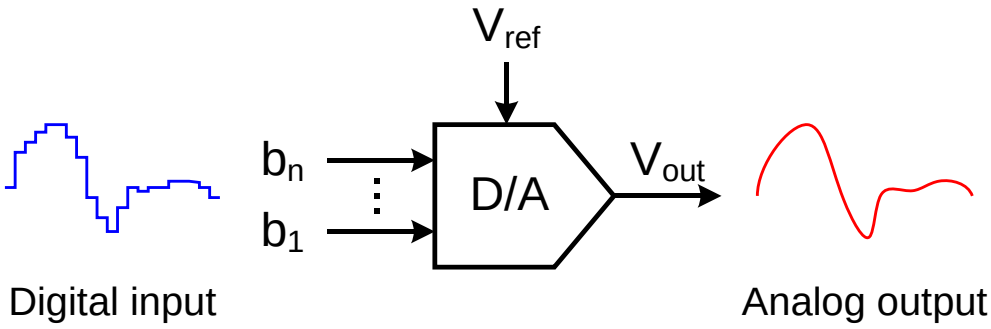
DAC Architectures

Vishal Saxena

Static Performance of DACs

DAC Transfer Characteristics

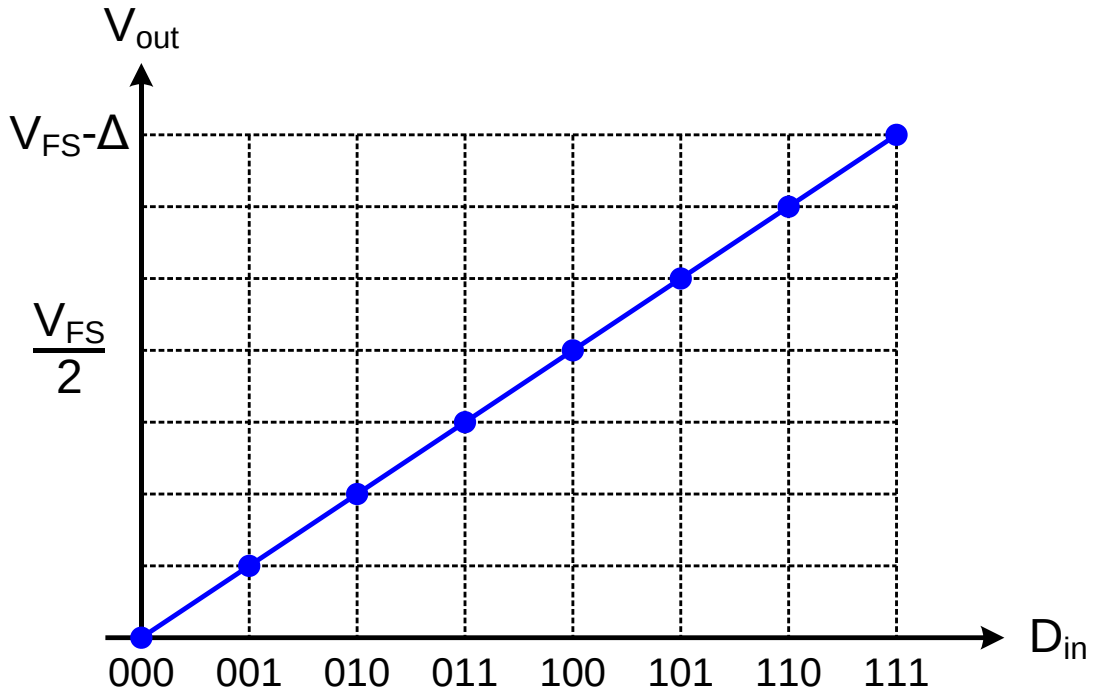


- N = # of bits
- V_{FS} = Full-scale range
- $\Delta = V_{FS}/2^N$ = 1LSB
- b_i = 0 or 1

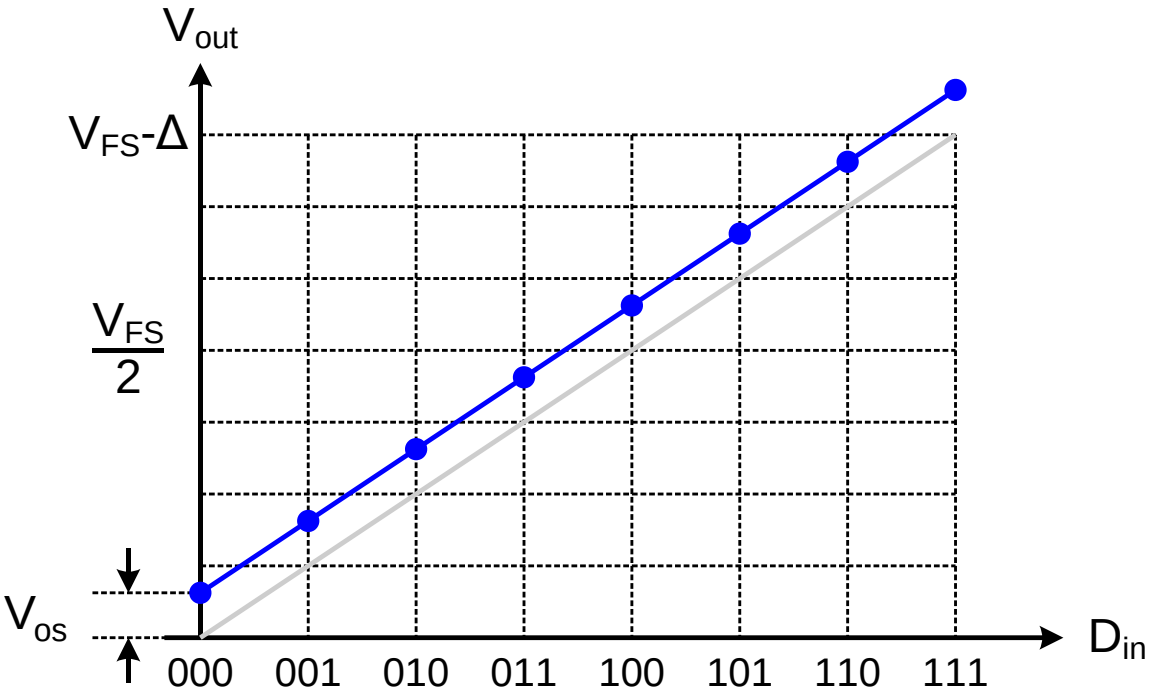
$$V_{out} = V_{FS} \cdot \sum_{i=0}^{N-1} \frac{b_i}{2^{N-i}} = \Delta \cdot \sum_{i=0}^{N-1} b_i \cdot 2^{i-N}$$

