



Year 1 – Programming A – Moving a robot

Unit introduction

Learners will be introduced to early programming concepts. Learners will explore using individual commands, both with other learners and as part of a computer program. They will identify what each command for the floor robot does, and use that knowledge to start predicting the outcome of programs. The unit is paced to ensure time is spent on all aspects of programming, and builds knowledge in a structured manner. Learners are also introduced to the early stages of program design through the introduction of algorithms.

There are two Year 1 programming units:

- Programming A – Moving a robot
- Programming B – Programming animations

This is unit A, which should be delivered before unit B.

This unit includes references relating to Bee-Bot and Blue-Bot floor robots, however, other educational floor robots are available. Learners should be given access to a device with a limited range of functions that is designed for young learners. Before starting this unit, ensure you are familiar with your school's floor robots, including charging or battery requirements. You should also know how to switch the devices on and off, as well as key functions such as clearing the memory. It is advisable to use the robots on the floor if possible, as this can reduce damage caused by dropping.

Overview of sessions

Session	Brief overview	Learning objectives
1 Buttons	Learners will be introduced to floor robots. They will talk about what the buttons on a floor robot might do and then try the buttons out. They will spend time linking an outcome to a button press. Learners will consider the direction command buttons, as well as the 'clear memory' and 'run program' buttons.	<p>To explain what a given command will do</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can predict the outcome of a command on a device • I can match a command to an outcome • I can run a command on a device
2 Directions	Learners will think about the language used to give directions and how precise it needs to be. They will also work with a partner to give and follow instructions. These real-world activities should, at suitable points during this session, be related to the floor robot introduced in Session 1.	<p>To act out a given word</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can follow an instruction • I can recall words that can be acted out • I can give directions
3 Forwards and backwards	Learners will focus on programming the floor robot to move forwards and backwards. They will see that the robot moves forwards and backwards a fixed distance. This highlights the idea that robots follow a clear, fixed	To combine 'forwards' and 'backwards' commands to make a sequence

	<p>command in a precise and repeatable way. Learners will think about starting the robot from the same place each time. Using the same starting position with fixed commands will allow learners to predict what a program will do.</p> <p>Note: This session focuses specifically on forward and backward movement only. This is to ensure that learners are developing a depth of knowledge in the concepts surrounding programming, as well as developing their ability to make the robot move. The success criteria for this session highlight this and ensure that the learners' knowledge is built in a suitably paced way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can compare forward and backward movements • I can start a sequence from the same place • I can predict the outcome of a sequence involving 'forwards' and 'backwards' commands
4 Four directions	<p>Learners will use 'left turn' and 'right turn' commands along with 'forwards' and 'backwards' commands. Doing this will allow learners to develop slightly more complex programs. Learners will create their programs in this session through trial and error, before moving on to planning out their programs in Session 5. In Activity 3, learners will predict where given programs will move the robot to. Learners will make their predictions by looking at the commands and matching the program steps to movements.</p>	<p>To combine four direction commands to make sequences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can compare left and right turns • I can experiment with 'turn' and 'move' commands to move a robot • I can predict the outcome of a sequence involving up to four commands
5 Getting there	<p>Learners will decide what their program will do. They will then create their program and test it on the robot. Where needed, learners will also debug their program.</p>	<p>To plan a simple program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can explain what my program should do

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can choose the order of commands in a sequence • I can debug my program
6 Routes	Learners will be encouraged to plan routes around a mat before they start to write programs for those routes. The activities in this session also introduce the concept of there being more than one way to solve a problem. This concept is valid for a lot of programming activities: the same outcome can be achieved through a number of different approaches, and there is not necessarily a 'right' approach. The session also introduces the idea of program design, where learners need to plan what they want their program to achieve before they start programming.	<p>To find more than one solution to a problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I can identify several possible solutions • I can plan two programs • I can use two different programs to get to the same place

Progression

As this is a Year 1 unit, no prior knowledge is assumed.

This unit progresses learners' knowledge and understanding of giving and following instructions. It moves from giving instructions to each other to giving instructions to a robot by programming it.

Please see the learning graph for this unit for more information about progression.

Curriculum links

National curriculum links

- Understand what algorithms are, how they are implemented as programs on digital devices, and that programs execute by following precise and unambiguous instructions

- Create and debug simple programs
- Use logical reasoning to predict the behaviour of simple programs
- Recognise common uses of information technology beyond school

Assessment

Formative assessment opportunities are provided in each of the session plan documents, and the learning objectives and success criteria can be used to observe learners' progress for summative assessment.

Subject knowledge

This unit focuses on developing learners' understanding of computer programming. It highlights that algorithms are a set of clear, precise, and ordered instructions, and that a computer program is the implementation of an algorithm on a digital device. The unit also introduces reading 'code' to predict what a program will do. Learners will engage in aspects of program design, including outlining the project task and creating algorithms.

When programming, there are four levels that can help describe a project, known as 'levels of abstraction'. Research suggests that this structure can support learners in understanding how to create a program and how it works:

- Task — what is needed
- Design — what it should do
- Code — how it is done
- Running the code — what it does

Spending time at the 'task' and 'design' levels before engaging in writing code aids learners in assessing the achievability of their programs and reduces the cognitive load for learners during programming.

Learners will move between the different levels throughout the unit, and this is highlighted within each session plan.

Enhance your subject knowledge to teach this unit through the following training opportunities:

Online training courses

If you are a teacher in England, you should access our online courses via the teachcomputing.org website:

- [Get Started Teaching Computing in Primary Schools: Preparing to teach 5- to 11-year-olds](#)
- [Teaching Programming to 5- to 11-year-olds](#)

If you are not a teacher in England, you can access our online courses via the FutureLearn platform:

- [Get Started Teaching Computing in Primary Schools: Preparing to teach 5- to 11-year-olds](#)
- [Teaching Programming to 5- to 11-year-olds](#)

Face-to-face courses

- [National Centre for Computing Education face-to-face training courses](#) (filter the courses to select from face-to-face or live remote training)

Resources are updated regularly — the latest version is available at: ncce.io/tcc.

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