

Multi-Stage Tuned Amplifier

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1 Objective

To compare the operation of common-emitter and common-base tuned amplifier stages, and to design and characterize a multi-stage, high-gain IF amplifier for 10 MHz operation with 50Ω input and output impedances.

2 Principles of Operation

Tuned amplifiers are critical for electronic communications because they increase the power of desired signal but reject other frequencies as noise. At 10 MHz, a tuned amplifier could be used with an antenna to receive HF amateur radio from the other side of the world ¹, or could be used in a computer to receive 10Base-T ethernet.

There are three possible circuit configurations for bipolar junction transistors (BJT) biased in forward-active mode, based on which terminals are used for input, output, and common reference.

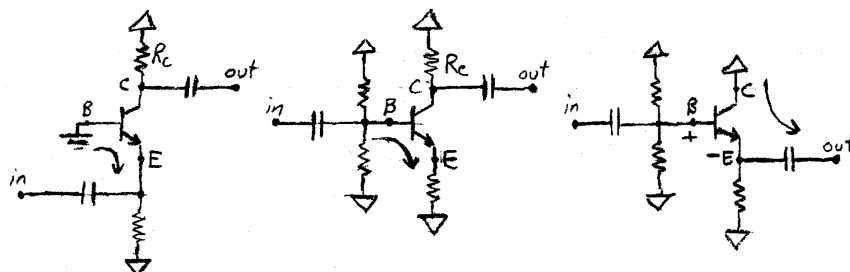


Figure 1: Common-base (left), common-emitter (middle), and common-collector (right) configurations for BJT amplifiers.

Each configuration has its tradeoffs. The common-base (CB) configuration is a good current buffer, with $A_i \approx 1$ and low input impedance. The common-emitter (CE) configuration offers the best overall power gain, but A_v and A_i may vary with loadings. The common-collector configuration is a good voltage buffer ($A_v \approx 1$) with low output impedance.

The three configurations can be cascaded together to gain the benefits of each. If cascaded in the order shown in figure 1, from left-to-right, the resulting 3-stage broadband amplifier would have low input impedance, good power gain, and minimal output impedance.

A slight modification to the CE and CB configurations in figure 1 can apply a filter to the broadband amplifier; tuning the gain to a narrow frequency set by a tank circuit.

Because BJTs are minority carrier devices, they act as current amplifiers without being strongly affected by voltage. For the two configurations where the output is at the collector (CB and CE), the BJT acts like a dependent current source feeding the output load and the biasing resistance R_C . As a result, the voltage gain for these configurations is determined primarily by how difficult it is for the collector current to reach ground; $A_v \propto R_C || R_L$.

One can take advantage of the collector current's obstinance by replacing R_C with an impedance that varies with frequency. Using an inductor and a capacitor in parallel provides a short circuit to ground for both DC and high frequency currents. Additionally, at the LC circuit's resonant frequency, the net impedance $\rightarrow \infty$ due to power oscillating between the two. ² The result is a narrow bandpass filter at the resonant frequency, where $Z_C \rightarrow \infty$.

¹10 MHz waves can traverse the curve of the earth because they get reflected by charged particles in the ionosphere, called ionospheric skip propagation.

²For this reason, an $L||C$ circuit is called a tank circuit.

3 Theory

3.1 Common-Base Broadband Amplifier

The basic circuit for an single stage, common-base (CB) amplifier is shown in figure 2. The base terminal is grounded and the input signal passes through the BJT from emitter to collector. In this configuration, the BJT acts like a current buffer, where the input current is repeated at the output regardless of the load.

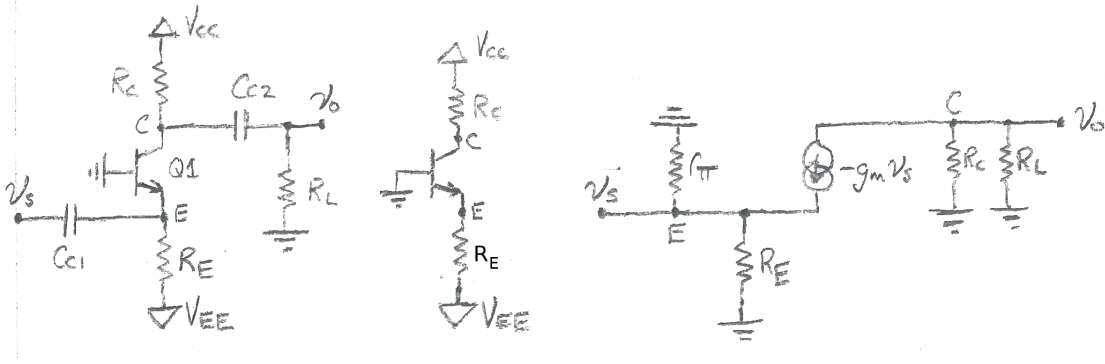


Figure 2: Basic circuit for a common-base broadband amplifier (left), its DC large signal (middle) equivalent, and AC small signal equivalent (right).

