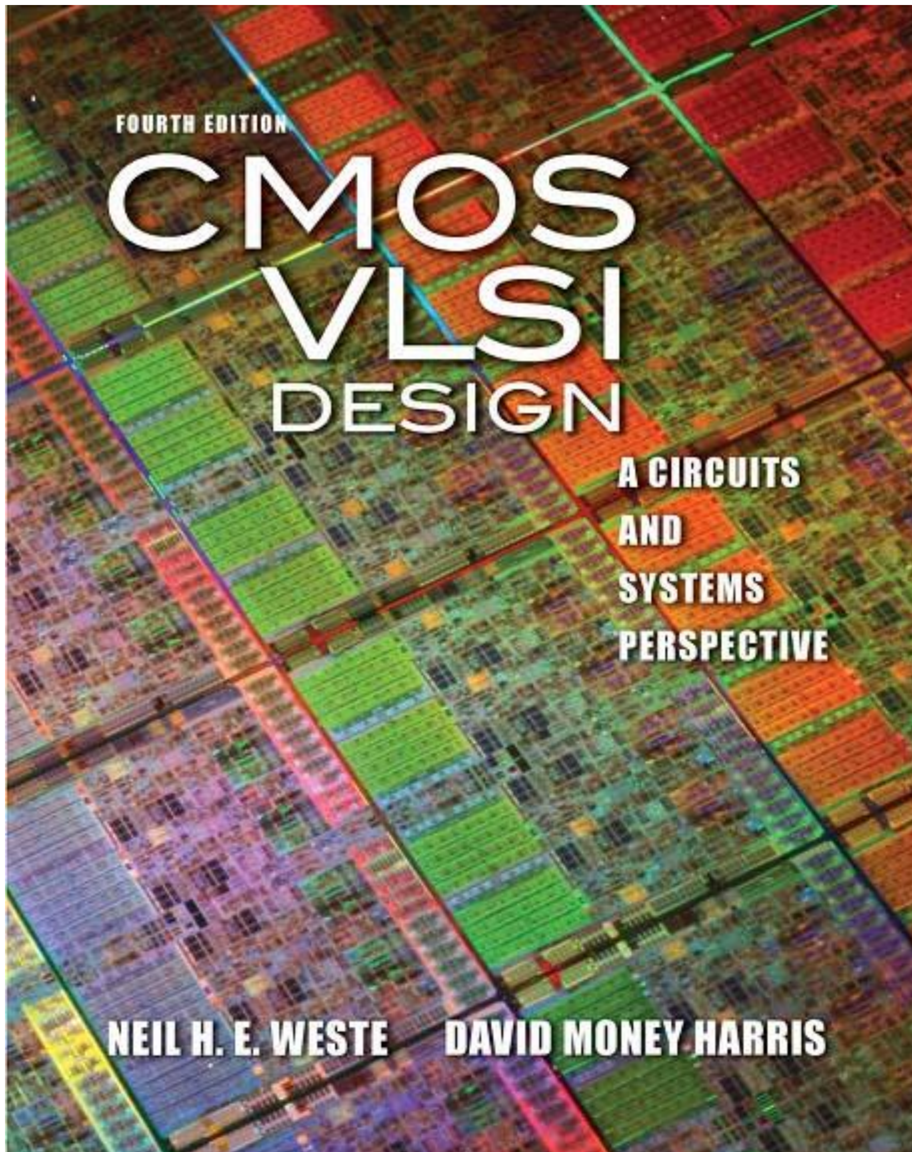


Lecture 8: Wires

Outline

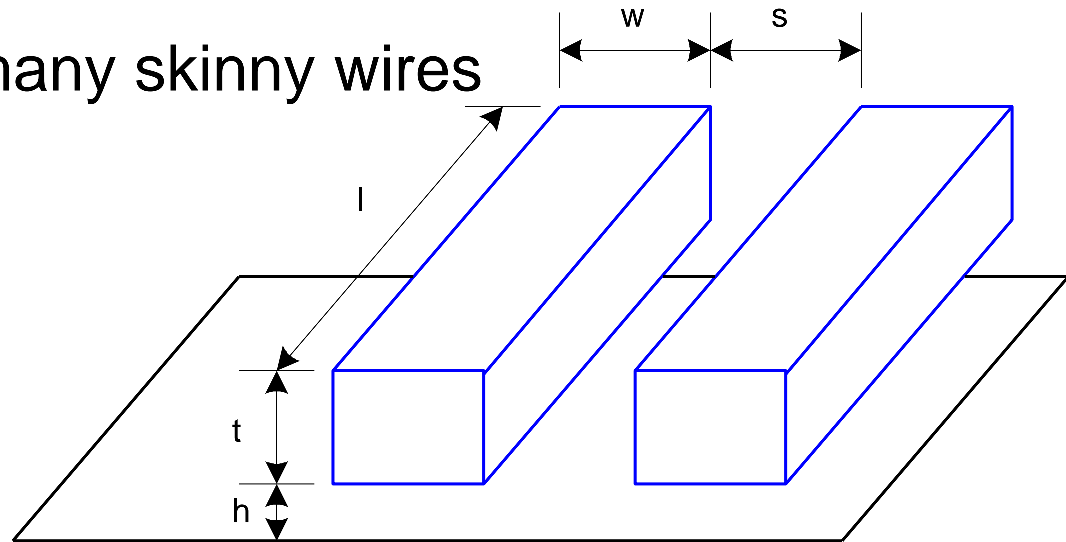
- Introduction
- Wire Resistance
- Wire Capacitance
- Wire RC Delay
- Crosstalk
- Wire Engineering
- Repeaters

Introduction

- Chips are mostly made of wires called *interconnect*
  - In stick diagram, wires set size
  - Transistors are little things under the wires
  - Many layers of wires
- Wires are as important as transistors
  - Speed
  - Power
  - Noise
- Alternating layers run orthogonally

Wire Geometry

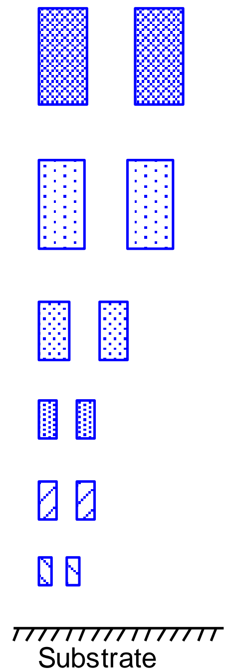
- Pitch = w + s
- Aspect ratio: AR = t/w
  - Old processes had AR << 1
  - Modern processes have AR ≈ 2
    - Pack in many skinny wires



