
Digital IC & Sytems Design

Iain McNally

≈ 10 lectures

Koushik Maharatna

≈ 12 lectures

Basel Halak

≈ 12 lectures

1001

Digital IC & Sytems Design

• Assessment

10% Coursework L-Edit Gate Design (BIM)
90% Examination

• Books

Integrated Circuit Design

a.k.a. Principles of CMOS VLSI Design - A Circuits and Systems Perspective

Neil Weste & David Harris
Pearson, 2011

Digital System Design with SystemVerilog

Mark Zwolinski
Pearson Prentice-Hall, 2010

1002

Iain McNally

Integrated Circuit Design

• Content

- Introduction
- Overview of Technologies
- Layout
- CMOS Processing
- Design Rules and Abstraction
- Cell Design and Euler Paths
- System Design using Standard Cells
- Wider View

• Notes & Resources

<https://secure.ecs.soton.ac.uk/notes/bim/notes/icd/>

1003

History

1947 First Transistor

John Bardeen, Walter Brattain, and William Shockley (Bell Labs)

1952 Integrated Circuits Proposed

Geoffrey Dummer (Royal Radar Establishment) - *prototype failed...*

1958 First Integrated Circuit

Jack Kilby (Texas Instruments) - *Co-inventor*

1959 First Planar Integrated Circuit

Robert Noyce (Fairchild) - *Co-inventor*

1961 First Commercial ICs

Simple logic functions from TI and Fairchild

1965 Moore's Law

Gordon Moore (Fairchild) observes the trends in integration.

1004

History

Moore's Law

Predicts exponential growth in the number of components per chip.

1965 - 1975 Doubling Every Year

In 1965 Gordon Moore observed that the number of components per chip had doubled every year since 1959 and predicted that the trend would continue through to 1975.

Moore describes his initial growth predictions as "ridiculously precise".

1975 - 2012 Doubling Every Two Years

In 1975 Moore revised growth predictions to doubling every two years.

Growth would now depend only on process improvements rather than on more efficient packing of components.

In 2000 he predicted that the growth would continue at the same rate for another 10-15 years before slowing due to physical limits.

History

Moore's Law; a Self-fulfilling Prophecy

The whole industry uses the Moore's Law curve to plan new fabrication facilities.

Slower - wasted investment

Must keep up with the Joneses².

Faster - too costly

Cost of capital equipment to build ICs doubles approximately every 4 years.

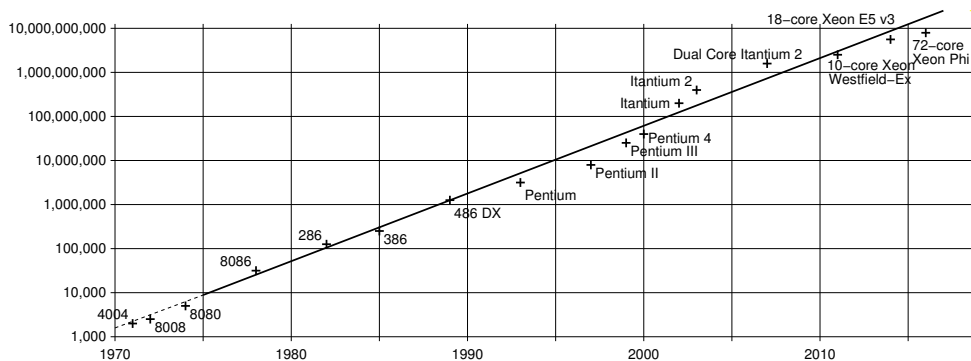
Moore's law is not dead (at least not quite), although there are worries that below 20nm, clever processing required for smaller transistors means that cost per transistor is going up rather than down.

How will **you** future engineers increase the number of transistors?

²or the Intels

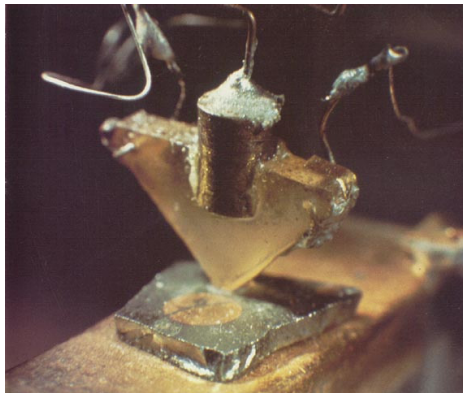
History

Moore's Law at Intel¹

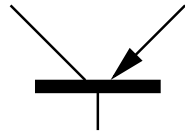


¹Intel was founded by Gordon Moore and Robert Noyce from Fairchild

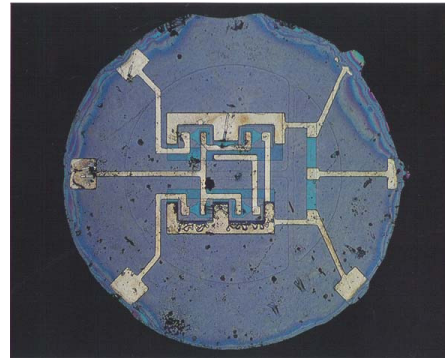
1947 Point Contact transistor



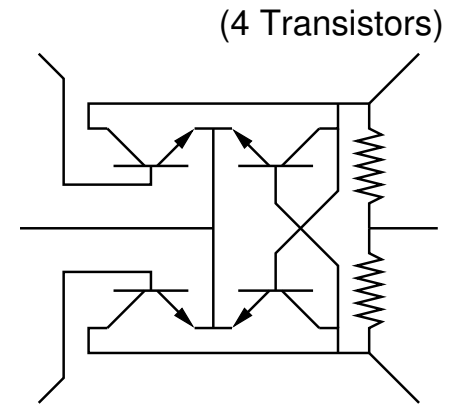
Source: Bell Labs



1961 Fairchild Bipolar RTL RS Flip-Flop

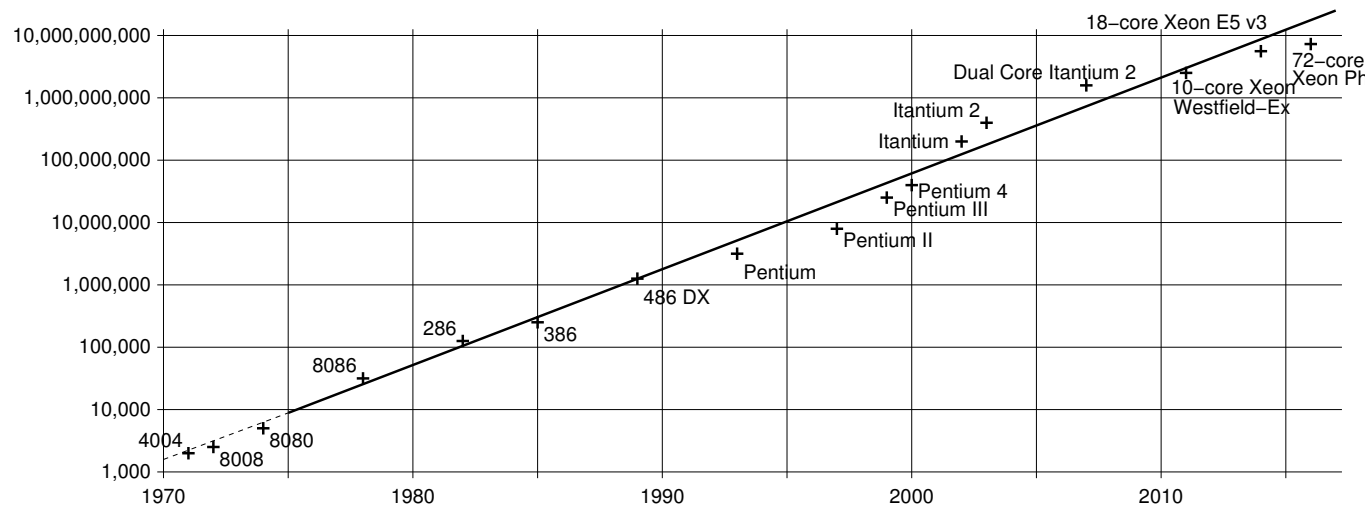


Source: Fairchild



Moore's Law (1965) Number of transistor has doubled every year and will continue to do so until 1975

Moore's Law (1975) Number of transistors will double every two years



Self-fulfilling Prophecy

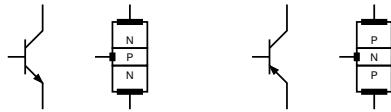
Overview of Technologies

Components for Logic

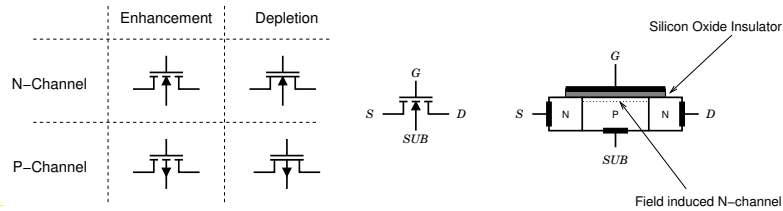
Diode



Bipolar Transistors



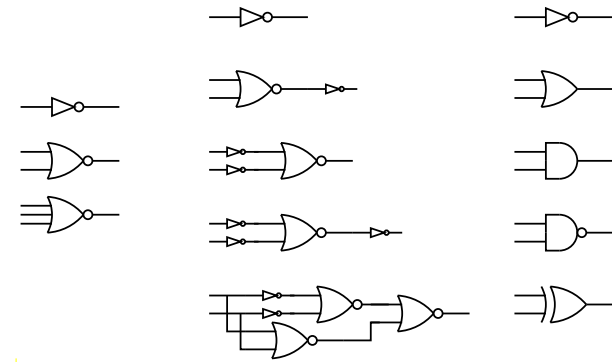
MOS Transistors



2001

Overview of Technologies

All functions can be realized using only the NOR gates¹ available in the RTL logic family.²



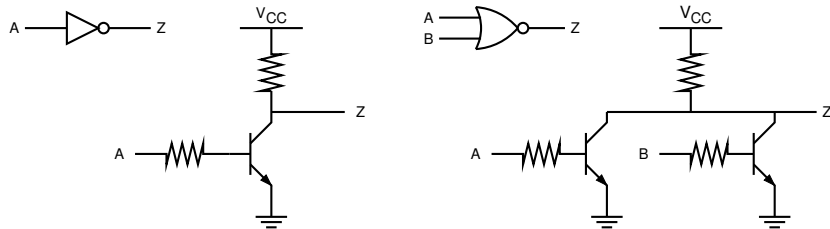
¹Note that an inverter is a special case of a NOR gate with only one input.

²NAND gates could be used instead for logic families which support only NAND gates.

2003

Overview of Technologies

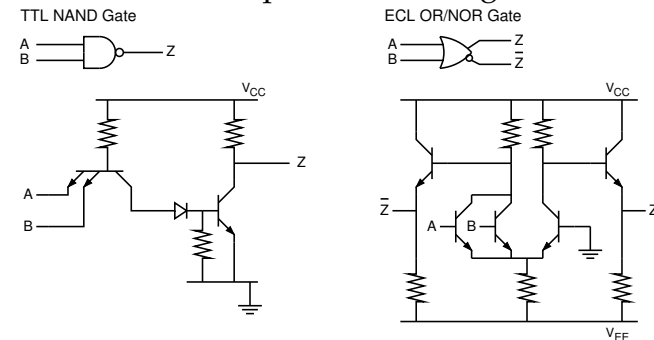
RTL Inverter and NOR gate



2002

Overview of Technologies

Other Bipolar Technologies



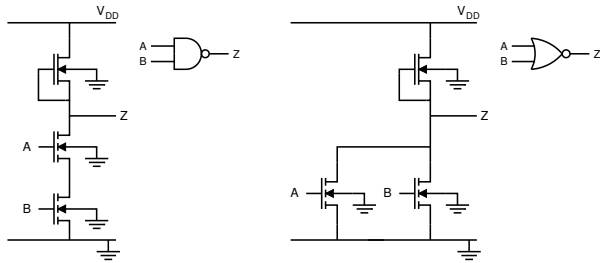
- TTL gives faster switching than RTL at the expense of greater complexity³. The characteristic multi-emitter transistor reduces the overall component count.
- ECL is a very high speed, high power, non-saturating technology.

