

Pythia tutorial

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Who am I? Why am I here?

- 4th year PhD student at University of Jyväskylä, Finland.
- My projects aim to improve DIS in Pythia (matching, merging, tuning).
- Supervisor I. Helenius is an author in Pythia collaboration.

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- Supervisor I. Helenius is an author in Pythia collaboration.
- He¹ made me do it².

¹well, it was another Pythia author, but Ilkka was very encouraging

²“It’s good practice! You get to meet experts! The subjects at the school are important!”

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 - **Basic knowledge:** how to drive the car, what kind of fuel it needs, how and when to use fog lights etc. (How to run Pythia, what input and settings to use)

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 - **Intermediate level:** How does a combustion engine work? (How does Pythia generate events)
 - **Expert level:** How to build it from scratch? (Code structure, physics models, mathematical tools and their implementation)
 - My goal today is to teach you how to drive the car (run the code).
-

Setup

- Install [Docker Desktop](#), test with

```
$ docker --version
```

```
> Docker version 27.4.0, build bde2b89
```

- For Linux systems, some steps might be required: [post-installation steps](#), re-launch terminal and Docker Desktop.
- Download the image for Pythia8 + Rivet4

```
$ docker pull hepstore/rivet-pythia
```

- Start the container, setting up a shared "host" directory between your local machine and the container

```
$ mkdir PythiaTutorial && cd PythiaTutorial
```

```
$ docker run -v $PWD:/host -it --rm hepstore/rivet-pythia
```


Introduction

- What is Pythia?

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- Pythia was the oracle at the Temple of Apollo in ancient Greece. She would inhale volcanic fumes and ramble and shriek incoherently.



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- Now in this analogy, Pythia (the MCEG) is Pythia (the oracle), and **you** are the priests.



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- The priests would interpret these as predictions of the future, writing them as poems.
- Now in this analogy, Pythia (the MCEG) is Pythia (the oracle), and **you** are the priests.
- The traffic rules for Pythia, or any MCEG, is to use critical thinking when interpreting the results.



Introduction

- What is Pythia?

Introduction

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A general-purpose Monte Carlo event generator

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- What is Pythia?

A general-purpose Monte Carlo event generator

- What is a **general-purpose Monte Carlo event generator**?

general-purpose

QCD processes

- Partonic hard scattering ($2 \rightarrow 2$, some $2 \rightarrow 3$)
- Heavy quark production

Electroweak processes

- Prompt photon production
- EW boson production and exchange
- Deep inelastic scattering
- Photon collisions

Onia production

- Charmonium, Bottomonium with different spin states

Top production

- $t\bar{t}$ pairs and single top

Heavy-ion collisions and cosmic rays

- ^2H , ^{16}O , ^{208}Pb , ...

Higgs production

- Standard Model Higgs, also in association with other particles
- Beyond-the-Standard-Model Higgs

Beyond the Standard Model

- Supersymmetry
- Dark matter
- Hidden Valley
- Leptoquarks

Monte Carlo event generator

- Uses random number generation to produce events, owing to the probabilistic nature of Quantum Mechanics.
- Acts as a "transfer function" between theory and experiment: physical theory as input and outgoing on-shell particles as output.
- Also goes the other way: experiments drive the development of MCEGs and constraints of theory



Introduction

- What is Pythia?
A general-purpose Monte Carlo event generator
- What is a **general-purpose Monte Carlo event generator**?
Some transfer function between theory and experiment

