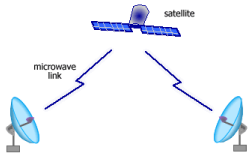
RF Front-End Blocks

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Wireless Communication Systems

Satellite communications



Cellular networks



Internet of Things



Autonomous cars

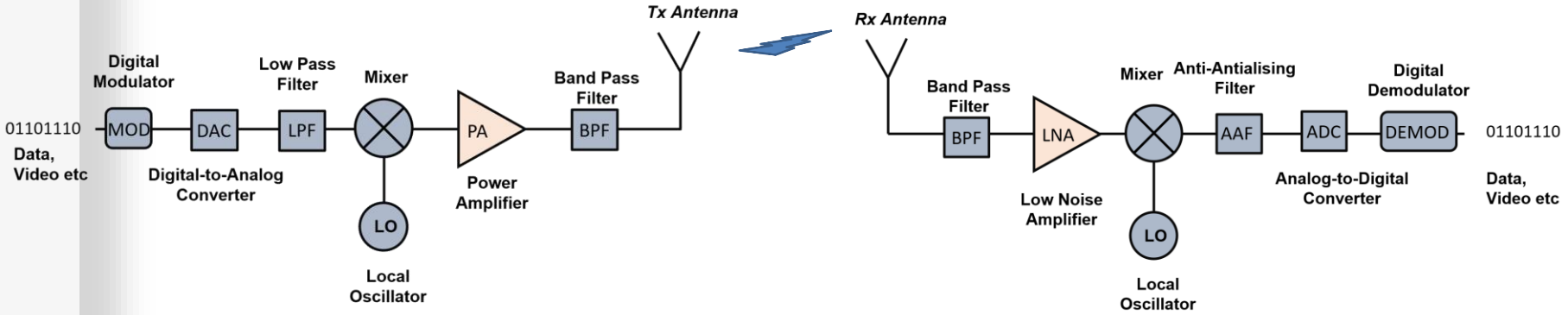


Wireless communication technology evolves fast →MANY hardware design challenges to overcome!

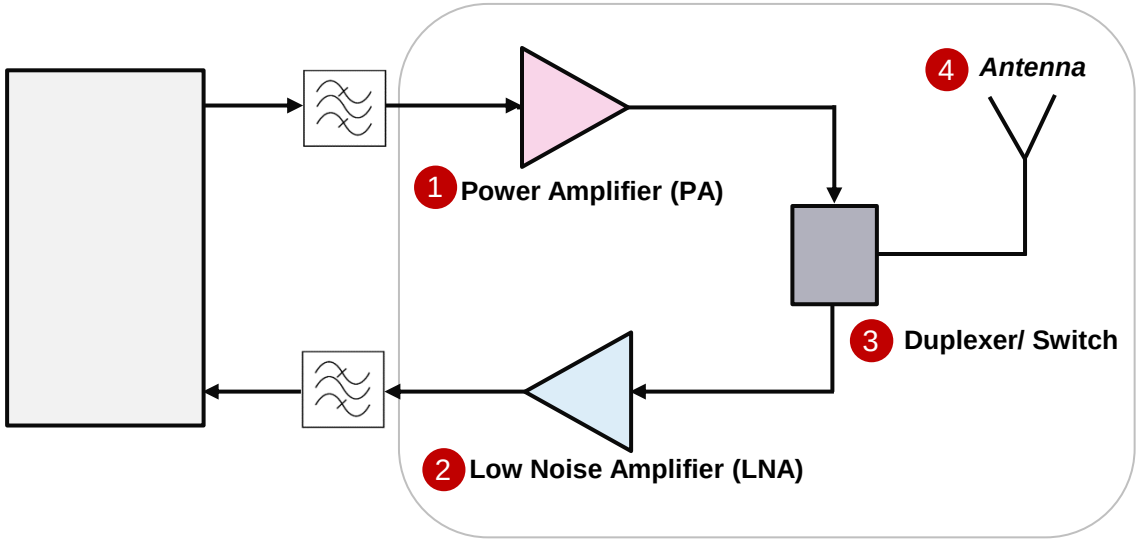
Wireless Communication Systems

Block Diagram of a Typical Transmitter (Tx)

Block Diagram of a Typical Receiver (Rx)



RF Front-End



Block diagram of a simplified RF Front-End



Our focus today: (1) power amplifier, (2) low noise amplifier, (3) switch/duplexer and (4) antenna.

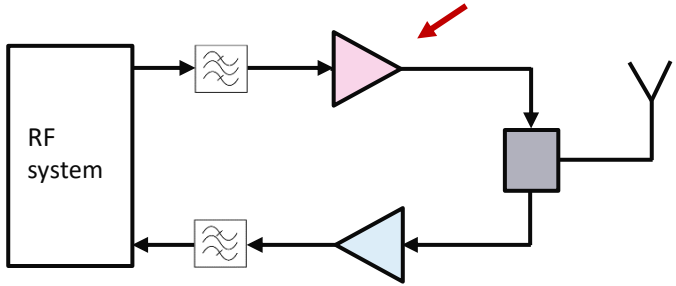
Outline

- Power Amplifier (PA)
- Low Noise Amplifier (LNA)
- Antenna
- Duplexer/ Switch

Introduction to Power Amplifiers

- **Power amplifiers** (PAs) are used in the final stage of radar and radio transmitters to increase the radiated power level.

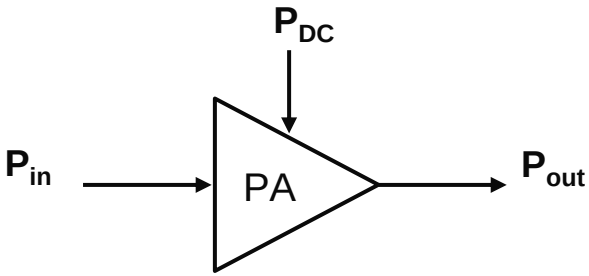
- Their **output power level** can vary from a few mW to MW. In the case of mobile communications systems (e.g. voice and data), the PA output can be in the order of 100-500 mW, in the case of radar systems it can be in the order of 1-100 W.



Key performance parameters are the *gain, efficiency (thermal effects), linearity*..

Power Amplifier - Gain

The gain of a power amplifier is defined as the ratio between its output power to its input power.



Gain (G) $G = \frac{P_{out}}{P_{in}}$

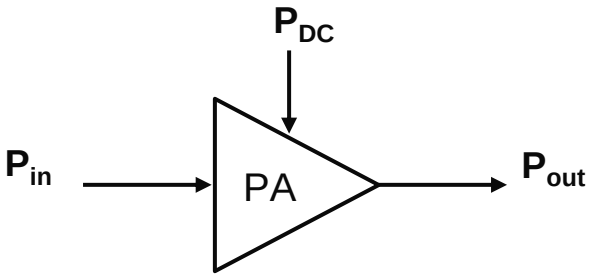
Gain in dB $G_{dB} = 10 \log_{10}\left(\frac{P_{out}}{P_{in}}\right)$

Power Amplifier - Efficiency

- The power amplifier dominates the power consumption of radio transmitters & impacts heavily the battery life time of the devices.



- Drain efficiency (DE) and Power Added Efficiency (PAE) are two important metrics for the efficiency of a power amplifier. PAE is the most popular metric. The drain efficiency does not take into account the gain of the power amplifier.



