FA Equipment for Beginners (Programmable Controllers)

This course is intended for first time users to grasp an overview and understanding of programmable controllers.

L(NA)00259ENG

Introduction

Purpose of the Course

This course is intended for first time users to understand the basics of programmable controllers.

Introduction Course Structure

The contents of this course are as follows.
We recommend that you start from Chapter 1.

Chapter 1 - What is "Sequence Control"?

You will learn about the basics of sequence control, including the meaning of the term "sequence".

Chapter 2 - What is a "Programmable Controller"?

You will learn about the history, structure, operation, and programs of programmable controllers.

Chapter 3 - Application Examples

You will learn about application examples of programmable controllers.

Final Test

Passing grade: 60% or higher.

Introduction How to Use This e-Learning Tool

Go to the next page	>	Go to the next page.
Back to the previous page	<	Back to the previous page.
Move to the desired page	TOC	"Table of Contents" will be displayed, enabling you to navigate to the desired page.
Exit the learning	X	Exit the learning.

Cautions for Use

Safety precautions

When you learn based on using actual products, please carefully read the safety precautions in the corresponding manuals.

Chapter 1 What is "Sequence Control"?

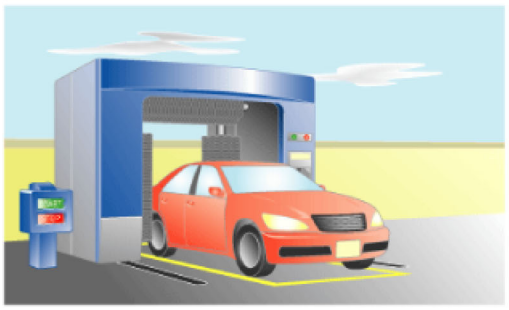
A programmable controller, which is also referred to as a "programmable logic controller" or "PLC", is a control device used for industrial automation.

Until now, countries around the world have developed their economies by mass-producing and consuming products.
Mass production is achieved by using machinery.
The efficiency of the mass production is further increased by automating machine operations.
In this chapter, let's learn about sequence control, which is the basics of industrial automation.

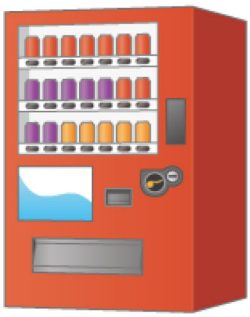
1.1 Meaning of "Sequence"

The term "sequence" refers to a succession or order in which events occur.
Accordingly, "sequence control" can be defined as the controlled operation of a machine according to a predetermined sequence.

Sequence control is widely used in our daily lives.
Vending machines and washing machines are just a couple of examples of machines that operate on the principle of sequence control.



Car-washing machines



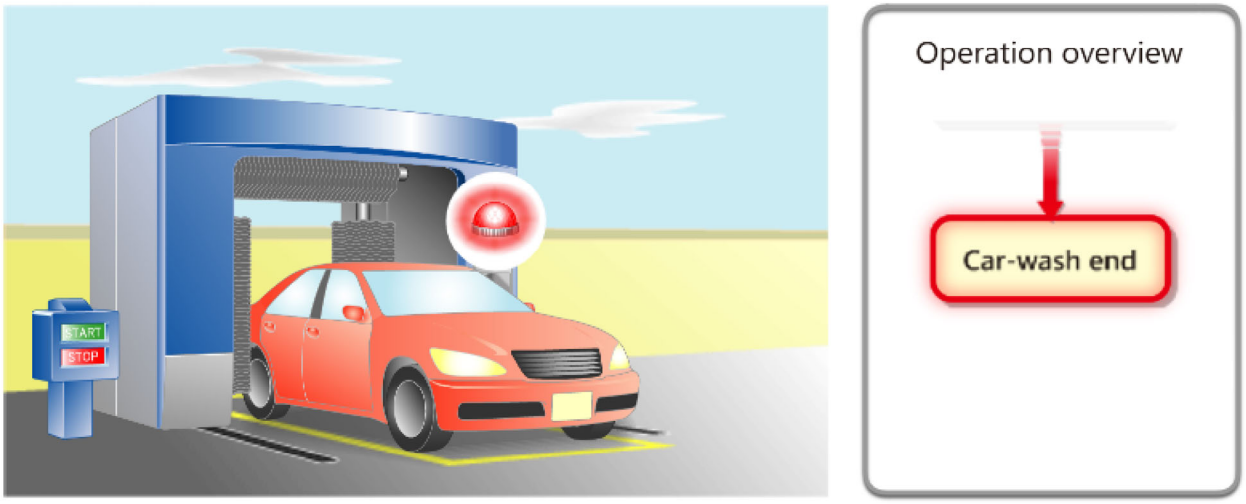
Vending machines

Washing machines

1.2 Sequence Control

Let's take a look at a sequence control example of a car-washing machine.

Click the [Play] button to start the video.



As you can see, the same operation can be repeated correctly and automatically for any number of times by using sequence control.

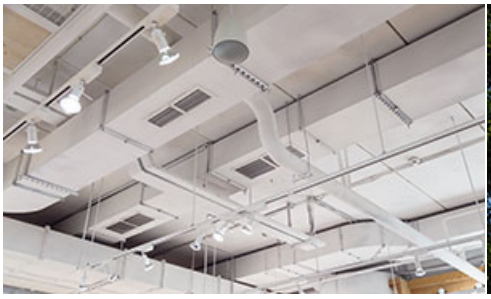
1.3 Application Examples of Sequence Control

Sequence control is used in many different industries.

