` module helper. It will automatically configure python logging for you, and also provides useful exception handling and `NetworkTables` configuration for you automatically.

You can instruct the `__main__` module to run your custom code via a command line parameter. The parameter is of the form `FILENAME:FUNCTION`. For example, if your code was located in a file called `targeting.py`, and your function was called `run`, then you would do:

```
$ python3 -m cscore targeting.py:run
```

Examples

See the [intermediate_camerasetver.py](#) example in the [robotpy-cscore examples folder](#)

Launching your script at startup

TODO: Add section about launching your script at coprocessor startup

Viewing streams via the LabVIEW dashboard or Shuffleboard

The LabVIEW dashboard and Shuffleboard both retrieve information about the camera stream via NetworkTables. If you use the `cscore.CameraServer` class to manage your streams (which you should!) it will automatically publish the correct information to NetworkTables. In order for the dashboard program to receive the NetworkTables information, you need to tell your cscore program to connect to a NetworkTables server (your robot), and the robot code must be actually running.

If you're using the cscore `__main__` module to launch your code you can tell it configure NetworkTables to connect to your robot. Use the `--robot` or `--team` options:

```
$ python3 -m cscore --team XXXX
```

Or if running custom code:

```
$ python3 -m cscore --team XXXX vision.py:run
```

If you're writing your own custom code/launcher, at some point you should initialize NetworkTables and point it at your robot:

```
import networktables
networktables.startClientTeam(1234)
```

More information

- The [WPIlib screensteps documentation for cscore](#) may be useful to explain concepts (though some details are different)
- [CSCore Troubleshooting](#)

1.7.3 Custom Image processing

vision file

Warning: If you merely wish to display a single camera stream and do not want to process the images, do **NOT** use this code. Instead, see one of the following sections about automatic streaming:

- [RoboRIO automatic streaming](#)
- [non-RoboRIO automatic streaming](#)

The first step you need to do is create a file – let's call it `vision.py`. `vision.py` must contain some function to be called, let's call it `main`, and at the minimum it needs to do the following operations:

- Create a `CameraServer` instance
- Start capturing from USB
- Get a `cvSink` object that images can be retrieved from

- Loop and capture images

Here's a full example:

```
# Import the camera server
from cscore import CameraServer

# Import OpenCV and NumPy
import cv2
import numpy as np

def main():
    cs = CameraServer.getInstance()
    cs.enableLogging()

    # Capture from the first USB Camera on the system
    camera = cs.startAutomaticCapture()
    camera.setResolution(320, 240)

    # Get a CvSink. This will capture images from the camera
    cvSink = cs.getVideo()

    # (optional) Setup a CvSource. This will send images back to the Dashboard
    outputStream = cs.putVideo("Name", 320, 240)

    # Allocating new images is very expensive, always try to preallocate
    img = np.zeros(shape=(240, 320, 3), dtype=np.uint8)

    while True:
        # Tell the CvSink to grab a frame from the camera and put it
        # in the source image. If there is an error notify the output.
        time, img = cvSink.grabFrame(img)
        if time == 0:
            # Send the output the error.
            outputStream.notifyError(cvSink.getError());
            # skip the rest of the current iteration
            continue

        #
        # Insert your image processing logic here!
        #

        # (optional) send some image back to the dashboard
        outputStream.putFrame(img)
```

This code will work both on a RoboRIO and on other platforms. The exact mechanism to run it differs depending on whether you're on a RoboRIO or a coprocessor:

- *RoboRIO*
- *Other*

Multiple Cameras

cscore easily supports multiple cameras! Here's a really simple `vision.py` file that will get you started streaming two cameras to the FRC Dashboard program:

```

from cscore import CameraServer

def main():
    cs = CameraServer.getInstance()
    cs.enableLogging()

    usb1 = cs.startAutomaticCapture(dev=0)
    usb2 = cs.startAutomaticCapture(dev=1)

    cs.waitForEver()

```

One thing to be careful of: if you get USB Bandwidth errors, then you probably need to do one of the following:

- Reduce framerate (FPS). The default is 30, but you can get by with 10 or even as low as 5 FPS.
- Lower image resolution: you'd be surprised how much you can do with a 160x120 image!