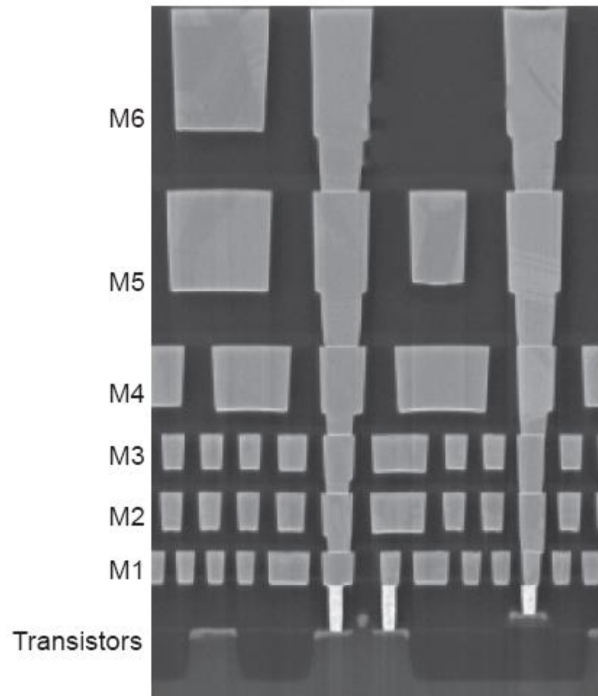
Layer Stack

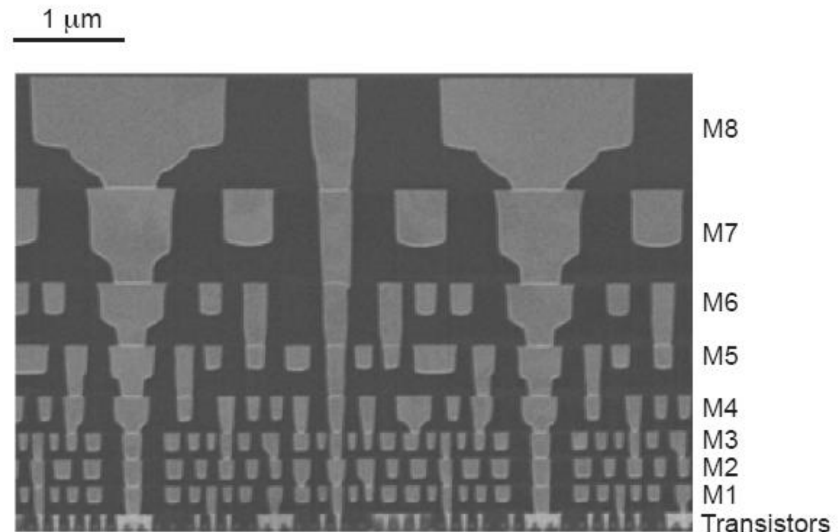
- AMI 0.6 μm process has 3 metal layers
- Modern processes use 6-10+ metal layers
- Example:
  Intel 180 nm process
- M1: thin, narrow (< 3λ)
  – High density cells
- M2-M4: thicker
  – For longer wires
- M5-M6: thickest
  – For V_{DD}, GND, clk

Layer	T (nm)	W (nm)	S (nm)	AR
6	1720	860	860	2.0
	1000			
5	1600	800	800	2.0
	1000			
4	1080	540	540	2.0
	700			
3	700	320	320	2.2
	700			
2	700	320	320	2.2
	700			
1	480	250	250	1.9
	800			



Example





Intel 90 nm Stack

[Thompson02]

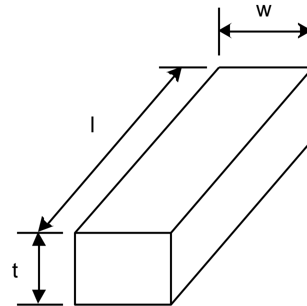
Intel 45 nm Stack

[Moon08]

Wire Resistance

- ρ = *resistivity* (Ω*m)

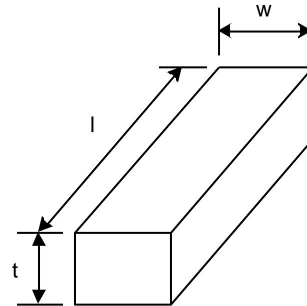
$$R =$$



Wire Resistance

- ρ = *resistivity* (Ω*m)

$$R = \frac{\rho}{t}\frac{l}{w}$$

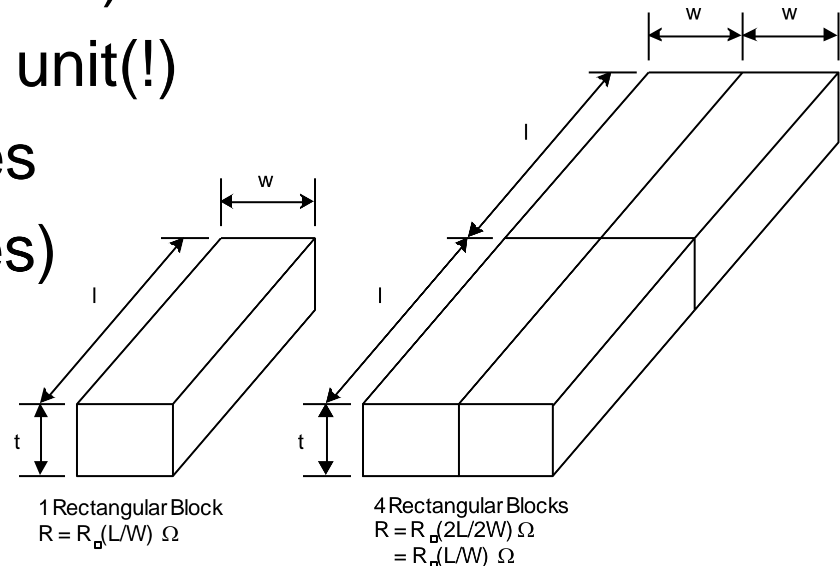


Wire Resistance

- ρ = *resistivity* (Ω*m)

$$R = \frac{\rho}{t}\frac{l}{w} = R_{\square}\frac{l}{w}$$

- $R_{\square}$ = *sheet resistance* ($\Omega/\square$)
  - $\square$ is a dimensionless unit(!)
- Count number of squares
  - R = $R_{\square}$ * (# of squares)