Note: V_{out} (b_i = 1, for all i) = $V_{FS} - \Delta = V_{FS}(1-2^{-N}) \neq V_{FS}$

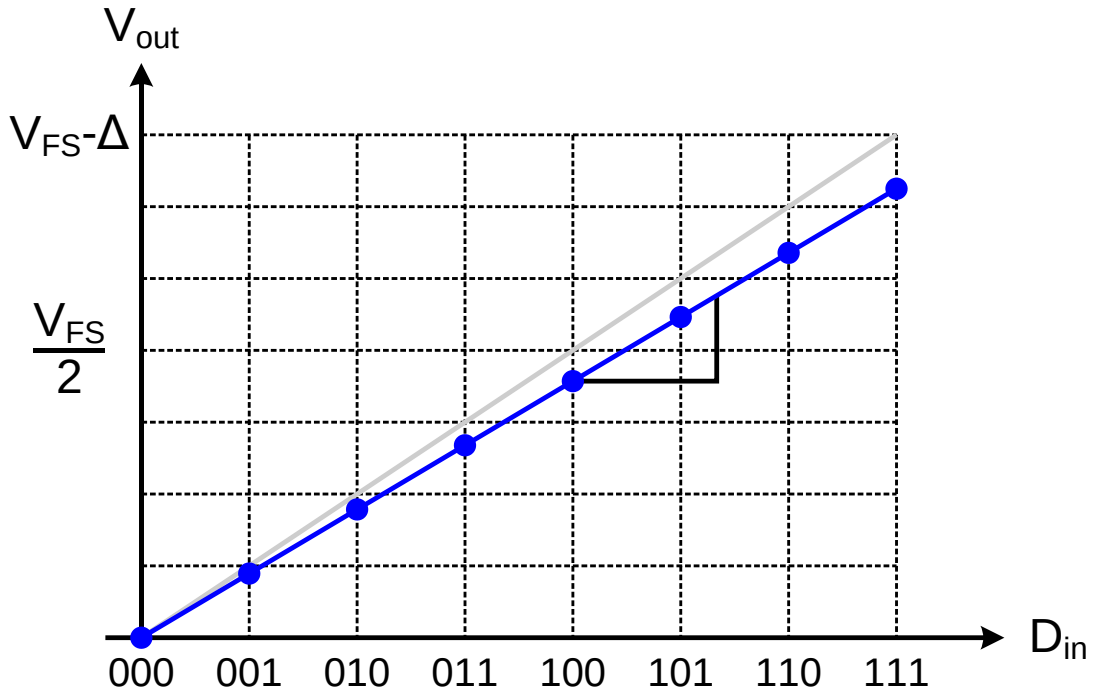
Ideal DAC Transfer Curve



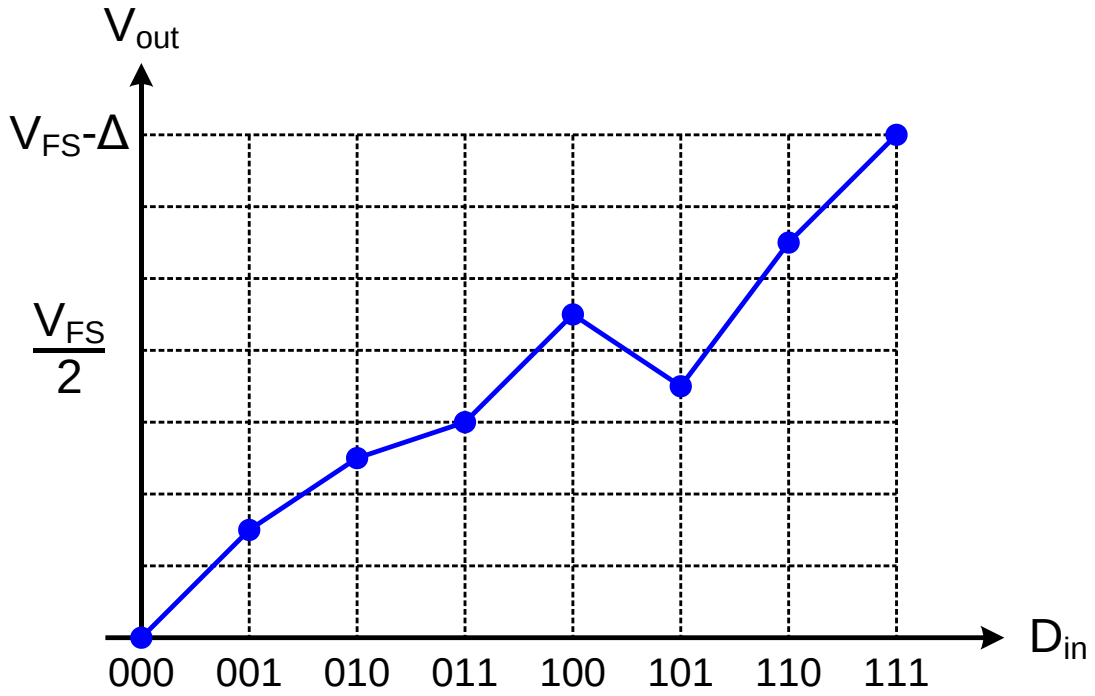
Offset



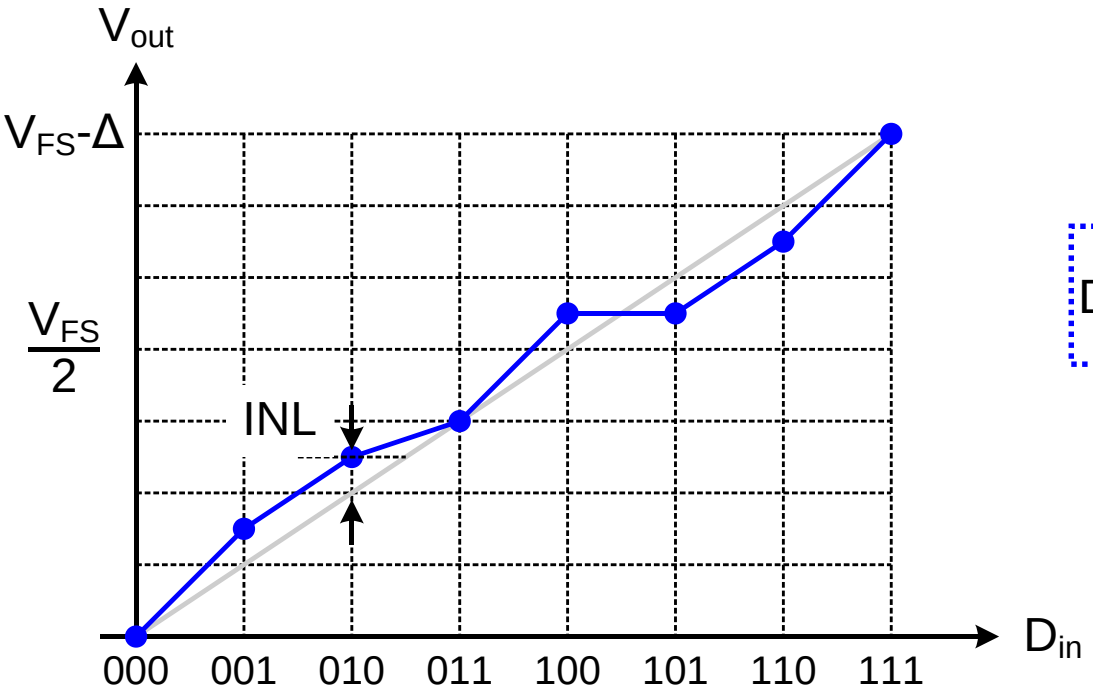
Gain Error



Monotonicity



