II. Signal Formation and Acquisition

II. Signal Formation and Acquisition

We consider detectors that provide electrical signal outputs.

To extract the amplitude or timing information the electrical signal is coupled to an amplifier, sent through gain and filtering stages, and finally digitized to allow data storage and analysis.

Optimal signal processing depends on the primary signal.

In general, the signal can be

1. a continuously varying current or voltage
2. a sequence of pulses, occurring
   - periodically
   - at known times
   - randomly

All of these affect the choice of signal processing techniques.

First steps in signal processing:

- Formation of the signal in the detector
- Coupling the sensor to the amplifier

Radiation detectors use either

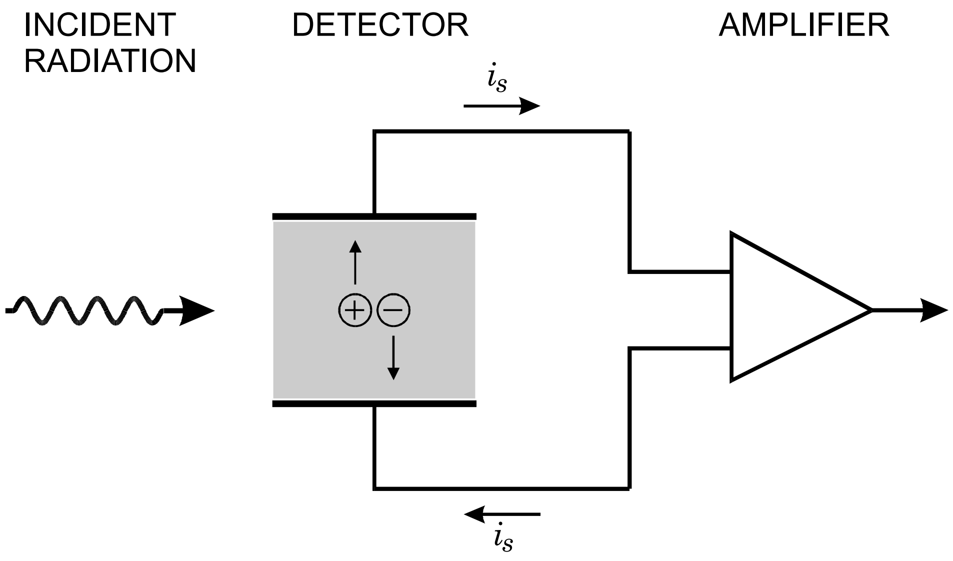
- direct detection or
- indirect detection

Examples:

1. Direct Detection

Ionization chamber

Radiation is converted directly to charge pairs.

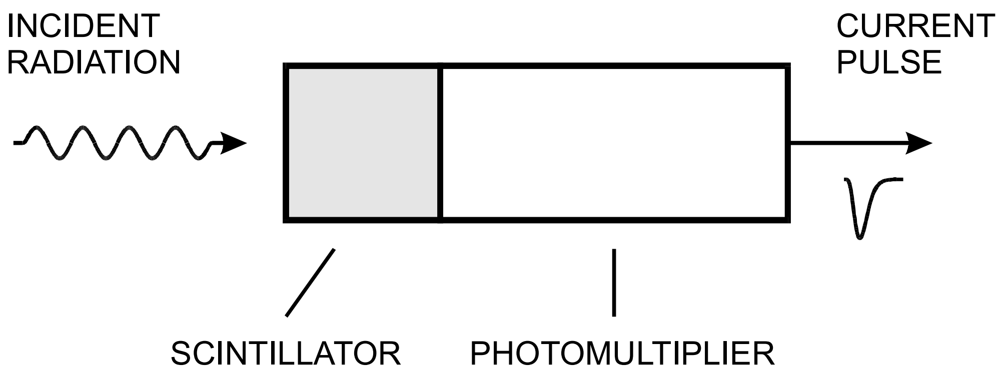


2. Indirect Detection

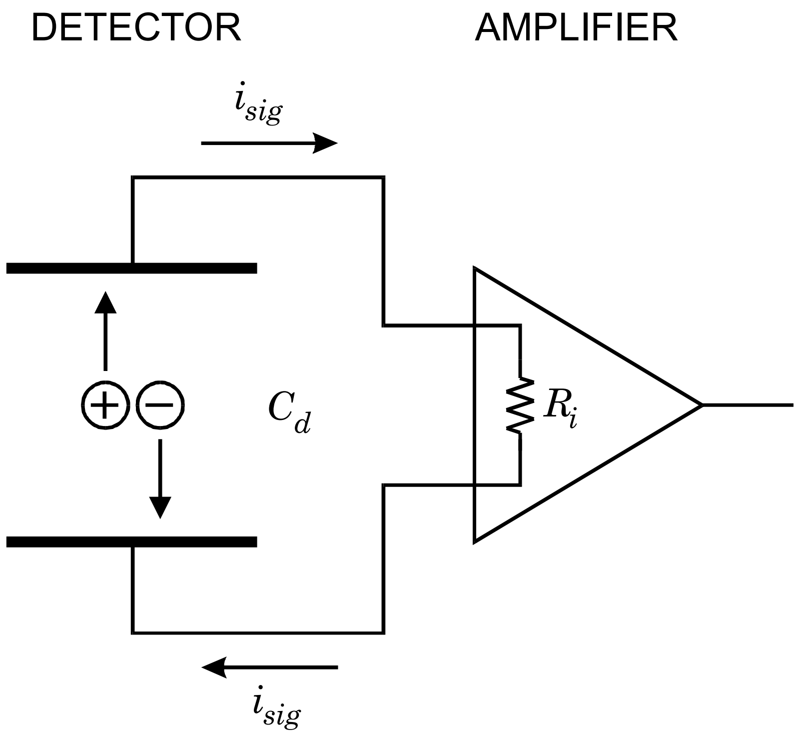
Scintillation detector

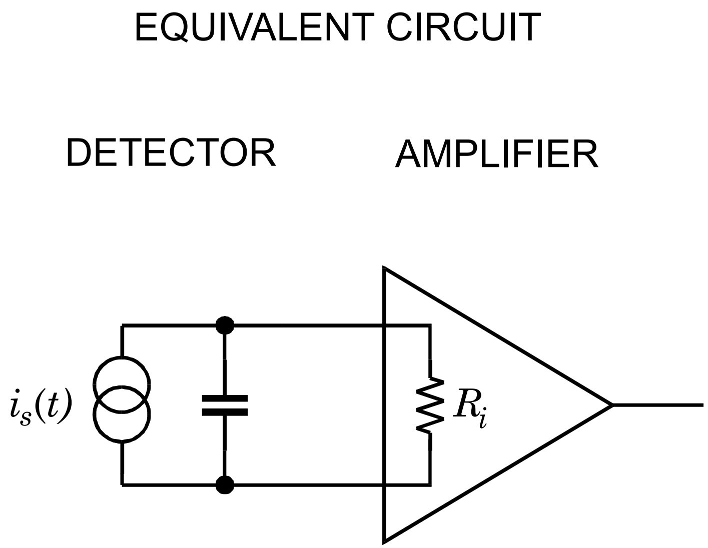
Radiation is converted to light (scintillation photons).

Scintillation light is converted to an electrical signal.



2. Signal Formation





When does the signal current begin?

a) when the charge reaches the electrode?

or

b) when the charge begins to move?

Although the first answer is quite popular (encouraged by the phrase “charge collection”), the second is correct.

When a charge pair is created, both the positive and negative charges couple to the electrodes. As the charges move the induced charge changes, i.e. a current flows in the electrode circuit.

The following discussion applies to ALL types of structures that register the effect of charges moving in an ensemble of electrodes, i.e. not just semiconductor or gas-filled ionization chambers, but also resistors, capacitors, photoconductors, vacuum tubes, etc.

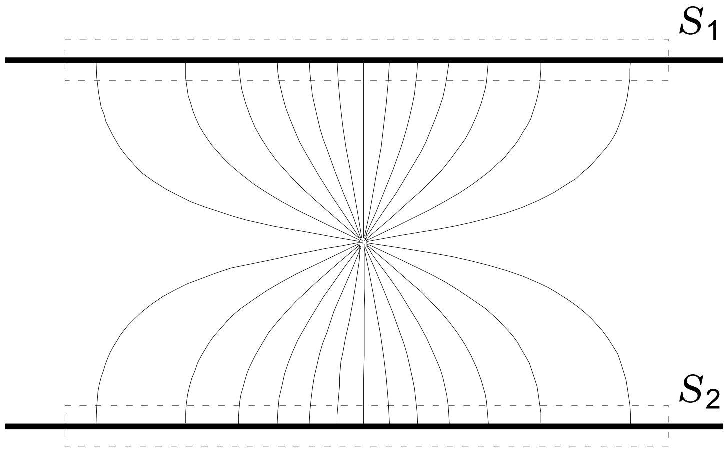
The effect of the amplifier on the signal pulse will be discussed in the Electronics part.

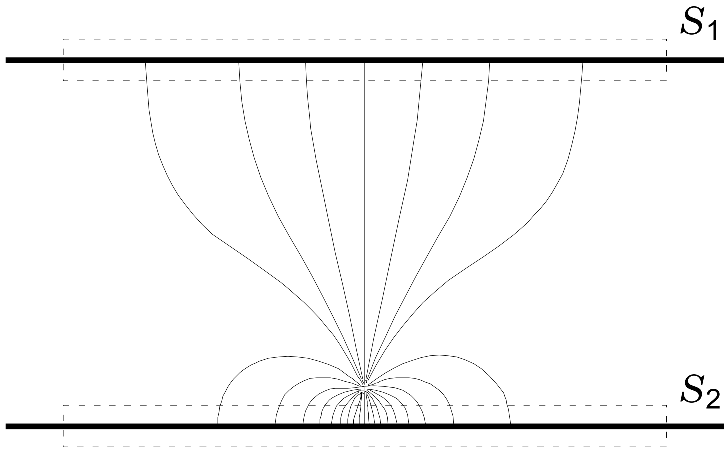
Induced Charge

Consider a charge q in a parallel plate capacitor:

When the charge is midway between the two plates, the charge induced on one plate is determined by applying Gauss' law. The same number of field lines intersect both S_1 and S_2, so equal charge is induced on each plate (= q / 2).

