

Practical IoT Handbook

*Programming IoT by implementing hands-on
projects with Arduino, Python, and Raspberry Pi*

Rodrigo J Hernandez



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Dedicated to

My beloved daughter, Ana Paula

and

My love and supportive partner, Vivi

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Rodrigo J Hernandez is an electronic engineer passionate about IoT even before it existed. He has been working on tech for more than 20 years until now. For several years he has been focusing on the IoT ecosystem. He is currently giving consultations about IoT systems to clients around the world. He also produces content online about IoT and related subjects and the content is available on his blog, YouTube channel, and social networks - mainly LinkedIn. He also writes for companies that need good-quality content about their products and services. His main objective nowadays is to help others to understand and implement IoT solutions.

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My gratitude also goes to the team at BPB Publications for their support and comprehension of the long time it took me to finish the book.

Preface

This book has been written with a clear objective: to give the reader a good introduction to the IoT world.

In this book, you will learn many concepts about hardware, embedded programming, protocols, platforms, tools, and many more topics.

The book covers theoretical concepts that are later applied to practical examples.

The book will lead you from basic definitions to advanced topics that you can apply to your projects.

This book is divided into 11 chapters. Every chapter develops a specific topic, like microcontrollers, sensors and actuators, computer Raspberry Pi 4, protocols, data storage, data visualization, and home automation, among others.

Chapter 1: Meet the Boards – In this chapter, you will explore the hardware you will use through the book to implement the projects

Chapter 2: Installing the Software Environment – In this chapter, we will see how to install and configure the software needed to develop the projects.

Chapter 3: Microcontrollers, Sensors, and Actuators – This chapter covers the fundamentals of sensors and actuators. You will learn about the different types of sensors and actuators, and how you can use them.

Chapter 4: Interfacing with Raspberry Pi – In this chapter, you will learn to connect different types of sensors and actuators with the Raspberry Pi 4 computer. You will learn how to configure the computer to be able to use it. Also, you will install Node-RED on the Raspberry Pi and use it to interact with the peripherals.

Chapter 5: Connecting IoT Devices using MQTT – This chapter covers the fundamentals of the MQTT protocol. You will learn how to use it to communicate with your IoT devices and transfer data between them and the MQTT broker installed in the Raspberry Pi 4.

Chapter 6: CoAP for IoT Connectivity – In this chapter, you will learn about the CoAP protocol. You will use different methods to exchange data between devices and a CoAP server in the Raspberry Pi.

Chapter 7: Using HTTP and WebSockets in IoT – This chapter covers both HTTP and WebSockets for exchanging data between devices and the Raspberry Pi. It explains the fundamentals of both protocols and provides many examples. It also emphasizes the differences between both protocols.

Chapter 8: Storing Internet of Things Data – In this chapter, you will learn how to store IoT data using time-series databases. In particular, this chapter focuses on the InfluxDB database, which is widely used in IoT systems. This chapter covers the fundamentals and shows you how to use InfluxDB in a real project.

Chapter 9: Visualizing Internet of Things Data – In this chapter, you will learn how to install, configure, and use Grafana to visualize IoT data. You will also see how to create alarms and notifications in Grafana.

Chapter 10: Building a Weather Station – This chapter covers the implementation of a weather station using the tools that you learned to use in the previous chapters.

Chapter 11: Home Automation – In this chapter, you will learn how to implement home automation using both Home Assistant and openHAB, which are open-source systems. You will also learn to use the Tasmota and ESPHome firmware for programming the devices that will connect with the home automation platforms.