Factories
Conveyors, robots

Leisure industry
Attractions and rides at amusement parks, water sprinkling system at golf courses, snow machines and lifts at ski resorts

Transportation system
Vehicle air conditioning system, tunnel ventilation system, monitoring system at stations, opening/closing system of hatch covers of container ships



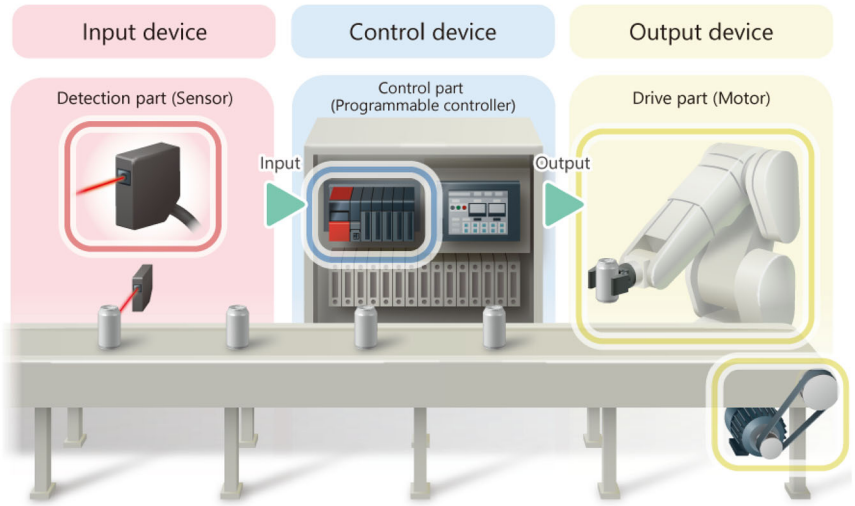
Construction industry
Air conditioning/pumping/lighting system, security monitoring system, emergency power generating system

Telecommunications industry
Power supply systems for mobile phone base stations

Theaters
Stage setting management system, lighting system

1.4 Devices Required for Sequence Control

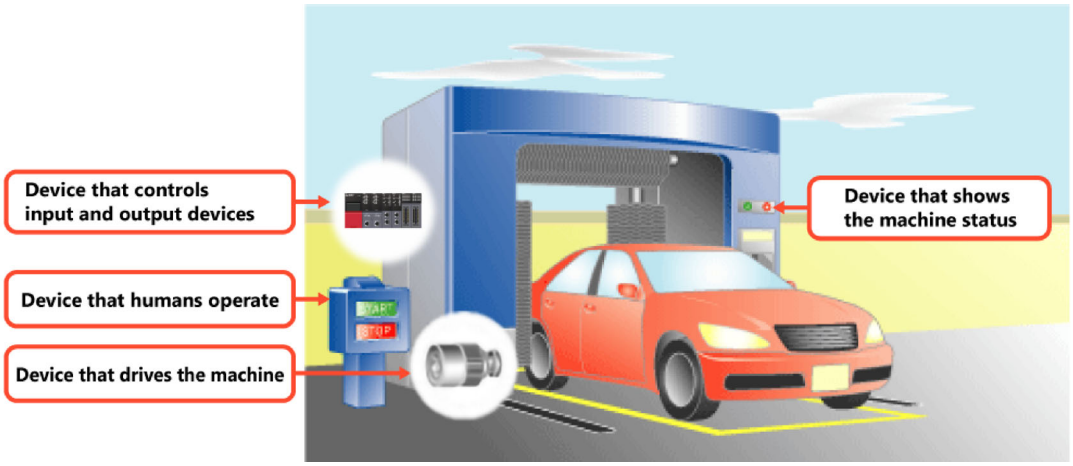
In this section, let's learn how sequence control work. The following devices are required for sequence control.



Device	Description
Input device	Device that humans operate (such as a start switch and a stop switch) Device that detects the machine status (such as a sensor and a proximity switch)
Control device	Device that controls input devices and output devices, and sends commands to drive a machine (such as a programmable controller)
Output device	Device that drives a machine (such as a motor and a solenoid valve) Device that shows the machine status (such as an indicator lamp and a warning buzzer)

1.4 Devices Required for Sequence Control

Now, let's take a look at specific examples of devices required for sequence control in a car-washing machine.



Device	Type of control	Device used (Example)
Input device	Device that detects the machine status	A proximity switch that detects a car approaching to the machine
	Device that humans operate	A start button to start car-washing, a stop button to stop car-washing
Control device	Device that controls input devices and output devices, and sends commands to drive a machine	A programmable controller that controls the machine
Output device	Device that shows the machine status	Lamps that show the machine status during car-washing
	Device that drives the machine	Pumps that supply cleaning solution and water, a motor to rotate brushes

1.5 Basic Sequence Control (Sequential Control)

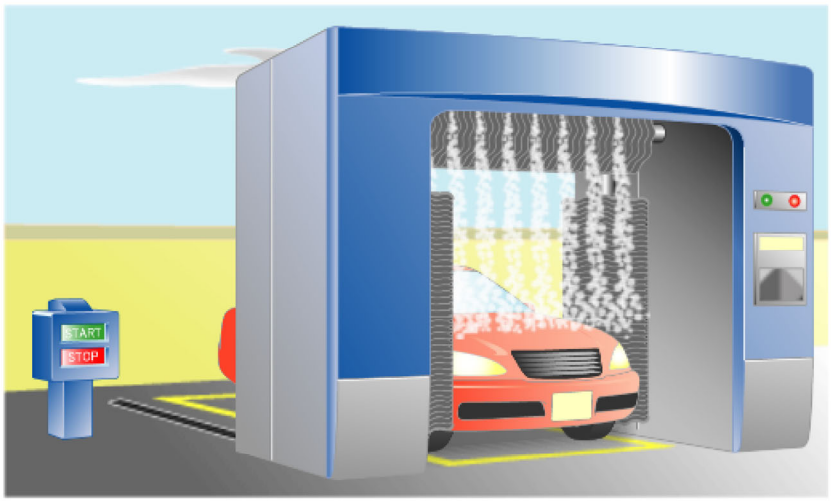
Basic sequence control is achieved by integrating the following controls into the operation of a machine.