³Most TTL families are more complex than the basic version shown here

2004

Overview of Technologies

NMOS - a VLSI technology.



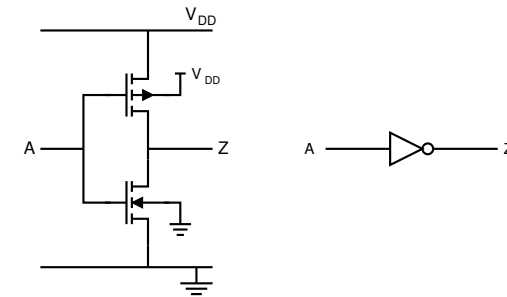
- Circuit function determined by series/parallel combination of devices.
- Depletion transistor acts as non-linear load resistor.
Resistance increases as the enhancement device turns on, thus reducing power consumption.
- The low output voltage is determined by the size ratio of the devices.

2005

Overview of Technologies

CMOS logic

CMOS - state of the art VLSI.

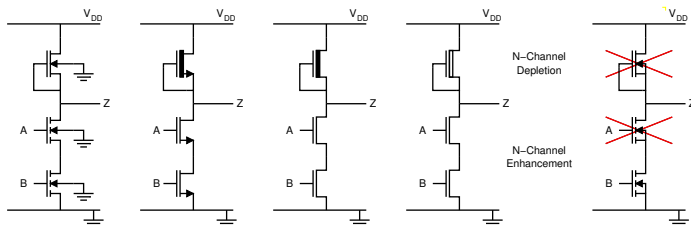


- An active PMOS device complements the NMOS device giving:
 - rail to rail output swing.
 - negligible static power consumption.

2007

Overview of Technologies

Alternative transistors representations for NMOS circuits



Various shorthands are used for simplifying NMOS circuit diagrams.

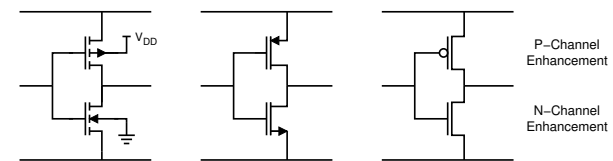
- Substrate connections need not be drawn since all must connect to Gnd.
- Since source and drain are indistinguishable in the layout, there is no need to show the source on the circuit diagram.

Note that schematic tools not designed for IC design will usually include inappropriate 3-terminal symbols.

2006

Digital CMOS Circuits

Alternative transistor representations for CMOS circuits



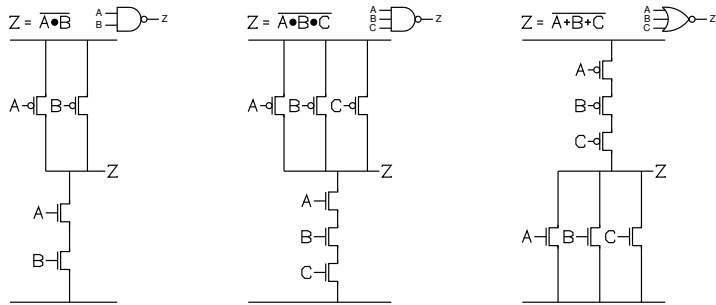
Digital CMOS circuits⁴ tend to use simplified symbols like their NMOS counterparts.

- In general substrate connections are not drawn where they connect to Vdd (PMOS) and Gnd (NMOS).
- All CMOS devices are enhancement mode.
- Transistors act as simple digitally controlled switches.

⁴in analog CMOS circuits we may have wells not connected to Vdd/GND

2008

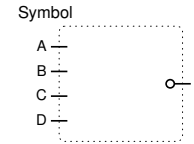
Static CMOS complementary gates



- For any set of inputs there will exist either a path to Vdd or a path to Gnd.

Compound Gate Example

$$Z = \overline{(A \cdot B) + (C \cdot D)}$$



Pull Up Network

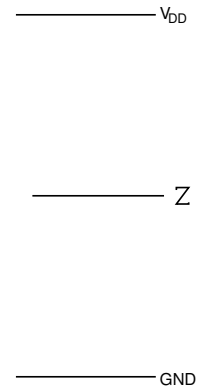
$$Z = f(\overline{A}, \overline{B}, \overline{C}, \overline{D})$$

$$Z = \dots\dots\dots$$

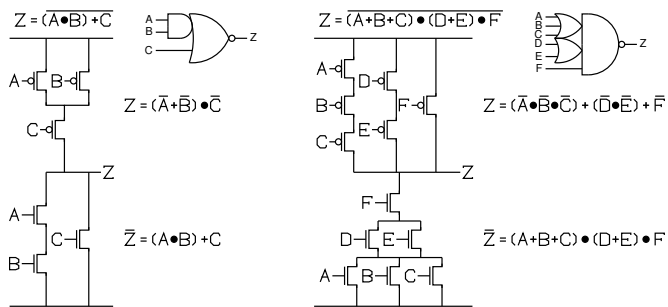
Pull Down Network

$$\overline{Z} = f(A, B, C, D)$$

$$\overline{Z} = (A \cdot B) + (C \cdot D)$$

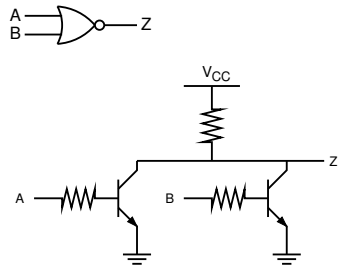


Compound Gates

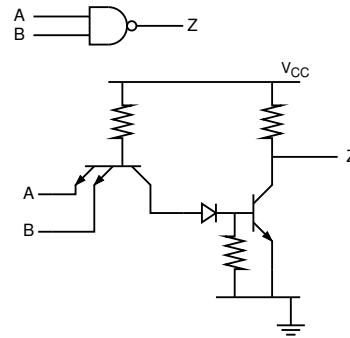


- All compound gates are inverting.
- Realisable functions are arbitrary AND/OR expressions with inverted output.

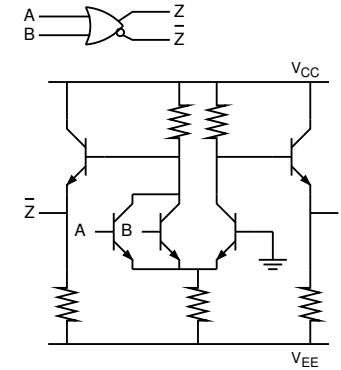
RTL NOR Gate



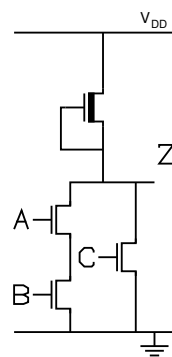
TTL NAND Gate



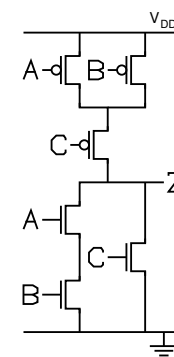
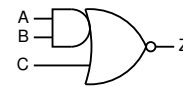
ECL OR/NOR Gate



NMOS Compound Gate



CMOS Compound Gate



- Bipolar Transistors with Resistors - MSI/LSI

RTL - NOR

TTL - NAND

ECL - OR/NOR

- MOS Transistors (no resistors) - VLSI

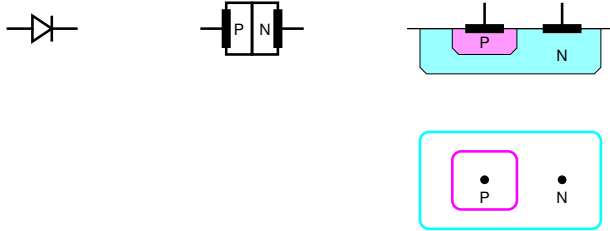
NMOS

CMOS - No static power!

Both allow construction of NOR, NAND & Compound gate (always inverting)

Diodes and Bipolar Transistors

Diode

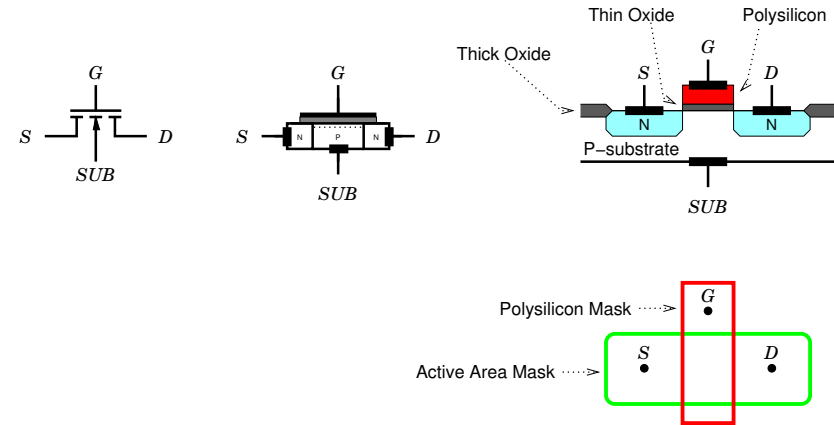


- Ideal structure - 1D
- Real structure - 3D
- Depth controlled implants.

3001

MOS Transistors

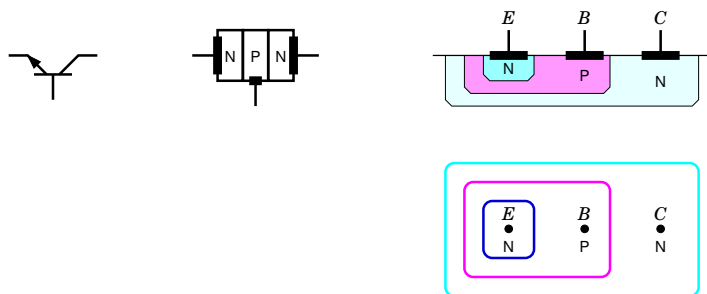
Simple NMOS Transistor



3003

Diodes and Bipolar Transistors

NPN Transistor



- Two n-type implants.

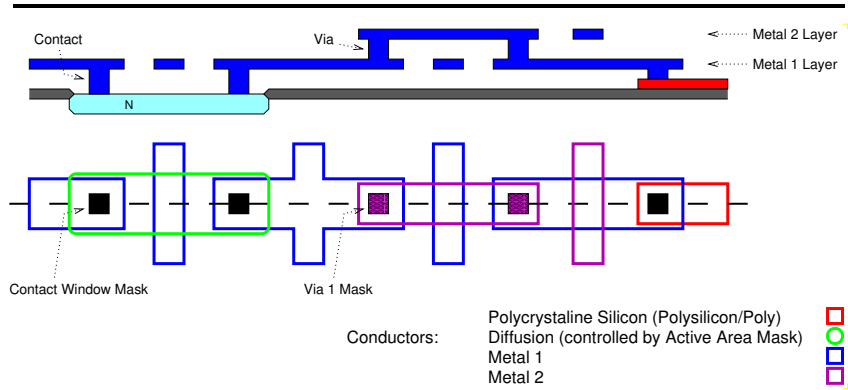
3002

Simple NMOS Transistor

- Active Area mask defines extent of *Thick Oxide*.
- Polysilicon mask also controls extent of *Thin Oxide* (alias *Gate Oxide*).
- N-type implant has no extra mask.
 - It is blocked by thick oxide and by polysilicon.
 - The implant is *Self Aligned*.
- Substrate connection is to bottom of wafer.
 - All substrates to ground.
- Gate connection not above transistor area.
 - Design Rule.

