

# Human-Inspired Robotic Grasp Control with Tactile Sensing



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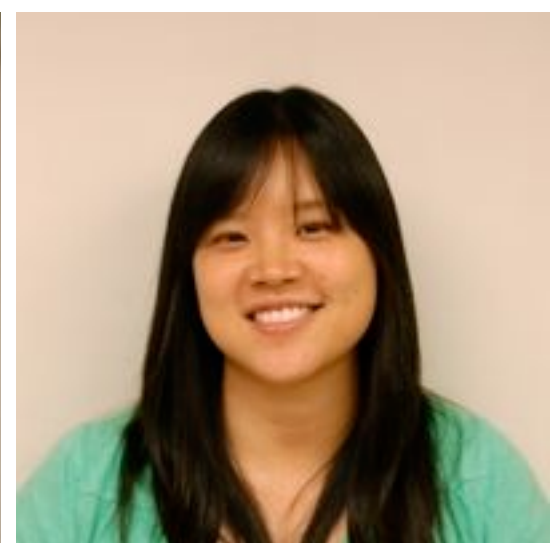
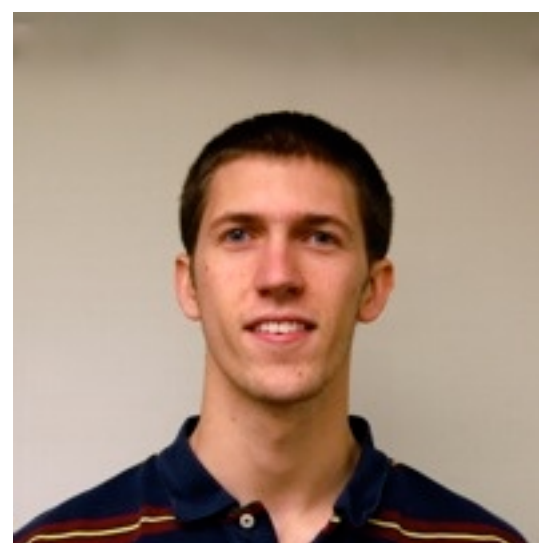
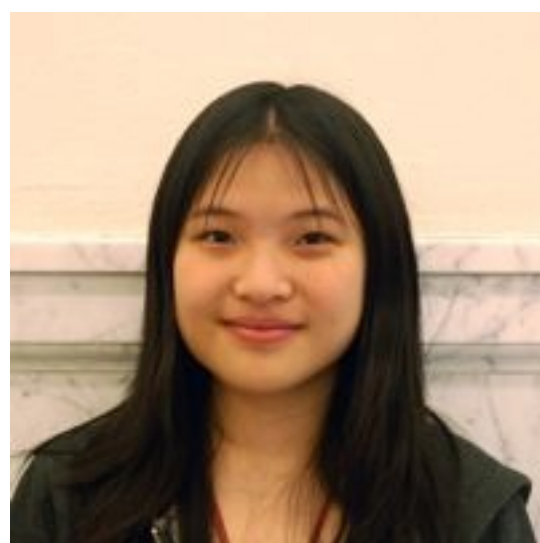
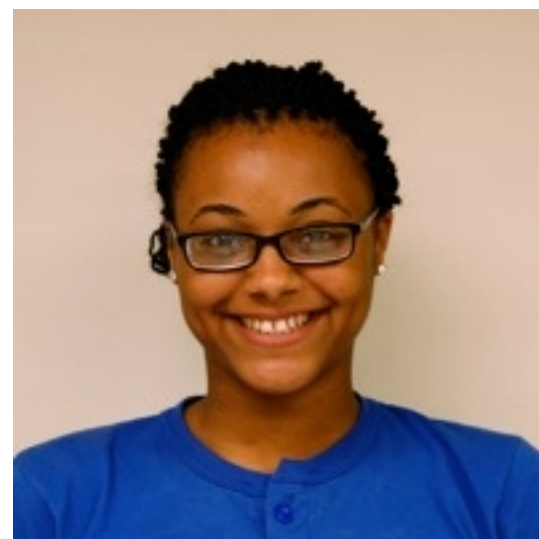
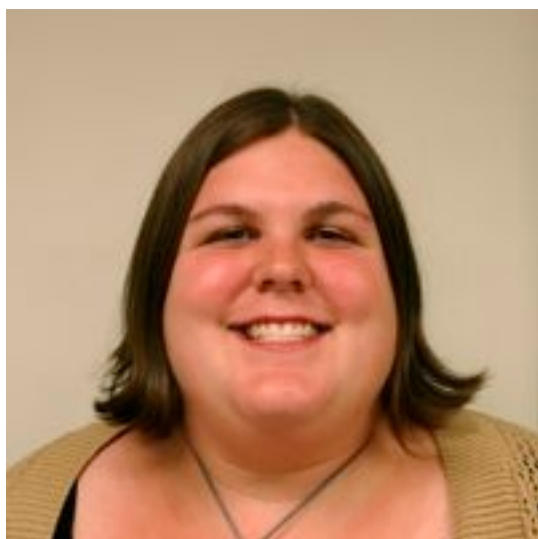


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# Haptics

the scientific study of touch-based interaction  
between an agent and its environment









# Remote

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***Teleoperation:*** extends the reach of the human hand to remote, hazardous, unreachable environments



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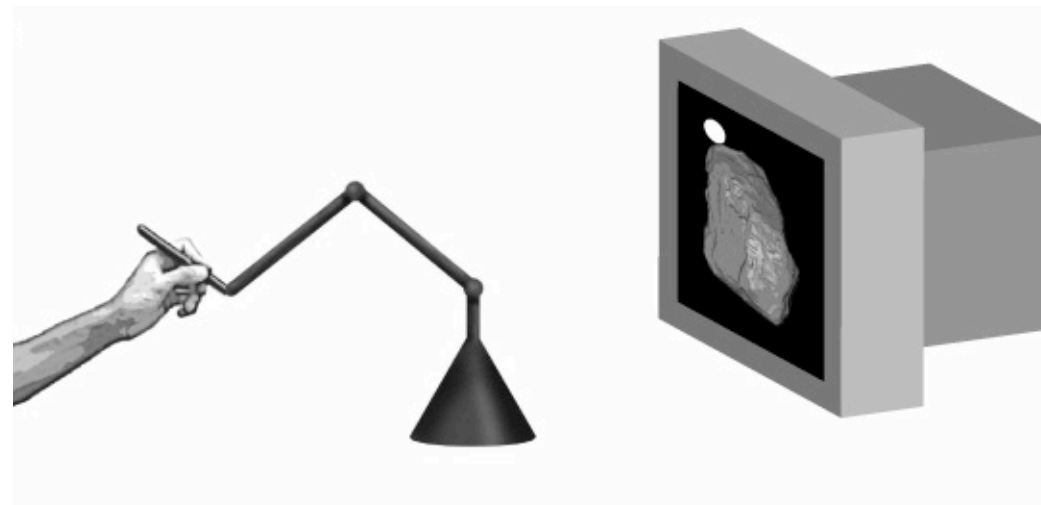


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## Virtual



**Simulation:** enables humans to touch geometric and dynamic computer-based data and models

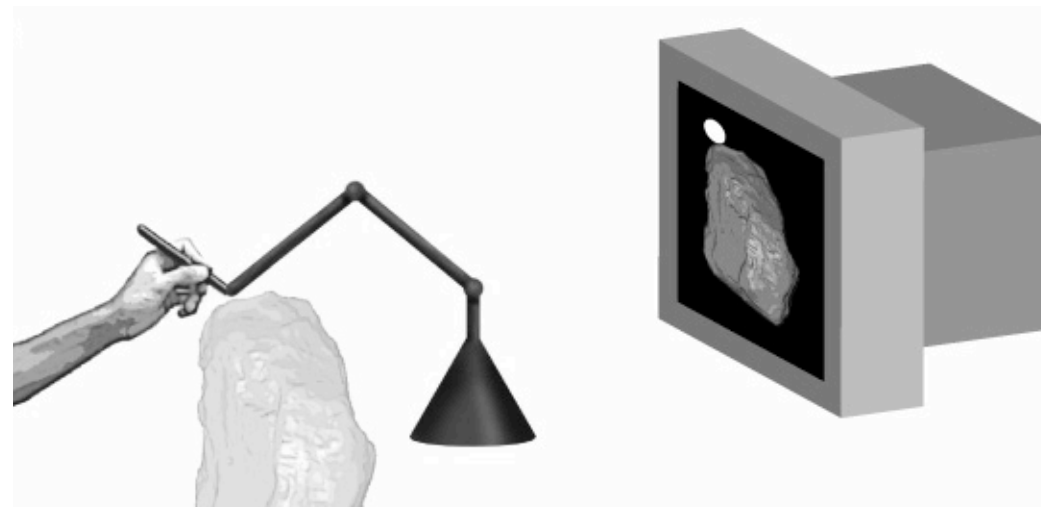


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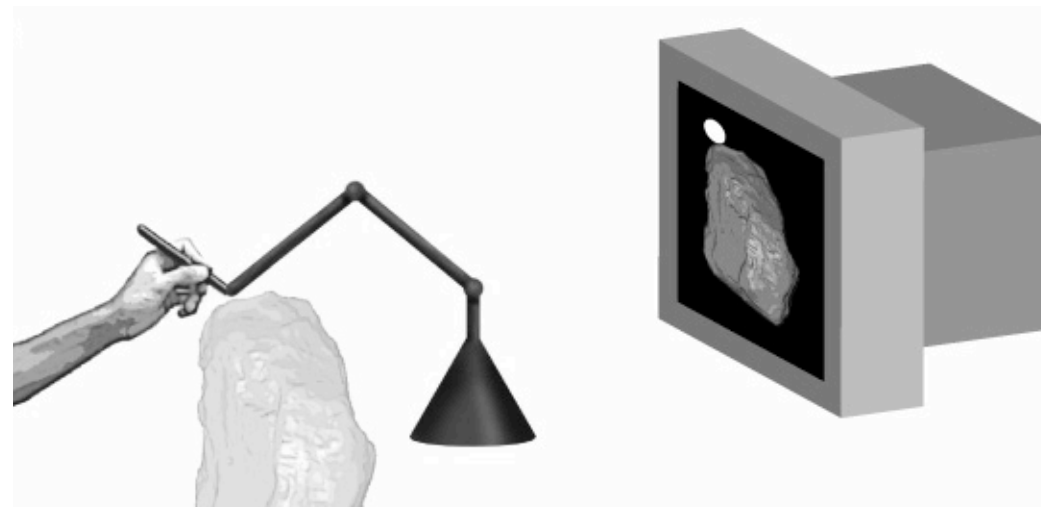


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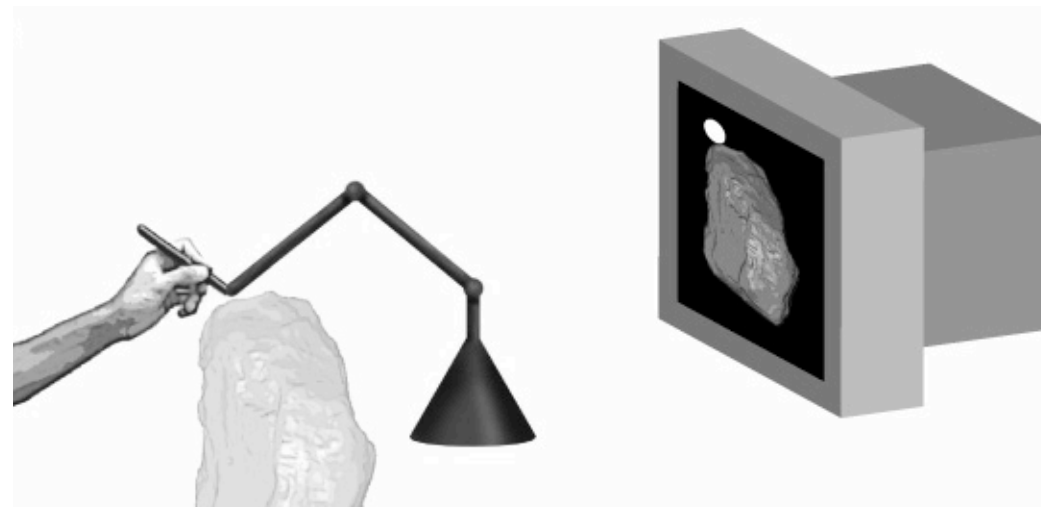


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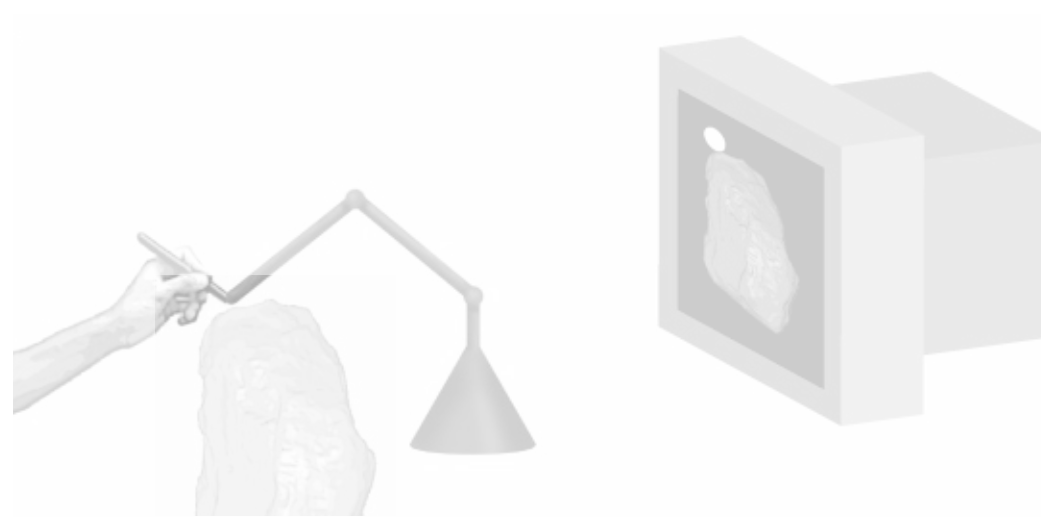


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Ph.D. Student



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Ph.D. Student







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Willow Garage Researcher



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Willow Garage Researcher



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Willow Garage Researcher





# Human-Inspired Robotic Grasp Control with Tactile Sensing

Joseph M. Romano, *Student Member, IEEE*, Kaijen Hsiao, *Member, IEEE*, Günter Niemeyer, *Member, IEEE*, Sachin Chitta, *Member, IEEE*, and Katherine J. Kuchenbecker, *Member, IEEE*

**Abstract**—We present a novel robotic grasp controller that allows a sensorized parallel jaw gripper to gently pick up and set down unknown objects once a grasp location has been selected. Our approach is inspired by the control scheme that humans employ for such actions, which is known to centrally depend on tactile sensation rather than vision or proprioception. Our controller processes measurements from the gripper's fingertip pressure arrays and hand-mounted accelerometer in real time to generate robotic tactile signals that are designed to mimic human SA-I, FA-I, and FA-II channels. These signals are combined into tactile event cues that drive the transitions between six discrete states in the grasp controller: Close, Load, Lift and Hold, Replace, Unload, and Open. The controller selects an appropriate initial grasping force, detects when an object is slipping from the grasp, increases the grasp force as needed, and judges when to release an object to set it down. We demonstrate the promise of our approach through implementation on the PR2 robotic platform, including grasp testing on a large number of real-world objects.

**Index Terms**—robot grasping, tactile sensing

## I. INTRODUCTION

AS robots move into human environments, they will need to know how to grasp and manipulate a very wide variety of objects [1]. For example, some items may be soft and light, such as a stuffed animal or an empty cardboard box, while others may be hard and dense, such as a glass bottle or an apple. After deciding **where** such objects should be grasped (finger placement), the robot must also have a concept of **how** to execute the grasp (finger forces and reactions to changes in grasp state). A robot that operates in the real world must be able to quickly grip a wide variety of objects firmly, without dropping them, and delicately, without crushing them (Fig. 1).

Non-contact sensors such as cameras and laser scanners are essential for robots to recognize objects and plan where to grasp them, e.g., [2], [3]. Recognition and planning may also instruct the grasping action, for example providing an object's expected stiffness, weight, frictional properties, or simply the required grasp forces. But to safely handle unknown objects as well as to remain robust to inevitable uncertainties, any such a priori information must be complemented by real-time tactile sensing and observations. Indeed tactile sensors are superior to other modalities at perceiving interactive events, such as the slip of an object held in the fingers, a glancing

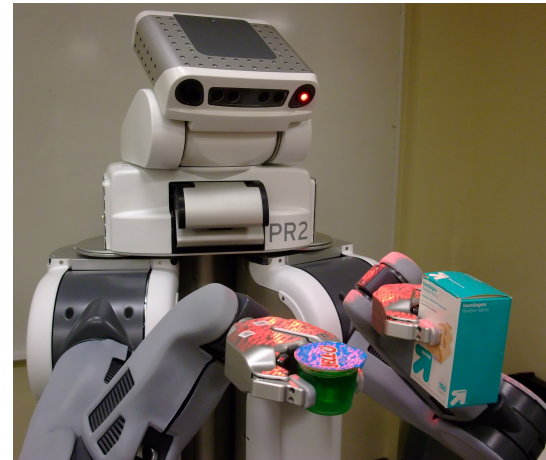


Fig. 1. The Willow Garage PR2 robot using our grasp controller to carefully handle two sensitive everyday objects.

collision between the object and an unseen obstacle, or the deliberate contact when placing the object. Understanding contact using tactile information and reacting in real time will be critical skills for robots to successfully interact with real-world objects, just as they are for humans.

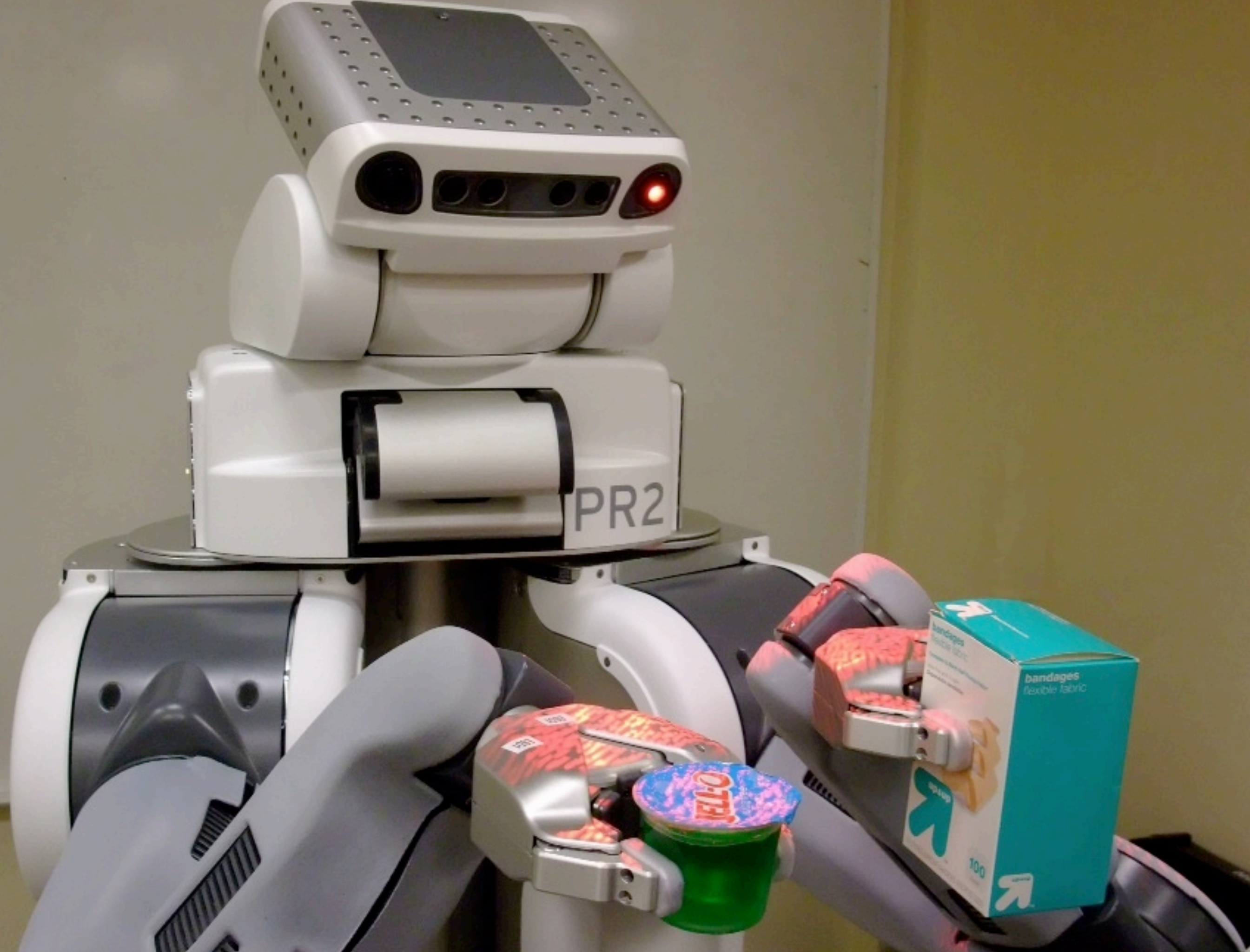
### A. Human Grasping

Neuroscientists have thoroughly studied the human talent for grasping and manipulating objects. As recently reviewed by Johansson and Flanagan [4], human manipulation makes great use of tactile signals from several different types of mechanoreceptors in the glabrous (non-hairy) skin of the hand, with vision and proprioception providing information that is less essential. Table I provides a list of the four types of mechanoreceptors in human glabrous skin. Johansson and Flanagan divide the seemingly effortless action of picking up an object and setting it back down into seven distinct states: reach, load, lift, hold, replace, unload, and release. In the first phase, humans close their grasp to establish finger contact with the object. Specifically, the transition from reach to load is known to be detected through the FA-I (Meissner) and FA-II (Pacinian) afferents, which are stimulated by the initial fingertip contact. FA signifies that these mechanoreceptors are fast-adapting; they respond primarily to changes in mechanical stimuli, with FA-I and FA-II having small and large receptive

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How can we  
increase the PR2's  
tactile intelligence?















Parallel jaw gripper





Parallel jaw gripper

High mechanical  
impedance





Parallel jaw gripper

High mechanical  
impedance

Naive control  
(100% motor effort)







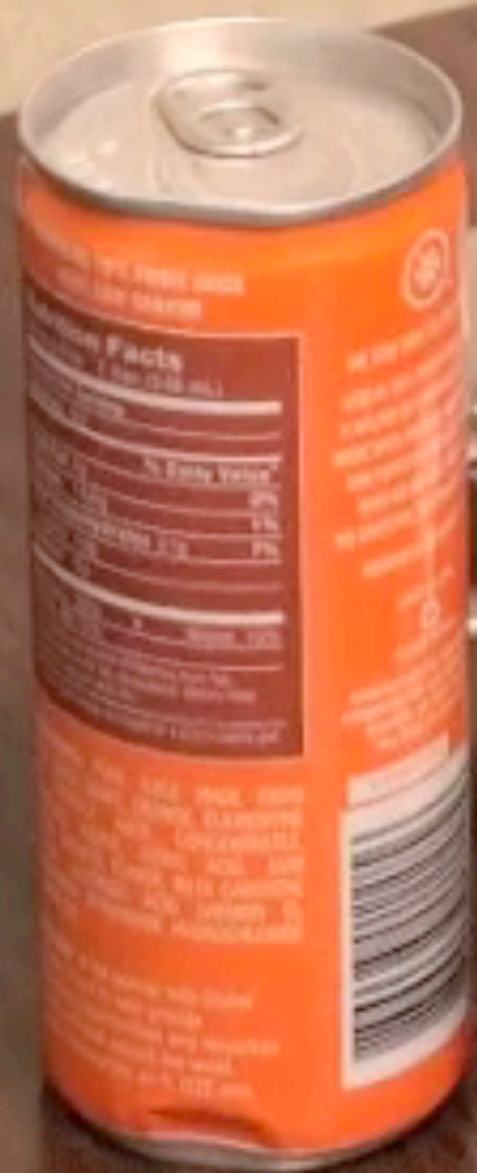












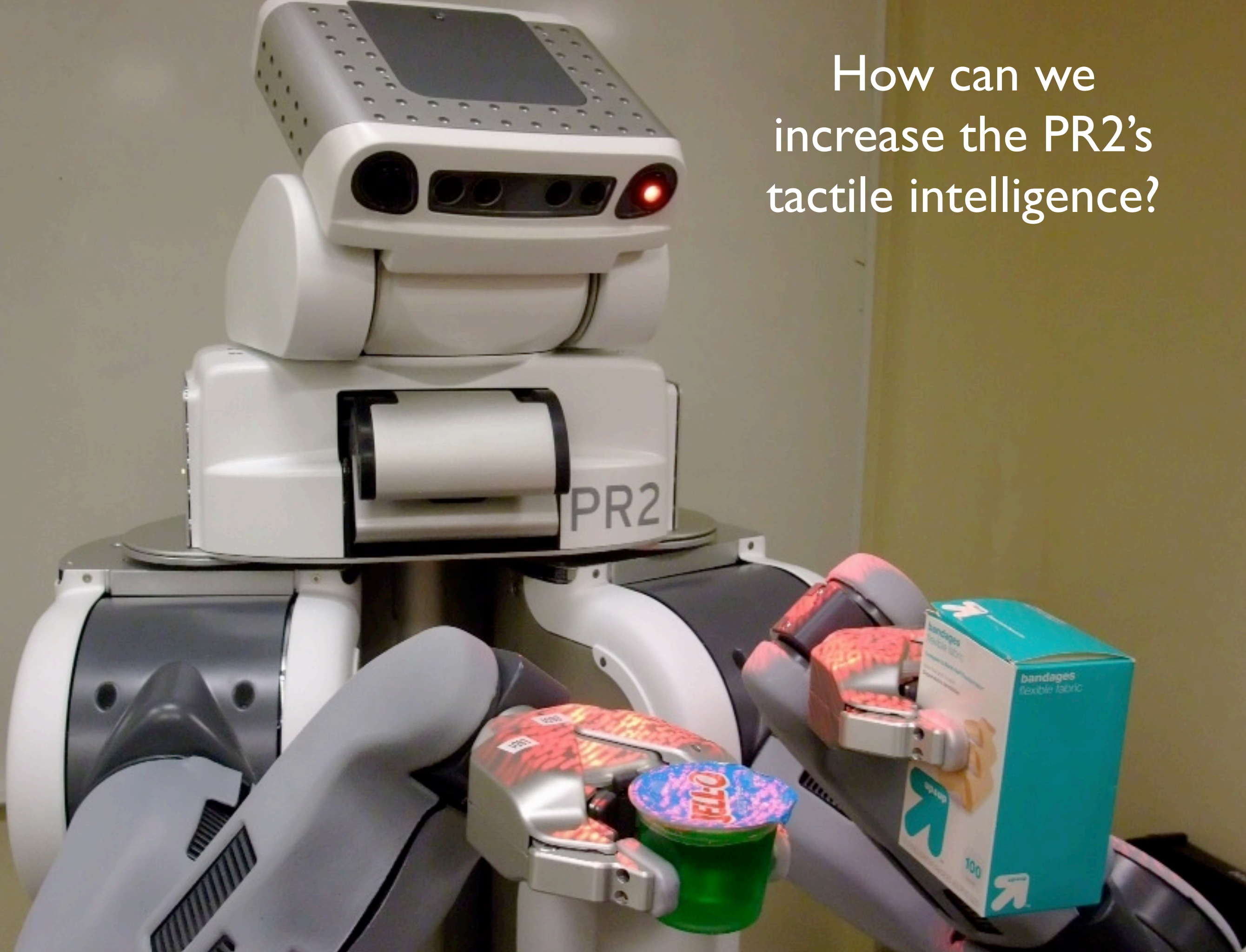








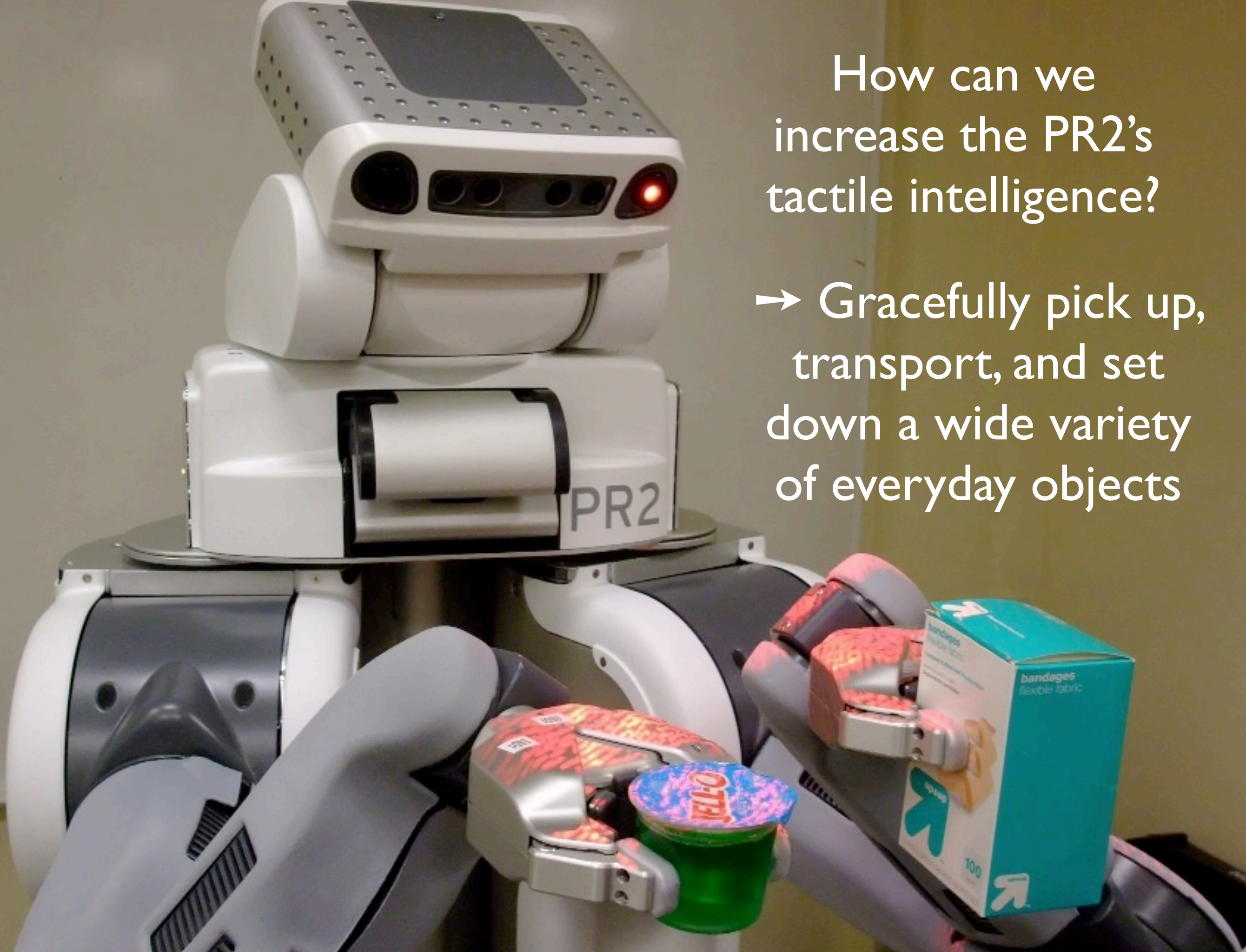
How can we  
increase the PR2's  
tactile intelligence?