Two DC power rails are needed to bias the BJT in forward-active mode. A positive supply holds the collector reverse biased relative to the base which, at ground, is forward biased relative to the negative supplied emitter. Quiescent point analysis of the common-base is easy because the voltage is pinned at every node.

$$I_{EQ} = \frac{-V_{BE(on)} - V_{EE}}{R_E} \quad (1)$$

$$r_\pi = \frac{V_{th}}{I_{BQ}} = \frac{V_{th}(\beta + 1)R_E}{-V_{BE(on)} - V_{EE}} \quad (2)$$

$$g_m = \frac{\beta}{r_\pi} = \frac{\alpha(-V_{BE(on)} - V_{EE})}{V_{th}R_E} \quad (3)$$

The hybrid- π model for small signal AC modeling is shown in the right pane of figure 2. Applying Kirchoff's current law at node E can be used to find the input resistance.

$$\text{KCL @ E:} \quad i_s - \frac{v_s}{r_\pi} - \frac{v_s}{R_E} - g_m v_s = 0$$

$$i_s = v_s \left[\frac{1}{R_\pi} + \frac{1}{R_E} + g_m \right]$$

$$i_s = v_s \left[\frac{R_E + r_\pi + g_m r_\pi R_E}{r_\pi R_E} \right]$$

$$\frac{v_s}{i_s} = \frac{r_\pi R_E}{R_E + r_\pi + g_m r_\pi R_E}$$

$$R_{in} = \frac{r_\pi}{\beta + 1 + \frac{r_\pi}{r_E}} \quad (4)$$

Applying KCL at the collector can be used to calculate the voltage gain of a single common-base stage.

$$-g_m v_s + \frac{v_o}{R_L} + \frac{v_o}{R_C} = 0$$

$$v_o \left[\frac{R_L + R_C}{R_L R_C} \right] = g_m v_s$$

$$A_v = \frac{g_m R_L R_C}{R_L + R_C} \quad (5)$$

3.2 Coupling Capacitors

The coupling capacitors, labeled C_{Cx} , isolate each stage from direct currents but provide a low impedance path for the AC signal. Taken together, they should form a sharp high-pass filter with its corner frequency below 1000 Hz. The 3dB corner occurs when half the signal power is dissipated in the capacitor and half in the stage's input. This occurs when $Z_{Cc} = Z_{in}$.

$$\frac{1}{|j\omega C|} = R_{in}$$

$$C_C \geq \frac{159.15 \mu F * \Omega}{R_{in}} \quad (6)$$

3.3 Tank Circuits

No inductor is ideal. The quality of an inductor is defined by the ratio of the impedance and resistance of the discrete element.

$$Q = \frac{X_L}{R_S} \quad \text{where} \quad Z_L = R_S + jX_L$$

The series resistance R_S is due to the resistivity of the wire and the length used to wrap the coil. Furthermore, the impedance X_L is not 100% inductive; there is a distributed capacitance C_D between the surfaces of the tightly wrapped wire. The circuit model for an inductor is shown in the left pane of figure 3.

As a consequence of the distributed capacitance, every inductor will have a self resonant frequency f_0 , at which the energy entering the tank will oscillate between the inductor and capacitor instead of passing through.

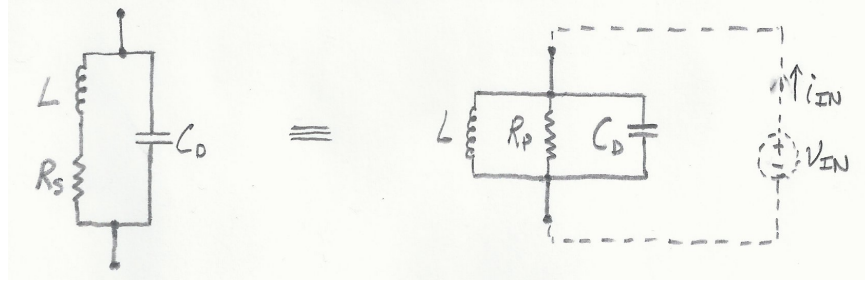


Figure 3: Circuit model for a non-ideal inductor (left) and its parallel equivalent circuit (right).