3004

Interconnect



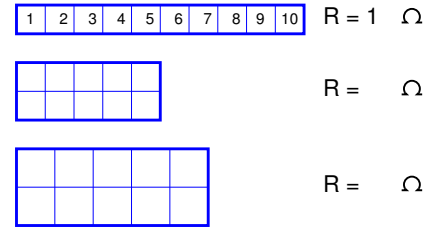
- Crossing conductors on different masks do not interact¹.
 - Explicit contact/via is required for connection.
- Crossing conductors on the same mask are always connected.

¹the exception to this rule is that polysilicon crossing diffusion gives us a transistor

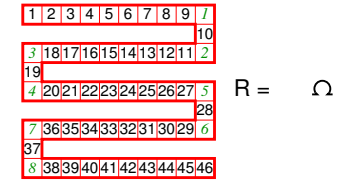
Components for IC Design

Resistors

Examples for Metal
 assuming $R_s = 0.1$ ohms per square



Example for Polysilicon
 assuming $R_s = 200$ ohms per square

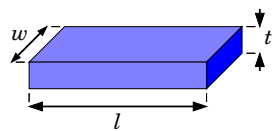


- for larger resistances we need minimum width poly (often combined with a serpentine shape) to save on area
- corner squares count as half² squares
- for predicatability and matching we may need wider tracks without corners

²effective resistance $\approx 0.56 R_s$

Interconnect

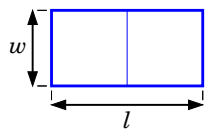
Resistance



$$R = \left(\frac{\rho}{t}\right) \left(\frac{l}{w}\right)$$

where ρ is the resistivity constant
 $3.2 \times 10^{-8} \Omega m$ for aluminium
 $1.7 \times 10^{-8} \Omega m$ for copper

Since t and ρ are fixed for a particular mask layer, the value that is normally used is the sheet resistance: $R_s = \left(\frac{\rho}{t}\right)$.



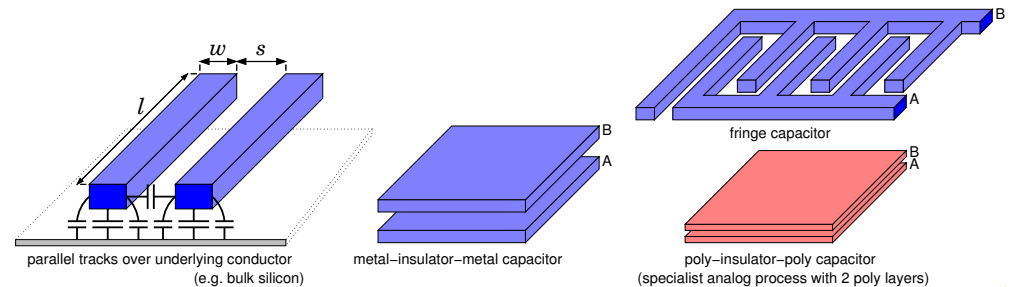
$$R = R_s \left(\frac{l}{w}\right)$$

where R_s is sheet resistance
 $0.1 \Omega/\square$ for 170nm thick copper

$R_s =$ resistance of a square (i.e. $w = l$) so the units for R_s are Ω/\square (ohms per square).

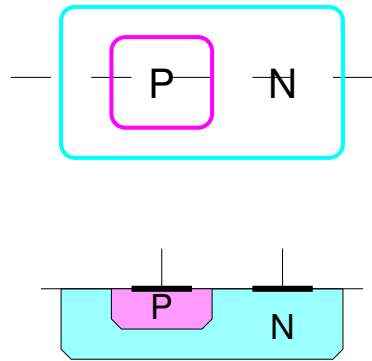
Components for IC Design

Capacitors

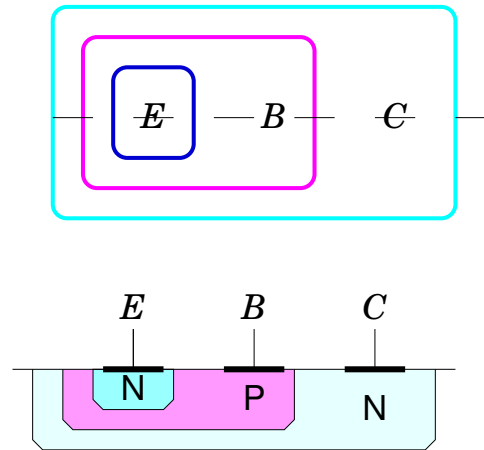


- Capacitance to underlying conductor $C = C_a w l + 2 C_f l$
- Coupling capacitance to adjacent track $C = C_c l/s$
 where C_a, C_f, C_c are constants for a given layer and process
 in digital designs our only aim is to minimise parasitic capacitance

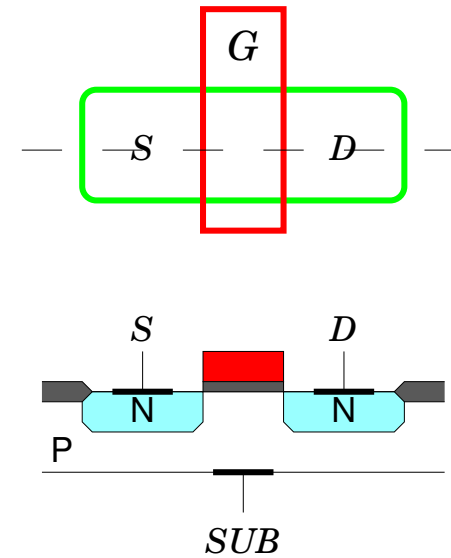
Diode



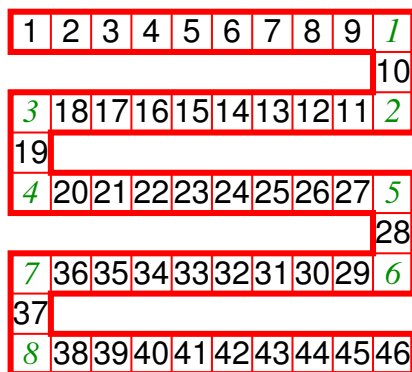
NPN Transistor



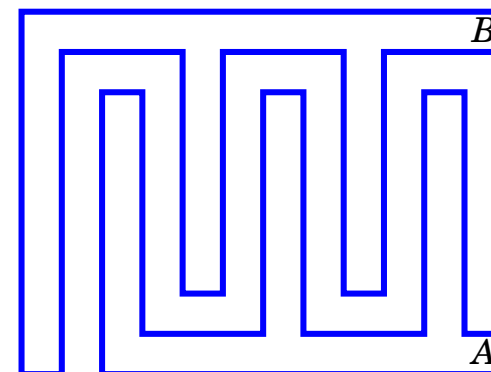
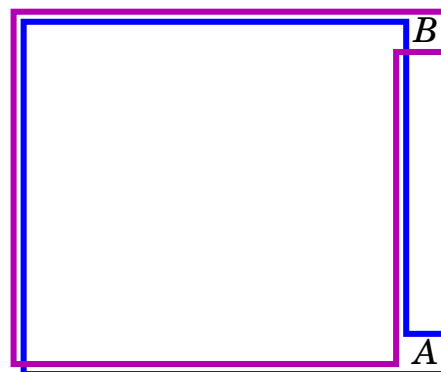
NMOS Enhancement transistor
NMOS Process



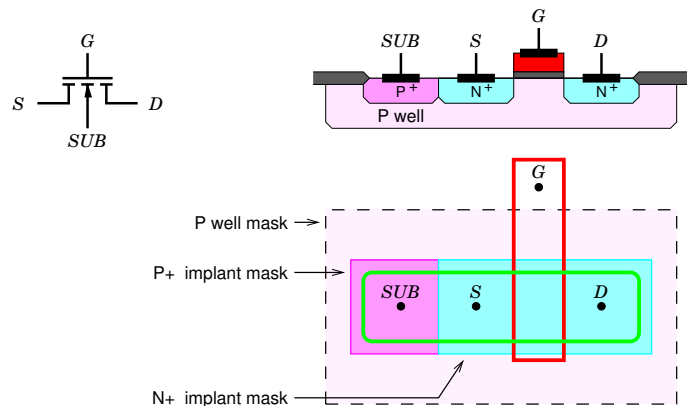
Resistor



Capacitors

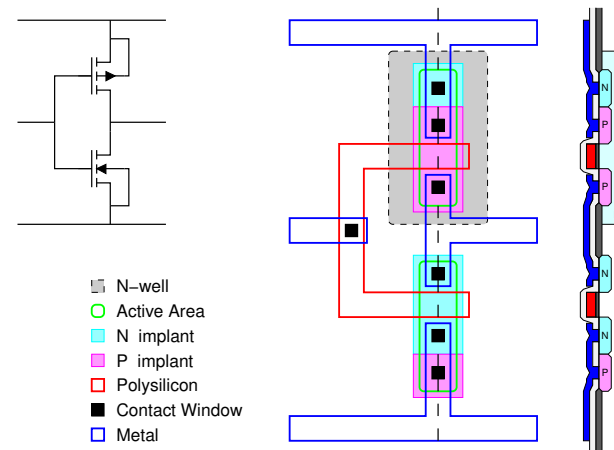


NMOS Transistor – with top substrate connection



4001

CMOS Inverter



4003

NMOS Transistor – with top substrate connection

Where it is not suitable for substrate connections to be shared, a more complex process is used.

- Five masks must be used to define the transistor:
 - P Well
 - Active Area
 - Polysilicon
 - N+ implant
 - P+ implant
- P Well, for isolation.
- Top *substrate* connection.
- P+/N+ implants produce good *ohmic* contacts.

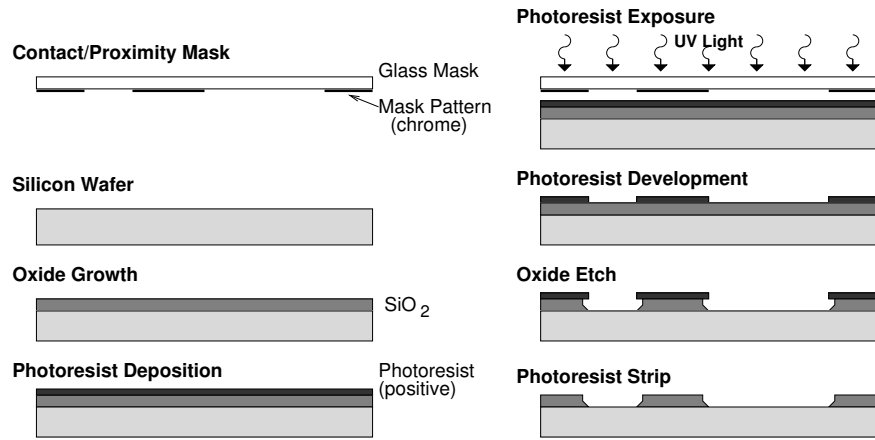
4002

CMOS Inverter

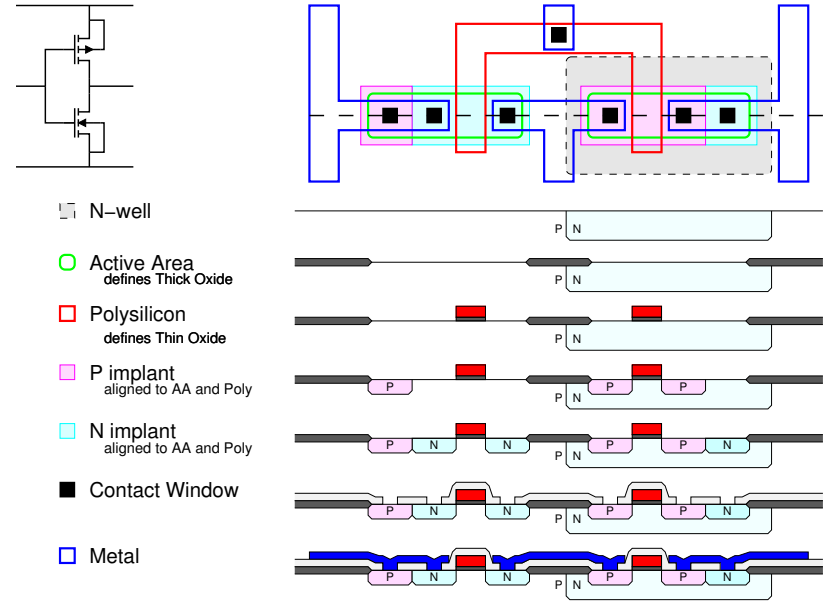
- The process described here is an *N Well process* since it has only an N Well. P Well and Twin Tub processes also exist.
- Note that the P-N junction between chip substrate and N Well will remain reverse biased. Thus the transistors remain isolated.
- N implant defines NMOS source/drain and PMOS substrate contact.
- P implant defines PMOS source/drain and NMOS substrate contact.