Choice of Metals

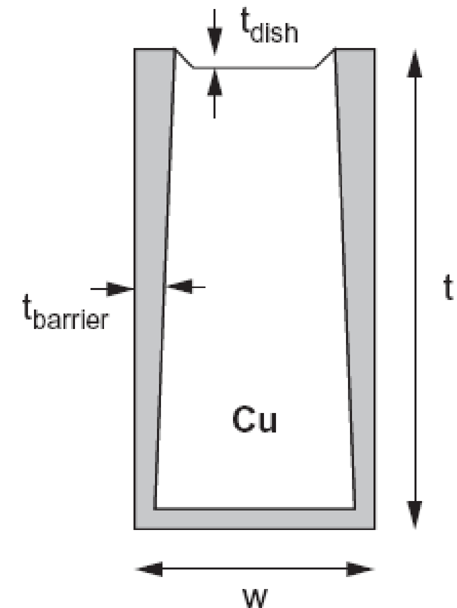
- Until 180 nm generation, most wires were aluminum
- Modern processes often use copper
  - Cu atoms diffuse into silicon and damage FETs
  - Must be surrounded by a diffusion barrier

Metal	**Bulk resistivity ($\mu\Omega$*cm)**
Silver (Ag)	1.6
Copper (Cu)	1.7
Gold (Au)	2.2
Aluminum (Al)	2.8
Tungsten (W)	5.3
Molybdenum (Mo)	5.3

Copper Issues

- Copper wires diffusion barrier has high resistance
- Copper is also prone to *dishing* during polishing
- Effective resistance is higher

$$R = \frac{\rho}{\left(t - t_{\text{dish}} - t_{\text{barrier}}\right)} \frac{l}{\left(w - 2t_{\text{barrier}}\right)}$$



Example

- Compute the sheet resistance of a 0.22 μm thick Cu wire in a 65 nm process. The resistivity of thin film Cu is 2.2 x 10-8 Ω•m. Ignore dishing.

$$R_{\square} =$$

- Find the total resistance if the wire is 0.125 μm wide and 1 mm long. Ignore the barrier layer.

$$R =$$

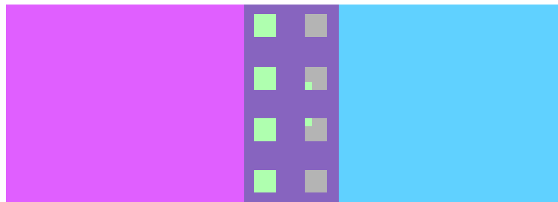
Sheet Resistance

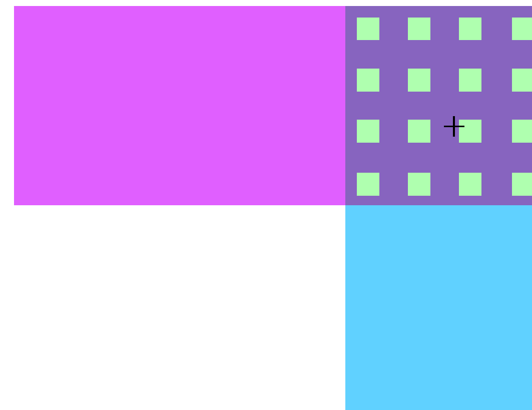
- Typical sheet resistances in 180 nm process

Layer	Sheet Resistance (Ω/□)
Diffusion (silicided)	3-10
Diffusion (no silicide)	50-200
Polysilicon (silicided)	3-10
Polysilicon (no silicide)	50-400
Metal1	0.08
Metal2	0.05
Metal3	0.05
Metal4	0.03
Metal5	0.02
Metal6	0.02

Contacts Resistance

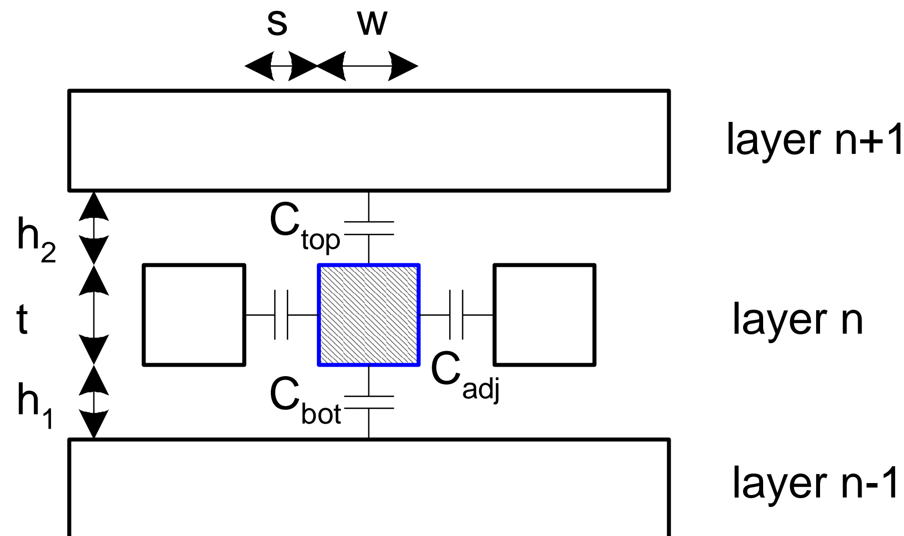
- Contacts and vias also have 2-20 Ω
- Use many contacts for lower R
  - Many small contacts for current crowding around periphery





Wire Capacitance

- Wire has capacitance per unit length
  - To neighbors
  - To layers above and below
- $C_{total} = C_{top} + C_{bot} + 2C_{adj}$