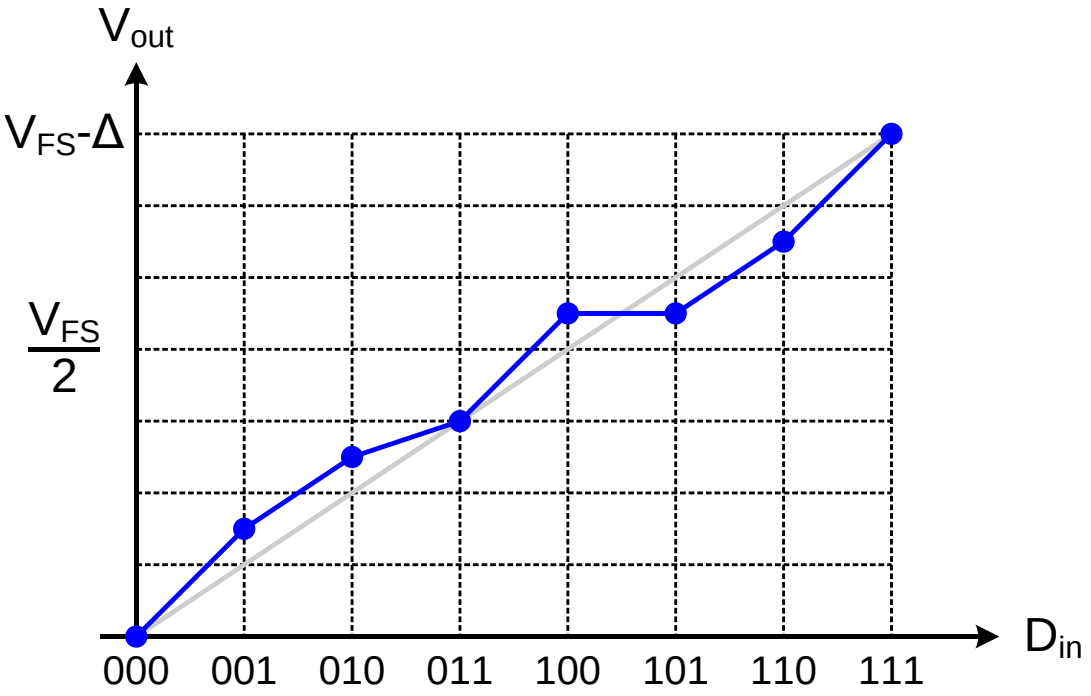
Differential and Integral Nonlinearities



$$DNL_i = \frac{i^{th}\ \text{Step Size} - \Delta}{\Delta}$$

- DNL = deviation of an output step from 1 LSB (= $\Delta = V_{FS}/2^N$)
- INL = deviation of the output from the ideal transfer curve