When the charge is close to one plate, most of the field lines terminate on that plate and the induced charge is much greater.

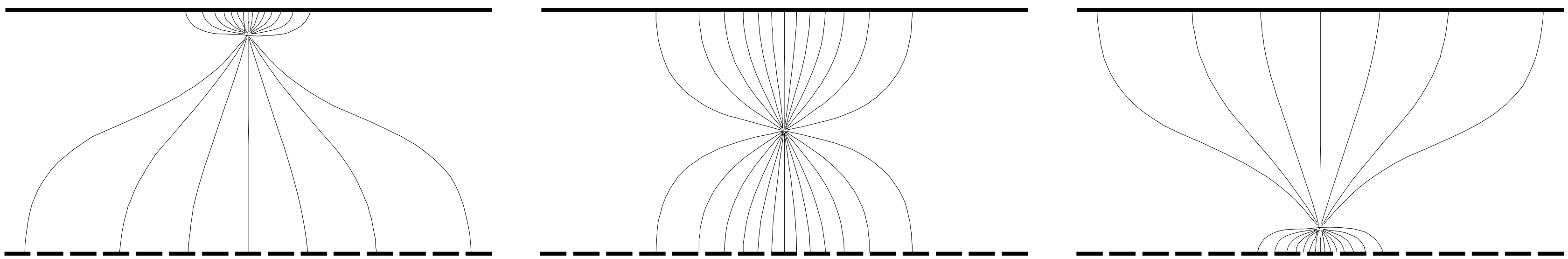




As a charge traverses the space between the two plates the induced charge changes continuously, so current flows in the external circuit as soon as the charges begin to move.

Induced Signal Currents in a Strip Detector

Consider a charge originating near the upper contiguous electrode and drifting down towards the strips.



Initially, charge is induced over many strips.

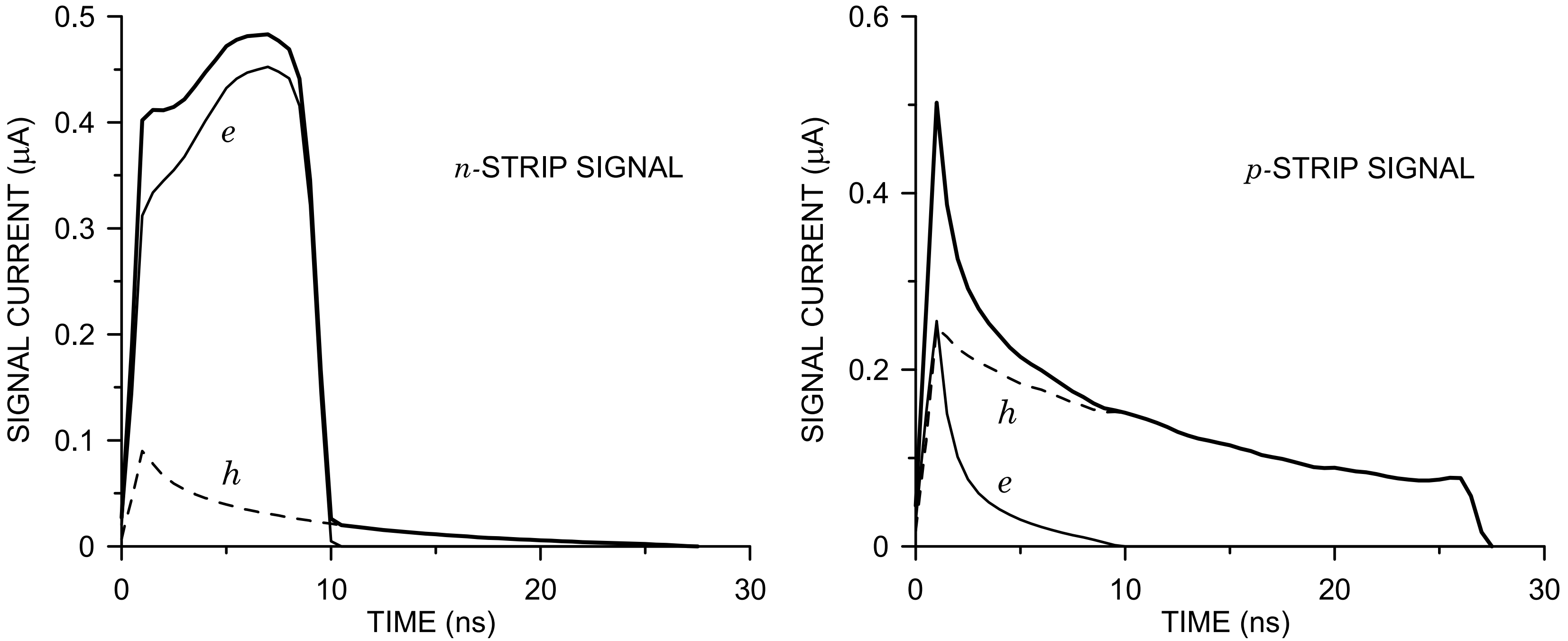
As the charge approaches the strips, the signal distributes over fewer strips.

When the charge is close to the strips, the signal is concentrated over few strips

The magnitude of the induced current due to the moving charge depends on the coupling between the charge and the individual electrodes.

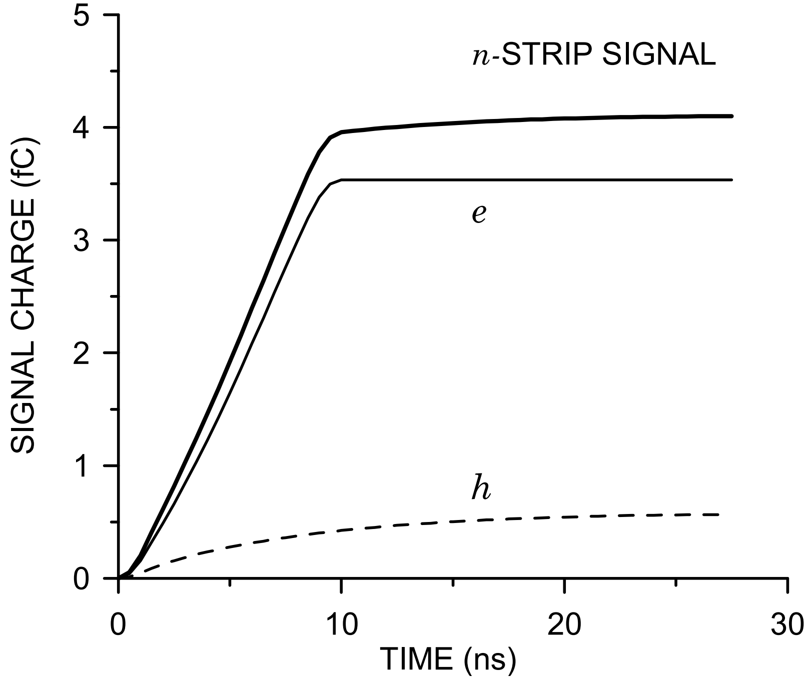
Mathematically this can be analyzed conveniently by applying Ramo's theorem.
(Chapter 2, pp 71-82)

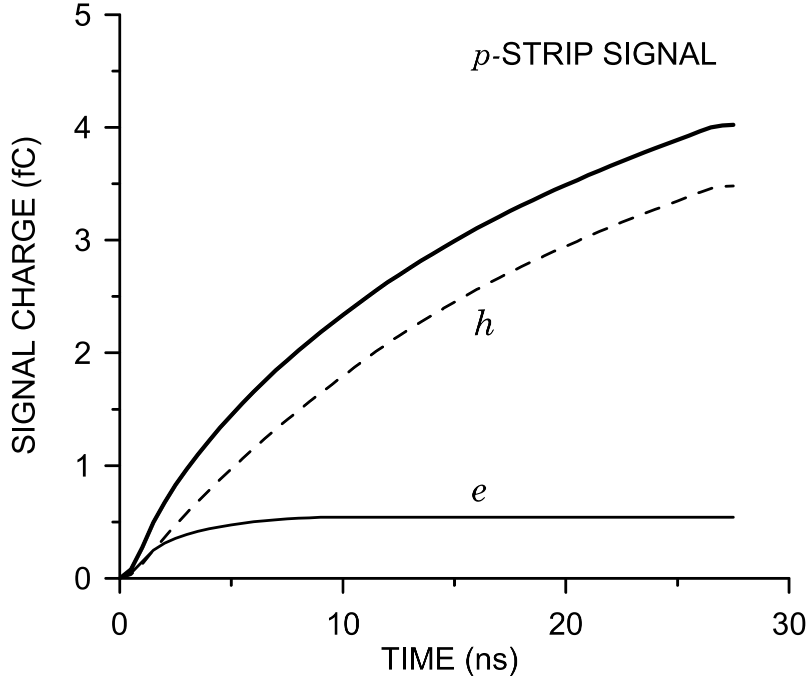
Current pulses in strip detectors (track traversing the detector)



The duration of the electron and hole pulses is determined by the time required to traverse the detector as in a parallel-plate detector, but the shapes are very different.