How can we  
increase the PR2's  
tactile intelligence?

→ Gracefully pick up,  
transport, and set  
down a wide variety  
of everyday objects





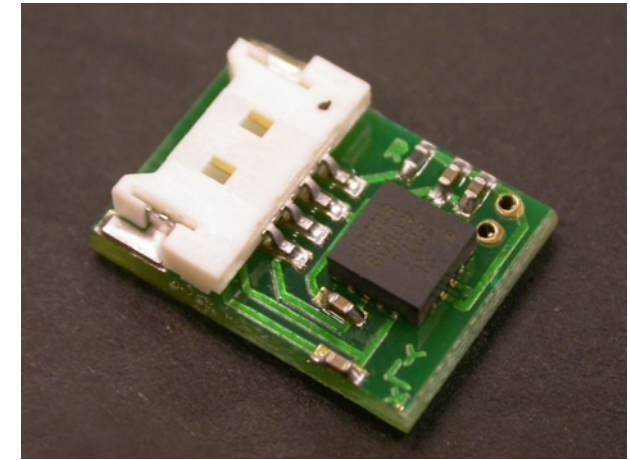


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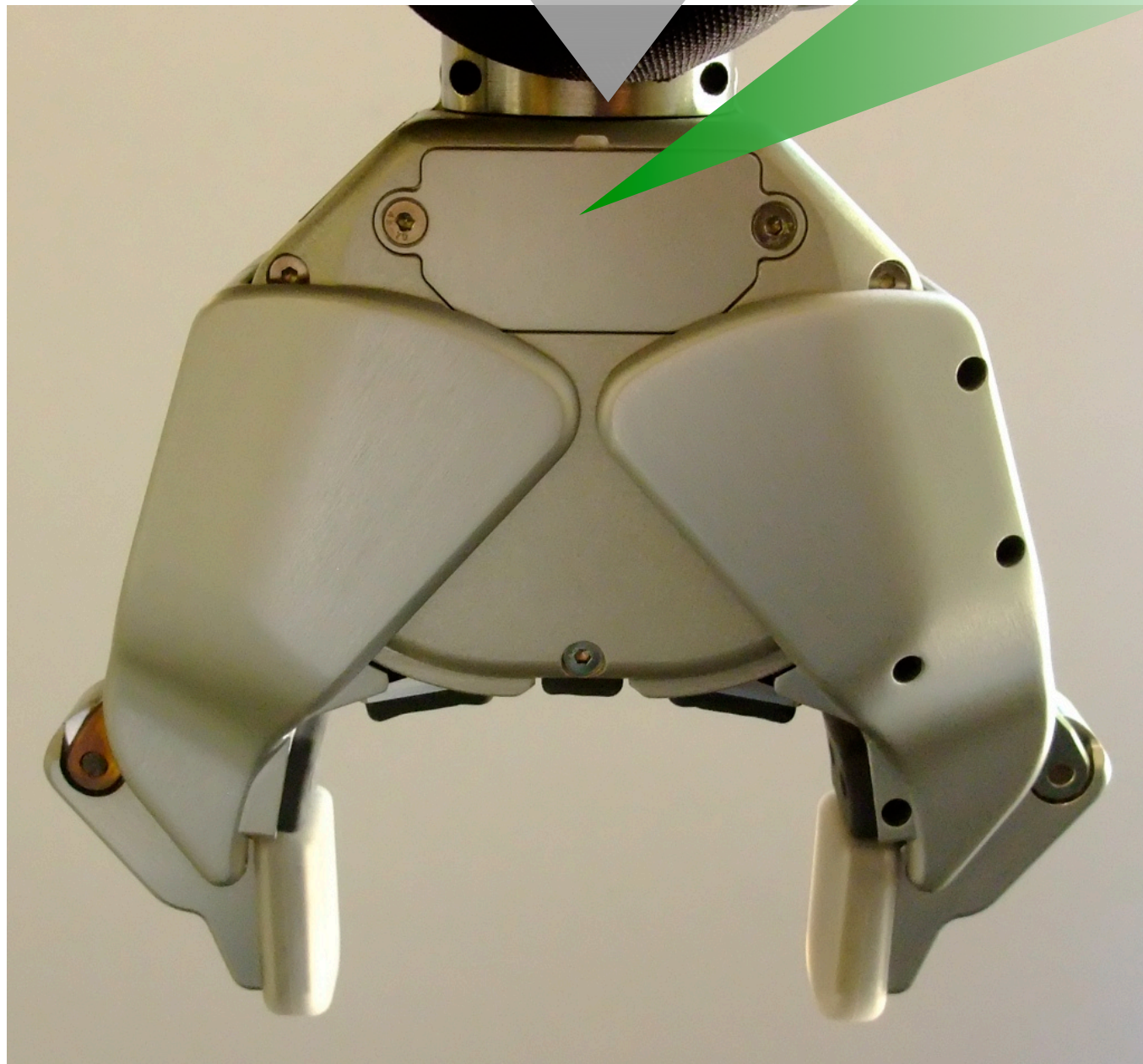




Encoder &  
Motor Current Sensor  
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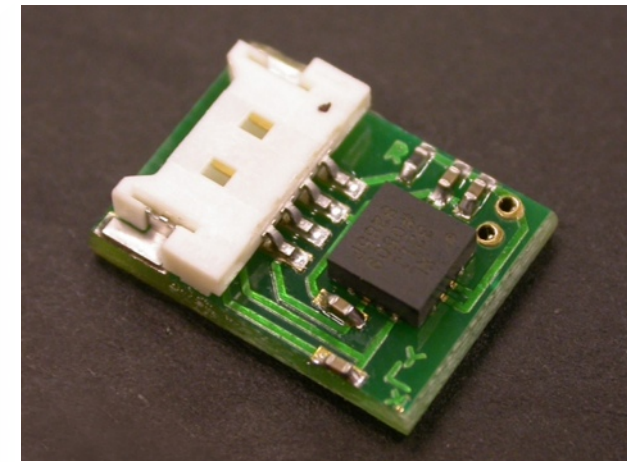


Three-axis accelerometer  
**3000 Hz**

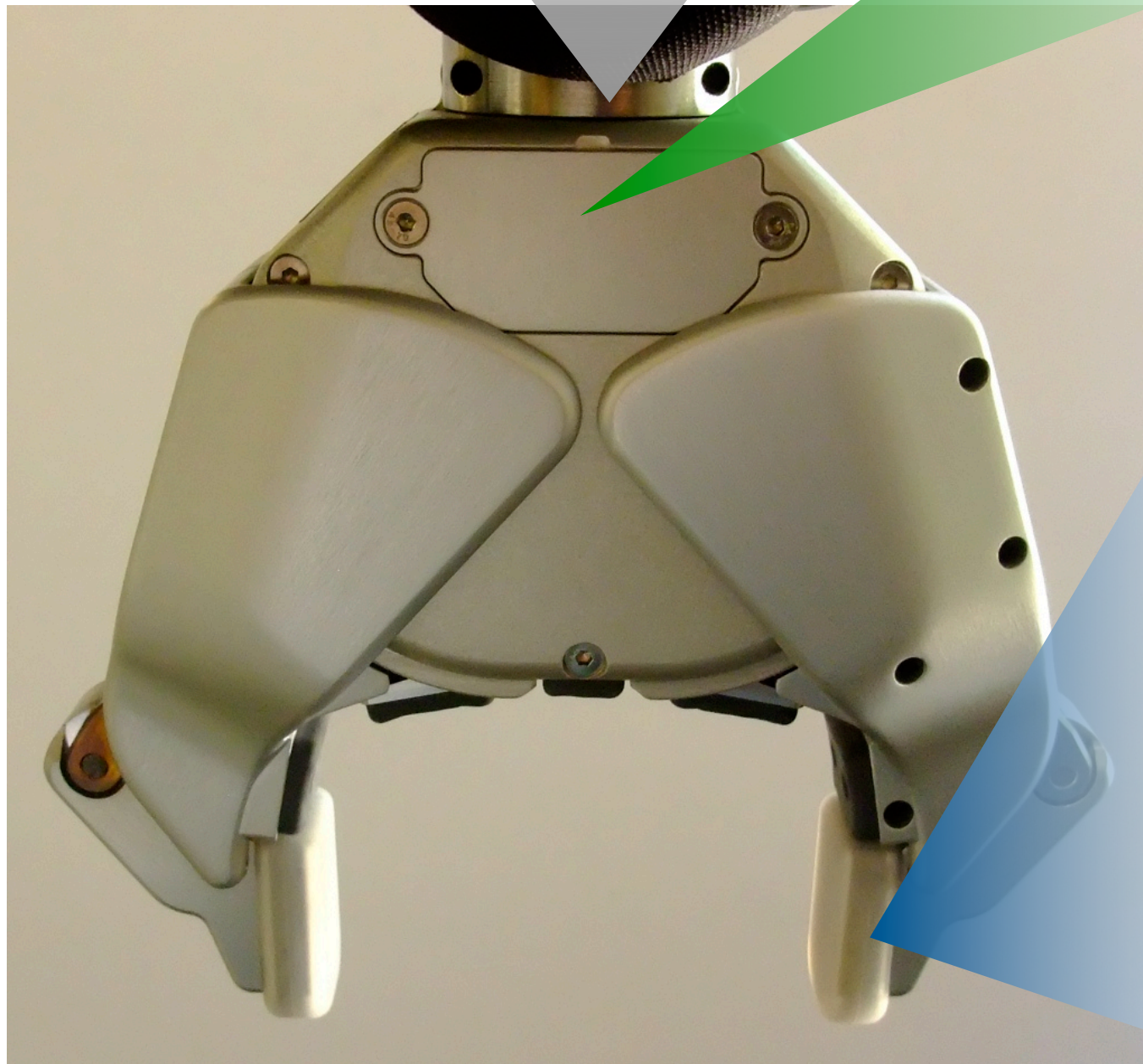




Encoder &  
Motor Current Sensor  
**1000 Hz**



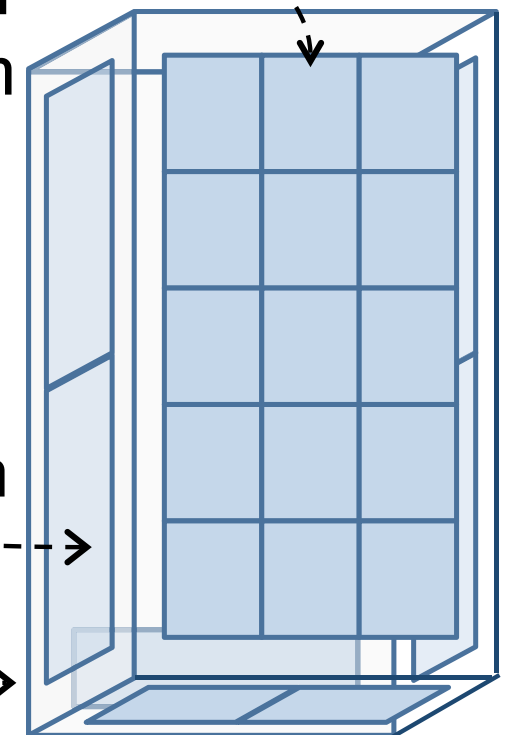
Three-axis accelerometer  
**3000 Hz**



5x3 array of  
elements on  
the front

Two  
elements on  
each side

One element  
at the tip of  
the back



Two  
elements at  
the tip  
**24.4 Hz**











# Coding and use of tactile signals from the fingertips in object manipulation tasks

Roland S. Johansson\* and J. Randall Flanagan†

**Abstract** | During object manipulation tasks, the brain selects and implements action-phase controllers that use sensory predictions and afferent signals to tailor motor output to the physical properties of the objects involved. Analysis of signals in tactile afferent neurons and central processes in humans reveals how contact events are encoded and used to monitor and update task performance.

## Tactile afferents

Fast-conducting myelinated afferent neurons that convey signals to the brain from low-threshold mechanoreceptors in body areas that actively contact objects — that is, the inside of the hand, the sole of the foot, the lips, the tongue and the oral mucosa.

## Proprioceptive afferents

Fast-conducting myelinated afferents that provide information about joint configurations and muscle states. These include mechanoreceptive afferents from the hairy skin, muscles, joints and connective tissues.

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doi:10.1038/nrn2621

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The tactile afferents that innervate the inside of the hand signal the transformation of soft tissues that occurs when the hand interacts with objects and thus provide information about the physical properties of the object and the contact between the object and the hand. People with impaired tactile sensibility have difficulties with many everyday activities because the brain lacks the information about mechanical contact states that is needed to plan and control object manipulations. Vision provides only indirect information about such mechanical interactions, and proprioceptive afferents exhibit low sensitivity to mechanical fingertip events<sup>1–4</sup>.

In this Review, we address emerging concepts regarding the use of tactile information by the brain in manipulation tasks. In doing so, we discuss the notion that the planning and control of manipulation tasks is centred on mechanical events that mark transitions between consecutive action phases and that represent subgoals of the overall task. We highlight recent findings that help explain the speed with which the brain detects and classifies tactile fingertip events in object manipulation. Finally, we discuss multisensory representation of action goals in object manipulation. Our account differs from a recent review of tactile signals in manipulation<sup>5</sup> by emphasizing the use of these signals in the control of manipulatory tasks, by considering how other sensory signals contribute to this control and by discussing the central neural mechanisms involved in manipulation tasks.

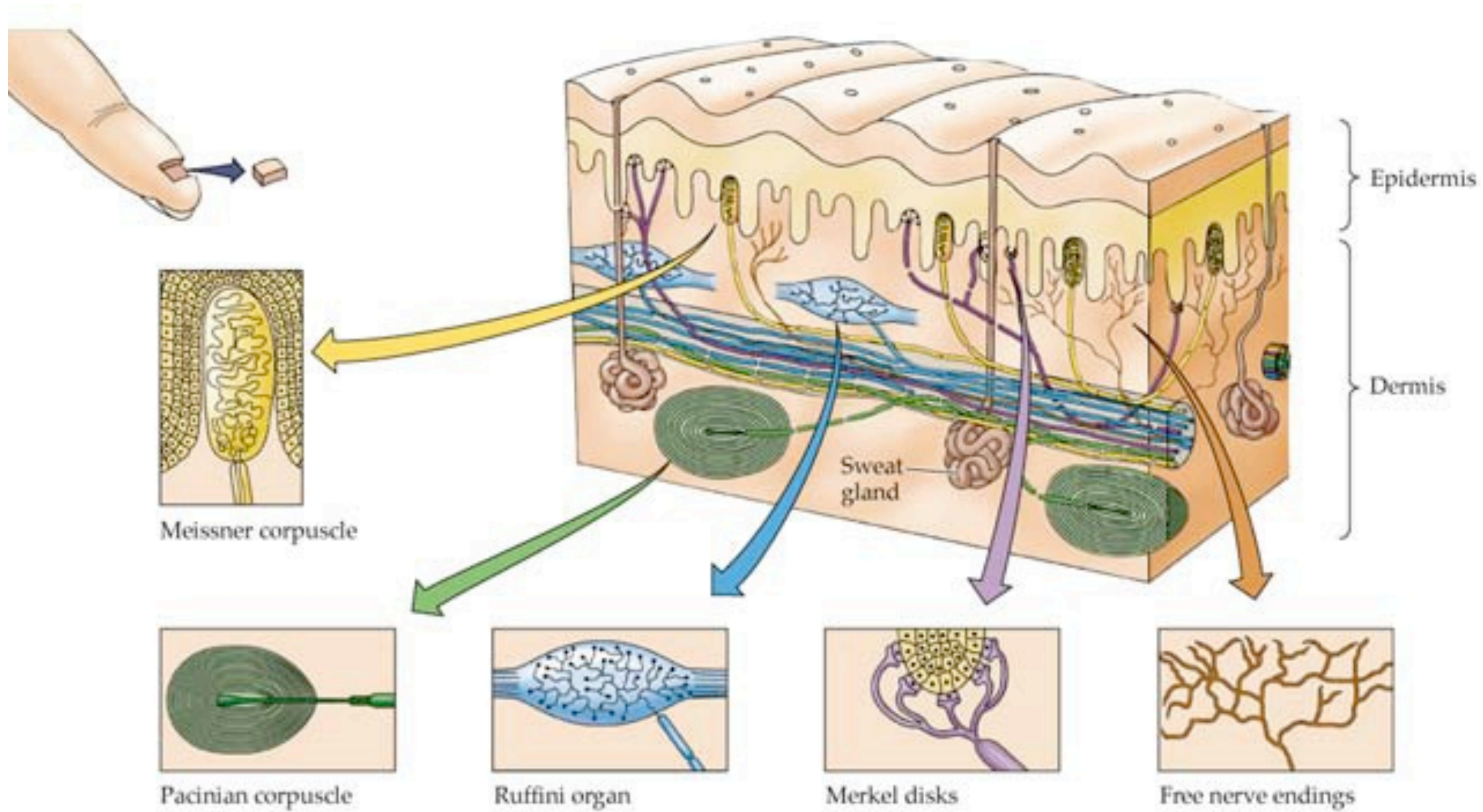
## Tactile sensors encoding fingertip transformations

When humans manipulate objects, the brain uses tactile afferent information related to the time course, magnitude, direction and spatial distribution of contact forces, the shapes of contacted surfaces, and the friction between contacted surfaces and the digits. The inside of




the human hand is equipped with four functionally distinct types of tactile afferents (TABLE 1; reviewed in more detail in REFS 5,6). FA-I (fast-adapting type I) and SA-I (slow-adapting type I) afferents terminate superficially in the skin, with a particularly high density in the fingertips. FA-Is exhibit sensitivity to dynamic skin deformations of relatively high frequency<sup>7,8</sup>, whereas SA-Is are most easily excited by lower-frequency skin deformations<sup>7,8</sup> and can respond to sustained deformation. There are more FA-I afferents than SA-I afferents in the fingertips (TABLE 1), reflecting the importance of extracting spatial features of dynamic mechanical events, such as the skin forming and breaking contact with objects or scanning across a textured surface.

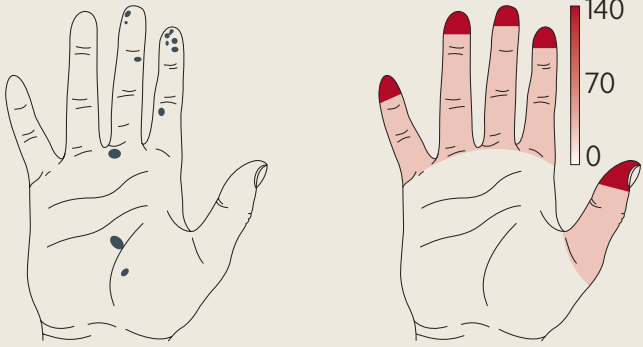
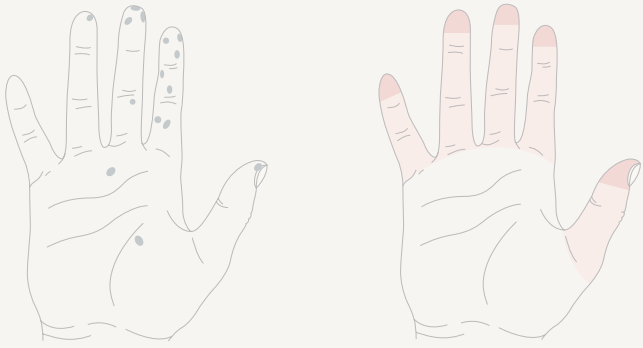
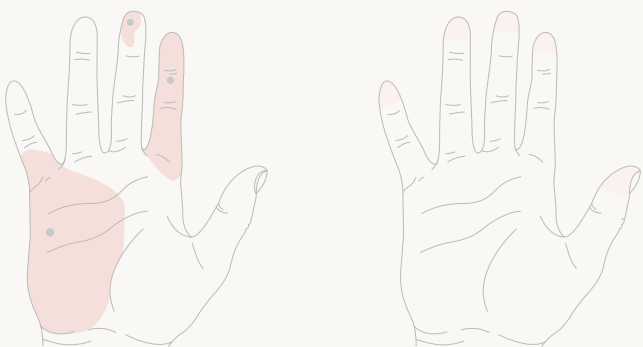
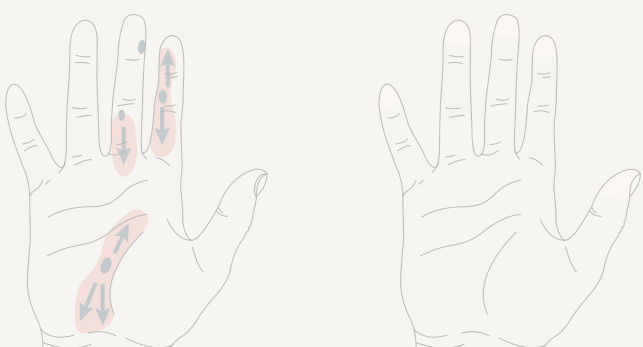
FA-II and SA-II afferents innervate the hand with a lower and roughly uniform density and terminate deeper in dermal and subdermal fibrous tissues. FA-II afferents are optimized for detecting transient mechanical events<sup>7–10</sup>. Hundreds of FA-II afferents, distributed throughout the hand, can be excited when hand-held objects contact or break contact with other objects<sup>11</sup>. SA-II afferents can respond to remotely applied lateral stretching of the skin<sup>12,13</sup> and can be sensitive to the tangential shear strain to the skin that occurs during object manipulation<sup>2,11</sup>. SA-II-like afferents are found in most fibrous tissues (such as muscle fascias and joint capsules and ligaments)<sup>14</sup> and there is evidence that they can act as proprioceptors (BOX 1).