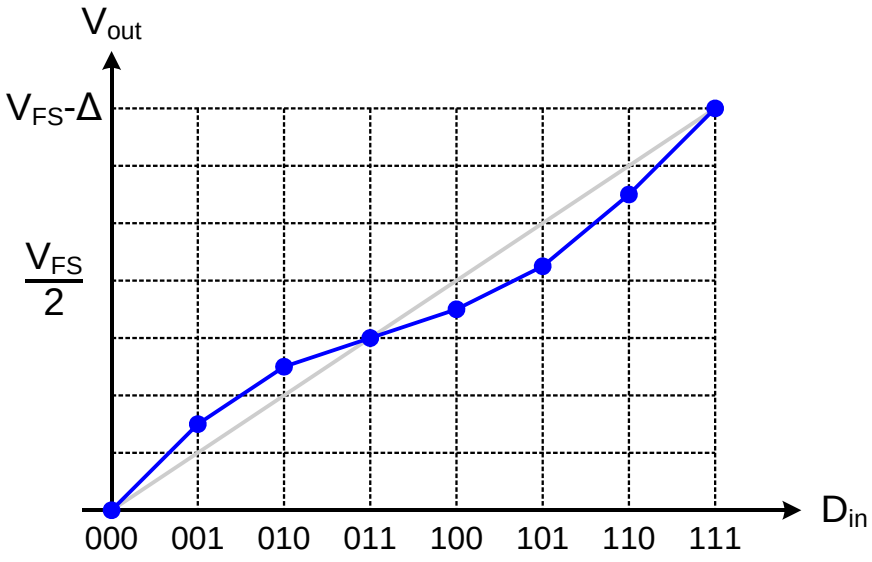
DNL and INL



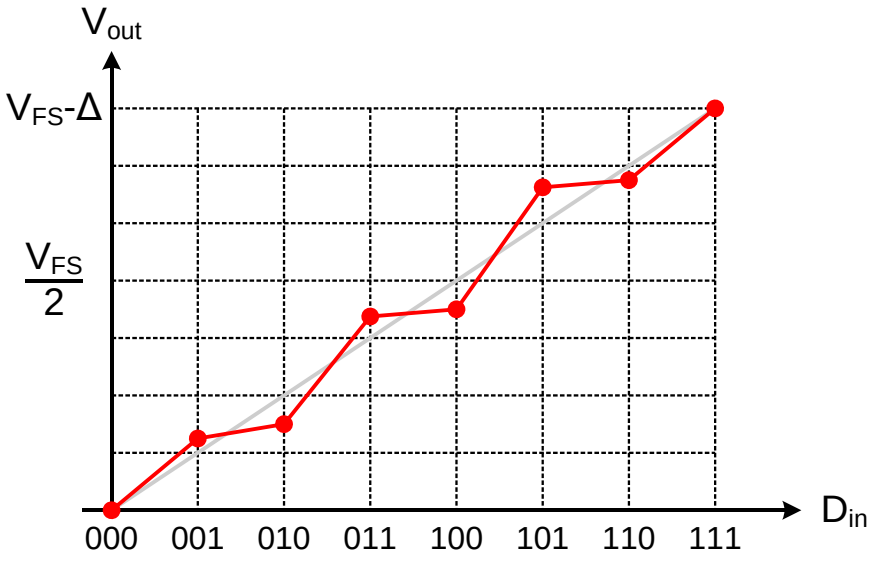
$$INL_i = \sum_{j=0}^{i} DNL_j$$

INL = cumulative sum of DNL

DNL and INL



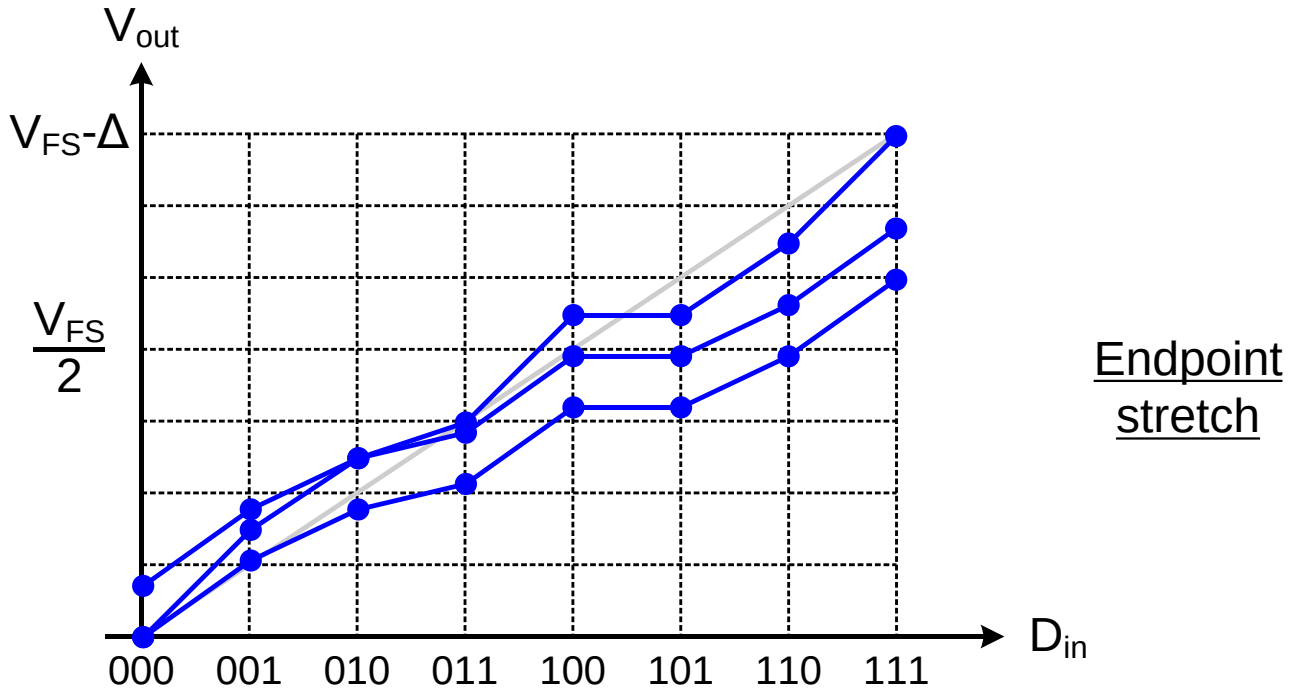
Smooth



Noisy

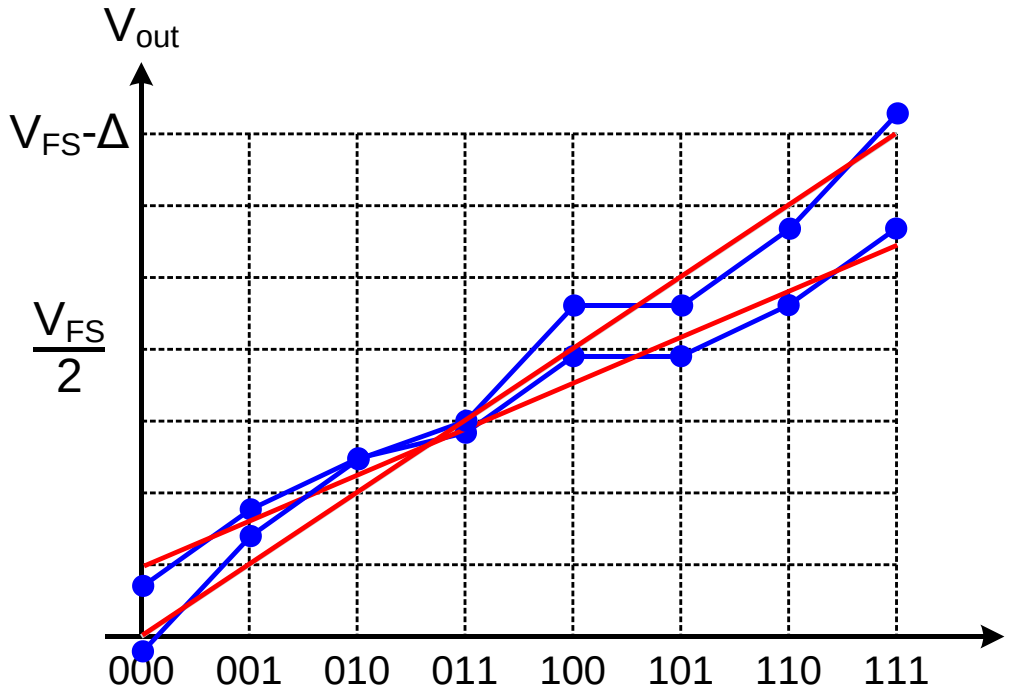
- DNL measures the uniformity of quantization steps, or incremental (local) nonlinearity; small input signals are sensitive to DNL.
