Lecture 17

Physics in Games
The Pedagogical Problem

- Physics simulation is a very complex topic
  - No way I can address this in a few lectures
  - Could spend an entire course talking about it
  - **CS 5643**: Physically Based Animation

- This is why we have **physics engines**
  - Libraries that handle most of the dirty work
  - But you have to understand how they work
  - **Examples**: Box2D, Bullet, PhysX
Approaching the Problem

- Want to start with the problem description
  - Squirrel Eiserloh’s *Problem Overview* slides
  - [http://www.essentialmath.com/tutorial.htm](http://www.essentialmath.com/tutorial.htm)

- Will help you understand the Engine APIs
  - Understand the limitations of physics engines
  - Learn where to go for other solutions

- Will cover Box2D API next time in depth
Physics in Games

• **Moving** objects about the screen
  • **Kinematics**: Motion ignoring external forces
    (Only consider position, velocity, acceleration)
  • **Dynamics**: The effect of forces on the screen

• **Collisions** between objects
  • **Collision Detection**: Did a collision occur?
  • **Collision Resolution**: What do we do?
**Motion: Modeling Objects**

- Typically ignore **geometry**
  - Don’t worry about shape
  - Only needed for **collisions**

- Every object is a **point**
  - **Centroid**: average of points
  - Also called: **center of mass**
  - Same if density uniform

- Use **rigid body** if needed
  - Multiple points together
  - Moving one moves them all
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Time-Stepped Simulation

- Physics is **time-stepped**
  - Assume velocity is constant (or the acceleration is)
  - Compute the position
  - Move for next frame

- Movement is very linear
  - Piecewise approximations
  - Remember your calculus

- Smooth = smaller steps
  - More frames a second?
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**Kinematics**

- **Goal**: determine an object position \( p \) at time \( t \)
  - Typically know it from a previous time

- **Assume**: constant velocity \( v \)
  - \( p(t + \Delta t) = p(t) + v\Delta t \)
  - Or \( \Delta p = p(t + \Delta t) - p(t) = v\Delta t \)

- **Alternatively**: constant acceleration \( a \)
  - \( v(t + \Delta t) = v(t) + a\Delta t \) (or \( \Delta v = a\Delta t \))
  - \( p(t + \Delta t) = p(t) + v(t)\Delta t + \frac{1}{2}a(\Delta t)^2 \)
  - Or \( \Delta p = v_0\Delta t + \frac{1}{2}a(\Delta t)^2 \)
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Linear Dynamics

- **Forces** affect movement
  - Springs, joints, connections
  - Gravity, repulsion

- Get velocity from forces
  - Compute current force $F$
  - $F$ constant entire frame

- Formulas:
  - $\Delta a = F/m$
  - $\Delta v = F\Delta t/m$
  - $\Delta p = F(\Delta t)^2/m$
**Linear Dynamics**

- **Force**: $F(p,t)$
  - $p$: current position
  - $t$: current time

- Creates a **vector field**
  - Movement should follow field direction

- **Update formulas**
  - $a_i = F(p_i, i\Delta t)/m$
  - $v_{i+1} = v_i + a_i \Delta t$
  - $p_{i+1} = p_i + v_i \Delta t$
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Physics Engines are DE Solvers

- Differential Equation
  - $F(p,t) = m \ a(t)$
  - $F(p,t) = m \ p''(t)$

- Euler’s method:
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- But heavily optimized
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Problem with DE Solvers

- **Errors accumulate**
  - Side effect of techniques
  - Stepwise approximations

- **Major problem with *orbits***
  - Move along tangent vector
  - Vector takes out of orbit
  - Gets worse over time

- **Must *constrain* behavior**
  - Keep movement in orbit
Dealing with Error Creep

- Classic solution: reduce the time step $\Delta t$
  - Up the frame rate (not necessarily good)
  - Perform more than one step per frame
  - Each Euler step is called an *iteration*

- **Multiple iterations per frame**
  - Let $h$ be the length of the frame
  - Let $n$ be the number of iterations

- Typically a parameter in your physics engine

\[ \Delta t = \frac{h}{n} \]
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Constraint Solvers

- **Limit** object movement
  - Pos must satisfy constraint
  - Correct position if does not

- **Example:** Distance
  - **Hard:** Dist must be exact
  - **Soft:** Dist must be no more

- **Other constraints**
  - **Contact:** non-penetration
  - **Restitution:** bouncing
  - **Friction:** sliding, sticking
**Constraint Solvers**

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**Focus of Lab 4**
Challenge: Interconnected Constraints

- Not hard if **one** object
  - Just move it and correct

- How about *relationships*?
  - Correct an object
  - But it constrained another
  - So have to correct it and…

- When does this happen?
  - Ropes, chains
  - Box stacking
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**Joints Fall Apart!**
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Joints Fall Apart!