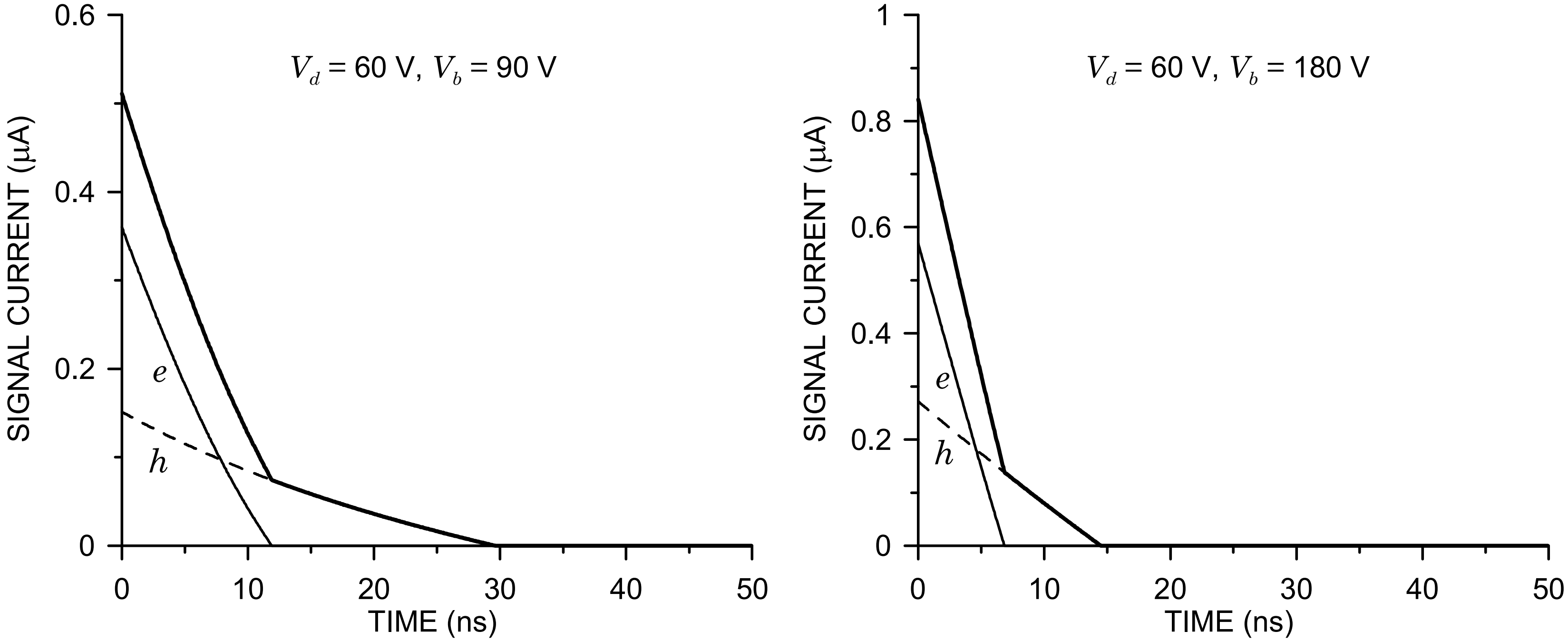
Strip Detector Signal Charge





For comparison:

Current pulses in pad detectors (track traversing the detector)



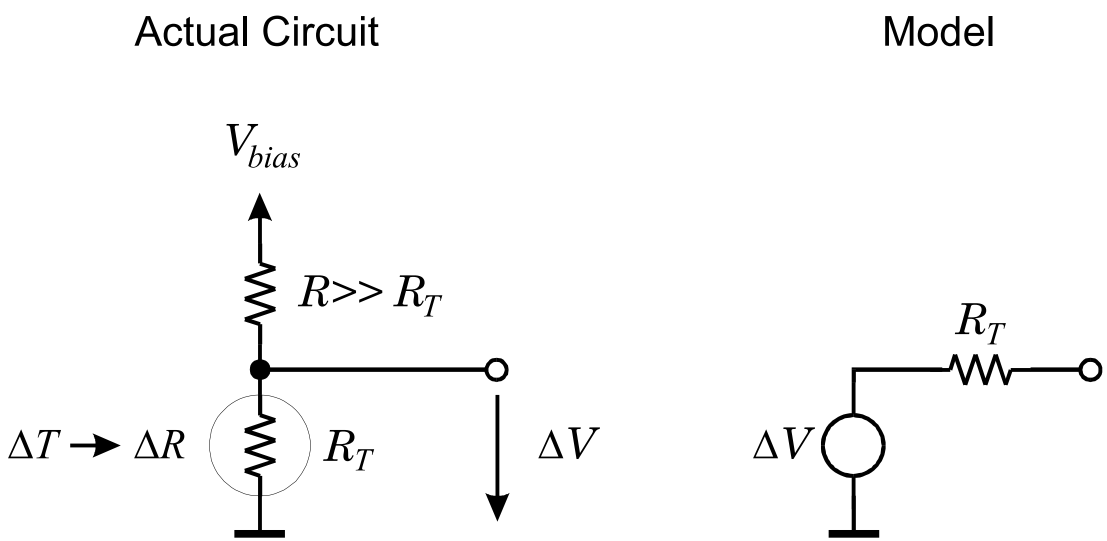
For the same depletion and bias voltages the pulse durations are the same as in strip detectors, although the shapes are very different.

Overbias decreases the collection time.

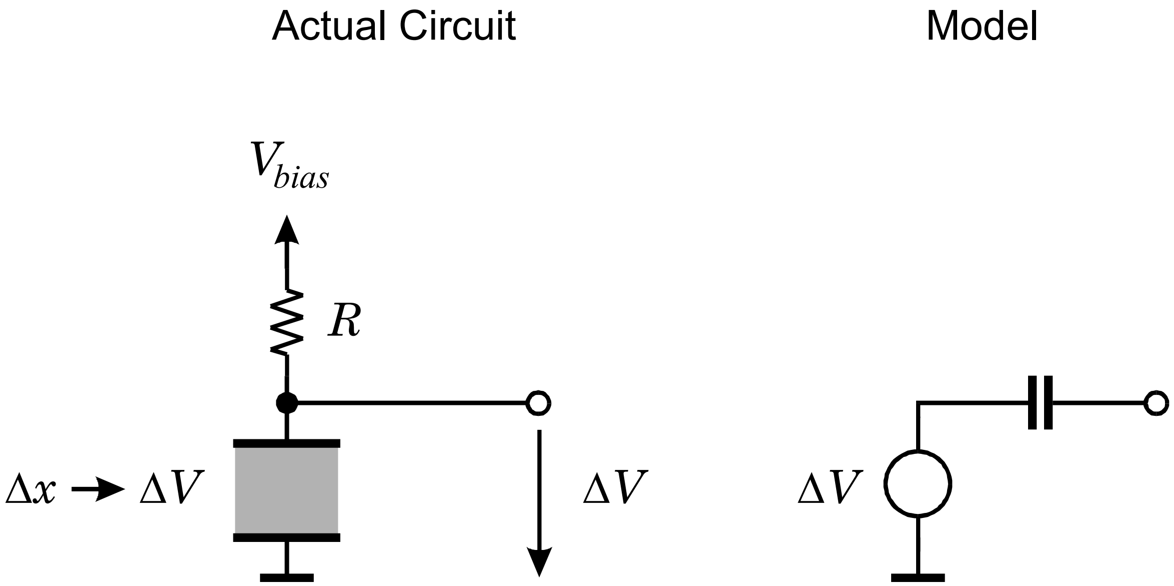
Example Detector Models

Although detectors take on many different forms, one can analyze the coupling to the amplifier with simple models.