Drain efficiency (DE)

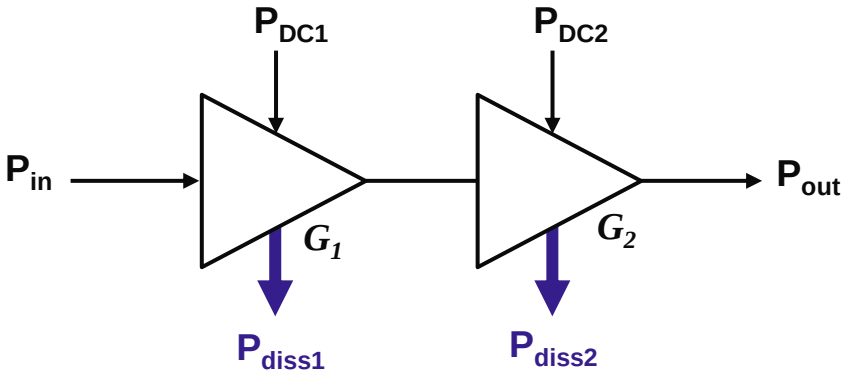
$$\eta_{\mathrm{DE}} = \frac{P_{out}}{P_{DC}}$$

$$\eta_{\mathrm{PAE}} = \left(1 - \frac{1}{G}\right) \frac{P_{out}}{P_{DC}} \rightarrow \eta_{\mathrm{PAE}} = \left(1 - \frac{1}{G}\right) \eta_{\mathrm{DE}}$$

Power Added Efficiency (PAE)

$$\eta_{\mathrm{PAE}} = \frac{P_{out} - Pin}{P_{DC}}$$

Power Amplifiers in cascade topology



Cascaded 2-stage matched PA

Overall gain

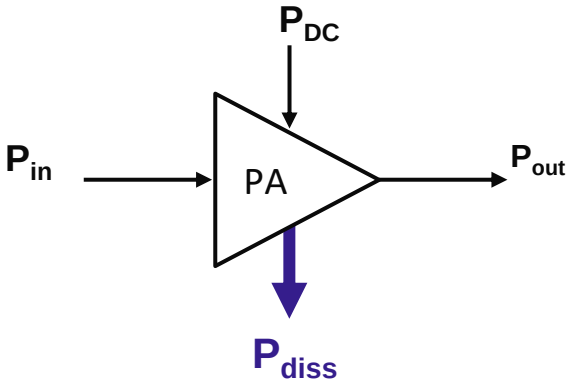
$$G_T = G_1 G_2$$

$$G_{T(dB)} = G_{1(dB)} + G_{2(dB)}$$

Overall efficiency

$$\eta = \frac{\eta_2}{1 + \frac{P_{DC1}}{P_{DC2}}} = \frac{\eta_2}{1 + \frac{\eta_2}{\eta_1 G_2}}$$

Power Amplifier – Thermal Behavior



$$P_{diss} + P_{out} = P_{in} + P_{DC}$$

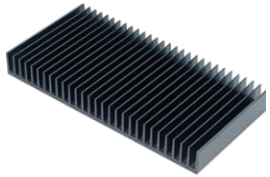
$$P_{diss} = (P_{in} - P_{out}) + P_{DC}$$

$$P_{diss} = P_{DC}(1 - \eta_{\mathrm{PAE}})$$

Thermal behaviour depends on P_{DC} and PAE

Power amplifiers get warm during their operation and the generated heat should be dissipated to avoid damaging the power amplifier → heatsinks typically used





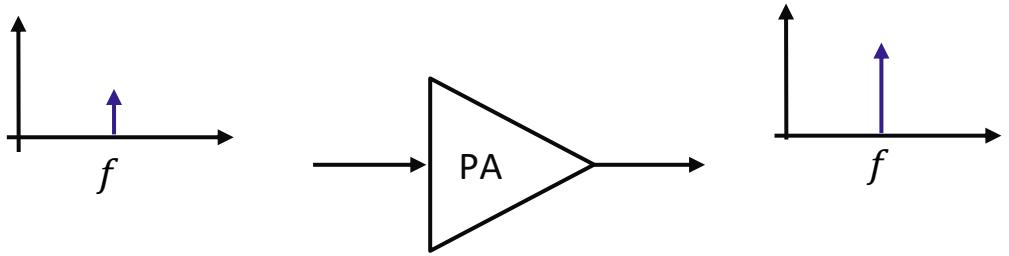


Power Amplifier Linearity

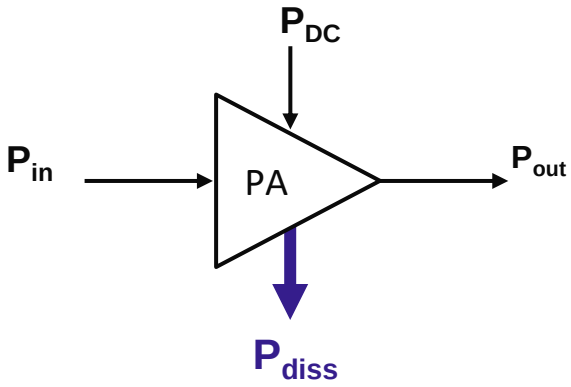
In a typical transceiver system, the most important source of nonlinear distortion is the power amplifier.

Many metrics and different signal excitations (single-tone excitation, modulated signals etc) are used for the characterization of the non linear behavior of the power amplifiers.

Ideal behavior of a linear power amplifier

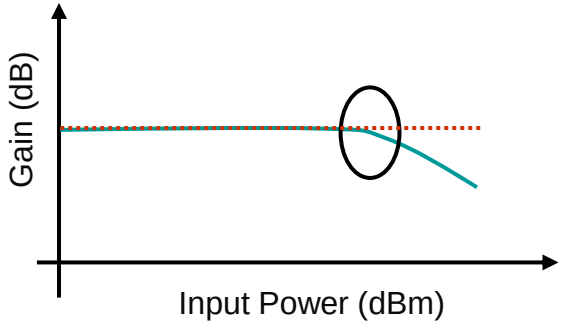


Gain compression



$$P_{diss} + P_{out} = P_{in} + P_{DC}$$

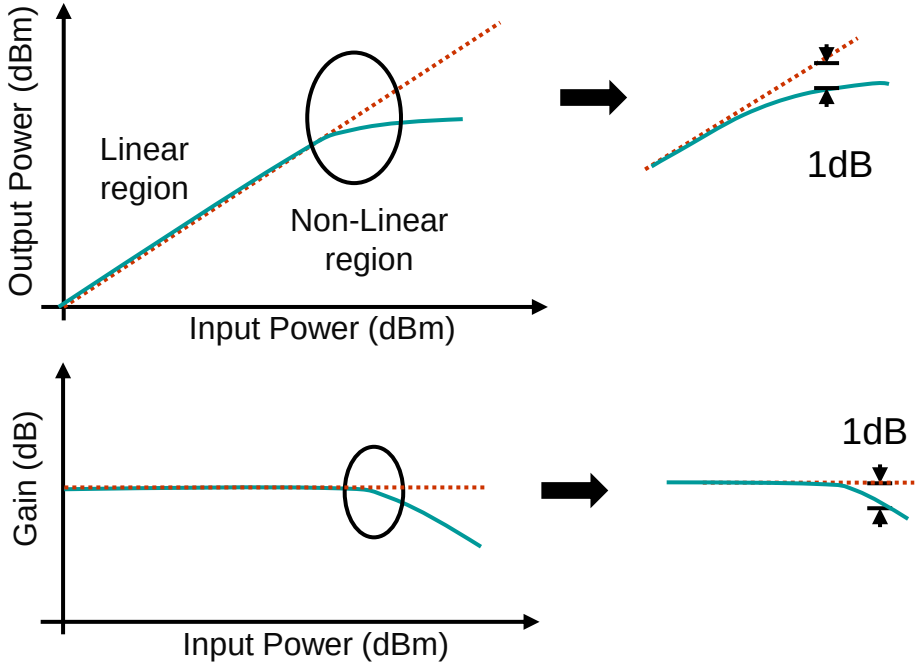
$$G = 1 + \frac{P_{DC} - P_{diss}}{P_{in}}$$



