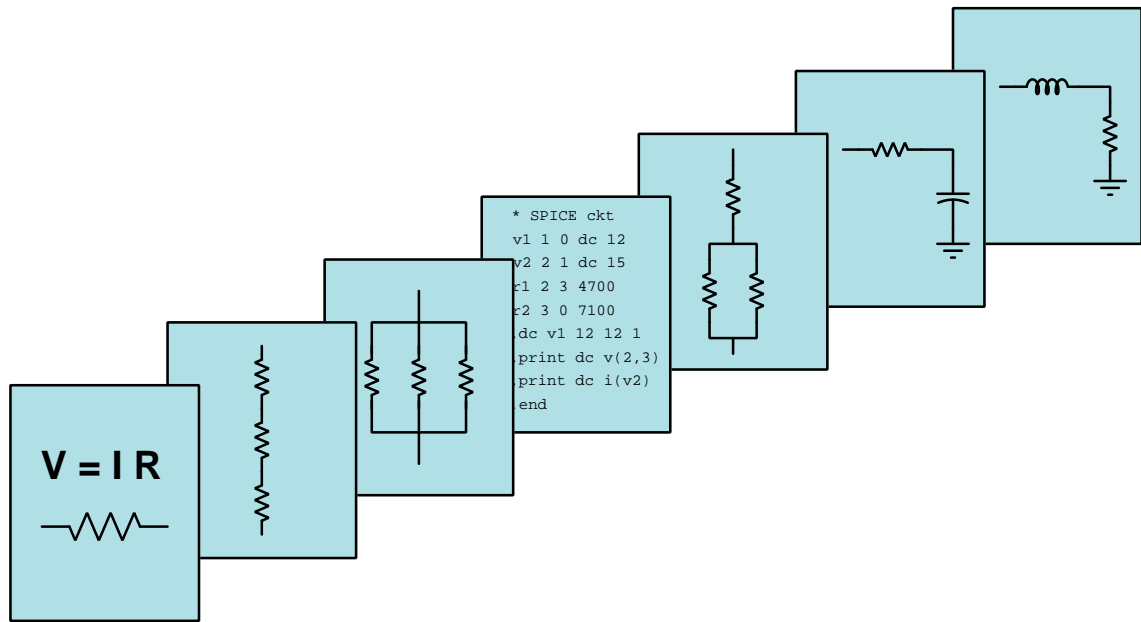


MODULAR ELECTRONICS LEARNING (MODEL) PROJECT



MULTIPLEXERS AND DEMULTIPLEXERS

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Multiplexing in its broadest sense refers to the communication of multiple streams of data over a commonly-shared channel. Many different methods exist to do this, but in basic digital logic circuits the strategy is *time-division* multiplexing, where a common data channel conveys multiple data streams *one stream at a time*. A digital *multiplexer* (“mux”) is a logic circuit “selecting” one-of- n inputs to be output to a single line. A digital *demultiplexer* (“demux”) takes a single input and sends it to one-of- n output lines. Both muxes and demuxes are controlled by a binary input instructing which I/O is to be selected.

Important concepts related to multiplexing and demultiplexing include **binary numeration**, **analog** versus **digital** signals, **combinational logic**, **decoding**, **strobing**, **microcontrollers**, and **flip-flops**.

Here are some good questions to ask of yourself while studying this subject:

- How might an experiment be designed and conducted to test the proper operation of a multiplexer IC? What hypothesis (i.e. prediction) might you pose for that experiment, and what result(s) would either support or disprove that hypothesis?
- How might an experiment be designed and conducted to test the proper operation of a demultiplexer IC? What hypothesis (i.e. prediction) might you pose for that experiment, and what result(s) would either support or disprove that hypothesis?
- What is the fundamental difference between a multiplexer and a demultiplexer?
- How can multiplexing reduce the number of conductors necessary for communication?
- What is the function of an “enable” or “strobe” input to a digital logic circuit?
- Which function (mux or demux) is most similar to an decoder?
- How may multiplexing and demultiplexing be used to expand the effective number of I/O lines on another digital device?
- How may multiplexing be used to implement an arbitrary logic function?

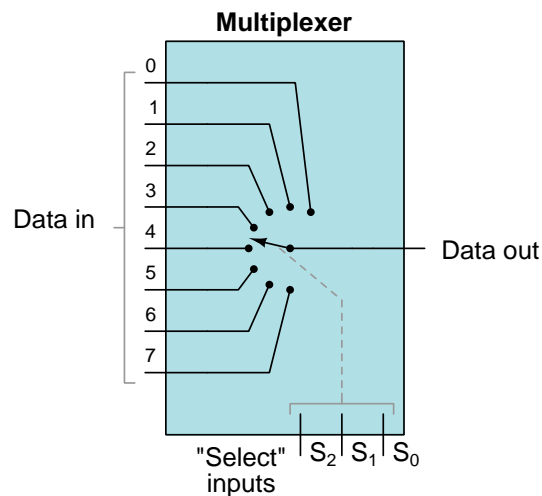
- What are all the logical states of each gate within a multiplexer IC when selecting a particular channel (i.e. trace all the high and low states for given input conditions)?
- What is *set-up time* and *hold time*, and why are these parameters important in digital logic?

Chapter 2

Tutorial

2.1 Steering digital signals

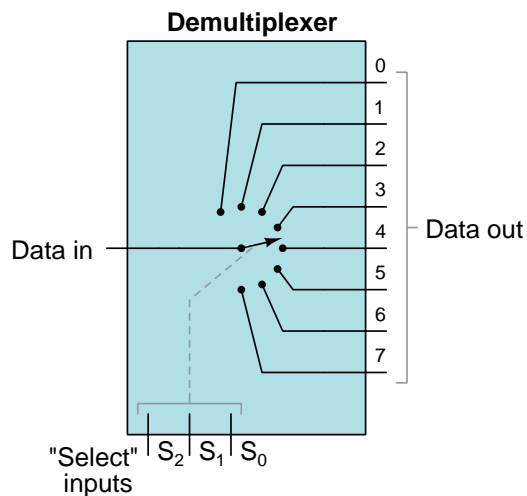
Many digital logic applications require signals to be “steered” in different directions, analogous to a *railroad switch* mechanism whereby railway trains may be steered from one set of tracks to another. A device that “steers” a multiple incoming signals onto a single outgoing line is called a *multiplexer*, often abbreviated as *mux*. A functional¹ diagram of a mux appears below:



The three selector input lines accept a 3-bit binary number specifying which input channel's signal will be directed to the output (i.e. 000 selects input zero and 111 selects input seven).

¹A functional diagram does not show electrical details like a schematic diagram, but rather attempts to convey the general purpose of the device or system. In this case, the multi-position switch represents combinational logic to direct one of the multiple input lines to the output line.

Conversely, a device built to “steer” a single incoming signal to one of multiple outgoing lines is called a *demultiplexer*, often abbreviated as *demux*, shown in the following functional diagram:



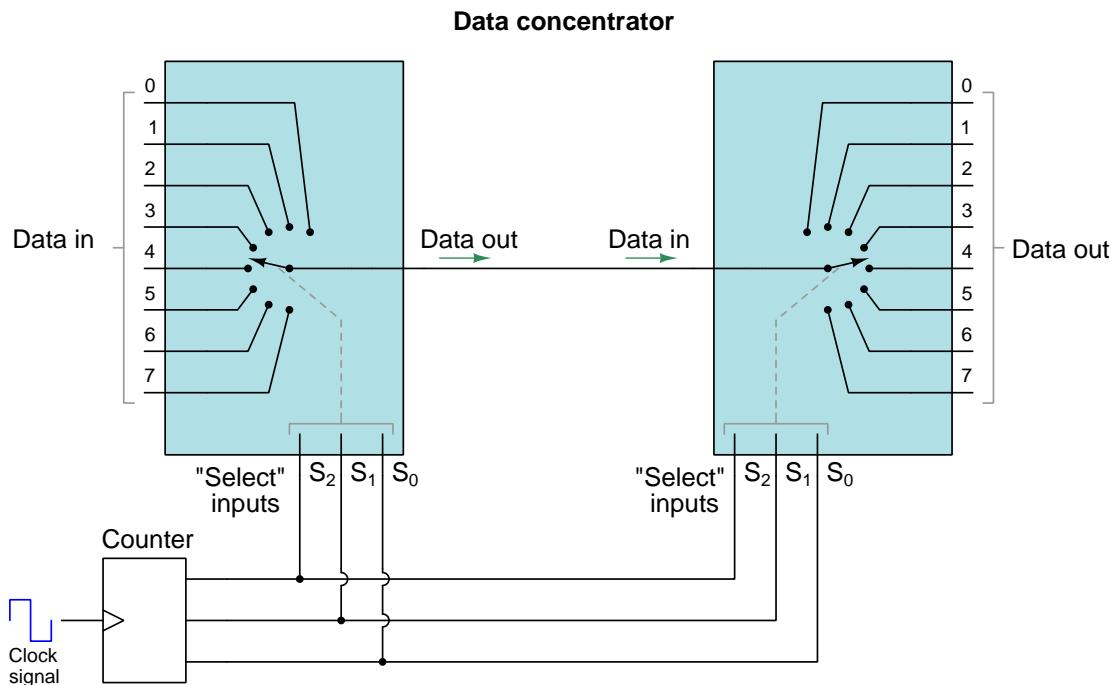
As with the mux, the demux’s internal redirection logic is controlled by a binary word input, in this case a 3-bit binary value representing one of eight possible outputs.

Although most multiplexers and demultiplexers are strictly *digital* devices, directing the pathways for discrete voltage signals, *analog* muxes and demuxes also exist. An analog multiplexer or demultiplexer differs from its digital cousin in its redirection circuitry (typically field-effect transistors designed to present either a “shorted” or “open” series resistance to any analog signal passing through the device, much like a solid-state version of a mechanical switch)², but is still controlled by a digital binary word identifying the input or output line to be selected.

²In fact, a truly mechanical analog multiplexer or demultiplexer may be built using a decoder and a set of electromechanical relays: the digital decoder drives the coils of one-of- n relays, each relay dedicated to one of the non-multiplexed input or output lines. Sending a binary word to the decoder causes only one of the n relays to energize, closing its contact and allowing that particular analog signal through.

2.2 Data concentration

A very useful application for mux/demux pairs is to form a *data concentrator* circuit, the purpose of which is to “concentrate” multiple channels of digital data through the fewest possible wires. An example of this circuit appears below in functional-diagram form, showing how eight individual digital data streams may be sent – one at a time – through a single wire at the command of the binary counter’s value (requiring three more wires):

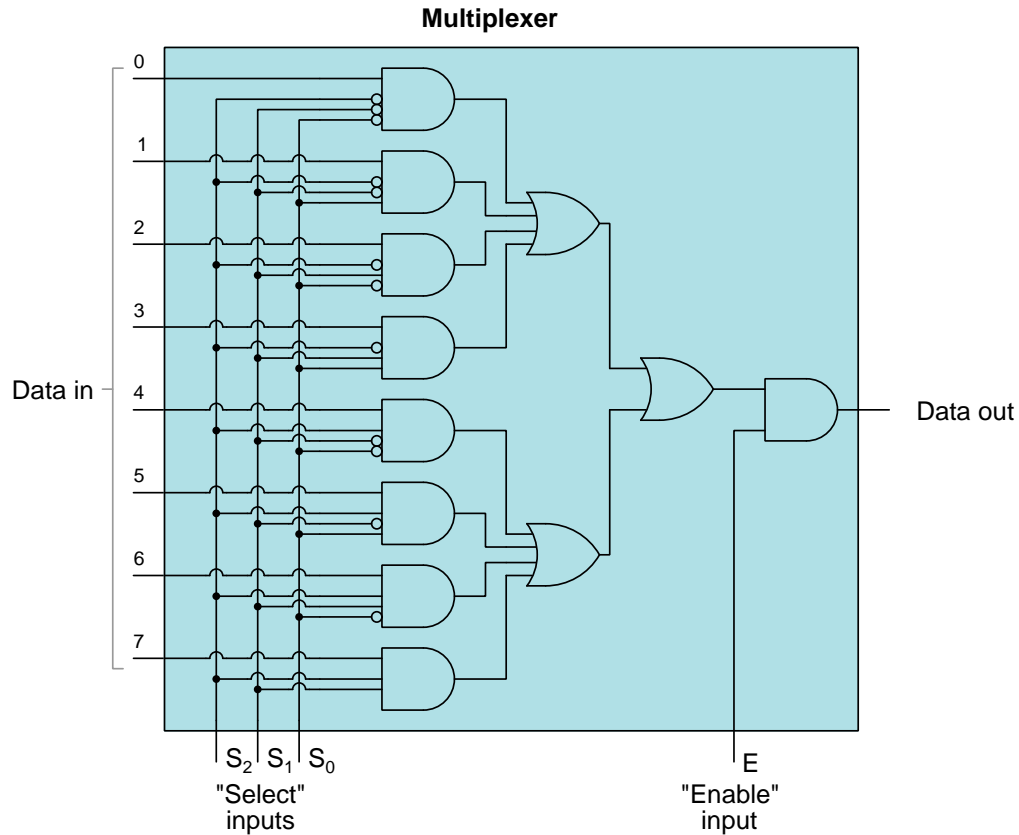


The three-bit counter increments from 000 to 001 to 010 and so on through to 111, then “recycles” back to 000 in an endless sequence. If cycled fast enough, the data flow from inputs to outputs appears seamless, enabling eight distinct digital data streams to be communicated over four wires (plus a shared ground connection). Obviously, this circuit only makes sense for scenarios where wire count is extremely limited, as the obvious alternative of using eight wires to convey eight signals is far less complex.