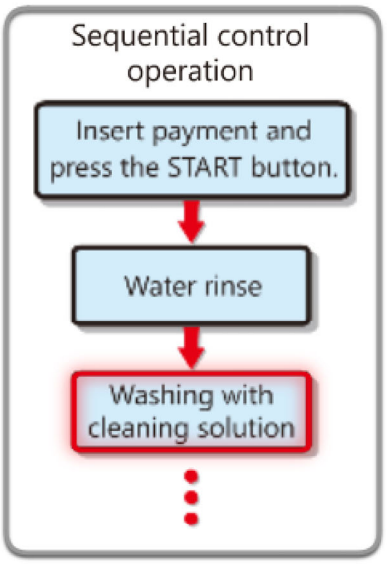
・ Sequential control ・ Conditional control ・ Time limit control ・ Counting control

(1) Sequential control

The operation of the machine is performed from one step to another according to a predetermined sequence. This type of control is called "sequential control". In the example of the car-washing machine, the same operation is automatically repeated for any number of times according to the predetermined sequence.

Click the [Play] button to start the video.



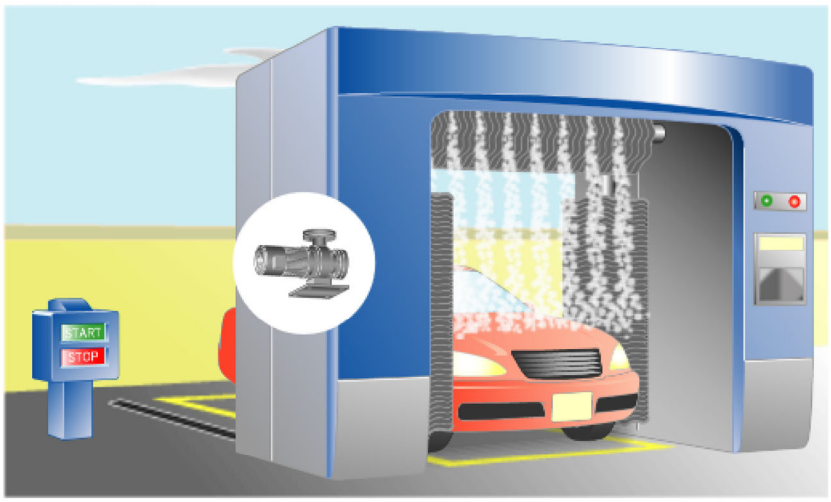


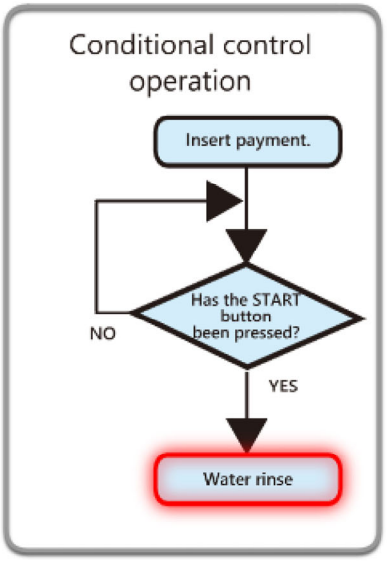
As shown in the sequential control example above, a series of operations are performed one step to another according to a predetermined sequence.

(2) Conditional control

The operation commands to the control target are determined by a condition. This type of control is called "conditional control". In the example of the car-washing machine, car-washing starts only after payment is inserted.

Click the [Play] button to start the video.





As shown in the conditional control example above, the operation is performed based on a condition.

1.5 Basic Sequence Control (Time Limit Control)

(3) Time limit control

The operation commands to the control target are determined by a preset time and timing. This type of control is called "time limit control".
The timer function is required for time limit control.

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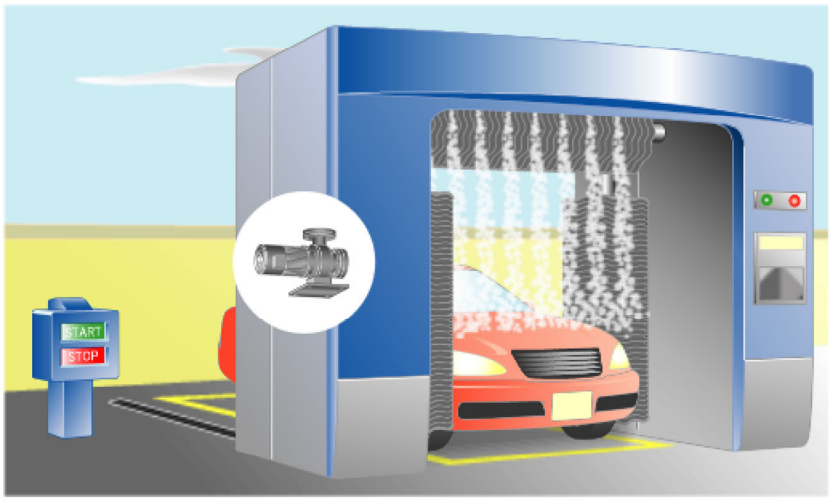
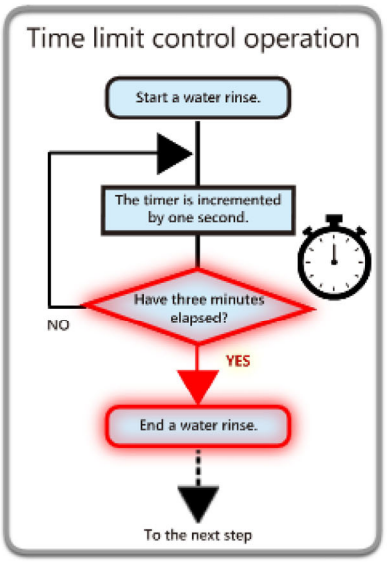




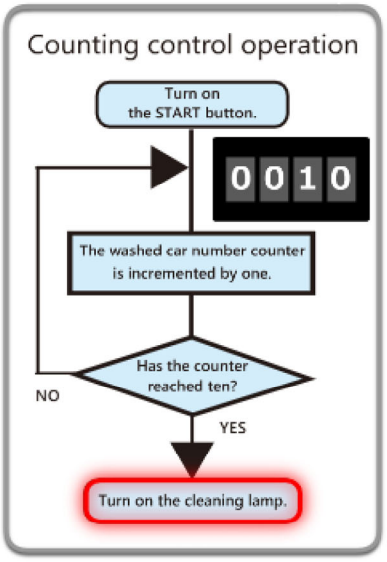
As shown in the time limit control example above, the currently running control switches to next control after the set period of time has elapsed.