Introduction

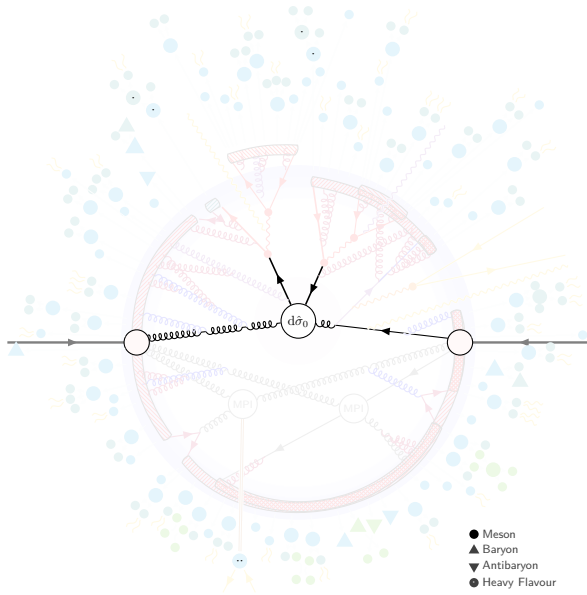
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Some transfer function between theory and experiment
- How does it work?

Event generation steps

Factorization theorems allow the separation in terms of "hardness"

1. Hard process

Image credit: P. Skands

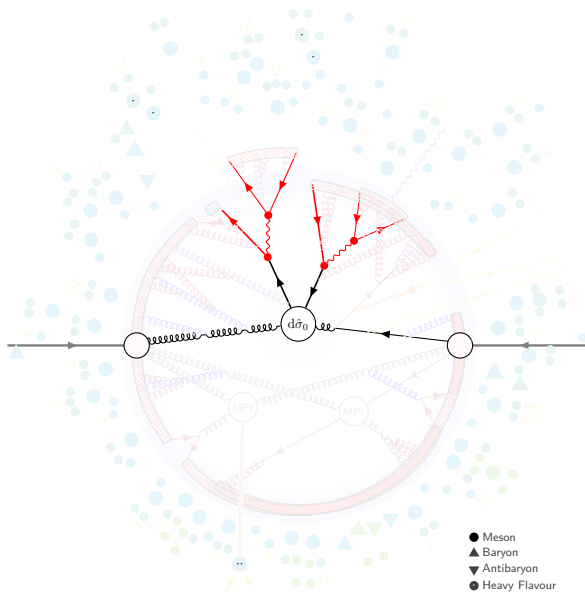


Event generation steps

Factorization theorems allow the separation in terms of "hardness"

1. Hard process
2. Resonance decays

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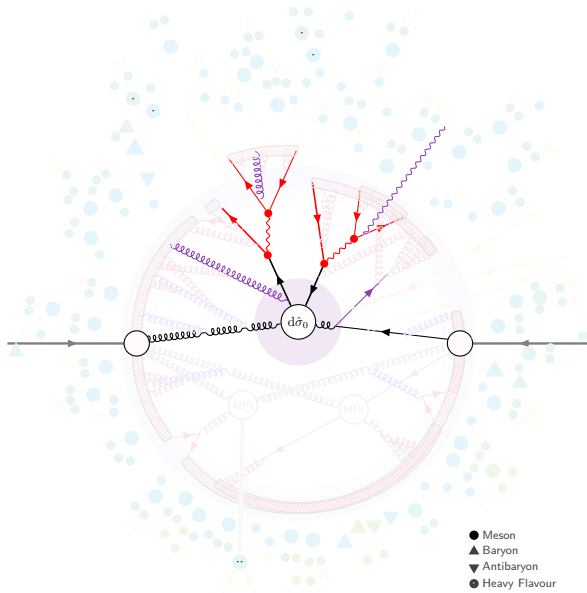


Event generation steps

Factorization theorems allow the separation in terms of "hardness"