- INL measures the overall, or cumulative (global) nonlinearity; large input signals are often sensitive to both INL (HD) and DNL (QE).

Measure DNL and INL (Method I)



Endpoints of the transfer characteristic are always at 0 and V_{FS}-Δ

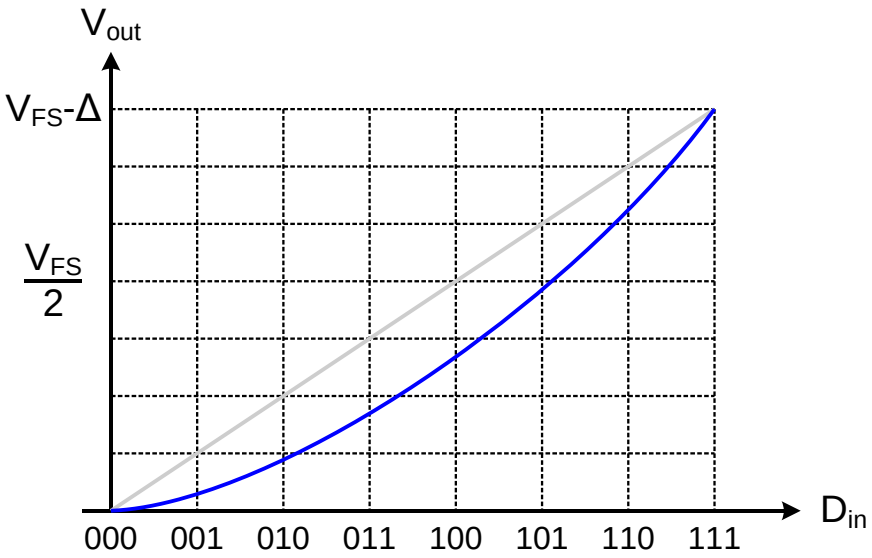
Measure DNL and INL (Method II)

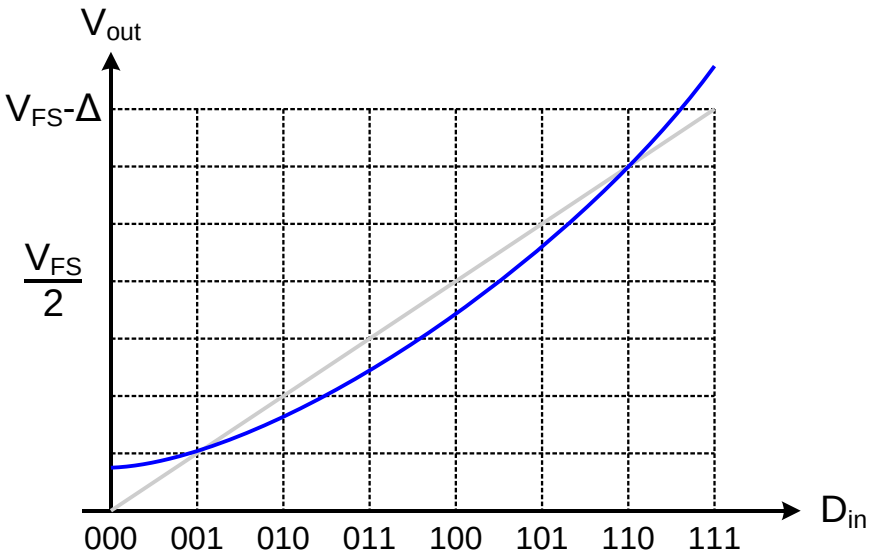


Least-square fit and stretch ("detrend")