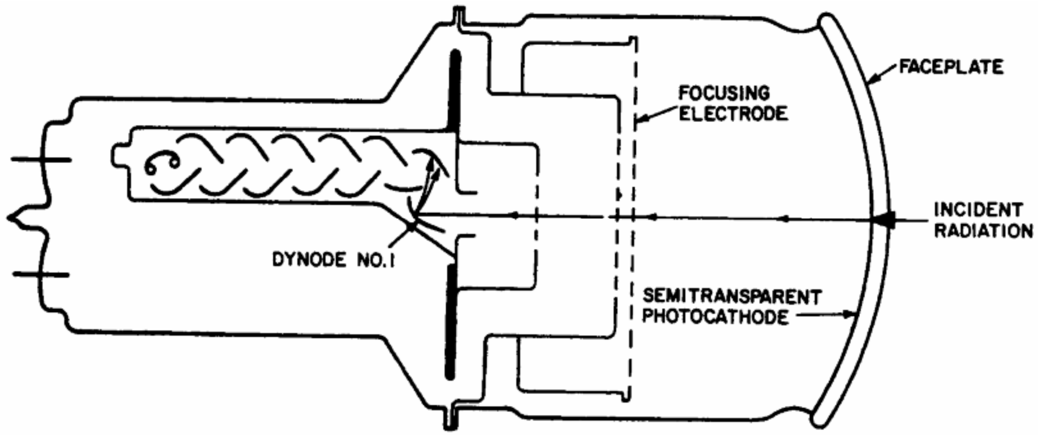
2.1 Thermistor detecting IR radiation



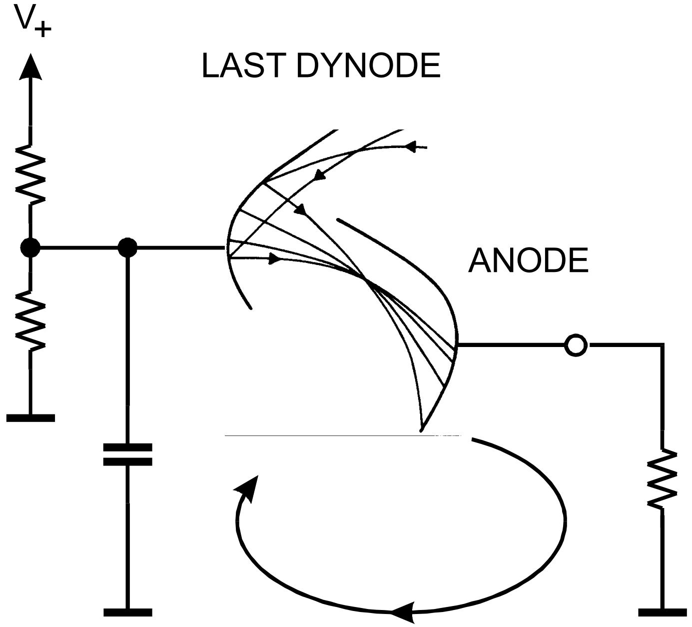
2.2 Piezoelectric Transducer



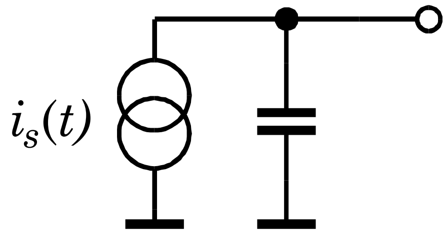
2.3 Photomultiplier Tube



Detail of output circuit

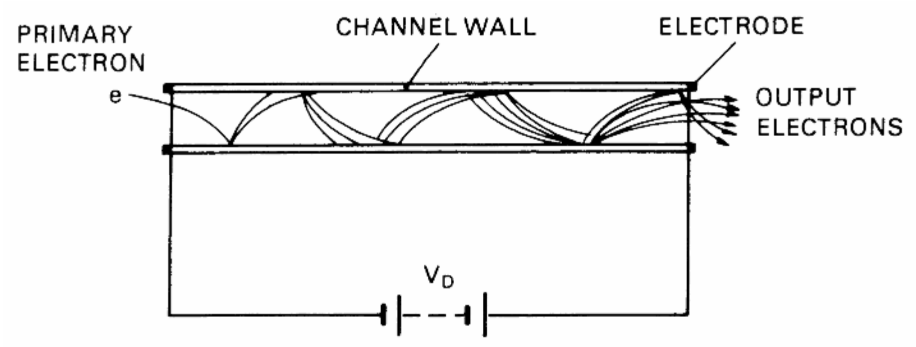


Model

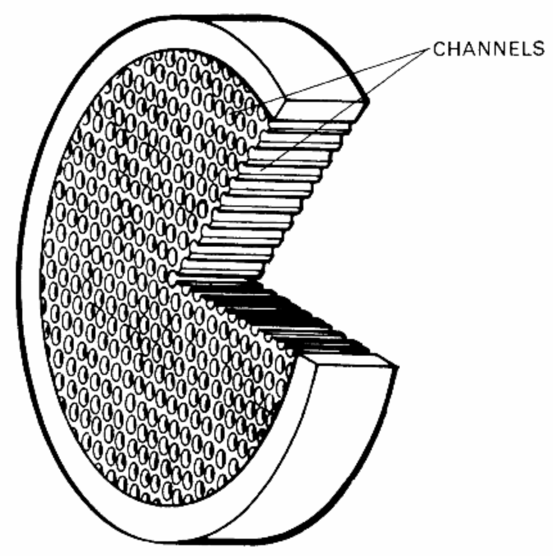


2.4 Channeltrons and Microchannel Plates

Channel electron multiplier
The inside of a glass capillary is coated with a secondary electron emitter that also forms a distributed resistance. Application of a voltage between the the two ends sets up a field, so that electrons in the structure are accelerated, strike the wall, and form secondaries.

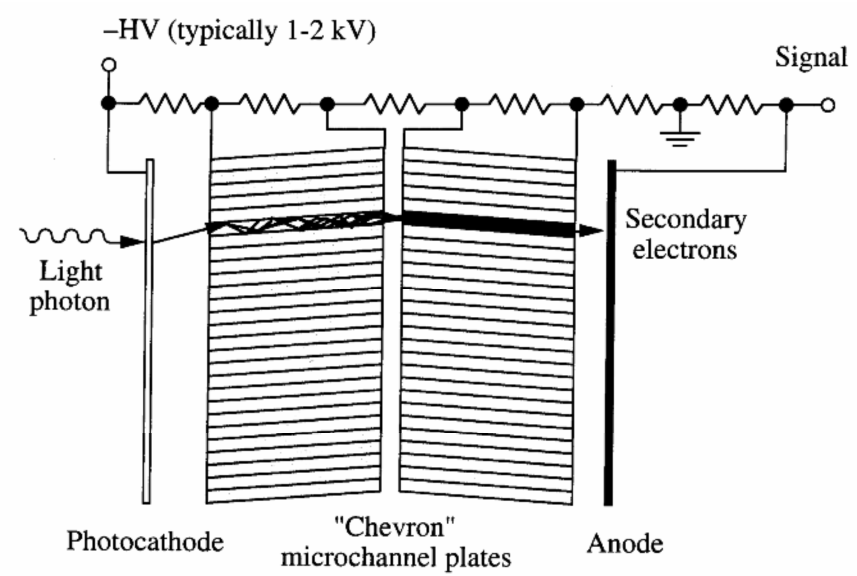


Channel electron multipliers are used individually ("channeltrons"), with tube diameters of ~1 mm, and in arrays called "micro-channel plates", which combine many small channels of order 10 μm diameter in the form of a plate.
Microchannel plates are fabricated by stretching bundles of glass capillaries and then slicing the bundle to form 2 – 5 cm diameter plates of several hundred microns thickness.



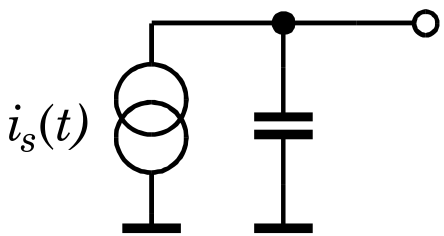
Microchannel plates are compact and fast. Transit time dispersion is < 1 ns due to the small dimensions of an individual channel. Pairs of microchannel plates can be combined to provide higher gain.

Connection scheme of a photon detector using microchannel plates



(from Derenzo)

Model

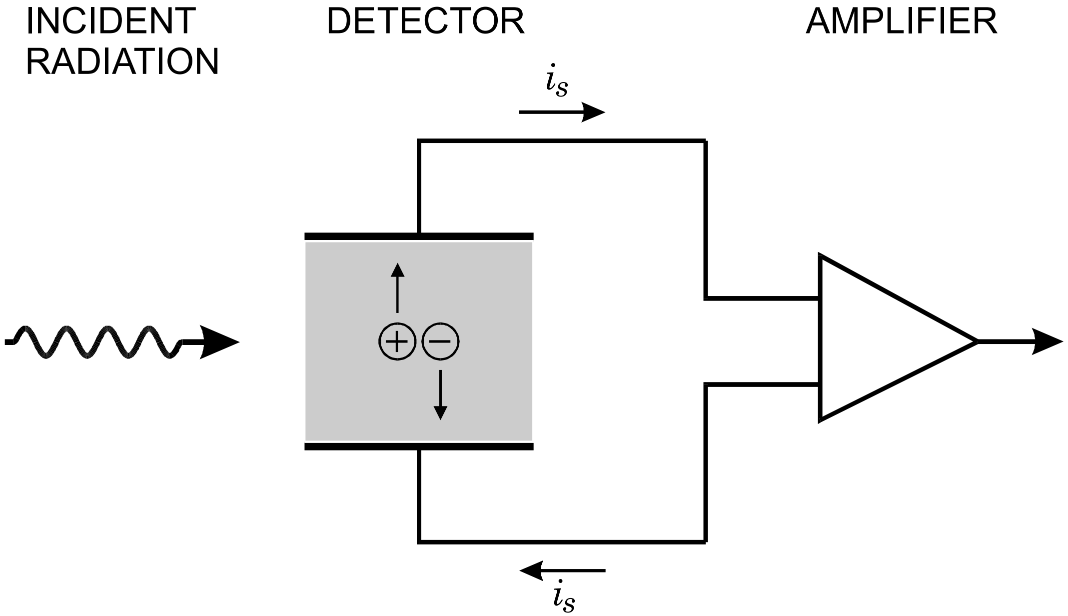


The shunt capacitor represents the capacitance between the exit face of the MCP and the anode.

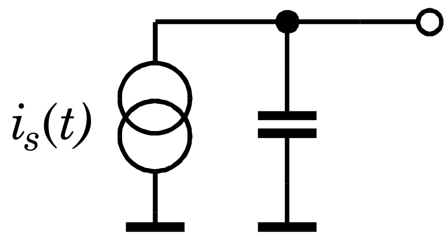
2.5 Ionization Chamber

Semiconductor detectors (pad, strip, pixel electrodes)

Gas-filled ionization or proportional chambers, ...

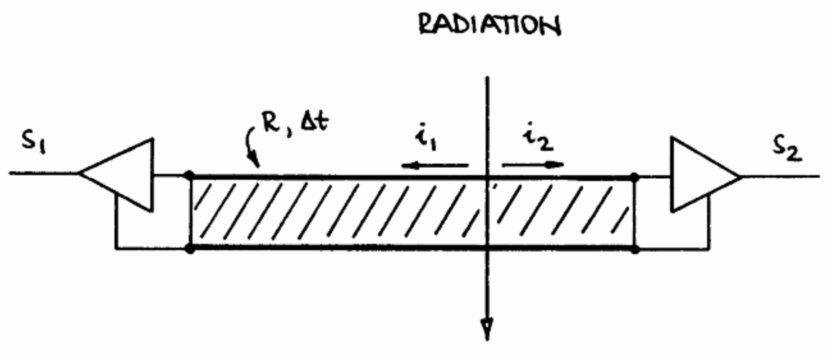


Model:



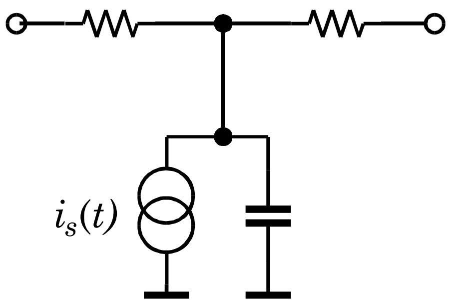
2.6 Position-Sensitive Detector with Resistive Charge Division

Electrode is made resistive with low-impedance amplifiers at each end. The signal current divides according to the ratio of resistances presented to current flow in the respective direction

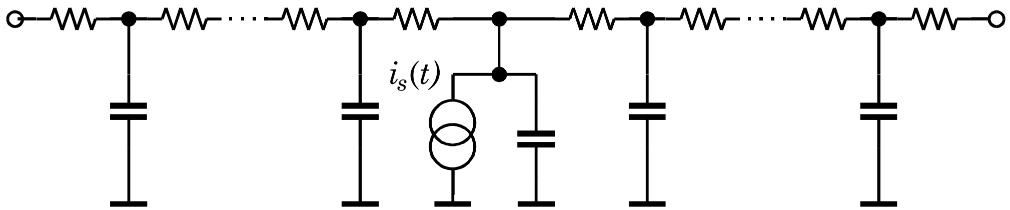


$$\frac{i_1(x)}{i_2(x)} = \frac{R_2(x)}{R_1(x)}$$

Simplest Model:



Depending on the speed of the amplifier, a more accurate model of the electrode includes the distributed capacitance:



Signal Magnitude

Any form of elementary excitation can be used to detect the radiation signal.

