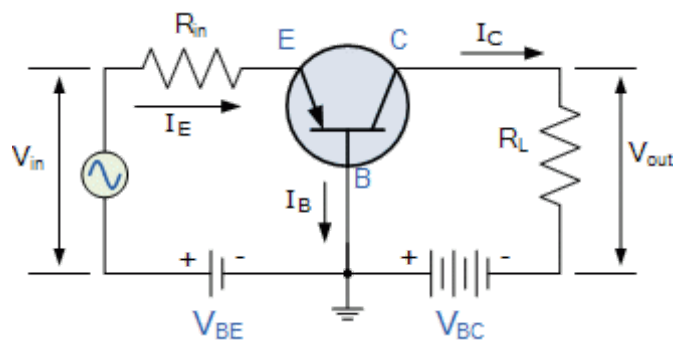




Register to download premium content!

Home / Transistors / Bipolar Transistor



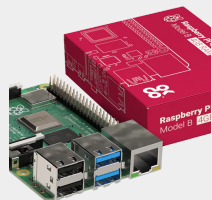
Bipolar Transistor

The Bipolar Junction Transistor is a semiconductor device which can be used for switching or amplification





In the diode tutorials we saw that simple diodes are made up from two pieces of semiconductor material to form a simple pn-junction and we also learnt about their properties and characteristics.



RASPBERRYPI4 4GB | 4 Model B

Raspberry Pi 4 Model B with board 4GB LPDDR4 SDRAM

[Buy from Arrow.com](#)

If we now join together two individual signal diodes back-to-back, this will give us two PN-junctions connected together in series which would share a common *Positive*, (P) or *Negative*, (N) terminal. The fusion of these two diodes produces a three layer, two junction, three terminal device forming the basis of a **Bipolar Junction Transistor**, or **BJT** for short.

Transistors are three terminal active devices made from different semiconductor materials that can act as either an insulator or a conductor by the application of a small signal voltage. The transistor's ability to change between these two states enables it to have two basic functions: "switching" (digital electronics) or "amplification" (analogue electronics). Then bipolar transistors have the ability to operate within three different regions:

- ✓ **Active Region** – the transistor operates as an amplifier and $I_c = \beta \cdot I_b$
- ✓ **Saturation** – the transistor is "Fully-ON" operating as a switch and $I_c = I(\text{saturation})$
- ✓ **Cut-off** – the transistor is "Fully-OFF" operating as a switch and $I_c = 0$

The word Transistor is a combination of the two words Transfer Varistor which describes their mode of operation way back in their early days of electronics development. There are two basic types of bipolar transistor construction, PNP and NPN,



from which they are made.

The **Bipolar Transistor** basic construction consists of two PN-junctions producing three connecting terminals with each terminal being given a name to identify it from the other two. These three terminals are known and labelled as the Emitter (E), the Base (B) and the Collector (C) respectively.

Bipolar Transistors are current regulating devices that control the amount of current flowing through them from the Emitter to the Collector terminals in proportion to the amount of biasing voltage applied to their base terminal, thus acting like a current-controlled switch. As a small current flowing into the base terminal controls a much larger collector current forming the basis of transistor action.

A Typical
Bipolar Transistor

The principle of operation of the two transistor types PNP and NPN, is exactly the same the only difference being in their biasing and the polarity of the power supply for each type.

Bipolar Transistor Construction



The construction and circuit symbols for both the PNP and NPN bipolar transistor are given above with the arrow in the circuit symbol always showing the direction of “conventional current flow” between the base terminal and its emitter terminal. The direction of the arrow always points from the positive P-type region to the negative N-type region for both transistor types, exactly the same as for the standard diode symbol.



As the Bipolar Transistor is a three terminal device, there are basically three possible ways to connect it within an electronic circuit with one terminal being common to both the input and output signals. Each method of connection responding differently to its input signal within a circuit as the static characteristics of the transistor vary with each circuit arrangement.

- ✓ Common Base Configuration – has Voltage Gain but no Current Gain.
- ✓ Common Emitter Configuration – has both Current and Voltage Gain.
- ✓ Common Collector Configuration – has Current Gain but no Voltage Gain.

The Common Base (CB) Configuration

As its name suggests, in the **Common Base** or grounded base configuration, the BASE connection is common to both the input signal AND the output signal. The input signal is applied between the transistors base and the emitter terminals, while the corresponding output signal is taken from between the base and the collector terminals as shown. The base terminal is grounded or can be connected to some fixed reference voltage point.

The input current flowing into the emitter is quite large as its the sum of both the base current and collector current respectively therefore, the collector current output is less than the emitter current input resulting in a current gain for this type of circuit of “1” (unity) or less, in other words the common base configuration “attenuates” the input signal.