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Table of Contents

1. Meet the Boards.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Structure.....	1
Objectives.....	2
Espressif devices	2
<i>System on chip</i>	2
<i>Using SoCs</i>	3
<i>Modules</i>	3
<i>When to use modules</i>	4
<i>Development boards</i>	4
<i>When to use development boards</i>	5
<i>Programming environments</i>	5
<i>ESP-IDF</i>	5
<i>Using the ESP-IDF</i>	6
Raspberry Pi Pico.....	6
<i>Pin functionalities</i>	8
<i>Adding communications capabilities</i>	10
<i>Programming the Raspberry Pi Pico</i>	11
Raspberry Pi Computer	12
<i>Raspberry Pi 4 uses and features</i>	12
<i>Installing the Raspberry Pi OS</i>	14
<i>Raspberry Pi Imager</i>	14
<i>Discovering the IP address of the Raspberry Pi</i>	18
<i>Detecting the Raspberry Pi</i>	19
<i>SSH clients</i>	19
Conclusion.....	21
2. Installing the Software Environment	23
Introduction.....	23
Structure.....	23
Objectives.....	24
Installing Arduino	24

Visual Studio Code.....	25
<i>Installing VS Code.....</i>	26
<i>Download VS Code</i>	27
<i>Installing on Windows</i>	27
<i>Installing on Mac</i>	28
<i>Installing on Linux</i>	28
<i>VS Code extensions</i>	28
<i>Installing Espressif extension</i>	30
<i>Installing PlatformIO extension</i>	31
Python for embedded development.....	33
<i>Python in Raspberry Pi</i>	33
<i>Using virtual environments in Python.....</i>	34
<i>Running a web app with Python</i>	35
<i>Building an app to connect to ChatGPT.....</i>	38
<i>Reading and writing log files with Python</i>	43
<i>Sending an e-mail using Python.....</i>	44
<i>CircuitPython</i>	46
<i>Installing CircuitPython extension in VS Code</i>	46
<i>MicroPython.....</i>	47
<i>PyMakr.....</i>	47
Conclusion.....	48
3. Microcontrollers, Sensors, and Actuators	49
Introduction.....	49
Structure.....	49
Objectives.....	50
Sensors	50
<i>Types of sensors by measurement</i>	50
<i>Temperature sensors</i>	50
<i>Humidity sensors</i>	51
<i>Pressure sensors</i>	51
<i>Light sensors.....</i>	52
<i>Motion sensors</i>	52
<i>Types of sensors by interface.....</i>	53
<i>Analog sensors</i>	53
<i>Digital sensors.....</i>	53

Inter-Integrated Circuit sensors.....	54
Serial Peripheral Interface sensors	54
1-Wire sensors	54
Characteristics of sensors.....	54
Actuators.....	55
Electromagnetic relays.....	55
Solid State Relays	56
Motor drivers.....	56
Basic projects with microcontrollers	56
Using MicroPython in Raspberry Pi Pico.....	56
Installing the MicroPython firmware	56
Accessing the microcontroller from VS Code.....	57
Creating a new project	58
Blinking a LED	59
Using ON/OFF sensors	61
Voltage levels	61
Pull-up and pull-down configurations	62
Polling versus interrupt.....	63
Sensing a button with the polling technique.....	64
Bouncing effect.....	64
Sensing a button with interruptions.....	66
Reading an analog sensor.....	67
Reading a 1-Wire temperature sensor	69
Using MicroPython with other boards	71
Using Arduino with Raspberry Pi Pico	72
Reading an analog sensor.....	73
Using Arduino with ESP8266 and ESP32	74
Controlling a relay	76
Controlling a motor driver	79
Conclusions	82
4. Interfacing with Raspberry Pi.....	83
Introduction.....	83
Structure.....	83
Objectives.....	84
Raspberry Pi GPIO	84