Box2d is good, but not perfect
Error Accumulation: Energy

- Want energy conserved
  - Energy loss undesirable
  - Energy gain is evil
  - Simulations explode!
- Not always possible
  - Error accumulation!
- Need *ad hoc* solutions
  - Clamping (max values)
  - Manual *dampening*
Error Accumulation: Energy

- Want energy conserved
  - Energy loss undesirable
  - Energy gain is evil
  - Simulations explode!
- High Energy is where joints fail
- Need *ad hoc* solutions
  - Clamping (max values)
  - Manual *dampening*
## Kinematics vs. Dynamics

### Kinematics

- **Advantages**
  - Very simple to use
  - Non-calculus physics

- **Disadvantages**
  - Only simple physics
  - All bodies are rigid

- Old school games

### Dynamics

- **Advantages**
  - Complex physics
  - Non-rigid bodies

- **Disadvantages**
  - Beyond scope of course
  - Need a physics engine

- Neo-retro games
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Collisions and Geometry

- Collisions need **geometry**
  - Points are not enough
  - Find *where* objects meet

- Often use **convex** shapes
  - Lines always remain inside
  - If not convex, is **concave**

- What if is not convex?
  - Break into components
  - **Triangles** always convex!
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Recall: Triangles in Computer Graphics

- Everything made of **triangles**
  - Mathematically “nice”
  - Hardware support (GPUs)

- Specify with **three vertices**
  - Coordinates of corners

- Composite for complex shapes
  - Array of vertex objects
  - Each 3 vertices = triangle
Recall: Triangles in Computer Graphics

- Everything made of **triangles**
  - Guaranteed to be convex
  - Hardware support (GPUs)

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Collision Types

- **Inelastic Collisions**
  - No energy preserved
  - Stop in place ($v = 0$)
  - “Back-out” so no overlap
  - Very easy to implement

- **Elastic Collisions**
  - 100% energy preserved
  - Think billiard balls
  - Classic physics problem
Something In-Between?

- **Partially Elastic**
  - x% energy preserved
  - Different each object
  - Like elastic, but harder

- **Issue**: object “material”
  - What is object made of?
  - **Example**: Rubber? Steel?

- Another parameter!
  - Technical prototype?
Collision Resolution: **Circles**

- Single point of contact!
  - Energy transferred at point
  - Not true in complex shapes

- **Use relative coordinates**
  - Point of contact is origin
  - **Perpendicular component:** Line through origin, center
  - **Parallel component:** Axis of collision “surface”

- Reverse object motion on the perpendicular comp
Collision Resolution: Circles

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  - Energy transferred at point
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- Use relative coordinates
  - Point of contact is origin
  - **Perpendicular component**: Line through origin, center
  - **Parallel component**: Axis of collision “surface”

- Exchange energy on the perpendicular comp
Issues with Collisions: Tunneling

- Games act like **flip-books**
  - Sequence of snapshots
  - Collisions mid-snapshot?
  - Could *miss* the collision
- Example of **false negative**
- This is a **serious** problem
  - Players going where shouldn’t
  - Players missing event trigger
  - Cannot ignore tunneling

We never actually see a snapshot of the ball hitting the ground!
Tunneling

Collisions
Tunneling: Observations

- Small objects tunnel more easily
Tunneling: Observations

- Small objects tunnel more easily
- Fast-moving objects tunnel more easily
More Complex Shapes

- Point of contact harder
  - Could just be a point
  - Or it could be an edge

- Model w/ rigid bodies
  - Break object into points
  - Connect with constraints
  - Force at point of contact
  - Transfers to other points

- Needs constraint solver
Summary

- Object representation depends on goals
  - For motion, represent object as a single point
  - For collision, objects must have geometry

- Dynamics is use of forces to move objects
  - Solve differential equations for position
  - Need constraint solvers to overcome error creep

- Collisions are broken up into two steps
  - Collision detection checks for intersections
  - Collision resolution is hard if not a circle