The economy of a data concentrator grows with channel and selection-bit count. For example, a 4-bit-selected mux/demux pair could communicate *sixteen* distinct data channels using only *five* wires plus ground. With each additional bit in the binary selection word, the number of multiplexed data channels doubles while the conductor count merely increments by one.

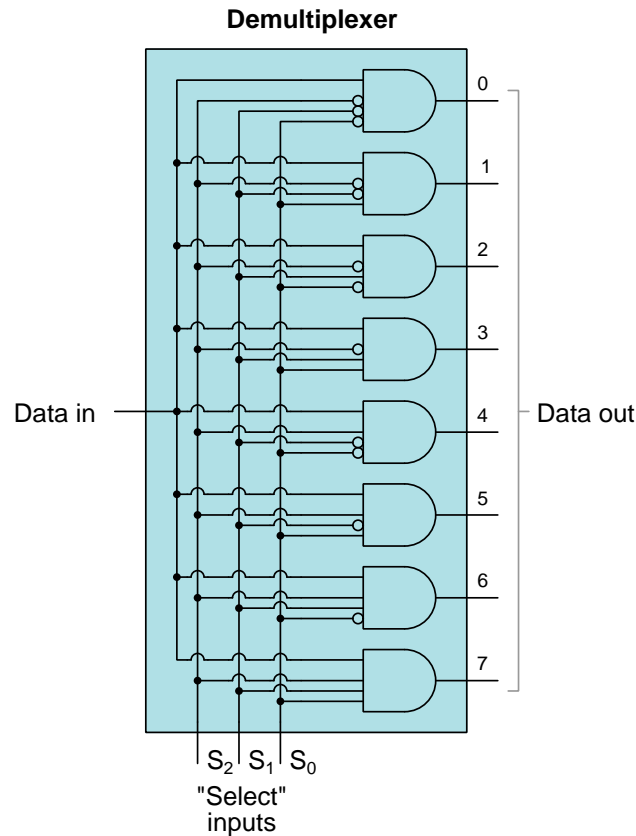
2.3 Multiplexer and demultiplexer construction

Multiplexer logic circuitry consists of AND gates, OR gates, and inverters (shown as complementation bubbles on some of the AND gate inputs). Recall that an AND gate outputs a high signal only if all inputs are high. Therefore, a “high” input signal becomes selected by a particular AND gate only if the other three inputs of that AND gate see the appropriate binary bit combination to satisfy the AND gate’s requirement of all “high” inputs. Then, the cascaded OR gates route any AND gate’s high output to the final output of the mux:



As with many combinational logic functions, multiplexers are often equipped with one or more *enable* or *strobe* inputs to override the output state regardless of channel or select line statuses. As you can see in the above diagram, the “enable” input allows data to pass through the multiplexer when active (high) but forces the output to a low state if inactive (low). Of course, you often find multiplexers with active-low enable inputs as well.

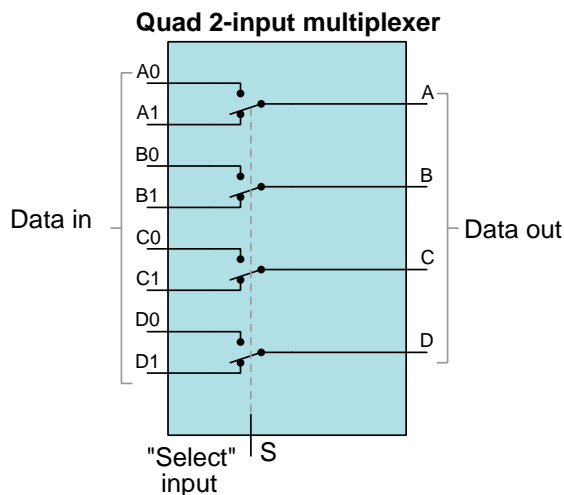
Demultiplexer logic is slightly simpler. Here, the OR gates are eliminated, while maintaining the same AND gate array. Each output line goes “high” only if the input line is high and the inverted/noninverted binary bits are such to satisfy that output’s AND gate with all “high” inputs:



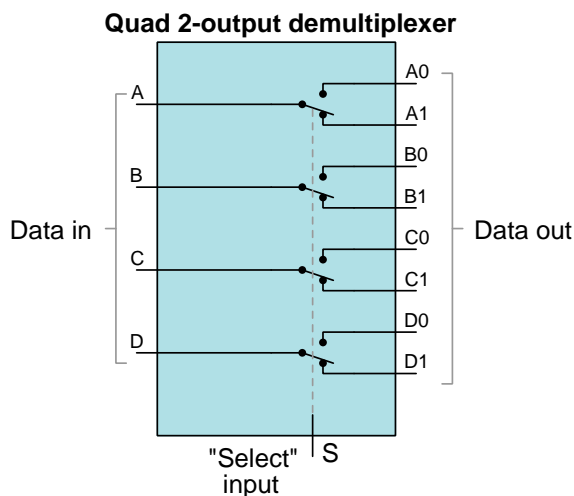
Interestingly, a demultiplexer is identical to a *binary decoder* equipped with an enable input. If you examine the demultiplexer circuit shown above and imagine re-labeling the “Data in” input as either “Enable” or “Strobe”, you can see that by maintaining the newly-labeled “Enable/Strobe” line in an active state the circuit simply functions as a decoder: activating one out of n channels according to the binary value impressed at the “Select” input lines.

2.4 Multiplexing and demultiplexing words

So far all the multiplexer and demultiplexer designs we have explored handle single bits of data, but other versions exist as well. For example, a *quad 2-input* multiplexer consists of four multiplexers in one integrated circuit, each of those multiplexers selecting one of two inputs. A functional diagram of this appears in the following illustration:



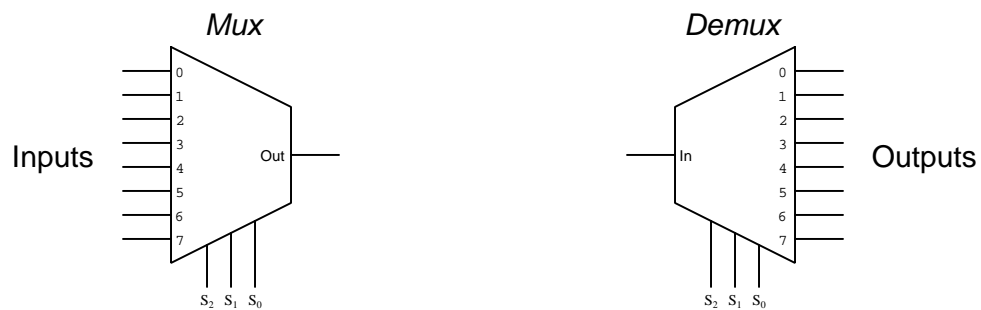
These multiplexers find popular use selecting between one of two four-bit digital *words*, in this case word 0 and word 1. Demultiplexers with similar formats also exist, directing a digital word to one of two banks of output lines.



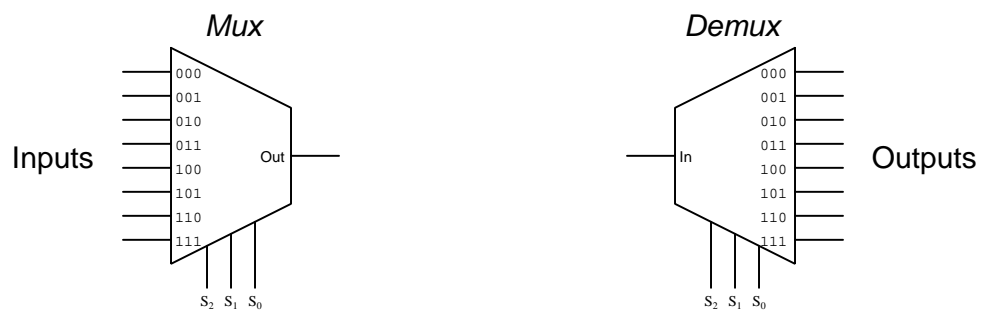
For both of these mux/demux units only one selection input line exists, since there are only *two* (2^1) switch states.

2.5 Common mux and demux symbols

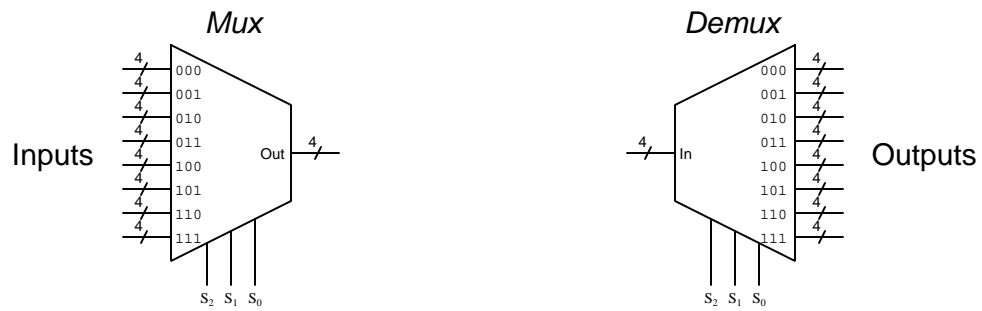
So far in this Tutorial we have illustrated the function of both multiplexers and demultiplexers using generic rectangular “box” symbols, but in many digital system documentation we see trapezoidal shapes used to denote these devices. The trapezoid shape is intended to evoke the image of data being either funneled into a single output channel (mux) or fanned out to a single output channel (demux):



In the above illustrations we see 8-channel mux and demux functions, each with 3-bit selector words. Note how each of the selected I/O lines is numbered in decimal form according to the binary value of the selector word, but that it is also appropriate to label in binary as well. This next example shows binary labeling of selectable I/O lines for both mux and demux devices:

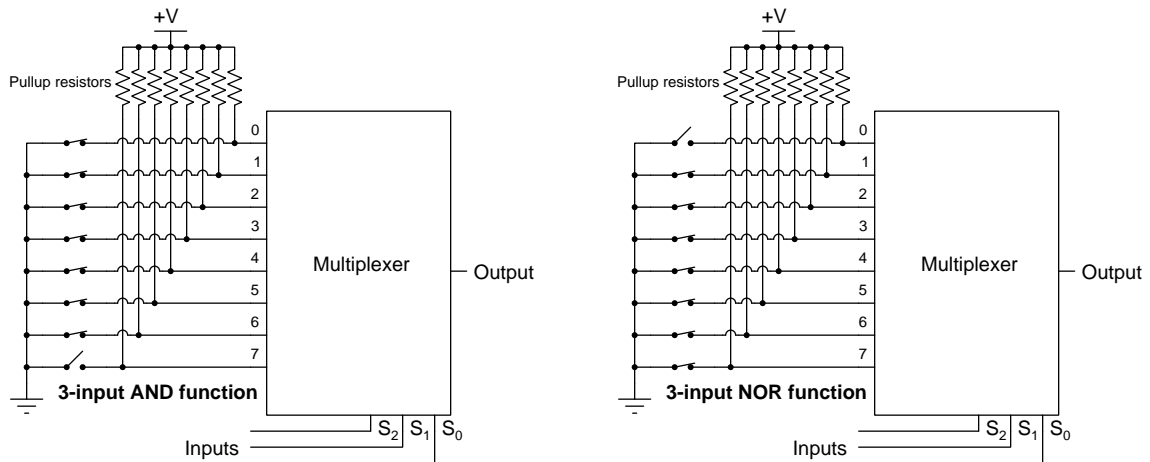


Multiplexers and demultiplexers operating on multi-bit words may also be represented using this same symbology. As an example of this, here we see both mux and demux units selecting one of eight four-bit words:



2.6 Arbitrary logic functions

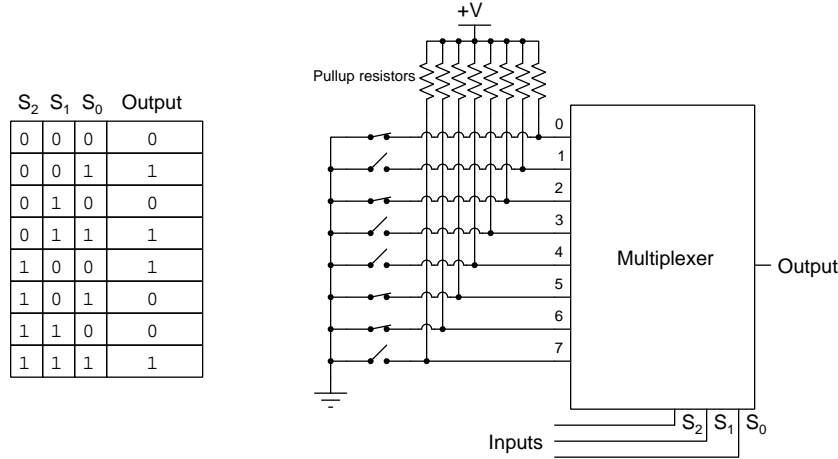
One interesting application for a multiplexer is the generation of arbitrary logic functions. If we consider the “select” lines to be the input lines of a logic function, and the single mux output line to be the output line of that same logic function, the mux input lines serve as connection points for “programmable” output states. Consider these simple examples:



As we apply all possible high/low combinations to the three “select” input lines (S_2 , S_1 , and S_0) of these multiplexers, those binary values select one input channel at a time (e.g. when S_2 is low and S_1 is low, and S_0 is low, the mux selects the logic state applied to input terminal 0 to be “steered” to the output terminal).

The toggle switches connected to the multiplexer’s input lines thus serve to *define* the logic function. Simply by setting these switches to different positions, we may specify any 3-input logic function desired.