Capacitance Trends

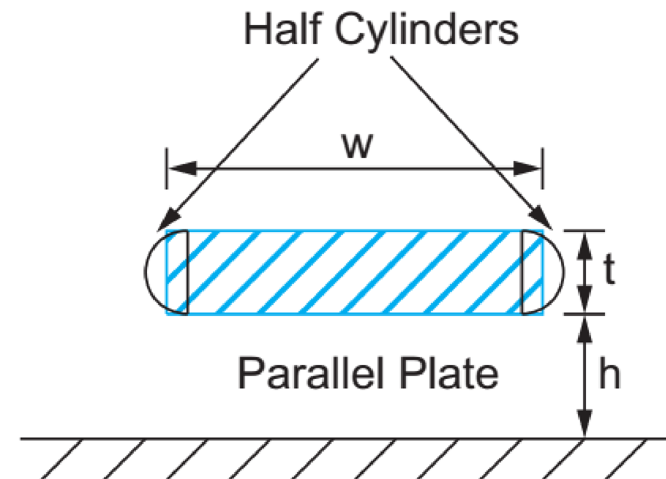
- Parallel plate equation: $C = \varepsilon A/d$
  - Wires are not parallel plates, but obey trends
  - Increasing area (W, t) increases capacitance
  - Increasing distance (s, h) decreases capacitance
- Dielectric constant
  - $\varepsilon = k\varepsilon_0$
- $\varepsilon_0 = 8.85 \times 10^{-14}$ F/cm
- $k = 3.9$ for SiO_2
- Processes are starting to use low-k dielectrics
  - $k \approx 3$ (or less) as dielectrics use air pockets

Capacitance Formula

- Capacitance of a conductor above a ground plane can be approximated as

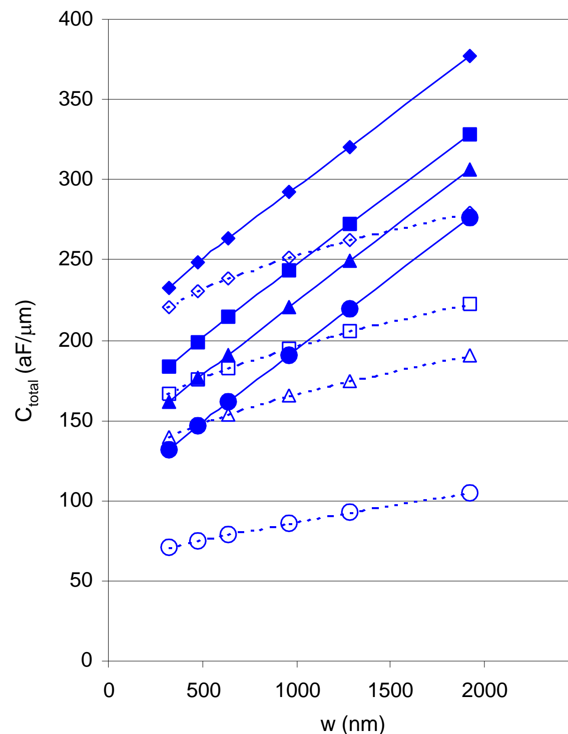
$$C_{tot} = \varepsilon_{ox} l \left[\frac{w}{h} + 0.77 + 1.06 \left(\frac{w}{h} \right)^{0.25} + 1.06 \left(\frac{t}{h} \right)^{0.5} \right]$$

- This empirical formula is accurate to 6% for AR < 3.3
- This formula does not account for neighbors in the same layer or higher layers

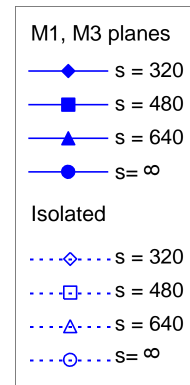


M2 Capacitance Data

- Typical wires have ~ 0.2 fF/μm
  - Compare to 2 fF/μm for gate capacitance



S: normalized spacing

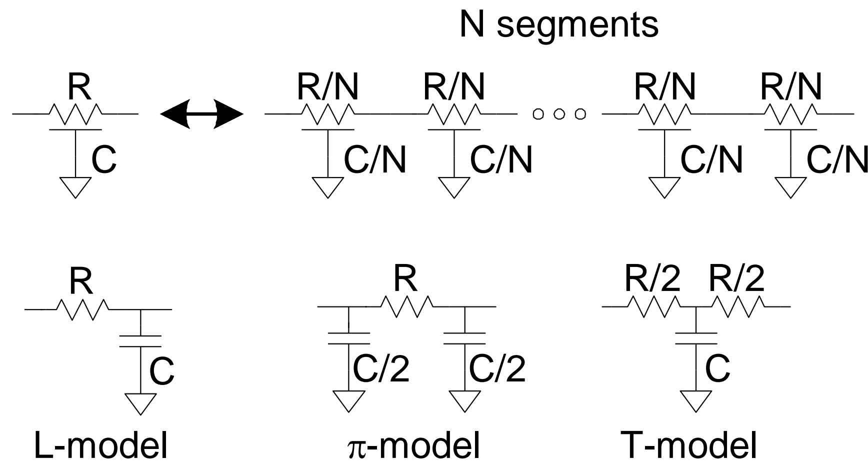


Diffusion & Polysilicon

- Diffusion capacitance is very high (about 2 fF/μm)
  - Comparable to gate capacitance
  - Diffusion also has high resistance
  - Avoid using diffusion *runners* for wires!
- Polysilicon has lower C but high R
  - Use for transistor gates
  - Occasionally for very short wires between gates

Lumped Element Models

- Wires are a distributed system
  - Approximate with lumped element models



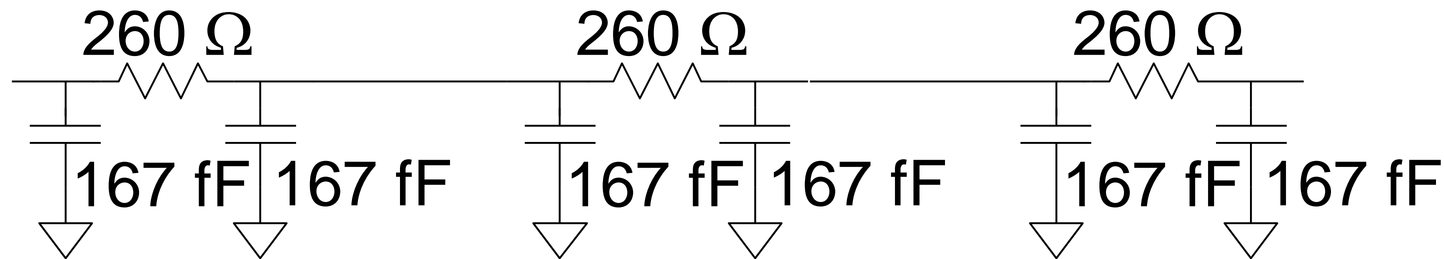
- 3-segment π-model is accurate to 3% in simulation
- L-model needs 100 segments for same accuracy!
- Use single segment π-model for Elmore delay

Example

- Metal2 wire in 180 nm process
  - 5 mm long
  - 0.32 μm wide
- Construct a 3-segment π-model
  - $R_{\square}$ =
  - $C_{permicron}$ =