4004

Processing – Photolithography



4005

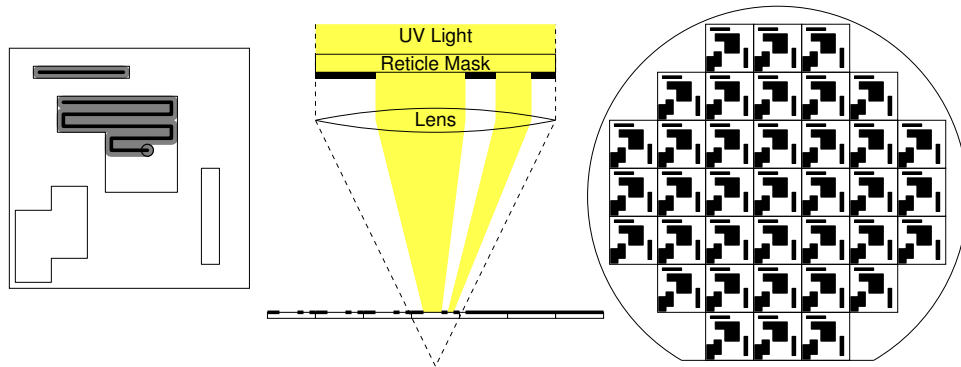


4007

Processing – Mask Making

Reticle written by scanning electron beam

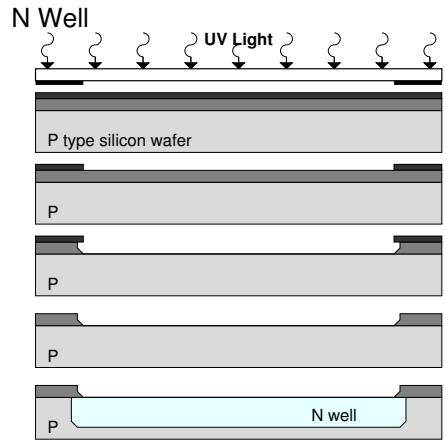
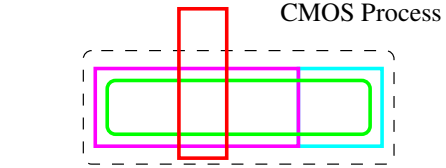
Pattern reproduced on wafer (or contact/proximity mask) by step and repeat with optical reduction



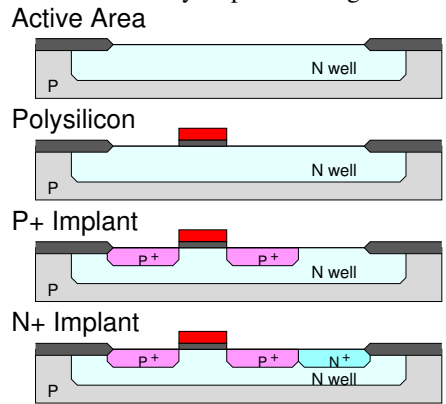
- Optical reduction allows narrower line widths.

4006

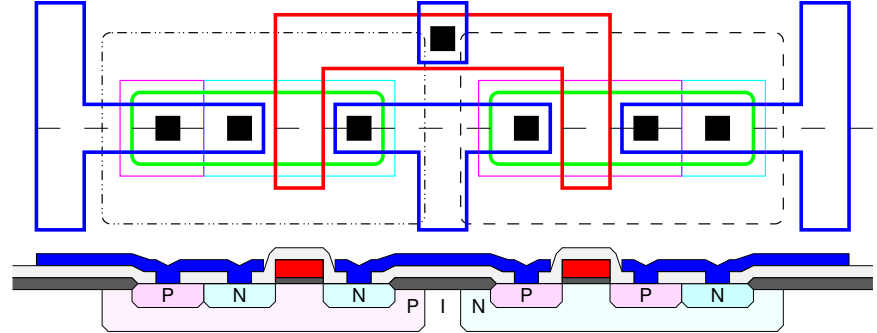
PMOS Enhancement transistor
CMOS Process



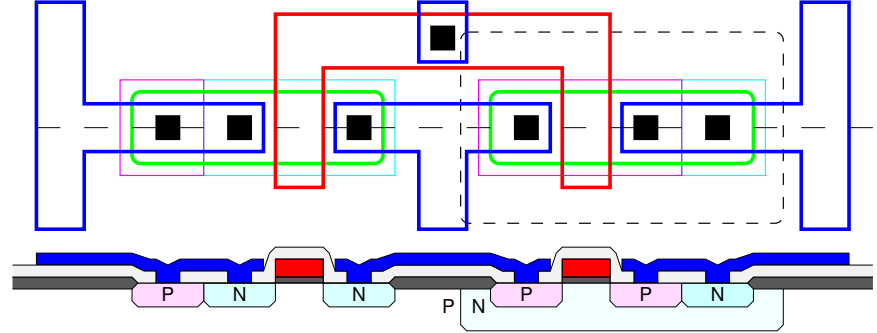
many steps for a single mask



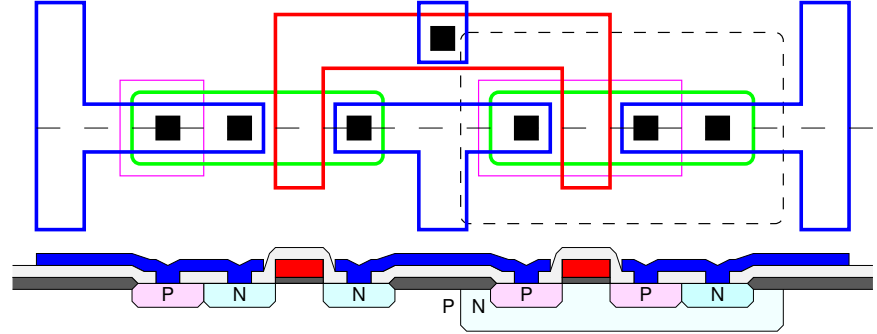
CMOS Inverter Twin Tub CMOS Process



CMOS Inverter N-Well CMOS Process (with explicit N+ implant mask)



CMOS Inverter N-Well CMOS Process (without explicit N+ implant mask)

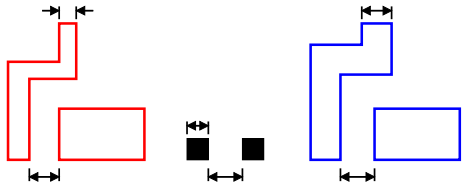


Features may be determined by a number of masks
e.g. NMOS source drain: ActiveArea AND NOT(NWell OR Poly OR PImplant)

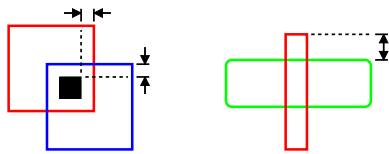
Design Rules

To prevent chip failure, designs must conform to design rules:

- Single layer rules



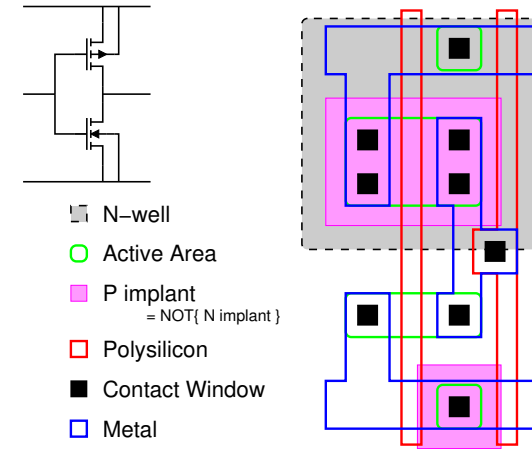
- Multi-layer rules



5001

Design Rules

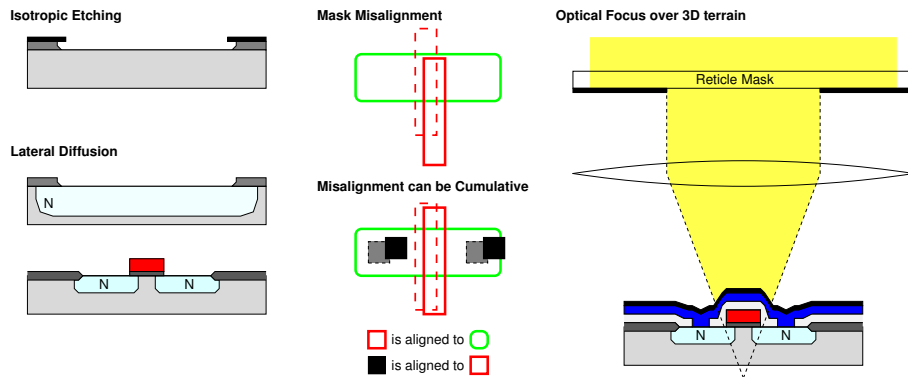
0.5 μm CMOS inverter



- N-well
- Active Area
- P implant
= NOT{ N implant }
- Polysilicon
- Contact Window
- Metal

5003

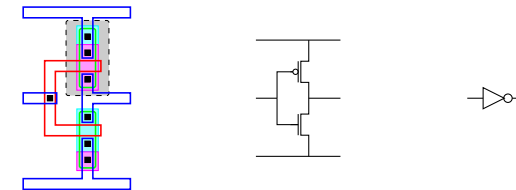
Derivation of Design Rules



5002

Abstraction

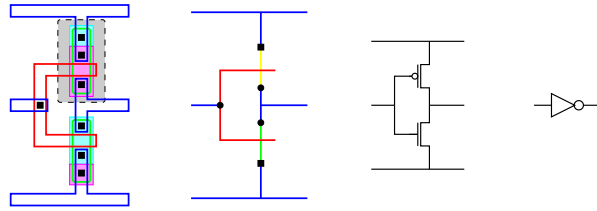
Levels of Abstraction



- Mask Level Design
 - Laborious Technology/Process dependent.
 - Design rules may change during a design!
- Transistor Level Design
 - Process independent, Technology dependent.
- Gate Level Design
 - Process/Technology independent.

5004

Abstraction - Stick Diagrams



Stick diagrams give us many of the benefits of abstraction:

- Much easier/faster than full mask specification.
- Process independent (valid for any CMOS process).
- Easy to change.

while avoiding some of the problems:

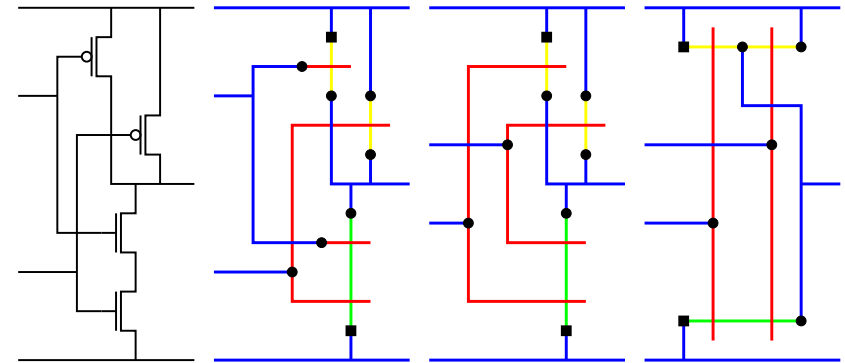
- Optimized layout may be generated much more easily from a stick diagram than from transistor or gate level designs.¹

¹note that all IC designs must end at the mask level.