Sometimes the parallel equivalent of the imperfect L model is more convenient. If the quality is greater than 5 the conversion is easy:

$$Q = \frac{X_L}{R_s} = \frac{R_p}{X_L} \quad (7)$$

The self resonance frequency occurs when the net impedance is greatest. Applying Kirchoff's current law to the parallel model...

$$|I_{in}| = \frac{|V_{in}|}{\sqrt{(j\omega L + 1/j\omega C)^2 + R_p^2}}$$

$$|Z_L| = \sqrt{R_p^2 - \left(\omega L - \frac{1}{\omega C}\right)^2} \quad (8)$$

One can see that Z_L will reach its peak when:

$$\left(\omega L - \frac{1}{\omega C}\right) = 0$$

Therefore, the maximum impedance of a tank circuit is:

$$|Z_L|_{max} = R_p \quad \text{when} \quad f_0 = \frac{1}{2\pi\sqrt{LC}} \quad (9)$$

4 Design and Simulation

4.1 Specifications

4.2 Tank Circuits

Two inductors were wound with 22 turns. Their inductance and quality were measured using a Hewlett-Packard 4342A Q Meter. An appropriate discrete capacitor and trimming capacitor were selected for both to obtain a tank circuit with resonance at 10 MHz. The fixed capacitors were soldered to their inductors in parallel.

The soldered LC circuit were breadboarded in parallel with a trimming capacitor and tuned. Then, the breadboarded tank circuit was measured for net capacitance, resonance

frequency, and quality using the HP Q Meter. The method for this measurement is attached in appendix 5.1.

The results of these measurements are shown in table 1

Table 1: Quality & Other Measurements of Tank Circuits

	L (meas.)	Q_L (meas.)	C_{fixed} (nominal val.)	C_{trim} (datasheet)	C_d (meas.)	f_0 (meas.)	Q_{tank} (meas.)	R_p (calc.)
1	$4.2\mu H$	90	$33 pF$	$5-35 pF$	$55 pF$	$13.3 MHz$	85.5	$2.18 k\Omega$
2								

4.3 Common-Base Stage

The first stage must be a common-base amplifier in order to achieve low input resistance. The emitter resistance must be chosen to achieve desirable input resistance and voltage gain.

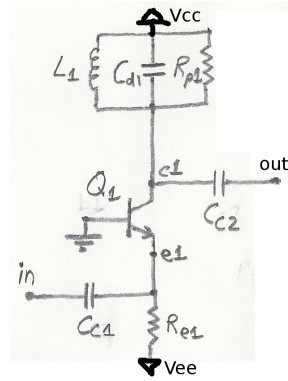


Figure 4: Common-base stage with SPICE netlist labels.

It is clear that R_{in} is strongly related to r_π from equation 4. Substituting equation 2 for r_π into equation 4 yields

$$R_{in} = \frac{-V_{th}R_E}{V_{BE(on)} + V_{EE}} \quad \text{or} \quad \left(R_E = \frac{R_{in}(-V_{BE(on)} - V_{EE})}{V_{th}} \right)$$

Using the specified value for V_{EE} and R_{in} , and typical values for V_{th} and $V_{BE(on)}$, the emitter resistance should be

$$R_E = \frac{50\Omega(-0.7V + 12V)}{0.0259V} = 21.8k\Omega$$

5 Appendices

5.1 HP 4342A Q Meter

The following 3 pages are taken from the HP 4342A Q Meter Operating and Service Manual, pages 35-37.

3-39. Inductance Measurement (at a desired frequency).

3-40. Occasionally it may be necessary to measure inductance at frequencies other than the specific "L" frequencies. The frequency characteristic measurements of an inductor or of an inductor core are representative examples. In such instances, the inductance may be measured as follows:

- a. Connect unknown inductor and resonate it using the procedure same as described in Q Measurement (para. 3-34) steps a through e.
- b. Note FREQUENCY dial, L/C dial C scale and ΔC dial readings. Substitute these values in the following equation:

$$L = 1/\omega^2 C \approx 0.0253/f^2 C \text{ (eq. 3-5)}$$

Where, L: inductance value (indicated L) of sample in henries.
 f: measurement frequency in hertz.
 ω : 2π times the measurement frequency.
 C: sum of C and ΔC dial readings in farads.