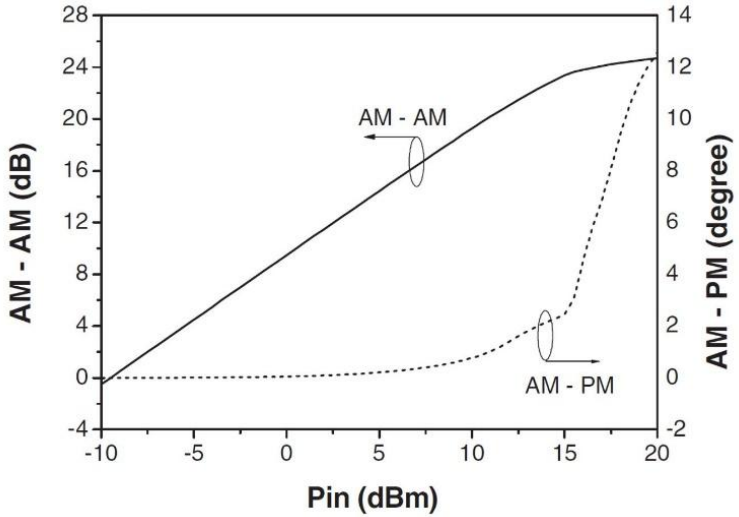
- The gain of a power amplifier is constant over a range of low input power levels – this is its *linear* region of operation.
- The PA can not maintain a constant gain above a certain power level → gain starts decreasing, the PA starts getting compressed and finally saturates (non-linear region of operation).

1 dB compression point

The 1 dB compression point is a measure of the PA distortion and refers to the power at which the output power is 1 dB less than what it should ideally be if the system was linear.



AM-PM distortion

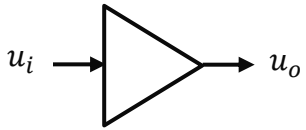


- The **AM–AM** curve of a power amplifier shows the relationship between the output amplitude and the input amplitude at the fundamental frequency. Based on the AM-AM curve, we can extract the 1-dB compression point (P_{1dB}).

- The **AM-PM** distortion curve refers to the phase variation due to the input power variation. This metric is very important for phase modulated signals (such as QPSK), as the phase deviation increases the bit error rate (BER) in digital communications

Source: P. Colantonio, F. Giannini, E. Limiti, High efficiency RF and microwave solid state power amplifiers

Harmonics



For a sinusoidal input signal u_i, the output u_o will be:

$$u_o = a_o + a_1 u_i + a_2 {u_i}^2 + \cdots + a_n {u_i}^n$$

For a single-frequency sinusoidal input signal ($u_i = A\cos(\omega_o t)$), at the output of the PA we get:

$$u_o = a_o + a_1 A\cos(\omega_o t)) + a_2 (A\cos(\omega_o t))^2 + \ldots + a_n (A\cos(\omega_o t))^n$$

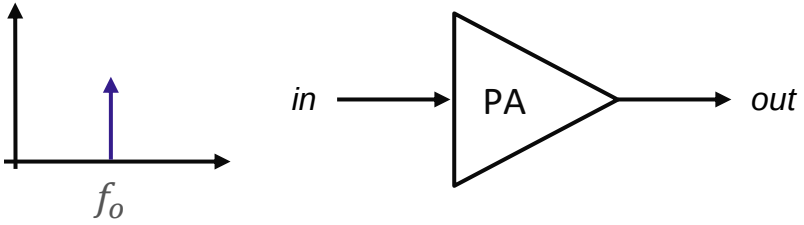
$constant$ $\quad freq.component\ at\ f_o$ $\quad freq.component\ at\ 2f_o$ $\quad freq.component\ at\ nf_o$

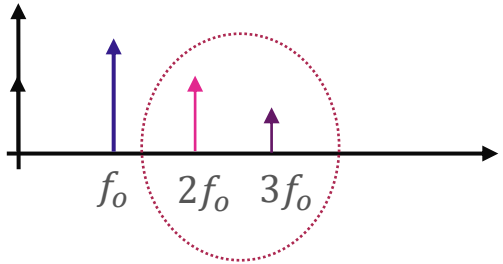
The output spectrum of the power amplifier consists of:

- a DC offset at the output port
- a signal at the original f_o (fundamental frequency) and
- multiples of the fundamental frequency ($n\ f_o$) → harmonics

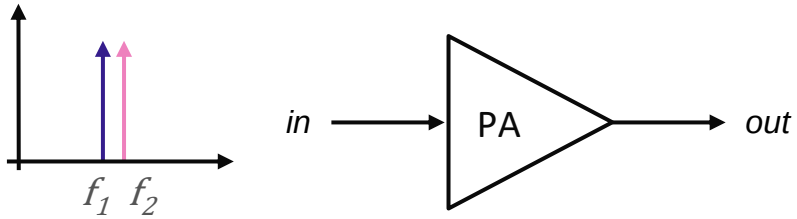
Harmonics

The harmonics are typically far from the fundamental frequency and can be easily filtered .



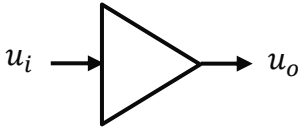


What will be the output of the PA in the case of two input signals?



?

Intermodulation Products

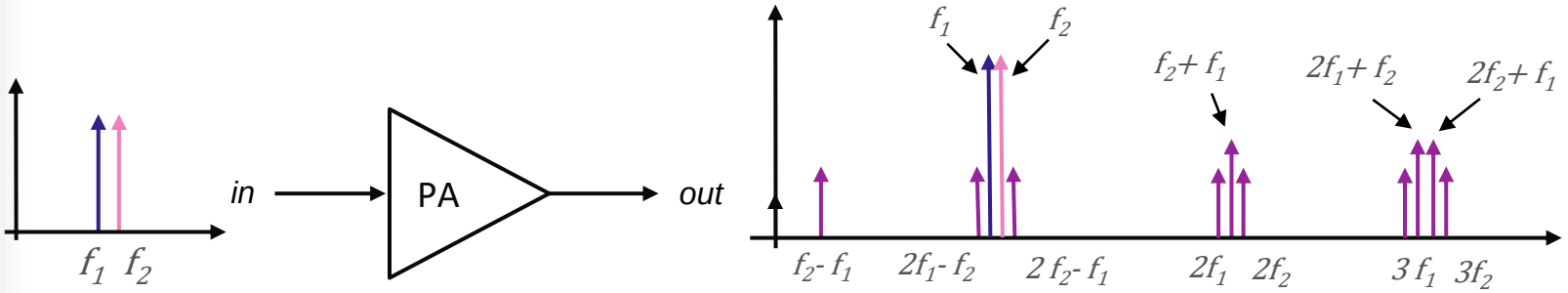


Let's consider a two-tone input signal $u_i = A\cos(\omega_1 t) + A\cos(\omega_2 t)$ at the input of the power amplifier, then:

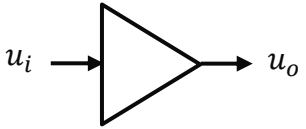
$$u_o = a_o + a_1 A(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t)) + a_2 A^2(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t))^2 + a_3 A^3(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t))^3 + \cdots$$

constant — original freq. — freq. comp. at $(f_1 + f_2)$ & $(f_2 - f_1)$ — freq. comp. at $(2f_1 + f_2)$ & $(2f_1 - f_2)$

… and other frequency components at f_1, $3f_1$, f_2, $3f_2$, $2f_1 + f_2$, $2f_2 + f_1$