Traditional studies on tactile sensing that examine correlations between afferent signals and perceptual (declarative) phenomena evoked by gently touching passive digits (for reviews see REFS 6,14–20) provide little information about the encoding and use of tactile information in object manipulation for several reasons: the control processes that are active in manipulation operate


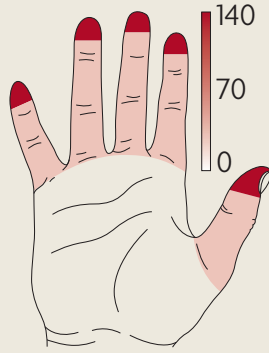









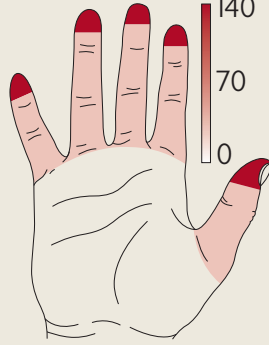








Afferent type (and response properties)	Receptive field (and probe)	Density (afferents per cm <sup>2</sup> )
<b>FA-I (fast-adapting type I)</b> Meissner endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to dynamic skin deformation of relatively high frequency (~5–50 Hz)</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities (e.g., edge contours and Braille-like stimuli)</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>	
<b>SA-I (slowly-adapting type I)</b> Merkel endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (&lt;~5 Hz)</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>	
<b>FA-II (fast-adapting type II)</b> Pacini ending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects</li> </ul>	 <p>Light tapping</p>	
<b>SA-II (slowly-adapting type II)</b> Ruffini-like endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low dynamic sensitivity</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands</li> <li>• Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin</li> </ul>	 <p>Touch or skin stretch</p>	


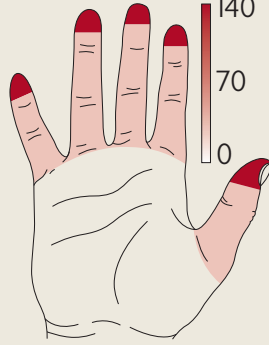






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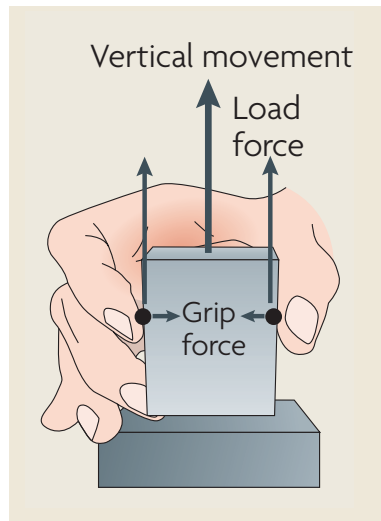


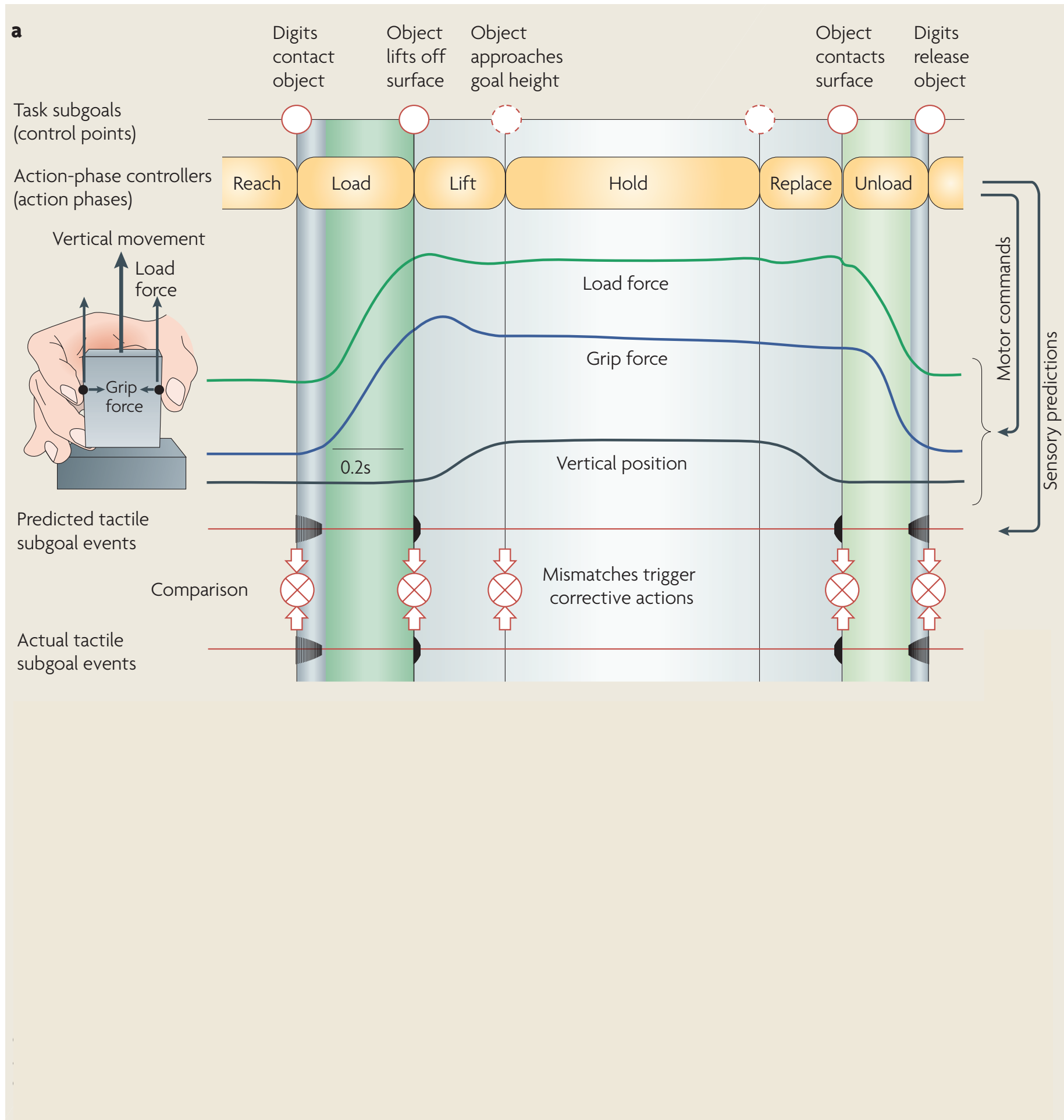




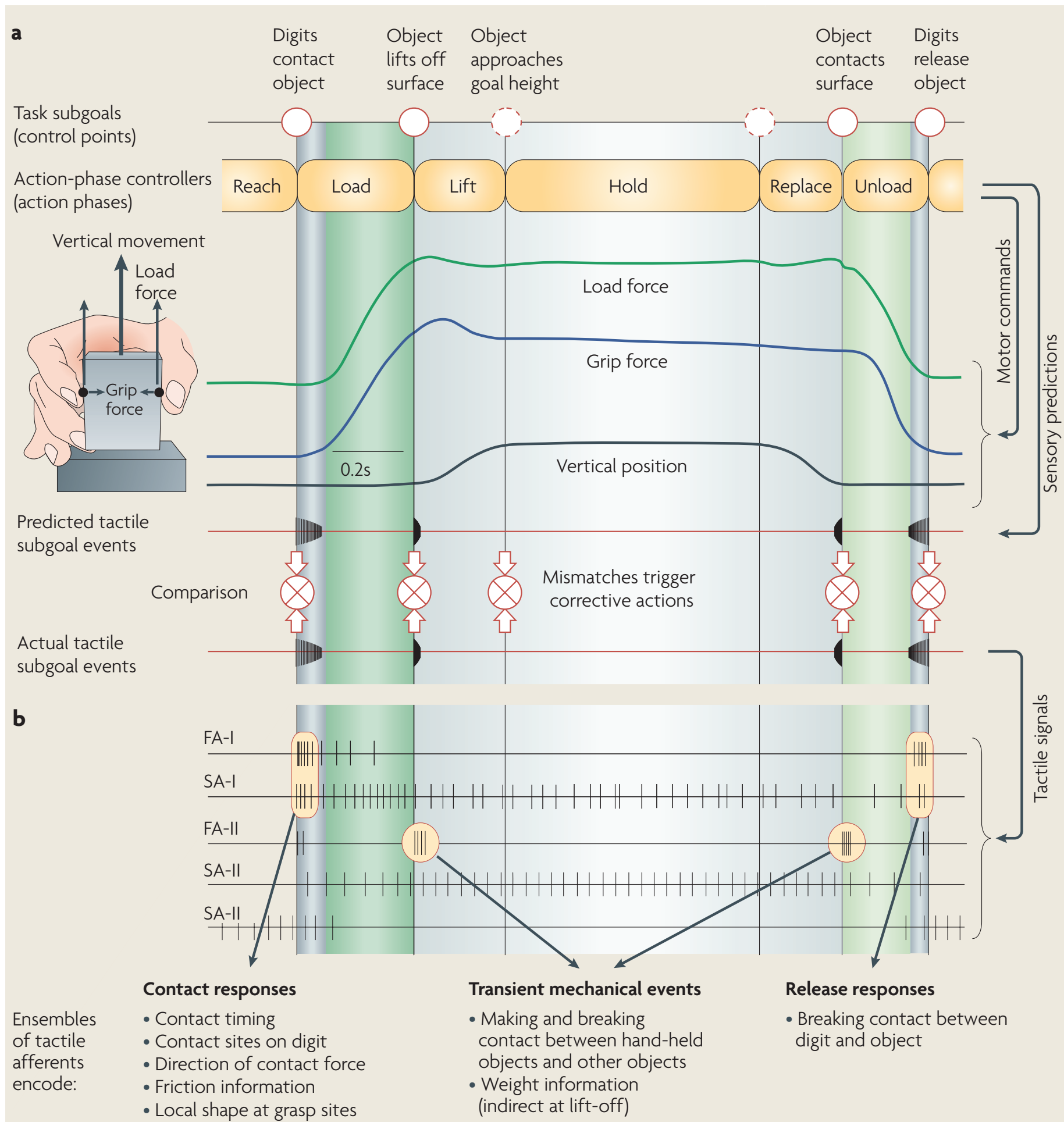


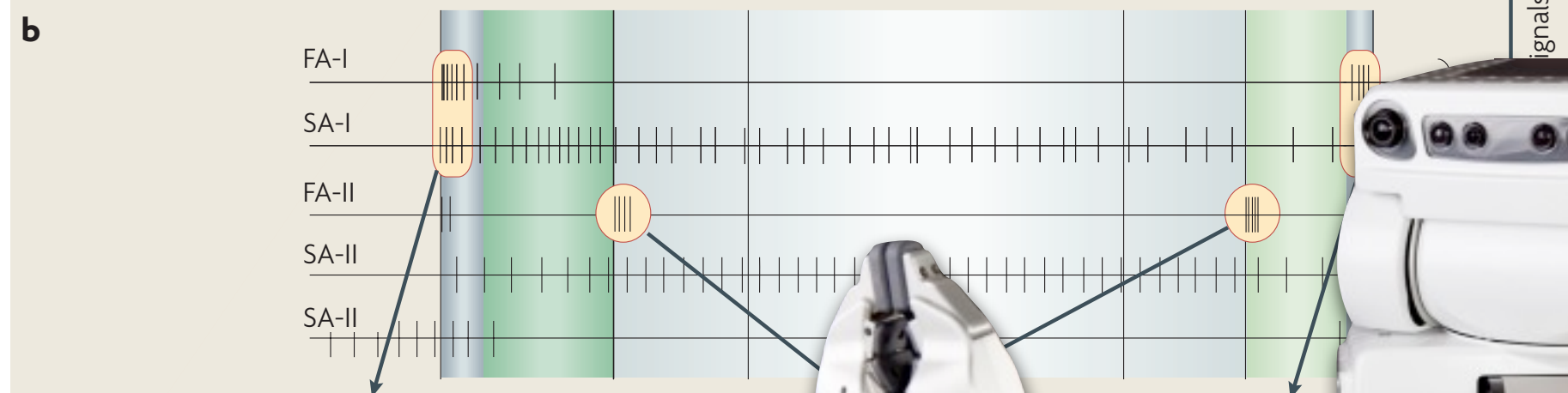
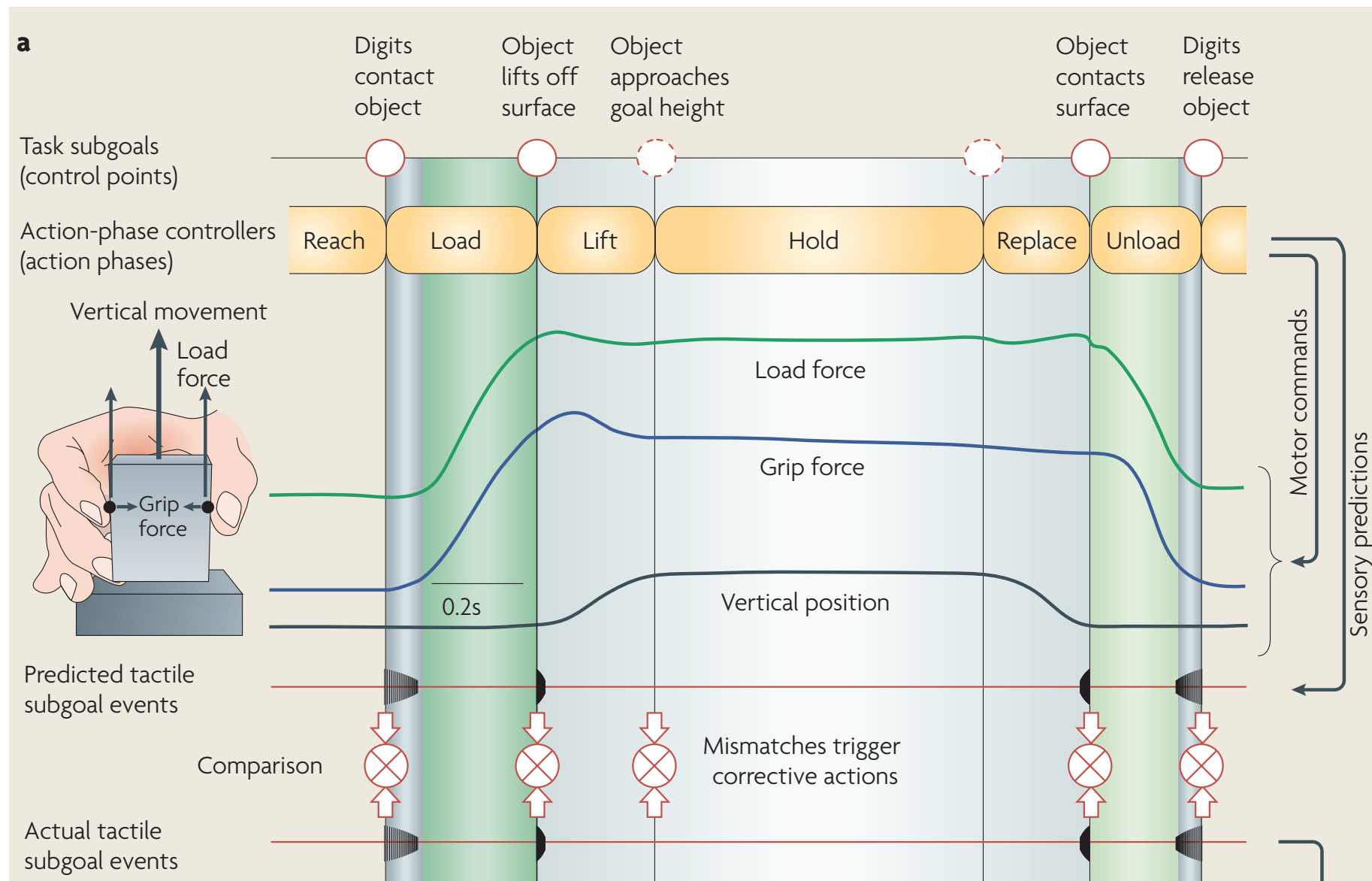




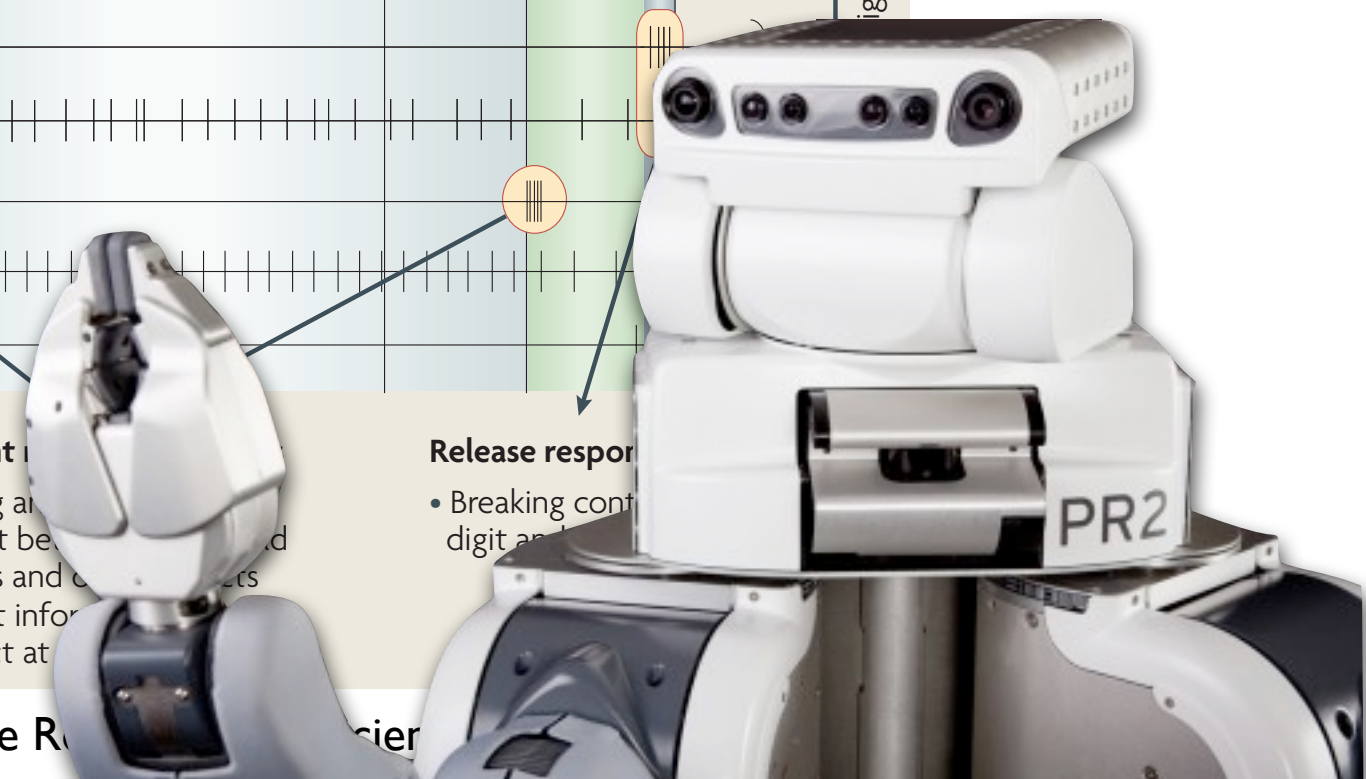








- Ensembles of tactile afferents encode:
- Contact responses**
    - Contact timing
    - Contact sites on digit
    - Direction of contact force
    - Friction information
    - Local shape at grasp sites
  - Transient**
    - Making and breaking contact between objects and digits
    - Weight information (indirect at contact sites)
  - Release responses**
    - Breaking contact between digit and object







# Robotic Tactile Signals





# Robotic Tactile Signals

## Gripper Position and Force Controllers



# Robotic Tactile Signals

## Gripper Position and Force Controllers

### Action-Phase Grasp Controller





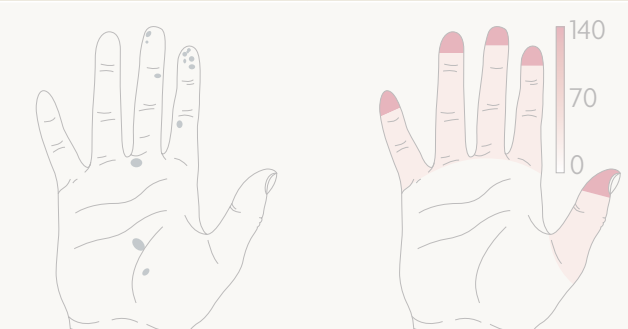
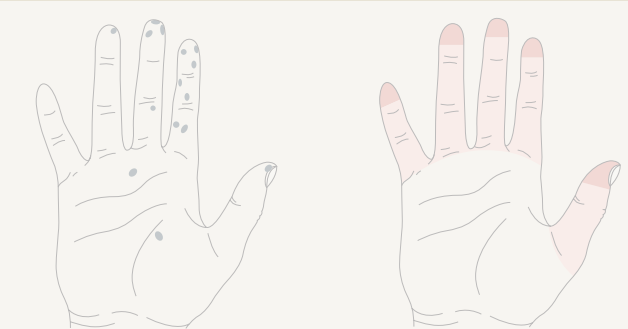
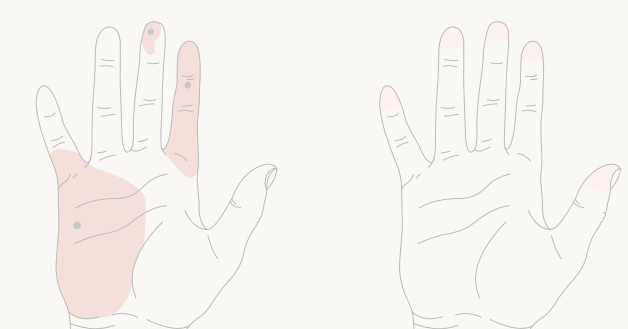
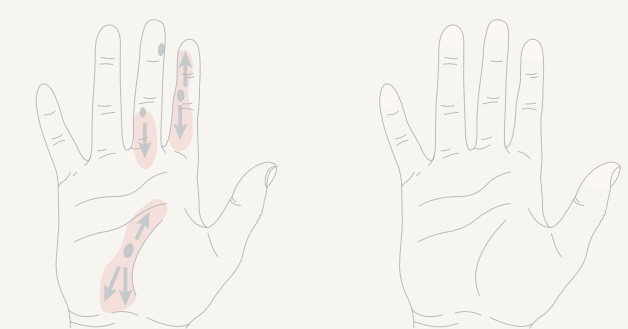
# Robotic Tactile Signals

Gripper Position and Force Controllers

Action-Phase Grasp Controller

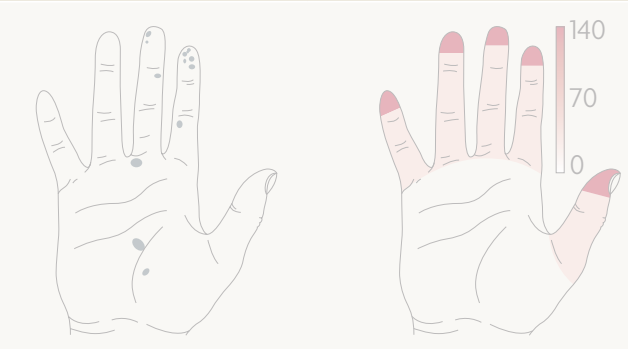
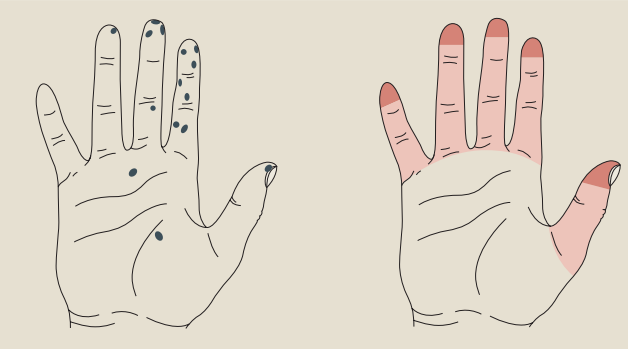
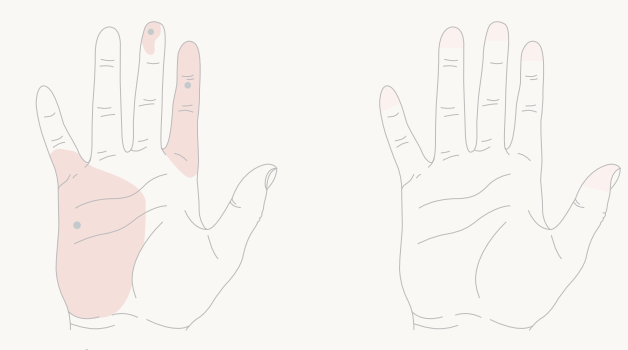
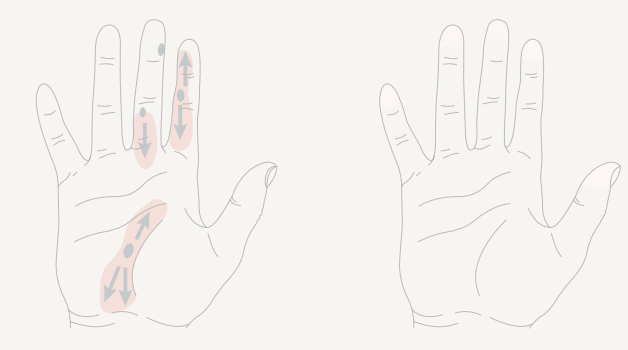


# Robotic Tactile Signals

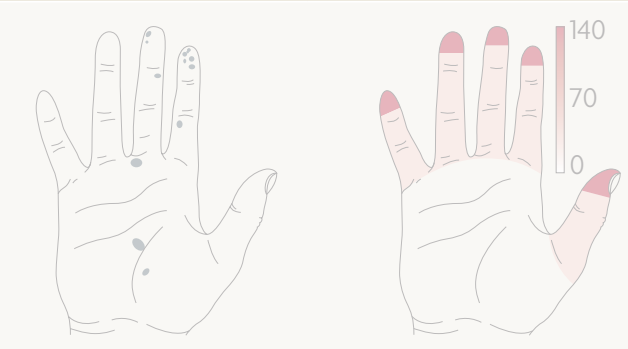
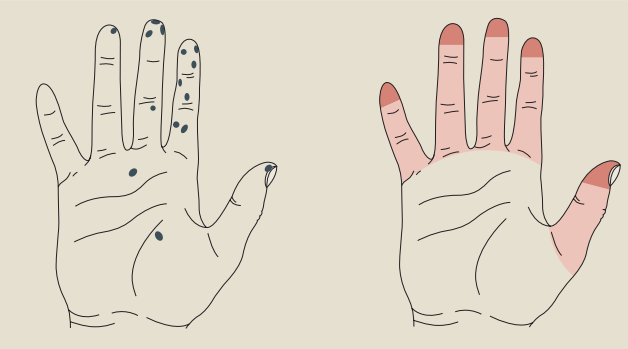
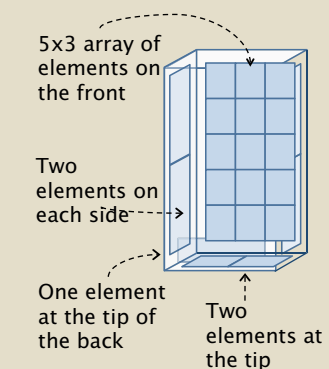
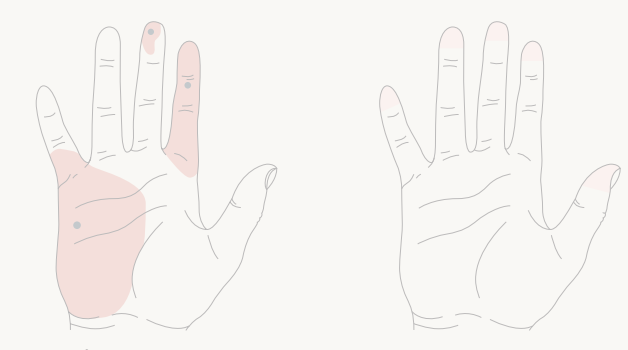
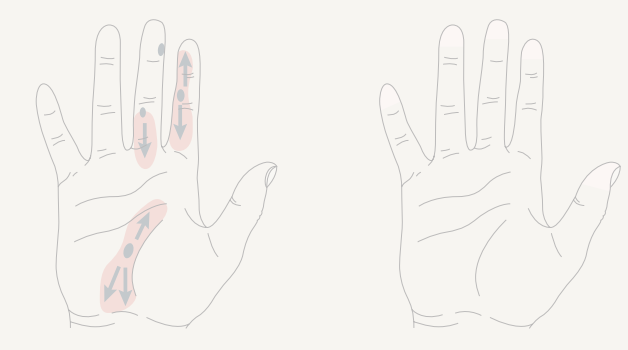
Afferent type (and response properties)	Receptive field (and probe)	Density (afferents per cm <sup>2</sup> )
<b>FA-I (fast-adapting type I)</b> Meissner endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to dynamic skin deformation of relatively high frequency (~5–50 Hz)</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities (e.g., edge contours and Braille-like stimuli)</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>	
<b>SA-I (slowly-adapting type I)</b> Merkel endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (&lt;~5 Hz)</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>	
<b>FA-II (fast-adapting type II)</b> Pacini ending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects</li> </ul>	 <p>Light tapping</p>	
<b>SA-II (slowly-adapting type II)</b> Ruffini-like endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low dynamic sensitivity</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands</li> <li>• Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin</li> </ul>	 <p>Touch or skin stretch</p>	



# Robotic Tactile Signals

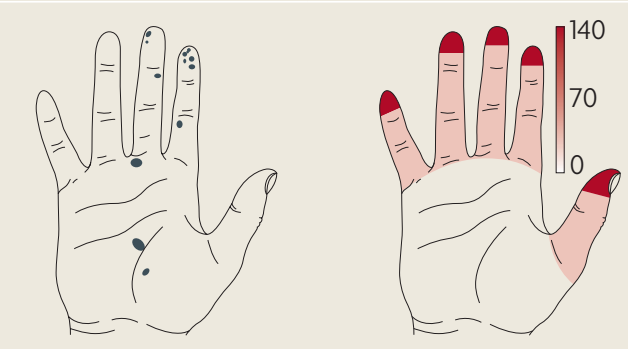
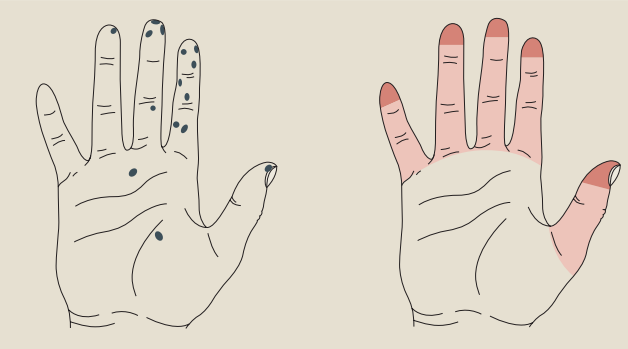
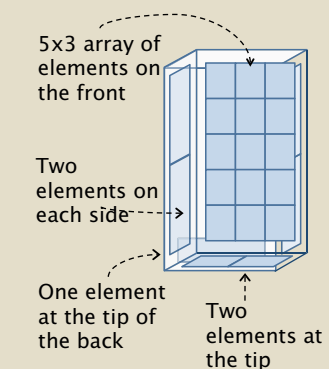
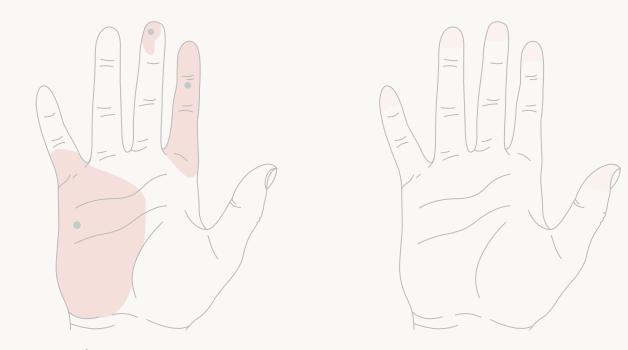
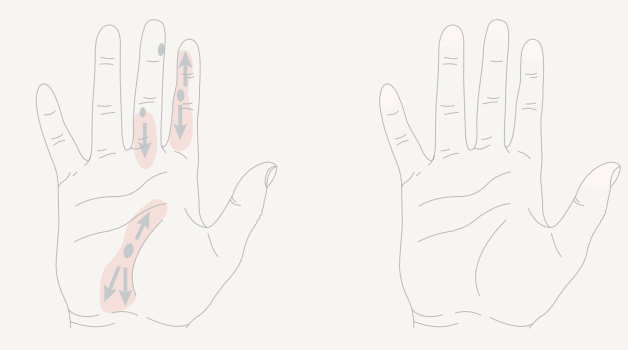
Afferent type (and response properties)	Receptive field (and probe)	Density (afferents per cm <sup>2</sup> )
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<b>SA-I (slowly-adapting type I)</b> Merkel endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (&lt;~5 Hz)</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>	
<b>FA-II (fast-adapting type II)</b> Pacini ending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects</li> </ul>	 <p>Light tapping</p>	
<b>SA-II (slowly-adapting type II)</b> Ruffini-like endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low dynamic sensitivity</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands</li> <li>• Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin</li> </ul>	 <p>Touch or skin stretch</p>	