(4) Counting control

The operation commands to the control target are determined by a count, such as the number of products and the number of machine operations. This type of control is called "counting control".
The counter function is required for counting control.

Click the [Play] button to start the video.

In the counting control example above, after ten cars are washed, a cleaning lamp turns on and the cleaning process starts.



Chapter 2 What is a "Programmable Controller"?

In Chapter 1, you have learned about sequence control.

In this chapter, let's learn about programmable controllers.

2.1 History

Sequence control using contact relays was dominant in the 1960s. However, this type of sequence control was extremely time-consuming. Making a change in the control circuits whenever the device, equipment, or production system was replaced or updated was very complicated.

Meanwhile, the requirements for a new sequence control system to replace the one using contact relays were presented by an automobile manufacturer in the United States. As a result, the first programmable controller was developed as a controller that satisfies those requirements.

1969

The first programmable controllers were introduced to the market by seven manufacturers in the United States.

1970 to 1976

The first programmable controllers manufactured in Japan were introduced.
The first general-purpose programmable controllers appeared.

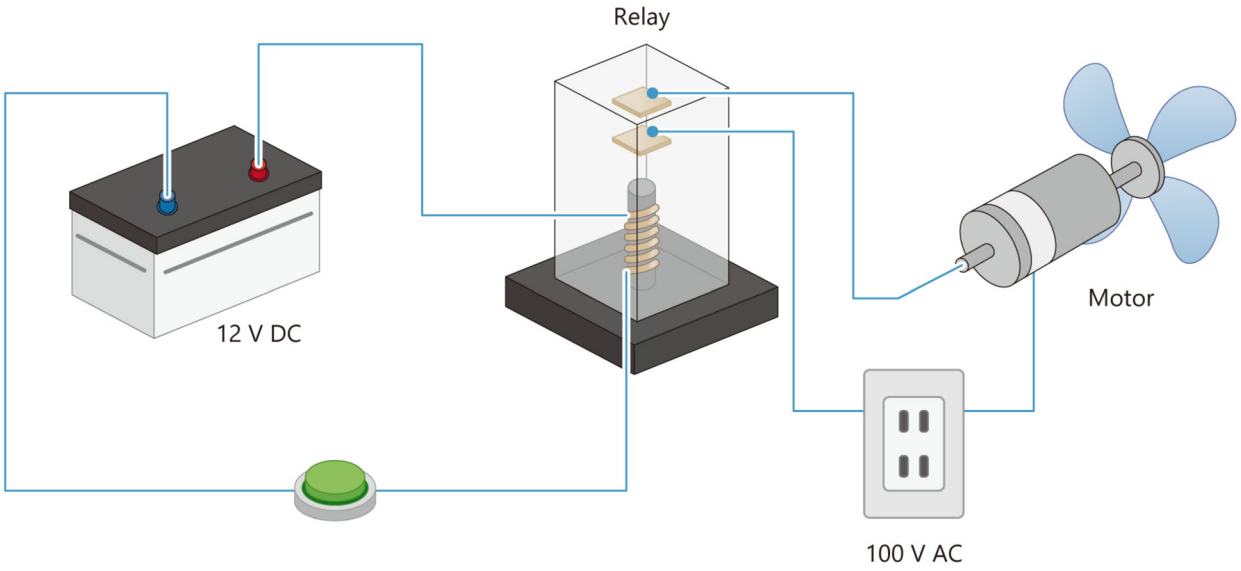
1977 to 1981

Mitsubishi Electric released their first general-purpose programmable controllers.
With the successful sales of MELSEC-K series and MELSEC-F series programmable controllers, Mitsubishi Electric established its current position in the market.

2.2 Relays

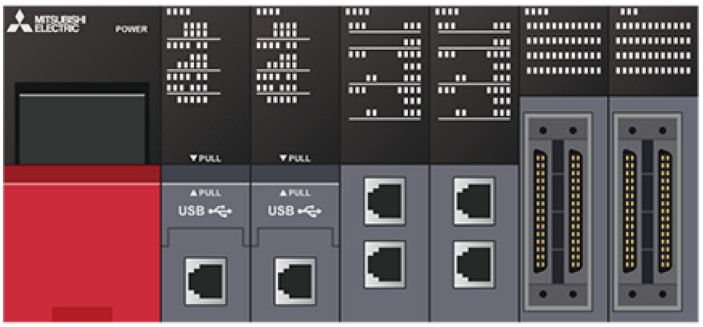
A relay is an electrical switch operated by a relatively small signal that can turn on or off a much larger electric current. Each relay has an electromagnet internally. When electricity flows in the input circuit, it activates the electromagnet. The energized electromagnet closes the contact, allowing a bigger current to flow through the output circuit.

The following is an electrical schematic diagram example. A large motor can be controlled with the on/off signals.



2.3 Differences Between Relay Control and Sequence Control

In this section, let's learn about the differences between the relay control and the sequence control.

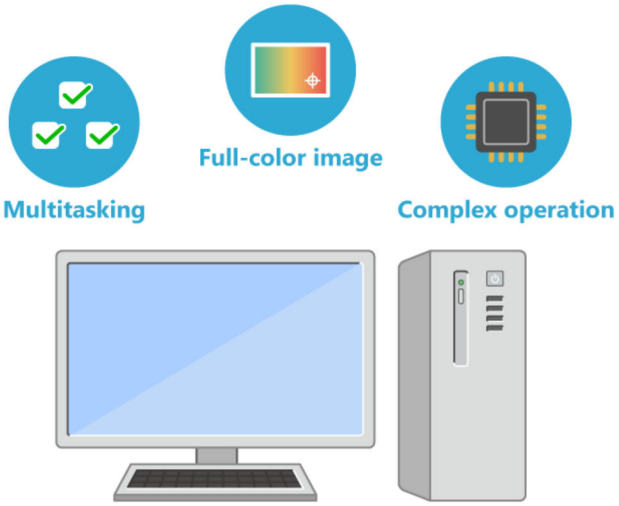


Relay control	Sequence control
Only on/off control can be performed.	On/off control and complex control can be performed.
The frequency of failure or breakdown is high and maintenance is not easy.	Reliability is high and maintenance is easy.
Circuits are modified by changing wiring.	Circuits are flexibly modified by using programs.
For large-scale systems, large space and long design period are required.	Even for large-scale systems, large space and long design period are not required, offering flexibility and extendibility.
Identifying the cause of a failure or an error and replacing the failed device are not easy.	All failures and errors can be monitored. The failed device can be replaced easily.