Intermodulation Products



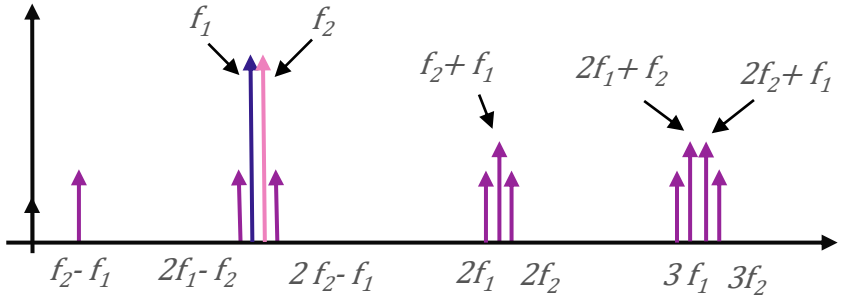
Let's consider a two-tone input signal $u_i = A\cos(\omega_1 t) + A\cos(\omega_2 t)$, at the input of the power amplifier, then:

$$u_o = a_o + \underbrace{a_1 A(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t))}_{\text{original freq.}} + \underbrace{a_2 A^2(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t))^2}_{\text{freq. comp. at } (f_1 + f_2) \text{ \& } (f_2 - f_1)} + \underbrace{a_3 A^3(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t))^3}_{\text{freq. comp. at } (2f_1 + f_2) \text{ \& } (2f_1 - f_2)} + \cdots$$

a_o: constant

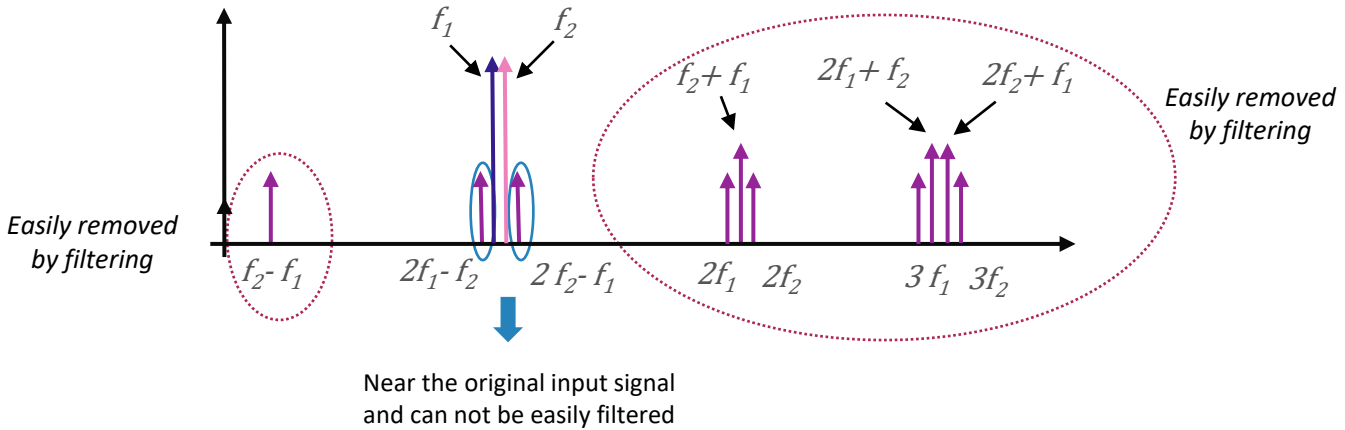
… and other frequency components at f_1, $3f_1$, f_2, $3f_2$, $2f_1 + f_2$, $2f_2 + f_1$

- The output spectrum of the PA consists of harmonics in the form of $mf_1 + nf_2$ where m, n = 0, ±1, ±2, ±3... → these combinations of the two input frequencies are called *intermodulation (IMD) products*.
- The order of a given intermodulation product is defined as |m| + |n|.



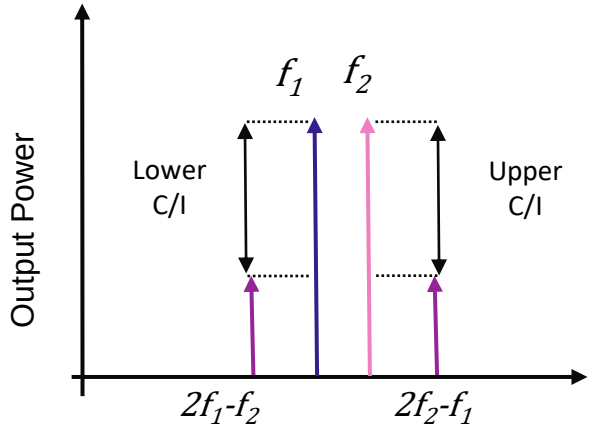
Output spectrum of 2nd & 3rd order two-tone intermodulation products

Intermodulation Products



Output spectrum of second and third order two-tone intermodulation products

Carrier to Intermodulation Ratio

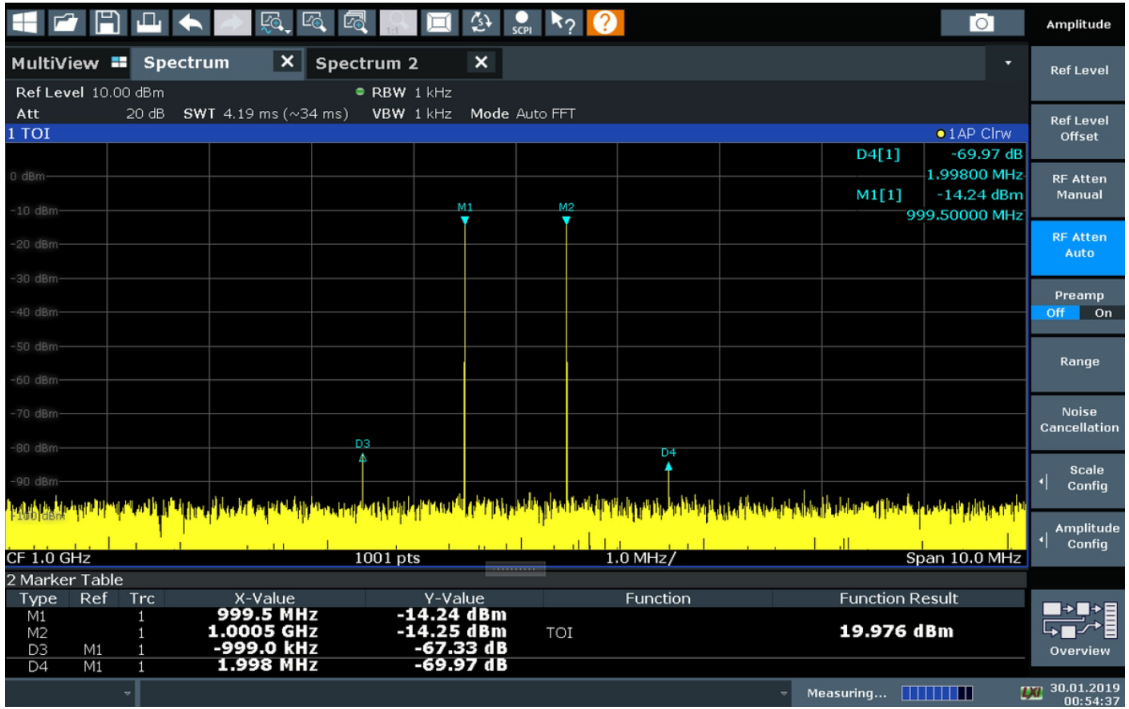


$$C/I = \frac{P_{out(fund)}}{P_{IMD}}$$

The carrier to intermodulation ratio is defined as the ratio of the power at the fundamental frequency and the intermodulation (IMD) output power.

This measure is usually described in **dBc**, meaning decibels below carrier.