An electrical signal can be formed directly by ionization.

Incident radiation quanta impart sufficient energy to individual atomic electrons to form electron-ion pairs (in gases) or electron-hole pairs (in semiconductors and metals).

Other detection mechanisms are

Excitation of optical states (scintillators)

Excitation of lattice vibrations (phonons)

Breakup of Cooper pairs in superconductors

Formation of superheated droplets in superfluid He

Typical excitation energies

Ionization in gases	~30 eV
Ionization in semiconductors	1 – 5 eV
Scintillation	~10 – 1000 eV
Phonons	meV
Breakup of Cooper Pairs	meV

Detector Sensitivity

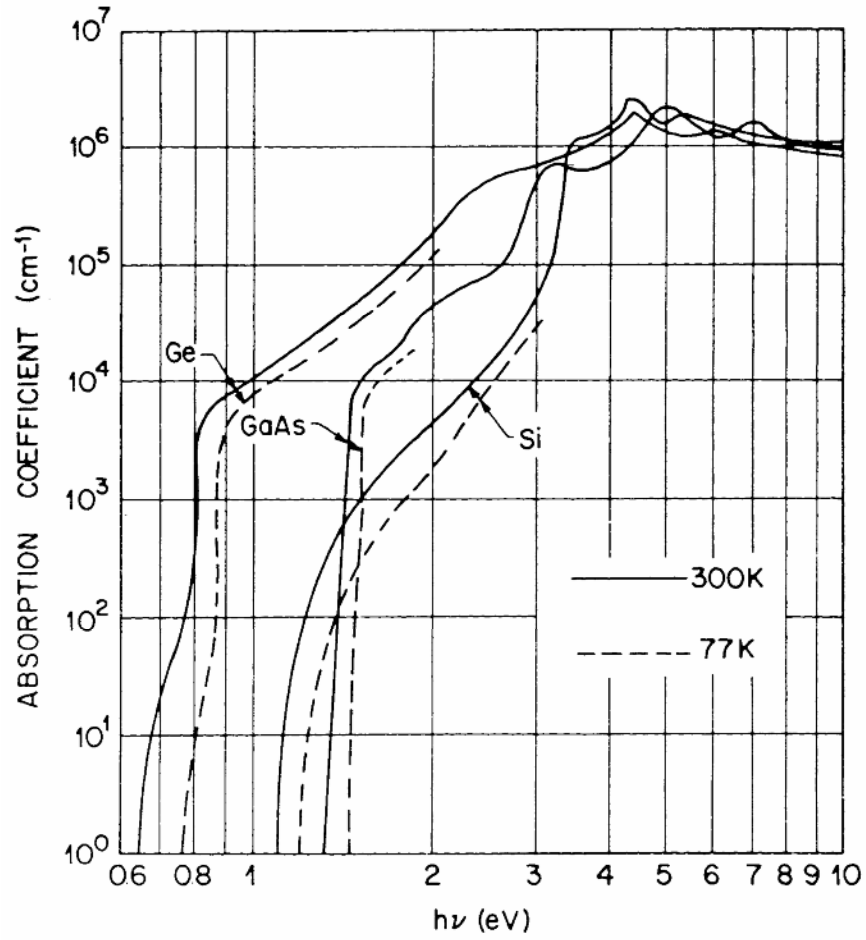
Example:

Ionization signal in semiconductor detectors

a) visible light (energies near band gap)

Detection threshold = energy required to produce an electron-hole pair
≈ band gap

In indirect bandgap semiconductors (Si), additional momentum required: provided by phonons



(from Sze)

b) High energy quanta ($E \gg E_g$)

It is experimentally observed that the energy required to form an electron-hole pair exceeds the bandgap.

In Si: $E_i = 3.6$ eV ($E_g = 1.1$ eV)

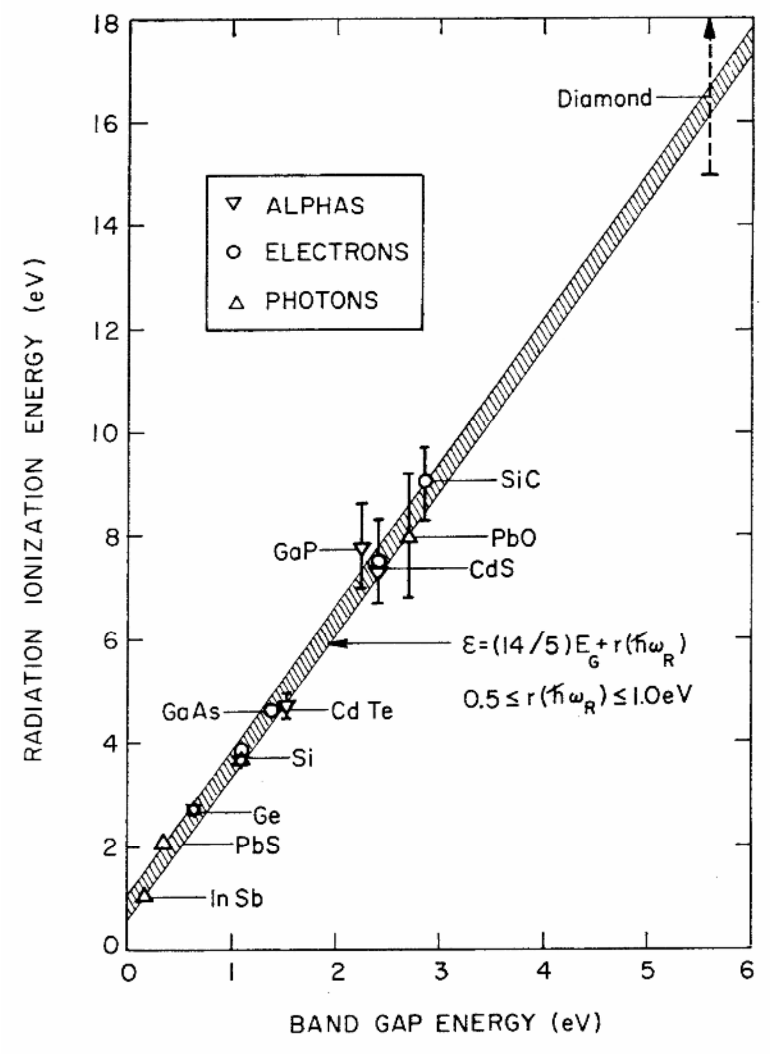
Why?

When particle deposits energy one must conserve both

energy and momentum

momentum conservation not fulfilled by transition across gap

$\Rightarrow$ excite phonons (lattice vibrations, i.e. heat)



A. Klein, J. Applied Physics **39** (1968) 2029

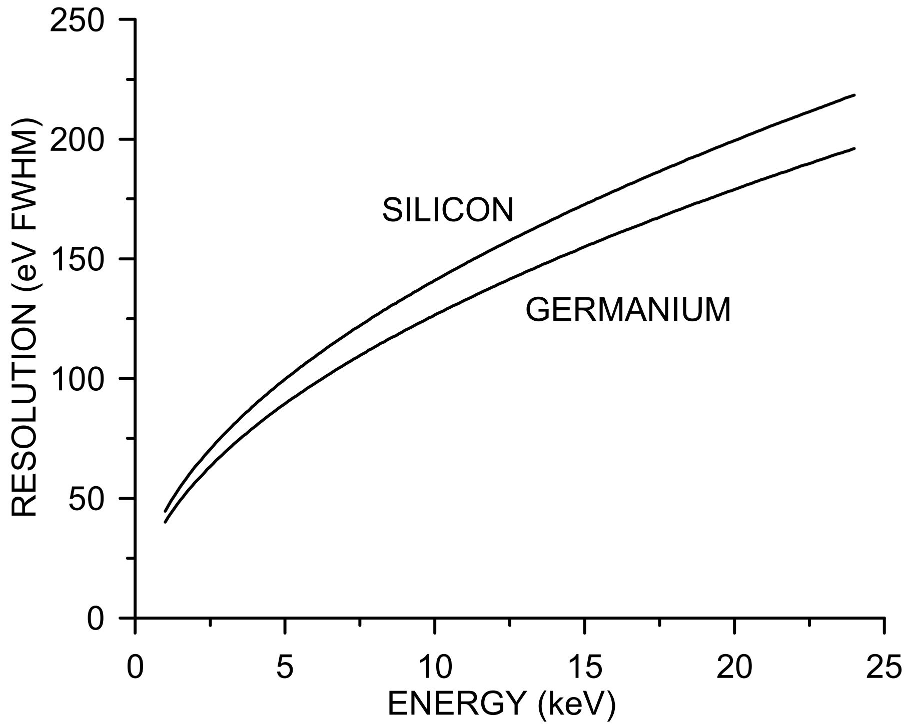
Signal Fluctuations: Intrinsic Resolution of Semiconductor Detectors

$$\Delta E_{FWHM} = 2.35 \cdot \varepsilon_i \sqrt{FN_Q} = 2.35 \cdot \varepsilon_i \sqrt{F \frac{E}{E_i}} = 2.35 \cdot \sqrt{FEE_i}$$

F is the Fano factor (Chapter 2, pp 52-55).

Si: $E_i = 3.6$ eV $F = 0.1$

Ge: $E_i = 2.9$ eV $F = 0.1$



Detectors with good efficiency in this energy range have sufficiently small capacitance to allow electronic noise of ~100 eV FWHM, so the variance of the detector signal is a significant contribution.

At energies >100 keV the detector sizes required tend to increase the electronic noise to dominant levels.

Signal Fluctuations in a Scintillation Detector

Example: Scintillation Detector - a typical NaI(Tl) system
(from Derenzo)

Resolution of energy measurement determined by statistical variance of produced signal quanta.

$$\frac{\Delta E}{E} = \frac{\Delta N}{N} = \frac{\sqrt{N}}{N} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}}$$

Resolution determined by smallest number of quanta in chain, i.e. number of photoelectrons arriving at first dynode.