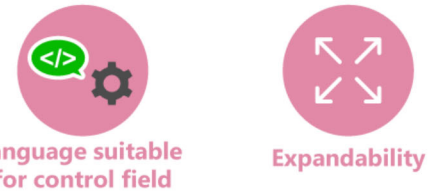
2.4 Features of Programmable Controllers and Personal Computers

Both a programmable controller and a personal computer are required to perform complex control. However, they are used for different purposes.

Programmable controllers perform sequence control.

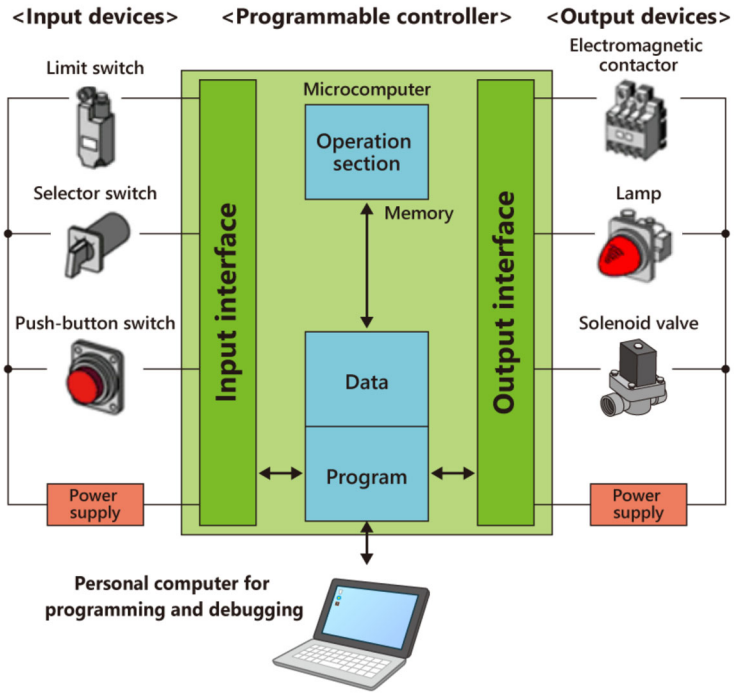


Personal computers perform information processing.



2.5 Structure of Programmable Controllers

Devices connected to the input side of the programmable controller are "input devices", and devices connected to the output side of the programmable controller are "output devices".
These devices are physically connected to the input/output interfaces of the programmable controller via wires.
The on/off (operation start/stop) signal of which input device is connected to which output device is determined by a program.
Programs are created using the engineering tool and written to the programmable controller (or, more precisely to the CPU module).



2.6 Basic Knowledge of Contacts

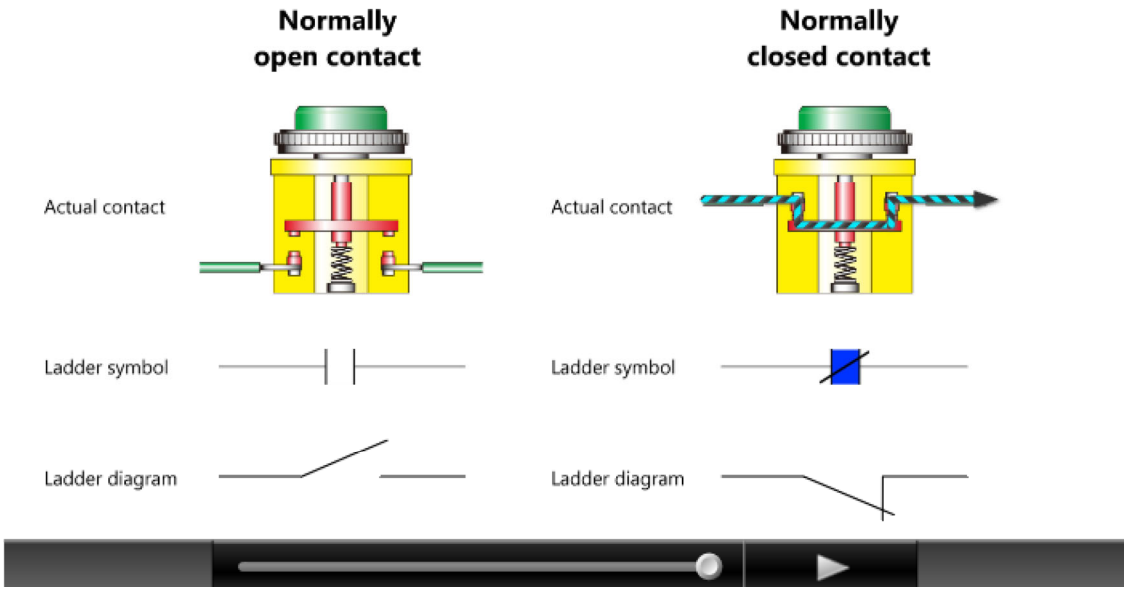
Let's learn about contacts, which are frequently used in sequence control.

The role of a contact is to turn a relay or switch on and off (to allow or block the flow of electricity). A contact is, for example, used in a power switch.