Sometimes the first and second camera swap!?

When using multiple USB cameras, Linux will sometimes order the cameras unpredictably – so camera 1 will become camera 0. Sometimes.

The way to deal with this is to tell cscore to use a specific camera by its path on the file system. First, identify the cameras dev paths by using SSH to access the robot and execute `find /dev/v4l`. You should see output similar to this:

```

/dev/v4l
/dev/v4l/by-path
/dev/v4l/by-path/pci-0000:00:1a.0-usb-0:1.4:1.0-video-index0
/dev/v4l/by-path/pci-0000:00:1d.0-usb-0:1.4:1.2-video-index0
/dev/v4l/by-id
...

```

What you need to do is figure out what paths belong to which camera, and then when you start the camera server, pass it a name and a path via:

```

usb1 = cs.startAutomaticCapture(name="cam1", path='/dev/v4l/by-id/some-path-here')
usb2 = cs.startAutomaticCapture(name="cam2", path='/dev/v4l/by-id/some-other-path-here
↪')

```

Generally speaking, if your cameras have unique IDs associated with them (you can tell because the by-id path has a random string of characters in it), then using by-id paths are the best, as they'll always be the same regardless which port the camera is plugged into.

However, if your camera does NOT have unique IDs associated with them, then you should use the by-path versions instead. These device paths are unique to each USB port plugged in. They should be fairly deterministic, but sometimes with USB hubs they have been known to change.

Note: The Microsoft Lifecam cameras commonly used in FRC don't have unique IDs associated with them, so you'll want to use the `by-path` versions of the links if you are using two Lifecams.

More information

- The [WPIlib](#) screensteps documentation for `cscore` may be useful to explain concepts (though some details are different)
- [robotpy-cscore API documentation](#)
- [CSCore Troubleshooting](#)

1.7.4 Limitations

opencv-python

`robotpy-cscore` is not currently able to use the `opencv-python` package on pypi, you will need to install python bindings for OpenCV some other way.

USB Camera Support

The `cscore` library currently only supports USB cameras on Linux. On other platforms you will want to use OpenCV to open a `VideoCamera` object. You can check at runtime to see if `cscore` is compiled with USB camera support by checking for the presence of a `UsbCamera` class. If it's not there, it's not supported.

See the `cvstream.py` example for using OpenCV in this manner.

1.8 Troubleshooting

- *Robot Code*
 - *Problem: I can't run code on the robot!*
 - *Problem: no module named 'wpilib'*
 - *Problem: no module named ...*
 - *Problem: pyfrc cannot connect to the robot, or appears to hang*
 - *Problem: I deploy successfully, but the driver station still shows 'No Robot Code'*
 - *Problem: When I run deploy, it complains that the WPIlib versions don't match*
- *pynetworktables*
 - *isConnected() returns False!*
 - *Ensure you're using the correct mode*
 - *Use static IPs when using pynetworktables*
 - *Problem: I can't determine if networktables has connected*
- *cscore*
 - *Problem: I can't view my cscore stream via a dashboard*
 - *Problem: My image processing code is running at 100% CPU usage*
 - *Problem: It still doesn't work!*

1.8.1 Robot Code

Problem: I can't run code on the robot!

There are lots of things that can go wrong here. It is very important to have the latest versions of the FIRST robot software installed:

- Robot Image
- Driver Station + Tools

The [FIRST screensteps documentation](#) contains information on what the current versions are, and how to go about updating the software.

You should also have the latest version of the RobotPy software packages:

- Do you have the latest version of pyfrc?