5005

Digital CMOS Design

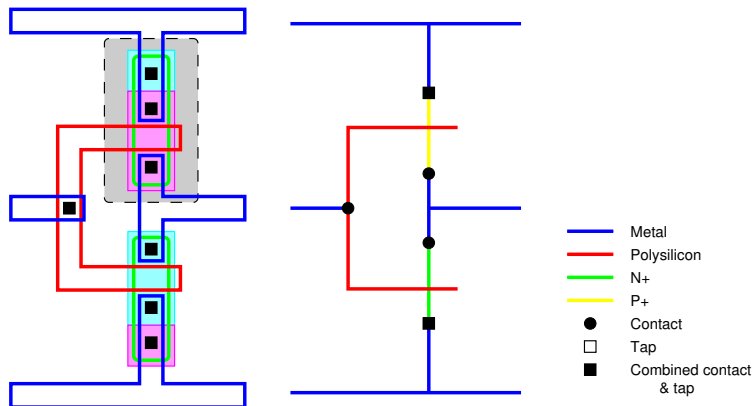
Stick Diagrams



5007

Digital CMOS Design

Stick Diagrams



5006

- Metal
- Polysilicon
- N+
- P+
- Contact
- Tap
- Combined contact & tap

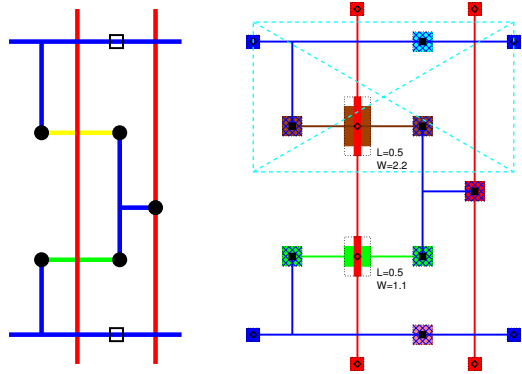
Digital CMOS Design

Stick Diagrams

- *Explore your Design Space.*
 - Implications of crossovers.
 - Number of contacts.
 - Arrangement of devices and connections.
- Process independent layout.
- Easy to expand to a full layout for a particular process.

5008

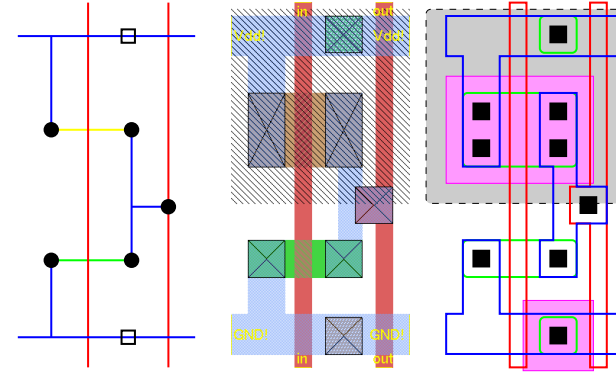
Sticks and CAD - Symbolic Capture



- Transistors are placed and explicitly sized.
 - components are joined with zero width wires.
 - contacts are automatically selected as required.
- A semi-automatic compaction process will create DRC correct layout.

5009

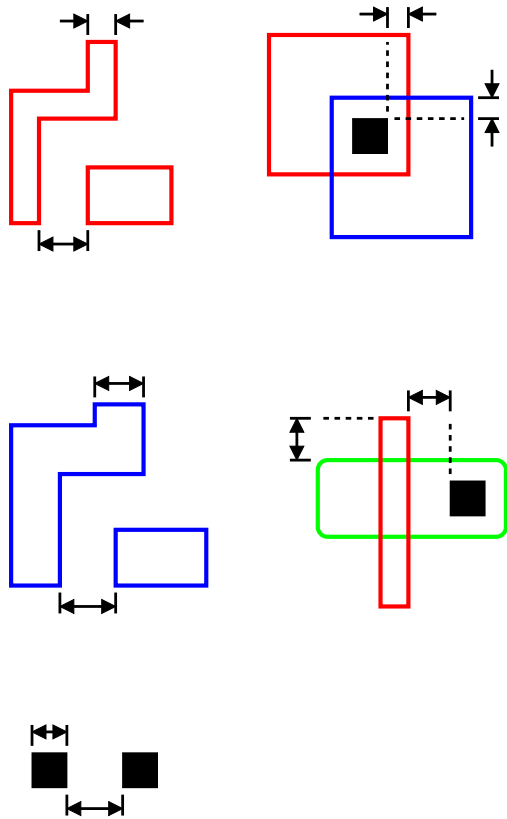
Sticks and CAD - Magic



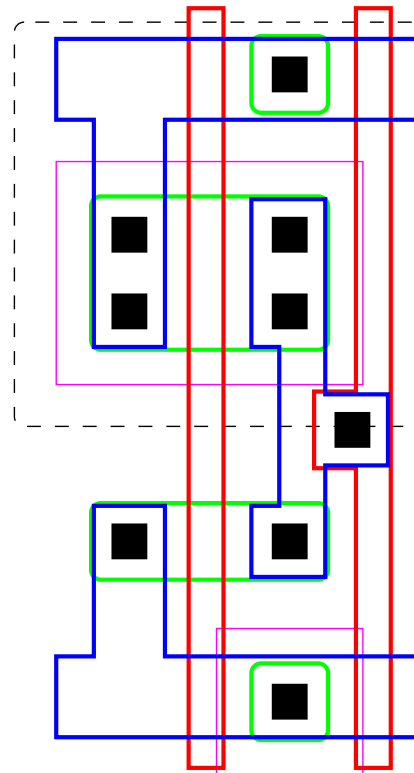
- Log style design (sticks with width) - DRC errors are flagged immediately.
 - again contacts are automatically selected as required.
- On-line DRC leads to rapid generation of correct designs.
 - symbolic capture style compaction is available if desired.

5010

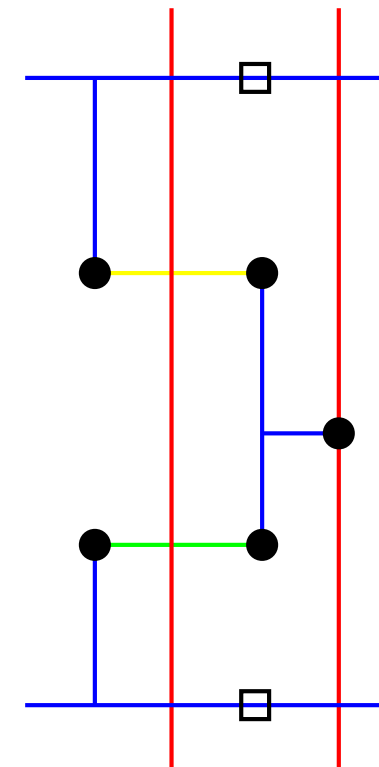
Design Rules – width, separation, overlap



Optimised Mask Layout



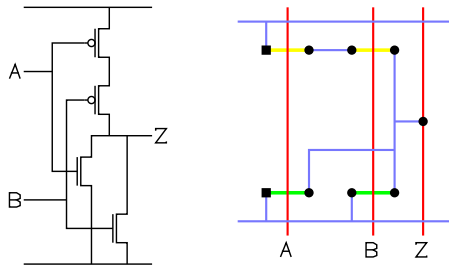
Equivalent Stick Diagram



- Metal
- Polysilicon
- N+
- P+
- Contact
- Tap
- Combined contact & tap

A logical approach to gate layout.

- All complementary gates may be designed using a single row of n-transistors above or below a single row of p-transistors, aligned at common gate connections.



6001

Finding an Euler Path

Computer Algorithms

- It is relatively easy for a computer to consider all possible arrangements of transistors in search of a suitable Euler path. This is not so easy for the human designer.

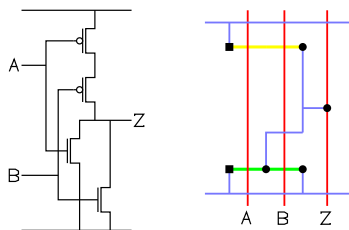
One Human Algorithm

- Find a path which passes through all n-transistors exactly once.
- Express the path in terms of the gate connections.
- Is it possible to follow a similarly labelled path through the p-transistors?
 - Yes - you've succeeded.
 - No - try again (you may like to try a p path first this time).

6003

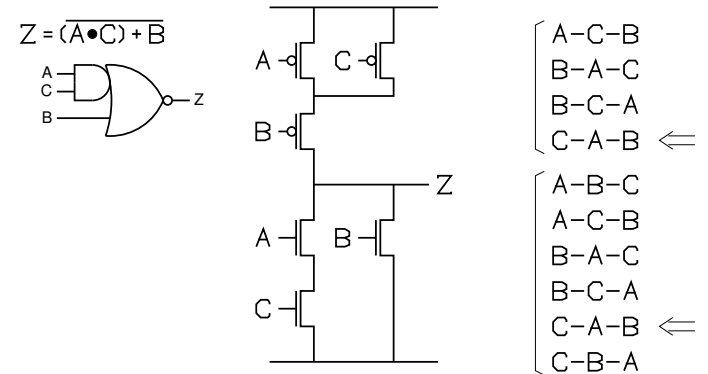
Euler Path

- For the majority of these gates we can find an arrangement of transistors such that we can butt adjoining transistors.
 - Careful selection of transistor ordering.
 - Careful orientation of transistor source and drain.
- Referred to as *line of diffusion*.



6002

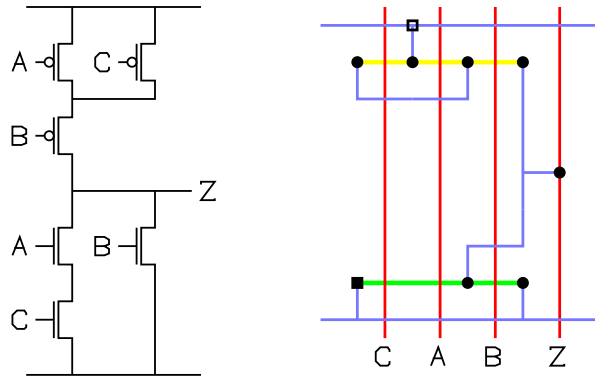
Finding an Euler Path



Here there are four possible Euler paths.

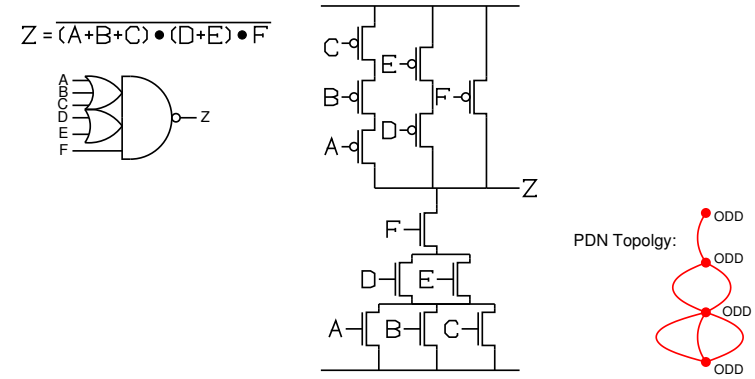
6004

Finding an Euler Path



6005

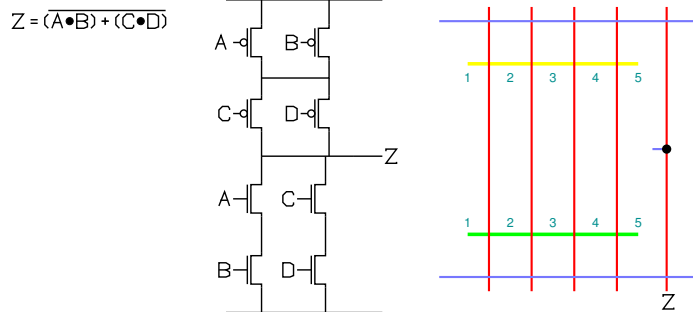
Finding an Euler Path



No possible path through n-transistors!