To show just how arbitrary the logic function may be when implemented by a multiplexer, consider the following example. Here we see a truth table not adhering to any canonical logic function such as AND or NOR, but nevertheless implemented just as easily as any other logic function using the same multiplexer IC we saw in the two prior examples. The output states for each row of the truth table are “programmed” by the settings of the eight toggle switches connected to the multiplexer’s input channel terminals:



A simple thought experiment works well to explore how this circuit functions. Just imagine setting the three “select” input lines to various high (1) and low (0) states, one combination at a time, and see for yourself which input channel the mux selects for each combination. Remember that the three “select” input line states constitute bits of a three-bit binary number, the value of that number determining which input channel gets “steered” to the output:

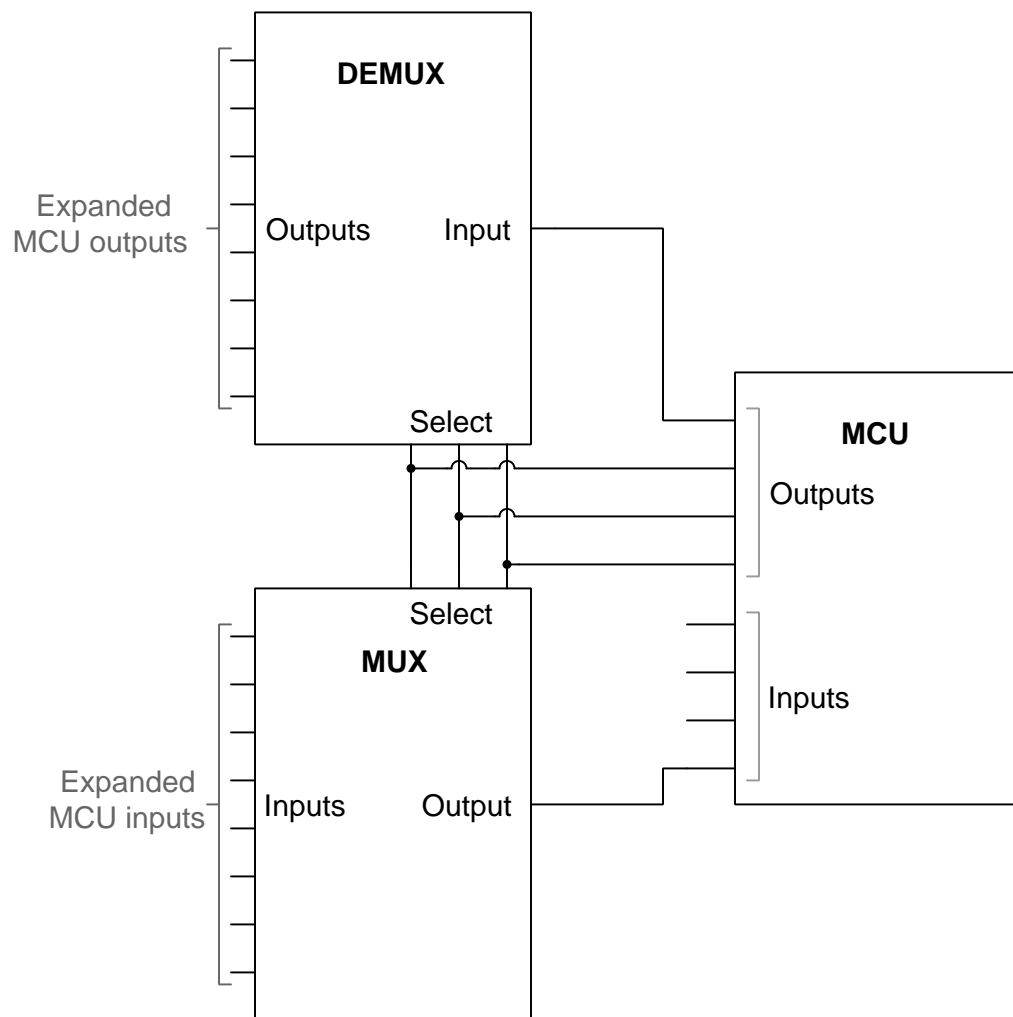
- $S_2 = 0$ $S_1 = 0$ $S_0 = 0$ Output = 0 because channel 0’s toggle switch is closed
- $S_2 = 0$ $S_1 = 0$ $S_0 = 1$ Output = 1 because channel 1’s toggle switch is open
- $S_2 = 0$ $S_1 = 1$ $S_0 = 0$ Output = 0 because channel 2’s toggle switch is closed
- $S_2 = 0$ $S_1 = 1$ $S_0 = 1$ Output = 1 because channel 3’s toggle switch is open
- $S_2 = 1$ $S_1 = 0$ $S_0 = 0$ Output = 1 because channel 4’s toggle switch is open
- $S_2 = 1$ $S_1 = 0$ $S_0 = 1$ Output = 0 because channel 5’s toggle switch is closed
- $S_2 = 1$ $S_1 = 1$ $S_0 = 0$ Output = 0 because channel 6’s toggle switch is closed
- $S_2 = 1$ $S_1 = 1$ $S_0 = 1$ Output = 1 because channel 7’s toggle switch is open

2.7 Microcontroller I/O expansion

Another practical use for multiplexers and demultiplexers is expanding the I/O capability of microcontrollers. This is similar in concept to the “data concentrator” examined earlier, where multiple digital signals could be routed, one at a time, through a single conductor. A *microcontroller* (often abbreviated *MCU*) is a functioning computer built on a single integrated circuit, useful for a great many practical tasks³. Due to their small physical size these small computers tend to be very limited in input and output (I/O) lines. Multiplexers may be used to effectively increase the number of input lines to the microcontroller by permitting a single input line to sequentially sample multiple inputs. Likewise, demultiplexers may be used to effectively expand the number of output lines on a microcontroller by permitting a single output line to sequentially drive multiple outputs.

³Most people reading this document actually own several microcontrollers without necessarily realizing their presence. Modern automobiles contain multiple microcontrollers, used for such tasks as airbag deployment, antilock brake modulation, engine management (e.g. air/fuel mixture control, ignition timing), and a host of “accessory” functions (e.g. sound system, seat adjustment, temperature control, etc.). Many residential appliances contain microcontrollers, too: digital thermostats, televisions, radios, remote control units, refrigerators, toasters, mixers, ovens, etc. Interestingly, most personal computers, besides containing their own microprocessor units, contain microcontrollers to handle peripheral tasks such as USB-networked devices (e.g. keyboard, mouse, printer). If you own an electric toothbrush, it most likely contains a microcontroller as well!

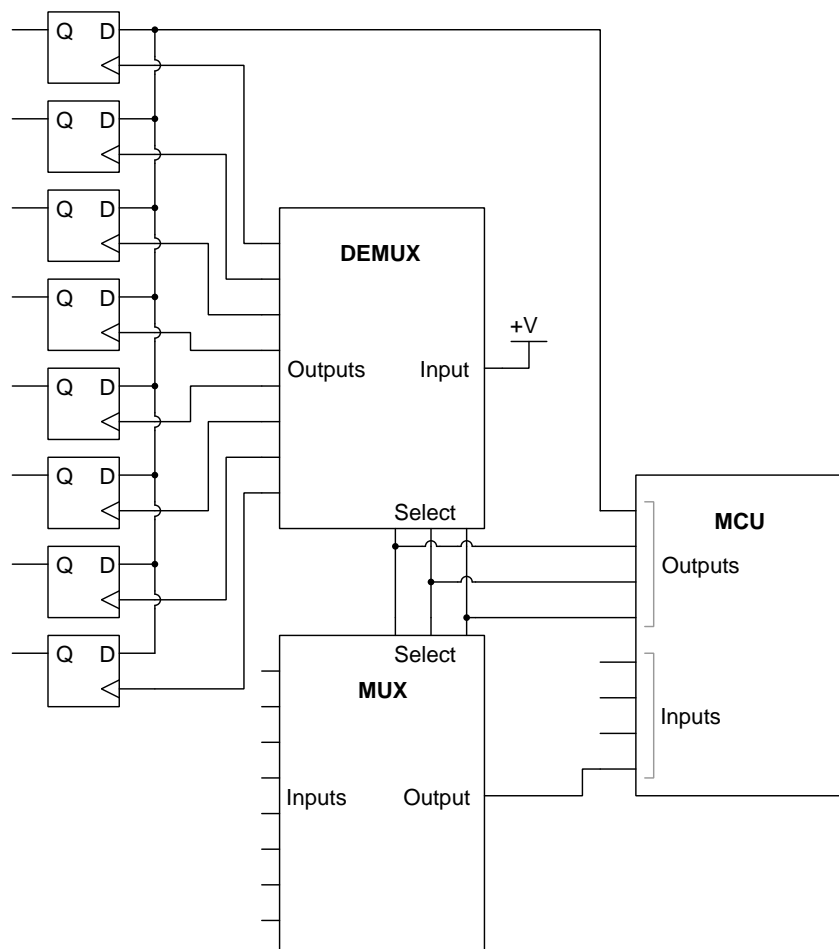
Examples of both applications appear in this diagram, where a microcontroller drives both a mux and a demux with three of its output lines, sampling the selected inputs with one input line and driving the selected outputs with an additional output line:



The microcontroller's program must instruct the three "select" output lines to periodically output binary values from 000 to 111 (a recirculating 3-bit binary count sequence is perhaps the easiest sequence to program), while other portions of the MCU's program reads logic states at the one utilized input line and writes logic states to the remaining output line at the appropriate times (i.e. shortly following the output of each new count value). Given the necessary programming in the MCU, the multiplexer and demultiplexer have expanded the MCU's available I/O count from four inputs and four outputs to *eleven* inputs and *eight* outputs.

Of course, this multiplexed expansion of I/O lines comes at a price. First is the penalty in time delay: eight multiplexed inputs cannot read data as quickly as eight independent input lines, because time must be spent “cycling” through each one. Second is the inability for the microcontroller to *maintain* high states on the eight demultiplexed outputs, since all output lines on a demultiplexer default to their inactive states (“low” for an active-high output demux) when not selected. At best, all the MCU is able to do with the eight multiplexed outputs is *pulse* them one at a time.

There are ways to enable the MCU to “latch” its expanded output lines, but once again it carries a functional penalty. We may use the demux outputs not as expanded outputs for the MCU directly, but instead as *clock* inputs for eight D-type flip-flops. The demux’s input line will be connected “high” so that each flip-flop receives a low-to-high pulse when that channel is selected, and it falls upon the MCU to output the desired state for that flip-flop just prior to and following the count transition (respecting the set-up time and hold time requirements of the flip-flops) in order to reliably “clock” that logic state through:



Chapter 3

Questions

This learning module, along with all others in the ModEL collection, is designed to be used in an inverted instructional environment where students independently read¹ the tutorials and attempt to answer questions on their own *prior* to the instructor's interaction with them. In place of lecture², the instructor engages with students in Socratic-style dialogue, probing and challenging their understanding of the subject matter through inquiry.

Answers are not provided for questions within this chapter, and this is by design. Solved problems may be found in the Tutorial and Derivation chapters, instead. The goal here is *independence*, and this requires students to be challenged in ways where others cannot think for them. Remember that you always have the tools of *experimentation* and *computer simulation* (e.g. SPICE) to explore concepts!

The following lists contain ideas for Socratic-style questions and challenges. Upon inspection, one will notice a strong theme of *metacognition* within these statements: they are designed to foster a regular habit of examining one's own thoughts as a means toward clearer thinking. As such these sample questions are useful both for instructor-led discussions as well as for self-study.

¹Technical reading is an essential academic skill for any technical practitioner to possess for the simple reason that the most comprehensive, accurate, and useful information to be found for developing technical competence is in textual form. Technical careers in general are characterized by the need for continuous learning to remain current with standards and technology, and therefore any technical practitioner who cannot read well is handicapped in their professional development. An excellent resource for educators on improving students' reading prowess through intentional effort and strategy is the book *Reading For Understanding – How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms* by Ruth Schoenbach, Cynthia Greenleaf, and Lynn Murphy.

²Lecture is popular as a teaching method because it is easy to implement: any reasonably articulate subject matter expert can talk to students, even with little preparation. However, it is also quite problematic. A good lecture always makes complicated concepts seem easier than they are, which is bad for students because it instills a false sense of confidence in their own understanding; reading and re-articulation requires more cognitive effort and serves to verify comprehension. A culture of teaching-by-lecture fosters a debilitating dependence upon direct personal instruction, whereas the challenges of modern life demand independent and critical thought made possible only by gathering information and perspectives from afar. Information presented in a lecture is ephemeral, easily lost to failures of memory and dictation; text is forever, and may be referenced at any time.

GENERAL CHALLENGES FOLLOWING TUTORIAL READING

- Summarize as much of the text as you can in one paragraph of your own words. A helpful strategy is to explain ideas as you would for an intelligent child: as simple as you can without compromising too much accuracy.
- Simplify a particular section of the text, for example a paragraph or even a single sentence, so as to capture the same fundamental idea in fewer words.
- Where did the text make the most sense to you? What was it about the text's presentation that made it clear?
- Identify where it might be easy for someone to misunderstand the text, and explain why you think it could be confusing.
- Identify any new concept(s) presented in the text, and explain in your own words.
- Identify any familiar concept(s) such as physical laws or principles applied or referenced in the text.
- Devise a proof of concept experiment demonstrating an important principle, physical law, or technical innovation represented in the text.
- Devise an experiment to disprove a plausible misconception.
- Did the text reveal any misconceptions you might have harbored? If so, describe the misconception(s) and the reason(s) why you now know them to be incorrect.
- Describe any useful problem-solving strategies applied in the text.
- Devise a question of your own to challenge a reader's comprehension of the text.