Intermodulation Products



Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/15/Two_carrier_3rd_order_intermod_measurement.png

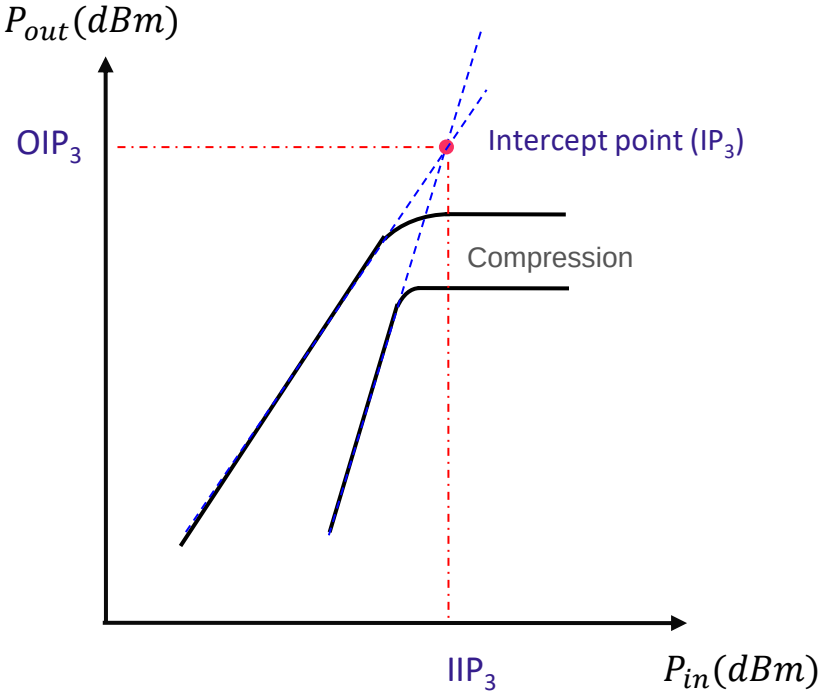
Intercept Point

$$u_o = a_o + a_1 V_o(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t)) + a_2 {V_o}^2(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t))^2 + a_3 {V_o}^3(\cos(\omega_1 t) + \cos(\omega_2 t))^3 + \cdots$$

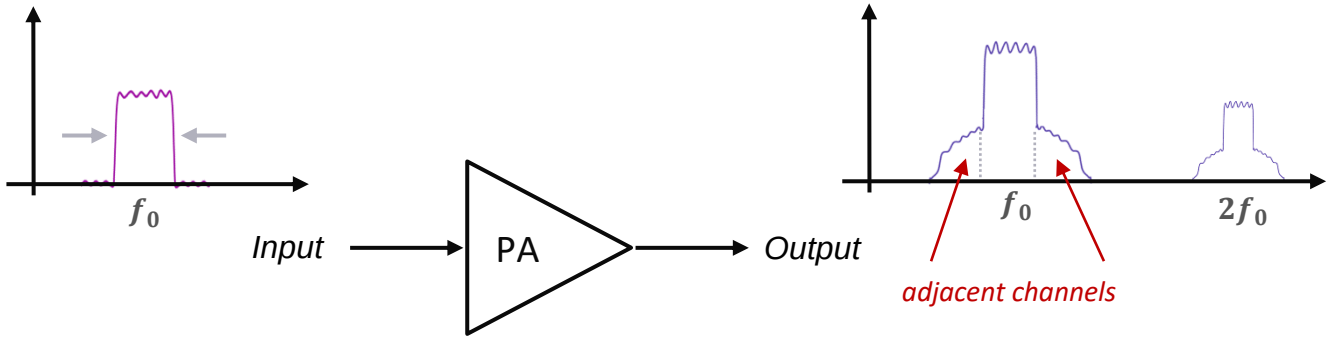
- For low input power levels, the 3rd order intermodulation products will be ‘relatively small’.
- As the input power increases, the power level of the 3rd order intermodulation product will increase quickly.
- There is one theoretical point where the the 3rd order intermodulation product will be equal with the power of the fundamental frequency → 3rd order intercept point (IP_3 or TOI)
- We can find the **3rd order intercept point** graphically by plotting the output power at the fundamental frequency and third-order products versus input power (log scale).

Intercept Point

- The extension of the idealized response of the power amplifier behavior is shown with dotted lines.
- The hypothetical intersection point where the fundamental frequency and the third-order powers would be equal is *the third-order intercept point* (*IP_3*).
- The third-order intercept point may be specified as either an *input power level* (*IIP_3*), or an *output power level* (*OIP_3*).



Adjacent Channel Power Ratio



The non-linearity of the power amplifier can distort the input signal and can cause interference at the adjacent channels (due to spectral regrowth).

Adjacent Channel Power Ratio

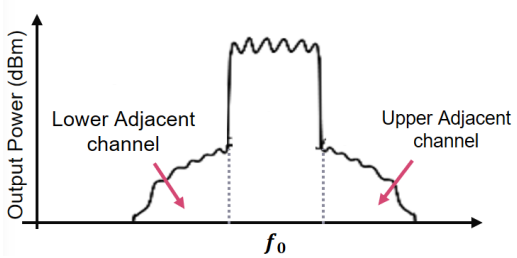
- The adjacent channel power ratio (ACPR) or adjacent channel leakage ratio (ACLR) is a metric for the spectrum regrowth in the adjacent channels.

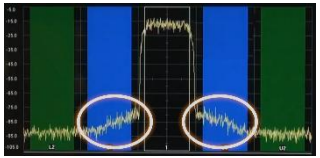
- $ACLR_L$ is the ratio between total output power measured in the fundamental zone (P_o), and the lower adjacent-channel power (P_{LA})

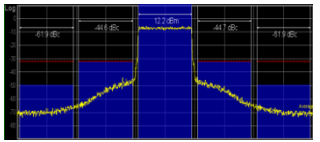
$$ACPR_L = \frac{P_o}{P_{LA}}$$

- $ACLR_U$ is the ratio between total output power measured in the fundamental zone (P_o), and the upper adjacent-channel power (P_{UA})

$$ACPR_U = \frac{P_o}{P_{UA}}$$

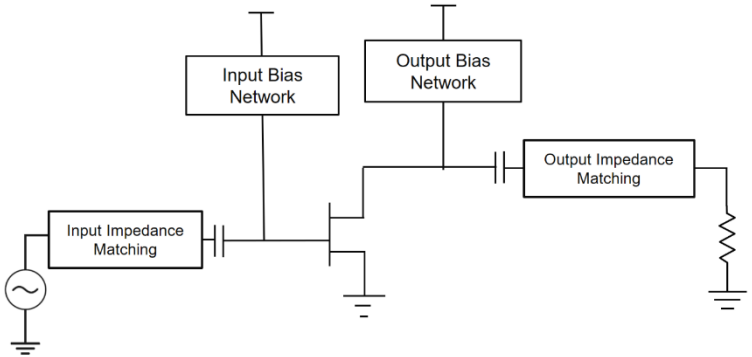




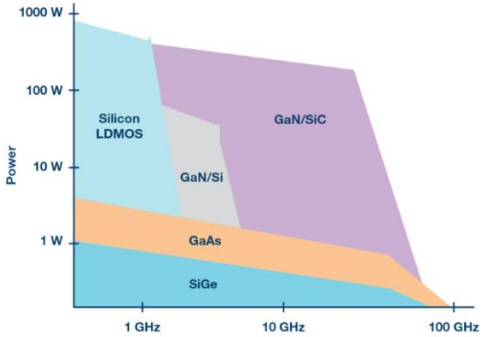


Source: https://www.anritsu.com/

Power Amplifier Topology Example

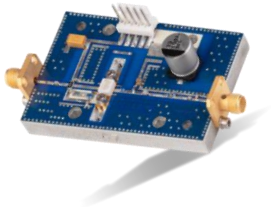


Schematic of power amplifier



Transistor technology selection

Example of commercial PA board



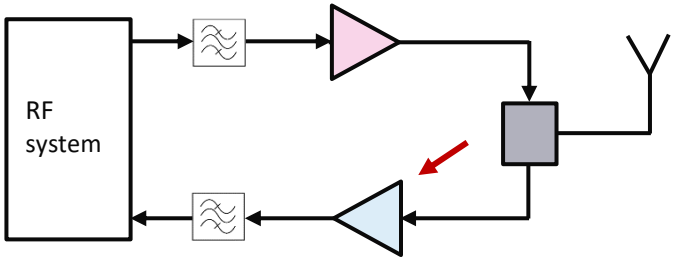
Outline

- Power Amplifier (PA)
- Low Noise Amplifier (LNA)
- Antenna
- Duplexer/ Switch

Low Noise Amplifier (LNA)

The Low Noise Amplifier (LNA) is an amplifier typically found at the receiver path of a transceiver.