Warning: Make sure that the version of WPILib on your computer matches the version installed on the robot! You can check what version you have locally by running:

```
Windows: py -3 -m pip list
Linux/macOS: pip3 list
```

1. Did you run the deploy command to put the code on the robot?
2. Make sure you have the latest version of pyfrc! Older versions **won't** work.
3. Read any error messages that pyfrc might give you. They might be useful. :)

Problem: no module named 'wpilib'

If you're on your local computer, did you *install pyfrc via pip*?

If you're on the roboRIO, did you *install RobotPy*?

Problem: no module named ...

If you're using a non-WPILib vendor library, it must be installed separately.

- *robotpy-ctre install*
- *robotpy-navx install*
- *robotpy-rev install*

If you're on your local computer, did you *install pyfrc via pip*?

If you're on the roboRIO, did you *install RobotPy*?

Problem: pyfrc cannot connect to the robot, or appears to hang

1. Can you ping your robot from the machine that you're deploying code from? If not, pyfrc isn't going to be able to connect to the robot either.

2. Try to ssh into your robot, using PuTTY or the `ssh` command on Linux/macOS. The username to use is `lvuser`, and the password is an empty string. If this doesn't work, pyfrc won't be able to copy files to your robot
3. If all of that works, it might just be that you typed the wrong hostname to connect to. There's a file called `.deploy_cfg` next to your `robot.py` that pyfrc created. Delete it, and try again.

Problem: I deploy successfully, but the driver station still shows 'No Robot Code'

1. Did you use the `--nc` option to the `deploy` command? Your code may have crashed, and the output should be visible on netconsole.
2. If you can't see any useful output there, then ssh into the robot and run `ps -Af | grep python3`. If nothing shows up, it means your python code crashed and you'll need to debug it. Try running it manually on the robot using this command:

```
python3 /home/lvuser/py/robot.py run
```

Problem: When I run deploy, it complains that the WPILib versions don't match

Not surprisingly, the error message is correct.

During deployment, pyfrc does a number of checks to ensure that your robot is setup properly for running python robot code. One of these checks is testing the WPILib version number against the version installed on your computer (it's installed when you install pyfrc).

You should either:

- Upgrade the RobotPy installation on the robot to match the newer version on your computer. See the [RobotPy install guide](#) for more info.
- Upgrade the pyfrc installation on your computer to match the version on the robot. Just run:

```
pip3 install pyfrc --upgrade
```

If you *really* don't want pyfrc to do the version check and need to deploy the code *now*, you can specify the `--no-version-check` option. However, this isn't recommended.

1.8.2 pynetworktables

isConnected() returns False!

Keep in mind that NetworkTables does not immediately connect, and it will connect/disconnect as devices come up and down. For example, if your program initializes NetworkTables, sends a value, and exits – that almost certainly will fail.

Ensure you're using the correct mode

If you're running pynetworktables as part of a RobotPy robot – relax, pynetworktables is setup as a server automatically for you, just like in WPILib!

If you're trying to connect to the robot from a coprocessor (such as a Raspberry Pi) or from the driver station, then you will need to ensure that you initialize pynetworktables correctly.

Thankfully, this is super easy as of 2017. Here's the code:


```
from networktables import NetworkTables
NetworkTables.initialize(server='10.xx.xx.2')
```

Don't know what the right hostname is? That's what the next section is for...

Use static IPs when using pynetworktables

See also:

Using NetworkTables

Problem: I can't determine if networktables has connected

Make sure that you have enabled python logging (it's not enabled by default):

```
# To see messages from networktables, you must setup logging
import logging
logging.basicConfig(level=logging.DEBUG)
```

Once you've enabled logging, look for messages that look like this:

```
INFO:nt:CONNECTED 10.14.18.2 port 40162 (...)
```

If you see a message like this, it means that your client has connected to the robot successfully. If you don't see it, that means there's still a problem. Usually the problem is that you set the hostname incorrectly in your call to `NetworkTables.initialize`.