6007

Euler Path Example

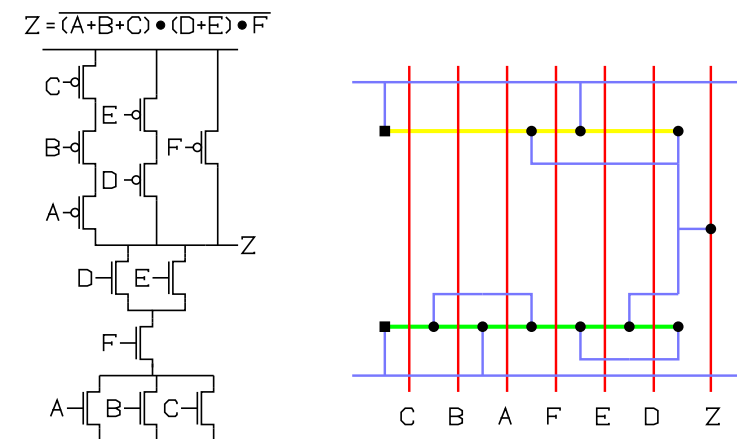


1. Find Euler path
 2. Label poly columns
 3. Route power nodes
 4. Route output node
 5. Route remaining nodes
 6. Add taps¹ for PMOS and NMOS
- A combined contact and tap, ■, may be used only where a power contact exists at the end of a line of diffusion. Where this is not the case a simple tap, ▣, should be used.

¹ tap is good for about 6 transistors – insufficient taps may leave a chip vulnerable to latch-up

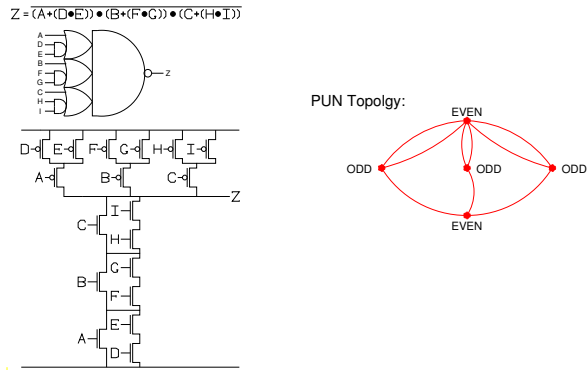
6006

Finding an Euler Path



6008

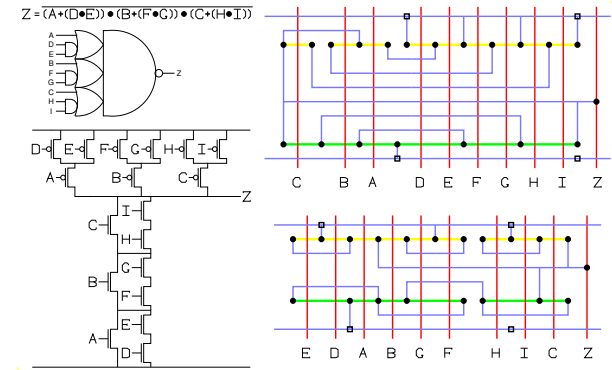
Finding an Euler Path



- No possible path through p-transistors.
- No re-arrangement will create a solution!

6009

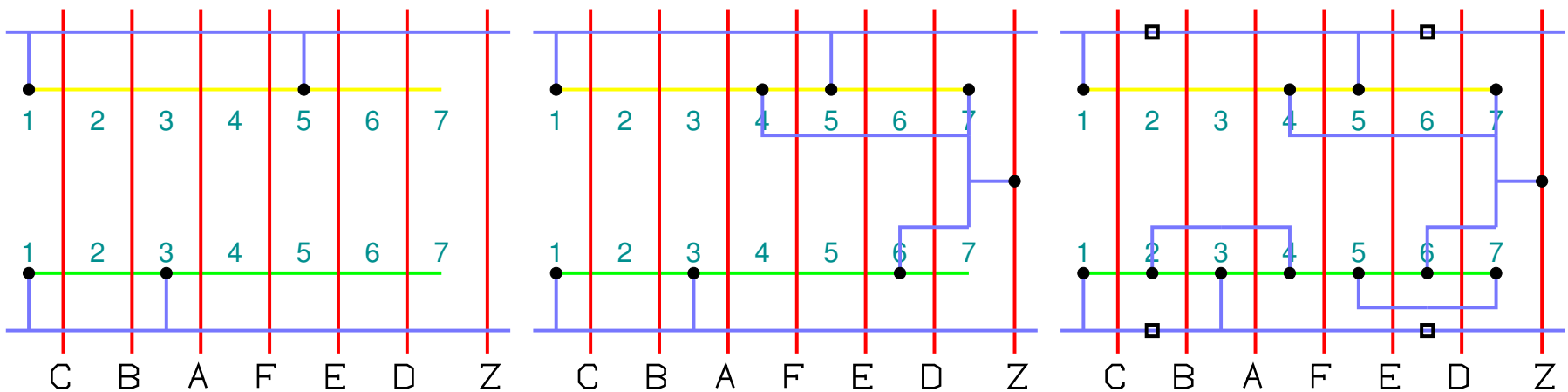
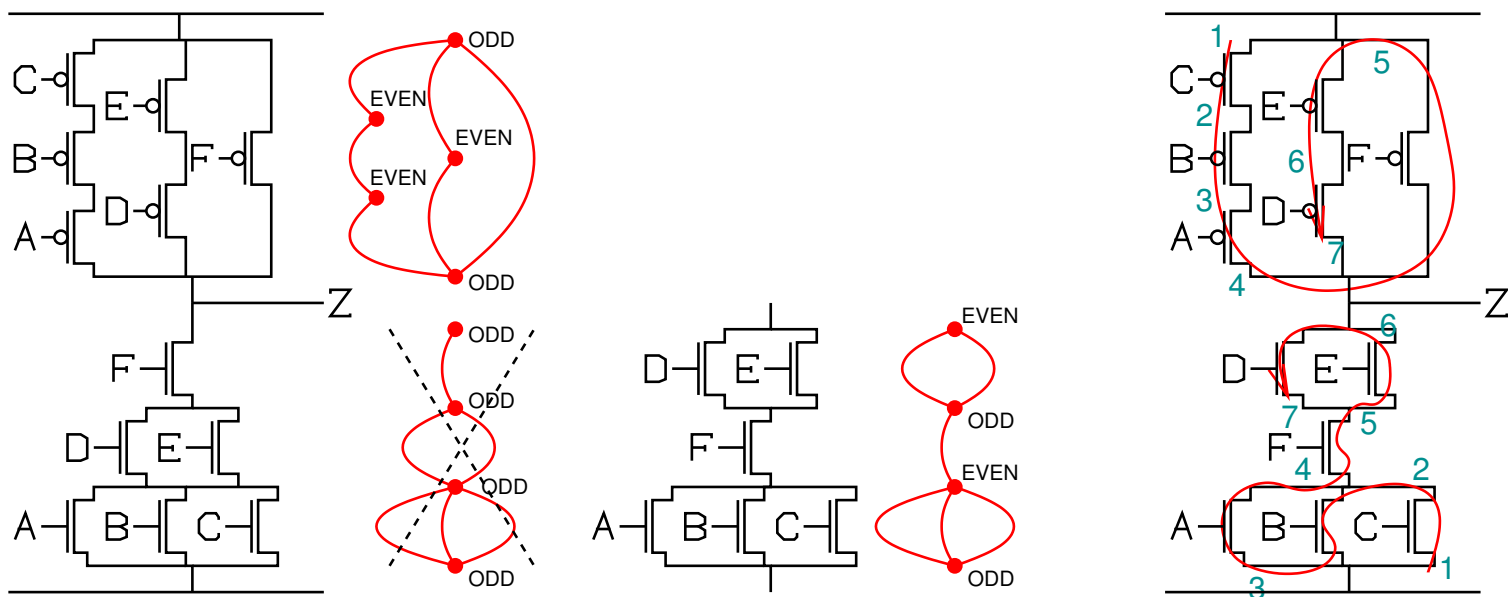
Philosophers vs. Engineers



- The philosopher is happy to prove that there is no Euler path to be found.
- The engineer will use *partial Euler paths* to reach the best solution.

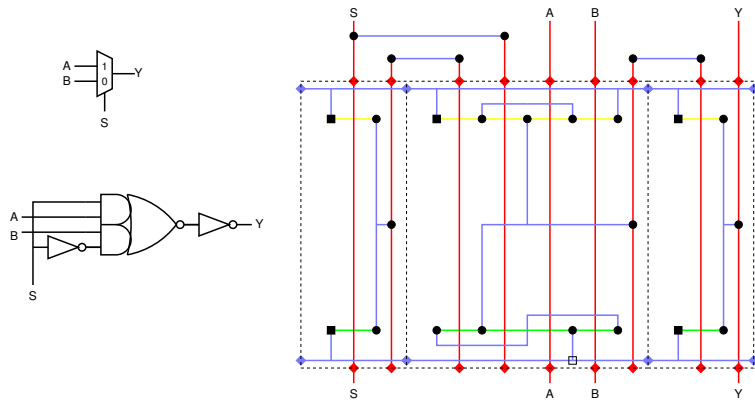
6010

Investigation of Euler paths leads to more efficient layout*



*not all gates will support a common Euler path for both PMOS and NMOS

Multiple gates



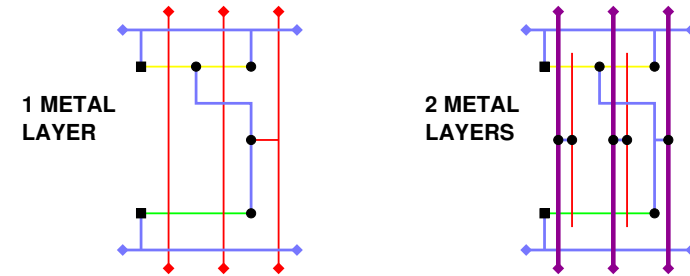
7001

Multiple gates

- Gates should all be of same height.
 - Power and ground rails will then line up when butted.
- All gate inputs and outputs are available at top and bottom.
 - All routing is external to cells.
 - Preserves the benefits of hierarchy.
- Interconnect is via *two conductor routing*.
 - In this case Polysilicon vertically and Metal horizontally.

7002

Two-layer Metal



Most modern VLSI processes support two or more metal layers.

The norm is to use only metal for inter-cell routing.

usually Metal1 for horizontal inter-cell routing (and for power rails)
 Metal2 for vertical inter-cell routing (and for cell inputs and outputs).

7003

Standard Cell Design

Many ICs are designed using the standard cell method.

- Cell Library Creation
 - A cell library, containing commonly used logic gates¹ is created for a process. This is often carried out by or on behalf of the foundry.
- ASIC² Design
 - The ASIC designer must design a circuit using the logic gates available in the library.
 - The ASIC designer usually has no access to the full layout of the standard cells and doesn't create any new cells for the library.
 - Layout work performed by the ASIC designer is divided into two stages:
 - Placement
 - Routing

¹note that a standard cell may include transistors from more than one basic function (e.g. NAND + inverter to give AND) but will normally be designed *flat* i.e. without layout hierarchy.

²Application Specific Integrated Circuit

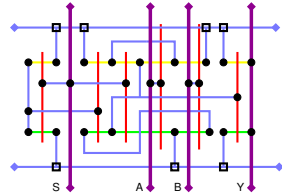
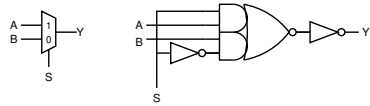
7004

Standard Cell Design

Choosing a set of cells for a cell library

- There is no set size for a cell library.
- Theoretically just one cell () or one type of cell (, , , ...) is sufficient for a cell library.
- The use of more complex cells allows for designs optimised for area and/or performance:

Multiplexer standard cell
(single cell – no hierarchy)

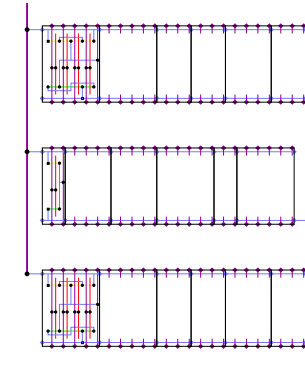


- Which basic gates; which compound gates; which sequential gates?
- Do we provide different versions of the same gate (e.g. small area version, high drive version)? If so, how many different versions?