1. Hard process
2. Resonance decays
3. Matching, merging and matrix-element corrections

Image credit: P. Skands

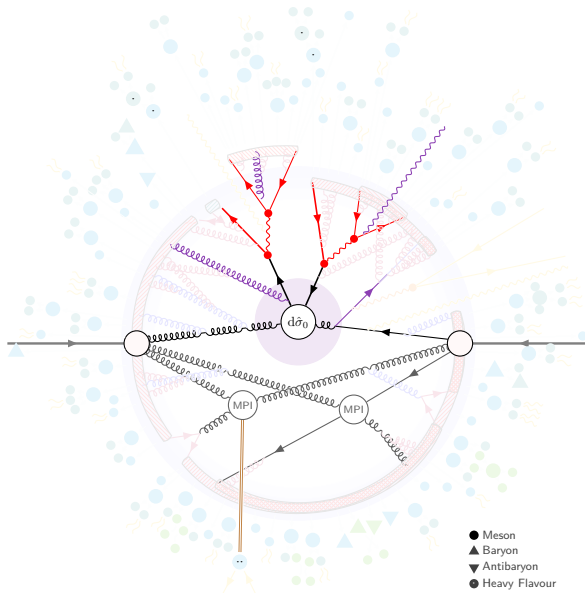


Event generation steps

Factorization theorems allow the separation in terms of "hardness"

1. Hard process
2. Resonance decays
3. Matching, merging and matrix-element corrections
4. Multiparton interactions

Image credit: P. Skands

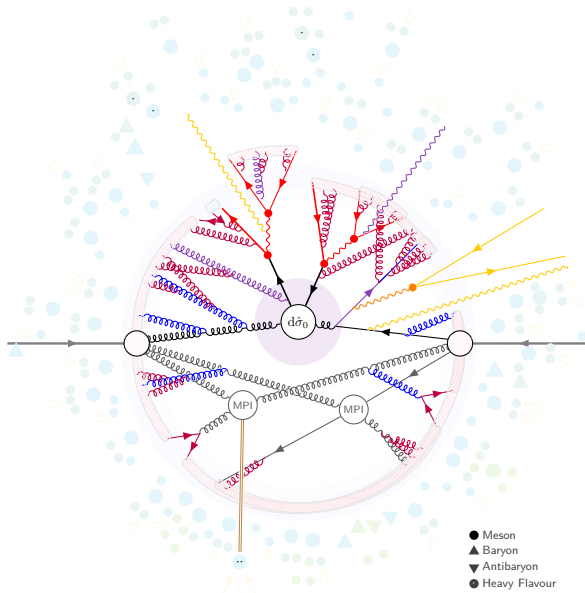


Event generation steps

Factorization theorems allow the separation in terms of "hardness"

1. Hard process
2. Resonance decays
3. Matching, merging and matrix-element corrections
4. Multiparton interactions
5. Parton showers:
ISR, FSR, QED, weak

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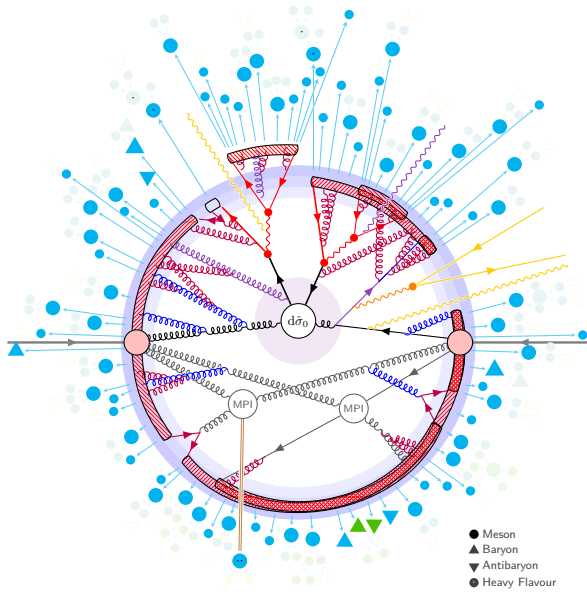


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1. Hard process
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beam Remnants