<i>Numbering GPIO</i>	84
Using the filesystem to access the GPIOs	85
<i>Kernel space and user space</i>	85
<i>Using Sysfs</i>	86
<i>Sysfs structure</i>	86
<i>Steps to perform I/O using Sysfs</i>	86
<i>Exporting GPIO control to userspace</i>	86
<i>Controlling GPIO with Sysfs</i>	87
<i>Managing GPIO with libgpiod</i>	87
<i>Installation of libgpiod tools</i>	88
<i>Using the gpiod binaries from the command line</i>	90
<i>Controlling a pin</i>	92
<i>Reading a pin</i>	95
Controlling GPIO with Python	96
<i>Using RPi.GPIO</i>	97
<i>Install a system-wide package with apt</i>	97
<i>Install a system-wide package with pip</i>	98
<i>Install RPi.GPIO within a Python environment</i>	98
<i>Reading pins with RPi.GPIO</i>	99
<i>Polling</i>	99
<i>Interruptions</i>	102
Using Node-RED	105
<i>Installing Node-RED</i>	105
<i>Running Node-RED</i>	107
<i>Running Node-RED as a service</i>	107
<i>Building flows in Node-RED</i>	107
<i>Reading a pin using Node-RED</i>	108
<i>Controlling a pin using Node-RED</i>	110
<i>Exporting and importing flows in Node-RED</i>	111
Conclusions	113
5. Connecting IoT Devices using MQTT	115
Introduction	115
Structure	115
Objectives	116
MQTT features	116

MQTT topics	117
Topic structure.....	117
Wildcards.....	117
Best practices	118
MQTT QoS.....	118
QoS 0	118
QoS 1.....	119
QoS 2.....	119
MQTT versions	119
MQTT payload.....	120
Wildcard filters.....	120
Retained messages	120
Session persistence	120
Last Will and Testament.....	120
Security features.....	121
Scalability	121
Message expiry.....	121
Version 5.0.....	121
Mosquitto.....	122
Installing Mosquitto.....	123
Using the Mosquitto client.....	124
Using the MQTTX desktop client	124
Connecting to the broker using Python.....	125
Subscribing to a topic.....	128
Publishing to a topic.....	129
Connecting NodeMCU using Arduino IDE.....	129
Publishing on a topic.....	130
Subscribing to a topic.....	134
Adding encryption to MQTT.....	137
TLS/SSL and its usage	137
Requirement	137
Using Node-RED with MQTT	139
Using HiveMQ MQTT broker	144
Conclusion.....	146

6. CoAP for IoT Connectivity	147
Introduction.....	147
Structure.....	147
Objectives.....	148
CoAP fundamentals.....	148
<i>CoAP architecture</i>	149
<i>CoAP messages</i>	150
<i>Message structure</i>	150
<i>CoAP message header</i>	150
<i>Token</i>	151
<i>Message types</i>	151
<i>Message options</i>	151
<i>Payload</i>	152
<i>CoAP security</i>	152
Using CoAP in Raspberry Pi.....	153
<i>Installing libcoap</i>	153
<i>Running libcoap</i>	155
<i>Creating dynamic resources</i>	156
<i>Using aiocoap</i>	157
<i>Installing aiocoap</i>	157
<i>Documentation of aiocoap module</i>	158
<i>Implementing CoAP clients with aiocoap</i>	158
<i>CoAP client to set a resource value</i>	158
<i>CoAP client to get a resource value</i>	159
Implementing CoAP with Node-RED.....	160
<i>Installing CoAP in Node-RED</i>	160
<i>Implementing CoAP in Node-RED</i>	162
<i>Creating a CoAP server in Node-RED</i>	162
<i>Adding a GET resource</i>	165
Using CoAP with Arduino.....	167
<i>Installing the library</i>	167
<i>Programming the Raspberry Pi Pico W</i>	168
<i>Testing the program</i>	171
Conclusion.....	172