# Robotic Tactile Signals

Afferent type (and response properties)	Receptive field (and probe)	Density (afferents per cm <sup>2</sup> )
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<b>SA-I (slowly-adapting type I)</b> Merkel endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (&lt;~5 Hz)</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>	 $F_{gl} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 f_l(i,j)$
<b>FA-II (fast-adapting type II)</b> Pacini ending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects</li> </ul>	 <p>Light tapping</p>	
<b>SA-II (slowly-adapting type II)</b> Ruffini-like endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low dynamic sensitivity</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands</li> <li>• Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin</li> </ul>	 <p>Touch or skin stretch</p>	



# Robotic Tactile Signals

Afferent type (and response properties)	Receptive field (and probe)	Density (afferents per cm <sup>2</sup> )
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<b>FA-II (fast-adapting type II)</b> Pacini ending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects</li> </ul>	 <p>Light tapping</p>	
<b>SA-II (slowly-adapting type II)</b> Ruffini-like endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low dynamic sensitivity</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands</li> <li>• Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin</li> </ul>	 <p>Touch or skin stretch</p>	

# Robotic Tactile Signals

## Afferent type (and response properties)

## Receptive field (and probe)

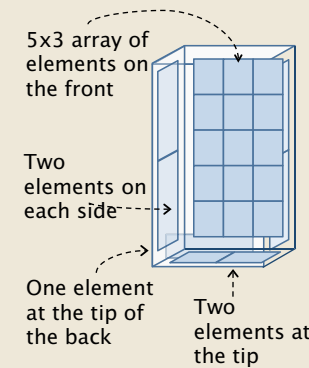
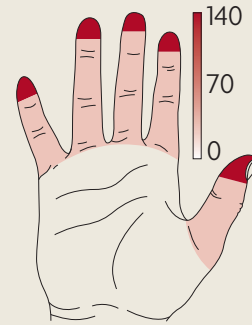
## Density (afferents per cm<sup>2</sup>)

### FA-I (fast-adapting type I) Meissner endings

- Sensitive to dynamic skin deformation of relatively high frequency (~5–50 Hz)
- Insensitive to static force
- Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities (e.g., edge contours and Braille-like stimuli)



Weak pointed touch



$$\tilde{F}_{gl}(z) = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 H_F(z) f_{l(i,j)}(z)$$

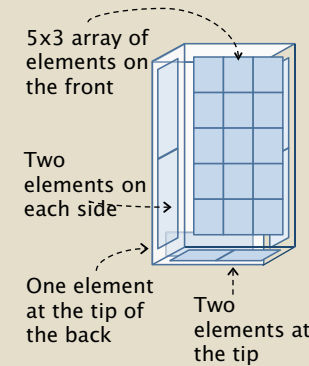
↑  
5 Hz high-pass

### SA-I (slowly-adapting type I) Merkel endings

- Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (<~5 Hz)
- Sensitive to static force
- Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities



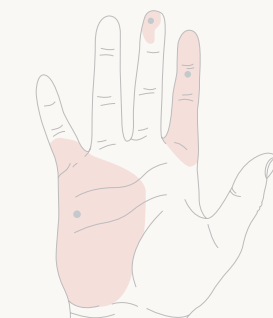
Weak pointed touch



$$F_{gl} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 f_{l(i,j)}$$

### FA-II (fast-adapting type II) Pacini ending

- Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues
- Insensitive to static force
- Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects



Light tapping



### SA-II (slowly-adapting type II) Ruffini-like endings

- Low dynamic sensitivity
- Sensitive to static force
- Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands
- Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin

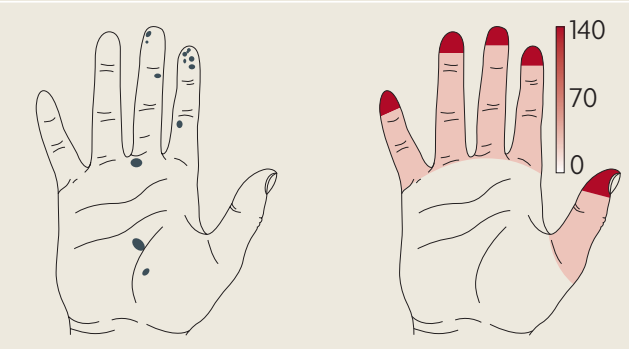
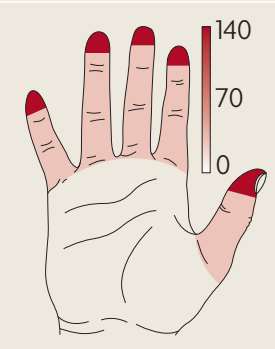
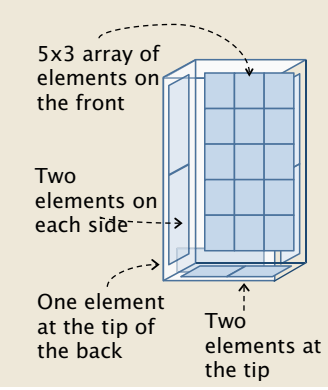


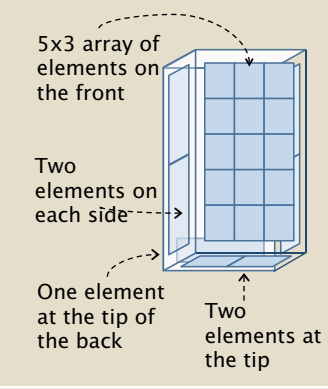






Touch or skin stretch





# Robotic Tactile Signals

Afferent type (and response properties)	Receptive field (and probe)	Density (afferents per cm <sup>2</sup> )	
<b>FA-I (fast-adapting type I)</b> Meissner endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to dynamic skin deformation of relatively high frequency (~5–50 Hz)</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities (e.g., edge contours and Braille-like stimuli)</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>		 $\tilde{F}_{gl}(z) = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 H_F(z) f_{l(i,j)}(z)$ <p>5 Hz high-pass</p>
<b>SA-I (slowly-adapting type I)</b> Merkel endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (&lt;~5 Hz)</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities</li> </ul>	 <p>Weak pointed touch</p>		 $F_{gl} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 f_{l(i,j)}$
<b>FA-II (fast-adapting type II)</b> Pacini ending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues</li> <li>• Insensitive to static force</li> <li>• Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects</li> </ul>	 <p>Light tapping</p>		
<b>SA-II (slowly-adapting type II)</b> Ruffini-like endings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low dynamic sensitivity</li> <li>• Sensitive to static force</li> <li>• Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands</li> <li>• Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin</li> </ul>	 <p>Touch or skin stretch</p>		

# Robotic Tactile Signals

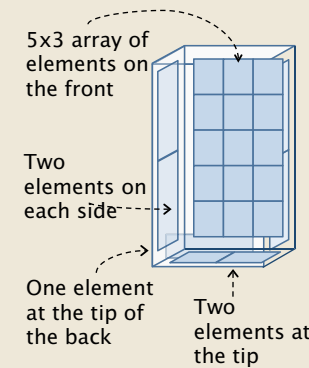
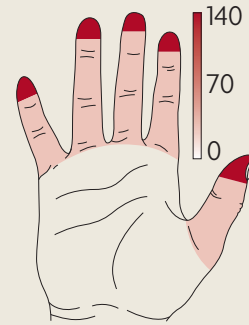
## Afferent type (and response properties)

## Receptive field (and probe)

## Density (afferents per cm<sup>2</sup>)

### FA-I (fast-adapting type I) Meissner endings

- Sensitive to dynamic skin deformation of relatively high frequency (~5–50 Hz)
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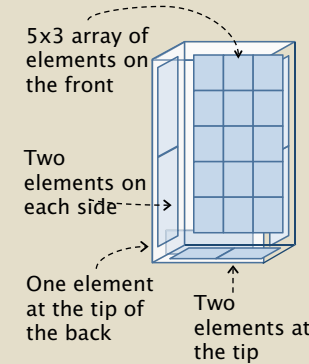


$$\tilde{F}_{gl}(z) = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 H_F(z) f_{l(i,j)}(z)$$

↑  
5 Hz high-pass

### SA-I (slowly-adapting type I) Merkel endings

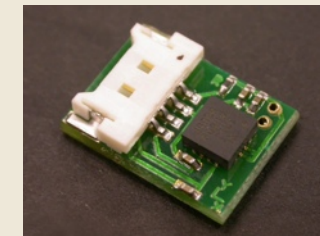
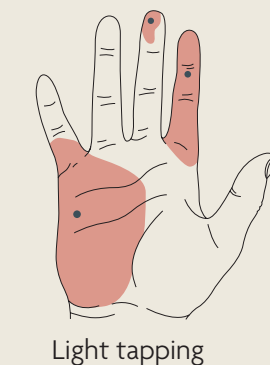
- Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (<~5 Hz)
- Sensitive to static force
- Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities



$$F_{gl} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 f_{l(i,j)}$$

### FA-II (fast-adapting type II) Pacini ending

- Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues
- Insensitive to static force
- Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects



50 Hz high-pass  
↓

$$\tilde{a}_h(z) = \sqrt{(H_a(z)a_{h,x})^2 + (H_a(z)a_{h,y})^2 + (H_a(z)a_{h,z})^2}$$

### SA-II (slowly-adapting type II) Ruffini-like endings

- Low dynamic sensitivity
- Sensitive to static force
- Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands
- Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin



Touch or skin stretch



# Robotic Tactile Signals

## Afferent type (and response properties)

## Receptive field (and probe)

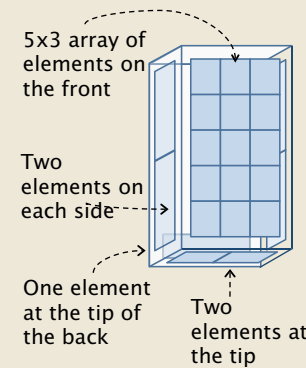
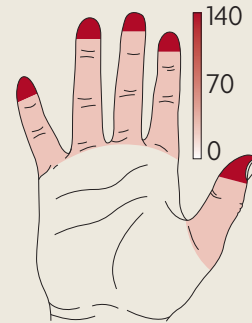
## Density (afferents per cm<sup>2</sup>)

### FA-I (fast-adapting type I) Meissner endings

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- Insensitive to static force
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Weak pointed touch



$$\tilde{F}_{gl}(z) = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 H_F(z) f_{l(i,j)}(z)$$

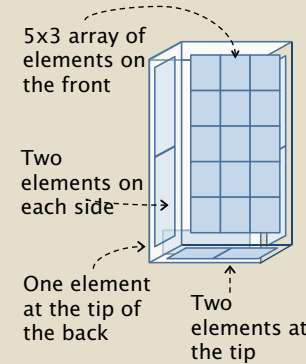
↑  
5 Hz high-pass

### SA-I (slowly-adapting type I) Merkel endings

- Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (<~5 Hz)
- Sensitive to static force
- Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities



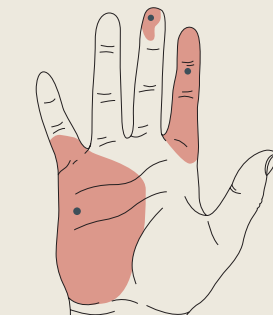
Weak pointed touch



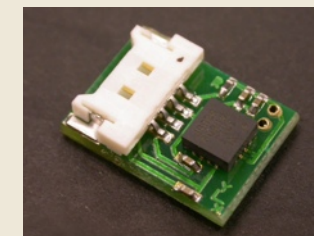
$$F_{gl} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 f_{l(i,j)}$$

### FA-II (fast-adapting type II) Pacini ending

- Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues
- Insensitive to static force
- Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects



Light tapping



50 Hz high-pass



$$\tilde{a}_h(z) = \sqrt{(H_a(z)a_{h,x})^2 + (H_a(z)a_{h,y})^2 + (H_a(z)a_{h,z})^2}$$

### SA-II (slowly-adapting type II) Ruffini-like endings

- Low dynamic sensitivity
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- Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands
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Touch or skin stretch



# Robotic Tactile Signals

## Afferent type (and response properties)

## Receptive field (and probe)

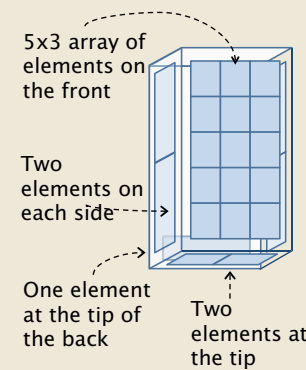
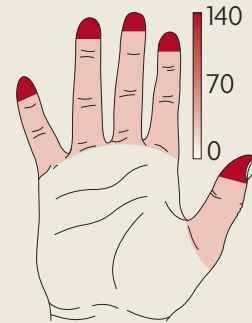
## Density (afferents per cm<sup>2</sup>)

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- Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities (e.g., edge contours and Braille-like stimuli)



Weak pointed touch



$$\tilde{F}_{gl}(z) = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 H_F(z) f_{l(i,j)}(z)$$

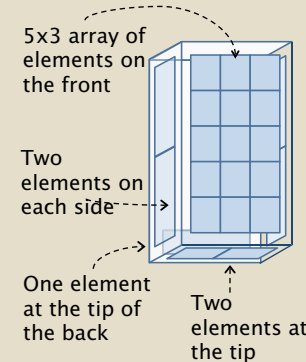
↑  
5 Hz high-pass

### SA-I (slowly-adapting type I) Merkel endings

- Sensitive to low-frequency dynamic skin deformations (<~5 Hz)
- Sensitive to static force
- Transmit enhanced representations of local spatial discontinuities



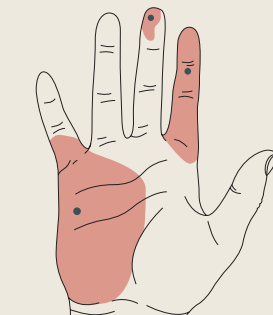
Weak pointed touch



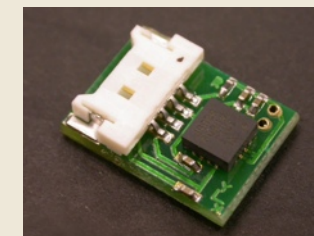
$$F_{gl} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \sum_{j=1}^5 f_{l(i,j)}$$

### FA-II (fast-adapting type II) Pacini ending

- Extremely sensitive to mechanical transients and high-frequency vibrations (~40–400 Hz) propagating through tissues
- Insensitive to static force
- Respond to distant events acting on hand-held objects



Light tapping



50 Hz high-pass



$$\tilde{a}_h(z) = \sqrt{(H_a(z)a_{h,x})^2 + (H_a(z)a_{h,y})^2 + (H_a(z)a_{h,z})^2}$$

### SA-II (slowly-adapting type II) Ruffini-like endings

- Low dynamic sensitivity
- Sensitive to static force
- Sense tension in dermal and subcutaneous collagenous fibre strands
- Can fire in the absence of externally applied stimulation and respond to remotely applied stretching of the skin



Touch or skin stretch



not possible on the PR2



# Robotic Tactile Signals

Gripper Position and Force Controllers

Action-Phase Grasp Controller



Robotic Tactile Signals

# Gripper Position and Force Controllers

Action-Phase Grasp Controller







# Gripper Position Controller



# Gripper Position Controller

$$E = KP \cdot (x_g - x_{g,des}) + KD \cdot (v_g - v_{g,des})$$

## Gripper Position Controller

$$E = KP \cdot (x_g - x_{g,des}) + KD \cdot (v_g - v_{g,des})$$

## Gripper Force Controller

## Gripper Position Controller

$$E = KP \cdot (x_g - x_{g,des}) + KD \cdot (v_g - v_{g,des})$$

## Gripper Force Controller

$$F_{g,min} = \min(F_{gl}, F_{gr})$$



## Gripper Position Controller

$$E = KP \cdot (x_g - x_{g,des}) + KD \cdot (v_g - v_{g,des})$$

## Gripper Force Controller

$$F_{g,min} = \min(F_{gl}, F_{gr})$$

$$v_{g,des} = KF \cdot (F_{g,min} - F_{g,des})$$

# Gripper Position Controller

$$E = KP \cdot (x_g - x_{g,des}) + KD \cdot (v_g - v_{g,des})$$

# Gripper Force Controller

$$F_{g,min} = \min(F_{gl}, F_{gr})$$

$$v_{g,des} = KF \cdot (F_{g,min} - F_{g,des})$$

$$KF = \begin{cases} KF_{CLOSE} & \text{if } F_{g,min} - F_{g,des} < 0, \\ KF_{OPEN} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Robotic Tactile Signals

# Gripper Position and Force Controllers

Action-Phase Grasp Controller



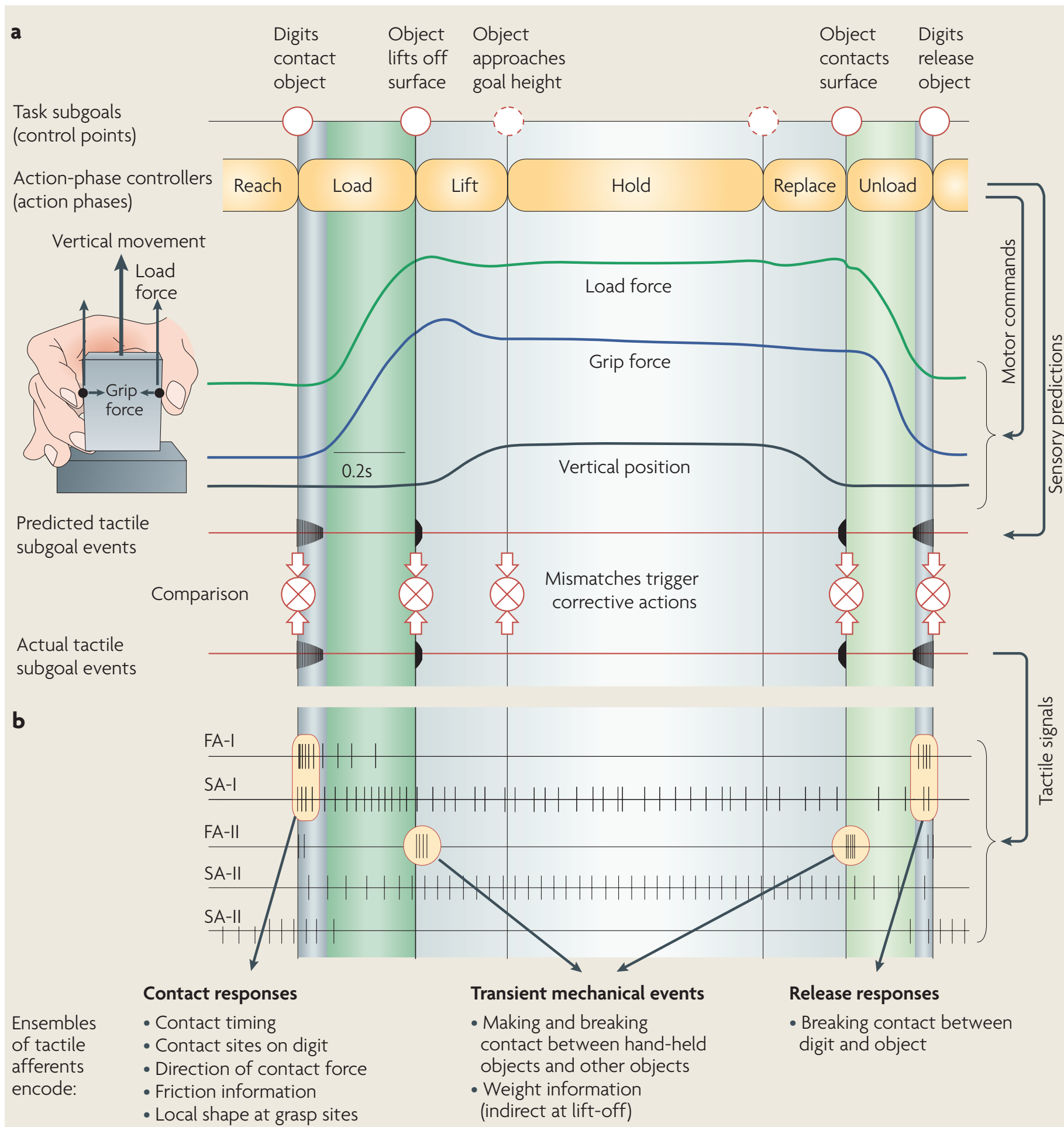


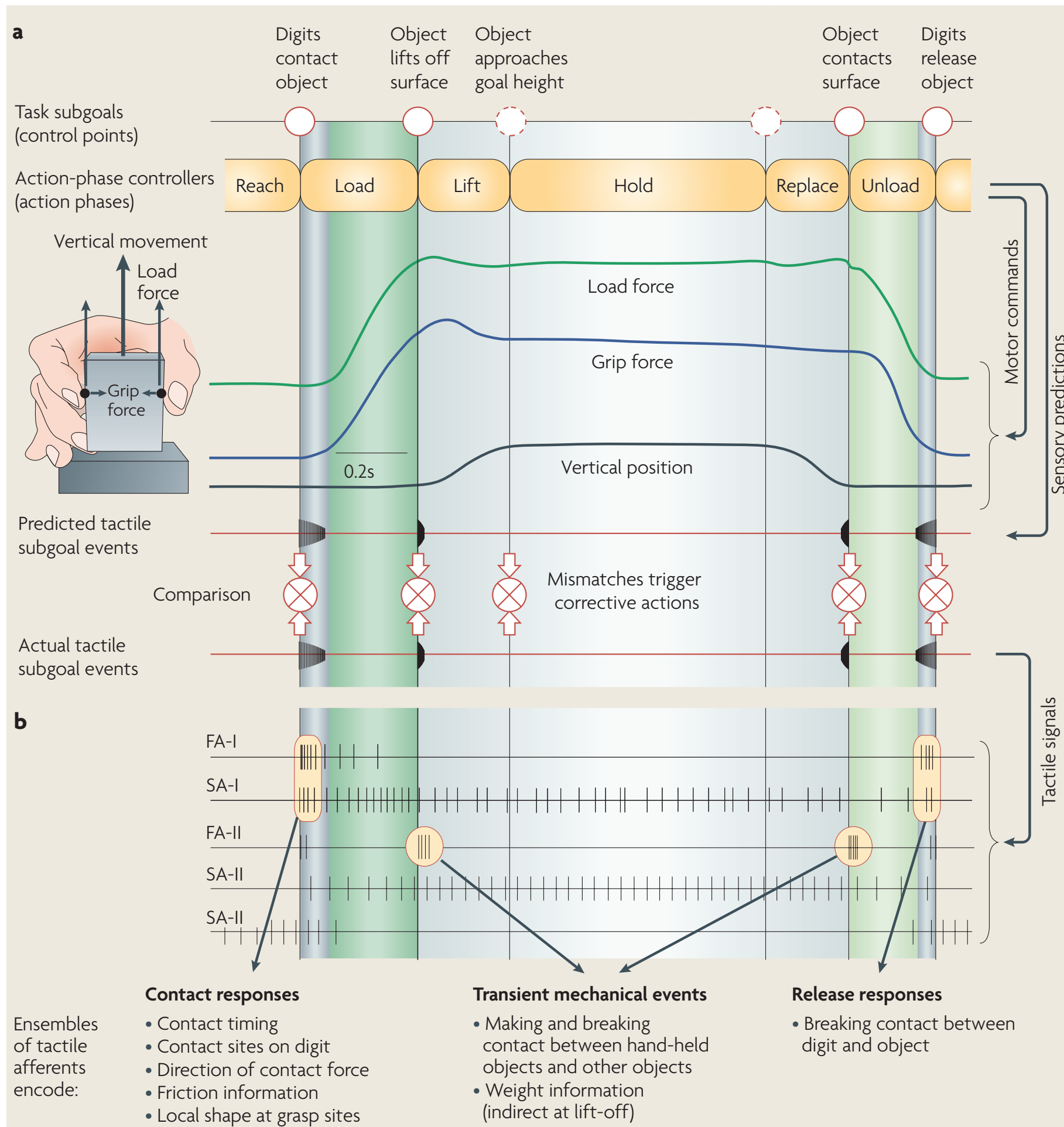
Robotic Tactile Signals

Gripper Position and Force Controllers

**Action-Phase Grasp Controller**



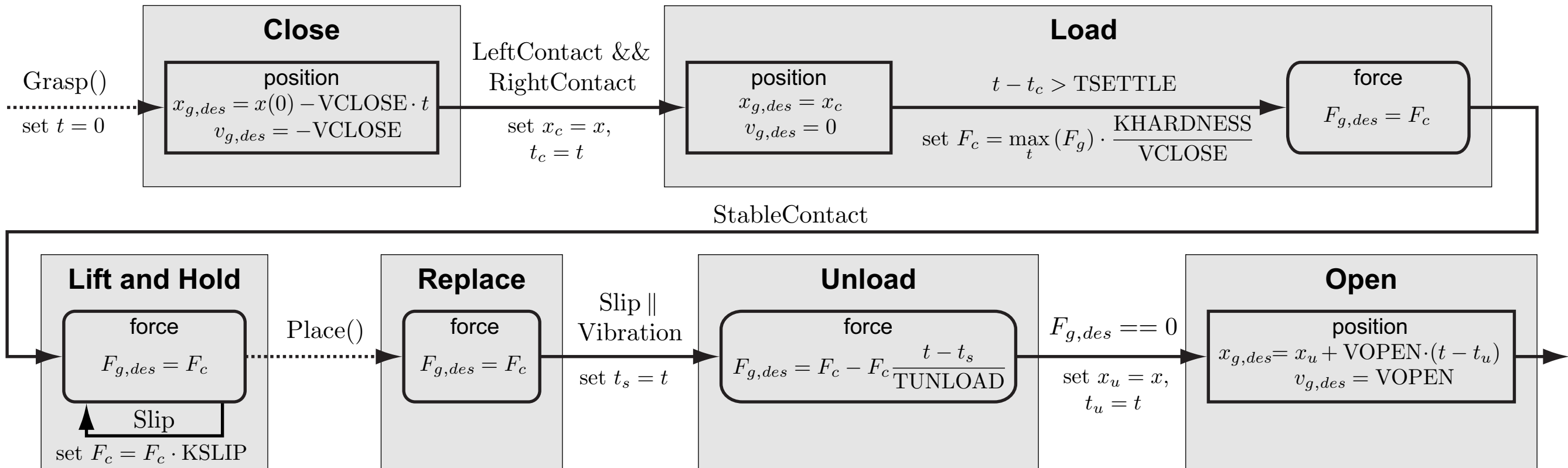




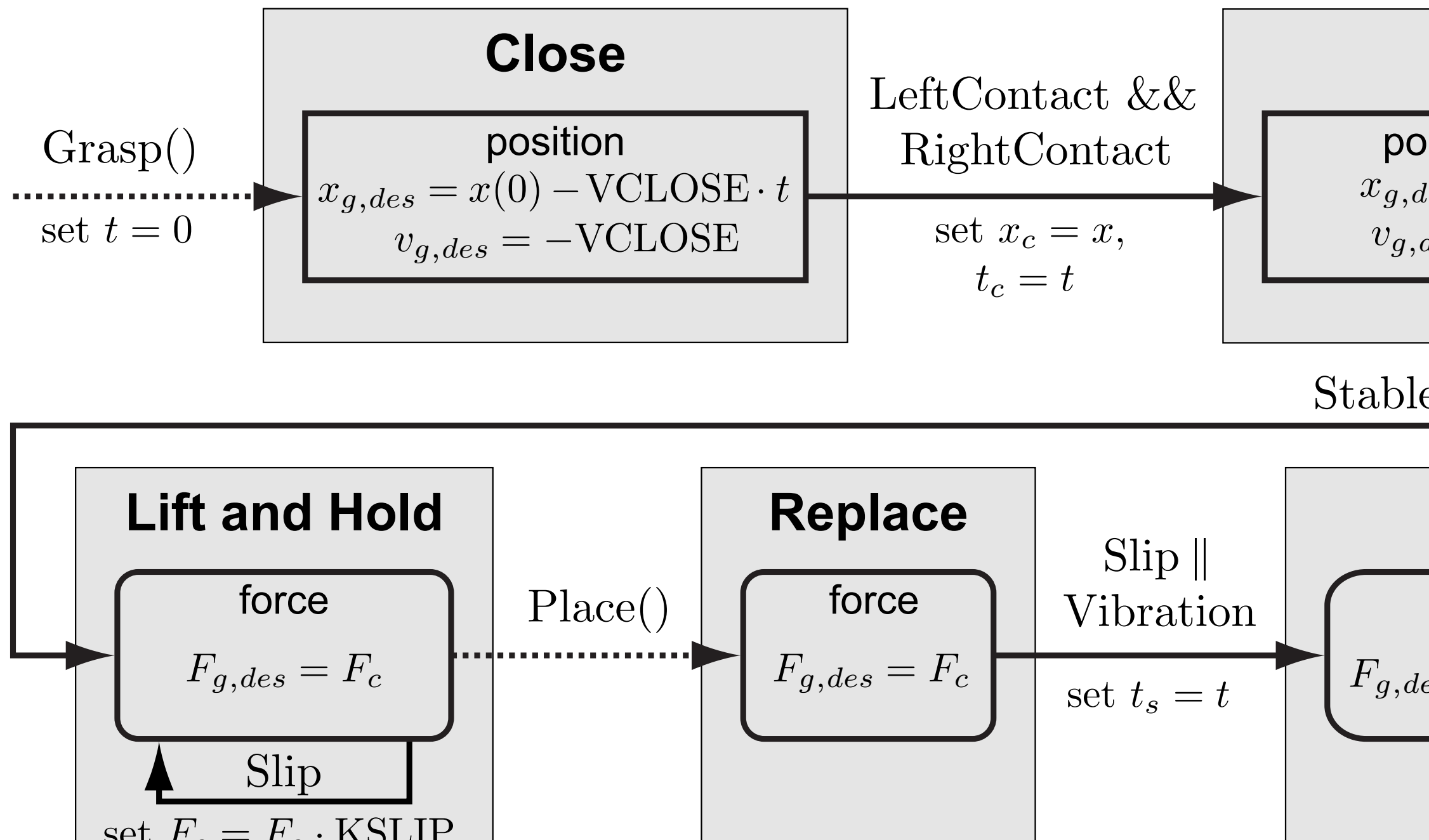
- Close
- Load
- Lift & Hold
- Replace
- Unload
- Open