1.8.3 cscore

Problem: I can't view my cscore stream via a dashboard

First, make sure that your stream is actually working. Connect with a web browser to the host that the stream is running on on the correct port (if you are using `CameraServer`, this will be output via a python logging message). The default port is 1181.

The LabVIEW dashboard and Shuffleboard both receive information about connecting to the stream via `NetworkTables`. This means that both your cscore code and the dashboard need to be connected to your robot, and your robot's code needs to be running. If you have python logging enabled, then your cscore code should output a message like this if it's connected to a robot:

```
INFO:nt:CONNECTED 10.14.18.2 port 40162 (...)
```

If it's connected to `NetworkTables`, then you can use something like the `TableView` to view the contents of `NetworkTables` and see if the correct URL is being published. Look under the 'CameraPublisher' key.

Problem: My image processing code is running at 100% CPU usage

You should only encounter this if running your own image processing code. If you're just streaming a camera, this should never happen and is a bug. When doing image processing, there's a few ways you can use too much CPU, particularly if you do it on a RoboRIO. Here are some thoughts:

- Resizing images is really expensive, don't do that. Instead, set the resolution of your camera via the API provided by `cscore`
- Preallocate your image buffers. Most OpenCV functions will optionally take a final argument called 'dst' that it will write the result of the image processing operation to. If you don't provide a 'dst' argument, then it will allocate a new image buffer each time. Because image buffers can be really large, this adds up quickly.
- Try a really small resolution like 160x120. Most image processing tasks for FRC are still perfectly doable at small resolutions.
- If your framerate is over 10fps, consider bringing it down and see if that helps.

Problem: It still doesn't work!

Please [file a bug on github](#) or use one of our [support channels](#).

1.9 Support

The RobotPy project was started in 2010, and since then the community surrounding RobotPy has continued to grow! If you have questions about how to do something with RobotPy, you can ask questions in the following locations:

- [RobotPy mailing list](#)
- [ChiefDelphi Python Forums](#)

<p>Warning: When posting on ChiefDelphi, post on the Python forum, not the main programming forum, otherwise your support request may get lost in the noise!</p>
--

We have found that most problems users have are actually questions generic to WPILib-based languages like C++/Java, so searching around the ChiefDelphi forums could be useful if you don't have a python-specific question.

During the FRC build season, you can probably expect answers to your questions within a day or two if you send messages to the mailing list. As community members are also members of FRC teams, you can expect that the closer we get to the end of the build season, the harder it will be for community members to respond to your questions!

1.9.1 Reporting Bugs

If you run into a problem with RobotPy that you think is a bug, or perhaps there is something wrong with the documentation or just too difficult to do, please feel free to file bug reports on the [github issue tracker](#). Someone should respond within a day or two, especially during the FIRST build season.

1.9.2 Contributing new fixes or features

RobotPy is intended to be a project that all members of the FIRST community can **quickly** and **easily** contribute to. If you find a bug, or have an idea that you think others can use:

1. Fork the appropriate git repository to your github account
2. Create your feature branch (`git checkout -b my-new-feature`)
3. Commit your changes (`git commit -am 'Add some feature'`)
4. Push to the branch (`git push -u origin my-new-feature`)

5. Create new Pull Request on github

Github has a lot of documentation about [forking repositories](#) and [pull requests](#), so be sure to check out those resources.

1.9.3 RobotPy Chat

During the FRC Build Season, some RobotPy developers may be able to be reached on the [RobotPy Gitter Channel](#).

Note: the channel is not very active, but if you stick around for a day or two someone will probably answer your question – think in terms of email response time

The channel tends to be most active between 11pm and 1am EST.

1.10 FAQ

Here you can find answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about RobotPy.

1.10.1 Should our team use RobotPy?

What we often recommend teams to do is to take their existing code for their existing robot, and translate it to RobotPy and try it out first in the robot simulator, followed by the real robot. This will give you a good taste for what developing code for RobotPy will be like.