7. Using HTTP and WebSockets in IoT	173
Introduction.....	173
Structure.....	173
Objectives.....	174
Hyper text transfer protocol fundamentals.....	174
<i>Hyper text transfer protocol</i>	<i>174</i>
<i>Architecture and communication model.....</i>	<i>175</i>
<i>Methods and headers</i>	<i>176</i>
<i>Headers.....</i>	<i>177</i>
<i>Hyper Text Transfer Protocol status codes</i>	<i>178</i>
<i>Hyper Text Transfer Protocol resources.....</i>	<i>180</i>
<i>Uniform Resource Identifier.....</i>	<i>180</i>
<i>Structure of a URL.....</i>	<i>180</i>
Implementing HTTP in Node-RED	182
<i>Accepting HTTP requests in Node-RED</i>	<i>182</i>
<i>Getting data from the internet.....</i>	<i>184</i>
Using HTTP with microcontrollers.....	186
<i>Sending data through HTTP in ESP8266.....</i>	<i>186</i>
<i>Volatile variables</i>	<i>190</i>
<i>ICACHE_RAM_ATTR parameter</i>	<i>190</i>
<i>Implementing and testing</i>	<i>191</i>
WebSockets	191
Implementing WebSockets in Node-RED	192
Using WebSockets in microcontrollers	196
<i>Arduino code.....</i>	<i>197</i>
Conclusions	201
8. Storing Internet of Things Data.....	203
Introduction.....	203
Structure.....	203
Objectives.....	204
InfluxDB fundamentals	204
<i>InfluxDB hierarchy.....</i>	<i>204</i>
<i>Data structure.....</i>	<i>204</i>
<i>Timestamps.....</i>	<i>205</i>
<i>Measurements</i>	<i>205</i>

Fields	205
Tags.....	206
Series in InfluxDB.....	206
Data standardization.....	207
Building a data model	208
Installing InfluxDB in a Raspberry Pi.....	209
Installation steps.....	209
Accessing the web interface	210
Storing and reading data in the bucket.....	213
Using Python to store data in InfluxDB	213
Using Node-RED to write and read data points	219
Writing data points.....	219
Reading data points.....	221
Using InfluxDB Cloud service.....	224
Conclusions	226
9. Visualizing Internet of Things Data	227
Introduction.....	227
Structure.....	227
Objectives.....	228
Installing Grafana in Raspberry Pi.....	228
Data sources	229
Adding InfluxDB as a data source	230
Populating the bucket with system usage data.....	233
Exploring the data in the bucket	236
Building a dashboard in Grafana	238
Adding visualization panels	241
Visualization options.....	241
Time series visualization	242
Gauge panels	243
Stat panel.....	244
Table panel.....	245
Plugins in Grafana.....	245
Types of plugins	246
Signed and unsigned plugins	246
Non-signed plugins.....	247

Installing a plugin in Grafana.....	247
<i>Using the Grafana command line interface</i>	247
<i>Installing plugins manually</i>	248
Alerts in Grafana	248
<i>Working on alerts in Grafana</i>	248
<i>Building alerts in Grafana</i>	249
Notifications in Grafana	254
<i>Contact points</i>	254
<i>Using the email contact point in Grafana</i>	255
<i>Notification policies</i>	256
Users and permissions in Grafana	258
Using Grafana Cloud Service	259
<i>Pricing plans</i>	260
Conclusions	260
10. Building a Weather Station	261
Introduction.....	261
Structure.....	262
Objectives.....	262
Preparation of the Raspberry Pi	262
<i>Enabling I2C</i>	262
<i>Installing command line tools</i>	264
Using BME680 with Raspberry Pi 4.....	265
<i>Connecting and testing BME680</i>	266
<i>Obtaining data from BME680 using Node-RED</i>	267
<i>Building a dashboard in Node-RED</i>	268
<i>Installing Node-RED dashboard 2.0</i>	268
<i>Programming the visualization</i>	270
Storing BME680 values.....	273
<i>Writing sensor values to a CSV file</i>	273
<i>Reading data from the file</i>	276
<i>Storing the values in InfluxDB</i>	277
Visualizing the data in Grafana	279
Connecting to cloud weather services.....	282
<i>Building a dashboard for Open Weather</i>	284
Conclusion.....	289