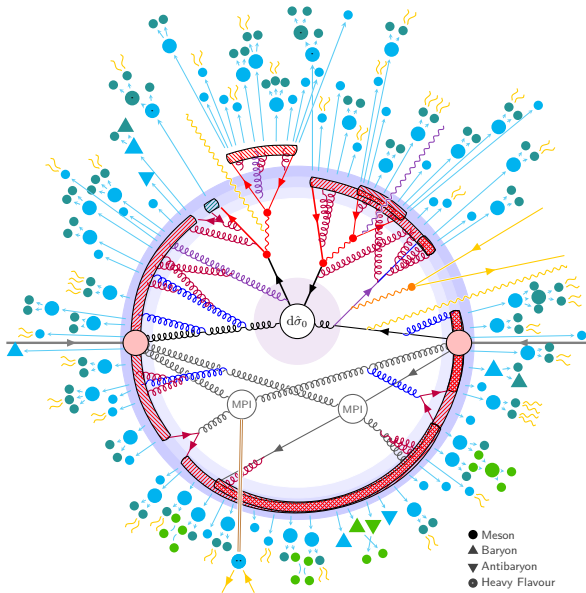


Event generation steps

Factorization theorems allow the separation in terms of "hardness"

1. Hard process
2. Resonance decays
3. Matching, merging and matrix-element corrections
4. Multiparton interactions
5. Parton showers:
ISR, FSR, QED, weak
6. Hadronization,
beam Remnants
7. Decays, rescattering

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A general-purpose Monte Carlo event generator
- What is a **general-purpose Monte Carlo event generator**?
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- How does it work?
- **Have you used Pythia or any other MCEG?**



Hands-on

Setup

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- For Linux systems, some steps might be required: [post-installation steps](#), re-launch terminal and Docker Desktop.
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- Start the container, setting up a shared "host" directory between your local machine and the container

```
$ mkdir PythiaTutorial && cd PythiaTutorial  
$ docker run -v $PWD:/host -it --rm hepstore/rivet-pythia
```

Open [Pythia - Latest Online Manual](#) and [Pythia 8.3 worksheet](#), section 3 on page 4.

First run

- Go to the host directory, copy the build configuration files and make a new file called `mymain01.cc`
- You can see and open the files in your local directory

```
$ cd /host
$ cp /usr/local/share/Pythia8/examples/Makefile* .
$ touch mymain01.cc
```

- Fill the example file with the contents on page 4.
- Compile and run the example:

```
$ make mymain01 && ./mymain01
```

You should get a bunch of output from Pythia: a welcome card, initialization and process information, a bunch of particles in the event listing, and the message

```
0 no errors or warnings to report
```

Let's wait until everyone has gotten this far, then we move on to some examples.

mymain01.cc at the start

```
// Headers and Namespaces.
#include "Pythia8/Pythia.h" // Include Pythia headers.
using namespace Pythia8; // Let Pythia8:: be implicit.

int main() { // Begin main program.

    // Set up generation.
    Pythia pythia; // Declare a Pythia object
    pythia.readString("Top:gg2ttbar = on"); // Switch on process.
    pythia.readString("Beams:eCM = 8000."); // 8 TeV CM energy.
    pythia.init(); // Initialize; incoming pp beams is default.

    // Generate event(s).
    pythia.next(); // Generate an(other) event. Fill event record.

    return 0;
} // End main program with error-free return.
```

Exercise 1: Event record

- Let's go through the basics together, starting with the event record.
- Read through section 3 in the worksheet, and try to answer the problem: "see if you can find several copies of the top quarks, and check the status codes to figure out why each new copy has been added."

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- If you follow the worksheet, you should have written output in the file `mymain01.log`. Now check this file for the event record.

```
no id name status mothers daughters colours p_x p_y p_z e m
...
5 6 (t) -22 3 4 9 9 101 0 90.224 -14.092 183.317 269.072 174.515
9 6 (t) -44 5 5 14 14 103 0 24.487 -44.352 12.944 182.090 174.421
14 6 (t) -44 9 9 20 20 103 0 29.202 -49.636 14.203 184.230 174.421
20 6 (t) -44 14 14 30 30 103 0 27.237 -55.269 13.092 185.447 174.421
...
```

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...
```

- The status codes are explained in the worksheet appendix A.
- The top quarks come from the hard process and go through initial-state radiation, beam remnant treatment and finally decay into W^+ and b .

Exercise 2: Event loop and particle loop

- Follow the instructions on section 4, halfway through page 6:
 - Include the process $q\bar{q} \rightarrow t\bar{t}$.
 - Introduce the event loop and particle loop.
 - Print out the transverse momentum and pseudorapidity of the final top-quark found in the event record.
 - Remember to build with `make mymain01` after changing the code.
- Some information in the worksheet might not work as expected in my Docker container, so please don't hesitate to ask!
- Work together! Share ideas and solutions, compare your results.

mymain01.cc after Exercise 2

```
// Headers and Namespaces.
#include "Pythia8/Pythia.h" // Include Pythia headers.
using namespace Pythia8; // Let Pythia8:: be implicit.

int main() { // Begin main program.