GENERAL FOLLOW-UP CHALLENGES FOR ASSIGNED PROBLEMS

- Identify where any fundamental laws or principles apply to the solution of this problem, especially before applying any mathematical techniques.
- Devise a thought experiment to explore the characteristics of the problem scenario, applying known laws and principles to mentally model its behavior.
- Describe in detail your own strategy for solving this problem. How did you identify and organized the given information? Did you sketch any diagrams to help frame the problem?
- Is there more than one way to solve this problem? Which method seems best to you?
- Show the work you did in solving this problem, even if the solution is incomplete or incorrect.
- What would you say was the most challenging part of this problem, and why was it so?
- Was any important information missing from the problem which you had to research or recall?
- Was there any extraneous information presented within this problem? If so, what was it and why did it not matter?
- Examine someone else's solution to identify where they applied fundamental laws or principles.
- Simplify the problem from its given form and show how to solve this simpler version of it. Examples include eliminating certain variables or conditions, altering values to simpler (usually whole) numbers, applying a limiting case (i.e. altering a variable to some extreme or ultimate value).
- For quantitative problems, identify the real-world meaning of all intermediate calculations: their units of measurement, where they fit into the scenario at hand. Annotate any diagrams or illustrations with these calculated values.
- For quantitative problems, try approaching it qualitatively instead, thinking in terms of “increase” and “decrease” rather than definite values.
- For qualitative problems, try approaching it quantitatively instead, proposing simple numerical values for the variables.
- Were there any assumptions you made while solving this problem? Would your solution change if one of those assumptions were altered?
- Identify where it would be easy for someone to go astray in attempting to solve this problem.
- Formulate your own problem based on what you learned solving this one.

GENERAL FOLLOW-UP CHALLENGES FOR EXPERIMENTS OR PROJECTS

- In what way(s) was this experiment or project easy to complete?
- Identify some of the challenges you faced in completing this experiment or project.

- Show how thorough documentation assisted in the completion of this experiment or project.
- Which fundamental laws or principles are key to this system's function?
- Identify any way(s) in which one might obtain false or otherwise misleading measurements from test equipment in this system.
- What will happen if (component X) fails (open/shorted/etc.)?
- What would have to occur to make this system unsafe?

3.1 Conceptual reasoning

These questions are designed to stimulate your analytic and synthetic thinking³. In a Socratic discussion with your instructor, the goal is for these questions to prompt an extended dialogue where assumptions are revealed, conclusions are tested, and understanding is sharpened. Your instructor may also pose additional questions based on those assigned, in order to further probe and refine your conceptual understanding.

Questions that follow are presented to challenge and probe your understanding of various concepts presented in the tutorial. These questions are intended to serve as a guide for the Socratic dialogue between yourself and the instructor. Your instructor's task is to ensure you have a sound grasp of these concepts, and the questions contained in this document are merely a means to this end. Your instructor may, at his or her discretion, alter or substitute questions for the benefit of tailoring the discussion to each student's needs. The only absolute requirement is that each student is challenged and assessed at a level equal to or greater than that represented by the documented questions.

It is far more important that you convey your *reasoning* than it is to simply convey a correct answer. For this reason, you should refrain from researching other information sources to answer questions. What matters here is that *you* are doing the thinking. If the answer is incorrect, your instructor will work with you to correct it through proper reasoning. A correct answer without an adequate explanation of how you derived that answer is unacceptable, as it does not aid the learning or assessment process.

You will note a conspicuous lack of answers given for these conceptual questions. Unlike standard textbooks where answers to every other question are given somewhere toward the back of the book, here in these learning modules students must rely on other means to check their work. The best way by far is to debate the answers with fellow students and also with the instructor during the Socratic dialogue sessions intended to be used with these learning modules. Reasoning through challenging questions with other people is an excellent tool for developing strong reasoning skills.

Another means of checking your conceptual answers, where applicable, is to use circuit simulation software to explore the effects of changes made to circuits. For example, if one of these conceptual questions challenges you to predict the effects of altering some component parameter in a circuit, you may check the validity of your work by simulating that same parameter change within software and seeing if the results agree.

³*Analytical* thinking involves the “disassembly” of an idea into its constituent parts, analogous to dissection. *Synthetic* thinking involves the “assembly” of a new idea comprised of multiple concepts, analogous to construction. Both activities are high-level cognitive skills, extremely important for effective problem-solving, necessitating frequent challenge and regular practice to fully develop.

3.1.1 Reading outline and reflections

“Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man” – Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon’s advice is a blueprint for effective education: reading provides the learner with knowledge, writing focuses the learner’s thoughts, and critical dialogue equips the learner to confidently communicate and apply their learning. Independent acquisition and application of knowledge is a powerful skill, well worth the effort to cultivate. To this end, students should read these educational resources closely, write their own outline and reflections on the reading, and discuss in detail their findings with classmates and instructor(s). You should be able to do all of the following after reading any instructional text:

✓ Briefly **OUTLINE THE TEXT**, as though you were writing a detailed Table of Contents. Feel free to rearrange the order if it makes more sense that way. Prepare to articulate these points in detail and to answer questions from your classmates and instructor. Outlining is a good self-test of thorough reading because you cannot outline what you have not read or do not comprehend.

✓ Demonstrate **ACTIVE READING STRATEGIES**, including verbalizing your impressions as you read, simplifying long passages to convey the same ideas using fewer words, annotating text and illustrations with your own interpretations, working through mathematical examples shown in the text, cross-referencing passages with relevant illustrations and/or other passages, identifying problem-solving strategies applied by the author, etc. Technical reading is a special case of problem-solving, and so these strategies work precisely because they help solve any problem: paying attention to your own thoughts (metacognition), eliminating unnecessary complexities, identifying what makes sense, paying close attention to details, drawing connections between separated facts, and noting the successful strategies of others.

✓ Identify **IMPORTANT THEMES**, especially **GENERAL LAWS** and **PRINCIPLES**, expounded in the text and express them in the simplest of terms as though you were teaching an intelligent child. This emphasizes connections between related topics and develops your ability to communicate complex ideas to anyone.

✓ Form **YOUR OWN QUESTIONS** based on the reading, and then pose them to your instructor and classmates for their consideration. Anticipate both correct and incorrect answers, the incorrect answer(s) assuming one or more plausible misconceptions. This helps you view the subject from different perspectives to grasp it more fully.

✓ Devise **EXPERIMENTS** to test claims presented in the reading, or to disprove misconceptions. Predict possible outcomes of these experiments, and evaluate their meanings: what result(s) would confirm, and what would constitute disproof? Running mental simulations and evaluating results is essential to scientific and diagnostic reasoning.

✓ Specifically identify any points you found **CONFUSING**. The reason for doing this is to help diagnose misconceptions and overcome barriers to learning.

3.1.2 Foundational concepts

Correct analysis and diagnosis of electric circuits begins with a proper understanding of some basic concepts. The following is a list of some important concepts referenced in this module's full tutorial. Define each of them in your own words, and be prepared to illustrate each of these concepts with a description of a practical example and/or a live demonstration.

Multiplexing

Demultiplexing

Binary number

Digital signal

Analog signal

Counter

OR function

AND function

Microcontroller

3.1.3 Oscilloscope alternate and chop modes

Most modern analog oscilloscopes have the ability to display multiple traces on their screens (dual-trace is the standard), even though the CRT itself used by the 'scope may only have one electron gun, and thus only be able to “paint” one flying dot on the screen at a time.

Oscilloscopes with single-gun display tubes achieve dual-trace capability by way of *multiplexing* the two input channels to the same CRT. There are usually two different modes for this multiplexing, though: **alternate** and **chop**.

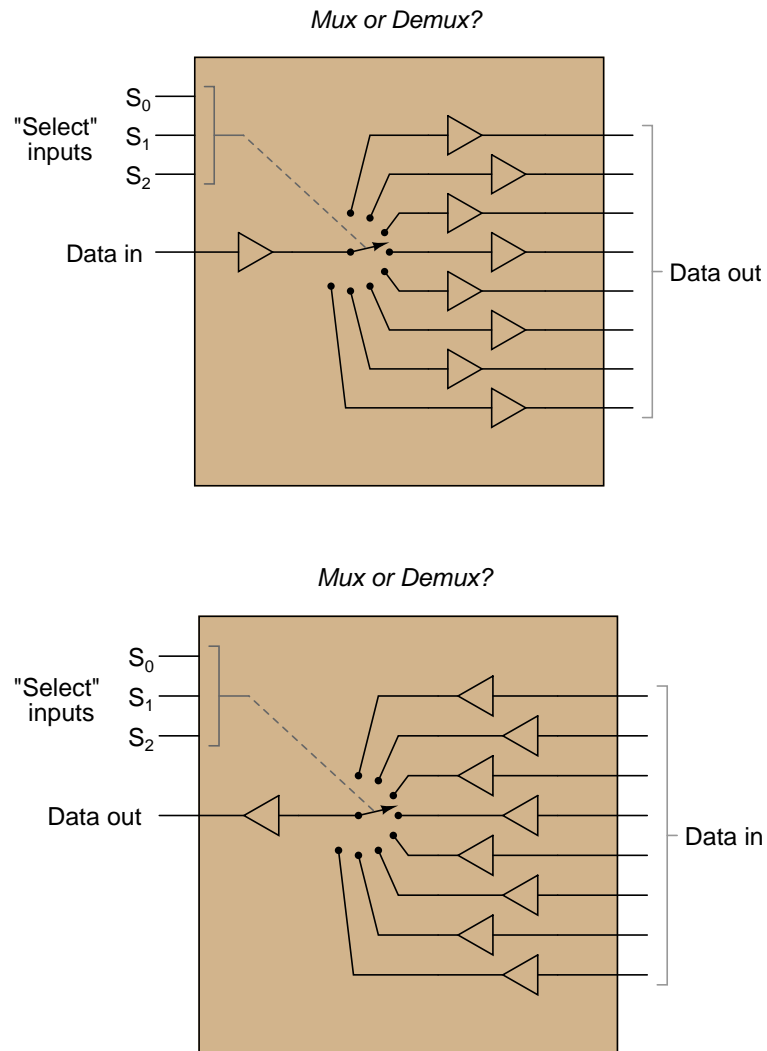
Explain how these multiplexing techniques work, and what conditions would prompt you to use the two different multiplexing modes. I *strongly* encourage you to experiment with displaying two different signals on one of these oscilloscopes as your research. You will likely learn far more from a hands-on exercise than if you were to read about it in a book!

Challenges

- Describe what might happen if you have the oscilloscope set for the wrong multiplexing mode.

3.1.4 Mux versus demux

Multiplexers and *demultiplexers* are often confused with one another by students first learning about them. Although they appear similar, they certainly perform different functions. Shown here is a multiplexer and a demultiplexer, each using a multiple-position switch symbol to indicate the selection functions inside the respective circuits:



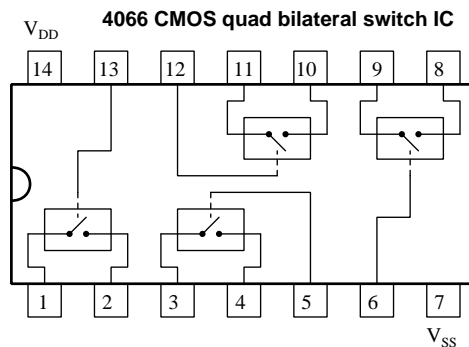
After identifying which is which, provide definitions for “multiplexer” and “demultiplexer” in your own words.

Challenges

- What do the triangle symbols represent, and why are those components included inside the mux and demux ICs?

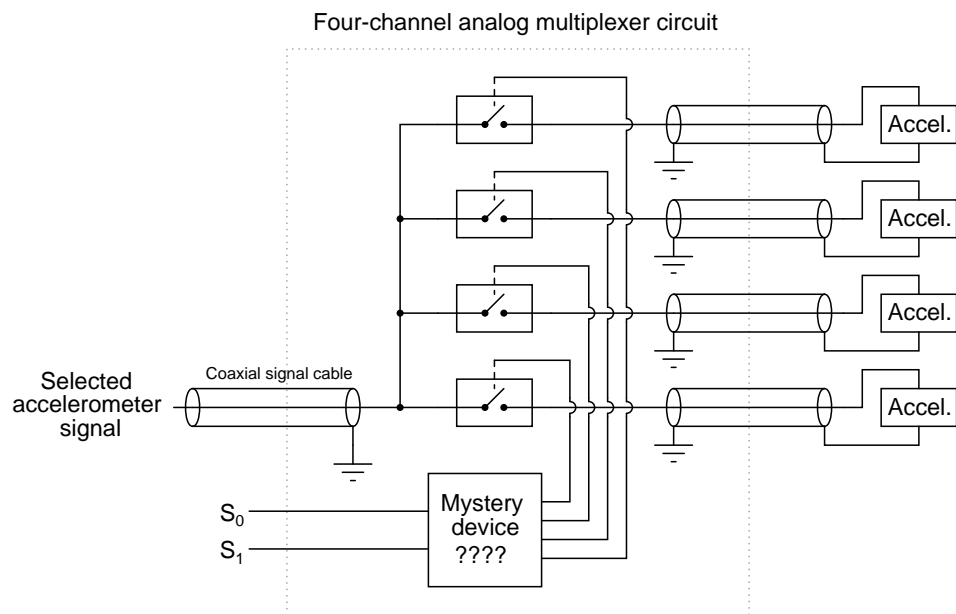
3.1.5 Multiplexed accelerometers

A variety of practical electronic applications require *multiplexing*, where several input signals are individually selected, one at a time but very rapidly, to be communicated through a single channel. In order to rapidly select (or switch) analog signals in these multiplexing applications, we need some form of semiconductor on/off switch capable of fast switching time, low pass-through (“on” state) impedance, and high blocking (“off” state) impedance. Thankfully, there is such a device commonly and inexpensively produced, called a *CMOS bilateral switch*:



This hybrid analog/digital device uses digital logic signals (high/low) to activate the gates of CMOS transistor assemblies to switch analog signals on and off. It is like having four low-current solid-state relays in a single integrated circuit. When the control line is made “high” (standard CMOS logic level), the respective switch goes into its conductive (“on”) state. When the control line is made “low,” the switch turns off. Because it is MOSFETs we are turning on and off, the control lines draw negligible current (just like CMOS logic gate inputs).