Example

- Metal2 wire in 180 nm process
  - 5 mm long
  - 0.32 μm wide
- Construct a 3-segment π-model
  - $R_\square$ = 0.05 Ω/□ => R = 781 Ω
  - $C_{permicron}$ = 0.2 fF/μm => C = 1 pF



Wire RC Delay

- Estimate the delay of a 10x inverter driving a 2x inverter at the end of the 5mm wire from the previous example.
  - R = 2.5 kΩ*μm for gates
  - Unit inverter: 0.36 μm nMOS, 0.72 μm pMOS

  - t_{pd} =

Wire RC Delay

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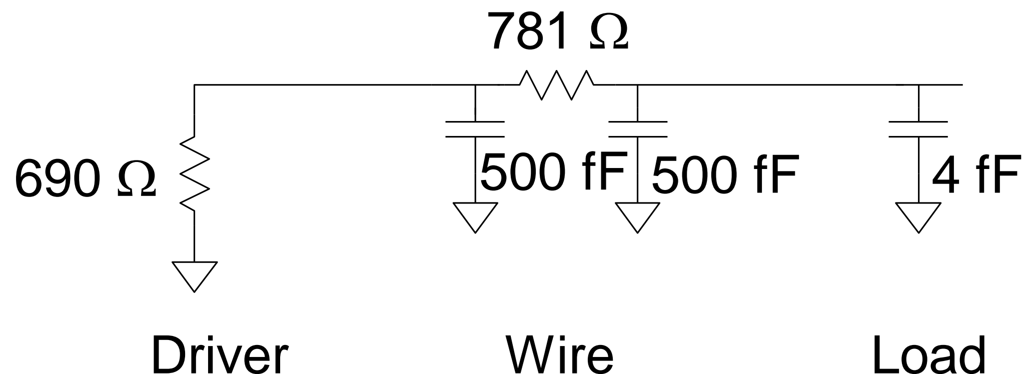
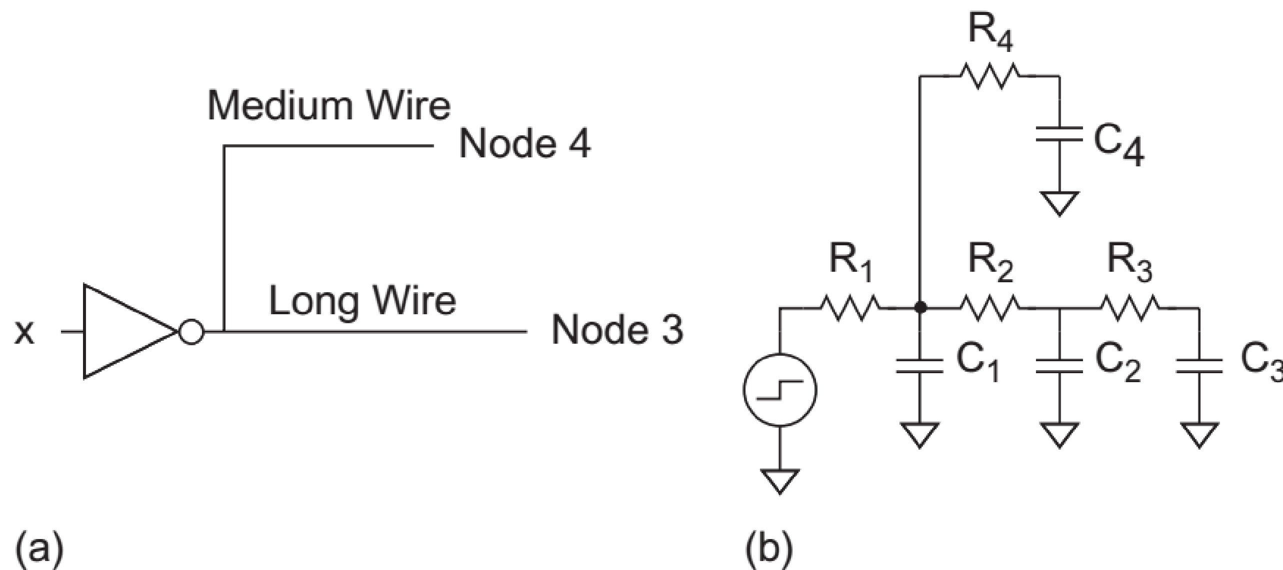


  - t_{pd} = 1.1 ns

Example 6.5

- A gate driving wires to two destinations:



$$T_{D_3} = R_1C_1 + (R_1 + R_2)C_2 + (R_1 + R_2 + R_3)C_3 + R_1C_4$$

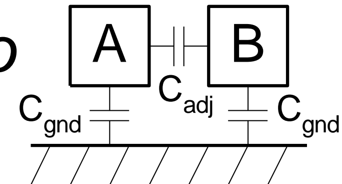
$$T_{D_4} = R_1C_1 + R_1(C_2 + C_3) + (R_1 + R_4)C_4$$

Crosstalk

- A capacitor does not like to change its voltage instantaneously.
- A wire has high capacitance to its neighbor.
  - When the neighbor switches from 1-> 0 or 0->1, the wire tends to switch too.
  - Called capacitive *coupling* or *crosstalk*.
- Crosstalk effects
  - Noise on nonswitching wires
  - Increased delay on switching wires

Crosstalk Delay

- Assume layers above and below on average are quiet
  - Second terminal of capacitor can be ignored
  - Model as $C_{gnd} = C_{top} + C_{bot}$
- Effective C_{adj} depends on behavior of neighbors
  - *Miller effect: The charge delivered to the coupling capacitor is* $Q = C_{adj}\,\Delta V$



B	ΔV	$C_{eff(A)}$	MCF
Constant			
Switching with A			
Switching opposite A			

Crosstalk Delay

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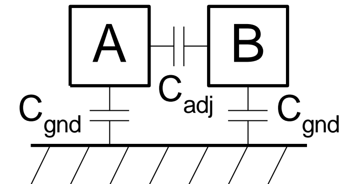
- Effective C_{adj} depends on behavior of neighbors
  - *Miller effect: Miller Coupling Factor (MCF)*



B	ΔV	$C_{eff(A)}$	MCF
Constant	V_{DD}	$C_{gnd} + C_{adj}$	1
Switching with A	0	C_{gnd}	0
Switching opposite A	$2V_{DD}$	$C_{gnd} + 2\ C_{adj}$	2

Miller Coupling Factor

- The *Miller Coupling Factor* (MCF) describes how the capacitance to adjacent wires is multiplied to find the effective capacitance
- Some designers use MCF = 1.5 as a statistical compromise when estimating propagation delays before layout information is available.
- A conservative design methodology assumes neighbors are switching to compute propagation and contamination delays (MCF = 2 and 0, respectively).
- A more aggressive methodology tracks the time and direction of switching between neighbor wires.