In this example

$$\frac{\Delta E}{E} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{3000}} = \text{ 2\% rms = 5\% FWHM}$$

511 keV gamma ray

⇓

25000 photons in scintillator

⇓

15000 photons at photocathode

⇓

3000 photoelectrons at first dynode

⇓

$3 \cdot 10^9$ electrons at anode

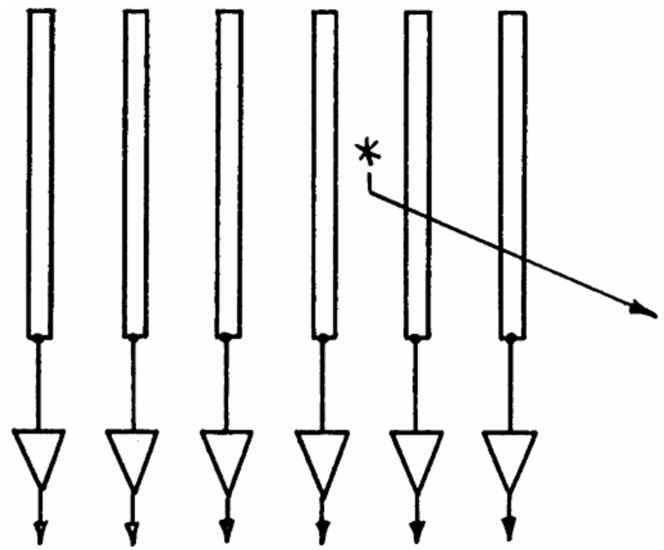
2 mA peak current

Typically 7 – 8% obtained, due to non-uniformity of light collection and gain.

In addition to energy measurements, semiconductor detectors allow precision position sensing.

Resolution determined by precision of micron scale patterning of the detector electrodes (e.g. strips on 50 μm pitch).

Two options: Binary Readout Analog Readout



Interpolation yields resolution < pitch

Relies on transverse diffusion

$$\sigma_x \propto \sqrt{t_{coll}}$$

to discriminators

Position resolution determined directly by pitch p: $\sigma_x = p/\sqrt{12}$

e.g. in Si: $t_c \approx 10$ ns $\Rightarrow \sigma_x = 5$ μm

depends on S/N and p

$p = 25$ μm and $S/N = 50$

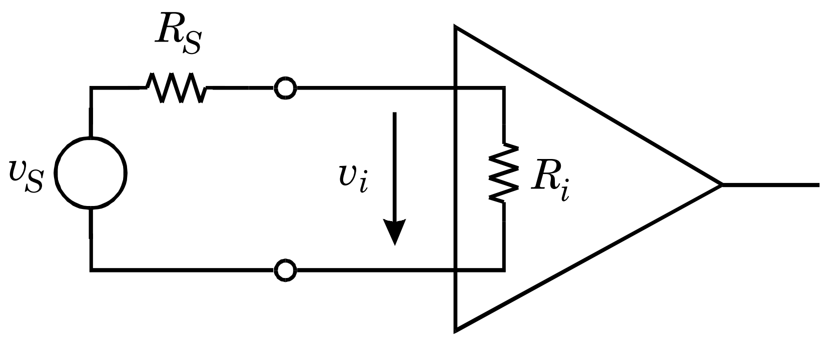
$\Rightarrow$ 3 – 4 μm resolution

3. Signal Acquisition

Amplifier Types

a) Voltage-Sensitive Amplifier

The signal voltage at the amplifier input



$$v_i = \frac{R_i}{R_S + R_i} v_S$$

If the signal voltage at the amplifier input is to be approximately equal to the signal voltage

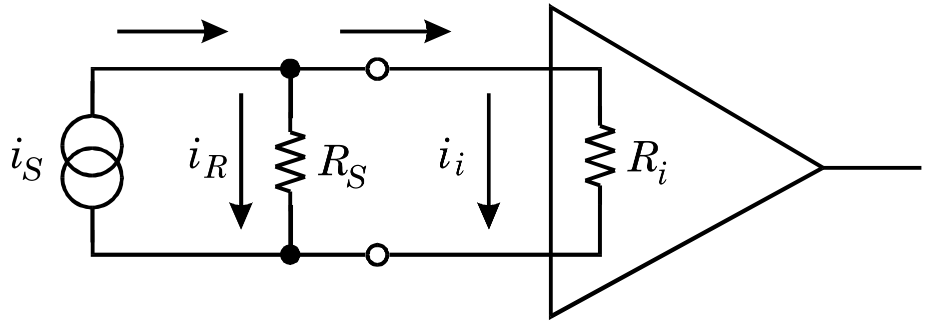
$$v_i \approx v_S \quad \Rightarrow \quad R_i \gg R_S$$

To operate in the voltage-sensitive mode, the amplifier's input resistance (or impedance) must be large compared to the source resistance (impedance).

In ideal voltage amplifiers one sets $R_i = \infty$, although this is never true in reality, although it can be fulfilled to a good approximation.

To provide a voltage output, the amplifier should have a low output resistance, i.e. its output resistance should be small compared to the input resistance of the following stage.

b) Current-Sensitive Amplifier



The signal current divides into the source resistance and the amplifier's input resistance. The fraction of current flowing into the amplifier

$$i_i = \frac{R_s}{R_s + R_i} i_S$$

If the current flowing into the amplifier is to be approximately equal to the signal current

$$i_i \approx i_S \qquad \Rightarrow \qquad R_i \ll R_S$$

To operate in the current-sensitive mode, the amplifier's input resistance (or impedance) must be small compared to the source resistance (impedance).

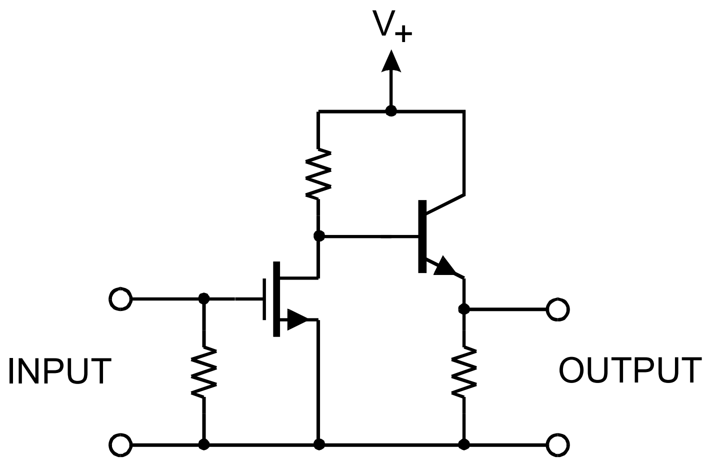
One can also model a current source as a voltage source with a series resistance. For the signal current to be unaffected by the amplifier input resistance, the input resistance must be small compared to the source resistance, as derived above.

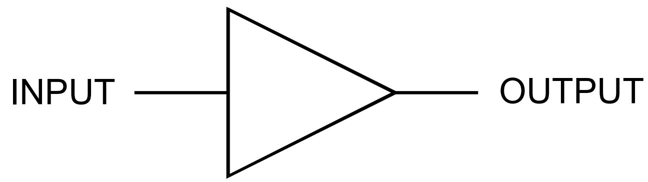
At the output, to provide current drive the output resistance should be high, i.e. large compared to the input resistance of the next stage.

- Whether a specific amplifier operates in the current or voltage mode depends on the source resistance.

- Amplifiers can be configured as current mode input and voltage mode output or, conversely, as voltage mode input and current mode output. The gain is then expressed as V/A or A/V.

Although an amplifier has a pair of input and a second pair of output connections, since the two have a common connection a simplified representation is commonly used:

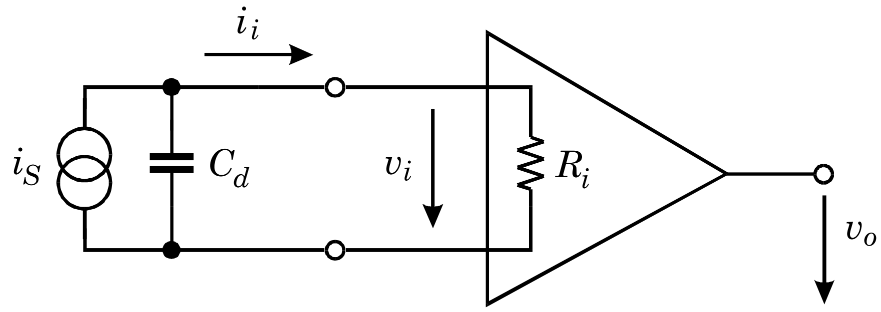




c) Voltage and Current Mode with Capacitive Sources

Output voltage:

v_o = (voltage gain A_v) × (input voltage v_i).



Operating mode depends on charge collection time t_c and the input time constant $R_i C_d$:

a) $R_i C_d \ll t_c$

detector capacitance discharges rapidly

$\Rightarrow \quad v_o \propto i_s(t)$

current sensitive amplifier

b) $R_i C_d \gg t_c$

detector capacitance discharges slowly

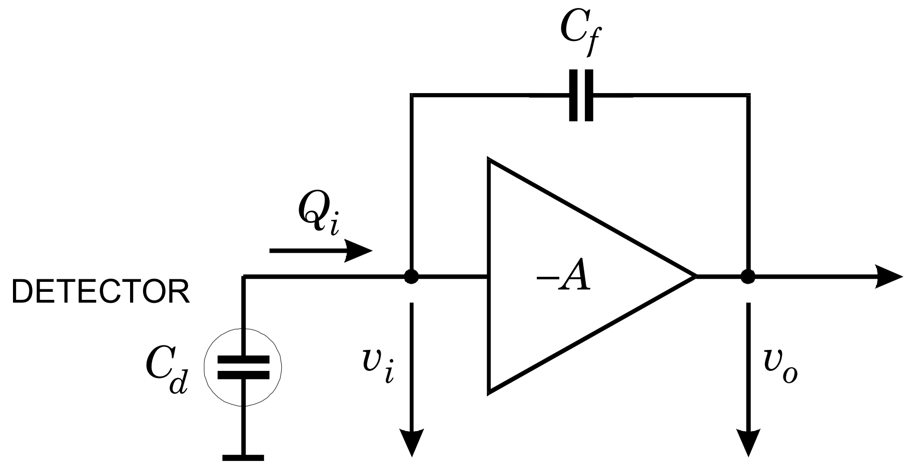
$\Rightarrow \quad v_o \propto \int i_s(t) dt$

voltage sensitive amplifier

Note that in both cases the amplifier is providing voltage gain, so the output signal voltage is determined directly by the input voltage. The difference is that the shape of the input voltage pulse is determined either by the instantaneous current or by the integrated current and the decay time constant.

