



# Remote Control Tree Ornament with Circuit Playground Express

Created by John Park



<https://learn.adafruit.com/remote-control-tree-ornament-with-circuit-playground-express>

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# Overview

The code in the project is currently not working. We are investigating the issue.

Have you put up with non-interactive, regular, old, low-tech tree ornaments for too long? Yes you have! But, this is where things change! It's time to build your own Remote Control Tree Ornament with Circuit Playground Express!!

The Circuit Playground Express (CPX) has a built in infrared (IR) sensor, and it's very simple to decode the signals using CircuitPython, thanks to the Adafruit IR Remote library.

We'll program the CPX to read IR blasts from the mini remote control, and use these commands to change the bright, beautiful NeoPixels. Plus, we'll defuse the light and dress it up with an inexpensive hobby store ornament and festive puff balls!

1 x [Circuit Playground Express](https://www.adafruit.com/product/3333) <https://www.adafruit.com/product/3333>  
Awesome microcontroller with CircuitPython

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1 x [Battery Holder w On/Off switch](https://www.adafruit.com/product/3286) <https://www.adafruit.com/product/3286>  
3 x AAA battery holder

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1 x [Alkaline AAA batteries](https://www.adafruit.com/product/3520) <https://www.adafruit.com/product/3520>  
3 pack

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1 x [USB Cable](https://www.adafruit.com/product/592) <https://www.adafruit.com/product/592>  
USB A to USB Micro - 3 ft.

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Or, optionally, to get most of those parts in a single pack:

1 x [Circuit Playground Express Base Kit](https://www.adafruit.com/product/3517) <https://www.adafruit.com/product/3517>  
Includes CPX, battery pack and batteries, USB cable, and storage box

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And these two items:

1 x [Mini Remote Control](https://www.adafruit.com/product/389) <https://www.adafruit.com/product/389>  
IR remote with NEC encoding

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1 x [DIY Ornament Kit](https://www.adafruit.com/product/4036) <https://www.adafruit.com/product/4036>  
6cm Diameter - Perfect for Circuit Playground

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Note: at this time MakeCode does not support the use of external IR remotes (only CPX-to-CPX communications) so this project is for CircuitPython use only.

## Materials

In addition to the materials above, you'll need:

- White iridescent pom poms from a craft store
- Ribbon or tree hanger hook



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## Code the Circuit Playground Express

The code in the project is currently not working. We are investigating the issue.

You'll program your ornament to change colors based on the numbered buttons on the IR mini remote control by using CircuitPython.

### Get Ready!

First, make sure you're up and running by following these steps:

- First, make sure you're familiar with the basics of using CircuitPython on the Circuit Playground Express. [Follow this guide \(\)](#) to familiarize yourself.

- Then, [install CircuitPython on your board by \(\) following these instructions \(\)](#)
- Next, [install the library bundle onto your board as shown here \(\)](#). The libraries give us what we need to code easily with high level commands!

## Library Bundle

Lighting up the NeoPixel ring in different colors is simple to do on the Circuit Playground Express using CircuitPython. In fact, it only takes a single line of code to make them all bright red: `pixels.fill(255, 0, 0)` will do the trick in the case of our program!

To control which colors we see, we can use the IR remote control along with IR library that makes it easy to decode the IR commands.

IR commands are actually messages that are sent by the remote when it blinks its infrared light rapidly with very precise timing and duration. It's a little bit like Morse code in that sense.

Using its IR sensor, the Circuit Playground Express can decode those messages sent by the remote. For more details on how this works, check out this great [IR sensor guide \(\)](#).

So that you don't need to deal with the low level complexities of the decoding process, the Adafruit IRRemote library makes it simple!