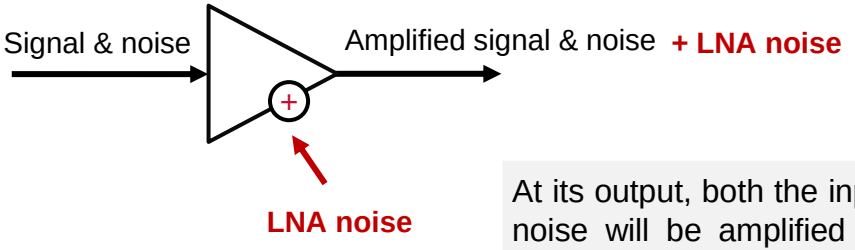
Its role is to amplify the low-power received signal to the desired level with the addition of minimum noise!



Key performance parameters are the *gain, efficiency, linearity and noise figure*…

Low Noise Amplifier

The signal at the input of the LNA contains the desired signal plus some unwanted noise.



At its output, both the input signal and noise will be amplified by the same amount (gain). However, the noise of the LNA will appear at the output as well.

Signal to Noise Ratio

$$SNR = \frac{P_s}{P_N} = \frac{signal\ power}{noise\ power}$$

Low Noise Amplifier

- The noise factor measures the change (degradation) of the Signal to Noise Ratio (SNR) between the input and output of the LNA.
- The noise figure (NF) is the log scale of the noise factor.

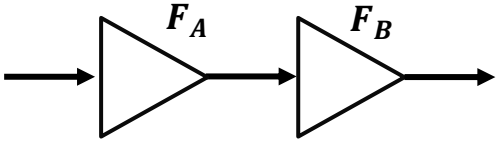
Noise Factor (F)

$$F = \frac{SNR_{in}}{SNR_{out}}$$

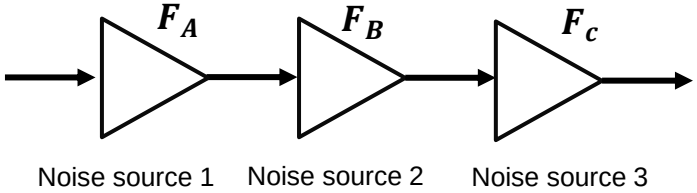
Noise Figure (NF)

$$NF = 10\log_{10}(F) = 10\log_{10}\left(\frac{SNR_{in}}{SNR_{out}}\right)$$

Cascaded Topology



$$F_{tot} = F_A + \frac{F_B - 1}{G_A}$$

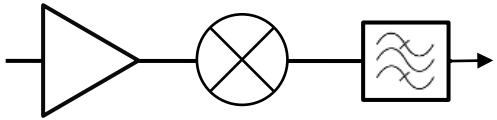


$$F_{tot} = F_A + \frac{F_B - 1}{G_A} + \frac{F_C - 1}{G_A G_B}$$

- In a cascaded system where many stages are connected together (LNAs, filters etc), the overall noise figure should be calculated.
- The performance of the first stage is the most important

Cascaded Noise Figure Example

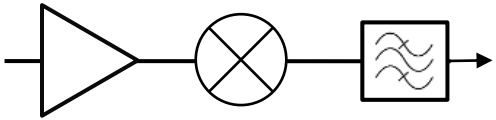
Calculate the overall gain and noise figure



Amplifier NF =3 dB
G =10 dB
Mixer conversion loss = 7 dB
Filter insertion loss 4 = dB

Cascaded Noise Figure Example

Calculate the overall gain and noise figure



Amplifier NF=3 dB
G=10 dB
Mixer conversion loss= 7 dB
Filter insertion loss 4 dB

Solution

$$F_{chain} = F_A + \frac{F_B - 1}{G_A} + \frac{F_C - 1}{G_A G_B}$$

$$F_{chain} = 10^{(3/10)} + \frac{10^{(7/10)} - 1}{10^{(10/10)}} + \frac{10^{(4/10)} - 1}{10^{(10/10)} 10^{(-7/10)}} = 3.15$$

$$NF = 10log10(3.15) = 5\ dB$$

$$G_{chain} = 10 - 7 - 4 = -1\ dB$$

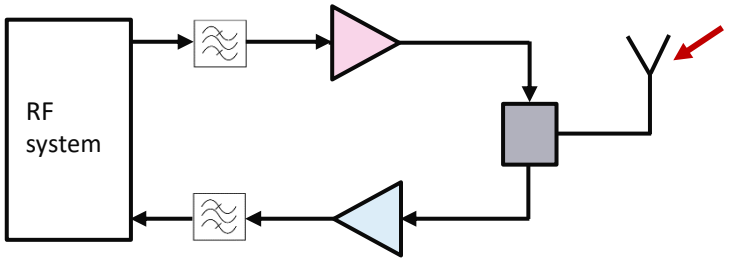
Outline

- Power Amplifier (PA)
- Low Noise Amplifier (LNA)
- Antenna
- Duplexer/ Switch

Antennas

- **Antennas** are responsible for the transmission and reception of the radio waves.

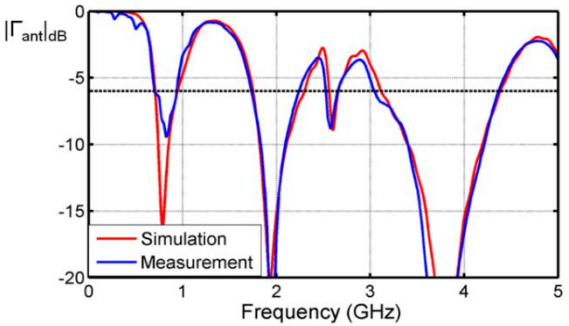
  There is a range of antenna types (e.g. wire antennas, microstrip antennas, reflector antennas).

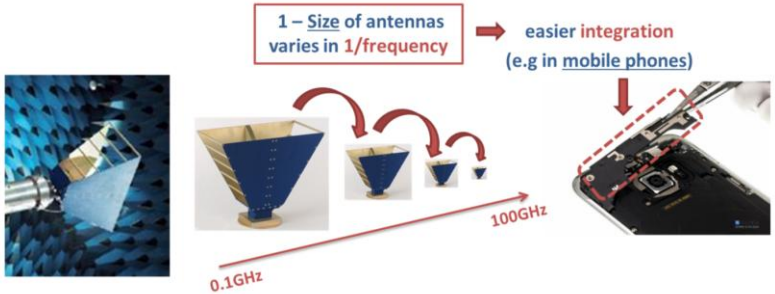


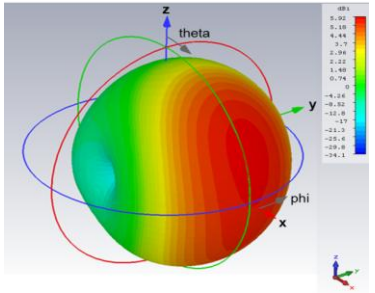
Key performance parameters are the *bandwidth, gain, efficiency and radiation pattern*…

Antennas Design Parameters

- Examples of antenna design parameters: bandwidth, gain and radiation pattern.
- The radiation pattern of an antenna defines how the radiated power varies in space.