11. Home Automation	291
Introduction.....	291
Structure.....	291
Objectives.....	292
Using Home Assistant	292
Installing Home Assistant in Raspberry Pi.....	293
Initial setup.....	297
Customizing Home Assistant.....	300
<i>Installing SSH add-on</i>	<i>300</i>
<i>Installing the file editor.....</i>	<i>303</i>
<i>Installing Home Assistant Community Store.....</i>	<i>305</i>
<i>Installing and using Mosquitto in Home Assistant.....</i>	<i>308</i>
Creating a Tasmota device	311
<i>Building a thermostat</i>	<i>312</i>
<i>Programming the device</i>	<i>312</i>
<i>Connecting to the MQTT broker</i>	<i>313</i>
<i>Configuring the relay and the sensor.....</i>	<i>314</i>
<i>Finishing the configuration</i>	<i>315</i>
<i>Adding the Tasmota device to Home Assistant</i>	<i>316</i>
<i>Creating an automation</i>	<i>317</i>
<i>Add the new device to the dashboard.....</i>	<i>319</i>
Using openHAB.....	321
Installing openHAB.....	322
Initializing openHAB.....	324
Creating an ESPHome device.....	326
<i>Connecting the hardware.....</i>	<i>326</i>
<i>Programming the firmware</i>	<i>327</i>
Integrating the ESPHome device in openHAB	328
Creating an automation in openHAB.....	331
Creating a dashboard in openHAB.....	335
Conclusions	338
Index.....	339-346

CHAPTER 1

Meet the Boards

Introduction

This chapter will provide you with an overview of the boards used throughout the book. We will explore their features, capabilities, and uses. Boards are divided into three groups: Espressif devices (ESP8266 and ESP32), ARM microcontroller (Raspberry Pi Pico), and Single Board Computer (Raspberry Pi 4). As you are aware, there exists a wide array of devices. Nevertheless, incorporating a comprehensive coverage of them would introduce unwarranted intricacy into this book.

On the other hand, this book proposes popularly used boards. Exploring these boards will establish a concrete base for learning programs on other platforms.

Structure

In this chapter, we will discuss the following topics:

- Espressif devices
- Raspberry Pi Pico
- Raspberry Pi Computer

Objectives

The objective of this chapter is to obtain a first approach to the hardware that we will use during the rest of the book.

Here you will learn the features and characteristics of microcontrollers and computers that we will use to build IoT systems.

Espressif devices

Espressif is a company that develops 32-bit microcontrollers with communications capabilities. These microcontrollers include either WiFi and **Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE)** 102 connectivity or both. The products are divided into three categories: SoC, modules, and development boards. Let us explore each of them.

System on chip

SoC is the acronym for system on chip. This type of device is a chip that includes all the necessary components from a functional point of view, and SoC may include the following:

- A 32-bit microcontroller, RAM, and ROM
- Peripheral interfaces (GPIO) digital inputs and outputs, ADC and DAC, (serial communication) I2C, I2S, SPI, UART, (memory access) DMA - GDMA, etc.
- Cryptographic hardware
- Real-time clock
- Clocks and timers
- WiFi and BLE controllers
- Radio frequency circuit

On the other hand, an SoC lacks:

- Programming interface, like USB
- Voltage regulators
- Antennas
- Any external component that is necessary to interface or feed the SoC

You can see an example of a SoC in *Figure 1.1*:

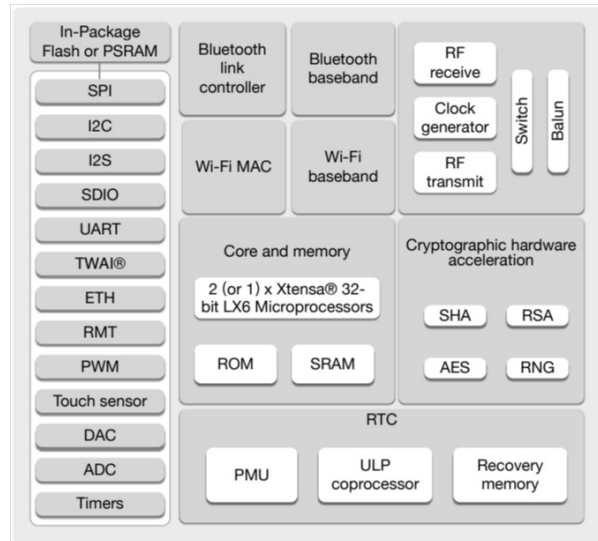


Figure 1.1: SoC example¹

Using SoCs

You may want to use a SoC for sending your product to mass production, as it is the cheapest and most efficient option to include a microcontroller in a new device. As you can see in *Figure 1.1*, a SoC has all the elements needed to obtain a fully working microcontroller with communication capabilities. However, you must design and build your **Printed Circuit Board (PCB)** to host the SoC accurately. This process may require several iterations. Moreover, a new PCB may require expensive certifications to be commercialized. On the other hand, you can add an SoC easily on any PCB design, given that it is a single chip.

Finally, if you are in the **proof of concept (PoC)** stage, you should not use an SoC as it adds unnecessary complexities.

Modules

The modules provide a higher level of integration with respect to SoCs.

The modules provide the following features:

- They include a SoC.
- They are fully certified with integrated antenna or connectors.

¹ Source: www.espressif.com

When to use modules

Modules are a good option if you want to produce a new device without the hassle of obtaining wireless certifications. You can add the module to your board by soldering it.

While modules come at a higher cost compared to SoCs, they offer the advantage of a reduced time-to-market.

On the other hand, modules do not provide voltage regulators or programming interfaces, so you are responsible for implementing all the necessary circuits.

You can see an example of a module in *Figure 1.2*:



Figure 1.2: ESP32-based module

Development boards

The development boards provide all the necessary elements to start testing a PoC or prototype immediately.

These boards typically offer some of these features:

- One or more microcontrollers or SOC's.
- They include all the circuits to bring you a programming interface. You can download your firmware using some kind of serial interface, typically in a USB format.
- Voltage regulators, and even battery chargers and energy harvesting interfaces (for example, to connect a solar panel).
- LEDs, buttons, displays, breadboards, connectors, SD card slots, etc.

Refer to *Figure 1.3* for an example of a development board:

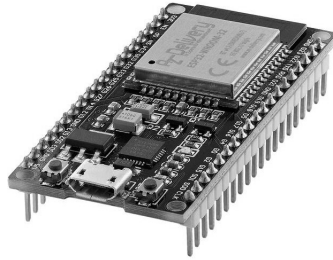


Figure 1.3: ESP32 development board

When to use development boards

A development board is the best option if you need to build a PoC fast and easily.

These boards are obviously more expensive than modules, but you will not use them in mass production. However, if the project involves fewer units, perhaps you can consider using them as a final solution.

We will use development boards to show the concepts described in this book with practical examples. Regarding Espressif, we will use ESP8266 and ESP32 devices.

Note: You can choose any development board to perform the examples given in this book. Just take into consideration the characteristics of your board, like GPIO pins.

Programming environments

You can program Espressif devices using several programming environments. These include ESP-IDF, Arduino, and PlatformIO.

Regarding programming languages, you can use C, C++, Arduino, MicroPython, CircuitPython, and others.

ESP-IDF

Espressif owns a programming ecosystem, called **Espressif's IoT Development Framework (ESP-IDF)**. With it, you can program ESP32, ESP32-S, ESP32-C, and ESP32-H SoCs.

The **Software Development Kit (SDK)** allows you to develop fully functional IoT applications using C or C++.

The main features of ESP-IDF are the following:

- **Open source:** It is delivered under the Apache 2.0 license, and you can obtain it freely on GitHub.