# Action-Phase Grasp Controller



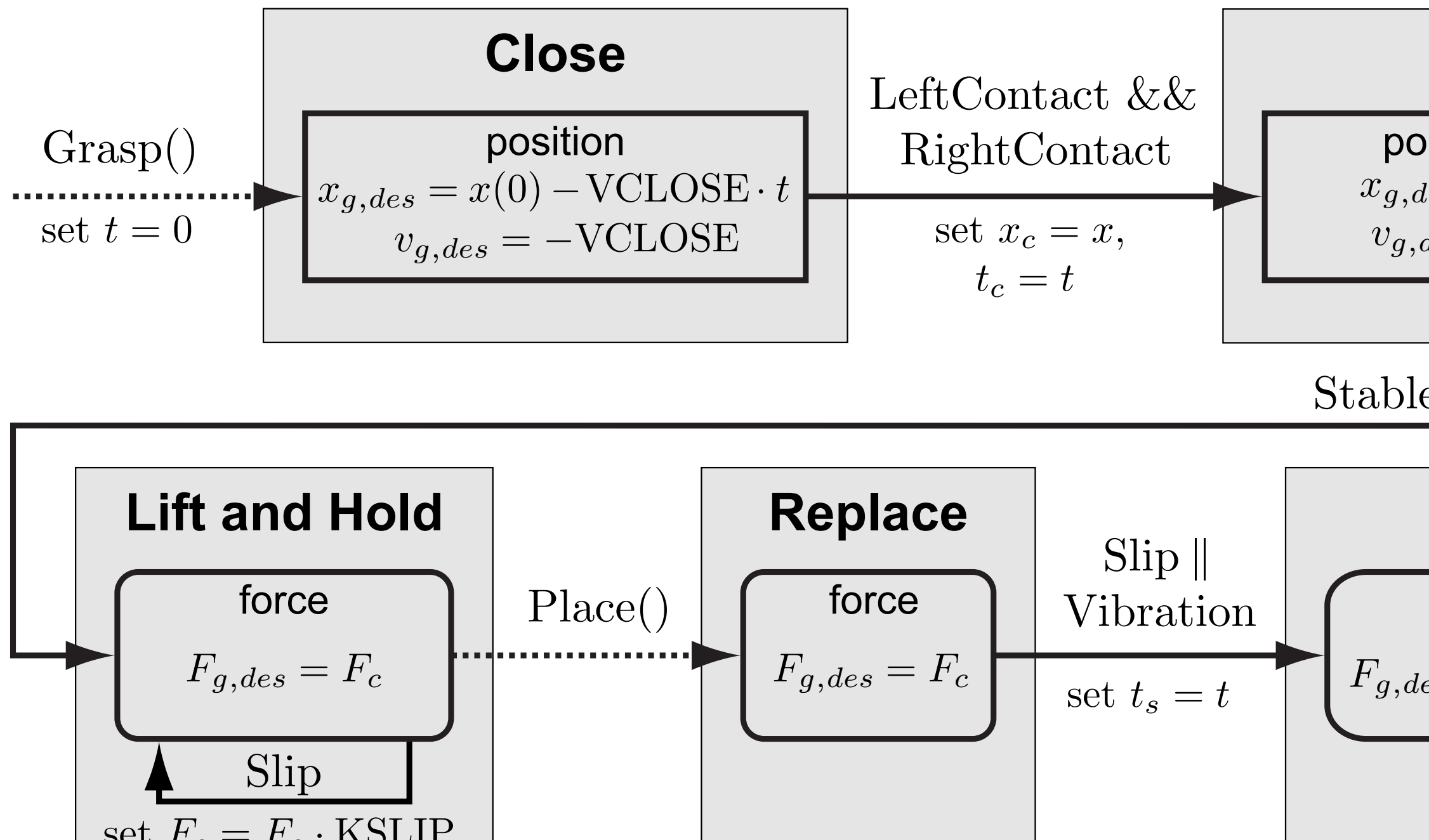
# Action-Phase Grasp Controller



# Action-Phase Grasp Controller

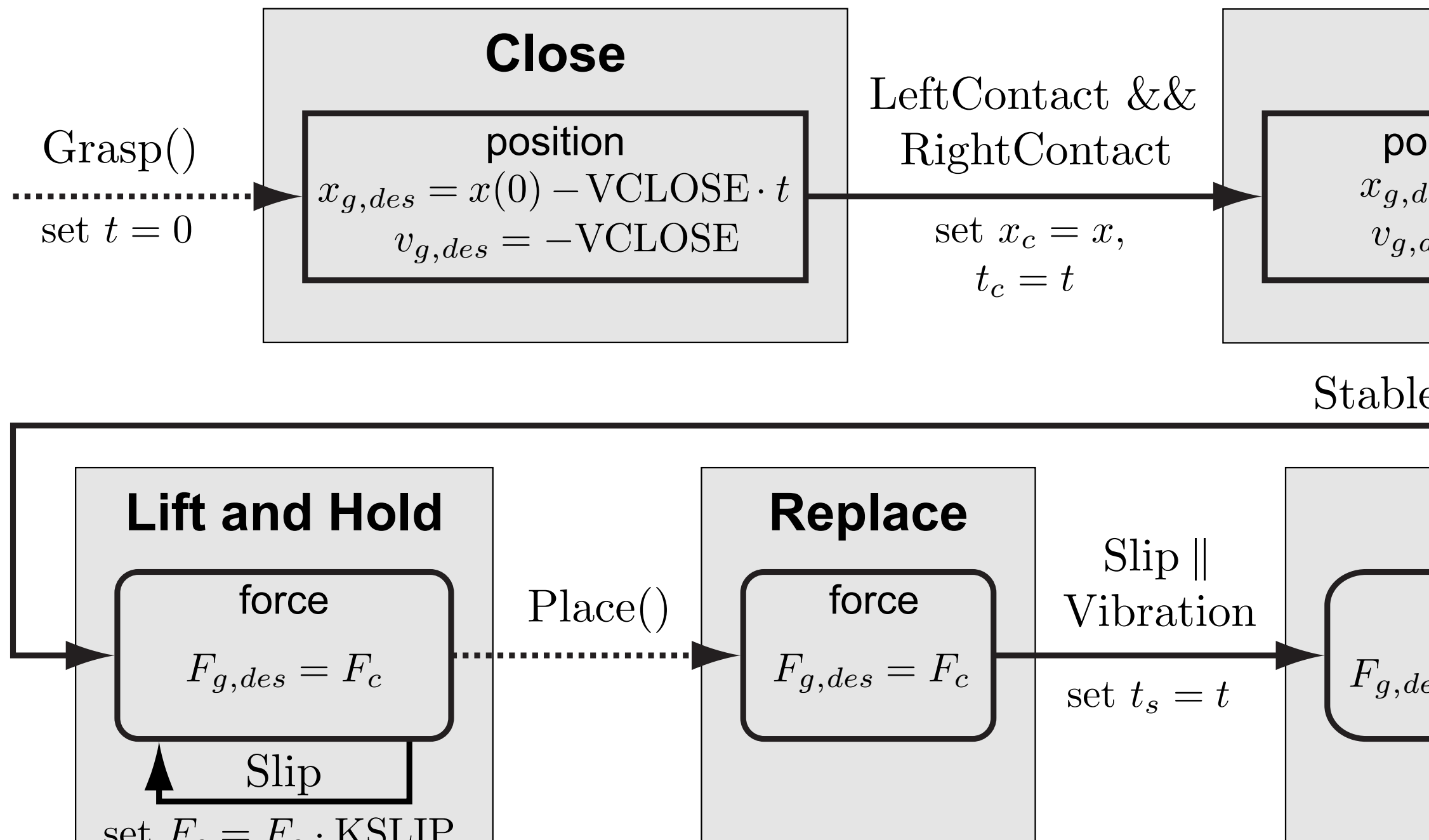
$$\text{LeftContact} = (F_{gl} > \text{FLIMIT}) \parallel (\tilde{F}_{gl} > \text{DLIMIT})$$

$$\text{RightContact} = (F_{gr} > \text{FLIMIT}) \parallel (\tilde{F}_{gr} > \text{DLIMIT})$$

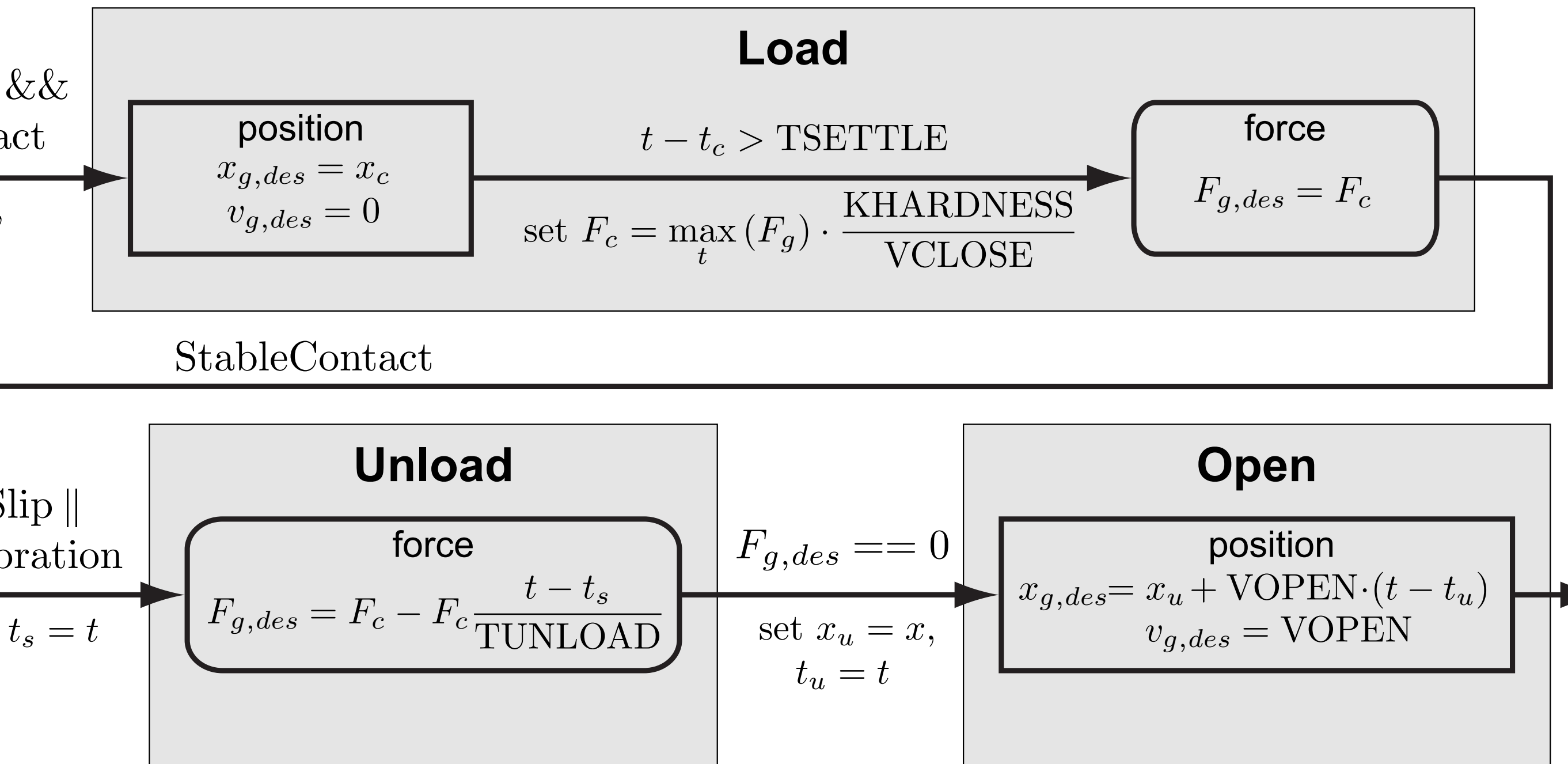




# Action-Phase Grasp Controller

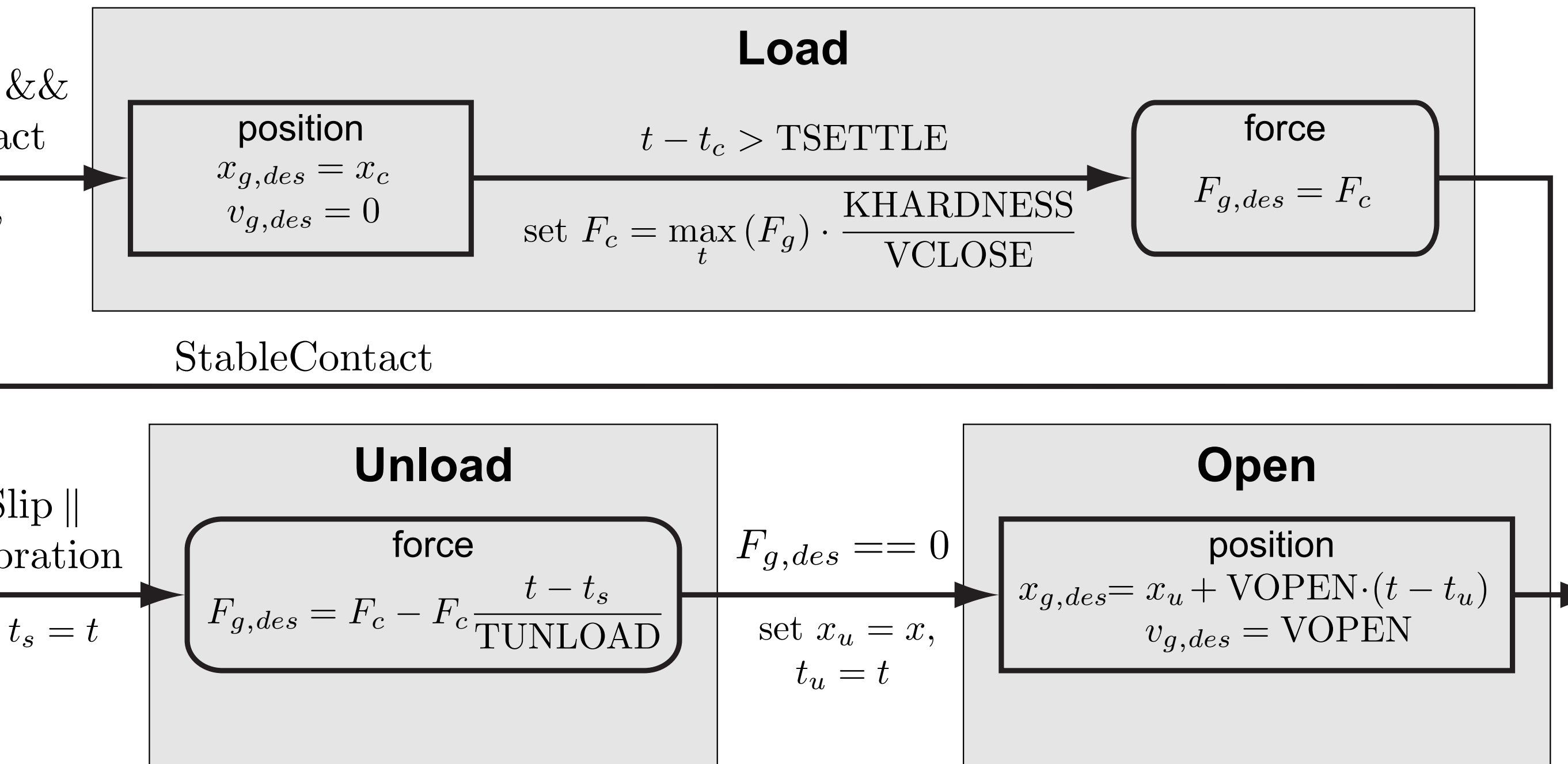


# Action-Phase Grasp Controller



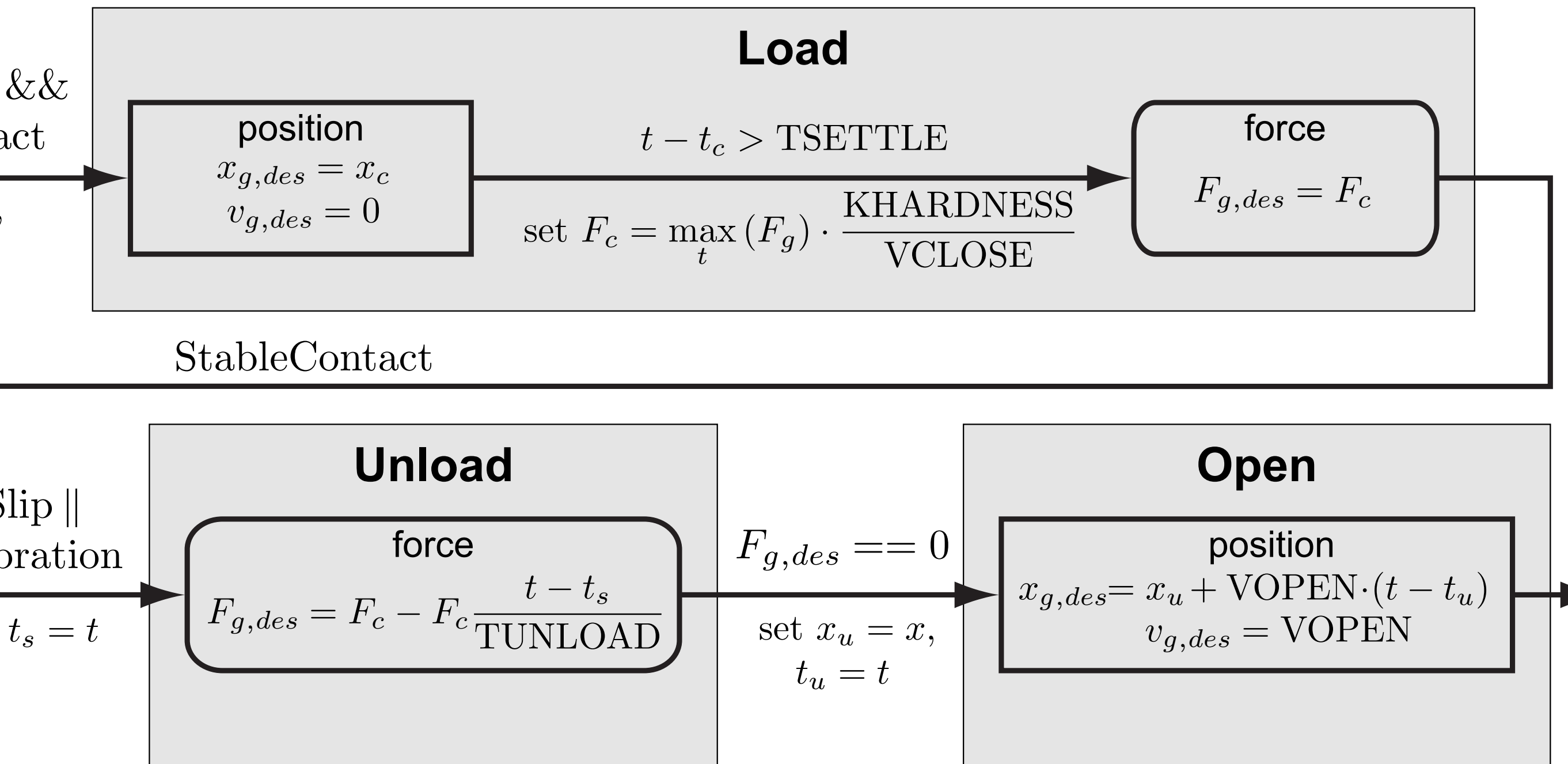
# Action-Phase Grasp Controller

$$\text{StableContact} = (|F_{g,min} - F_{g,des}| < \text{FTHRESH}) \\ \&\& (|v_g| < \text{VTHRESH})$$

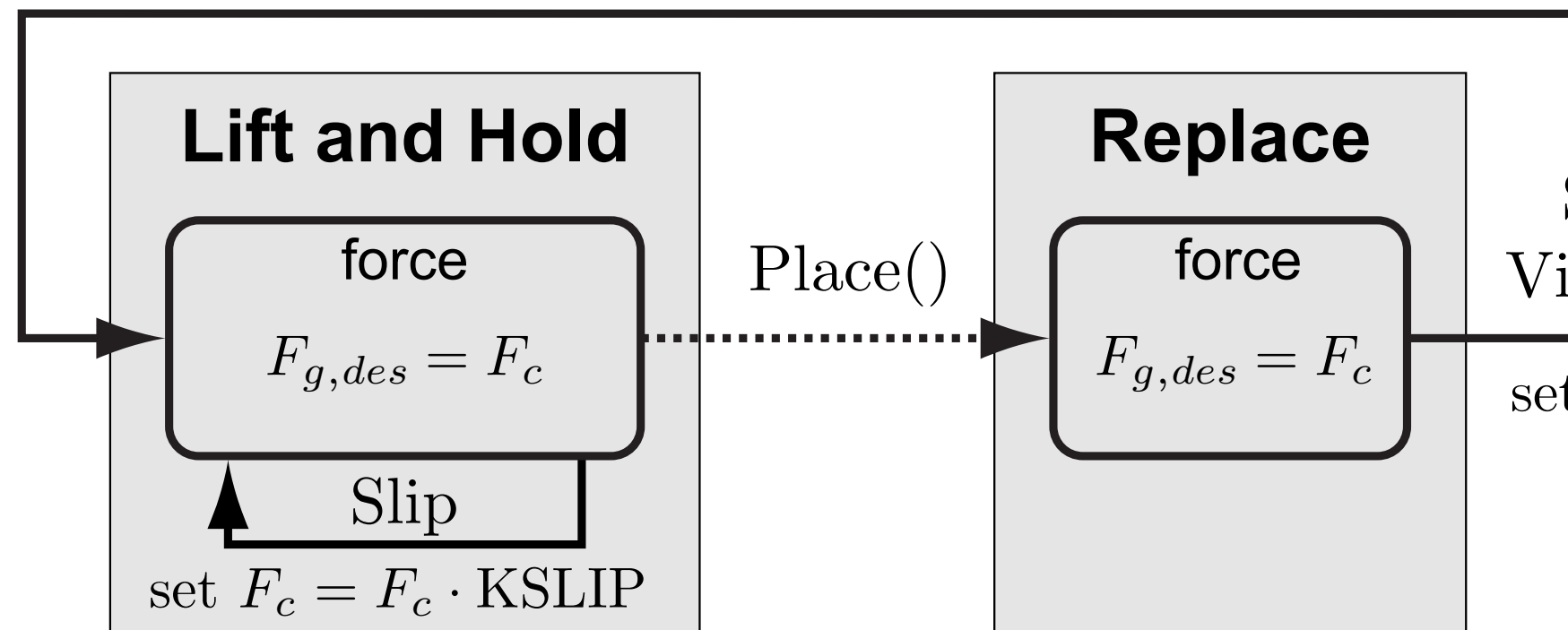
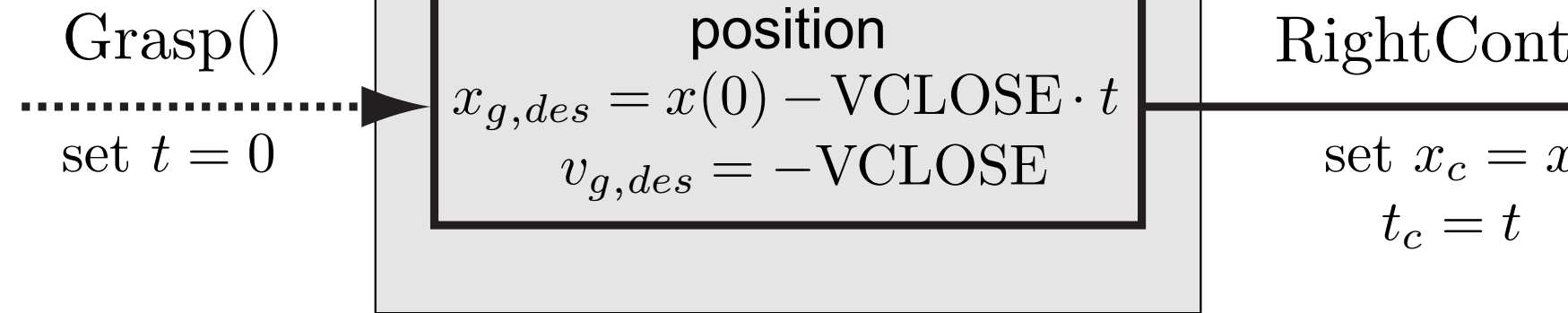