Example

- Two 1 mm lines has capacitance of 0.08 fF/Rm to ground and 0.12 fF/μm to its neighbor
  - Each wire is driven by an inverter of 1KΩ resistance
  - Estimate the contamination and propagation delays of the path.
- Solution:

C_{gnd} = (0.08 fF/μm)(1000 μm) = 80 fF , C_{adj} = 120 fF

$T_d = RC_{eff}$

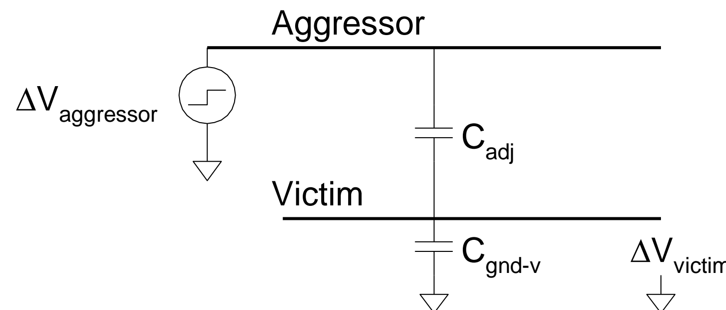
Contamination delay (MCF=0) → $C_{eff} = C_{gnd}$

Propagation delay (MCF=2) → $C_{eff} = C_{gnd} + 2\,C_{adj}$

Crosstalk Noise

- Crosstalk causes noise on nonswitching wires
- If victim is floating:
  - model as capacitive voltage divider

$$\Delta V_{victim} = \frac{C_{adj}}{C_{gnd-v} + C_{adj}} \Delta V_{aggressor}$$

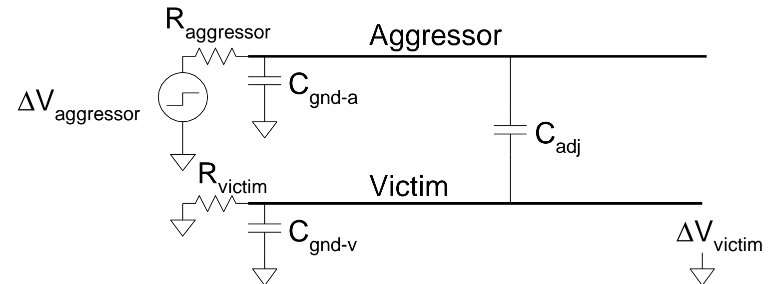


Driven Victims

- Usually victim is driven by a gate that fights noise
  - Noise depends on relative resistances
  - Victim driver is in linear region, agg. in saturation
  - If sizes are same, $R_{aggressor} = 2\text{-}4 \times R_{victim}$

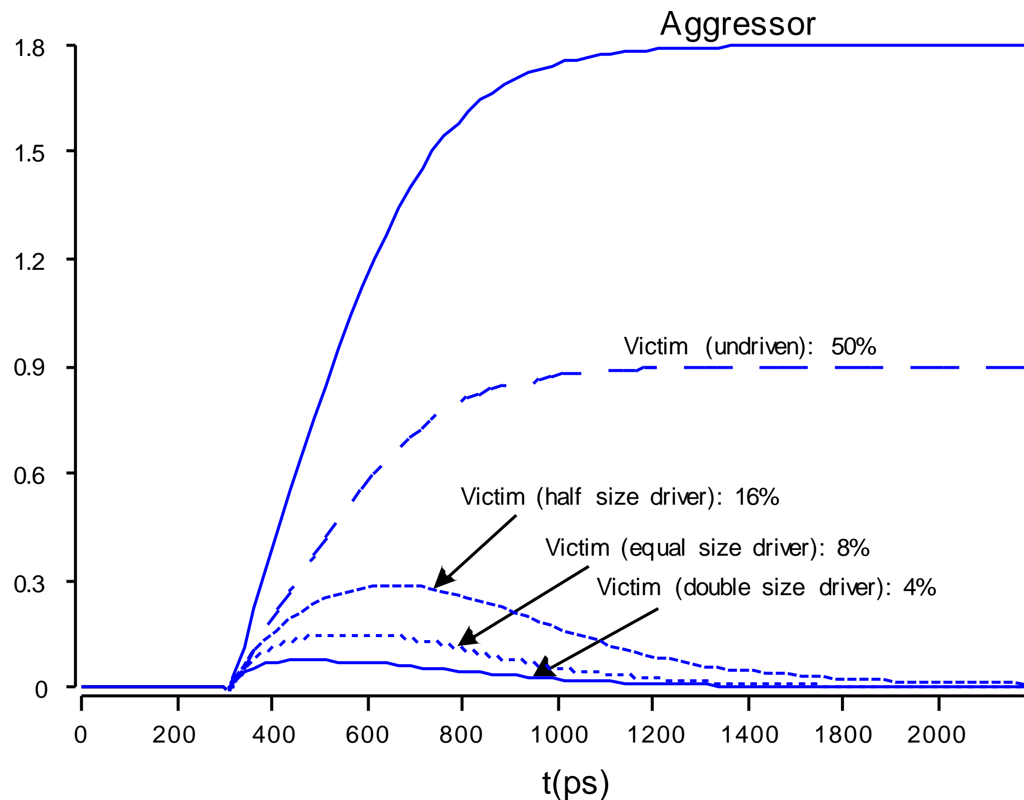
$$\Delta V_{victim} = \frac{C_{adj}}{C_{gnd-v} + C_{adj}} \frac{1}{1+k} \Delta V_{aggressor}$$

$$k = \frac{\tau_{aggressor}}{\tau_{victim}} = \frac{R_{aggressor}\left(C_{gnd-a} + C_{adj}\right)}{R_{victim}\left(C_{gnd-v} + C_{adj}\right)}$$