## Download the Remote Tree Ornament Code

Download the code below by clicking 'Download Project Bundle.' Then, copy `code.py` over to the CIRCUITPY drive.

```
# SPDX-FileCopyrightText: 2017 John Park for Adafruit Industries
#
# SPDX-License-Identifier: MIT

import adafruit_irremote
import board
import digitalio
import neopixel
import pulseio

pixels = neopixel.NeoPixel(board.NEOPIXEL, 10)

red_led = digitalio.DigitalInOut(board.D13)
red_led.direction = digitalio.Direction.OUTPUT

pulsein = pulseio.PulseIn(board.REMOTEIN, maxlen=120, idle_state=True)
decoder = adafruit_irremote.GenericDecode()
```

```

# among others, this example works with the Adafruit mini IR remote:
# https://www.adafruit.com/product/389
# size must match what you are decoding! for NEC use 4
received_code = bytearray(4)

# IR Remote Mapping
'''
1: [255, 2, 247, 8]
2: [255, 2, 119, 136]
3: [255, 2, 183, 72]
4: [255, 2, 215, 40]
5: [255, 2, 87, 168]
6: [255, 2, 151, 104]
7: [255, 2, 231, 24]
8: [255, 2, 103, 152]
9: [255, 2, 167, 88]
0: [255, 2, 207, 48]

^ : [255, 2, 95, 160]
v : [255, 2, 79, 176]
> : [255, 2, 175, 80]
< : [255, 2, 239, 16]

Enter: [255, 2, 111, 144]
Setup: [255, 2, 223, 32]
Stop/Mode: [255, 2, 159, 96]
Back: [255, 2, 143, 112]

Vol - : [255, 2, 255, 0]
Vol + : [255, 2, 191, 64]

Play/Pause: [255, 2, 127, 128]
'''

RED = (255, 0, 0)
GREEN = (0, 255, 0)
WHITE = (85, 85, 85)
BLUE = (0, 0, 255)
PINK = (128, 0, 128)
YELLOW = (148, 108, 0)
PURPLE = (200, 0, 55)
TEAL = (0, 200, 100)
ORANGE = (100, 45, 0)
BLACK = (0, 0, 0)

last_command = None

while True:
    red_led.value = False
    try:
        pulses = decoder.read_pulses(pulsein)
    except MemoryError as e:
        print("Memory error: ", e)
        continue
    red_led.value = True
    print("Heard", len(pulses), "Pulses:", pulses)
    command = None
    try:
        code = decoder.decode_bits(pulses, debug=False)
        if len(code) > 3:
            command = code[2]
            print("Decoded:", code)
    except adafruit_irremote.IRNECRepeatException: # unusual short code!
        print("NEC repeat!")
        command = last_command
    except adafruit_irremote.IRDecodeException as e: # failed to decode
        print("Failed to decode:", e)
    except MemoryError as e:
        print("Memory error: ", e)

```

```

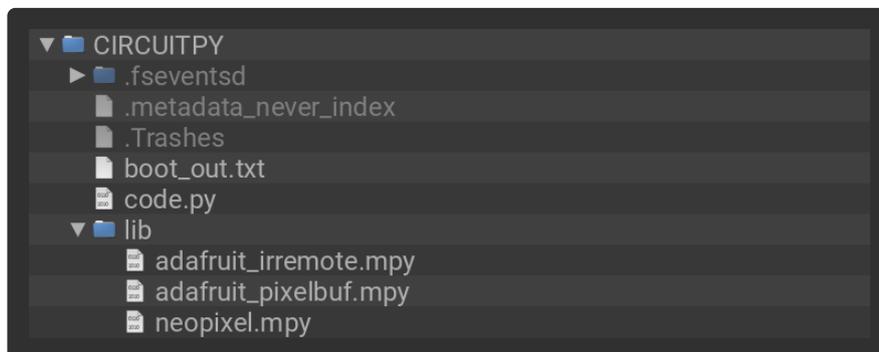
if not command:
    continue
last_command = command

print("-----")
red_led.value = False

if command == 247: # IR button 1
    pixels.fill(RED)
elif command == 119: # 2
    pixels.fill(GREEN)
elif command == 183: # 3
    pixels.fill(WHITE)
elif command == 215: # 4
    pixels.fill(BLUE)
elif command == 87: # 5
    pixels.fill(PINK)
elif command == 151: # 6
    pixels.fill(YELLOW)
elif command == 231: # 7
    pixels.fill(PURPLE)
elif command == 103: # 8
    pixels.fill(TEAL)
elif command == 167: # 9
    pixels.fill(ORANGE)
elif command == 207:
    pixels.fill(BLACK) # 0/10+

```

After you've copied everything over, your CIRCUITPY drive should look something like this:



The board will restart once the code has been saved. Now, point the remote at the board and press any number button 1-9. See how the lights change color depending on the button!

## Code Tour

Let's have a look at how the code works.

First, we import a few libraries that give us easy commands to use for more complex tasks.

The code blocks that follow are for explanation only, you won't need to use them by themselves, instead use the full code above.

```
import adafruit_irremote
import board
import digitalio
import neopixel
import pulseio
```

Next, we'll do a bit of setup, creating the NeoPixel object named `pixels`, and the on-board indicator LED called `red_led`.

```
pixels = neopixel.NeoPixel(board.NEOPIXEL, 10)

red_led = digitalio.DigitalInOut(board.D13)
red_led.direction = digitalio.Direction.OUTPUT
```

To prepare the IR pulse detection and decoding, we'll initialize these objects:

```
pulsein = pulseio.PulseIn(board.REMOTEIN, maxlen=120, idle_state=True)
decoder = adafruit_irremote.GenericDecode()
```

Next, we'll create a variable to store the decoded message number list:

```
received_code = bytearray(4)
```

