

In this chapter we perform what is normally referred to as a transient analysis. We begin our analysis with first-order circuits—that is, those that contain only a single storage element. When only a single storage element is present in the network, the network can be described by a first-order differential equation.

Our analysis involves an examination and description of the behavior of a circuit as a function of time after a sudden change in the network occurs due to switches opening or closing. Because of the presence of one or more storage elements, the circuit response to a sudden change will go through a transition period prior to settling down to a steady-state value. It is this transition period that we will examine carefully in our transient analysis.

One of the important parameters that we will examine in our transient analysis is the circuit's time constant. This is a very important network parameter because it tells us how fast the circuit will respond to changes. We can contrast two very different systems to obtain a feel for the parameter. For example, consider the model for a room air-conditioning system and the model for a single-transistor stage of amplification in a computer chip. If we change the setting for the air conditioner from 70 degrees to 60 degrees, the unit will come on and the room will begin to cool. However, the temperature measured by a thermometer in the room will fall very slowly and, thus, the time required to reach the desired temperature is long. However, if we send a trigger signal to a transistor to change state, the action may take only a few nanoseconds. These two systems will have vastly different time constants.

Our analysis of first-order circuits begins with the presentation of two techniques for performing a transient analysis: the differential equation approach, in which a differential equation is written and solved for each network, and a step-by-step approach, which takes advantage of the known form of the solution in every case. In the second-order case, both an inductor and a capacitor are present simultaneously, and the network is described by a second-order differential equation. Although the *RLC* circuits are more complicated than the first-order single storage circuits, we will follow a development similar to that used in the first-order case.

Our presentation will deal only with very simple circuits, since the analysis can quickly become complicated for networks that contain more than one loop or one nonreference node. Furthermore, we will demonstrate a much simpler method for handling these circuits when we cover the Laplace transform later in this book. We will analyze several networks in which the parameters have been chosen to illustrate the different types of circuit response.

We begin our discussion by recalling that in Chapter 6 we found that capacitors and inductors were capable of storing electric energy. In the case of a charged capacitor, the energy is stored in the electric field that exists between the positively and negatively charged plates. This stored energy can be released if a circuit is somehow connected across the capacitor that provides a path through which the negative charges move to the positive charges. As we know, this movement of charge constitutes a current. The rate at which the energy is discharged is a direct function of the parameters in the circuit that is connected across the capacitor's plates.

As an example, consider the flash circuit in a camera. Recall that the operation of the flash circuit, from a user standpoint, involves depressing the push button on the camera that triggers both the shutter and the flash and then waiting a few seconds before repeating the process to take the next picture. This operation can be modeled using the circuit in **Fig. 7.1a**. The voltage source and resistor R_s model the batteries that power the camera and flash. The capacitor models the energy storage, the switch models the push button, and finally the resistor R models the xenon flash lamp. Thus, if the capacitor is charged, when the switch is closed, the capacitor voltage drops and energy is released through the xenon lamp, producing the flash. In practice this energy release takes about a millisecond, and the discharge time is a function of the elements in the circuit. When the push button is released and the switch is then opened, the battery begins to recharge the capacitor. Once again, the time required to charge the capacitor is a function of the circuit elements. The discharge and charge cycles are graphically illustrated in **Fig. 7.1b**. Although the discharge time is very fast, it is not instantaneous. To provide further insight into this phenomenon, consider what we might call a *free-body diagram* of the right half of the network in Fig. 7.1a, as shown