If we are to use such bilateral switches to multiplex analog signals along a common signal line, though, we must add some accessory components to control which switch (out of the four) is active at any given time. Take for instance this circuit where we use four bilateral switches to multiplex the voltage signals from four accelerometers (measuring acceleration on a vibration-testing jig):



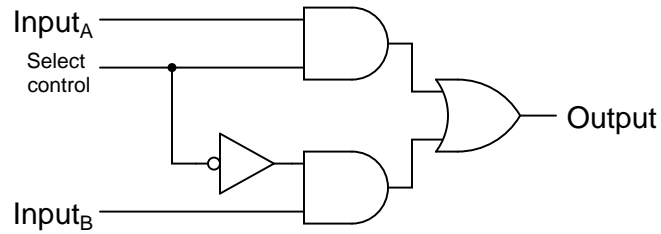
Identify the necessary “mystery device” shown in the schematic, which allows a binary input (S_0 and S_1 with four combinations of high/low states: 00, 01, 10, and 11) to activate just *one* bilateral switch at a time.

Challenges

- Propose a solution involving individual logic gates.

3.1.6 Two-input selector logic

The following schematic diagram is for a *two-input selector* circuit, which (as the name implies) selects one of two inputs to be sent to the output:



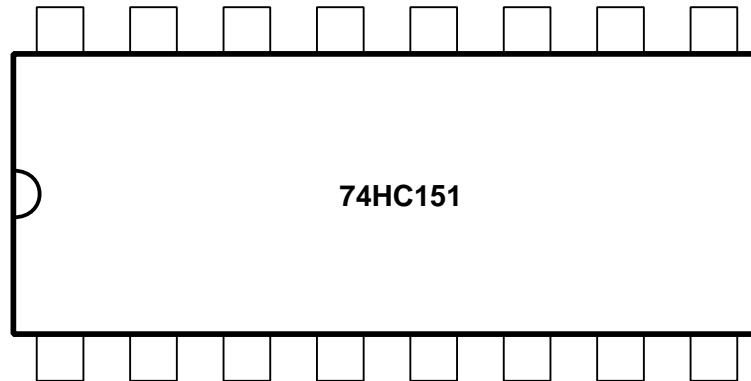
Determine which state the “select control” input line has to be in to select Input_A to be sent to the output, and which state it has to be in to select Input_B to go to the output.

Challenges

- Why is the inverter gate necessary for proper function?

3.1.7 74HC151 mux

The 74HC151 is a high-speed CMOS (TTL-compatible) integrated circuit multiplexer, also known as a *data selector*. It is commonly available as a 24 pin DIP “chip.” Identify the terminals of a 74HC151, and label them here:



In particular, note the locations and functions of the “select” terminals, as well as the output terminal.

What types of electrical “data” may be “selected” by this particular integrated circuit? For example, can it select an analog waveform, such as human speech from a microphone? Is it limited to discrete TTL logic levels? How can you tell?

Challenges

- How will this IC behave if its enable line is left unconnected?

3.1.8 Address latching

The 74HC137 and 74HC237 decoder/demultiplexer integrated circuits have a feature that some other decoder/demultiplexers do not: *address latching*. Explain what this additional feature is, how it works, and how you would disable the feature if you needed to use one of these integrated circuits in an application not requiring address latching.

Challenges

- What is the functional difference between the 74HC137 and the 74HC237? How would the respective schematic symbols for these two decoder/demux ICs differ?
- Devise a practical application where you might need the feature of address latching.

3.2 Quantitative reasoning

These questions are designed to stimulate your computational thinking. In a Socratic discussion with your instructor, the goal is for these questions to reveal your mathematical approach(es) to problem-solving so that good technique and sound reasoning may be reinforced. Your instructor may also pose additional questions based on those assigned, in order to observe your problem-solving firsthand.

Mental arithmetic and estimations are strongly encouraged for all calculations, because without these abilities you will be unable to readily detect errors caused by calculator misuse (e.g. keystroke errors).

You will note a conspicuous lack of answers given for these quantitative questions. Unlike standard textbooks where answers to every other question are given somewhere toward the back of the book, here in these learning modules students must rely on other means to check their work. My advice is to use circuit simulation software such as SPICE to check the correctness of quantitative answers. Refer to those learning modules within this collection focusing on SPICE to see worked examples which you may use directly as practice problems for your own study, and/or as templates you may modify to run your own analyses and generate your own practice problems.

Completely worked example problems found in the Tutorial may also serve as “test cases⁴” for gaining proficiency in the use of circuit simulation software, and then once that proficiency is gained you will never need to rely⁵ on an answer key!

⁴In other words, set up the circuit simulation software to analyze the same circuit examples found in the Tutorial. If the simulated results match the answers shown in the Tutorial, it confirms the simulation has properly run. If the simulated results disagree with the Tutorial’s answers, something has been set up incorrectly in the simulation software. Using every Tutorial as practice in this way will quickly develop proficiency in the use of circuit simulation software.

⁵This approach is perfectly in keeping with the instructional philosophy of these learning modules: *teaching students to be self-sufficient thinkers*. Answer keys can be useful, but it is even more useful to your long-term success to have a set of tools on hand for checking your own work, because once you have left school and are on your own, there will no longer be “answer keys” available for the problems you will have to solve.

3.2.1 Miscellaneous physical constants

Note: constants shown in **bold** type are *exact*, not approximations. Values inside of parentheses show one standard deviation (σ) of uncertainty in the final digits: for example, the magnetic permeability of free space value given as $1.25663706212(19) \times 10^{-6}$ H/m represents a center value (i.e. the location parameter) of $1.25663706212 \times 10^{-6}$ Henrys per meter with one standard deviation of uncertainty equal to $0.0000000000019 \times 10^{-6}$ Henrys per meter.

Avogadro's number (N_A) = **$6.02214076 \times 10^{23}$** per mole (mol^{-1})

Boltzmann's constant (k) = **1.380649×10^{-23}** Joules per Kelvin (J/K)

Electronic charge (e) = **$1.602176634 \times 10^{-19}$** Coulomb (C)

Faraday constant (F) = **$96,485.33212...$** $\times 10^4$ Coulombs per mole (C/mol)

Magnetic permeability of free space (μ_0) = $1.25663706212(19) \times 10^{-6}$ Henrys per meter (H/m)

Electric permittivity of free space (ϵ_0) = $8.8541878128(13) \times 10^{-12}$ Farads per meter (F/m)

Characteristic impedance of free space (Z_0) = $376.730313668(57)$ Ohms (Ω)

Gravitational constant (G) = $6.67430(15) \times 10^{-11}$ cubic meters per kilogram-seconds squared ($\text{m}^3/\text{kg}\cdot\text{s}^2$)

Molar gas constant (R) = **$8.314462618...$** Joules per mole-Kelvin (J/mol-K) = $0.08205746(14)$ liters-atmospheres per mole-Kelvin

Planck constant (h) = **$6.62607015 \times 10^{-34}$** joule-seconds (J-s)

Stefan-Boltzmann constant (σ) = **$5.670374419...$** $\times 10^{-8}$ Watts per square meter-Kelvin⁴ ($\text{W}/\text{m}^2\cdot\text{K}^4$)

Speed of light in a vacuum (c) = **$299,792,458$** meters per second (m/s) = 186282.4 miles per second (mi/s)

Note: All constants taken from NIST data "Fundamental Physical Constants – Complete Listing", from <http://physics.nist.gov/constants>, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), 2018 CODATA Adjustment.

3.2.2 Introduction to spreadsheets

A powerful computational tool you are encouraged to use in your work is a *spreadsheet*. Available on most personal computers (e.g. Microsoft Excel), *spreadsheet* software performs numerical calculations based on number values and formulae entered into cells of a grid. This grid is typically arranged as lettered columns and numbered rows, with each cell of the grid identified by its column/row coordinates (e.g. cell B3, cell A8). Each cell may contain a string of text, a number value, or a mathematical formula. The spreadsheet automatically updates the results of all mathematical formulae whenever the entered number values are changed. This means it is possible to set up a spreadsheet to perform a series of calculations on entered data, and those calculations will be re-done by the computer any time the data points are edited in any way.

For example, the following spreadsheet calculates average speed based on entered values of distance traveled and time elapsed:

	A	B	C	D
1	Distance traveled	46.9	Kilometers	
2	Time elapsed	1.18	Hours	
3	Average speed	= B1 / B2	km/h	
4				
5				

Text labels contained in cells A1 through A3 and cells C1 through C3 exist solely for readability and are not involved in any calculations. Cell B1 contains a sample distance value while cell B2 contains a sample time value. The formula for computing speed is contained in cell B3. Note how this formula begins with an “equals” symbol (=), references the values for distance and speed by lettered column and numbered row coordinates (B1 and B2), and uses a forward slash symbol for division (/). The coordinates B1 and B2 function as *variables*⁶ would in an algebraic formula.

When this spreadsheet is executed, the numerical value 39.74576 will appear in cell B3 rather than the formula = B1 / B2, because 39.74576 is the computed speed value given 46.9 kilometers traveled over a period of 1.18 hours. If a different numerical value for distance is entered into cell B1 or a different value for time is entered into cell B2, cell B3’s value will automatically update. All you need to do is set up the given values and any formulae into the spreadsheet, and the computer will do all the calculations for you.

Cell B3 may be referenced by other formulae in the spreadsheet if desired, since it is a variable just like the given values contained in B1 and B2. This means it is possible to set up an entire chain of calculations, one dependent on the result of another, in order to arrive at a final value. The arrangement of the given data and formulae need not follow any pattern on the grid, which means you may place them anywhere.

⁶Spreadsheets may also provide means to attach text labels to cells for use as variable names (Microsoft Excel simply calls these labels “names”), but for simple spreadsheets such as those shown here it’s usually easier just to use the standard coordinate naming for each cell.

Common⁷ arithmetic operations available for your use in a spreadsheet include the following:

- Addition (+)
- Subtraction (-)
- Multiplication (*)
- Division (/)
- Powers (^)
- Square roots (sqrt())
- Logarithms (ln() , log10())

Parentheses may be used to ensure⁸ proper order of operations within a complex formula. Consider this example of a spreadsheet implementing the *quadratic formula*, used to solve for roots of a polynomial expression in the form of $ax^2 + bx + c$:

$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

	A	B
1	x_1	= (-B4 + sqrt((B4^2) - (4*B3*B5))) / (2*B3)
2	x_2	= (-B4 - sqrt((B4^2) - (4*B3*B5))) / (2*B3)
3	a =	9
4	b =	5
5	c =	-2

This example is configured to compute roots⁹ of the polynomial $9x^2 + 5x - 2$ because the values of 9, 5, and -2 have been inserted into cells B3, B4, and B5, respectively. Once this spreadsheet has been built, though, it may be used to calculate the roots of *any* second-degree polynomial expression simply by entering the new a , b , and c coefficients into cells B3 through B5. The numerical values appearing in cells B1 and B2 will be automatically updated by the computer immediately following any changes made to the coefficients.

⁷Modern spreadsheet software offers a bewildering array of mathematical functions you may use in your computations. I recommend you consult the documentation for your particular spreadsheet for information on operations other than those listed here.

⁸Spreadsheet programs, like text-based programming languages, are designed to follow standard order of operations by default. However, my personal preference is to use parentheses even where strictly unnecessary just to make it clear to any other person viewing the formula what the intended order of operations is.

⁹Reviewing some algebra here, a *root* is a value for x that yields an overall value of zero for the polynomial. For this polynomial ($9x^2 + 5x - 2$) the two roots happen to be $x = 0.269381$ and $x = -0.82494$, with these values displayed in cells B1 and B2, respectively upon execution of the spreadsheet.

Alternatively, one could break up the long quadratic formula into smaller pieces like this:

$$y = \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac} \quad z = 2a$$

$$x = \frac{-b \pm y}{z}$$

	A	B	C
1	x_1	= (-B4 + C1) / C2	= sqrt ((B4^2) - (4*B3*B5))
2	x_2	= (-B4 - C1) / C2	= 2*B3
3	a =	9	
4	b =	5	
5	c =	-2	

Note how the square-root term (y) is calculated in cell C1, and the denominator term (z) in cell C2. This makes the two final formulae (in cells B1 and B2) simpler to interpret. The positioning of all these cells on the grid is completely arbitrary¹⁰ – all that matters is that they properly reference each other in the formulae.