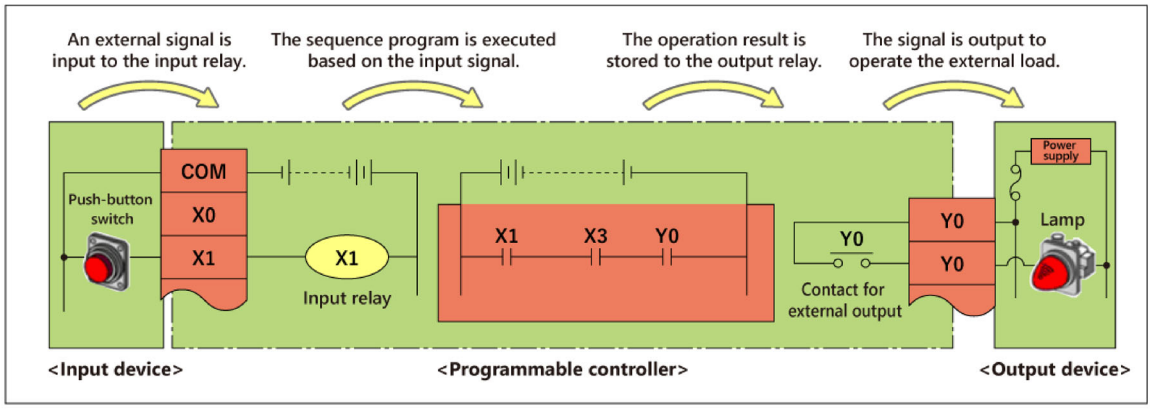
(1) Normally open contact
This is a contact that is open in its default position. When actuated, it will close and electricity will flow.
Example: Start button

(2) Normally closed contact
This is a contact that is closed in its default position. When actuated, it will open and no electricity will flow.
Example: Emergency stop button

Please check the operation of contacts in the video.
Click the [Play] button.



The following is the flow of signals used for operation.



The state of the input device is taken into the input relay of the programmable controller as an electrical on/off signal. The programmable controller executes the program using the input signal received and outputs the operation result (electrical on/off signal) to the output device through a contact for external output.

The following are the typical devices in the programmable controller.
Each device is described with a symbol and a number.

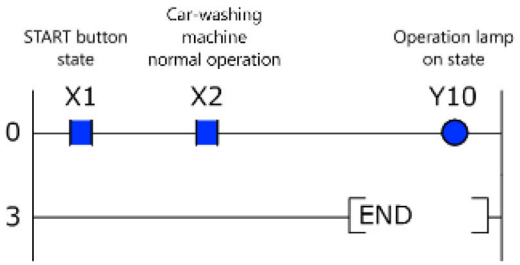
Device number		Description
Input	X0 ...	This is an area for receiving signals from input devices connected. The symbol is X. The device is also called "input relay".
Output	Y0 ...	This is an area for storing signals output to output devices connected. The symbol is Y. The device is also called "output relay".

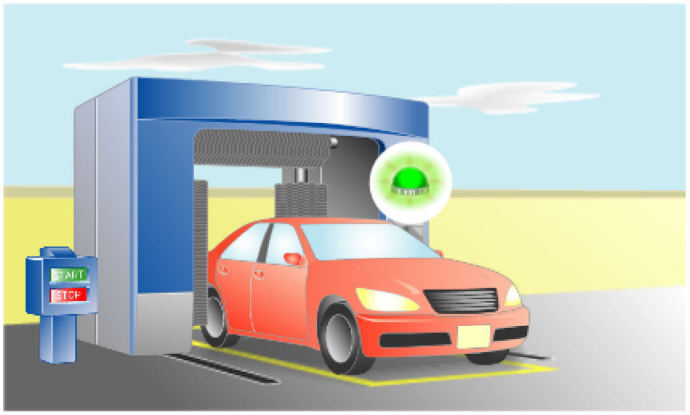
2.8 Programs

Inside a programmable controller, sequence control is performed based on programs, such as the one shown below.
The following program is written using the ladder diagram language. This language is called "ladder" diagrams because they resemble a ladder.

◆ Program that turns on the lamp

Click the [Play] button to start the video.





Each instruction operation unit in the program is called a "step", and a number, which is called a "step number", is assigned to each step.
The CPU module executes instructions sequentially starting from step number 0. Once after the END instruction is executed, the program operation is returned to step number 0 and repeated again. This is called "cyclic operation". The time required to perform one sequence cycle is called "scan time".

As shown in the above program example, when two switches, X1 and X2, are connected in series, an "AND" operation is performed.
The AND instruction is one of the most basic sequence instructions.

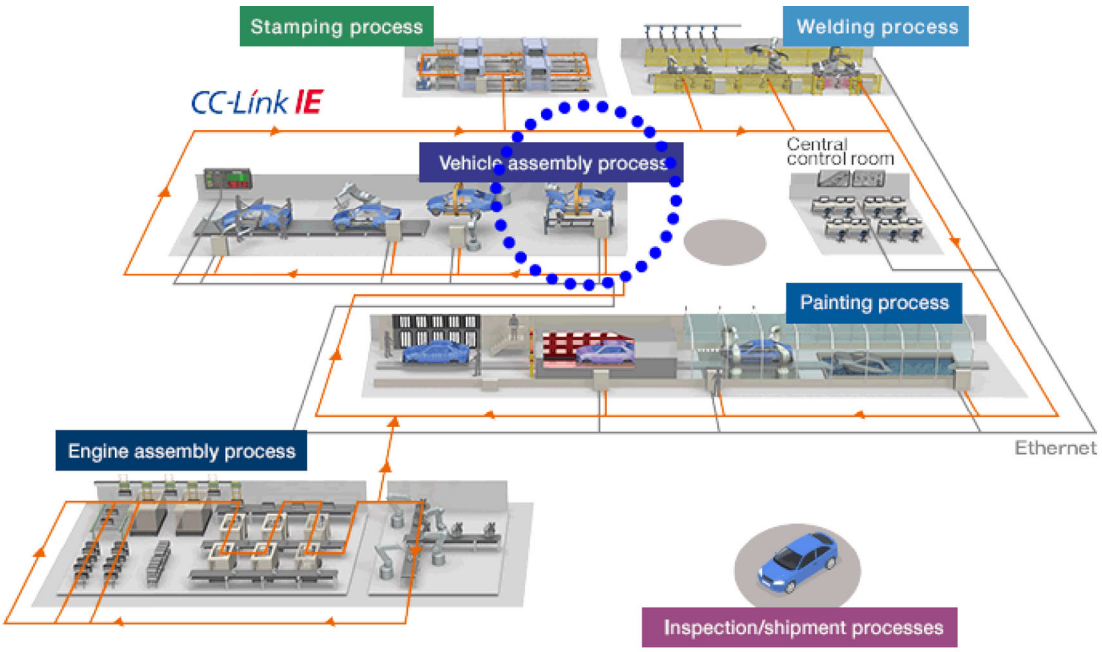
Chapter 3 Application Examples of Programmable Controllers

In Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, you have learned about sequence control and programmable controllers.
In this chapter, let's learn how programmable controllers are actually used.

