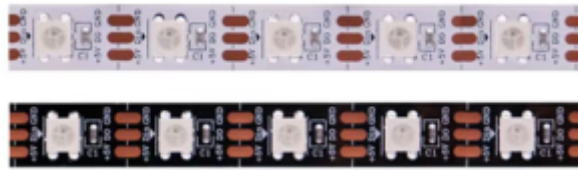


12 NeoPixel LED Strip

Aug 2026



Introduction



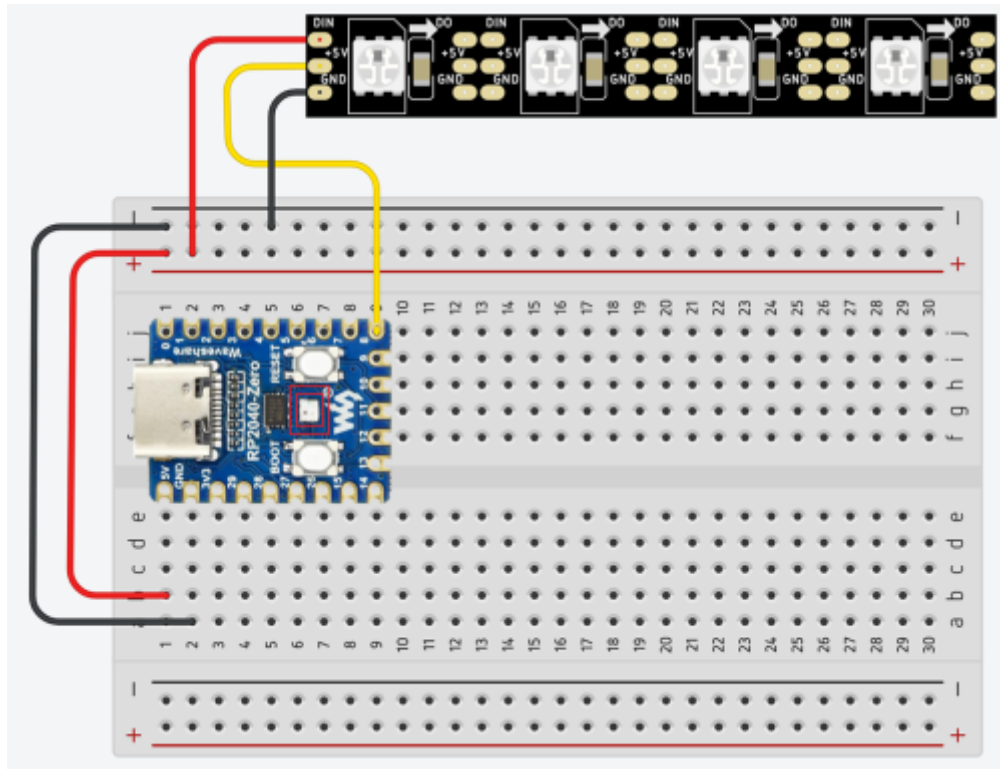
Strips of NeoPixels are very cool to use. You might have heard of them being referred to as Addressable RGBs (aRGB) LEDs. While neopixels look a bit like Xmas tree lights, they are in fact individually addressable, so you can turn on one, none, all or any combination of the LEDs, and they can all be differently coloured.

The Circuit

The circuit for the NeoPixels is very simple. All the electronics that you need are built in to the strip, so you don't need to worry about things like current limiting resistors etc.

NeoPixels come in two main types that I have seen (ignoring waterproofing levels) and that is 5V and 12V. So make sure you have the correct type.

Please see below for setup I am using.



I am using a 5v strip of neopixels, so I can power everything I need from a USB connector. When we plug the USB-C connector in to this device, it will power both the Pico and the NeoPixels.

Please note, this will work with either the Raspberry Pi or Waveshare zero.

A quick note about setting the LED Colour and Brightness

We set the colour of RGB LEDs by sending an RGB value to each chip LED. For example, I can send the following: Remember (R, G, B) (some NeoPixels have the RGB in a different order, beware!)