Related questions for those curious about RobotPy:

- *Is RobotPy competition-legal?*
- *Is RobotPy stable?*
- *Is RobotPy fast?*

1.10.2 Installing and Running RobotPy

How do I install RobotPy?

See our *getting started guide*.

What version of Python do RobotPy projects use?

When running RobotPy on a FIRST Robot, our libraries/interpreters use Python 3. This means you should reference the [Python 3.x documentation](#) instead of the Python 2.x documentation.

- RobotPy WPILib on the roboRIO uses the latest version of Python 3 at kickoff. In 2020, this was Python 3.8. When using pyfrc or similar projects, you should use a Python 3.6 or newer interpreter (the latest is recommended).
- RobotPy 2014.x is based on Python 3.2.5.

[pynetworktables](#) is compatible with Python 3.5 or newer, since 2019. Releases prior to 2019 are also compatible with Python 2.7.

What happens when my code crashes?

An exception will be printed out to the console, and the Driver Station log may receive a message as well. It is highly recommended that you enable NetConsole for your robot, so you can see these messages.

Is WPILib available?

Of course! Just `import wpilib`. Class and function names are identical to the Java version. Check out the [Python WPILib API Reference](#) for more details.

As of 2020, the API mostly matches the C++ version of WPILib, except that protected functions are prefixed with an underscore (but are available to all Python code).

From 2015-2019, almost all classes and functions from the Java WPILib are available in RobotPy's WPILib implementation.

Prior to 2015, the API matched the C++ version of WPILib.

Is Command-based programming available?

Of course! Check out the `command` package. There is also some *python-specific documentation available*.

Is there an easy way to test my code outside of the robot?

Glad you asked! Our `pyfrc` project has a built in *lightweight robot simulator* you can use to run your code, and also has builtin support for unit testing with `py.test`.

Note: These are in the process of being updated for 2020

1.10.3 Competition

Is RobotPy competition-legal?

As RobotPy was not written by anyone involved with the GDC, we can't provide a guaranteed answer (particularly not for future years). However, we see no reason that RobotPy would not be legal: to the cRIO/RoboRIO, it looks just like any other C++ WPILib-using program that reads text files. RobotPy itself should be considered COTS software as it is freely available to all teams. Teams have been using RobotPy since 2010 without any problems from FIRST, and we expect that to continue.

Caveat emptor: while RobotPy is almost certainly legal to use, your team should carefully consider the risk of using such a large piece of unofficial software; unless RobotPy is used by many teams, if you run into trouble at a competition, there may not be anyone else there to help! However, we've found that most problems teams run into are problems with WPILib itself, and not RobotPy.

Also, be sure to keep in mind the fact that Python is a dynamic language and is NOT compiled. This means that typos can easily go undetected until your robot runs that particular line of code, resulting in an exception and 5 second restart. Make sure to test your code thoroughly (see our *unit testing documentation*).

Is RobotPy stable?

Yes! While Python is not an officially supported language, teams have been using RobotPy since 2010, and the maintainer of RobotPy is a member of the WPILib team. Much of the time when bugs are found, they are found in the underlying WPILib, instead of RobotPy itself.

One caveat to this is that because RobotPy doesn't have a beta period like WPILib does, bugs tend to be found during the first half of competition season. However, by the time build season ends, RobotPy is just as stable as any of the officially supported languages.

How often does RobotPy get updated?

RobotPy is a community project, and updates are made whenever community members contribute changes and the developers decide to push a new release.

Historically, RobotPy tends to have frequent releases at the beginning of build season, with less frequent releases as build season goes on. We try hard to avoid WPILib releases after build season ends, unless critical bugs are found.

1.10.4 Performance

Is RobotPy fast?

It's fast enough.

We've not yet benchmarked it, but it's almost certainly just as fast as Java for typical WPILib-using robot code. RobotPy uses the native C++ WPILib, and thus the only interpreted portions are your specific robot actions. If you have particularly performance sensitive code, you can write it in C++ and use pybind11 wrappers to interface to it from Python.