    // Set up generation.
    Pythia pythia; // Declare a Pythia object
    pythia.readString("Top:gg2ttbar = on"); // Switch on process.
    pythia.readString("Top:qqbar2ttbar = on"); // Another process.
    pythia.readString("Beams:eCM = 8000."); // 8 TeV CM energy.
    pythia.readString("Next:numberShowEvent = 5"); // How many events to show.
    pythia.init(); // Initialize; incoming pp beams is default.

    // Generate events.
    for (int iEvent = 0; iEvent < 5; ++iEvent) {
        pythia.next();
        int iTop = 0; // Integer to find last top quark in process.

        for (int i = 0; i < pythia.event.size(); ++i) {
            cout << "i = " << i << ", id = " << pythia.event[i].id() << endl;
            if (pythia.event[i].id() == 6) iTop = i;
        }
        cout << "Top pT = " << pythia.event[iTop].pT() << endl;
        cout << "Top eta = " << pythia.event[iTop].eta() << endl;
    }

    pythia.stat();

    return 0;
} // End main program with error-free return.
```

Exercise 3: Histograms

- Continue the instructions on section 4.
- Declare and fill histograms for top quark p_T and η .
- Write out the histograms.
- Try to produce the histogram for charged multiplicity as well.

Exercise 3: p_T histogram, 100K events

[illegible]

Exercise 3: η histogram, 100K events

[illegible]

Exercise 4: Input files

- Follow section 5 to run your code using a command file.
- The benefit is that you no longer need to build between different runs, since all changes should be done to command file.
- Try to produce charged multiplicity histograms with 3 setups:
 1. ISR, FSR and MPI turned on.
 2. ISR and FSR turned on, MPI turned off.
 3. ISR, FSR and MPI turned off
- Save results in output log files with

```
$ ./mymain01 mymain01.cmnd > mymain01_ISR-on_FSR-on_MPI-on.log  
$ ./mymain01 mymain01.cmnd > mymain01_ISR-on_FSR-on_MPI-off.log  
$ ./mymain01 mymain01.cmnd > mymain01_ISR-off_FSR-off_MPI-off.log
```

Exercise 4: N_{ch} , 100K events

[illegible]

Exercise 4: N_{ch} histogram, MPI off, 100K events

[illegible]

Exercise 4: N_{ch} histogram, parton showers off, MPI off, 100K events

```
2025-11-16 00:15      charged multiplicity
```

1.30*10^ 4	3
1.25*10^ 4	2X
1.20*10^ 4	XX9
1.15*10^ 4	XXX
1.10*10^ 4	XXX
1.05*10^ 4	XXXX9
1.00*10^ 4	XXXXX
0.95*10^ 4	XXXXX
0.90*10^ 4	XXXXX
0.85*10^ 4	9XXXXX
0.80*10^ 4	XXXXXX5
0.75*10^ 4	XXXXXXX
0.70*10^ 4	XXXXXXX
0.65*10^ 4	5XXXXXXX
0.60*10^ 4	XXXXXXX
0.55*10^ 4	XXXXXXX7
0.50*10^ 4	XXXXXXXXX
0.45*10^ 4	1XXXXXXXXX
0.40*10^ 4	XXXXXXXXXXX
0.35*10^ 4	XXXXXXXXXXX1
0.30*10^ 4	XXXXXXXXXXX
0.25*10^ 4	9XXXXXXXXXXX
0.20*10^ 4	XXXXXXXXXXXXX2
0.15*10^ 4	8XXXXXXXXXXXXX
0.10*10^ 4	3XXXXXXXXXXXXX3
0.05*10^ 4	25XXXXXXXXXXXXX51

Contents

[illegible]

Low edge

[illegible]

Exercise 5a: Rivet

- Now we know the basics, but a more realistic analysis could use some real-life data.
- Let's take a small detour from the worksheet and try to run some comparisons to experimental data using [Rivet](#).
- Copy and inspect the program `main144.cc`, and the associated run card `main144.cmnd`