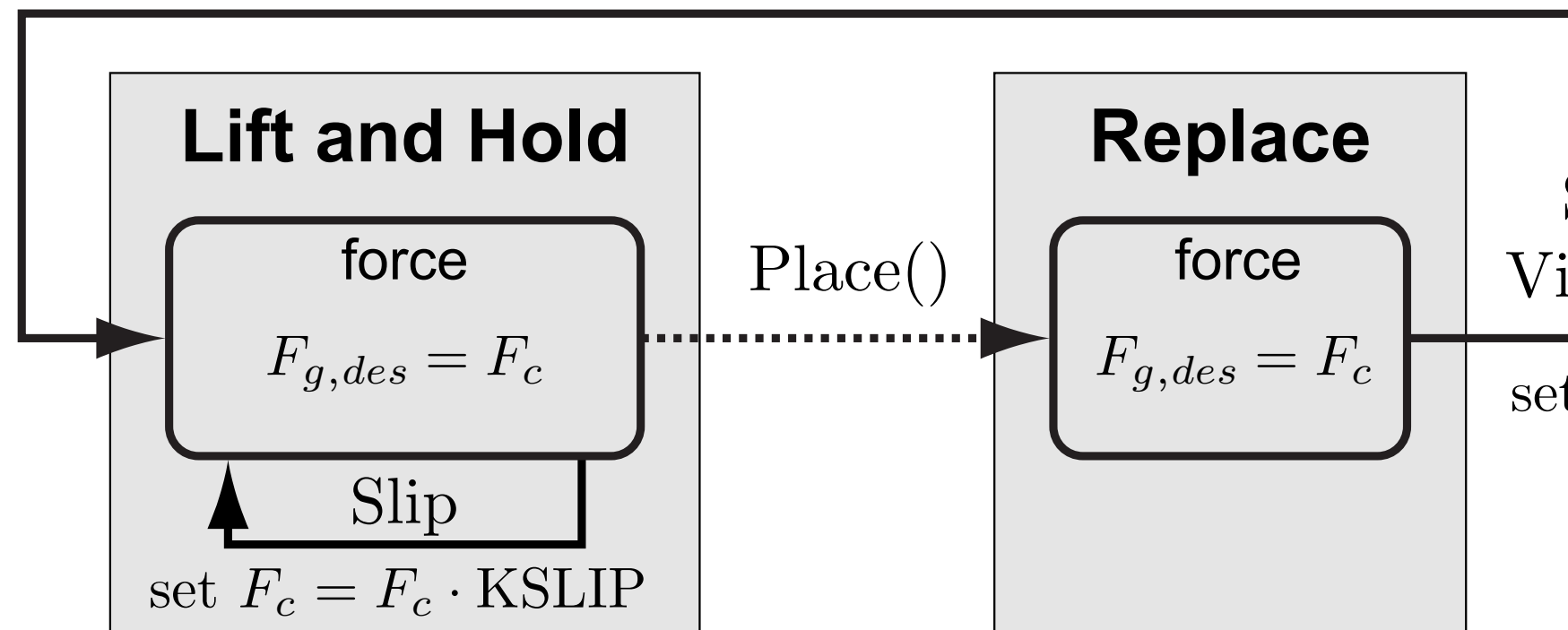
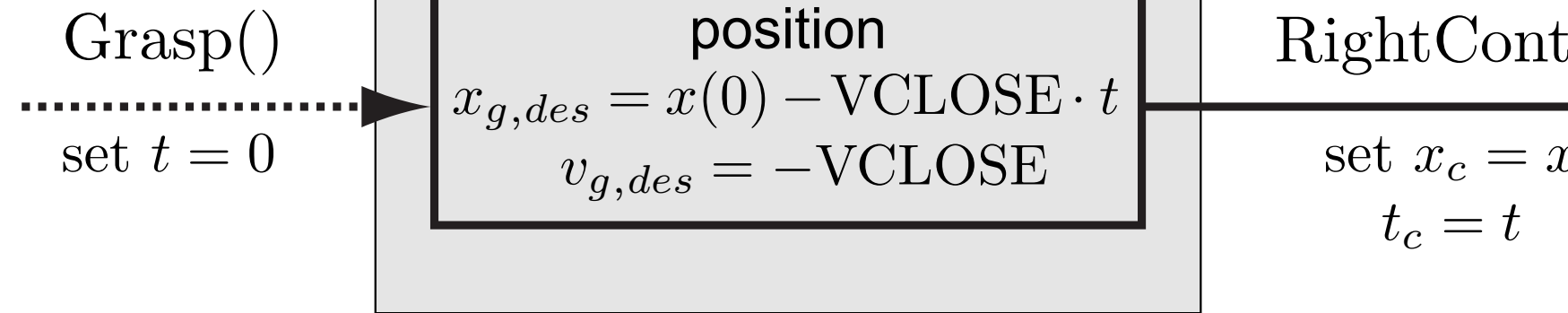
# Action-Phase Grasp Controller



# Action-Phase Grasp Controller



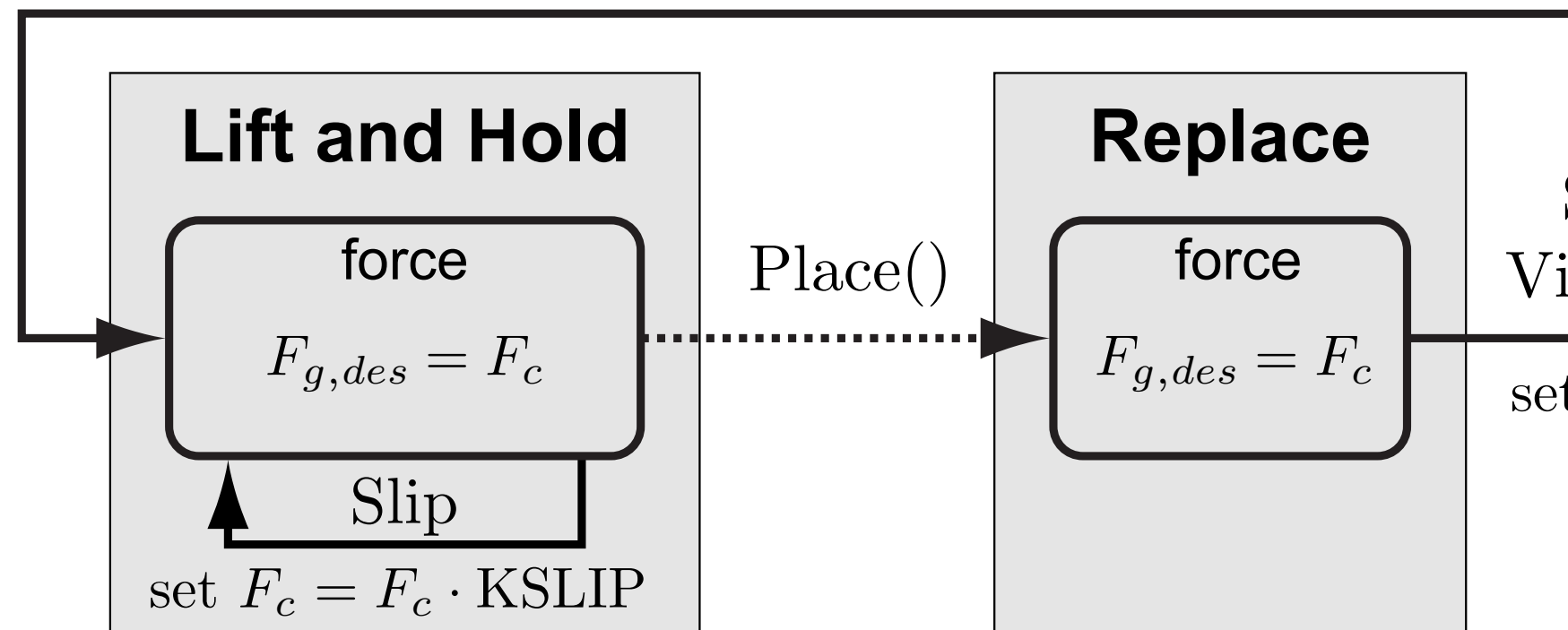
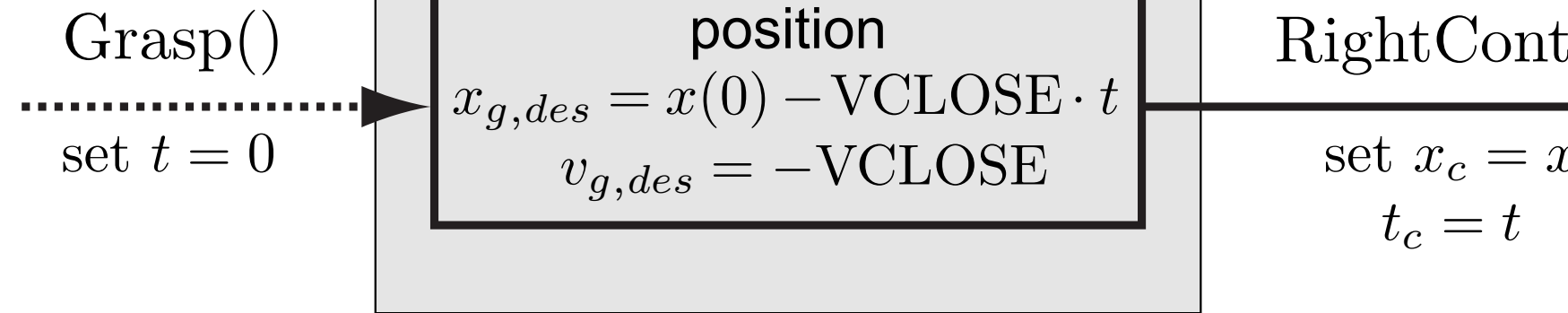
# Action-Phase Grasp Controller

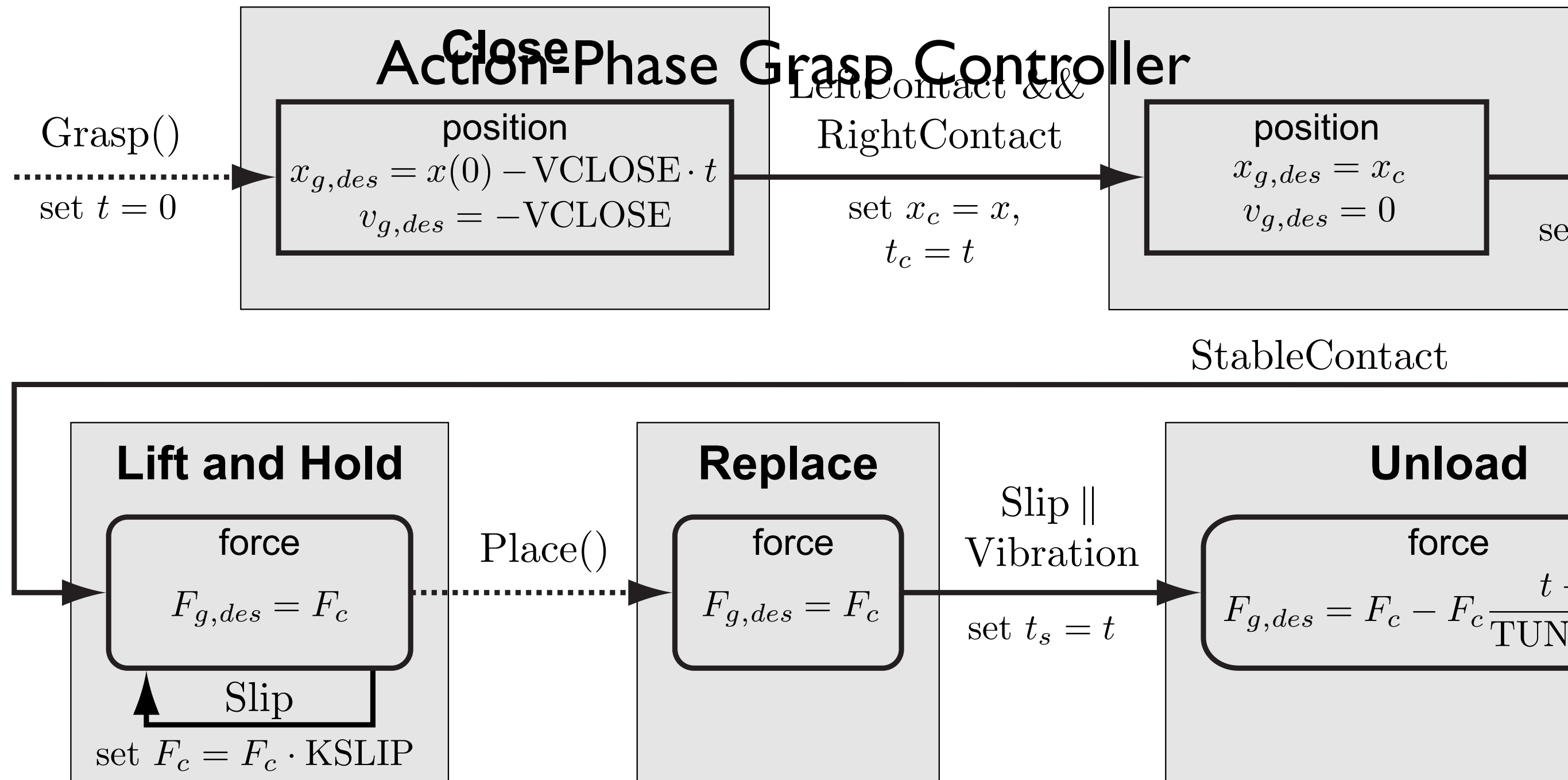


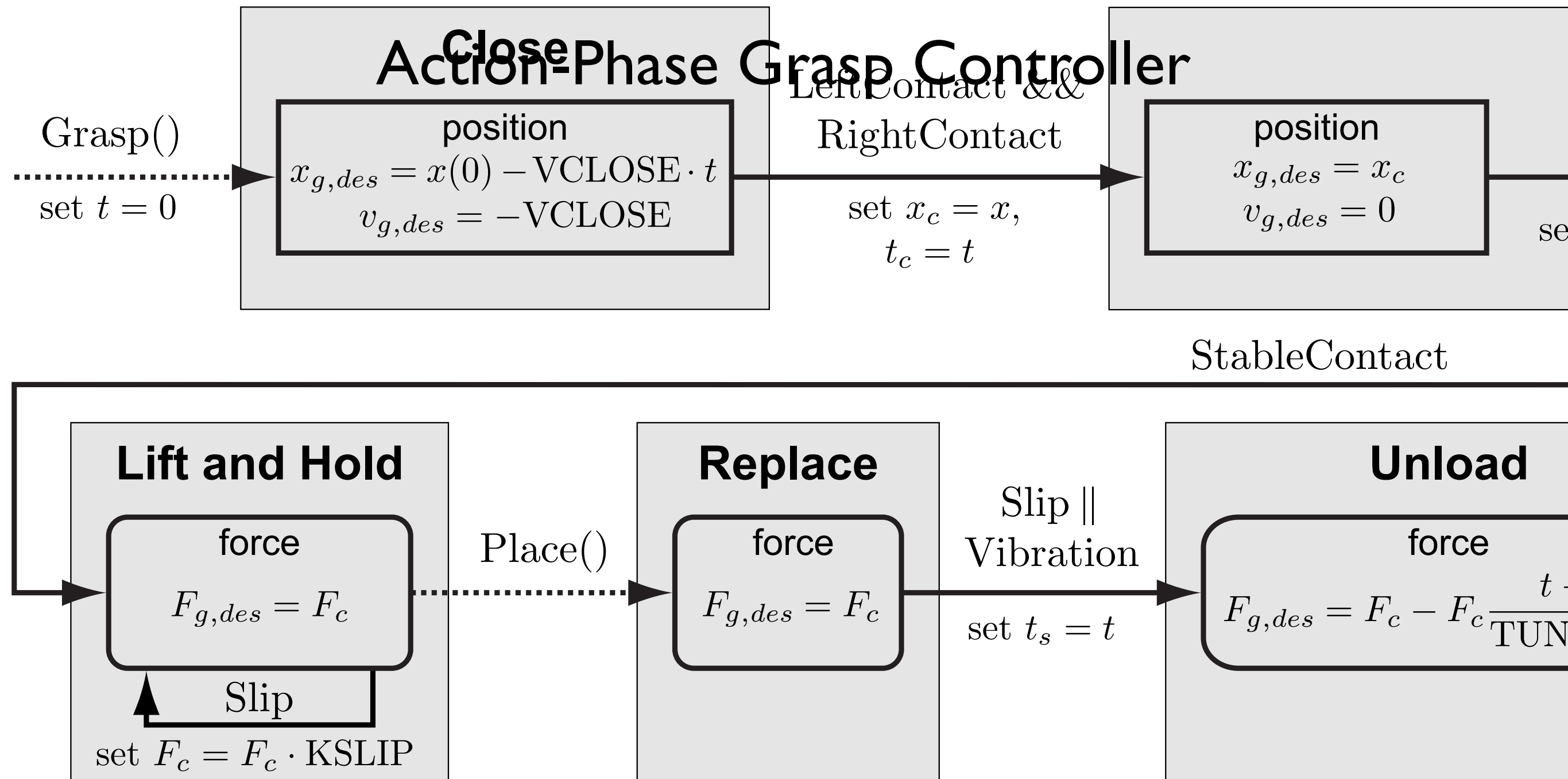
$$\text{Slip} = \left( |\tilde{F}_g| > F_g \cdot \text{SLIPTHRESH} \right) \\ \&\& \left( F_g^{BP} < \text{FBPTHRESH} \right)$$



# Action-Phase Grasp Controller

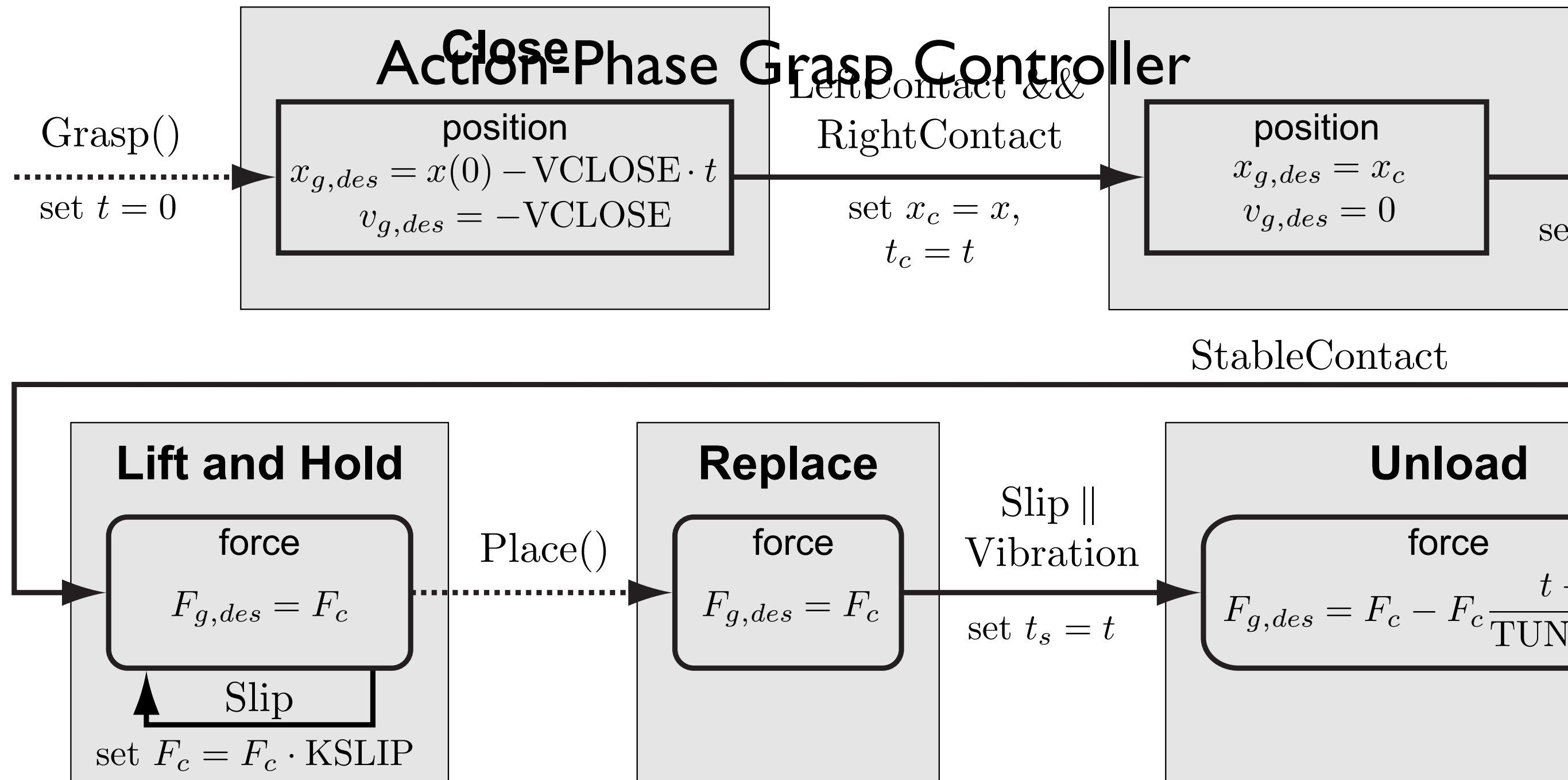


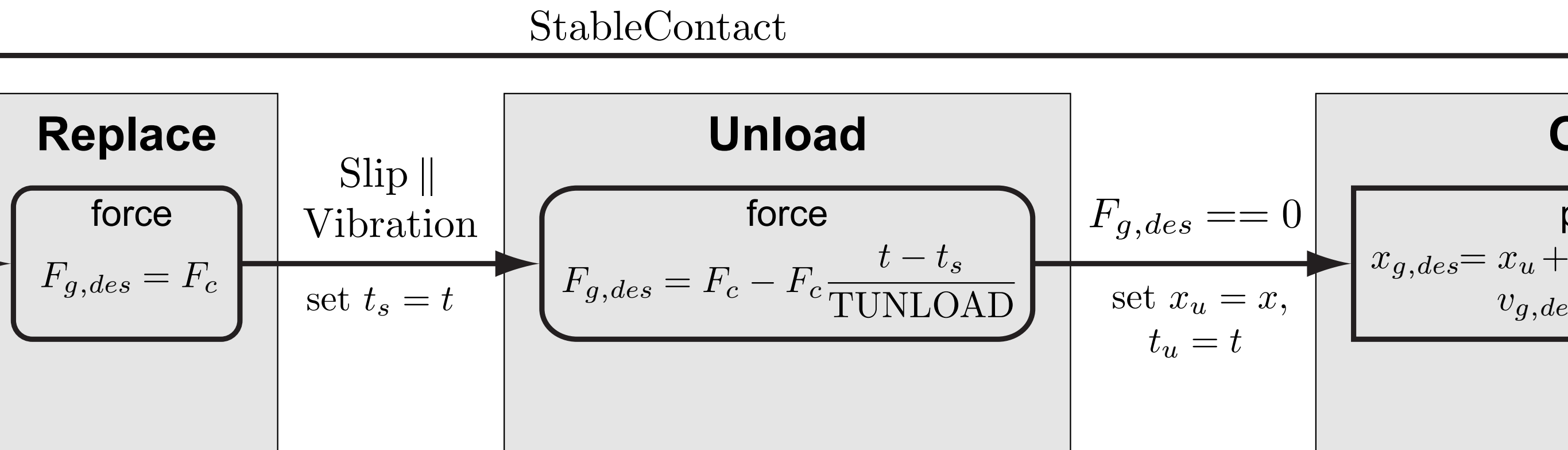
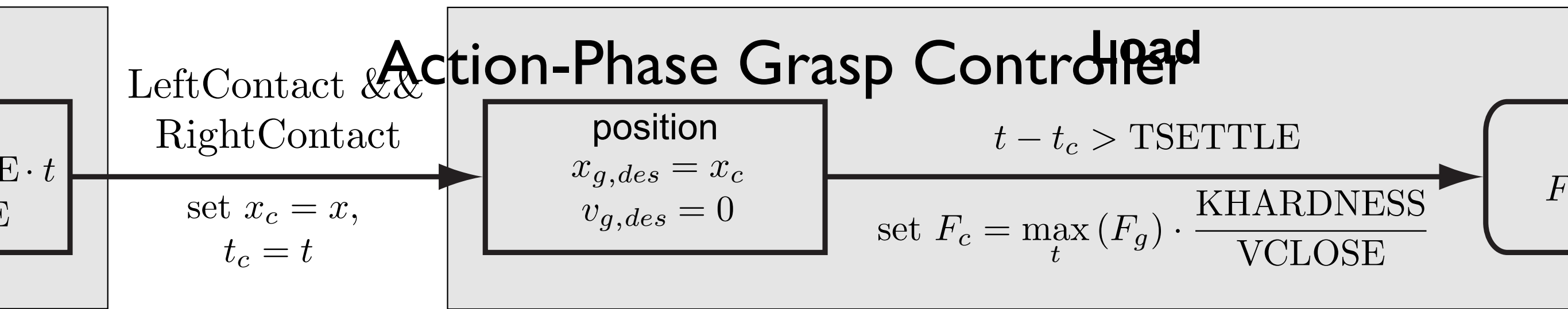




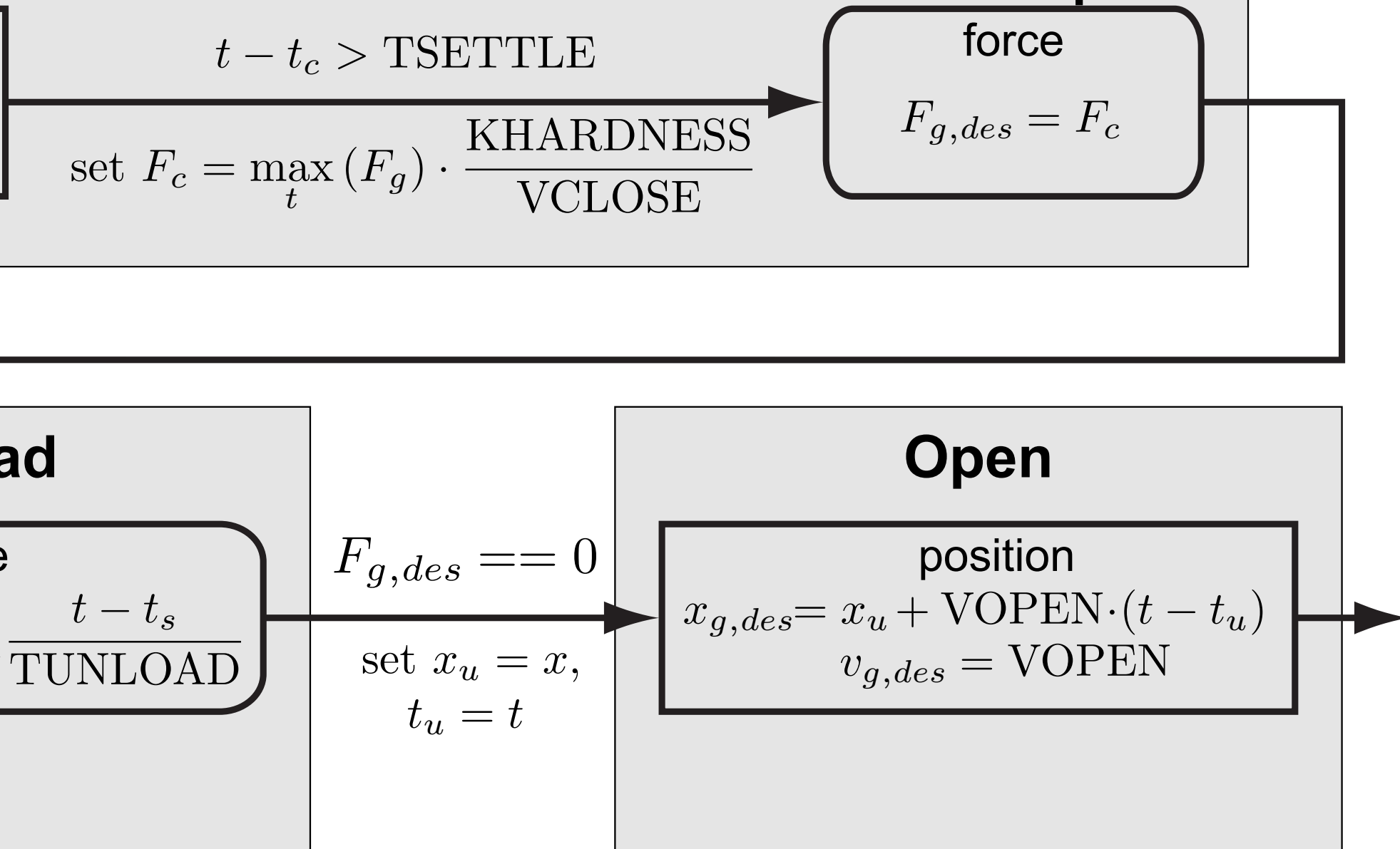
$$\text{Vibration} = (\tilde{a}_h > \text{ATHRESH})$$