Goal is to measure signal charge, so it is desirable to use a system whose response is independent of detector capacitance.

Active Integrator (“charge-sensitive amplifier”)



Start with inverting voltage amplifier

Voltage gain $dv_o / dv_i = -A \Rightarrow$

$$v_o = -Av_i$$

Input impedance = ∞ (i.e. no signal current flows into amplifier input)

Connect feedback capacitor C_f between output and input.

Voltage difference across C_f: $v_f = (A+1)v_i$

⇒ Charge deposited on C_f: $Q_f = C_f v_f = C_f (A+1) v_i$

$Q_i = Q_f$ (since $Z_i = \infty$)

⇒ Effective input capacitance $C_i = \dfrac{Q_i}{v_i} = C_f (A+1)$ (“dynamic” input capacitance)

Gain $$A_Q = \frac{dV_o}{dQ_i} = \frac{A \cdot v_i}{C_i \cdot v_i} = \frac{A}{C_i} = \frac{A}{A+1} \cdot \frac{1}{C_f} \approx \frac{1}{C_f} \quad (A >> 1)$$

Charge gain set by a well-controlled quantity, the feedback capacitance.

Q_i is the charge flowing into the preamplifier .... but some charge remains on C_d.

What fraction of the signal charge is measured?

$$\frac{Q_i}{Q_s} = \frac{C_i v_i}{Q_d + Q_i} = \frac{C_i}{Q_s} \cdot \frac{Q_s}{C_i + C_d}$$

$$= \frac{1}{1 + \frac{C_d}{C_i}} \approx 1 \quad (\text{if } C_i >> C_d)$$

Example: $A = 10^3$

$C_f = 1$ pF $\Rightarrow$ $C_i = 1$ nF

$C_{det} = 10$ pF: $Q_i / Q_s = 0.99$

$C_{det} = 500$ pF: $Q_i / Q_s = 0.67$

↑

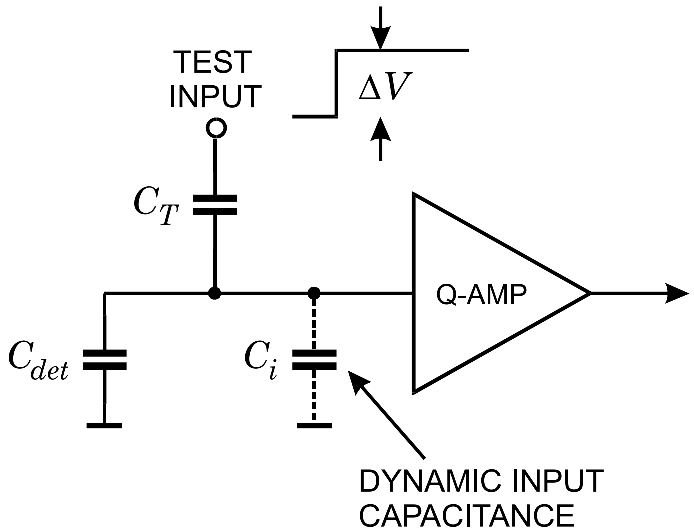
Si Det.: 50 μm thick, 250 mm^2 area

Note: Input coupling capacitor must be $\gg C_i$ for high charge transfer efficiency.

Calibration

Inject specific quantity of charge - measure system response

Use voltage pulse (can be measured conveniently with oscilloscope)



$C_i >> C_T$ $\Rightarrow$ Voltage step applied to test input develops over C_T.

$\Rightarrow$ $Q_T = \Delta V \cdot C_T$

Accurate expression: $$Q_T = \frac{C_T}{1+\frac{C_T}{C_i}} \cdot \Delta V \approx C_T \left(1 - \frac{C_T}{C_i}\right) \Delta V$$

Typically: $C_T / C_i = 10^{-3} - 10^{-4}$

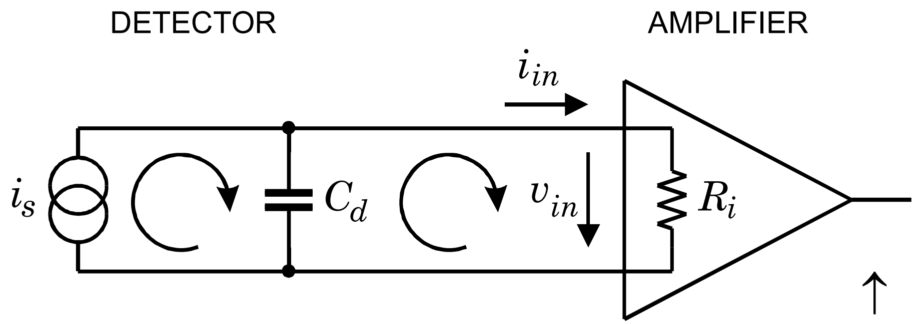
Realistic Charge-Sensitive Preamplifiers

The preceding discussion assumed idealized amplifiers with infinite speed.

In reality, amplifiers may be too slow to follow the instantaneous detector pulse.

Does this incur a loss of charge?

Equivalent Circuit:



charges moving in detector change induced charge on detector electrodes

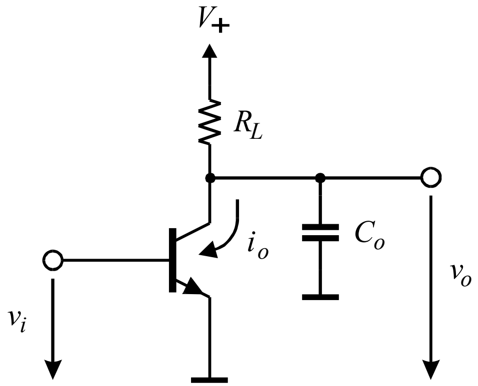
detector capacitance discharges into amplifier

Signal is preserved even if the amplifier responds much more slowly than the detector signal.

However, the response of the amplifier affects the measured pulse shape.

- How do "real" amplifiers affect the measured pulse shape?
- How does the detector affect amplifier response?

A Simple Amplifier



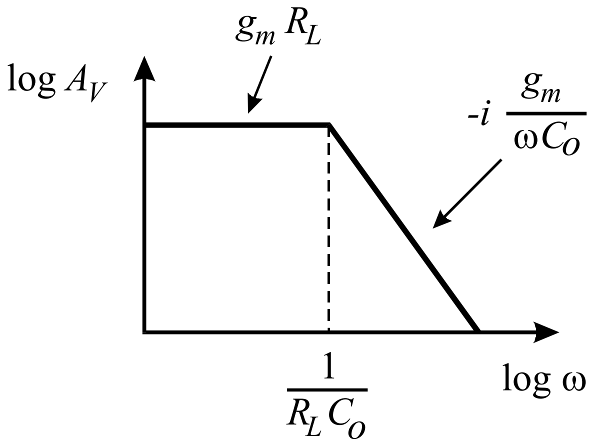
Voltage gain: $A_V = \frac{dv_o}{dv_i} = \frac{di_o}{dv_i} \cdot Z_L \equiv g_m Z_L$

$g_m \equiv$ transconductance

$$Z_L = R_L \, // \, C_o$$

$$\frac{1}{Z_L} = \frac{1}{R_L} + \mathbf{i}\omega C_o$$

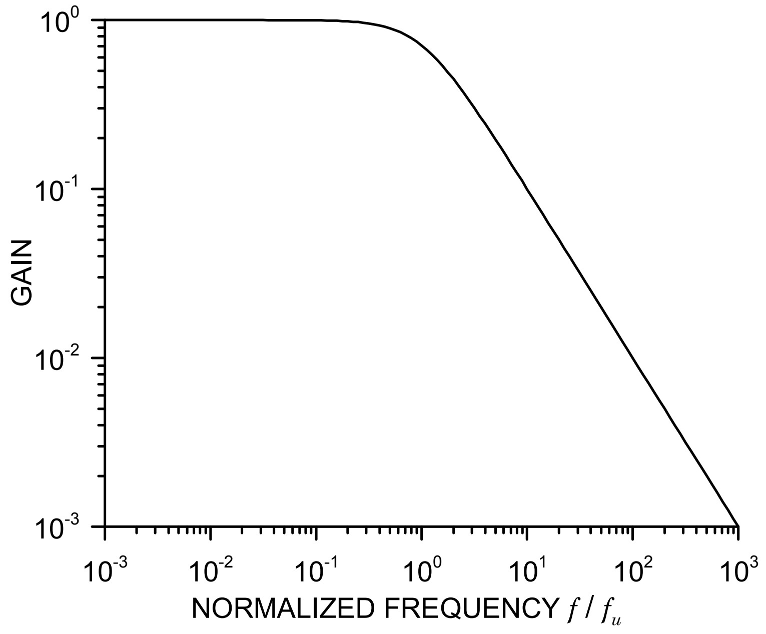
Gain vs. Frequency

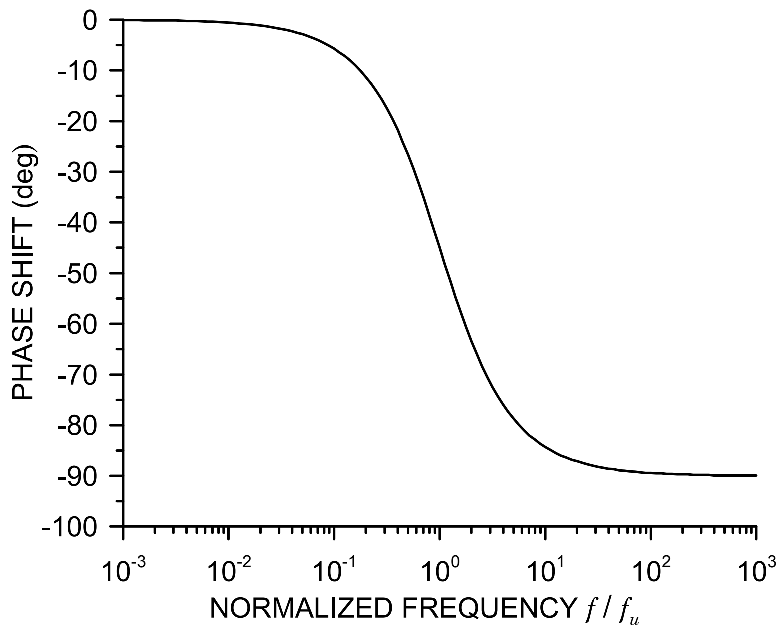


$$\Rightarrow \quad A_V = g_m \left(\frac{1}{R_L} + \mathbf{i}\omega C_o \right)^{-1}$$

↑ low freq. ↑ high freq.