1.10.5 RobotPy Development

Who created RobotPy?

RobotPy was created by Peter Johnson, programming mentor for FRC Team 294, [Beach Cities Robotics](#). He was inspired by the [Lua port for the cRIO](#) created by Ross Light, FRC Team 973. Peter is a member of the FIRST WPILib team, and also created the [ntcore](#) and [cscore](#) libraries.

The current RobotPy maintainer is [Dustin Spicuzza](#), also a member of the FIRST WPILib team.

Current RobotPy developers include:

- [Dustin Spicuzza \(@virtuald\)](#)
- [David Vo \(@auscompgeek\)](#)
- [Ellery Newcomer \(@ariovistus\)](#)
- [Tim Winters \(@ArchdukeTim\)](#)

1.10.6 How can I help?

RobotPy is an open project that all members of the FIRST community can easily and quickly contribute to. If you find a bug, or have an idea that you think others can use:

- Test and report any issues you find.

- Port and test a useful library.
- Write a Python module and share it with others (and contribute it to the [robotpy-wpilib-utilities](#) package!)

1.11 Developer Documentation

These pages contain information about various internal details of RobotPy which are useful for advanced users and those interested in developing RobotPy itself. We will endeavor to keep these pages up to date. :)

1.11.1 Design

Goals

The python implementation of WPILib/HAL is derived from the Java implementation of WPILib. In particular, we strive to keep the python implementation of WPILib as close to the spirit of the original WPILib java libraries as we can, only adding language-specific features where it makes sense.

Things that you won't find in the original WPILib can be found in the `_impl` package.

If you have a suggestion for things to add to WPILib, we suggest making a request to the WPILib team directly, or if appropriate you can add it to the `robotpy_ext` package, which is a separate package for “high quality code of things that should be in WPILib, but aren't”. This package is installed by the RobotPy installer by default.

HAL Loading

Currently, the HAL is split into two python packages:

- `hal` - Provided by the `robotpy-hal-base` package
- `hal_impl` - Provided by either `robotpy-hal-robotrio` or `robotpy-hal-sim`

You can only have a single `hal_impl` package installed in a particular python installation.

The `hal` package provides the definition of the functions and various types & required constants.

The `hal_impl` package provides the actual implementation of the HAL functions, or links them to a shared DLL via ctypes.

Adding options to `robot.py`

When `run()` is called, that function determines available commands that can be run, and parses command line arguments to pass to the commands. Examples of commands include:

- Running the robot code
- Running the robot code, connected to a simulator
- Running unit tests on the robot code
- And lots more!

python `setuptools` has a feature that allows you to extend the commands available to `robot.py` without needing to modify WPILib's code. To add your own command, do the following:

- Define a `setuptools` entrypoint in your package's `setup.py` (see below)
- The entrypoint name is the command to add

- **The entrypoint must point at an object that has the following properties:**

- Must have a docstring (shown when `--help` is given)
- Constructor must take a single argument (it is an `argparse` parser which options can be added to)
- Must have a `run` function which takes two arguments: `options`, and `robot_class`. It must also take arbitrary keyword arguments via the `**kwargs` mechanism. If it receives arguments that it does not recognize, the entry point must ignore any such options.

If your command's `run` function is called, it is your command's responsibility to execute the robot code (if that is desired). This sample command demonstrates how to do this:

```
class SampleCommand:
    '''Help text shown to user'''

    def __init__(self, parser):
        pass

    def run(self, options, robot_class, **static_options):
        # runs the robot code main loop
        robot_class.main(robot_class)
```

To register your command as a robotpy extension, you must add the following to your `setup.py` `setup()` invocation:

```
from setuptools import setup

setup(
    ...
    entry_points={'robotpy': ['name_of_command = package.module:CommandClassName']},
    ...
)
```

1.11.2 Developer Installation

Installing WPILib from git

Warning: These instructions are only intended for those users wanting to deploy a custom modified version of the RobotPy WPILib source code

1. Install python on the roboRIO using one of the methods in the *installation guide*.
2. Checkout the `robotpy-wpilib` git repository, and make your changes there
3. To deploy your changes, you can run `devtools/build_and_deploy.sh` from the root of the git repository.