Coupling Waveforms

- Simulated coupling for $C_{adj} = C_{victim}$



Noise Implications

- *So what* if we have noise?
- If the noise is less than the noise margin, nothing happens
- Static CMOS logic will eventually settle to correct output even if disturbed by large noise spikes
  - But glitches cause extra delay
  - Also cause extra power from false transitions
- Dynamic logic never recovers from glitches
- Memories and other sensitive circuits also can produce the wrong answer

Wire Engineering

- Goal: achieve delay, area, power goals with acceptable noise
- Degrees of freedom:

Wire Engineering

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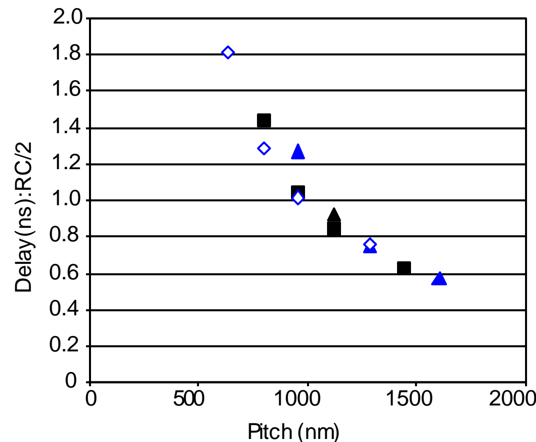
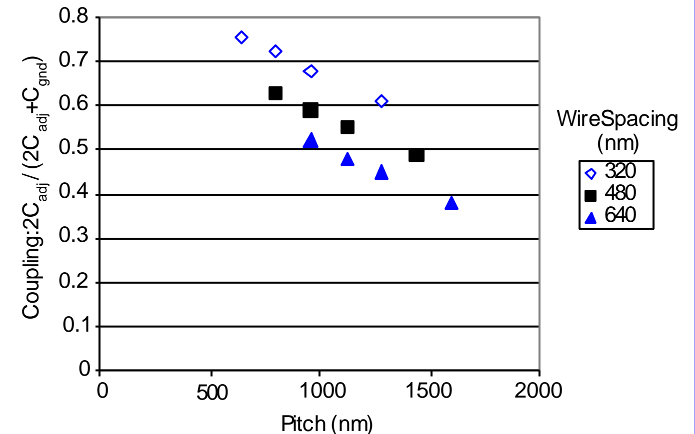
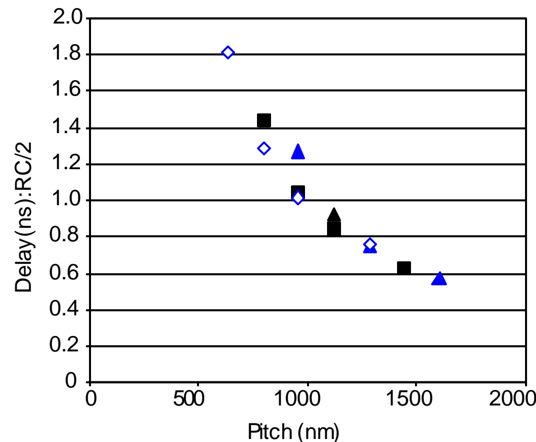
  - Width
  - Spacing

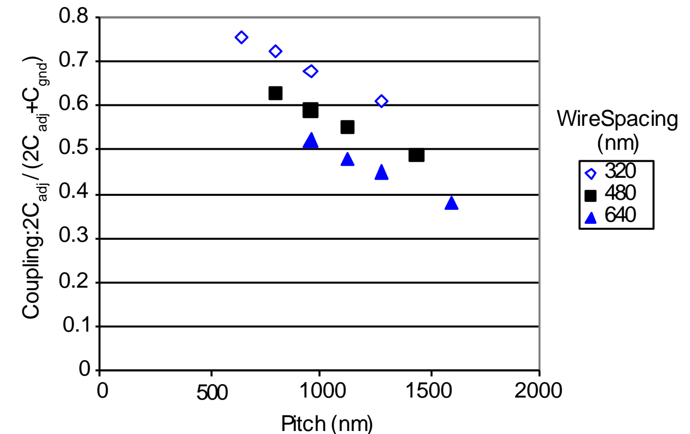




Wire Engineering

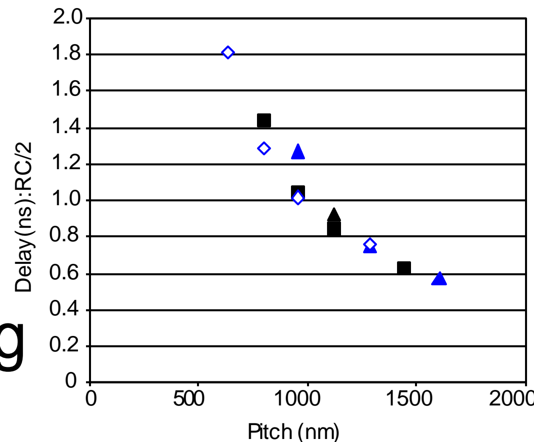
- Goal: achieve delay, area, power goals with acceptable noise
- Degrees of freedom:
  - Width
  - Spacing
  - Layer

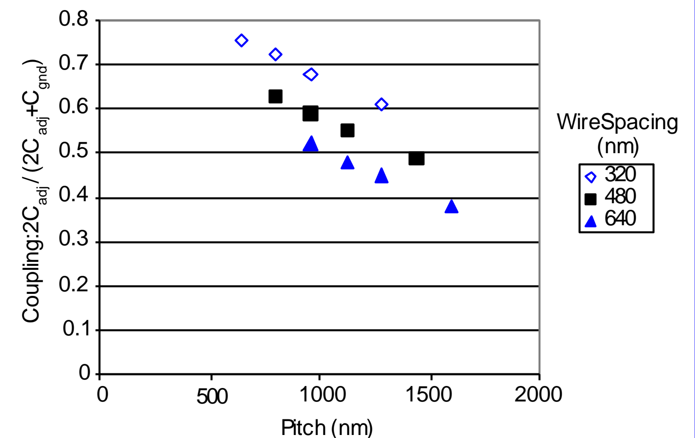


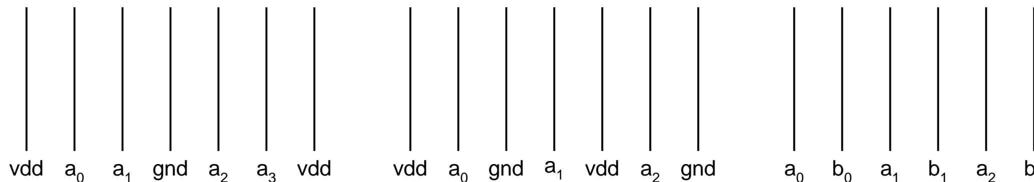


Wire Engineering

- Goal: achieve delay, area, power goals with acceptable noise
- Degrees of freedom:
  - Width
  - Spacing
  - Layer
  - Shielding