```
$ cp /usr/local/share/Pythia8/examples/main144.c* .
```

Exercise 5a: Rivet

- Modify the main144.cmnd to run at $\sqrt{s} = 8$ TeV, including hard process and a phase-space cut

```
Beams:eCM = 8000. ! CM energy of collision
SoftQCD:all = off ! All soft QCD processes
HardQCD:all = on ! All hard QCD processes
PhaseSpace:ptHatMin = 50.
```

- Activate Rivet plugin within Pythia, provide an inclusive-jet analysis from ATLAS.

```
Main:runRivet = on
Main:rivetAnalyses = {ATLAS_2017_I1604271}
```

- Run and save Rivet output to file, plot using Rivet

```
$ ./main144 -c main144.cmnd -n 10000 -o pp8TeV_flat # wait until complete
$ rivet-mkhtml pp8TeV_flat.yoda
```

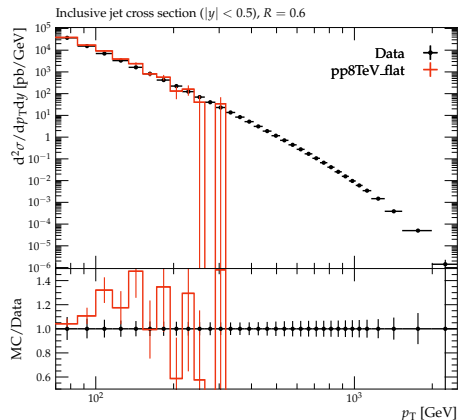
- Inspect by opening the file rivet-plots/index.html in a web browser, outside the container

Exercise 5a: Rivet

- The differential cross section scales like

$$\frac{d\sigma}{d\hat{p}_T^2} \propto \frac{1}{\hat{p}_T^n},$$

- where $n = 4 - 6$.
- Huge span in magnitude of cross section, need to bias phase-space sampling with $\hat{p}_T$.



Exercise 5a: Rivet

- Next challenge is to use phase-space biasing in the sampling of the hard process. This way, more events will be generated at high- p_T , and reweighted to retain the correct cross section.

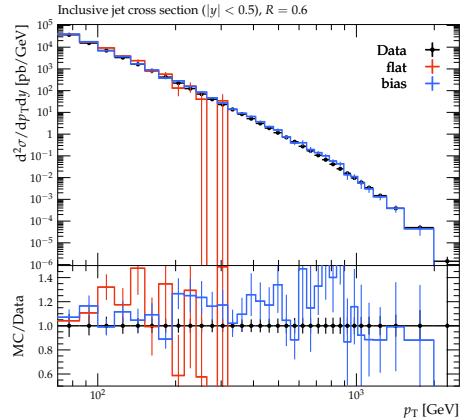
```
PhaseSpace:bias2Selection = on
PhaseSpace:bias2SelectionPow = 4.
PhaseSpace:bias2SelectionRef = 50.
```

- Produce a comparison to the previous run which had flat phase-space sampling in terms of p_T .