The Common Base Transistor Circuit



This type of amplifier configuration is a non-inverting voltage amplifier circuit, in that the signal voltages V_{in} and V_{out} are “in-phase”. This type of transistor arrangement is not very common due to its unusually high voltage gain characteristics. Its input characteristics represent that of a forward biased diode while the output characteristics represent that of an illuminated photo-diode.

Also this type of bipolar transistor configuration has a high ratio of output to input resistance or more importantly “load” resistance (R_L) to “input” resistance (R_{in}) giving it a value of “Resistance Gain”. Then the voltage gain (A_v) for a common base configuration is therefore given as:

Common Base Voltage Gain



Where: I_c/I_e is the current gain, α (α) and R_L/R_{in} is the resistance gain.



frequency (Hz) amplifiers due to its very good high-frequency response.

The Common Emitter (CE) Configuration

In the **Common Emitter** or grounded emitter configuration, the input signal is applied between the base and the emitter, while the output is taken from between the collector and the emitter as shown. This type of configuration is the most commonly used circuit for transistor based amplifiers and which represents the “normal” method of bipolar transistor connection.

The common emitter amplifier configuration produces the highest current and power gain of all the three bipolar transistor configurations. This is mainly because the input impedance is LOW as it is connected to a forward biased PN-junction, while the output impedance is HIGH as it is taken from a reverse biased PN-junction.

The Common Emitter Amplifier Circuit



In this type of configuration, the current flowing out of the transistor must be equal to the currents flowing into the transistor as the emitter current is given as $I_e = I_c + I_b$.

As the load resistance (R_L) is connected in series with the collector, the current gain of the common emitter transistor configuration is quite large as it is the ratio of I_c/I_b . A transistor's current gain is given the Greek symbol of Beta, (β).

As the emitter current for a common emitter configuration is defined as $I_e = I_c + I_b$, the ratio of I_c/I_e is called Alpha, given the Greek symbol of α . Note: that the value of Alpha will always be less than unity.

Since the electrical relationship between these three currents, I_b , I_c and I_e is determined by the physical construction of the transistor itself, any small change in the base current (I_b), will result in a much larger change in the collector current (I_c).

Then, small changes in current flowing in the base will thus control the current in the emitter-collector circuit. Typically, Beta has a value between 20 and 200 for most general purpose transistors. So if a transistor has a Beta value of say 100, then one electron will flow from the base terminal for every 100 electrons flowing between the emitter-collector terminal.



therefore the current gain of the transistor can be given as.



Where: “ I_c ” is the current flowing into the collector terminal, “ I_b ” is the current flowing into the base terminal and “ I_e ” is the current flowing out of the emitter terminal.

Then to summarise a little. This type of bipolar transistor configuration has a greater input impedance, current and power gain than that of the common base configuration but its voltage gain is much lower. The common emitter configuration is an inverting amplifier circuit. This means that the resulting output signal has a 180° phase-shift with regards to the input voltage signal.

The Common Collector (CC) Configuration



the collector terminal is common to both the input and the output. The input signal is connected directly to the base terminal, while the output signal is taken from across the emitter load resistor as shown. This type of configuration is commonly known as a **Voltage Follower** or **Emitter Follower** circuit.

The common collector, or emitter follower configuration is very useful for impedance matching applications because of its very high input impedance, in the region of hundreds of thousands of Ohms while having a relatively low output impedance.

The Common Collector Transistor Circuit

The common emitter configuration has a current gain approximately equal to the β value of the transistor itself. However in the common collector configuration, the load resistance is connected in series with the emitter terminal so its current is equal to that of the emitter current.

As the emitter current is the combination of the collector AND the base current combined, the load resistance in this type of transistor configuration also has both the collector current and the input current of the base flowing through it. Then the



The Common Collector Current Gain



This type of bipolar transistor configuration is a non-inverting circuit in that the signal voltages of V_{in} and V_{out} are “in-phase”. The common collector configuration has a voltage gain of about “1” (unity gain). Thus it can be considered as a voltage-buffer since the voltage gain is unity.

The load resistance of the common collector transistor receives both the base and collector currents giving a large current gain (as with the common emitter configuration) therefore, providing good current amplification with very little voltage gain.



Relationships between the transistor's individual DC currents flowing through each leg and its DC current gains given above in the following table.

Relationship between DC Currents and Gains

Note that although we have looked at *NPN Bipolar Transistor* configurations here, PNP transistors are just as valid to use in each configuration as the calculations will all be the same, as for the non-inverting of the amplified signal. The only difference will be in the voltage polarities and current directions.

Bipolar Transistor Summary



and produces different circuit characteristics with regards to input impedance, output impedance and gain whether this is voltage gain, current gain or power gain and this is summarised in the table below.