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```
(255, 0, 0),    # Red
(0, 255, 0),    # Green
(0, 0, 255),    # Blue
(255, 255, 0),  # Yellow
(255, 0, 255),  # Magenta
(0, 255, 255),  # Cyan
(255, 255, 255), # White
(0, 0, 0)      # Off
```

So the value 255 turns on the respective LED. 255, 0, 0 is Red on, Green off, Blue off. So you just see a RED coloured LED.

The value 255 is the brightness, so if you use lower values, say 128, 0, 0 then you get a much dimmer Red LED. I personally use the value 8, as scorched retinas is really not my thing.

Micro Python Test Code

Before we let our imagination run away with what we can do with NeoPixels, lets run some simple test code to ensure that everything is working as expected.

Here is a simple test set for the LEDs.

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```
# WS2812 / NeoPixel Example
# Raspberry Pi Pico + MicroPython
#
# Controls a strip of 12 LEDs connected to GP0.

from machine import Pin
import neopixel
import time

# -----
# Configuration
# -----

LED_PIN = 8          # GPIO connected to DIN
NUM_LEDS = 12        # Number of LEDs, 0-11 is used, not 1-12
LUMAR = 8            # Red Brightness
LUMAG = 8            # Green Brightness
LUMAB = 8            # Blue Brightness

# Create the NeoPixel object
np = neopixel.NeoPixel(Pin(LED_PIN), NUM_LEDS)
print(np)

# -----
# Helper Functions
# -----

def clear():
    """Turn all LEDs off."""
    for i in range(NUM_LEDS):
        np[i] = (0, 0, 0)
    np.write()

def fill(color):
    """Set every LED to the same colour."""
    for i in range(NUM_LEDS):
        np[i] = color
    np.write()

# -----
# Main Program
# -----

while True:

    print("Set every LED to Red")
    # Red
    fill((LUMAR, 0, 0))
    time.sleep(1)

    print("Set every LED to Green")
    # Green
    fill((0, LUMAG, 0))
    time.sleep(1)

    print("Set every LED to Blue")
    # Blue
    fill((0, 0, LUMAB))
    time.sleep(1)

    print("Set every LED to White")
    # White
    fill((LUMAR, LUMAG, LUMAB))
    time.sleep(1)

    print("Clear all LEDs")
    # Off
    clear()
    time.sleep(0.5)
```

What the code above does, is to turn off all LEDs, then set all LEDs to Red, Green, Blue then repeat the sequence. Lets break down the code to see what each section does.

This first part

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```
# Controls a strip of 12 LEDs connected to GP0.

#This imports the Pin class, which lets you control the Raspberry Pi Pico's GPIO pins.
#You need this because NeoPixels require a digital output pin (like GP0) to send data.
from machine import Pin

#This loads the NeoPixel driver library.
#It gives you the NeoPixel class with methods like:

#np[i] = (r, g, b) – set one LED
#np.fill((r, g, b)) – set all LEDs
#np.write() – send the data to the strip

#Without this import, you can't talk to the LEDs.
import neopixel

#This gives you access to timing functions like time.sleep().
#This allows us to keep the LEDs on or off for a set time.
import time
```

So the first block of code sets up the Pico hardware.

Next we can set some variables.

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```
LED_PIN = 8          # GPIO connected to DIN. This is the GPIO Pin that you are using on your
Pico.
NUM_LEDS = 12        # Number of LEDs, 0-11 is used, not 1-12. Set this to the number of LEDs on
your strip/ring.

# each time you write to an LED, you can use a fixed set of values, say (255,0,0) for red,
however,
# if you want to change the brightness at any time, you have to edit every value in your code. So
by using a
# variable here, we can # set the brightness once and it is used every time we write to the LEDs
(LUMAR, 0, 0)
# for example
LUMAR = 8
LUMAG = 8
LUMAB = 8
```

We have set our variable values.

Next, we are defining a couple of functions.