```
$ ./main144 -c main144.cmnd -n 10000 -o pp8TeV_bias
$ rivet-mkhtml pp8TeV_flat.yoda:"Title=flat" \
pp8TeV_bias.yoda:"Title=bias"
```

Exercise 5a: Rivet

- Whole phase-space filled, events reweighted to preserve physical cross-section.



Exercise 5b: Rivet Z-boson p_T

- The previous exercise was a good example where there's nothing wrong with the events that are generated, but we just didn't fill enough of the phase space.
- This next exercise aims to showcase how one might generate events that don't describe the physics you're aiming to simulate, emphasizing the importance of ISR for Z-boson transverse momentum.
- Change the beam energy, turn Z-production on and other processes off

```
Beams:eCM = 7000. ! CM energy of collision
```

```
SoftQCD:all = off ! All soft QCD processes
```

```
HardQCD:all = off ! All soft QCD processes
```

```
WeakSingleBoson:ffbar2gmZ = on ! Gamma/Z production on
```

- Turn off ISR, and remove the phase-space biasing

```
PartonLevel:ISR=off
```

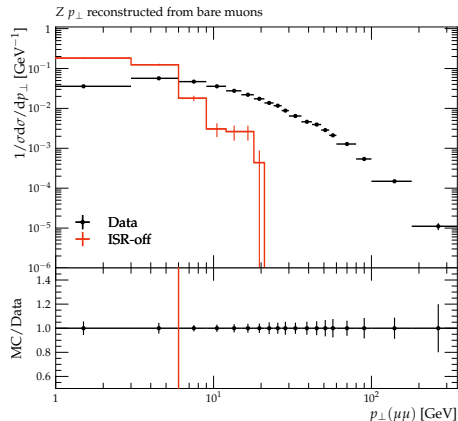
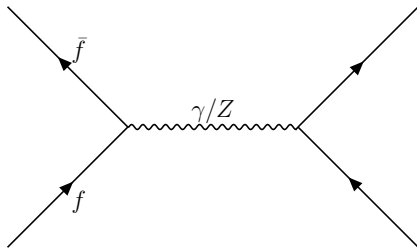
```
! PhaseSpace:bias2Selection = on
```

```
! PhaseSpace:bias2SelectionPow = 4.
```

```
! PhaseSpace:bias2SelectionRef = 50.
```

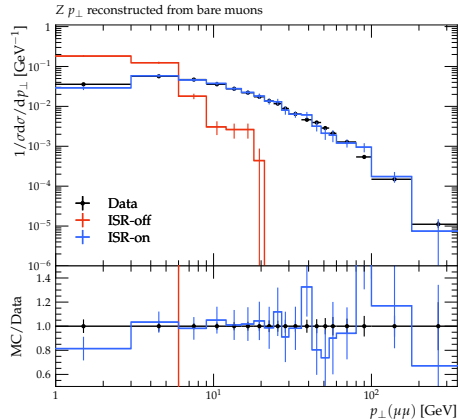
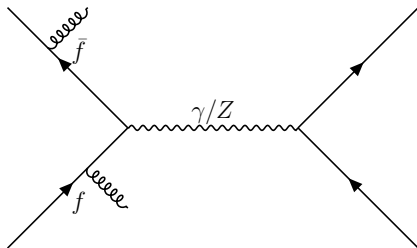
Exercise 5b: Rivet Z-boson p_T

- Add the Z-boson analysis
ATLAS_2011_S9131140
- The effect is similar: p_T distribution cuts off at some point, but this time the overall shape of the cross section is also wrong.



Exercise 5b: Rivet Z-boson p_T

- Without ISR, the Z-boson doesn't acquire much p_T in LO picture. ISR provides p_T kicks through emissions.



Exercises 6-?:

- Congratulations! You now have your drivers license for Pythia, and should be able to tackle the rest of the problems in the worksheet, in any order you wish.
 - Section 6: Jets
 - Section 7: Higgs production
 - Section 8: CKKW-L merging
 - Section 9: Further studies
- Some topics we have covered already which you could try in practice are
 - Factorization and renormalization scale variations (envelope) with `SigmaProcess:factorMultFac/renormMultFac`
 - Different PDF sets with `PDF:pSet`
 - Matching and merging: `main164.cc` and associated `.cmnd` files

Resources

- [pythia.org Online Manual](#) - Very important, especially for basics.
- [A comprehensive guide to the physics and usage of PYTHIA 8.3](#) - More advanced and detailed guide.
- [Pythia 8.3 Worksheet](#) - Beginner-friendly tutorial.

thanks