3.1 Automotive and Automotive Parts Industry

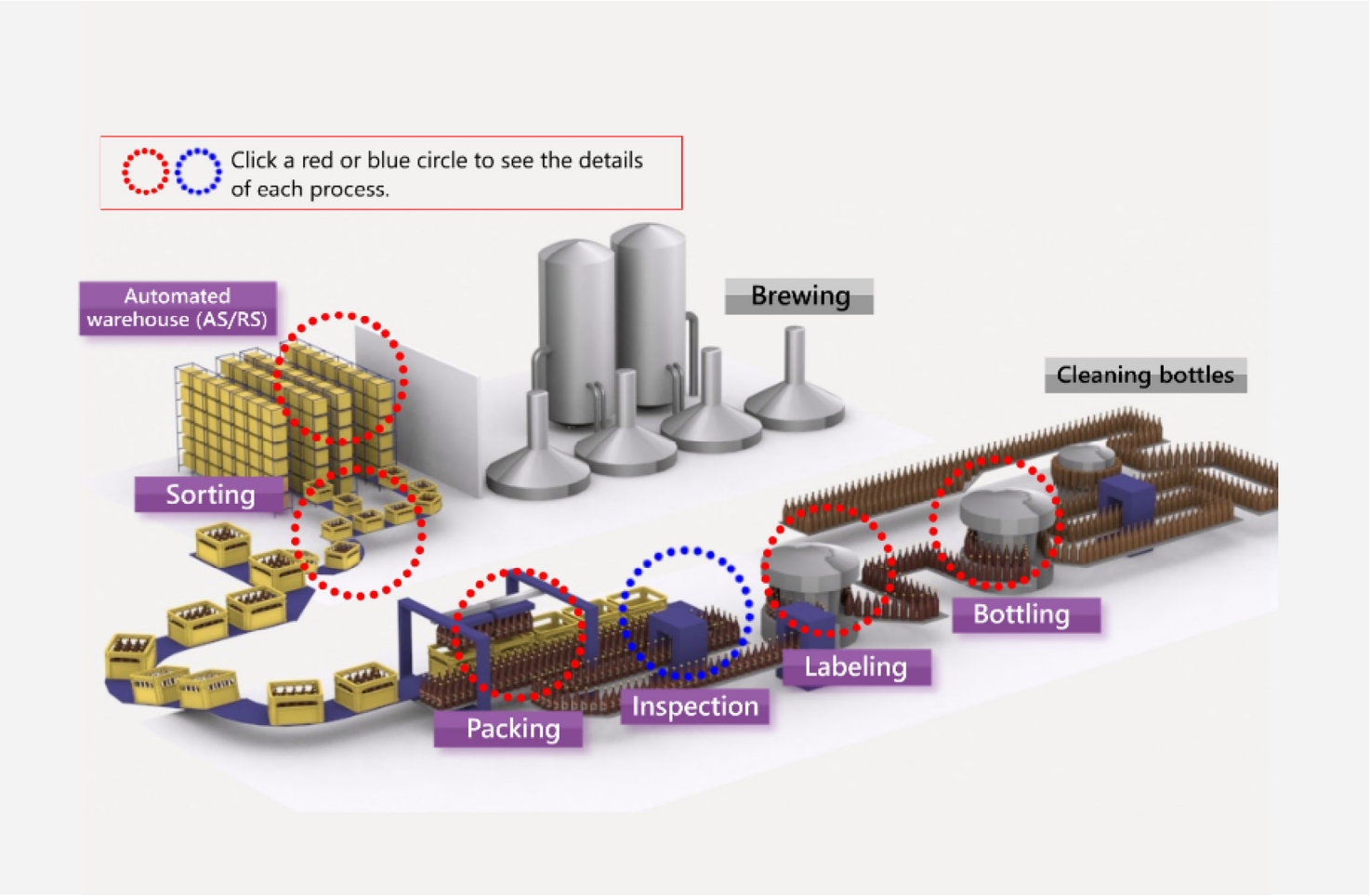
Programmable controllers are used for controlling a large number of different parts and different processes in an automobile manufacturing plant as shown below.
Let's take a look at one of the examples.

Click the blue circle.



3.2 Food and Beverage Industry

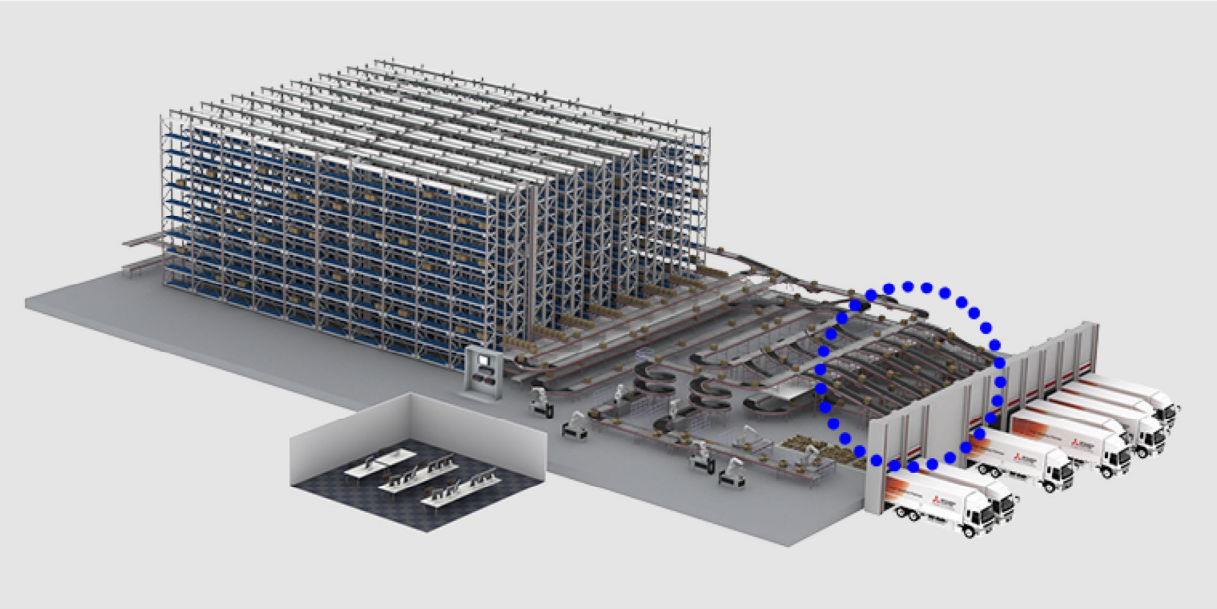
Programmable controllers are used at the different processes in a beverage plant as shown below.
Let's take a look at some examples.