Endpoints of the transfer characteristic may not be at 0 and V_{FS}-Δ

Measure DNL and INL





Method I (endpoint stretch)

$\Sigma(INL) \neq 0$

Method II (LS fit & stretch)

$\Sigma(INL) = 0$

DAC Architectures

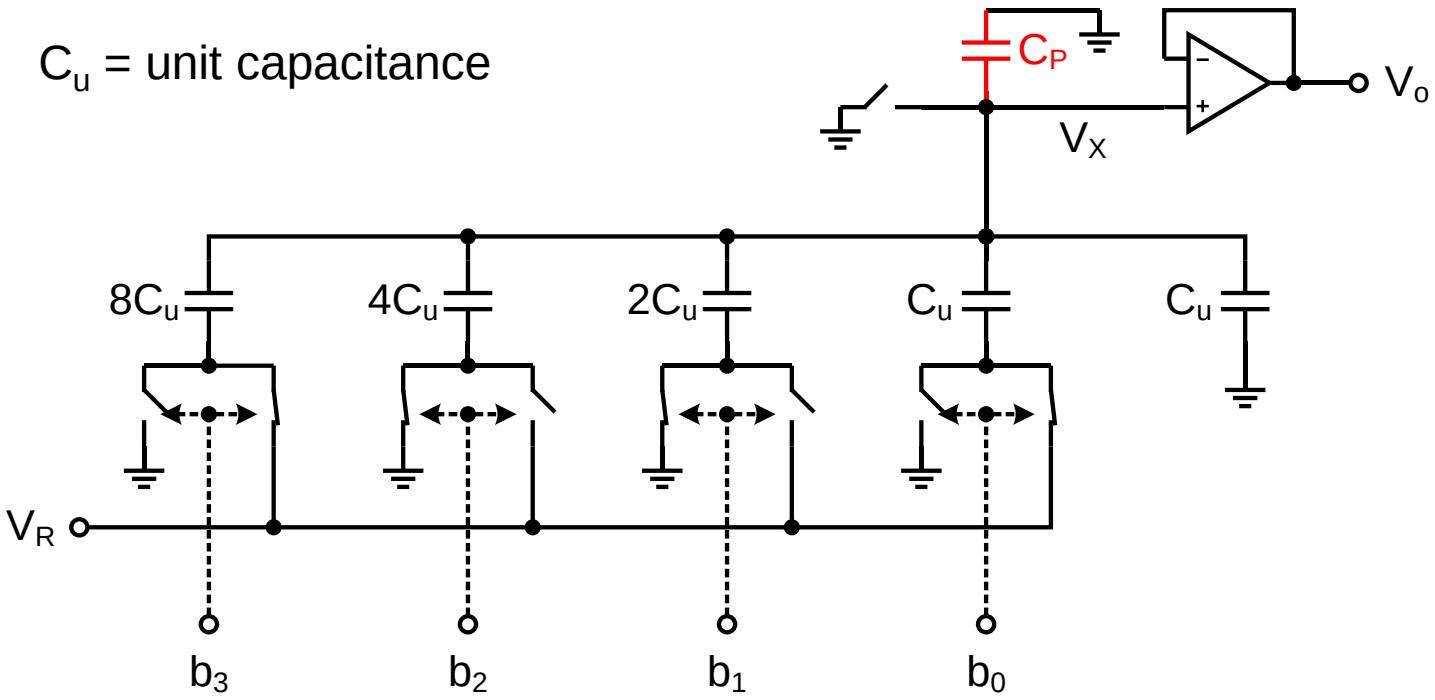
DAC Architecture

- Nyquist DAC architectures
  - Binary-weighted DAC
  - Unit-element (or thermometer-coded) DAC
  - Segmented DAC
  - Resistor-string, current-steering, charge-redistribution DACs

- Oversampling DAC
  - Oversampling performed in digital domain (zero stuffing)
  - Digital noise shaping (ΣΔ modulator)
  - 1-bit DAC can be used
  - Analog reconstruction/smoothing filter

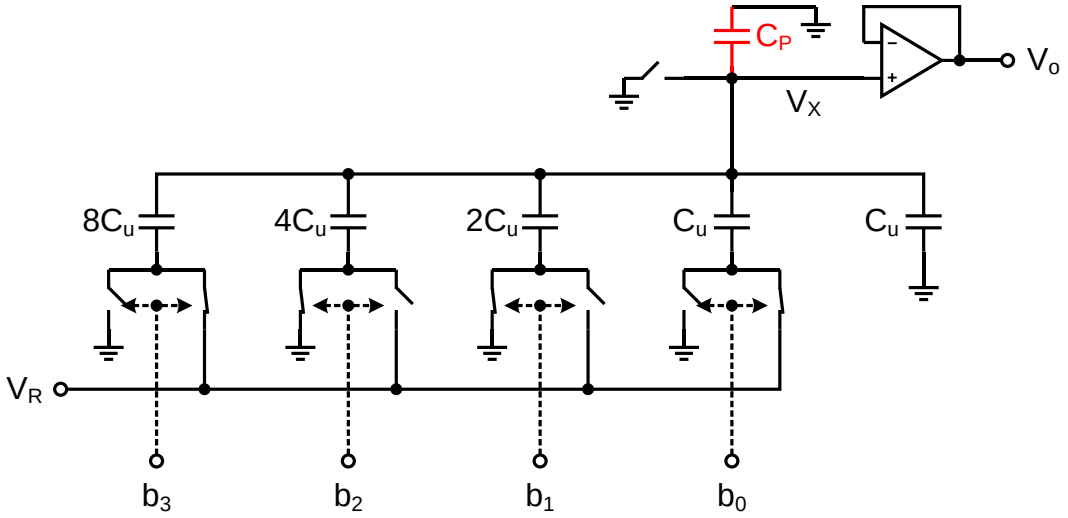
Binary-Weighted DAC

Binary-Weighted CR DAC



- Binary-weighted capacitor array → most efficient architecture
- Bottom plate @ V_R with $b_j = 1$ and @ GND with $b_j = 0$