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```
# In your code, def clear(): means you are defining a function named clear.
# We have to call the function for it to work. By having the function outside of our main code
# we can call this function from anywhere in our program.
def clear():
    """Turn all LEDs off."""
    for i in range(NUM_LEDS):
        np[i] = (0, 0, 0)
    NUM_LEDS = 12
    print(i)
    np.write()

#At the start of the code, a variable NUM_LEDS = 12 tells the
code we have 12 LEDs
#np (neopixel) [i] the current value of i (from 0 to 11) for
#prints current value of i to Thonny output.
#writes (0, 0, 0) to currently selected aRGB (defined by current
value of i)
```

```
# fill is a function to set the LED colour.
# color is a built in python variable that holds an RGB value.
# when you call the fill function (fill(color)) you have to set the value of color.
def fill(color):
    """Set every LED to the same colour."""
    for i in range(NUM_LEDS):
        np[i] = color
    np.write()
```

So above we have created two functions, one to clear() (turn off) the LEDs and one to set the LED Color fill(color). These are both called from our main body of code.

Now for the main code body, this is actually the simplest part, because all we are doing here is calling the code we have already written.

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```
# -----
# Main Program
# -----

while True:    # run this loop for ever.

    print ("Set every LED to Red")    # this is just a comment
    # Red                             # as is this
    fill((LUMAR, 0, 0))               # fill (LUMAR, 0, 0) calls the fill function we defined
    above and sets the                # data value passed to the color variable to LUMAR (which we
                                     # defined as a
                                     # value of 8 at the start of this code so color now = (8, 0
    ,0) as these                      # LEDs are R, G, B this means set LEDs to all red, no green,
    no blue.                          #

    time.sleep(1)                     # Wait for 1 second.

# Now we will repeat what we did for Red (255, 0, 0) for Green (0, 255, 0), Blue (0, 0, 255),
# White (255, 255, 255) then Off (0, 0, 0).

    print ("Set every LED to Green")
    # Green
    fill((0, LUMAG, 0))
    time.sleep(1)

    print ("Set every LED to Blue")
    # Blue
    fill((0, 0, LUMAB))
    time.sleep(1)

    print ("Set every LED to White")
    # White
    fill((LUMAR, LUMAG, LUMAB))
    time.sleep(1)

    print ("Clear all LEDs")
    # Off
    clear()
    time.sleep(0.5)
```

Using this knowledge, we can have some fun working with these LED strips, check out below for some ideas.

Using NeoPixel Strip for Traffic Lights

So this is a great idea for several reasons.

- Less components, no Transistors or resistors (9 components saved).
- Less wiring, just 3 wires, 5v, data, 0v.
- Simpler control of LED Colour and Brightness.
- Can double up LEDs to get an even better light output

So there are some clear reasons to use a NeoPixel strip over discrete components. The code is very similar, and just as easy to understand. If you are using the same connection as above, then use this code below. The only thing you might have to change is the `LED_PIN` example as you might not be using the same Pico GPIO pin as the example.

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```
from machine import Pin
import time
import neopixel

LED_PIN = 8
NUM_LEDS = 12

np = neopixel.NeoPixel(Pin(LED_PIN), NUM_LEDS)

# --- Helper functions -----
def clear():
    """Turn off all LEDs."""
    np.fill((0, 0, 0))
    np.write()

def set_pixels(indices, color):
    """Set multiple LEDs to the same colour."""
    for i in indices:
        np[i] = color
    np.write()

# --- Traffic light colours -----
RED     = (255, 0, 0)
AMBER   = (100, 25, 0)
GREEN   = (0, 255, 0)

# --- Main loop -----
while True:
    # Red
    clear()
    set_pixels([0, 1], RED)
    time.sleep(3)

    # Red + Amber
    set_pixels([4, 5], AMBER)
    time.sleep(2)

    # Green
    clear()
    set_pixels([8, 9], GREEN)
    time.sleep(3)

    # Amber
    clear()
    set_pixels([4, 5], AMBER)
    time.sleep(1)
```

So if you set this up correctly, you should have something resembling the video below:

[neopixel-traffic-light.mp4](#)

I cannot wait to build this in to an actual traffic light ;)

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