7005

Placement & Routing

Placement

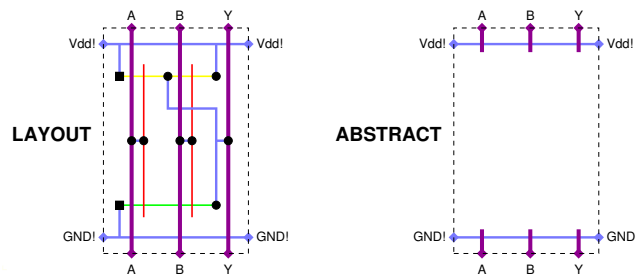


Cells are placed in one or several equal length lines with inter-digitated power and ground rails.

7007

Standard Cell Design

Layout and Abstract Views of a Standard Cell



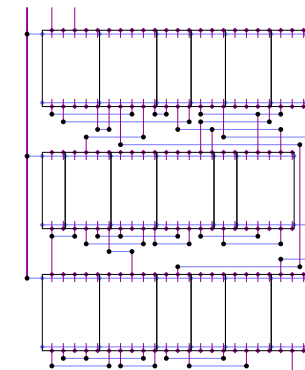
The partial cell layout usually given to the ASIC designer is known as a black box or *abstract* view. The abstract:

- must include cell ports and a cell boundary
- may include some or all of the metal mask information

7006

Placement & Routing

Routing



In the routing channels between the cells we route metal1 horizontally and metal2 vertically.

7008

Placement & Routing

Two conductor routing

- Conductor A for horizontal inter-cell routing³
- Conductor B for vertical inter-cell routing³
- This logical approach means that we should never have to worry about signals crossing. This makes life considerably easier for a computer (or even a human) to complete the routing.
- We must only ensure that two signals will not meet in the same horizontal or vertical channel.
- Computer algorithms can be used to ensure placement of cells such that wires are short.⁴
- Further computer algorithms can be used to optimize the routing itself.

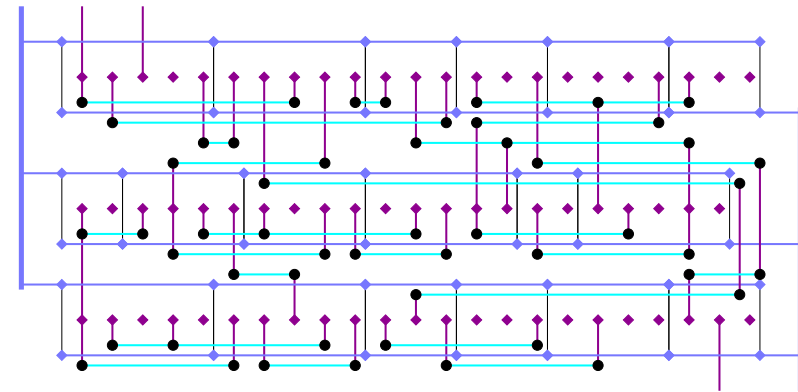
³In the two-metal example Conductor A is Metal1 and Conductor B is Metal2

⁴In VLSI circuits we often find that inter-cell wiring occupies more area than the cells themselves.

7009

Standard Cell Design

More Metal Layers



With this approach we can route safely over the cell to the specified pins leading to much smaller gaps between cell rows.

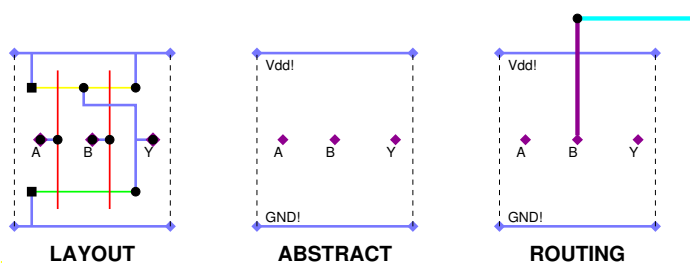
7011

Standard Cell Design

More Metal Layers

With three or more metal layers it is possible to take a different approach. The simplest example uses three metal layers.

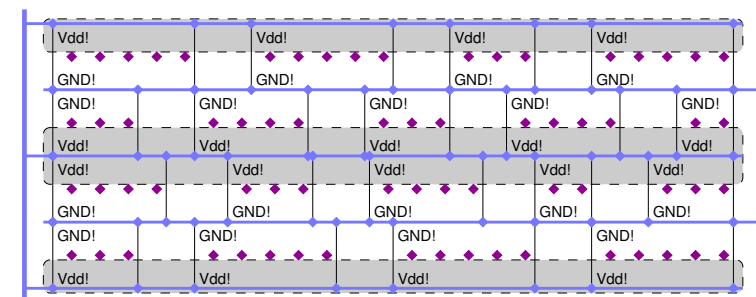
- Standard Cells
Use only metal1 except for I/O which is in metal2
- Two Conductor Routing
Uses metal2 and metal3



7010

Standard Cell Design

Alternative Placement Style

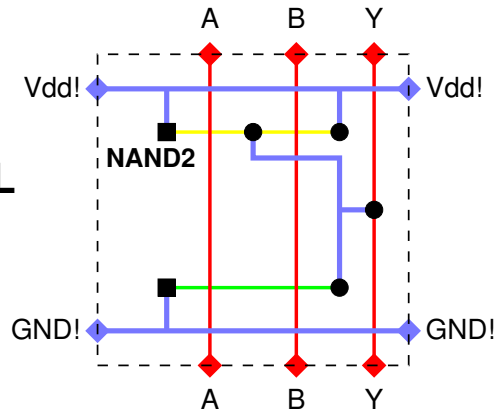


By flipping every second row it may be possible to eliminate gaps between rows. N-wells are merged and power or ground rails are shared. This approach is normally associated with sparse rows and non channel based routing algorithms.

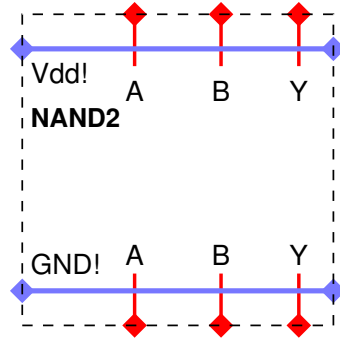
7012

1 METAL LAYER

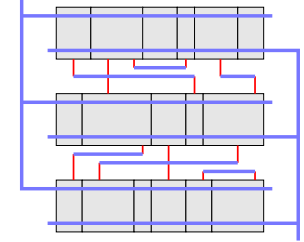
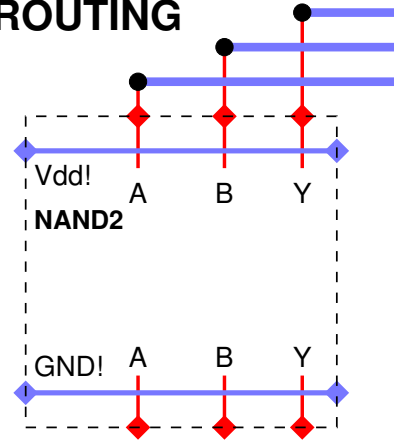
LAYOUT



ABSTRACT

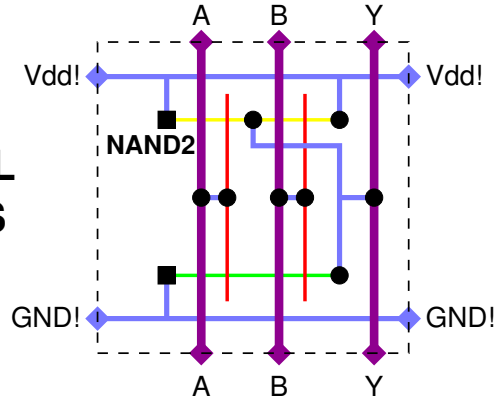


ROUTING

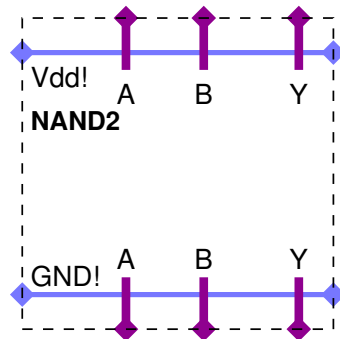


2 METAL LAYERS

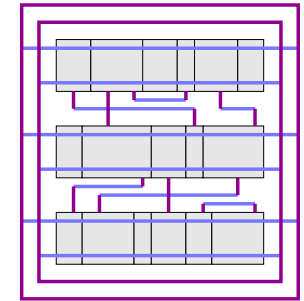
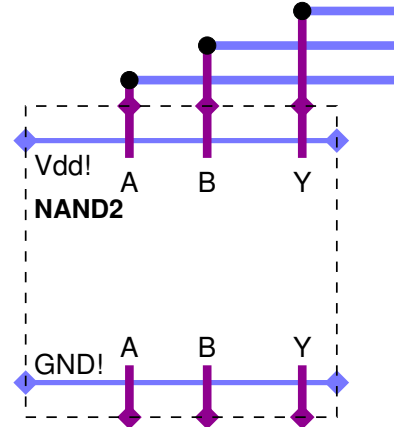
LAYOUT



ABSTRACT

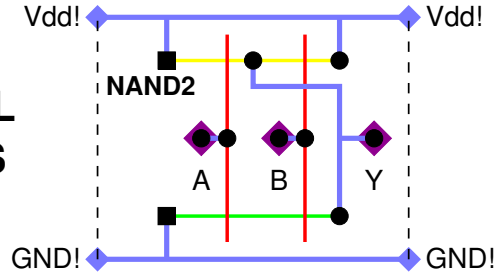


ROUTING

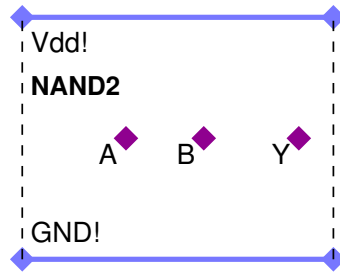


3 METAL LAYERS

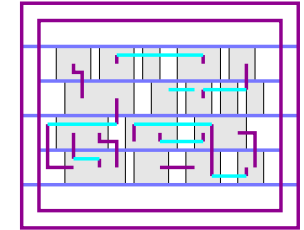
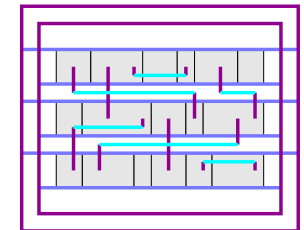
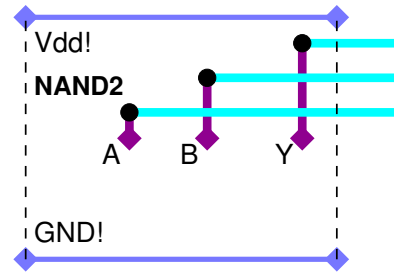
LAYOUT



ABSTRACT



ROUTING

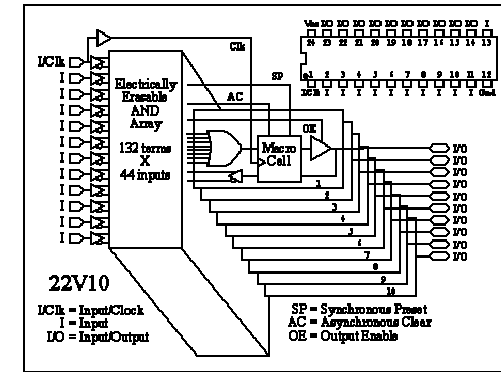


System Design Choices

- Programmable Logic
 - PLD
 - e.g. Lattice ispGAL22V10, Atmel ATF1502 CPLD
 - Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA)
 - e.g. Intel Cyclone V, Xilinx Artix-7/Zync-7000
- Semi-Custom Design
 - Mask Programmable Gate Array
 - e.g. ECS CMOS Gate Array
 - Intel HardCopy II structured ASICs
 - Standard Cell Design
 - e.g. AMS CORELIB 0.35 μ m cell library
- Full Custom Design

8001

Programmable Logic



ICT PEEL22CV10

Source: ICT

- One time use - Fuse programmable.
- Reprogrammable - UV/Electrically Erasable.