Radiation pattern

Outline

- Power Amplifier (PA)
- Low Noise Amplifier (LNA)
- Antenna
- Duplexer/ Switch

Wireless communication systems

Band No.	Band Definition	Uplink Frequency Range	Downlink Frequency Range	FDD/TDD System
1	Mid-Band	1920-1980 MHz	2110-2170 MHz	FDD
2	Mid-Band	1850-1910 MHz	1930-1990 MHz	FDD
3	Mid-Band	1710-1785 MHz	1805-1880 MHz	FDD
4	Mid-Band	1710-1755 MHz	2110-2155 MHz	FDD
5	Low-Band	824-849 MHz	869-894 MHz	FDD
6	Low-Band	830-840 MHz	875-885 MHz	FDD
7	High-Band	2500-2570 MHz	2620-2690 MHz	FDD
8	Low-Band	880-915 MHz	925-960 MHz	FDD
9	Mid-Band	1749.9-1784.9 MHz	1844.9-1879.9 MHz	FDD
10	Mid-Band	1710-1770 MHz	2110-2170 MHz	FDD
11	Mid-Band	1427.9-1452.9 MHz	1475.9-1500.9 MHz	FDD
33	Mid-Band	1900-1920 MHz		TDD
34	Mid-Band	2010-2025 MHz		TDD
35	Mid-Band	1850-1910 MHz		TDD
36	Mid-Band	1930-1990 MHz		TDD
37	Mid-Band	1910-1930 MHz		TDD

FDD channels

TDD channels

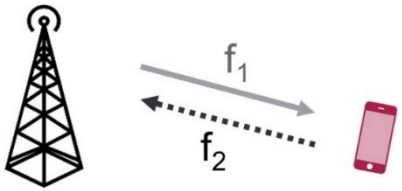
Example of specifications for spectrum usage (FDD and TDD systems)

3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP) refers to a number of standards for mobile communications (e.g. GSM, LTE, 5G etc)

Source: https://www.3gpp.org/

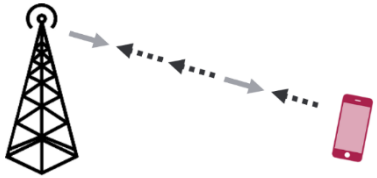
FDD and TDD systems: design difference

FDD system



In a Frequency Division Duplex system, a duplexer can be used to separate the signals paths for the transmitter and the receiver.

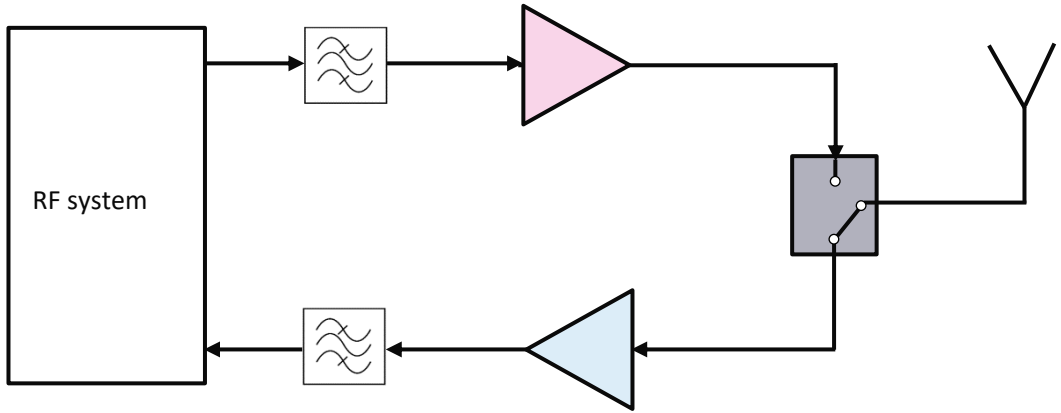
TDD system



In a Time Division Duplex system, an RF switch can be used (same Tx & Rx frequency).

Tx/Rx Switch

In TDD systems, a Tx/Rx switch can be used to connect the antenna at the output of the transmitter and the receiver chain.







Key performance parameters are the *insertion loss, isolation (signal leakage between the Tx and Rx) and switching speed*…

Tx/Rx Switch

- A key parameter for the operation of a Tx/Rx switch is the switching speed.
- The switching speed can be calculated based on the time required to change from the ‘off-state’ to the ‘on-state’ or from ‘on-state’ to the ‘off-state’.

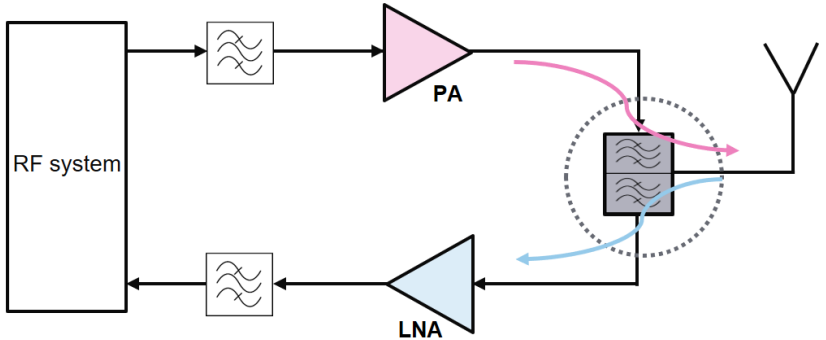
Transmit RF switching time	tsw	10% to 90% RF on, repetition rate = 0.1 MHz, @ 2.6 GHz		250		ns

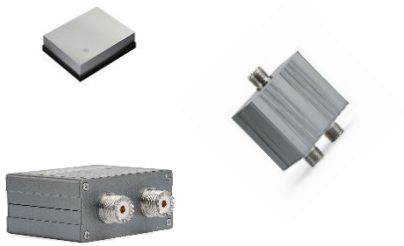
Example of commercial RF switch

Source: Skyworks - SKY12215-478LF

Duplexer

A duplexer is a three port device that allows the transmitter and the receiver operating at different frequencies to share the same antenna (typically the transmit and receive frequency are quite ‘close’).



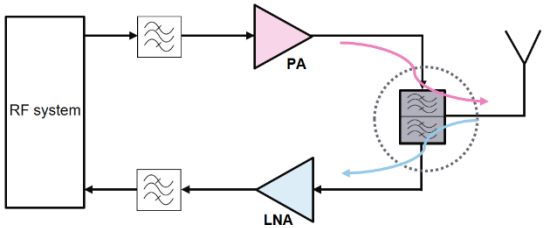


Key performance parameters are the *insertion loss, isolation*…

Duplexer Insertion Loss

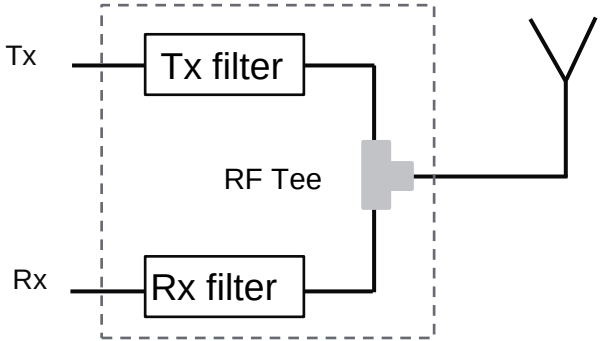
The duplexer is one of the most important components for both the Tx and Rx chain.

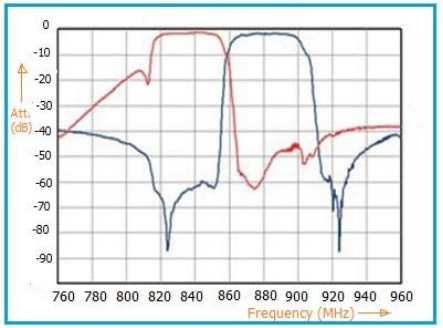
- What does duplexer high insertion loss mean for the transmitter?
- What does duplexer high insertion loss mean for the receiver?