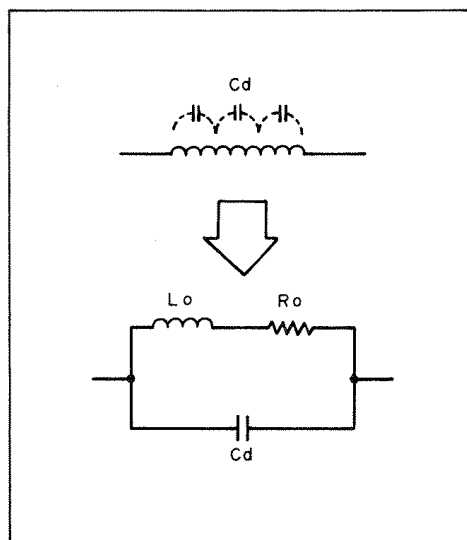


Figure 3-8. Distributed Capacitance Circuit Model.

3-41. MEASUREMENTS REQUIRING CORRECTIONS.**3-42. Effects of Distributed Capacitance.**

3-43. The presence of distributed capacitances in a sample influences Q meter indications with a factor that is related to both its capacity and the measurement frequency. Considerations for the distributed capacitances in an inductor may be equivalently expressed as shown in Figure 3-8. In the low frequency region, the impedance of the distributed capacitance C_d is extremely high and has negligible effect on the resonating circuit. Thus, the sample measured has an inductance of L_o , an equivalent series resistance of R_o , and a Q value of $\omega L_o/R_o$ (where, ω is 2π times the measurement frequency). In the high frequency region, the inductor develops a parallel resonance with the distributed capacitance and the impedance of the sample increases at frequencies near the resonant frequency. Therefore, readings for measured inductances will be higher as the measurement frequency gets closer to the self-resonant frequency. Additionally, at parallel resonance, the equivalent series resistance is substantially increased (this is because, at resonance, the impedance of the sample changes from reactive to resistive because of the phase shift in the measurement current) and the measured Q value reading is lower than that determined by $\omega L_o/R_o$. Typical variations of Q and inductance values under these conditions are given in Figure 3-9.

3-44. Ratio of the measurement frequency and the self-resonant frequency can be converted to a distributed capacitance and tuning capacitance relationship with the following equation:

$$f_1/f_o = \sqrt{C_d/(C + C_d)} \text{ (eq. 3-6)}$$

Where, f_1 : measurement frequency.
 f_o : self-resonant frequency of sample.
 C_d : distributed capacitance of sample.
 C: tuning capacitance of Q meter.

Figure 3-10 graphically shows the variation of measured Q and inductance as capacitance is taken for the parameter. The ideal inductance and Q values in the presence of no distributed capacitance (or when it is negligible) are correlated with the actually measured values by correction factors which correspond to readings along the vertical axis scales in Figures 3-9 and 3-10.

Measurements Requiring Corrections

3-45. Measuring Distributed Capacitance
(Preferred Method).

3-46. The impedance of a coil at its self-resonant frequency is resistive and usually high. This characteristic may be utilized for measuring distributed capacitance. Proceed as follows:

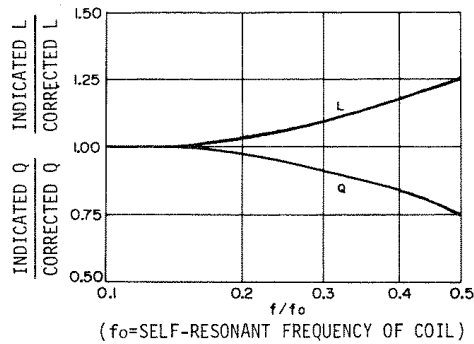


Figure 3-9. Typical Variation of Effective Q and Inductance with Frequency.

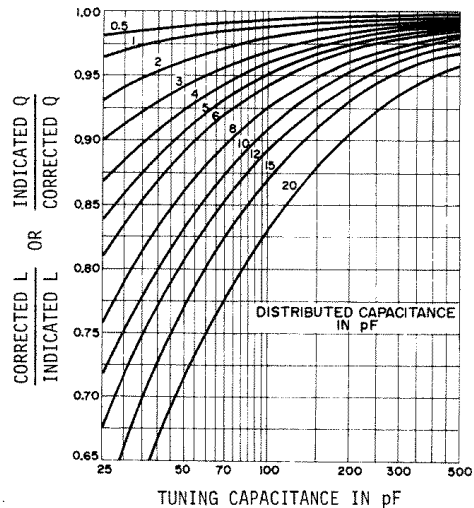


Figure 3-10. Correction Chart for Distributed Capacitance.