3.3 Logistics Industry

The importance of supply chain management to achieve more efficient distribution is receiving worldwide attention recently.
Programmable controllers are used in the logistics industry as well.
Let's take a look at an example.

Click the blue circle.



Test Final Test

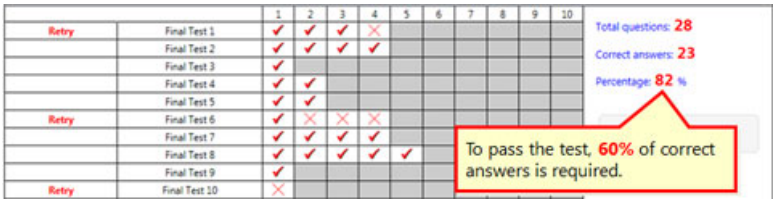
Now that you have completed all of the lessons of the FA Equipment for Beginners (Programmable Controllers) course, you are ready to take the final test. If you are unclear on any of the topics covered, please take this opportunity to review those topics.

There are a total of 7 questions (20 items) in this Final Test.

You can take the final test as many times as you like.

Score results

The number of correct answers, the number of questions, the percentage of correct answers, and the pass/fail result will appear on the score page.



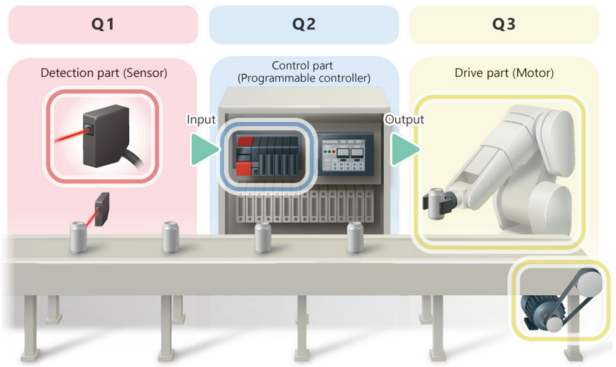
Test **Final Test 1**

Fill in the blanks in the configuration diagram for sequence control with appropriate terms.

Q1 Input device

Q2 Control device

Q3 Output device



[+]

Test **Final Test 2**

Select a type of control corresponding to each description (Q1 to Q4).

Q1. Control that performs the operation one step to another according to a predetermined sequence

Q2. Control that performs the operation based on a condition

Q3. Control that performs the operation based on a preset time and timing

Q1	Sequential control
Q2	Conditional control
Q3	Time limit control
Q4	Counting control

Test **Final Test 3**

Fill in the blanks in the descriptions about the contacts with appropriate terms.

A contact that is open in its default position and will close to allow the flow of electricity when actuated. This type of contact is known as a "Q1".

A contact that is closed in its default position and will open to block the flow of electricity when actuated. This type of contact is known as a "Q2".

Q1 Normally open contact

Q2 Normally closed contact

Q1.

Q2.

[+]

Test **Final Test 4**

There are differences between sequence control and relay control. Select a correct sentence that describes the feature of sequence control.

Q1

- Only on/off control is performed.
- **Circuits are flexibly modified by using programs.**
- For large-scale systems, large space and long design period are required.
- Identifying the cause of a failure or an error and replacing the failed device are not easy.

Test **Final Test 5**

The following are the features of programmable controllers and personal computers. Select a device (programmable controller or personal computer) to which each keyword applies.

Q1	Personal computer
Q2	Programmable controller
Q3	Programmable controller
Q4	Personal computer

Q1. Full-color image

Q2. Environmental resistance

Q3. Real time reaction

Q4. Complex operation

[+]

Test **Final Test 6**

Select a device symbol corresponding to each description about devices in the programmable controller.

Q1. An area for receiving signals from input devices connected. The device is also called "input relay".

Q2. An area for storing signals output to output devices connected. The device is also called "output relay".

Q1 X

Q2 Y

Test **Final Test 7**

Fill in the blanks in the descriptions about the sequence program operation.

The CPU module executes instructions sequentially staring from step number "Q1".

Once after the "Q2" instruction is executed, the program operation is returned to the start step number and repeated again.

Q1	0
Q2	END
Q3	cyclic
Q4	scan

Test **Test Score**

You have completed the Final Test. Your results are as follows.
To end the Final Test, proceed to the next page.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Final Test 1	✓	✓	✓							
	Final Test 2	✓	✓	✓	✓						
	Final Test 3	✓	✓								
	Final Test 4	✓									
	Final Test 5	✓	✓	✓	✓						
	Final Test 6	✓	✓								
	Final Test 7	✓	✓	✓	✓						

Total questions: **20**

Correct answers: **20**

Percentage: **100** %

Clear

You have completed the FA Equipment for Beginners (Programmable Controllers) course.

Thank you for taking this course.

We hope you enjoyed the lessons and the information you acquired in this course will be useful in the future.

You can review the course as many times as you want.

Review

Close