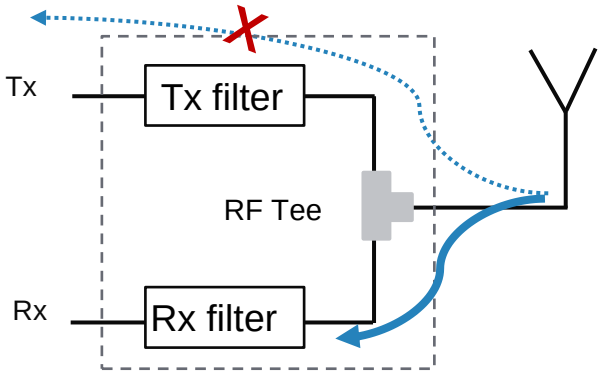
Duplexer

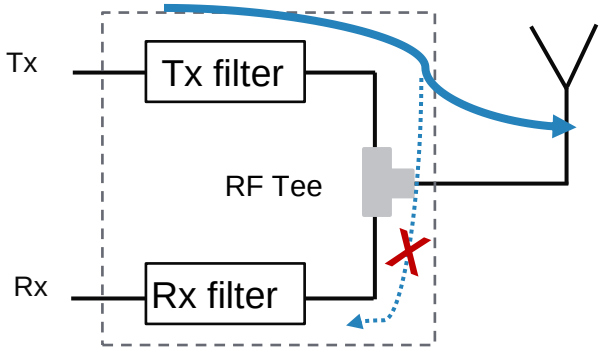
Very selective band pass filters are required to separate uplink and downlink signals





Duplexer Isolation

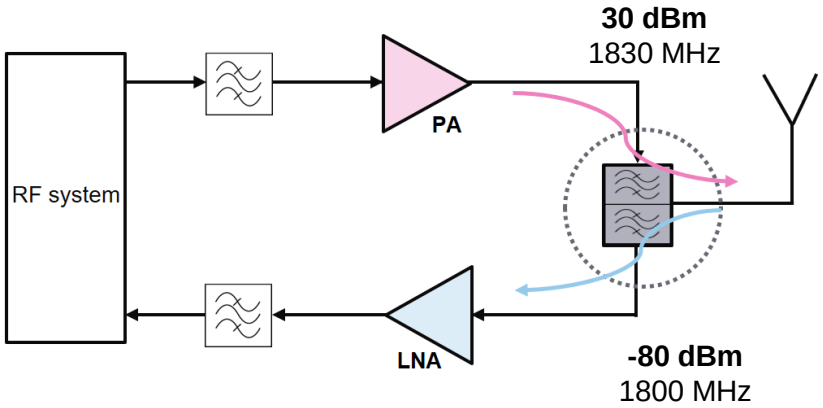




Duplexer Isolation Example

Characteristics of the transceiver shown below:

- transmitted power at 1830 MHz : 30 dBm
- receiver power at 1800 MHz : -80 dBm
- 70 dB isolation duplexer

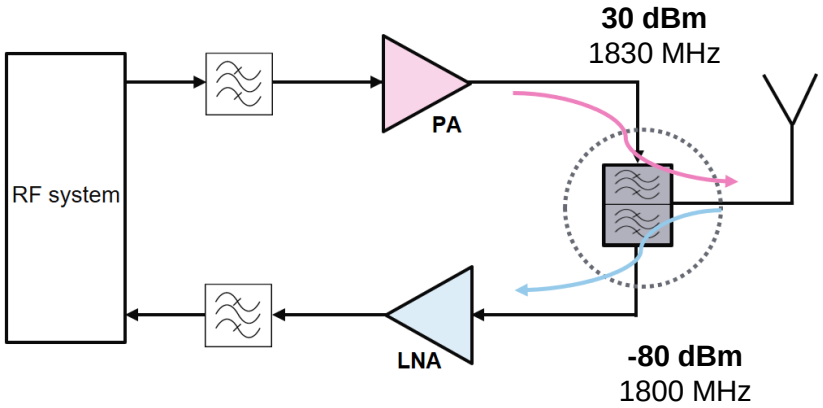


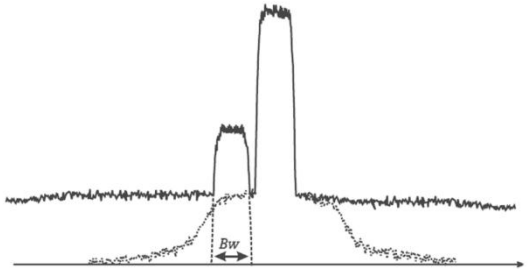
Source: J.C. Pedro, N. Carvalho, Intermodulation Distortion in Microwave and Wireless circuits

Duplexer Isolation Example

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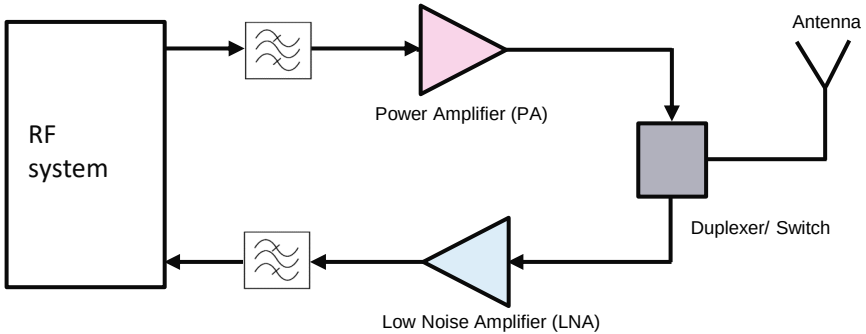


The receiver will be driven by the received signal of -80 dBm plus an interferer of 40 dB stonger!

Source: J.C. Pedro, N. Carvalho, Intermodulation Distortion in Microwave and Wireless circuits

Summary of today's lecture

- Overview of RF Front-End Blocks
- Analysis of main RF components:
  - Power Amplifier (PA)
  - Low Noise Amplifier (LNA)
  - Antenna
  - Duplexer/RF switch



Bibliography & Useful Resources

1 - S. M. Redl et al, An introduction to GSM, Artech house

2 - L. Larson, RF and Microwave Circuit design for wireless Communications, Artech house

3 - P. Young, Electronic communication techniques, Prentice Hall

4 - D. M. Pozar, Microwave Engineering, Addison Wesley

5 - G. Gonzales, Microwave transistor amplifiers, Prentice Hall

6 - Proceeding of IEEE conference on RF IC

7 - J.C. Pedro, N. Carvalho, Intermodulation Distortion in Microwave and Wireless circuits, Artech house

8 - P. Colantonio, F. Giannini, E. Limiti, High efficiency RF and microwave solid state power amplifiers, J. Wiley

9 - https://spectrum.ieee.org/

10 - https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/

11 - https://emfguide.itu.int/

12 - https://www.microwavejournal.com/

13 - https://www.eetimes.com/

14 - https://www.mwrf.com/

Reminder

Absolute power levels are expressed in decibels, with a reference power level (usually 1 mW and 1W)
For reference value of 1 mW → dB**m**.
For reference value of 1 W → dB**W**.

dBm to Watt Power Conversion

$$P_{(W)} = \frac{10^{P(dBm)/10}}{1000}$$

$$P_{(dBm)} = 10 * log10(P/1mW)$$

dBW to Watt Power Conversion

$$P_{(W)} = 10^{P(dBW)/10}$$

$$P_{(dBW)} = 10 * log10(P/1W)$$

Gain and propagation losses (generally variables that express **ratios**) can be expressed in dB form.

$$G = 10^{G_{(dB)}/10}$$

$$G_{(dB)} = 10 * \log_{10}(G)$$