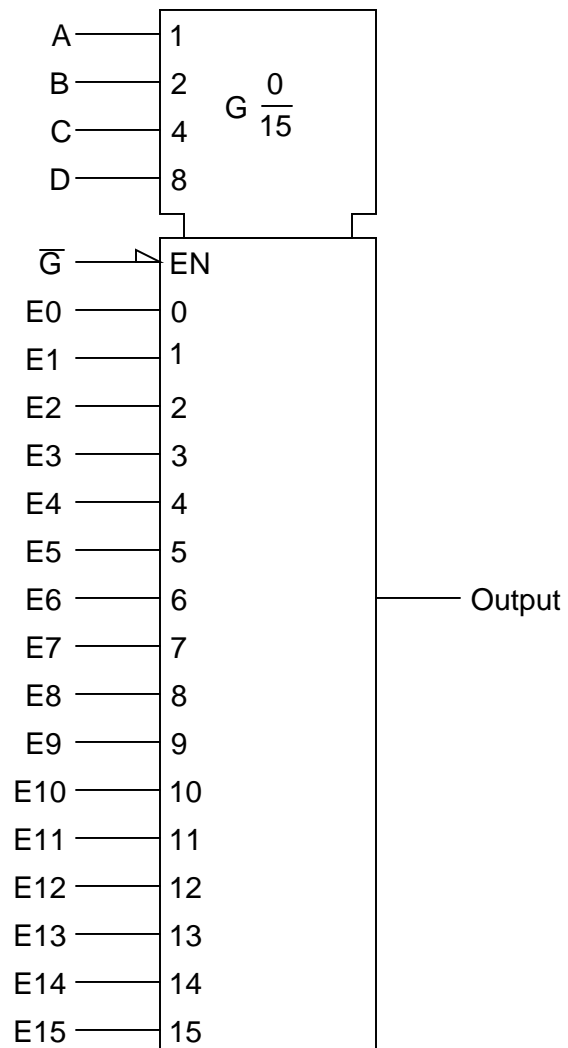
Spreadsheets are particularly useful for situations where the same set of calculations representing a circuit or other system must be repeated for different initial conditions. The power of a spreadsheet is that it automates what would otherwise be a tedious set of calculations. One specific application of this is to simulate the effects of various components within a circuit failing with abnormal values (e.g. a shorted resistor simulated by making its value nearly zero; an open resistor simulated by making its value extremely large). Another application is analyzing the behavior of a circuit design given new components that are out of specification, and/or aging components experiencing drift over time.

¹⁰My personal preference is to locate all the “given” data in the upper-left cells of the spreadsheet grid (each data point flanked by a sensible name in the cell to the left and units of measurement in the cell to the right as illustrated in the first distance/time spreadsheet example), sometimes coloring them in order to clearly distinguish which cells contain entered data versus which cells contain computed results from formulae. I like to place all formulae in cells below the given data, and try to arrange them in logical order so that anyone examining my spreadsheet will be able to figure out *how* I constructed a solution. This is a general principle I believe all computer programmers should follow: *document and arrange your code to make it easy for other people to learn from it.*

3.2.3 Arbitrary truth table

Multiplexers, or data selectors, may be used to generate arbitrary truth table functions. Take for example this truth table, shown beside a symbol for a 16-channel multiplexer:

D	C	B	A	Out
0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	1	1
0	0	1	0	0
0	0	1	1	0
0	1	0	0	0
0	1	0	1	1
0	1	1	0	1
0	1	1	1	1
1	0	0	0	0
1	0	0	1	1
1	0	1	0	0
1	0	1	1	1
1	1	0	0	1
1	1	0	1	0
1	1	1	0	0
1	1	1	1	1



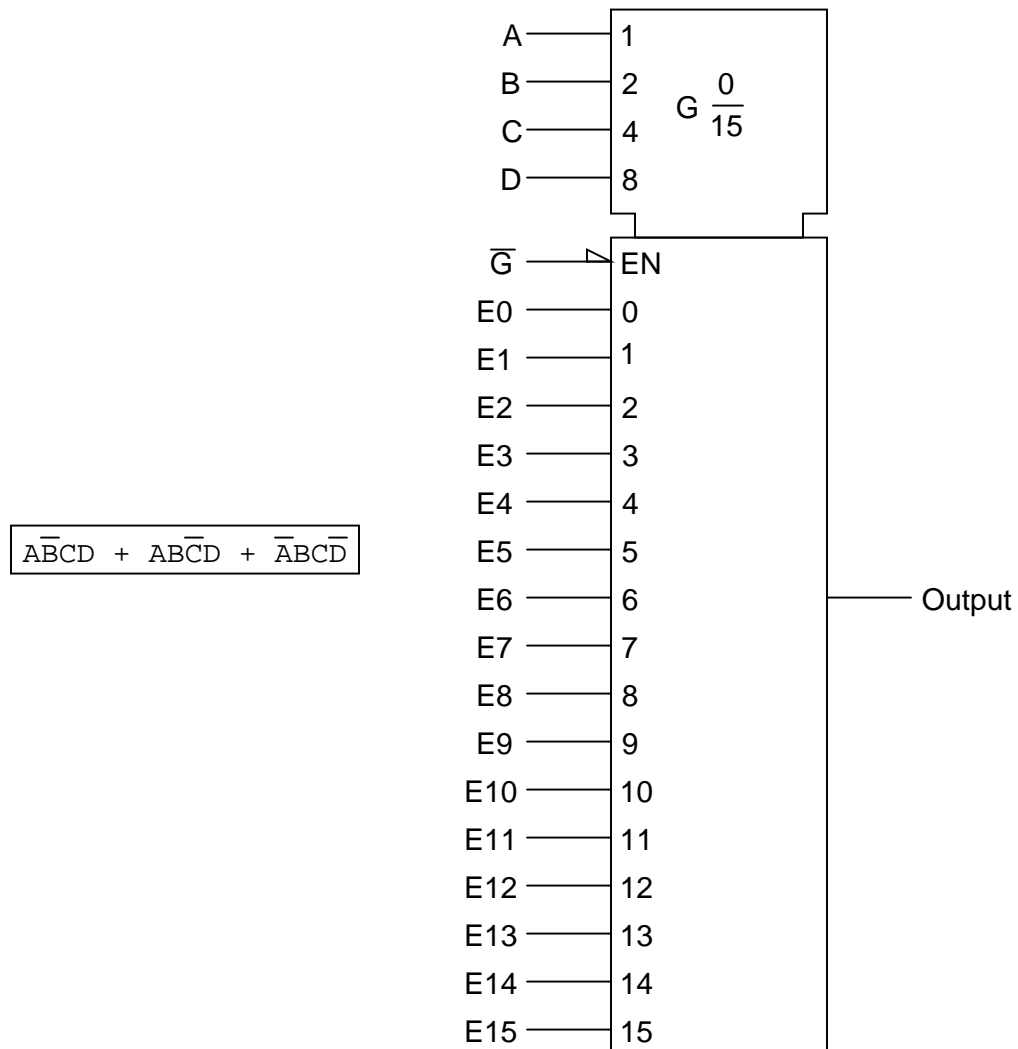
Show the wire connections necessary to make the multiplexer output the specified logic states in response to the data select (A, B, C, and D) inputs.

Challenges

- What should be done with the \overline{G} line?

3.2.4 Arbitrary SOP expression

Multiplexers, or data selectors, may be used to generate arbitrary truth table functions. Take for example this Boolean SOP expression, shown beside a symbol for a 16-channel multiplexer:



Show the wire connections necessary to make the multiplexer implement the specified Boolean expression.

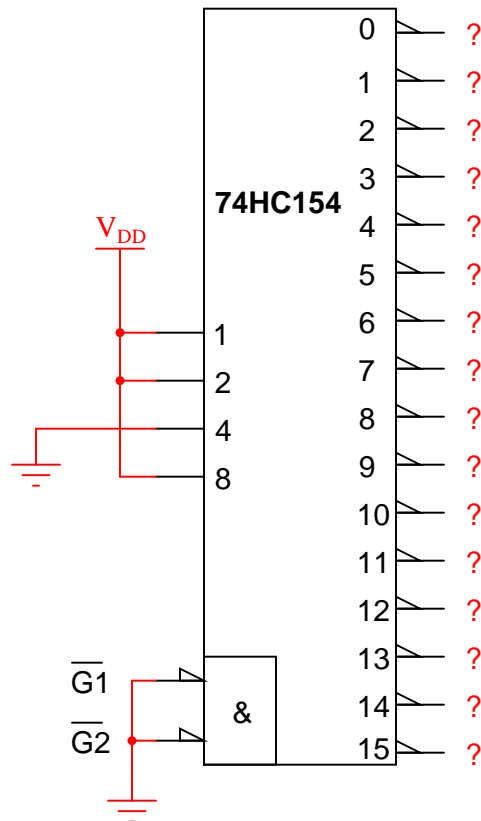
Challenges

- What should be done with the \overline{G} line?

- Complete a truth table describing this same SOP expression.

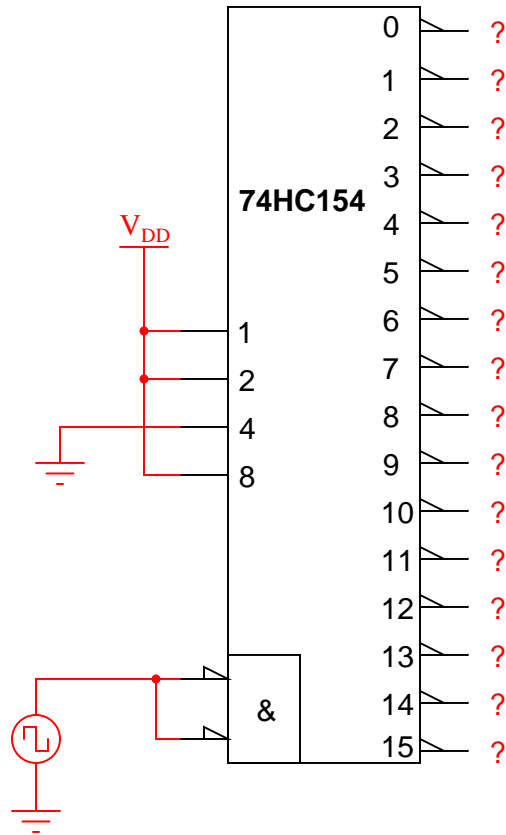
3.2.5 74HC154 decoder

The 74HC154 is a high-speed CMOS (TTL-compatible) integrated circuit decoder with four input lines and sixteen output lines:



Identify the logic states of all output terminals given the input conditions shown.

Next, identify the logic states for the same circuit, this time with a square wave (on/off pulse) logic signal applied to the enable terminals:



Challenges

- In the square-wave application of this decoder, is it functioning as a mux or as a demux?
- Explain why it is necessary to use both $\overline{G1}$ and $\overline{G2}$, and not just one of them.

3.3 Diagnostic reasoning

These questions are designed to stimulate your deductive and inductive thinking, where you must apply general principles to specific scenarios (deductive) and also derive conclusions about the failed circuit from specific details (inductive). In a Socratic discussion with your instructor, the goal is for these questions to reinforce your recall and use of general circuit principles and also challenge your ability to integrate multiple symptoms into a sensible explanation of what's wrong in a circuit. Your instructor may also pose additional questions based on those assigned, in order to further challenge and sharpen your diagnostic abilities.

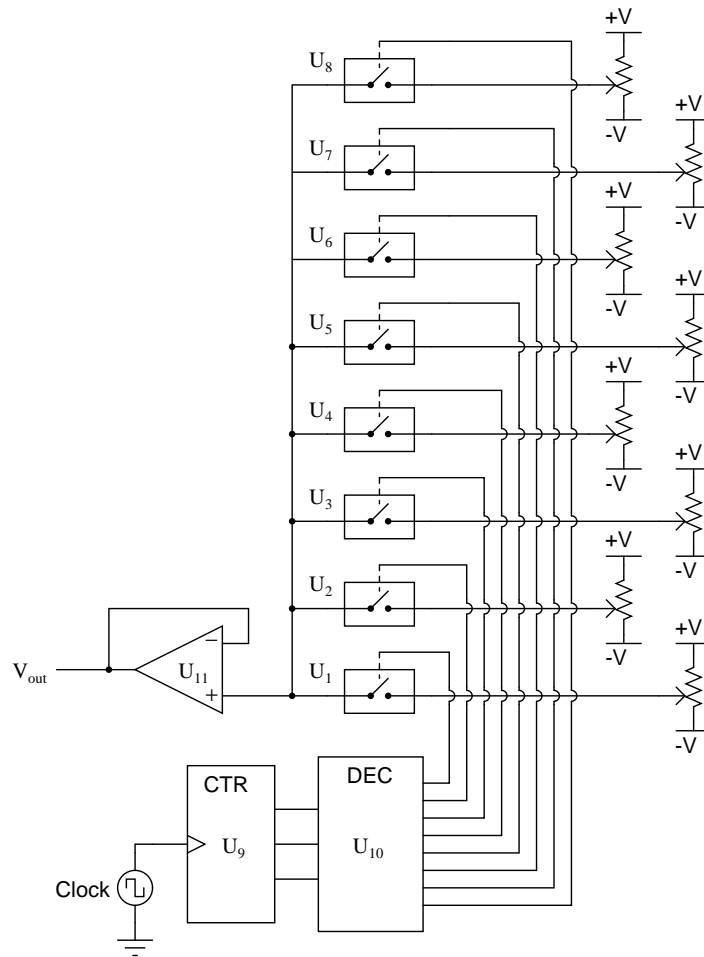
As always, your goal is to fully *explain* your analysis of each problem. Simply obtaining a correct answer is not good enough – you must also demonstrate sound reasoning in order to successfully complete the assignment. Your instructor's responsibility is to probe and challenge your understanding of the relevant principles and analytical processes in order to ensure you have a strong foundation upon which to build further understanding.