## Messages

The messages will be sets of four numbers. Here's a list of which buttons correlate to these messages. We'll use this later in the code to know which button has been pressed.

```
# IR Remote Mapping
'''
1: [255, 2, 247, 8]
2: [255, 2, 119, 136]
3: [255, 2, 183, 72]
4: [255, 2, 215, 40]
5: [255, 2, 87, 168]
6: [255, 2, 151, 104]
7: [255, 2, 231, 24]
8: [255, 2, 103, 152]
9: [255, 2, 167, 88]
0: [255, 2, 207, 48]

^ : [255, 2, 95, 160]
v : [255, 2, 79, 176]
> : [255, 2, 175, 80]
< : [255, 2, 239, 16]

Enter: [255, 2, 111, 144]
Setup: [255, 2, 223, 32]
```

```
Stop/Mode: [255, 2, 159, 96]
Back: [255, 2, 143, 112]

Vol - : [255, 2, 255, 0]
Vol + : [255, 2, 191, 64]

Play/Pause: [255, 2, 127, 128]
'''
```

Note that CircuitPython code that is only meant for humans to read are commented out with the pound # symbol for individual lines, and three single quotes "" around blocks.

## Color Names

Next, we'll create a few variables that make it easier to call out colors by name. The colors of the NeoPixels are described with red, green, and blue values from 0-255.

```
RED = (255, 0, 0)
GREEN = (0, 255, 0)
WHITE = (85, 85, 85)
BLUE = (0, 0, 255)
PINK = (128, 0, 128)
YELLOW = (148, 108, 0)
PURPLE = (200, 0, 55)
TEAL = (0, 200, 100)
ORANGE = (100, 45, 0)
BLACK = (0, 0, 0)
```

We'll also create a variable to store the value of the last command decoded from the remote, so that we can compare commands to the previous one to know if anything has to change.

```
last_command = None
```

## Main Loop

Now we get to the main loop that runs over and over after the line:

```
while True:
```

The first thing we do is turn the red LED off. This way, when an IR command is received later, the LED can be turned on to indicate this. In the absence of that, the LED will turn back off.

```
red_led.value = False
```

This next section is where the IR pulses are detected, and then tested to see if they conform to the expected protocol. If so, the decoded pulses are turned into a message we can use.

```
try:
    pulses = decoder.read_pulses(pulsein)
except MemoryError as e:
    print("Memory error: ", e)
    continue
red_led.value = True
print("Heard", len(pulses), "Pulses:", pulses)
command = None
try:
    code = decoder.decode_bits(pulses, debug=False)
    if len(code) > 3:
        command = code[2]
    print("Decoded:", code)
except adafruit_irremote.IRNECRepeatException: # unusual short code!
    print("NEC repeat!")
    command = last_command
except adafruit_irremote.IRDecodeException as e: # failed to decode
    print("Failed to decode:", e)
except MemoryError as e:
    print("Memory error: ", e)

if not command:
    continue
last_command = command

print("-----")
red_led.value = False
```

## Color Commands

Lastly, we'll check the received commands against a list -- if the command corresponds to one of them, the code to change the NeoPixel colors is run.

```
if command == 247: # IR button 1
    pixels.fill(RED)
elif command == 119: # 2
    pixels.fill(GREEN)
elif command == 183: # 3
    pixels.fill(WHITE)
elif command == 215: # 4
    pixels.fill(BLUE)
elif command == 87: # 5
    pixels.fill(PINK)
elif command == 151: # 6
    pixels.fill(YELLOW)
elif command == 231: # 7
    pixels.fill(PURPLE)
elif command == 103: # 8
    pixels.fill(TEAL)
elif command == 167: # 9
    pixels.fill(ORANGE)
elif command == 207:
    pixels.fill(BLACK) # 0/10+
```

Next, we'll build the ornament and use it!

---

# Assemble and Use the Ornament

## Fill the Ornament

First, you'll want to tie on the hanging ribbon or hook, and separate the two halves of the clear ornament ball.



Next, fill one half with the pom poms. They will look festive, and help to diffuse the strong glow of the NeoPixels on the Circuit Playground Express.



Plug the battery pack's JST cable into the Circuit Playground Express, and then turn on the on switch.



Place the CPX and battery pack on top of the pom poms. Looks comfy!



Now, close up the ornament. It's ready for testing with the remote, and then for hanging on the tree!



## Use the Remote

The IR signal needs to make it to the IR sensor on the CPX, so you may need to try it from different angles. It has the benefit of bouncing off of lots of surfaces, so it isn't hard to make it work from nearby. Without a direct line of sight, it's harder to control it from great distances, but definitely possible!



Try pressing the different number keys on the remote to see the different colors!



Now, you may hang it on the tree with care! When it's not in use you can press 0 to turn off the NeoPixels which will preserve battery life. You can also open the ornament to flip off the switch for total energy savings.

Enjoy your festive ornament!