- a. Connect inductor sample to be tested to the 4342A measurement COIL (HI and LO) terminals.
- b. Set L/C dial control to approximately 400pF and ΔC dial control to 0pF. Note C dial reading as C_1 .
- c. Depress a trial FREQUENCY RANGE button and rotate FREQUENCY dial to search for the frequency at which panel Q meter shows a maximum deflection. If no peak deflection can be observed, change FREQUENCY RANGE setting and repeat the procedure.
- d. Adjust FREQUENCY dial control for maximum Q meter deflection. Note the dial frequency reading as f_1 .
- e. Set measurement frequency to approximately ten times the frequency f_1 noted in step d.
- f. Replace the inductor sample with a stable coil (16470 series supplemental inductor) capable of resonating in the measuring circuit at this higher frequency.
- g. Adjust the L/C dial control for maximum Q meter deflection.
- h. Connect the test inductor to the measurement CAPACITOR (HI and GND) terminals.
- i. Adjust the L/C dial control for again obtaining maximum Q meter deflection. If the L/C dial control has to be rotated in the direction of higher capacitance, increase the measurement frequency. If it has to be rotated towards a lower capacitance, decrease the frequency.
- j. Alternately connect and disconnect the test inductor to/from the CAPACITOR terminals and adjust the FREQUENCY dial control (if necessary, change FREQUENCY RANGE setting) until the influence of the test inductor to tuning conditions is non-existent (indicated Q value may change). Note dial frequency reading as f_0 . This frequency is identical with the self resonant frequency of the inductor.
- k. Distributed capacitance of the inductor sample is given by the following equation. Substitute measured values of C_1 , f_0 , and f_1 in the equation:

Measurements Requiring Corrections

$$C_d = \frac{C_1}{\left(\frac{f_0}{f_1}\right)^2 - 1} \dots\dots\dots (\text{eq. 3-7})$$

Where, C_d : distributed capacitance in farads.

C_1 : C dial reading (farads) noted in step h.

f_0 : measurement frequency (hertz) noted in step j.

f_1 : measurement frequency (hertz) noted in step d.

Note

If $f_0 \gg f_1$, the eq. 3-7 is simplified as follows:

$$C_d = \left(\frac{f_1}{f_0}\right)^2 C_1 \dots\dots\dots (\text{eq. 3-7})$$

3-47. Measuring Distributed Capacitance (Approximate Method, $C_d \geq 10\text{pF}$).

3-48. A distributed capacitance more than approximately 10pF may be measured with the simplified procedure described below (this procedure is useful for obtaining approximate values of distributed capacitance with an accuracy which serves practical purposes):

- Connect inductor sample to the measurement COIL (HI and LO) terminals.
- Set L/C dial control to approximately 50pF and ΔC dial control to 0pF. Note the C dial reading as C_1 .
- Depress a trial FREQUENCY RANGE button and rotate FREQUENCY dial control to search for the frequency at which panel Q meter shows a maximum deflection. If no peak deflection can be observed, change FREQUENCY RANGE setting and repeat the procedure.
- Adjust FREQUENCY dial control for maximum panel Q meter deflection. Note this frequency as f_1 .
- Change FREQUENCY dial setting to f_2 equal to f_1/n (n should be a selected integer, e.g. 2 or 3).
- Adjust L/C dial and ΔC dial controls for again obtaining maximum meter deflection. Note the sum of C dial and ΔC dial readings as C_2 .

g. Distributed capacitance is given by the following equation. Substitute measured values of C_1 , C_2 , f_1 and f_2 in the equation:

$$C_d = \frac{(C_2 - n^2 C_1)}{n^2 - 1} \dots\dots\dots (\text{eq. 3-9})$$

$$n = \frac{f_1}{f_2}$$

Where, C_d : distributed capacitance in farads.

C_1 : C dial reading (farads) noted in step b.

C_2 : C dial reading (farads) noted in step f.

f_1 : measurement frequency (hertz) noted in step d.

f_2 : measurement frequency (hertz) given in step e.

Note

If f_2 is exactly one half of f_1 , then

$$C_d = \frac{C_2 - 4C_1}{3} \dots\dots\dots (\text{eq. 3-10})$$

An average of several measurements using different values of C_1 will improve the results of this measurement. The best accuracy to be expected with this method, however, is in the range of $\pm 2\text{pF}$.

3-49. CORRECTION FOR Q.

3-50. To use the indicated Q for the purpose of calculating L and R_s (in determining the actual equivalent circuit), it must be corrected for the effects of the distributed capacitance. The corrected Q and the Q value measured by the Q meter can be obtained from the following equation:

$$Q_t = Q_i \frac{C + C_d}{C} \dots\dots\dots (\text{eq. 3-11})$$

Then,

$$\text{Correction factor} = \frac{C + C_d}{C} = 1 + \frac{C_d}{C} \dots\dots\dots (\text{eq. 3-12})$$

Where, Q_t : corrected Q value.

Q_i : indicated Q value.

C: sum of C and ΔC dial readings.

C_d : distributed capacitance of sample.