You will note a conspicuous lack of answers given for these diagnostic questions. Unlike standard textbooks where answers to every other question are given somewhere toward the back of the book, here in these learning modules students must rely on other means to check their work. The best way by far is to debate the answers with fellow students and also with the instructor during the Socratic dialogue sessions intended to be used with these learning modules. Reasoning through challenging questions with other people is an excellent tool for developing strong reasoning skills.

Another means of checking your diagnostic answers, where applicable, is to use circuit simulation software to explore the effects of faults placed in circuits. For example, if one of these diagnostic questions requires that you predict the effect of an open or a short in a circuit, you may check the validity of your work by simulating that same fault (substituting a very high resistance in place of that component for an open, and substituting a very low resistance for a short) within software and seeing if the results agree.

3.3.1 Faulted AWG circuit

The following schematic diagram shows an eight-step arbitrary waveform generator (AWG). The analog multiplexer selects one of the eight potentiometer signals at a time, stepping from one to the next at the pace of the clock pulse:



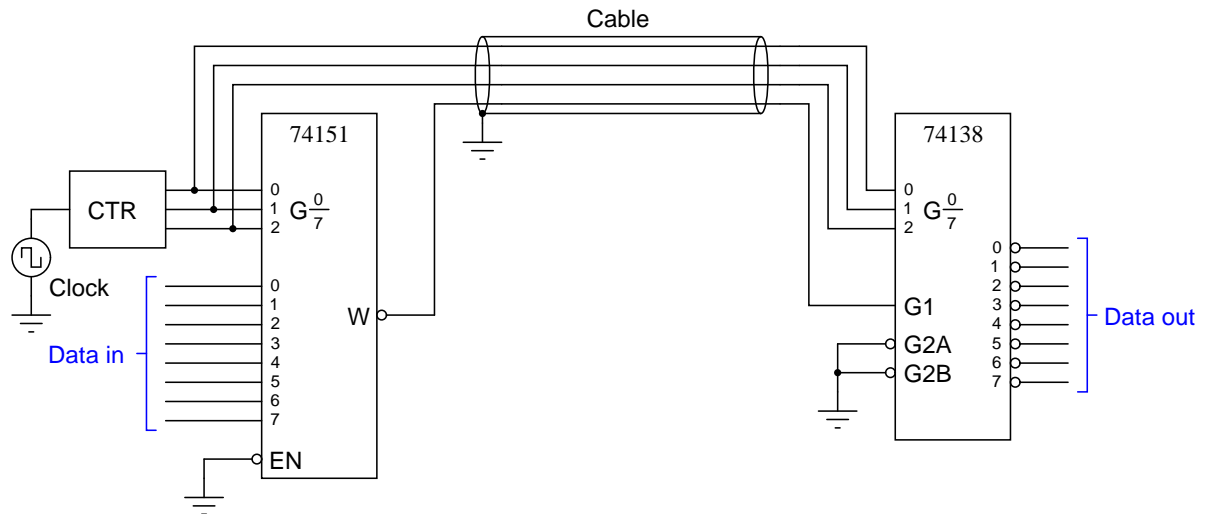
Explain what effect a *shorted* bilateral switch would have on the output waveform. Be as specific as possible.

Challenges

- Why is it important that all the potentiometers connect to both +V and -V?
- Identify how to increase or decrease the frequency output by the AWG.
- Identify the function of U₁₁.

3.3.2 Faulted concentrator circuit

Predict how the operation of this “concentrator” circuit (taking eight digital inputs and “concentrating” them into a single, multiplexed, communication line to be expanded into eight outputs at the receiving end) will be affected as a result of the following faults. Consider each fault independently (i.e. one at a time, no coincidental faults):



- Clock pulse generator stops pulsing:
- Pin breaks on the W output of 74151 chip, leaving that wire floating:
- Pin breaks on G2A input of 74138 chip, leaving it floating:
- Enable pin breaks on 74151 chip, leaving it floating:

For each of these conditions, explain *why* the resulting effects will occur.

Challenges

- What factors influence the appropriate choice of clock frequency for a circuit such as this?

Appendix A

Problem-Solving Strategies

The ability to solve complex problems is arguably one of the most valuable skills one can possess, and this skill is particularly important in any science-based discipline.

- Study principles, not procedures. Don't be satisfied with merely knowing how to compute solutions – learn *why* those solutions work.
- Identify what it is you need to solve, identify all relevant data, identify all units of measurement, identify any general principles or formulae linking the given information to the solution, and then identify any “missing pieces” to a solution. Annotate all diagrams with this data.
- Sketch a diagram to help visualize the problem. When building a real system, always devise a plan for that system and analyze its function *before* constructing it.
- Follow the units of measurement and meaning of every calculation. If you are ever performing mathematical calculations as part of a problem-solving procedure, and you find yourself unable to apply each and every intermediate result to some aspect of the problem, it means you don't understand what you are doing. Properly done, every mathematical result should have practical meaning for the problem, and not just be an abstract number. You should be able to identify the proper units of measurement for each and every calculated result, and show where that result fits into the problem.
- Perform “thought experiments” to explore the effects of different conditions for theoretical problems. When troubleshooting real systems, perform *diagnostic tests* rather than visually inspecting for faults, the best diagnostic test being the one giving you the most information about the nature and/or location of the fault with the fewest steps.
- Simplify the problem until the solution becomes obvious, and then use that obvious case as a model to follow in solving the more complex version of the problem.
- Check for exceptions to see if your solution is incorrect or incomplete. A good solution will work for *all* known conditions and criteria. A good example of this is the process of testing scientific hypotheses: the task of a scientist is not to find support for a new idea, but rather to *challenge* that new idea to see if it holds up under a battery of tests. The philosophical

principle of *reductio ad absurdum* (i.e. disproving a general idea by finding a specific case where it fails) is useful here.

- Work “backward” from a hypothetical solution to a new set of given conditions.
- Add quantities to problems that are qualitative in nature, because sometimes a little math helps illuminate the scenario.
- Sketch graphs illustrating how variables relate to each other. These may be quantitative (i.e. with realistic number values) or qualitative (i.e. simply showing increases and decreases).
- Treat quantitative problems as qualitative in order to discern the relative magnitudes and/or directions of change of the relevant variables. For example, try determining what happens if a certain variable were to increase or decrease before attempting to precisely calculate quantities: how will each of the dependent variables respond, by increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same as before?
- Consider limiting cases. This works especially well for qualitative problems where you need to determine which direction a variable will change. Take the given condition and magnify that condition to an extreme degree as a way of simplifying the direction of the system’s response.
- Check your work. This means regularly testing your conclusions to see if they make sense. This does *not* mean repeating the same steps originally used to obtain the conclusion(s), but rather to use some other means to check validity. Simply repeating procedures often leads to *repeating the same errors* if any were made, which is why alternative paths are better.

Appendix B

Instructional philosophy

“The unexamined circuit is not worth energizing” – Socrates (if he had taught electricity)

These learning modules, although useful for self-study, were designed to be used in a formal learning environment where a subject-matter expert challenges students to digest the content and exercise their critical thinking abilities in the answering of questions and in the construction and testing of working circuits.

The following principles inform the instructional and assessment philosophies embodied in these learning modules:

- The first goal of education is to enhance clear and independent thought, in order that every student reach their fullest potential in a highly complex and inter-dependent world. Robust reasoning is *always* more important than particulars of any subject matter, because its application is universal.
- Literacy is fundamental to independent learning and thought because text continues to be the most efficient way to communicate complex ideas over space and time. Those who cannot read with ease are limited in their ability to acquire knowledge and perspective.
- Articulate communication is fundamental to work that is complex and interdisciplinary.
- Faulty assumptions and poor reasoning are best corrected through challenge, not presentation. The rhetorical technique of *reductio ad absurdum* (disproving an assertion by exposing an absurdity) works well to discipline student’s minds, not only to correct the problem at hand but also to learn how to detect and correct future errors.
- Important principles should be repeatedly explored and widely applied throughout a course of study, not only to reinforce their importance and help ensure their mastery, but also to showcase the interconnectedness and utility of knowledge.

These learning modules were expressly designed to be used in an “inverted” teaching environment¹ where students first read the introductory and tutorial chapters on their own, then individually attempt to answer the questions and construct working circuits according to the experiment and project guidelines. The instructor never lectures, but instead meets regularly with each individual student to review their progress, answer questions, identify misconceptions, and challenge the student to new depths of understanding through further questioning. Regular meetings between instructor and student should resemble a Socratic² dialogue, where questions serve as scalpels to dissect topics and expose assumptions. The student passes each module only after consistently demonstrating their ability to logically analyze and correctly apply all major concepts in each question or project/experiment. The instructor must be vigilant in probing each student’s understanding to ensure they are truly *reasoning* and not just *memorizing*. This is why “Challenge” points appear throughout, as prompts for students to think deeper about topics and as starting points for instructor queries. Sometimes these challenge points require additional knowledge that hasn’t been covered in the series to answer in full. This is okay, as the major purpose of the Challenges is to stimulate analysis and synthesis on the part of each student.

The instructor must possess enough mastery of the subject matter and awareness of students’ reasoning to generate their own follow-up questions to practically any student response. Even completely correct answers given by the student should be challenged by the instructor for the purpose of having students practice articulating their thoughts and defending their reasoning. Conceptual errors committed by the student should be exposed and corrected not by direct instruction, but rather by reducing the errors to an absurdity³ through well-chosen questions and thought experiments posed by the instructor. Becoming proficient at this style of instruction requires time and dedication, but the positive effects on critical thinking for both student and instructor are spectacular.

An inspection of these learning modules reveals certain unique characteristics. One of these is a bias toward thorough explanations in the tutorial chapters. Without a live instructor to explain concepts and applications to students, the text itself must fulfill this role. This philosophy results in lengthier explanations than what you might typically find in a textbook, each step of the reasoning process fully explained, including footnotes addressing common questions and concerns students raise while learning these concepts. Each tutorial seeks to not only explain each major concept in sufficient detail, but also to explain the logic of each concept and how each may be developed

¹In a traditional teaching environment, students first encounter new information via *lecture* from an expert, and then independently apply that information via *homework*. In an “inverted” course of study, students first encounter new information via *homework*, and then independently apply that information under the scrutiny of an expert. The expert’s role in lecture is to simply *explain*, but the expert’s role in an inverted session is to *challenge*, *critique*, and if necessary *explain* where gaps in understanding still exist.

²Socrates is a figure in ancient Greek philosophy famous for his unflinching style of questioning. Although he authored no texts, he appears as a character in Plato’s many writings. The essence of Socratic philosophy is to leave no question unexamined and no point of view unchallenged. While purists may argue a topic such as electric circuits is too narrow for a true Socratic-style dialogue, I would argue that the essential thought processes involved with scientific reasoning on *any* topic are not far removed from the Socratic ideal, and that students of electricity and electronics would do very well to challenge assumptions, pose thought experiments, identify fallacies, and otherwise employ the arsenal of critical thinking skills modeled by Socrates.

³This rhetorical technique is known by the Latin phrase *reductio ad absurdum*. The concept is to expose errors by counter-example, since only one solid counter-example is necessary to disprove a universal claim. As an example of this, consider the common misconception among beginning students of electricity that voltage cannot exist without current. One way to apply *reductio ad absurdum* to this statement is to ask how much current passes through a fully-charged battery connected to nothing (i.e. a clear example of voltage existing without current).

from “first principles”. Again, this reflects the goal of developing clear and independent thought in students’ minds, by showing how clear and logical thought was used to forge each concept. Students benefit from witnessing a model of clear thinking in action, and these tutorials strive to be just that.

Another characteristic of these learning modules is a lack of step-by-step instructions in the Project and Experiment chapters. Unlike many modern workbooks and laboratory guides where step-by-step instructions are prescribed for each experiment, these modules take the approach that students must learn to closely read the tutorials and apply their own reasoning to identify the appropriate experimental steps. Sometimes these steps are plainly declared in the text, just not as a set of enumerated points. At other times certain steps are implied, an example being assumed competence in test equipment use where the student should not need to be told *again* how to use their multimeter because that was thoroughly explained in previous lessons. In some circumstances no steps are given at all, leaving the entire procedure up to the student.

This lack of prescription is not a flaw, but rather a feature. Close reading and clear thinking are foundational principles of this learning series, and in keeping with this philosophy all activities are designed to *require* those behaviors. Some students may find the lack of prescription frustrating, because it demands more from them than what their previous educational experiences required. This frustration should be interpreted as an unfamiliarity with autonomous thinking, a problem which must be corrected if the student is ever to become a self-directed learner and effective problem-solver. Ultimately, the need for students to read closely and think clearly is more important both in the near-term and far-term than any specific facet of the subject matter at hand. If a student takes longer than expected to complete a module because they are forced to outline, digest, and reason on their own, so be it. The future gains enjoyed by developing this mental discipline will be well worth the additional effort and delay.

Another feature of these learning modules is that they do not treat topics in isolation. Rather, important concepts are introduced early in the series, and appear repeatedly as stepping-stones toward other concepts in subsequent modules. This helps to avoid the “compartmentalization” of knowledge, demonstrating the inter-connectedness of concepts and simultaneously reinforcing them. Each module is fairly complete in itself, reserving the beginning of its tutorial to a review of foundational concepts.

This methodology of assigning text-based modules to students for digestion and then using Socratic dialogue to assess progress and hone students’ thinking was developed over a period of several years by the author with his Electronics and Instrumentation students at the two-year college level. While decidedly unconventional and sometimes even unsettling for students accustomed to a more passive lecture environment, this instructional philosophy has proven its ability to convey conceptual mastery, foster careful analysis, and enhance employability so much better than lecture that the author refuses to ever teach by lecture again.