1.11.3 Deploy process details

When the code is uploaded to the robot, the following steps occur:

- SSH/sftp operations are performed as the `lvuser` user (this is REALLY important, don't use the `admin` user!)
- `pyfr` does some checks to make sure the environment is setup properly
- The directory containing `robot.py` is recursively copied to the the directory `/home/lvuser/py`

- The files `robotCommand` and `robotDebugCommand` are created
- `/usr/local/frc/bin/frcKillRobot.sh -t -r` is called, which causes any existing robot code to be killed, and the new code is launched

If you wish for the code to be started up when the roboRIO boots up, you need to make sure that “Disable RT Startup App” is **not** checked in the roboRIO’s web configuration.

These steps are compatible with what C++/Java does when deployed by eclipse, so you should be able to seamlessly switch between python and other FRC languages!

How to manually run code

Note: Generally, you shouldn’t need to use this process.

If you don’t have (or don’t want) to install `pyfrc`, running code manually is pretty simple too.

1. Make sure you have RobotPy installed on the robot
2. Use `scp` or `sftp` (Filezilla is a great GUI product to use for this) to copy your robot code to the roboRIO
3. `ssh` into the roboRIO, and run your robot code manually

```
python3 robot.py run
```

Your driver station should be able to connect to your code, and it will be able to operate your robot!

Note: This is good for running experimental code, but it won’t start the code when the robot starts up. Use `pyfrc` to do that.

1.11.4 Updating RobotPy source code to match WPILib

Every year, the WPILib team makes improvements to WPILib, so RobotPy needs to be updated to maintain compatibility. While this is largely a manual process, we now use a tool called [git-source-track](#) to assist with this process.

Note: `git-source-track` only works on Linux/macOS at this time. If you’re interested in helping with the porting process and you use Windows, file a github issue and we’ll try to help you out.

Using `git-source-track`

First, you need to checkout the git repo for [allwpilib](#) and the RobotPy WPILib next to each other in the same directory like so:

```
allwpilib/  
robotpy-wpilib/
```

The way `git-source-track` works is it looks for a comment in the header of each tracked file that looks like this:

```
# validated: 2015-12-24 DS 6d854af athena/java/edu/wpi/first/wpilibj/Compressor.java
```


This stores when the file was validated to match the original source, initials of the person that did the validation, what commit it was validated against, and the path to the original source file.

Finding differences

From the *robotpy-wpilib* directory, you can run `git source-track` and it will output all of the configured files and their status. The status codes include:

- OK: File is up to date, no changes required
- OLD: The tracked file has been updated, `git source-track diff FILENAME` can be used to show all of the git log messages and associated diffs.
- ??: The tracked file has moved or has been deleted
- IGN: The file has explicitly been marked as do not track
- --: The file is not currently being tracked

Sometimes, commits are added to WPILib which only change comments, formatting, or mass file renames – these don't change the semantic content of the file, so we can ignore those commits. When identified, those commits should be added to `devtools/exclude_commits`.

Looking at differences

Once you've identified a file that needs to be updated, then you can run:

```
git source-track diff FILENAME
```

This will output a verbose git log command that will show associated commit messages and the diff output associated with that commit for that specific file. Note that it will only show the change for that specific file, it will not show changes for other files (use `git log -p COMMITHASH` in the original source directory if you want to see other changes).

After running `git source-track diff` it will ask you if you want to validate the file. If no Python-significant changes have been made, then you can answer 'y' and the validation header will be updated.

Adding new files

Unfortunately, `git-source-track` doesn't currently have a mechanism that allows it to identify new files that need to be ported. We need to do that manually.