Binary-Weighted CR DAC



$$V_o = \left(\frac{\sum_{j=1}^{N} b_{N-j} \cdot 2^{N-j} C_u}{C_p + C_u + \sum_{j=1}^{N} 2^{N-j} C_u} \right) \cdot V_R$$

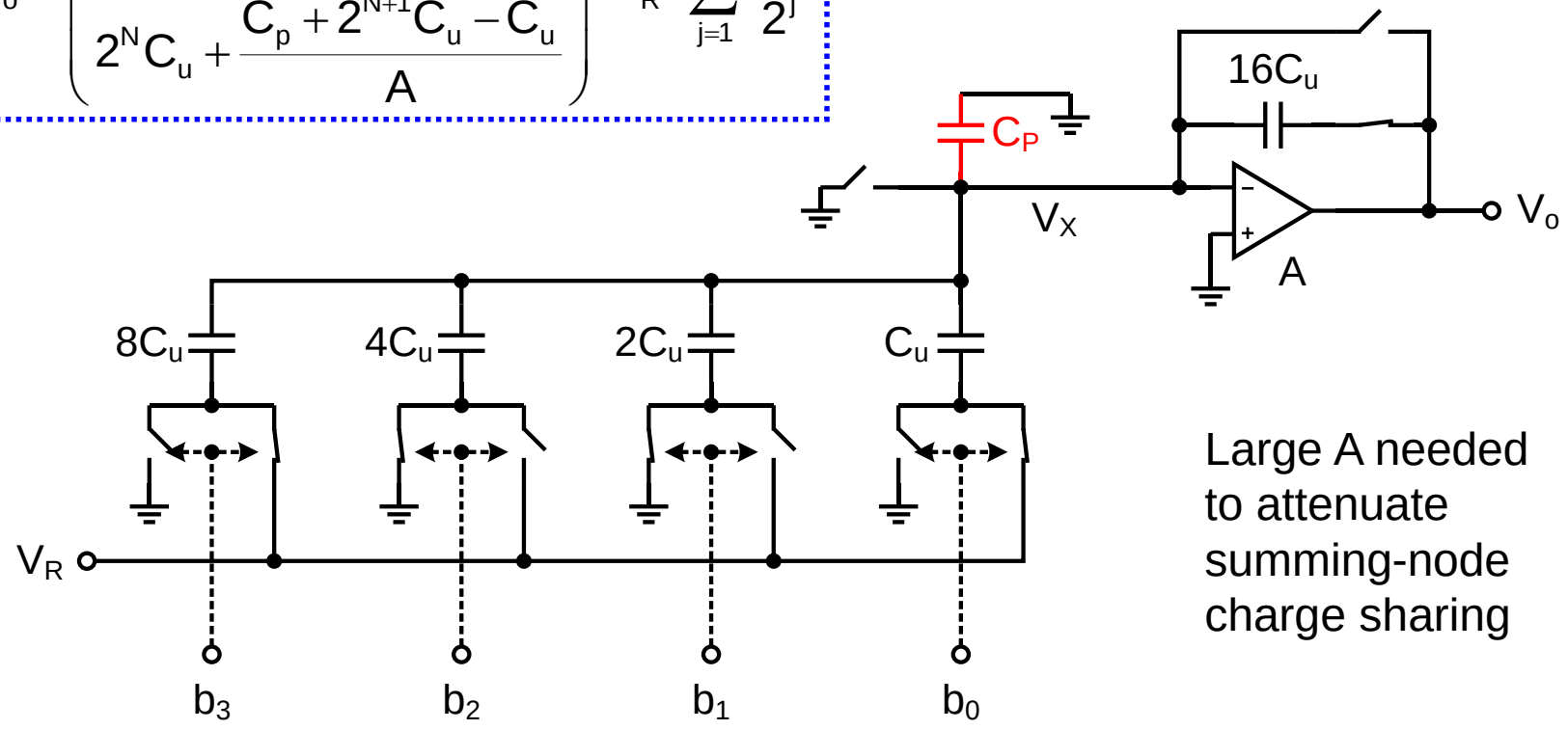
$$= \left(\frac{\sum_{j=1}^{N} b_{N-j} \cdot 2^{N-j} C_u}{C_p + 2^N C_u} \right) \cdot V_R$$

$$V_o = \left(\frac{2^N C_u}{C_p + 2^N C_u} \right) \cdot V_R \cdot \sum_{j=1}^{N} \frac{b_{N-j}}{2^j}$$

- $C_p \rightarrow$ gain error (nonlinearity if C_p is nonlinear)
- INL and DNL limited by capacitor array mismatch

Stray-Insensitive CR DAC

$$V_o = \left(\frac{2^N C_u}{2^N C_u + \frac{C_p + 2^{N+1} C_u - C_u}{A}} \right) \cdot V_R \cdot \sum_{j=1}^{N} \frac{b_{N-j}}{2^j}$$



Large A needed to attenuate summing-node charge sharing

MSB Transition

Code 0111

$$V_o(0111) = \left(\frac{C_1 + C_2 + C_3}{C_p + C + \sum_{j=1}^{4} 2^{4-j} C} \right) \cdot V_R$$

Code 1000

$$V_o(1000) = \left(\frac{C_4}{C_p + C + \sum_{j=1}^{4} 2^{4-j} C} \right) \cdot V_R$$