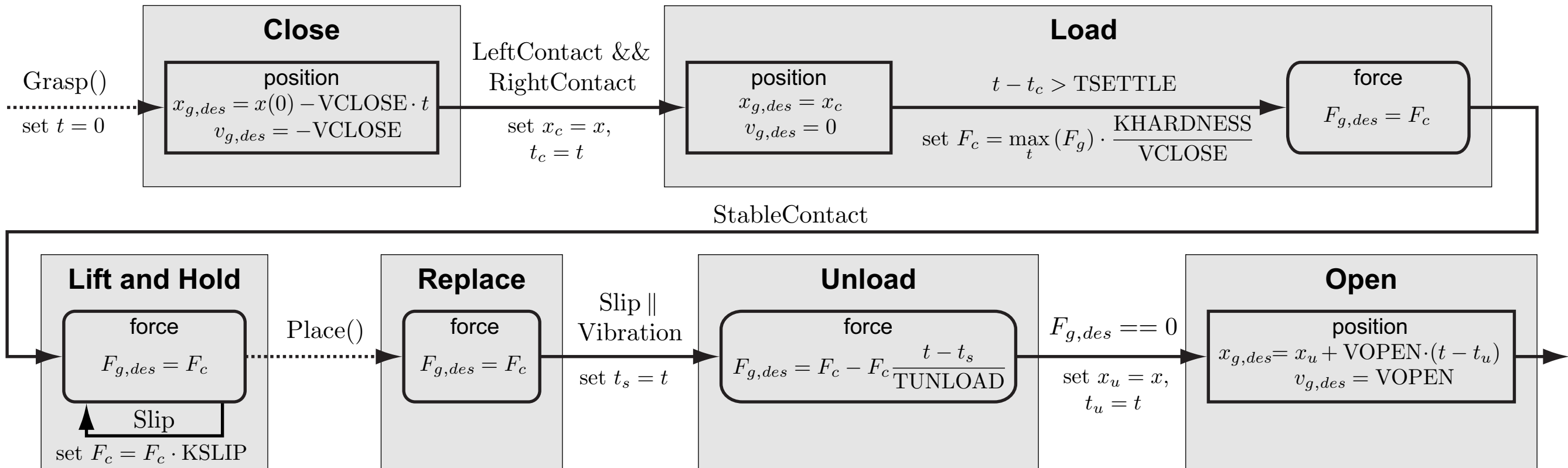


# Load Action-Phase Grasp Controller



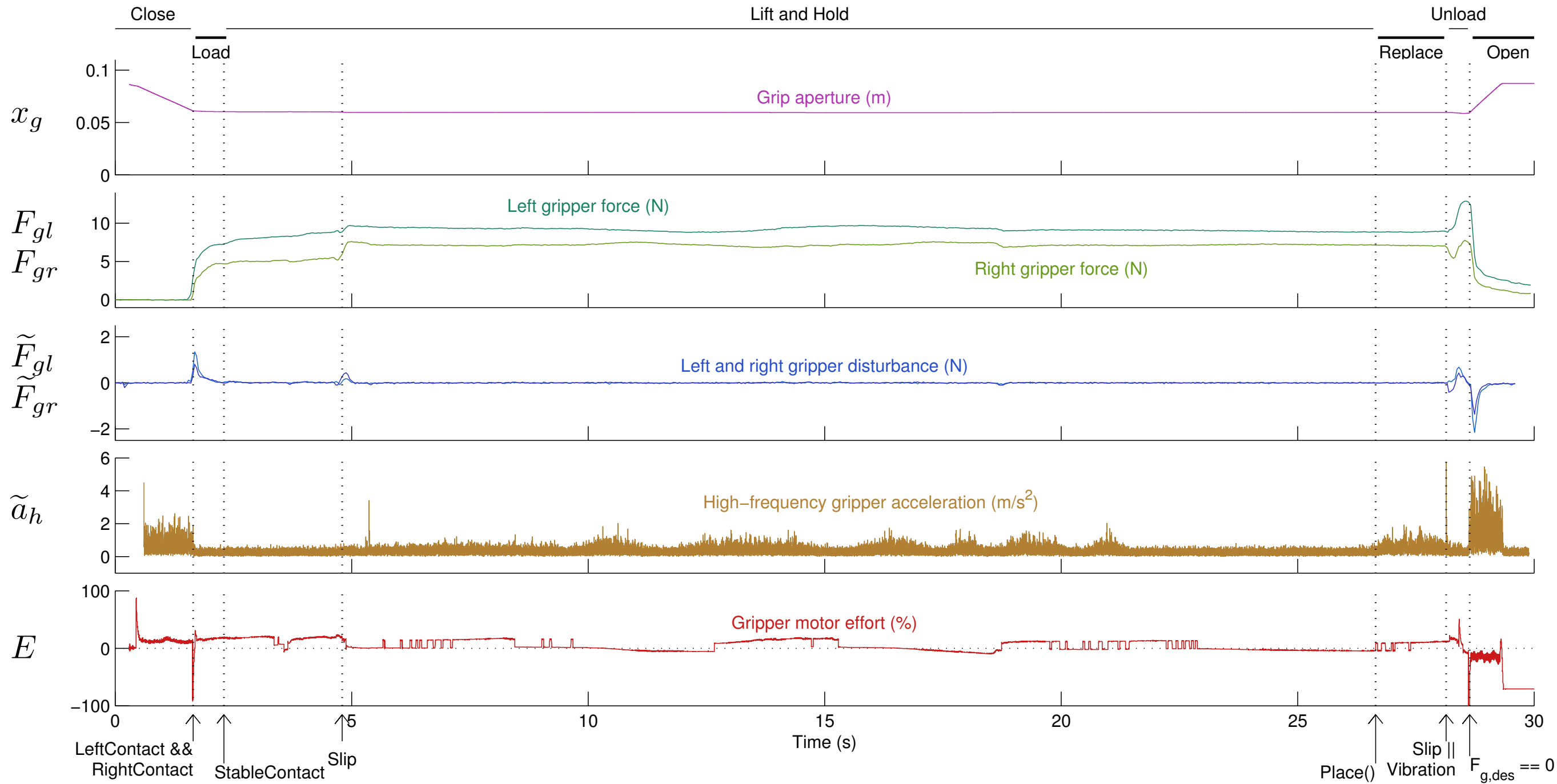


# Action-Phase Grasp Controller



# Sample Grasp Execution

# Sample Grasp Execution





Robotic Tactile Signals

Gripper Position and Force Controllers

**Action-Phase Grasp Controller**



# Robotic Tactile Signals

## Gripper Position and Force Controllers

### Action-Phase Grasp Controller







*Does it work?*



# Control Parameter Tuning

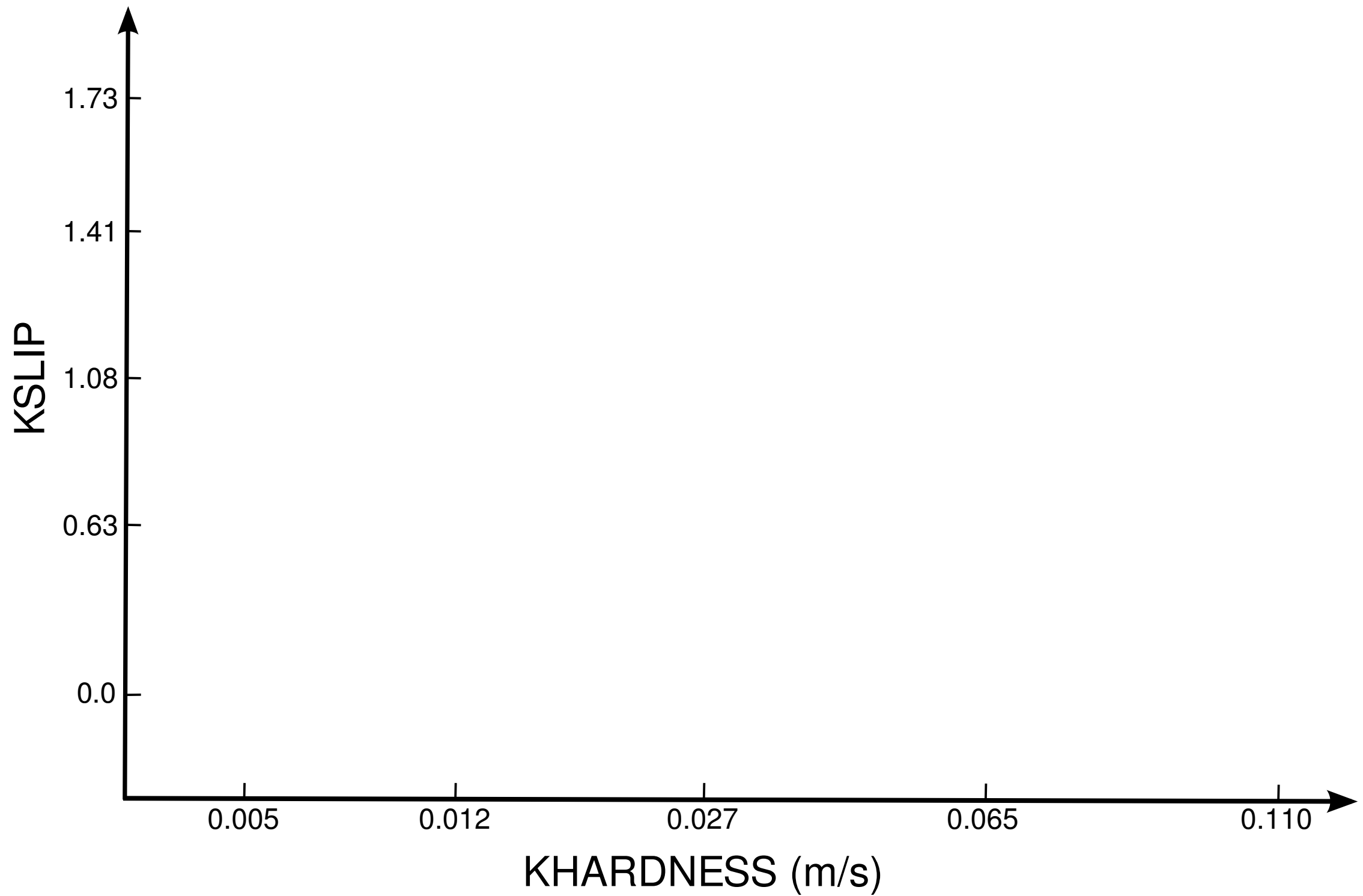
# Control Parameter Tuning



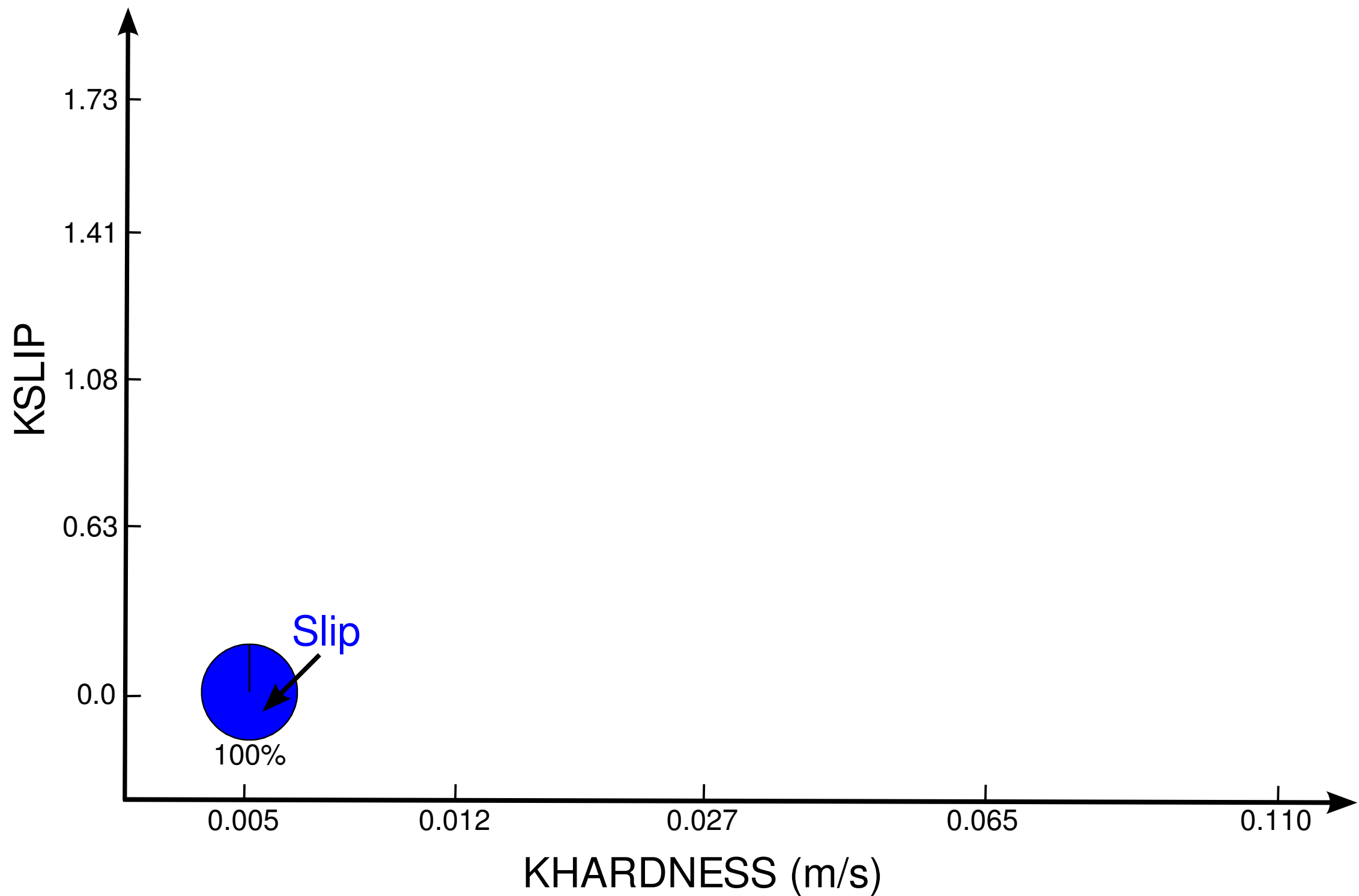


# Control Parameter Tuning

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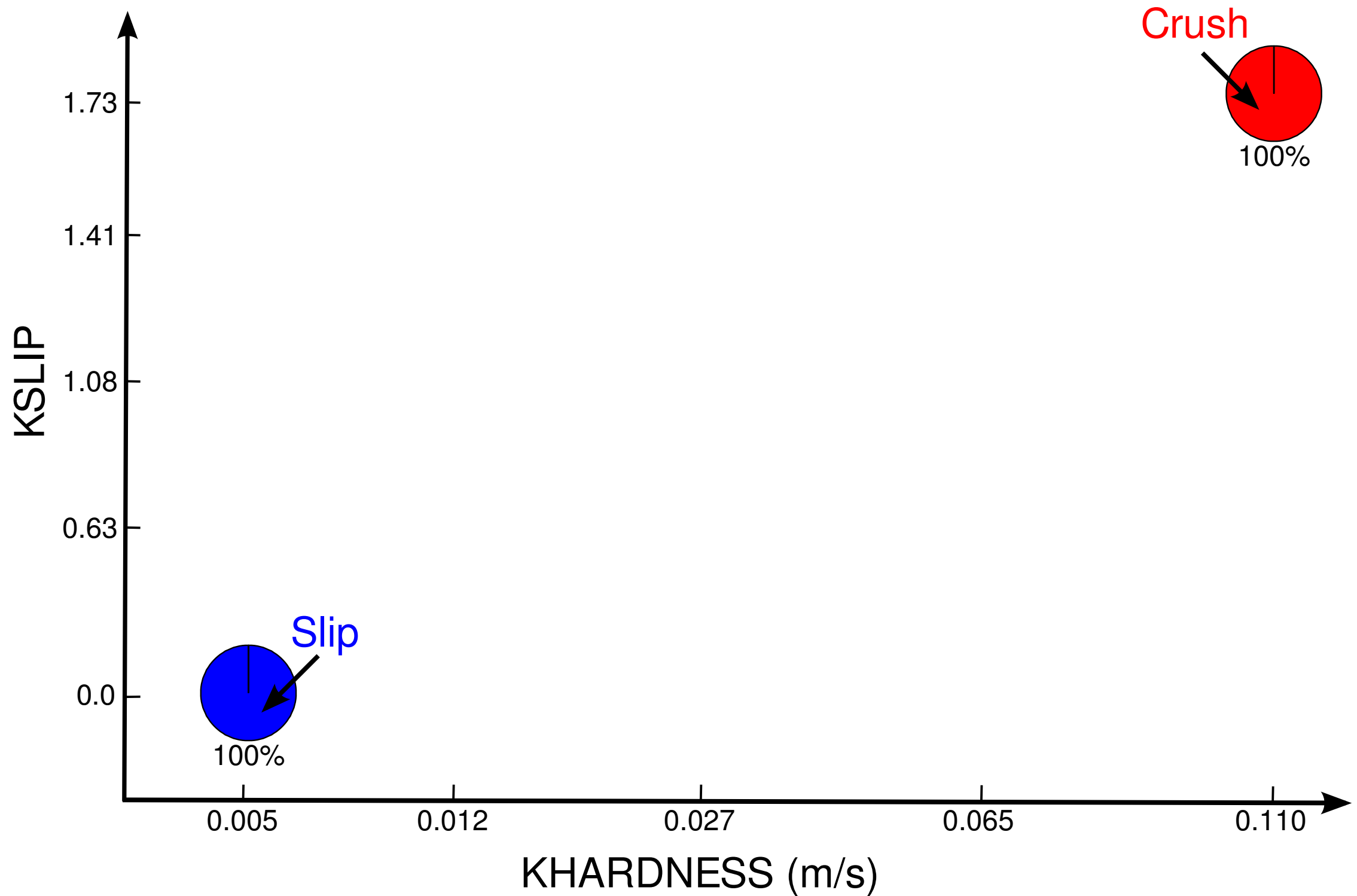