8003

System Design Choices

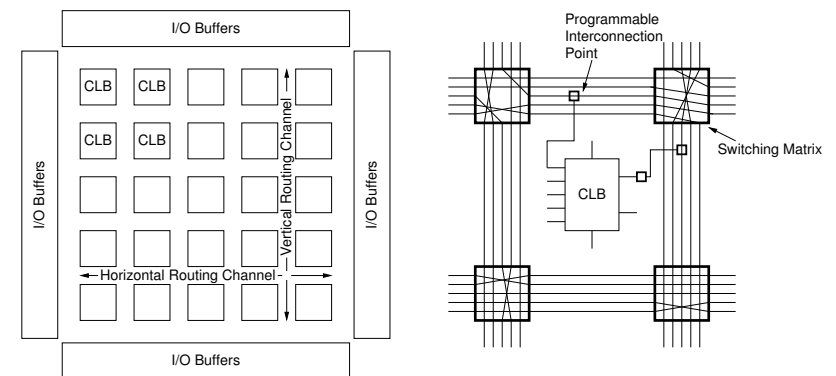
- Programmable Logic
 - Best possible design turnaround time
 - Cheapest for prototyping
 - Best time to market
 - Minimum skill required
- Semi-Custom Design
- Full Custom Design
 - Cheapest for mass production
 - Fastest
 - Lowest Power
 - Highest Density¹
 - Most skill required

START HERE

¹optimization limited by speed/power/area trade off

8002

Field Programmable Gate Array – Xilinx XC4000

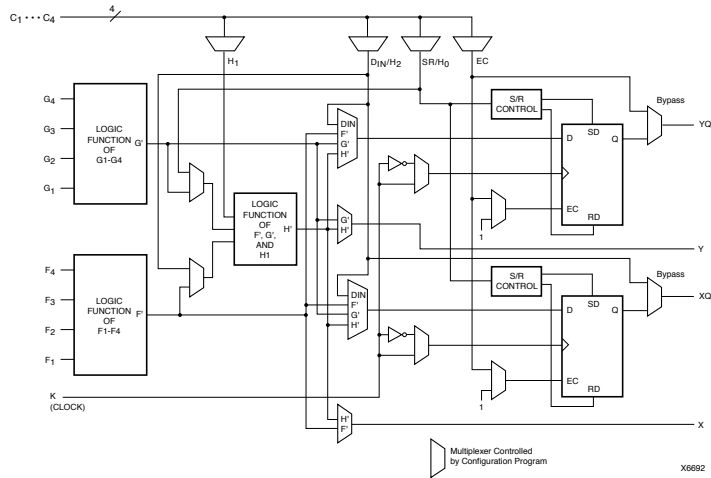


- Configurable Logic Blocks (CLBs) & I/O Blocks²
- Programmable Interconnect

²Xilinx XC4013 has 576 (24 × 24) CLBs and up to 192 (4 × 48) user I/O pins.

8004

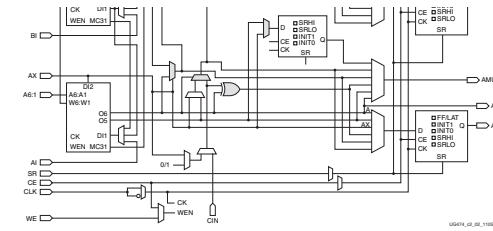
Field Programmable Gate Array – Xilinx XC4000 CLB



Source: Xilinx

8005

Xilinx Artix-7 – SLICEM CLB³



Source: Xilinx

- 4x 6-input Look-Up Tables (LUTs) for combinational logic
- Carry chain supporting fast carry lookahead
- 8x storage elements

LUTs can be alternatively configured as

- 256 bits RAM
- 32-bit shift register

³Xilinx XC7A200T has 16,825 CLBs (each containing 2 slices) and up to 500 user I/O pins.

8007

FPGA - System On Chip

Modern FPGAs are big enough for:

- One or more soft-core processors
- Program memory
- Data memory
- + specialist hardware

The new trend is for FPGAs with hard processors built in:

- Xilinx Zynq-7000 includes dual-core ARM A9
- Intel Cyclone V SE includes dual-core ARM A9
- Cypress PSoC 4 includes ARM Cortex-M0 and programmable digital⁴ and analog blocks

⁴here the digital block is PLD rather than FPGA

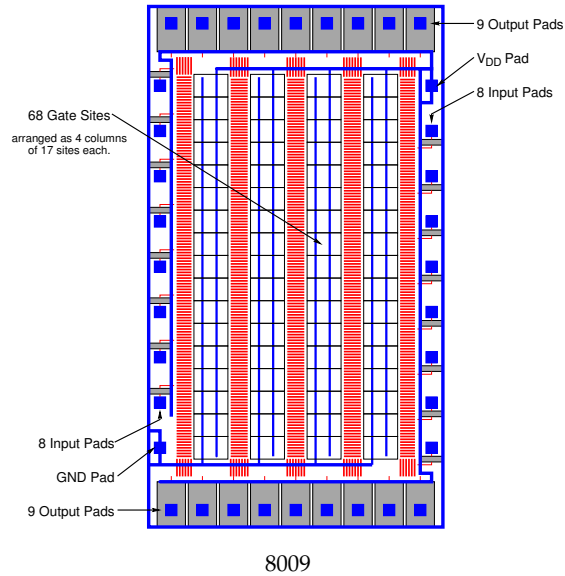
Artix-7 – SLICEM CLB

Source: Xilinx

8006

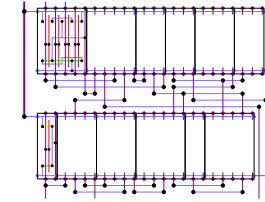
8008

Mask Programmable Gate Array



Standard Cell Design

- Logic Functions

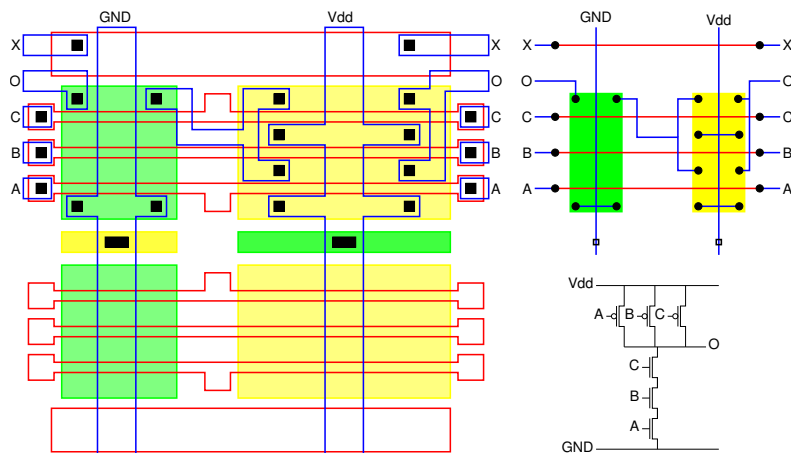


- Auto Generated Macro Blocks
 - PLA
 - ROM
 - RAM
- System Level Blocks
 - Microprocessor core⁵

⁵Will support System On Chip applications.

8011

Mask Programmable Gate Array



- Customize Metal and Contact Window masks only.

8010

Full Custom

All design styles need full custom designers

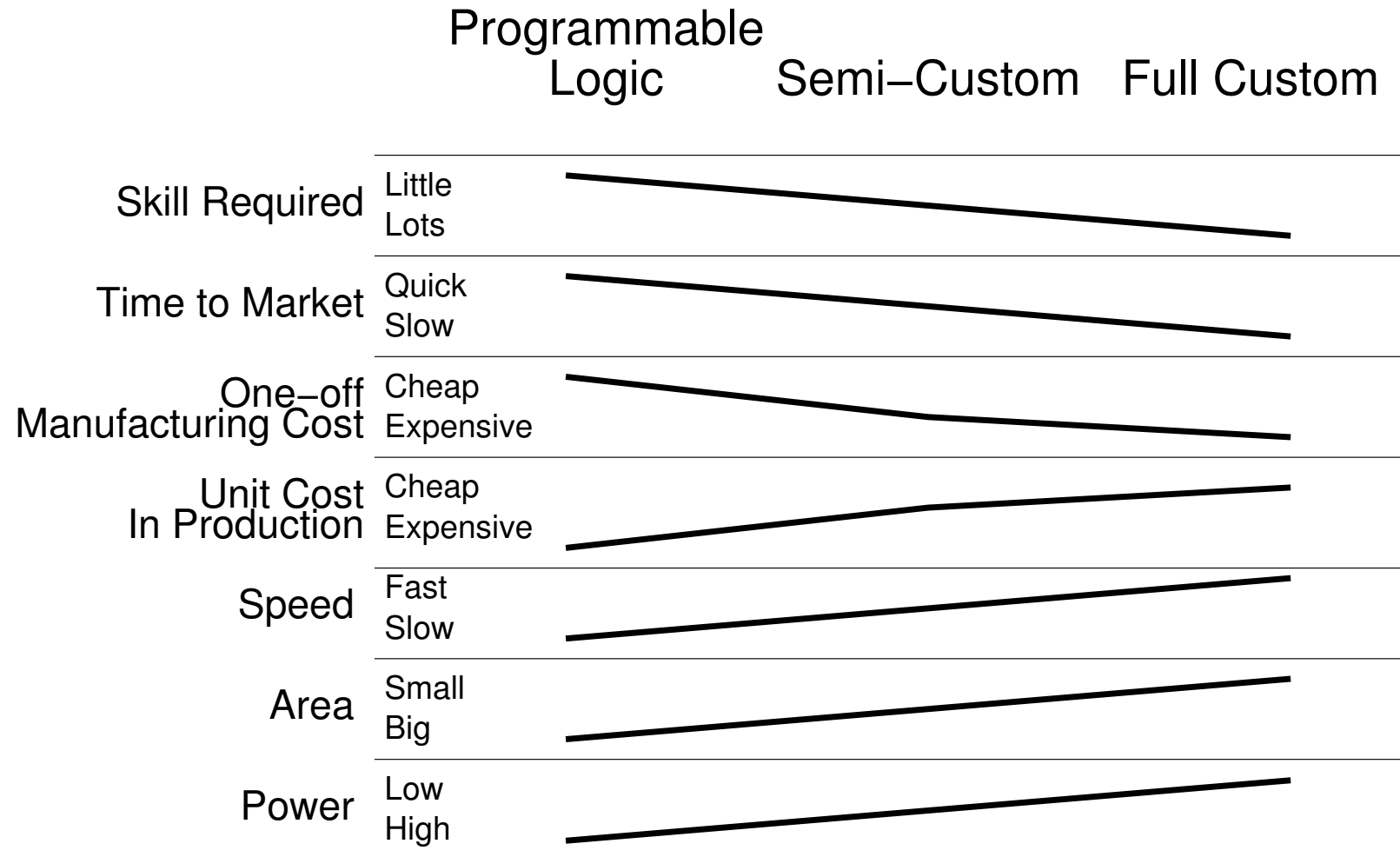
- to design the base programmable logic chips
- to design building blocks for semi-custom

Where large ASICs use full custom techniques they are likely to be used alongside semi-custom techniques.

e.g. Hand-held computer game chip

- Full custom bitslice datapath
hand crafted for optimum area efficiency and low power consumption
- Standard cell controller
- Macro block RAM, ROM

8012



All design styles need full custom designers

A large ASIC (especially SoC) may mix Semi-Custom and Full Custom