Width, Spacing, and Layer

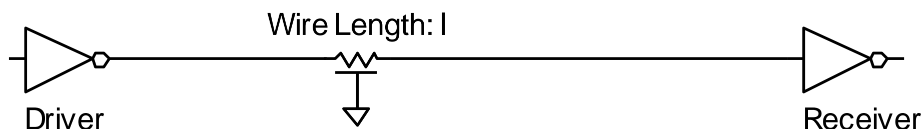
- The wire width, spacing, and layer usage are selected to trade off delay, bandwidth, energy, and noise.
- Minimum pitch wires are preferred for noncritical wires
- When the load is dominated by wire capacitance, increase spacing to reduce delay is by reducing the capacitance to nearby neighbors which also reduces the energy and coupling noise.
- When the delay is dominated by the gate capacitance and wire resistance, widening the wire reduces resistance and delay, reduces coupling noise, but increases the energy.

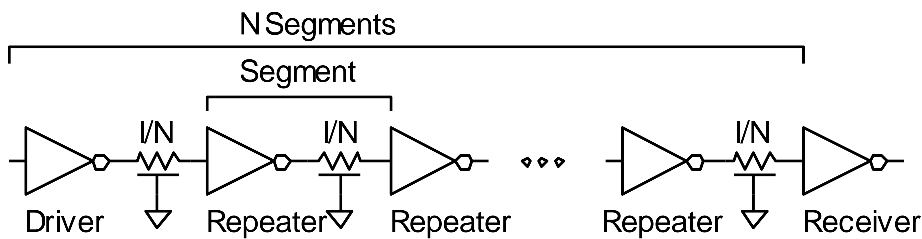
Repeaters

- R and C are proportional to l
- RC delay is proportional to l^2
  - Unacceptably great for long wires

Repeaters

- R and C are proportional to l
- RC delay is proportional to l^2
  - Unacceptably great for long wires
- Break long wires into N shorter segments
  - Drive each one with an inverter or buffer





Repeater Design

- How many repeaters should we use?
- How large should each one be?
- Equivalent Circuit
  - Wire length l/N
    - Wire Capaitance C_w*l/N, Resistance R_w*l/N
  - Inverter width W (nMOS = W, pMOS = 2W)
    - Gate Capacitance C'*W, Resistance R/W

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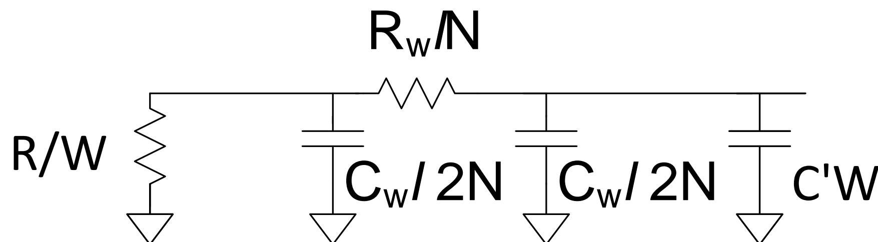


Repeater Results

- Write equation for Elmore Delay
  - Differentiate with respect to W and N
  - Set equal to 0, solve

$$\frac{l}{N} = \sqrt{\frac{2RC'}{R_w C_w}}$$

$$\frac{t_{pd}}{l} = \left(2 + \sqrt{2}\right)\sqrt{RC'R_w C_w}$$

~60-80 ps/mm

in 180 nm process

$$W = \sqrt{\frac{RC_w}{R_w C'}}$$

Repeater Energy

- Energy / length ≈ $1.87C_wV_{DD}^2$
  - 87% premium over unrepeated wires
  - The extra power is consumed in the large repeaters
- If the repeaters are downsized for minimum EDP:
  - Energy premium is only 30%
  - Delay increases by 14% from min delay

Crosstalk Control

- The crosstalk is proportional to the ratio of coupling capacitance to total capacitance.
- For modern processes, the coupling capacitance contributes more than ¾ of the total capacitance.
- There are several approaches to control crosstalk:
  - Increase spacing to adjacent lines
  - Shield wires: usually clock signal is shielded
  - Ensure neighbors switch at different times: e.g. signals switch at different clock edges
  - Crosstalk cancellation: arrange wires to cancel the effects of crosstalk

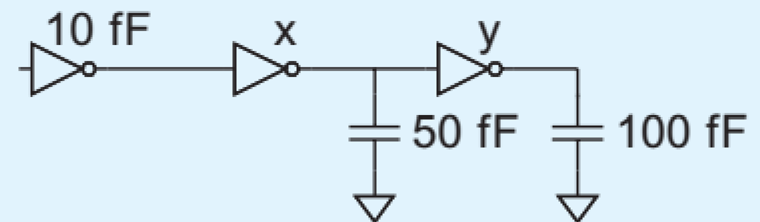
Logical Effort with Wires

- The branching effort at a wire with capacitance C_{wire} driving a gate load of C_{gate} is $(C_{gate} + C_{wire}) / C_{gate}$
- This branching effort is not constant; it depends on the size of the gate being driven
- For short interconnect ($C_{wire} << C_{gate}$), C_{wire} can be ignored.
- Conversely, when the interconnect is long (Cwire >> Cgate), the gate at the end can be ignored.
- The path can now be partitioned into two parts; the first part drives the wire while the second receives its input from the wire.

Logical Effort with Wires

- The most difficult problems occur when $C_{wire} \approx C_{gate}$.
- These wires introduce branching efforts that are a function of the size of the gates they drive
- Example:

$$d = \frac{x}{10} + \frac{y+50}{x} + \frac{100}{y} + P$$



Diff W.R.T x and y yields:

$$\frac{1}{10} - \frac{y+50}{x^2} = 0 \Rightarrow x^2 = 10y + 500$$

$$\frac{1}{x} - \frac{100}{y^2} = 0 \Rightarrow y^2 = 100x$$

x=33 fF and y=57fF
The stage efforts are (33/10) = 3.3, (57 + 50)/33 = 3.2, and (100/57) = 1.8
Not equal as usual due to the wire capacitance