# Control Parameter Tuning

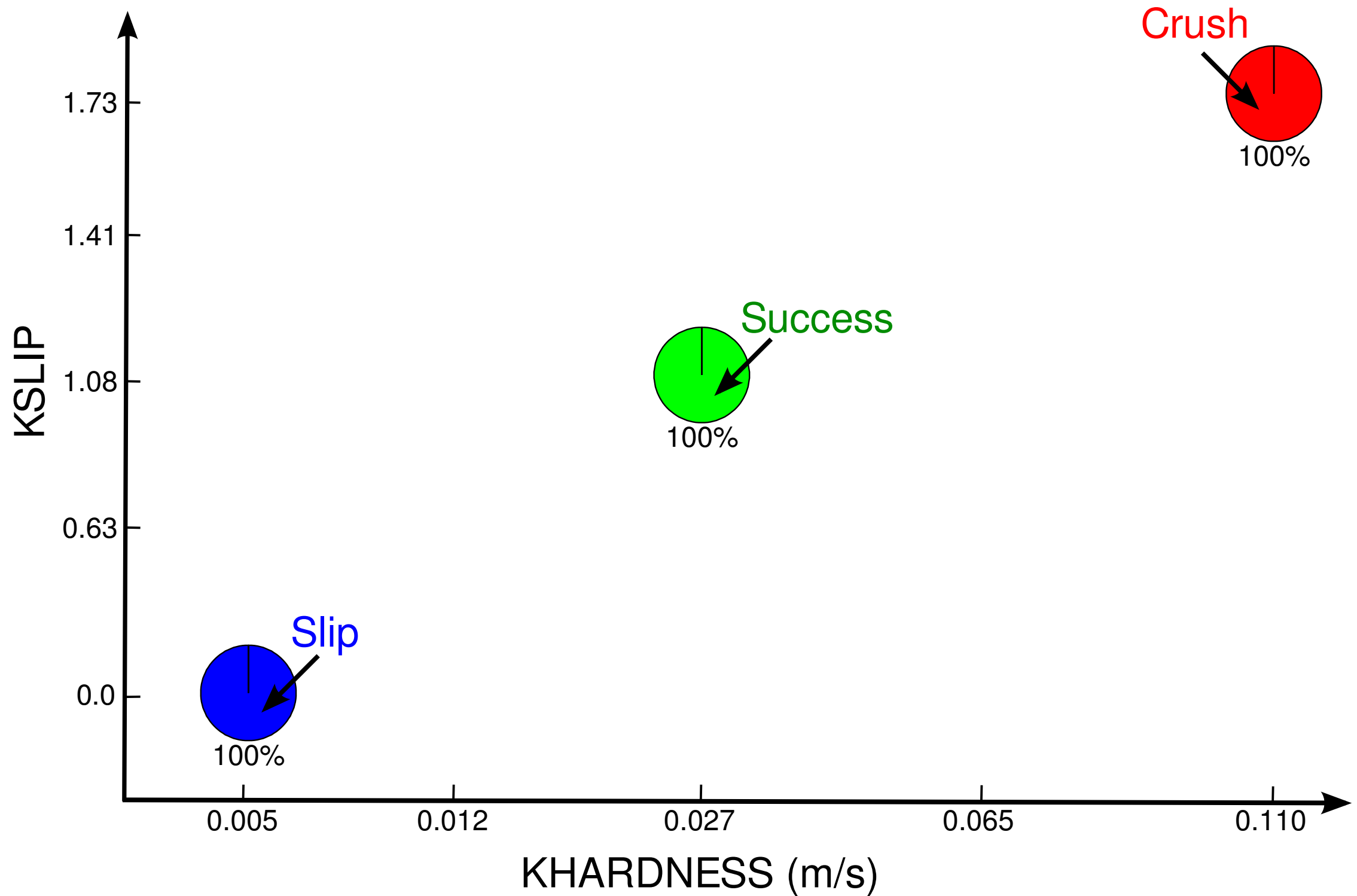




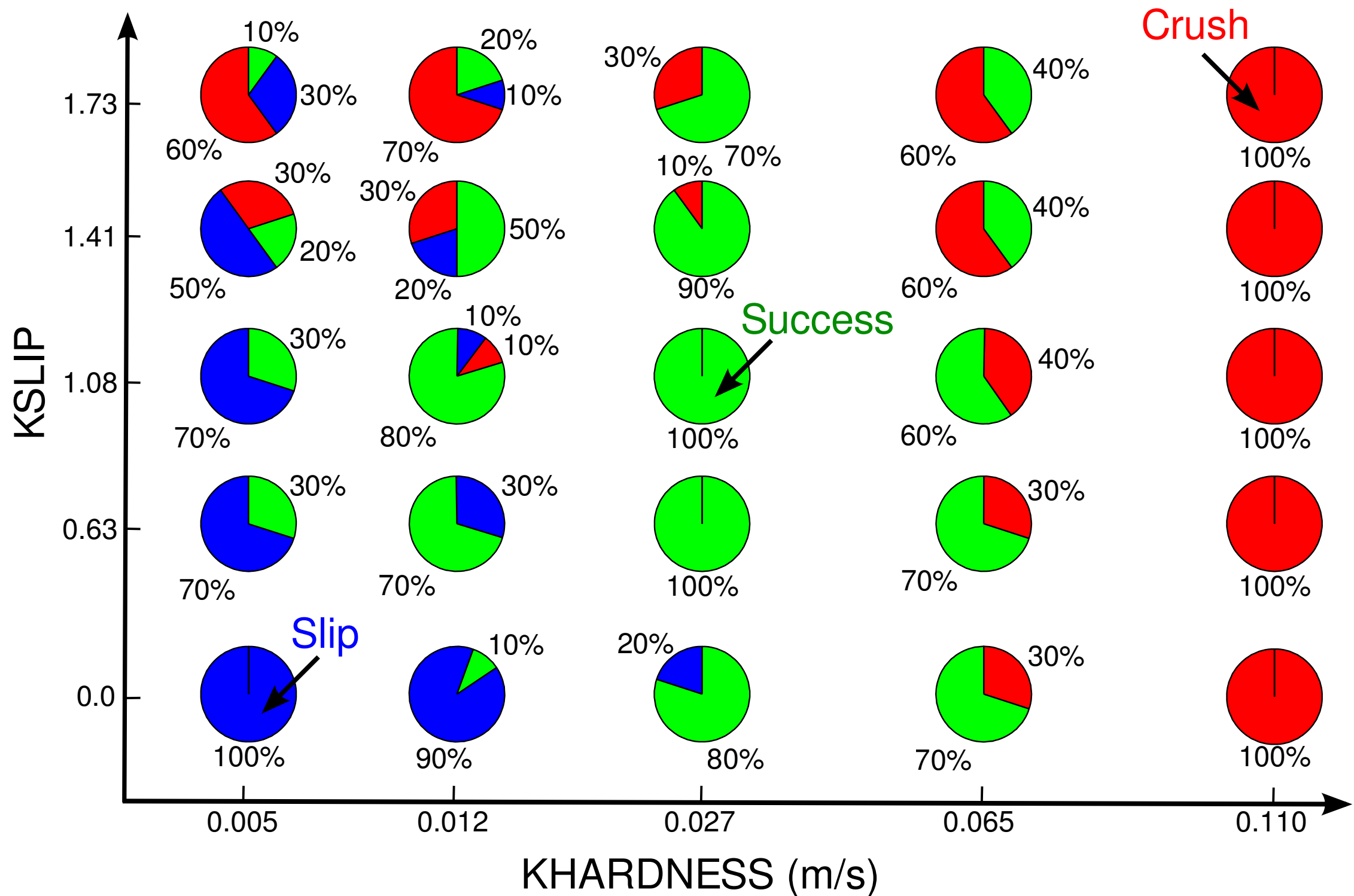
# Control Parameter Tuning



# Control Parameter Tuning



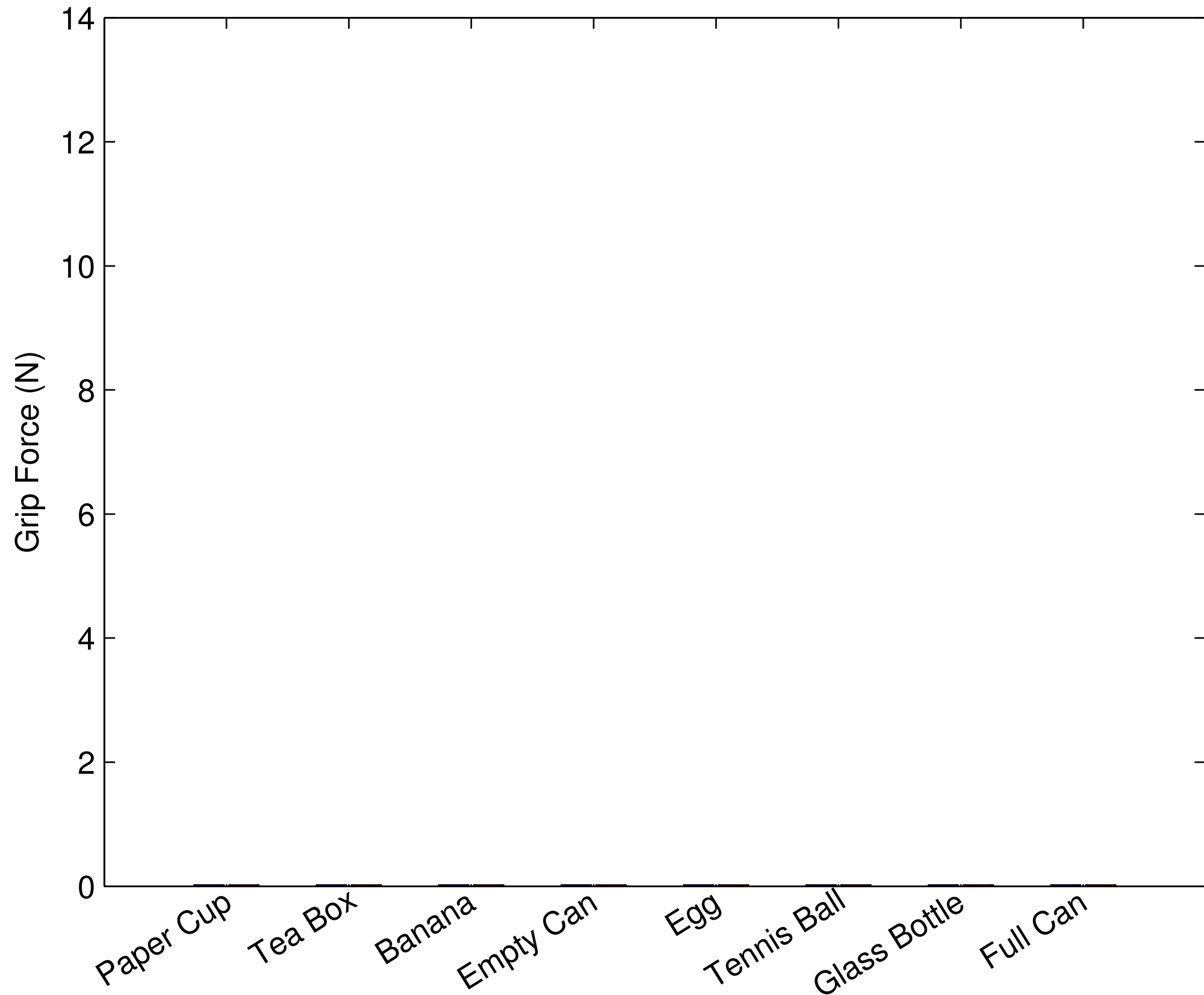
# Control Parameter Tuning



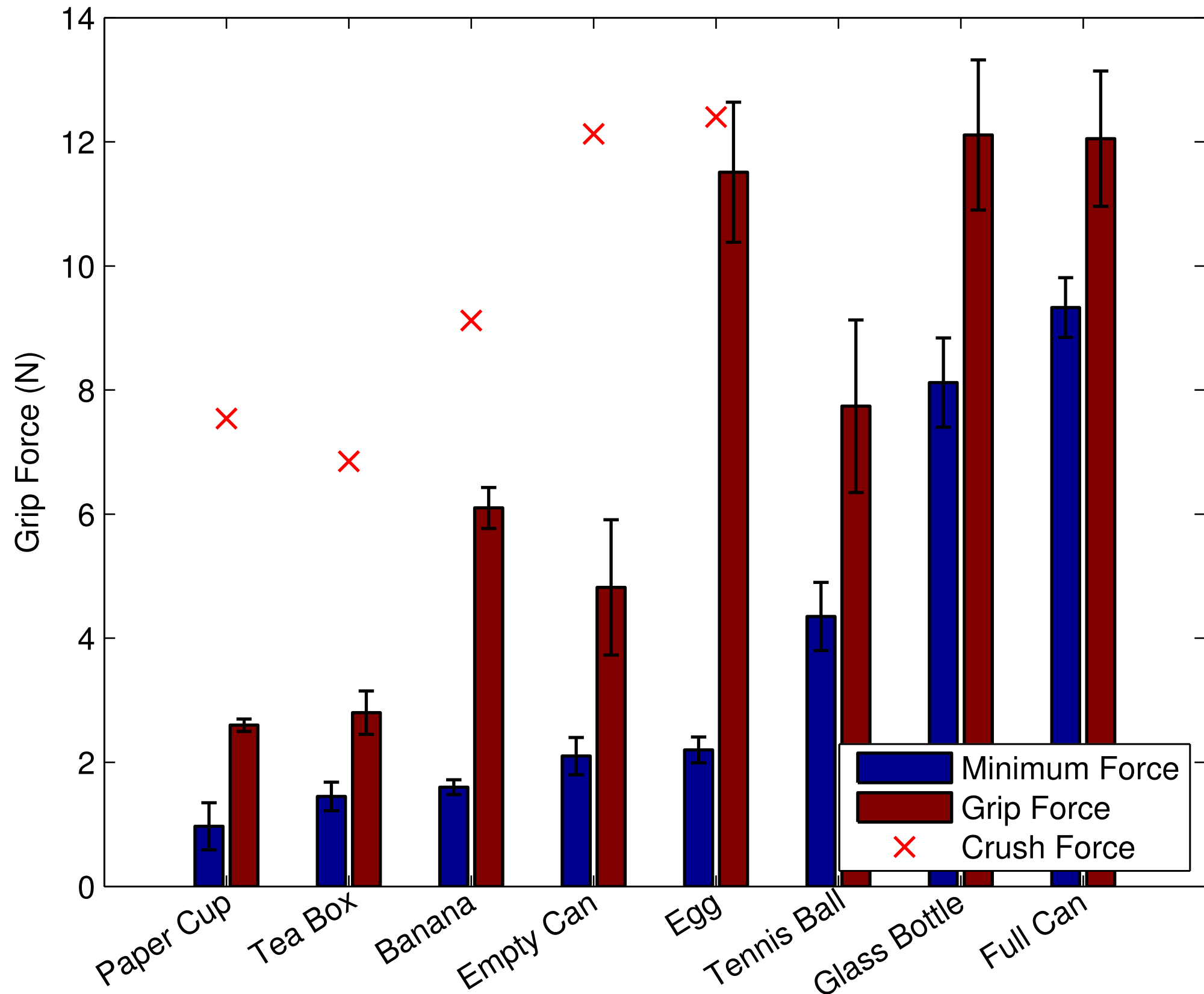


# Initial Grip Force Testing

# Initial Grip Force Testing



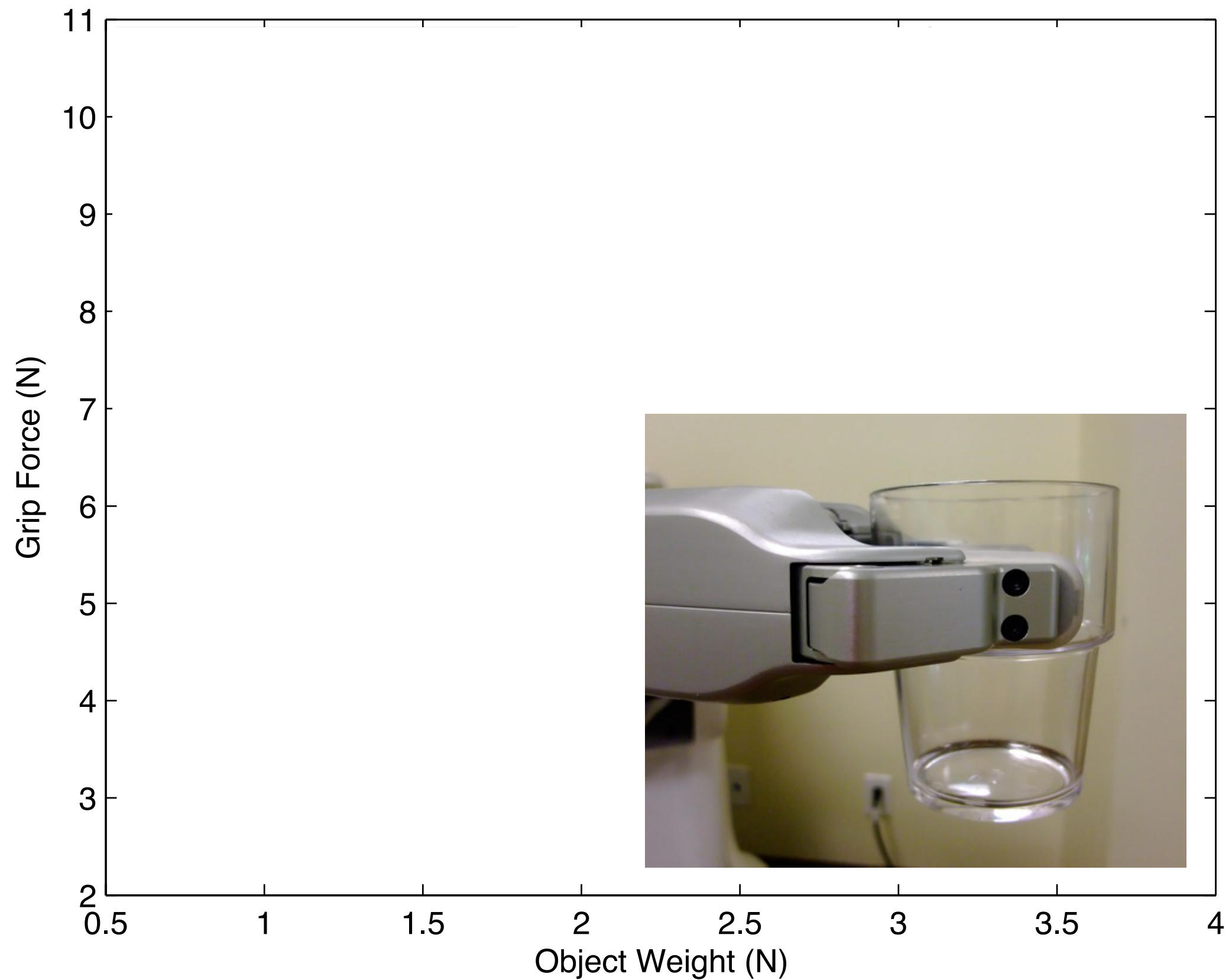
# Initial Grip Force Testing



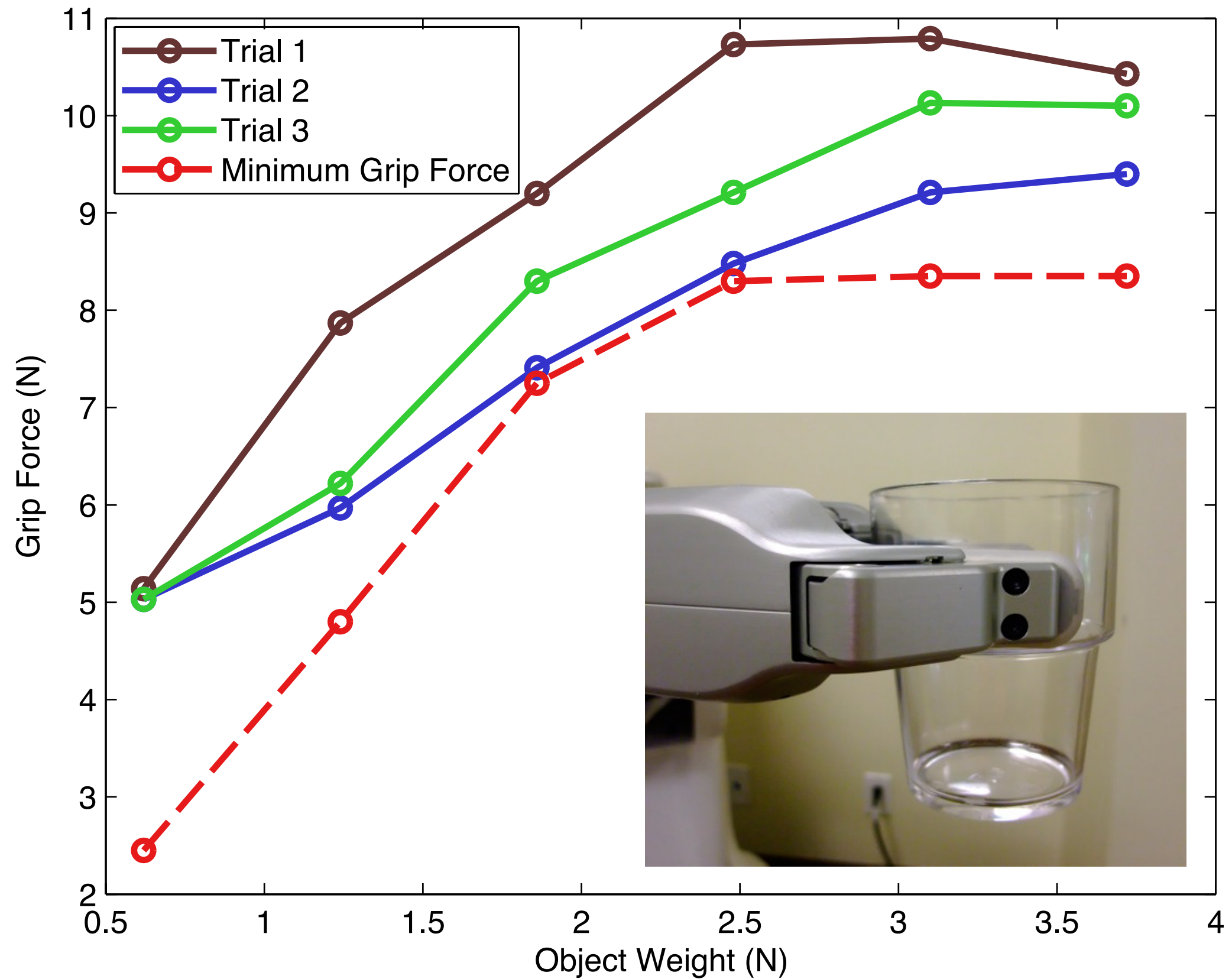
# Slip Reaction Testing



# Slip Reaction Testing



# Slip Reaction Testing



# 50 Object Marathon



# 50 Object Marathon







<https://code.ros.org> slipgrip\_controller







## OUTCOMES OF GRASP TESTING WITH EVERYDAY OBJECTS.

## 100% Motor Effort

## Our Methods

Crushed

## Rotated Within Grasp

# Slipped Within Grasp

Dropped





## OUTCOMES OF GRASP TESTING WITH EVERYDAY OBJECTS.

	100% Motor Effort	Our Methods
Crushed	30/30	
Rotated Within Grasp	5/50	
Slipped Within Grasp	2/50	
Dropped	2/50	





## OUTCOMES OF GRASP TESTING WITH EVERYDAY OBJECTS.

	100% Motor Effort	Our Methods
Crushed	30/30	1/30
Rotated Within Grasp	5/50	9/50
Slipped Within Grasp	2/50	4/50
Dropped	2/50	4/50



# Contact Sensing During Replace



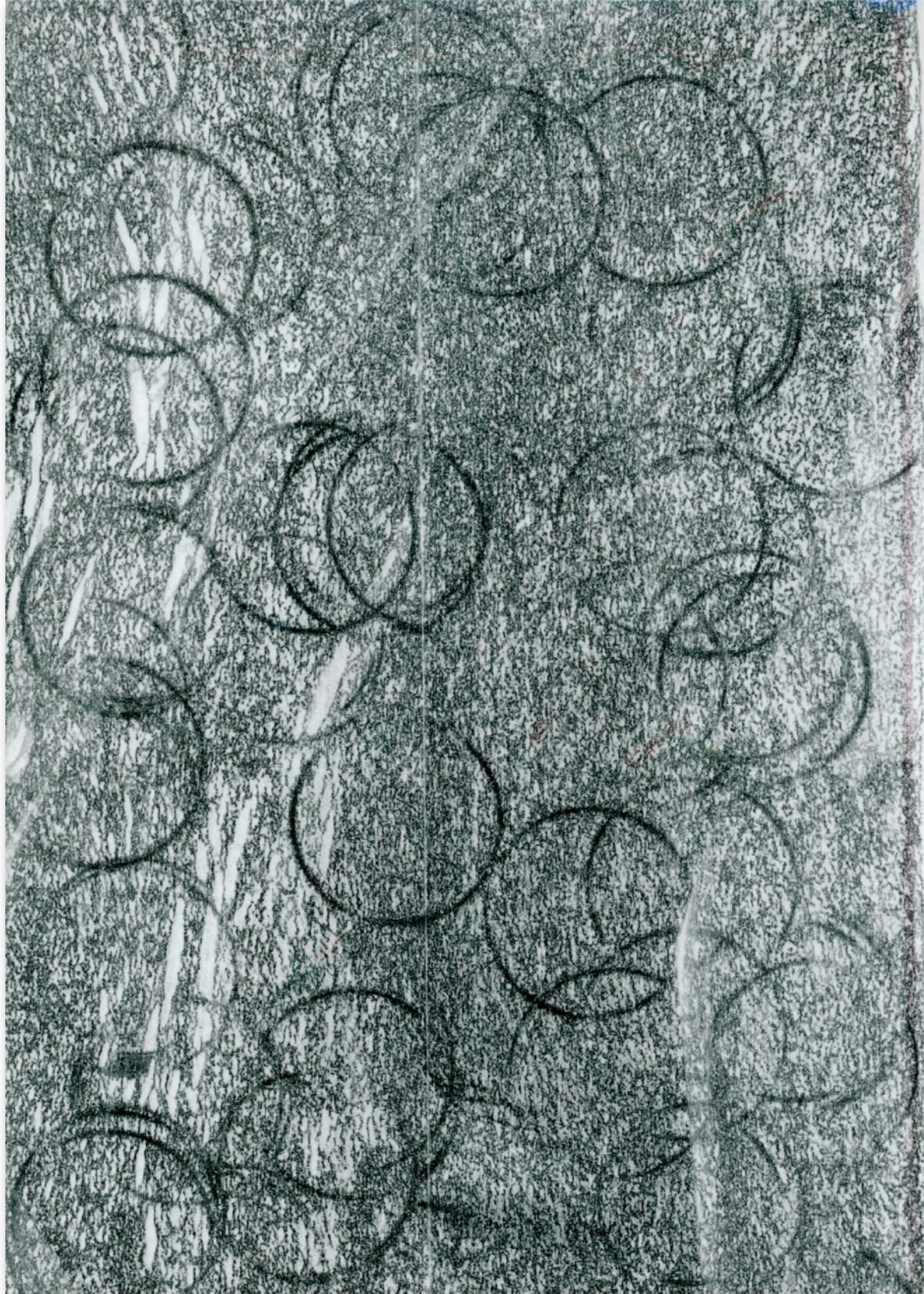
# Contact Sensing During Replace



# Contact Sensing During Replace



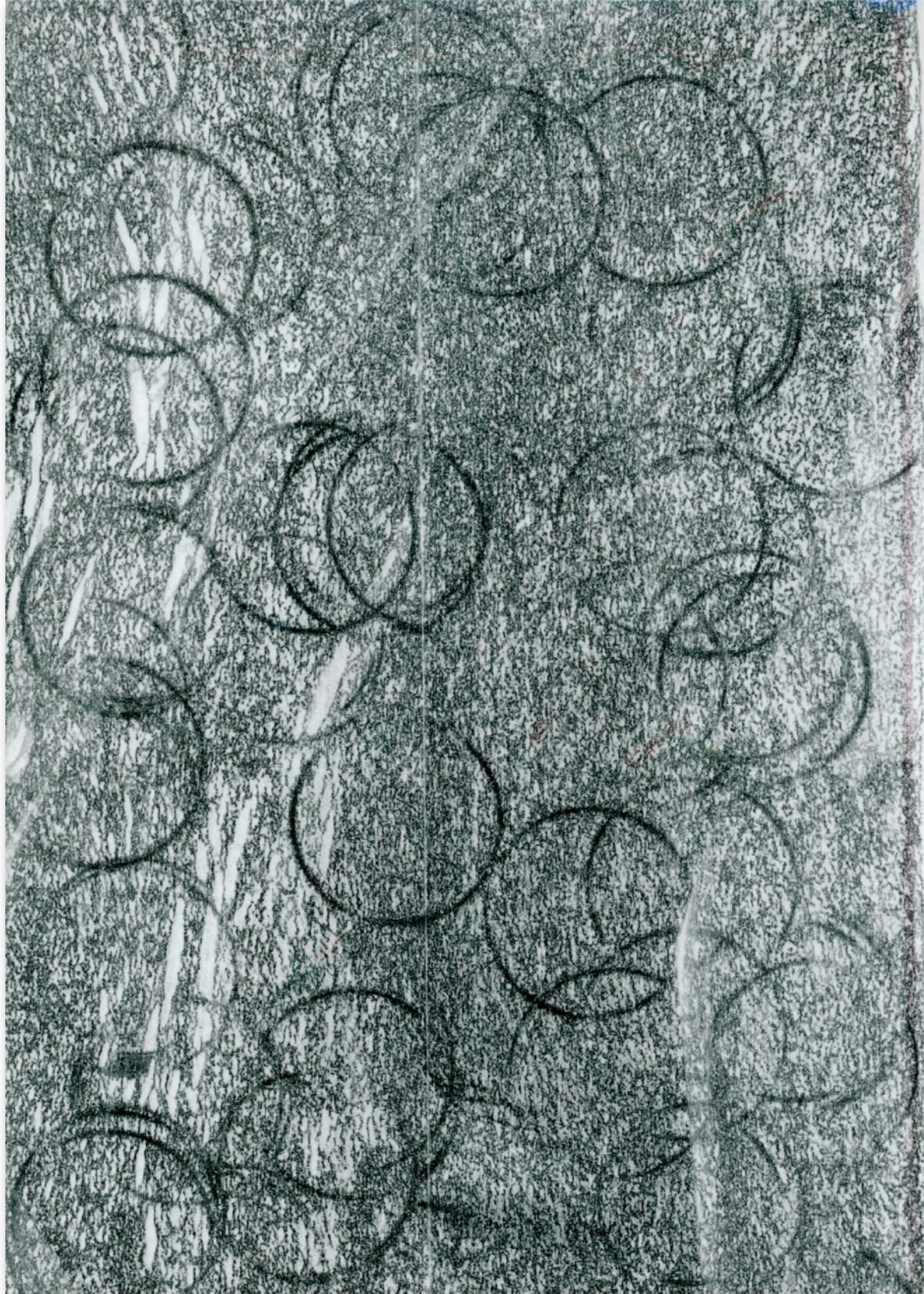
# Contact Sensing During Replace



Standard Controller



# Contact Sensing During Replace



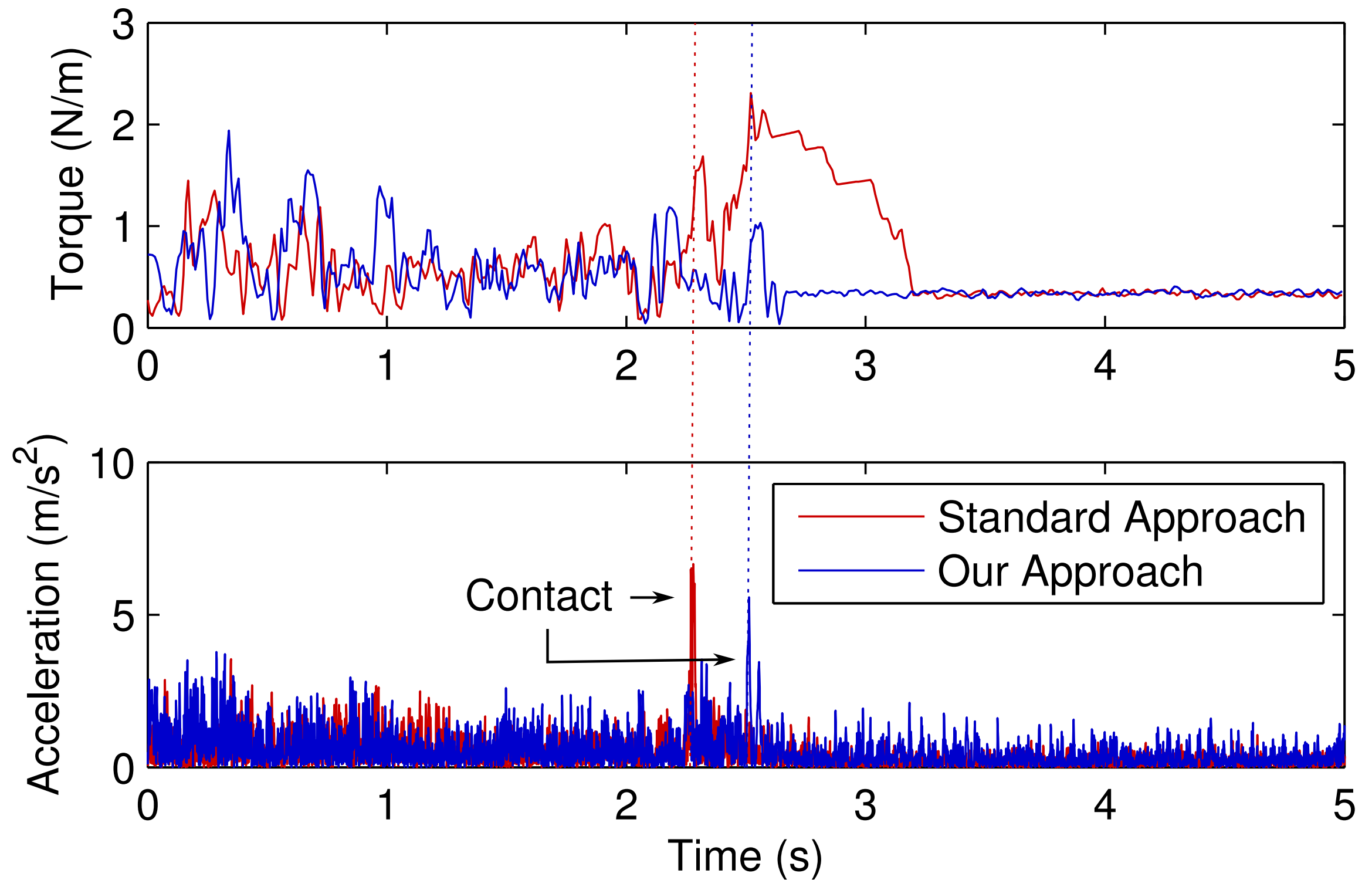
Standard Controller



Our Controller



# Contact Sensing During Replace







Robotic SA-I, FA-I, and FA-II tactile signals from fingertip pressure cells and a palmar accelerometer



Robotic SA-I, FA-I, and FA-II tactile signals from  
fingertip pressure cells and a palmar accelerometer

Low-level position and force controllers



Robotic SA-I, FA-I, and FA-II tactile signals from fingertip pressure cells and a palmar accelerometer

Low-level position and force controllers

Human-inspired action-phase grasp controller with tactile events



Robotic SA-I, FA-I, and FA-II tactile signals from fingertip pressure cells and a palmar accelerometer

Low-level position and force controllers

Human-inspired action-phase grasp controller with tactile events

Robust performance in picking up, transporting, and setting down common objects









# Another Kind of Tactile Intelligence

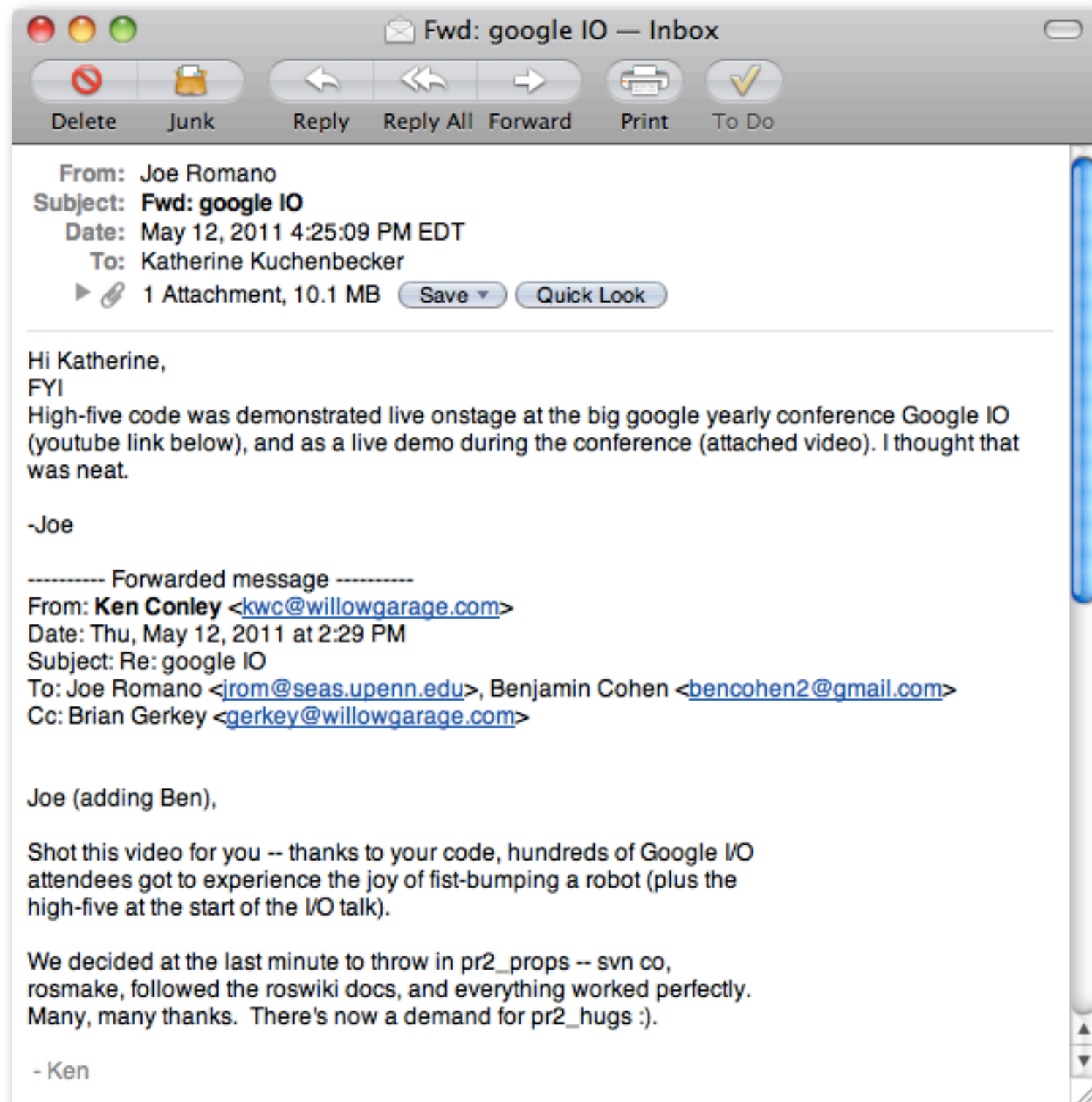


# Another Kind of Tactile Intelligence



Demo at Google I/O on Wednesday, May 11

# Demo at Google I/O on Wednesday, May 11



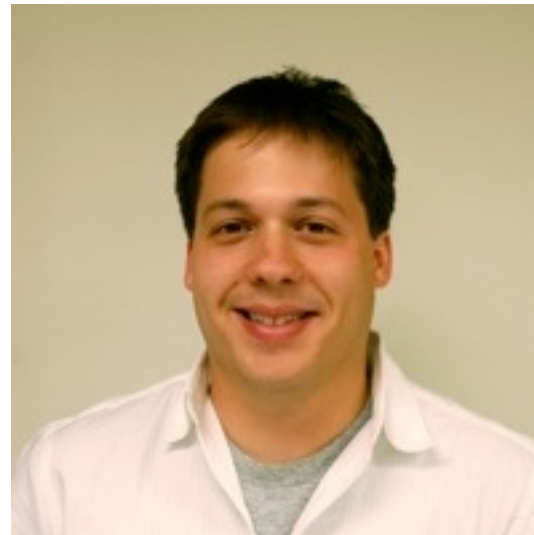


Demo at Google I/O on Wednesday, May 11

# Demo at Google I/O on Wednesday, May 11



# Acknowledgments



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**Günter Niemeyer, Ph.D.**  
Willow Garage Researcher



**Sachin Chitta, Ph.D.**  
Willow Garage Researcher



# Thank You



# Questions?



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