Frequency and phase response:



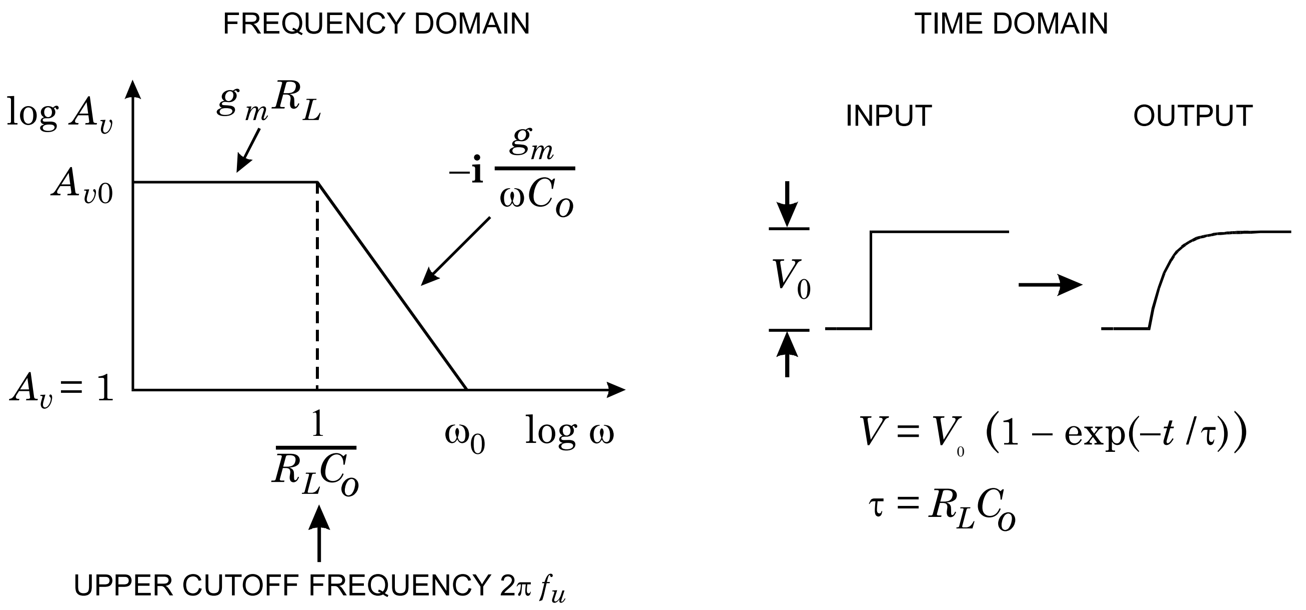


Phase shows change from low-frequency response. For an inverting amplifier add 180°.

Pulse Response of the Simple Amplifier

A voltage step $v_i(t)$ at the input causes a current step $i_o(t)$ at the output of the transistor.
For the output voltage to change, the output capacitance C_o must first charge up.

⇒ The output voltage changes with a time constant $\tau = R_L C_O$



The time constant τ corresponds to the upper cutoff frequency : $\tau = \dfrac{1}{2\pi f_u}$

Input Impedance of a Charge-Sensitive Amplifier

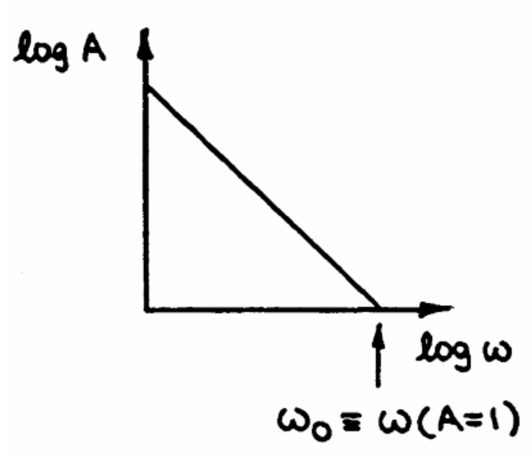
Input impedance $$Z_i = \frac{Z_f}{A+1} \approx \frac{Z_f}{A} \quad (A >> 1)$$

Amplifier gain vs. frequency beyond the upper cutoff frequency

$$A = -\mathbf{i}\ \frac{\omega_0}{\omega}$$

Feedback impedance $$Z_f = -\mathbf{i}\ \frac{1}{\omega\ C_f}$$

⇒ Input Impedance $$Z_i = -\frac{\mathbf{i}}{\omega\ C_f} \cdot \frac{1}{-\mathbf{i}\frac{\omega_0}{\omega}} = \frac{1}{\omega_0 C_f}$$



Gain-Bandwidth Product

Imaginary component vanishes ⇒ *Resistance:* $Z_i \to R_i$

⇒ low frequencies ($f < f_u$): capacitive input
high frequencies ($f > f_u$): resistive input

Practically all charge-sensitive amplifiers operate in the 90° phase shift regime.
⇒ Resistive input

Time Response of a Charge-Sensitive Amplifier

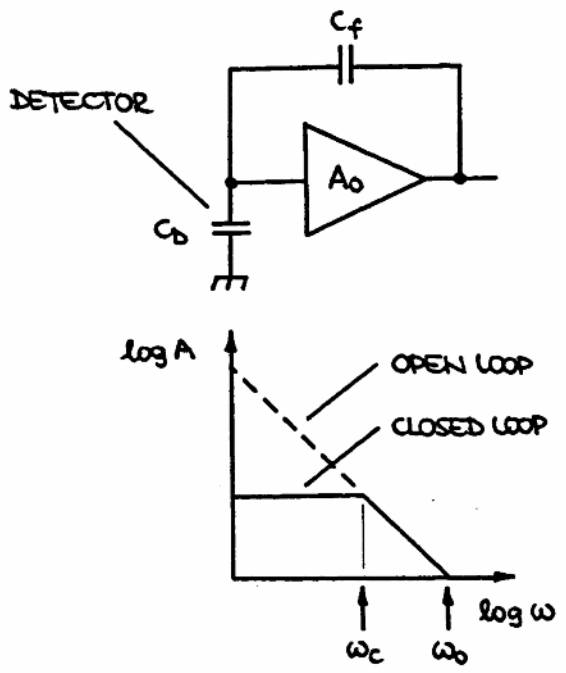
Input resistance and detector capacitance form RC time constant:

$$\tau_i = R_i C_D$$

$$\tau_i = \frac{1}{\omega_0 C_f} \cdot C_D$$

$\Rightarrow$ **Rise time increases with detector capacitance.**

Or apply feedback theory:



Closed Loop Gain $A_f = \dfrac{C_D + C_f}{C_f} \quad (A_f << A_0)$

$A_f \approx \dfrac{C_D}{C_f} \quad (C_D >> C_f)$

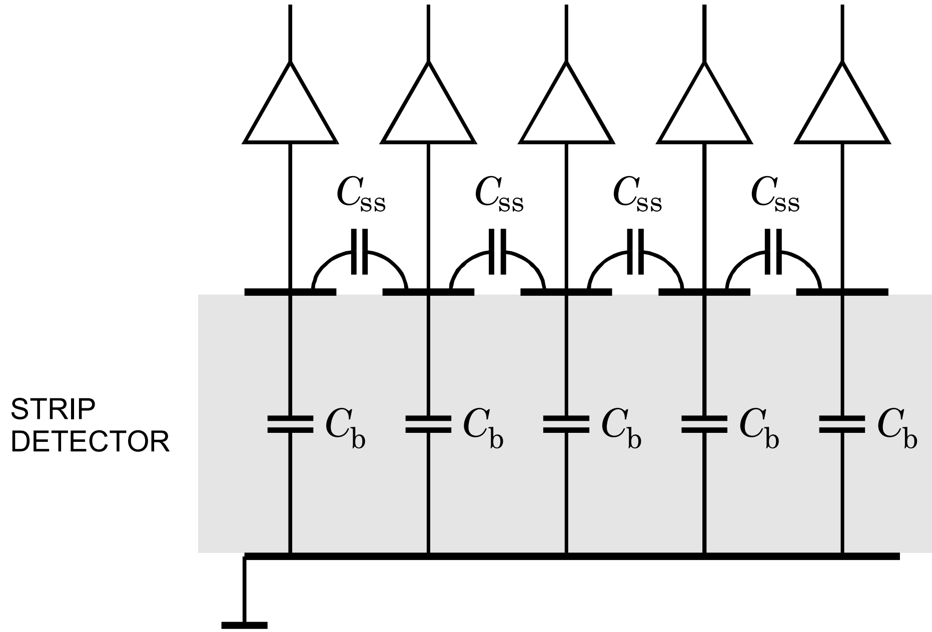
Closed Loop Bandwidth $\omega_C A_f = \omega_0$

Response Time $\tau_{amp} = \dfrac{1}{\omega_C} = C_D \dfrac{1}{\omega_0 C_f}$

Same result as from input time constant.

Input impedance in strip and pixel detectors:

Amplifiers must have a low input impedance to reduce transfer of charge through capacitance to neighboring strips



For strip pitches that are smaller than the bulk thickness, the capacitance is dominated by the fringing capacitance to the neighboring strips C_{SS}.

Typically: 1 – 2 pF/cm for strip pitches of 25 – 100 μm on Si.

The backplane capacitance C_b is typically 20% of the strip-to-strip capacitance.

Negligible cross-coupling at shaping times $T_P > (2 \ldots 3) \times R_i C_D$ and if $C_i \gg C_D$.