Bipolar Transistor Configurations

with the generalised characteristics of the different transistor configurations given in the following table:

Characteristic	Common Base	Common Emitter	Common Collector
Input Impedance	Low	Medium	High
Output Impedance	Very High	High	Low
Phase Shift	0°	180°	0°
Voltage Gain	High	Medium	Low
Current Gain	Low	Medium	High
Power Gain	Low	Very High	Medium



emitter configuration as an amplifier as this is the most widely used configuration due to its flexibility and high gain. We will also plot the output characteristics curves commonly associated with amplifier circuits as a function of the collector current to the base current.



Next
NPN Transistor



447 Comments



Join the conversation



☐ Notify me of follow-up comments by email.

SUBMIT

Norah jepkogei

The calculations and explanations are okey and understandable

Posted on November 30th 2021 | 5:41 pm

← Reply



Iam biomedical eneenring

Posted on October 31st 2021 | 6:20 pm

 Reply

Ajeet Kumar Meena

circuit

Posted on September 16th 2021 | 3:37 am

 Reply

Ochor Wisdom

MOSFET

Posted on September 08th 2021 | 8:57 am

 Reply

Aisha abdullahi Mohammed

Common collector



Mubin

Hhvv

Posted on August 14th 2021 | 3:23 am

← Reply

Zahraddeen

So what about resistors connected in a circuit?

Posted on July 28th 2021 | 5:37 am

← Reply

Wayne Storr

So read the tutorial section about “resistors connected in a circuit”

Posted on July 28th 2021 | 5:32 pm

← Reply



The three type of configurations are totally unclear. They have nothing common other than the called “common base/emitter/collector” doesn’t have a resistor in the schematics. Probably the term common is misleading.

Posted on July 19th 2021 | 6:41 am

← Reply

junk

that f***ked me up for a while too but theyre using the term “common” as another name for ground...

Posted on November 08th 2021 | 10:28 pm

← Reply

More

Chris

Given that the collector current of an NPN transistor is 500mA and the base current is. Calculate for the transistor

- 1)Its emitter current.
- 2)Its common base configuration gain.
- 3)Its common collector configuration gain.

Posted on July 16th 2021 | 11:25 pm

← Reply



Zetareem Kassanun

This note is very interesting. I wonder if you add more notes on this topic.

Posted on July 16th 2021 | 6:30 pm

← Reply

Samuel Sokpo

I Like it

Posted on June 16th 2021 | 3:28 pm

← Reply

Mahadeb

Good

Posted on June 12th 2021 | 7:17 am

← Reply

Gireesh



Posted on June 11th 2021 | 10:54 am

← Reply

Kibet Brian Chepkwony

Very usefull

Posted on June 08th 2021 | 6:13 am

← Reply

Krishna

Very helpful .

Thank you!!!👍

Posted on May 29th 2021 | 4:49 am

← Reply

Jeetendrakumar kushwaha

Very useful



Abdul Aziz maliha adeola

It was amazing The note was well explain

Posted on April 27th 2021 | 4:24 am

← Reply

LEW WAN LING

Usefull!

Posted on April 01st 2021 | 8:55 am

← Reply

Bijoy Dasmahanta

Excellent

Posted on March 15th 2021 | 3:49 pm

← Reply



Scratchpad

More calculation are needed

Posted on March 07th 2021 | 10:29 am

← Reply

[View More](#)

Read more Tutorials in Transistors

- ▶ 1. Bipolar Transistor
 - 2. NPN Transistor
 - 3. PNP Transistor
 - 4. Transistor as a Switch
 - 5. Junction Field Effect Transistor
 - 6. The MOSFET
 - 7. MOSFET as a Switch
 - 8. Transistor Tutorial Summary
 - 9. Darlington Transistors
 - 10. FET Current Source
 - 11. Open Collector Outputs



Open Collector Outputs

Open Collector Outputs are very useful for switching incompatible loads but may require a pull-up or pull-down [\[...\]](#)

FET Current Source

FET constant current sources use JFETs and MOSFETs to deliver a load current which remains constant despite [\[...\]](#)



DATASHEETS

LOOKING FOR

DATASHEETS?





[Contact Us](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

ASPENCORE NETWORK

[EBN](#)

[EE Times](#)

[Electronic Products](#)

[Embedded](#)

[ElectroSchematics](#)

[Datasheets.com](#)

[IoT Times](#)

GLOBAL NETWORK

[EE Times Asia](#)

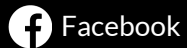
[EE Times India](#)

[EE Times Taiwan](#)

[EDN China](#)

[EDN Japan](#)

CONNECT WITH US



[Contact Sales](#)

[Media Guide Request](#)

[EDN](#)

[EEWeb](#)

[Power Electronics News](#)

[Planet Analog](#)

[TechOnline](#)

[Electronics Know How](#)

[EE Times China](#)

[EE Times Japan](#)

[EDN Asia](#)

[EDN Taiwan](#)

[ESM China](#)