Dealing with RobotPy-specific files

We don't need to track those files; `git source-track set-notrack FILENAME` takes care of it.

After you finish porting the changes

Once you've finished making the appropriate changes to the Python code, then you should update the validation header in the source file. Thankfully, there's a command to do this:

```
git source-track set-valid FILENAME
```

It will store the current date and the tracked git commit.

Additionally, if you answer 'y' after running `git source-track diff FILENAME`, then it will update the validation header in the file.

HAL Changes

RobotPy uses the WPILib HAL API to talk to the hardware. This API is not guaranteed to be stable, so every year we have to update it. There are several pieces to this that need to be updated.

Each WPILib build publishes new header files and library files to their website, and in `hal-roborio/hal_impl/distutils.py` there is code to download and extract the package. The version number of the HAL release we want to use needs to be updated there.

Once that's updated, you can run the unit tests to see if there are any breaking HAL changes. If they fail and there are changes to the HAL, there are two places that HAL code updates need to be made aside from the code in WPILib that uses the HAL:

- `hal-base/hal/functions.py` - contains ctypes signatures for each HAL function, which must match the functions in the HAL headers. Running the `robotpy-wpilib` unit tests will fail if the functions do not match.
- `hal-sim/hal_impl/functions.py` - contains simulated HAL definitions, which need to have the same parameter names as defined in `hal-base`

Additionally, `devtools/hal_fix.sh` is a script that can be used to detect errors in the HAL and print out the correct HAL definitions for a given function or generate empty python stubs (via the `--stubs` argument). Use `--help` for more information on the capabilities of this tool.

Syntax/Style Guide

As of the 2019 season, RobotPy projects will use the [black](#) code autoformatter. Black generates pretty good looking code, and it makes it easier to review incoming pull requests. Before making pull requests, please install black and run it on the repo you're changing.

Except where it makes sense, developers should try to retain the structure and naming conventions that the Java implementation of WPILib follows. There are a few guidelines that can be helpful when translating Java to Python:

- Member variables such as `m_foo` should be converted to `self.foo`
- Private/protected functions (but NOT variables) should start with an underscore
- Always retain original Javadoc documentation, and convert it to the appropriate standard Python docstring (see below)

Converting javadocs to docstrings

There is an HTML page in devtools called `convert_javadoc.html` that you can use. The way it works is you copy a Java docstring in the top box (you can also paste in a function prototype too) and it will output a Python docstring in the bottom box. When adding new APIs that have documentation, this tool is invaluable and will save you a ton of time – but feel free to improve it!

This tool has also been converted to a command line application called `sphinxify`, which you can install by running:

```
pip install sphinxify
```

Enums

Python 3.4 and up have an `enum` module. In the past, we did not use it to implement the enums found in the Java WPILib, however, we are slowly moving towards its use, starting with moving existing enums to `IntEnum`. New enums should preferably use a plain `Enum` (although this may be up for discussion). See [robotpy-wpilib issue #78](#) for details. For example:

```
class SomeObject:

    class MyEnum(enum.IntEnum):
        VALUE1 = 1
        VALUE2 = 2
```

Many WPILib classes define various enums, see existing code for example translations.

Synchronized

The Python language has no equivalent to the Java `synchronized` keyword. Instead, create a `threading.RLock` instance object called `self.lock`, and surround the internal function body with a `with self.lock: block`:

```
def someSynchronizedFunction(self):
    with self.lock:
        # do something here...
```

Interfaces

While we define the various interfaces for documentation's sake, the Python WPILib does not actually utilize most of the interfaces.

Final thoughts

Before translating WPILib Java code to RobotPy's WPILib, first take some time and read through the existing RobotPy code to get a feel for the style of the code. Try to keep it Pythonic and yet true to the original spirit of the code. Style *does* matter, as students will be reading through this code and it will potentially influence their decisions in the future.

Remember, all contributions are welcome, no matter how big or small!

CHAPTER 2

Indices and tables

- `genindex`
- `modindex`
- `search`