Problems which often go undiagnosed in a lecture environment are laid bare in this “inverted” format where students must articulate and logically defend their reasoning. This, too, may be unsettling for students accustomed to lecture sessions where the instructor cannot tell for sure who comprehends and who does not, and this vulnerability necessitates sensitivity on the part of the “inverted” session instructor in order that students never feel discouraged by having their errors exposed. *Everyone* makes mistakes from time to time, and learning is a lifelong process! Part of the instructor’s job is to build a culture of learning among the students where errors are not seen as shameful, but rather as opportunities for progress.

To this end, instructors managing courses based on these modules should adhere to the following principles:

- Student questions are always welcome and demand thorough, honest answers. The only type of question an instructor should refuse to answer is one the student should be able to easily answer on their own. Remember, *the fundamental goal of education is for each student to learn to think clearly and independently*. This requires hard work on the part of the student, which no instructor should ever circumvent. Anything done to bypass the student's responsibility to do that hard work ultimately limits that student's potential and thereby does real harm.
- It is not only permissible, but encouraged, to answer a student's question by asking questions in return, these follow-up questions designed to guide the student to reach a correct answer through their own reasoning.
- All student answers demand to be challenged by the instructor and/or by other students. This includes both correct and incorrect answers – the goal is to practice the articulation and defense of one's own reasoning.
- No reading assignment is deemed complete unless and until the student demonstrates their ability to accurately summarize the major points in their own terms. Recitation of the original text is unacceptable. This is why every module contains an "Outline and reflections" question as well as a "Foundational concepts" question in the Conceptual reasoning section, to prompt reflective reading.
- No assigned question is deemed answered unless and until the student demonstrates their ability to consistently and correctly apply the concepts to *variations* of that question. This is why module questions typically contain multiple "Challenges" suggesting different applications of the concept(s) as well as variations on the same theme(s). Instructors are encouraged to devise as many of their own "Challenges" as they are able, in order to have a multitude of ways ready to probe students' understanding.
- No assigned experiment or project is deemed complete unless and until the student demonstrates the task in action. If this cannot be done "live" before the instructor, video-recordings showing the demonstration are acceptable. All relevant safety precautions must be followed, all test equipment must be used correctly, and the student must be able to properly explain all results. The student must also successfully answer all Challenges presented by the instructor for that experiment or project.

Students learning from these modules would do well to abide by the following principles:

- No text should be considered fully and adequately read unless and until you can express every idea *in your own words, using your own examples*.
- You should always articulate your thoughts as you read the text, noting points of agreement, confusion, and epiphanies. Feel free to print the text on paper and then write your notes in the margins. Alternatively, keep a journal for your own reflections as you read. This is truly a helpful tool when digesting complicated concepts.
- Never take the easy path of highlighting or underlining important text. Instead, *summarize* and/or *comment* on the text using your own words. This actively engages your mind, allowing you to more clearly perceive points of confusion or misunderstanding on your own.
- A very helpful strategy when learning new concepts is to place yourself in the role of a teacher, if only as a mental exercise. Either explain what you have recently learned to someone else, or at least *imagine* yourself explaining what you have learned to someone else. The simple act of having to articulate new knowledge and skill forces you to take on a different perspective, and will help reveal weaknesses in your understanding.
- Perform each and every mathematical calculation and thought experiment shown in the text on your own, referring back to the text to see that your results agree. This may seem trivial and unnecessary, but it is critically important to ensuring you actually understand what is presented, especially when the concepts at hand are complicated and easy to misunderstand. Apply this same strategy to become proficient in the use of *circuit simulation software*, checking to see if your simulated results agree with the results shown in the text.
- Above all, recognize that learning is hard work, and that a certain level of frustration is unavoidable. There are times when you will struggle to grasp some of these concepts, and that struggle is a natural thing. Take heart that it will yield with persistent and varied⁴ effort, and never give up!

Students interested in using these modules for self-study will also find them beneficial, although the onus of responsibility for thoroughly reading and answering questions will of course lie with that individual alone. If a qualified instructor is not available to challenge students, a workable alternative is for students to form study groups where they challenge⁵ one another.

To high standards of education,

Tony R. Kuphaldt

⁴As the old saying goes, “Insanity is trying the same thing over and over again, expecting different results.” If you find yourself stumped by something in the text, you should attempt a different approach. Alter the thought experiment, change the mathematical parameters, do whatever you can to see the problem in a slightly different light, and then the solution will often present itself more readily.

⁵Avoid the temptation to simply share answers with study partners, as this is really counter-productive to learning. Always bear in mind that the answer to any question is far less important in the long run than the method(s) used to obtain that answer. The goal of education is to empower one’s life through the improvement of clear and independent thought, literacy, expression, and various practical skills.

Appendix C

Tools used

I am indebted to the developers of many open-source software applications in the creation of these learning modules. The following is a list of these applications with some commentary on each.

You will notice a theme common to many of these applications: a bias toward *code*. Although I am by no means an expert programmer in any computer language, I understand and appreciate the flexibility offered by code-based applications where the user (you) enters commands into a plain ASCII text file, which the software then reads and processes to create the final output. Code-based computer applications are by their very nature *extensible*, while WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) applications are generally limited to whatever user interface the developer makes for you.

The GNU/Linux computer operating system

There is so much to be said about Linus Torvalds' **Linux** and Richard Stallman's **GNU** project. First, to credit just these two individuals is to fail to do justice to the *mob* of passionate volunteers who contributed to make this amazing software a reality. I first learned of **Linux** back in 1996, and have been using this operating system on my personal computers almost exclusively since then. It is *free*, it is completely *configurable*, and it permits the continued use of highly efficient **Unix** applications and scripting languages (e.g. shell scripts, Makefiles, **sed**, **awk**) developed over many decades. **Linux** not only provided me with a powerful computing platform, but its open design served to inspire my life's work of creating open-source educational resources.

Bram Moolenaar's **Vim** text editor

Writing code for any code-based computer application requires a *text editor*, which may be thought of as a word processor strictly limited to outputting plain-ASCII text files. Many good text editors exist, and one's choice of text editor seems to be a deeply personal matter within the programming world. I prefer **Vim** because it operates very similarly to **vi** which is ubiquitous on **Unix/Linux** operating systems, and because it may be entirely operated via keyboard (i.e. no mouse required) which makes it fast to use.

Donald Knuth's \TeX typesetting system

Developed in the late 1970's and early 1980's by computer scientist extraordinaire Donald Knuth to typeset his multi-volume magnum opus *The Art of Computer Programming*, this software allows the production of formatted text for screen-viewing or paper printing, all by writing plain-text code to describe how the formatted text is supposed to appear. \TeX is not just a markup language for documents, but it is also a Turing-complete programming language in and of itself, allowing useful algorithms to be created to control the production of documents. Simply put, *\TeX is a programmer's approach to word processing*. Since \TeX is controlled by code written in a plain-text file, this means anyone may read that plain-text file to see exactly how the document was created. This openness afforded by the code-based nature of \TeX makes it relatively easy to learn how other people have created their own \TeX documents. By contrast, examining a beautiful document created in a conventional WYSIWYG word processor such as Microsoft **Word** suggests nothing to the reader about *how* that document was created, or what the user might do to create something similar. As Mr. Knuth himself once quipped, conventional word processing applications should be called WYSIAYG (What You See Is *All* You Get).

Leslie Lamport's \LaTeX extensions to \TeX

Like all true programming languages, \TeX is inherently extensible. So, years after the release of \TeX to the public, Leslie Lamport decided to create a massive extension allowing easier compilation of book-length documents. The result was \LaTeX , which is the markup language used to create all ModEL module documents. You could say that \TeX is to \LaTeX as **C** is to **C++**. This means it is permissible to use any and all \TeX commands within \LaTeX source code, and it all still works. Some of the features offered by \LaTeX that would be challenging to implement in \TeX include automatic index and table-of-content creation.

Tim Edwards' **Xcircuit** drafting program

This wonderful program is what I use to create all the schematic diagrams and illustrations (but not photographic images or mathematical plots) throughout the ModEL project. It natively outputs PostScript format which is a true vector graphic format (this is why the images do not pixellate when you zoom in for a closer view), and it is so simple to use that I have never had to read the manual! Object libraries are easy to create for **Xcircuit**, being plain-text files using PostScript programming conventions. Over the years I have collected a large set of object libraries useful for drawing electrical and electronic schematics, pictorial diagrams, and other technical illustrations.

Gimp graphic image manipulation program

Essentially an open-source clone of Adobe's **PhotoShop**, I use **Gimp** to resize, crop, and convert file formats for all of the photographic images appearing in the **ModEL** modules. Although **Gimp** does offer its own scripting language (called **Script-Fu**), I have never had occasion to use it. Thus, my utilization of **Gimp** to merely crop, resize, and convert graphic images is akin to using a sword to slice bread.

SPICE circuit simulation program

SPICE is to circuit analysis as **T_EX** is to document creation: it is a form of markup language designed to describe a certain object to be processed in plain-ASCII text. When the plain-text "source file" is compiled by the software, it outputs the final result. More modern circuit analysis tools certainly exist, but I prefer **SPICE** for the following reasons: it is *free*, it is *fast*, it is *reliable*, and it is a fantastic tool for *teaching* students of electricity and electronics how to write simple code. I happen to use rather old versions of **SPICE**, version 2g6 being my "go to" application when I only require text-based output. **NGSPICE** (version 26), which is based on Berkeley **SPICE** version 3f5, is used when I require graphical output for such things as time-domain waveforms and Bode plots. In all **SPICE** example netlists I strive to use coding conventions compatible with all **SPICE** versions.

Andrew D. Hwang's ePiX mathematical visualization programming library

This amazing project is a **C++** library you may link to any **C/C++** code for the purpose of generating PostScript graphic images of mathematical functions. As a completely free and open-source project, it does all the plotting I would otherwise use a Computer Algebra System (CAS) such as **Mathematica** or **Maple** to do. It should be said that **ePiX** is *not* a Computer Algebra System like **Mathematica** or **Maple**, but merely a mathematical *visualization* tool. In other words, it won't determine integrals for you (you'll have to implement that in your own **C/C++** code!), but it can graph the results, and it does so beautifully. What I really admire about **ePiX** is that it is a **C++** programming library, which means it builds on the existing power and toolset available with that programming language. Mr. Hwang could have probably developed his own stand-alone application for mathematical plotting, but by creating a **C++** library to do the same thing he accomplished something much greater.

`gnuplot` mathematical visualization software

Another open-source tool for mathematical visualization is `gnuplot`. Interestingly, this tool is *not* part of Richard Stallman’s GNU project, its name being a coincidence. For this reason the authors prefer “gnu” *not* be capitalized at all to avoid confusion. This is a much “lighter-weight” alternative to a spreadsheet for plotting tabular data, and the fact that it easily outputs directly to an X11 console or a file in a number of different graphical formats (including PostScript) is very helpful. I typically set my `gnuplot` output format to default (X11 on my Linux PC) for quick viewing while I’m developing a visualization, then switch to PostScript file export once the visual is ready to include in the document(s) I’m writing. As with my use of `Gimp` to do rudimentary image editing, my use of `gnuplot` only scratches the surface of its capabilities, but the important points are that it’s *free* and that it *works well*.

Python programming language

Both Python and C++ find extensive use in these modules as instructional aids and exercises, but I’m listing Python here as a *tool* for myself because I use it almost daily as a *calculator*. If you open a Python interpreter console and type `from math import *` you can type mathematical expressions and have it return results just as you would on a hand calculator. Complex-number (i.e. *phasor*) arithmetic is similarly supported if you include the complex-math library (`from cmath import *`). Examples of this are shown in the Programming References chapter (if included) in each module. Of course, being a fully-featured programming language, Python also supports conditionals, loops, and other structures useful for calculation of quantities. Also, running in a console environment where all entries and returned values show as text in a chronologically-ordered list makes it easy to copy-and-paste those calculations to document exactly how they were performed.

Appendix D

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Appendix E

References

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Appendix F

Version history

This is a list showing all significant additions, corrections, and other edits made to this learning module. Each entry is referenced by calendar date in reverse chronological order (newest version first), which appears on the front cover of every learning module for easy reference. Any contributors to this open-source document are listed here as well.

26-27 November 2023 – added a new Tutorial section describing trapezoidal mux and demux symbols. Also added some instructor notes to Challenge questions.

24 April 2023 – improvement to Tutorial text regarding switching between different binary words, referring to them as words 0 and 1 rather than words A and B. This improvement courtesy of Joe Archer.

28 November 2022 – placed questions at the top of the itemized list in the Introduction chapter prompting students to devise experiments related to the tutorial content.

26 July 2022 – added more explanatory text on forming arbitrary logic functions using a mux.

25 May 2022 – divided the Tutorial into sections. Also, corrected minor illustration error in image_2530 and added some more questions to the Introduction chapter.

2 December 2021 – added Challenge questions.

10 May 2021 – commented out or deleted empty chapters.

2 October 2020 – significantly edited the Introduction chapter to make it more suitable as a pre-study guide and to provide cues useful to instructors leading “inverted” teaching sessions.

11 Mar 2020 – minor error corrections: wrong type of quotation marks used in a problem, and also had “encoder” written in a footnote where it should have said “decoder”. Also expanded on some of the instructor-version answers, and added discussion of enable/strobe inputs to the tutorial.

28 January 2020 – added Foundational Concepts to the list in the Conceptual Reasoning section.

18 December 2019 – minor edits to diagnostic questions, replacing “no multiple faults” with “no coincidental faults”.

22 November 2019 – began writing Tutorial.

21 November 2019 – document first created.

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