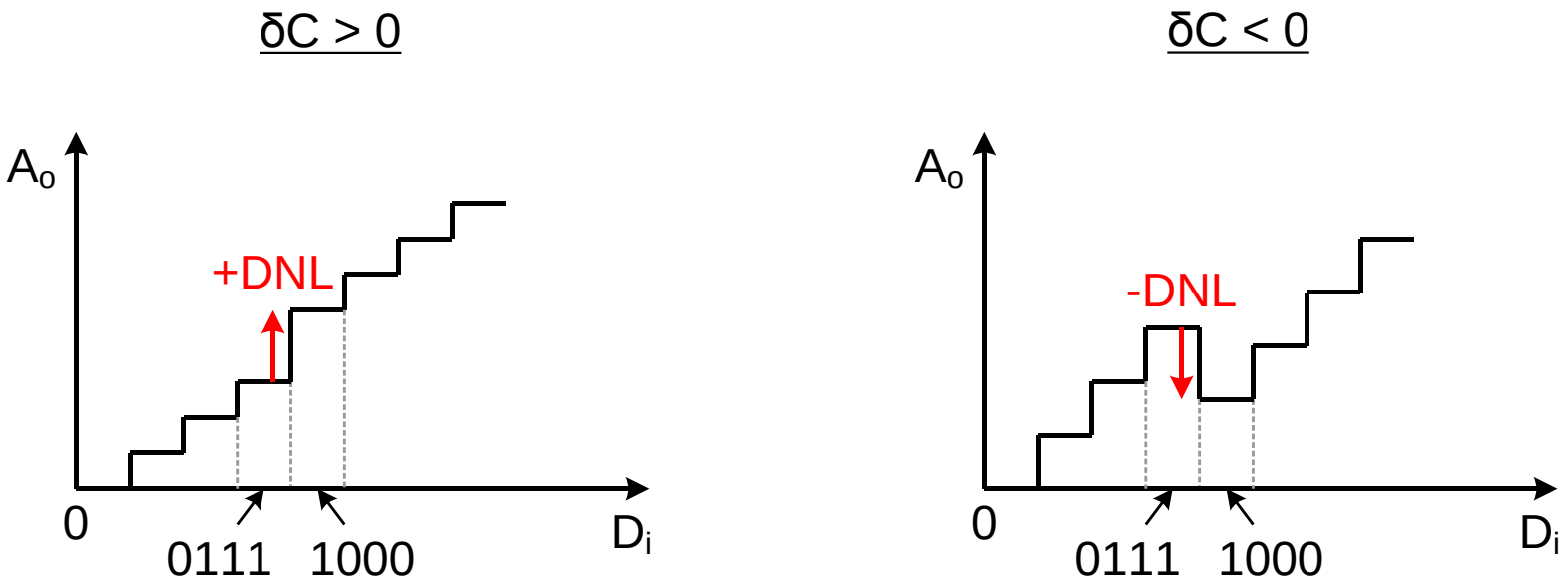
Assume: $C_4 - (C_1 + C_2 + C_3) = C_u + \delta C,$

$$\text{DNL} = [V_o(1000) - V_o(0111) - 1\text{LSB}]/1\text{LSB}$$

$$= \frac{\delta C}{\sum C} \Big/ \frac{C_u}{\sum C} = \delta C / C_u$$

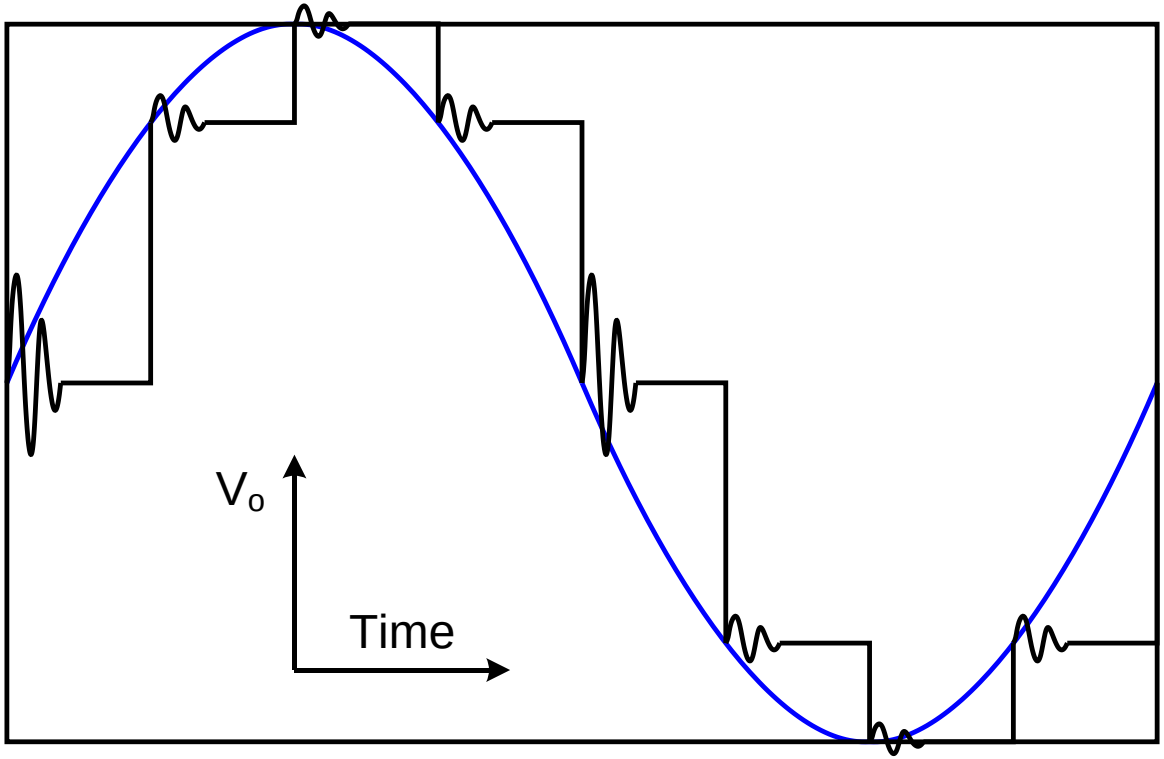
Largest DNL error occurs at the midpoint where MSB transitions, determined by the mismatch between the MSB capacitor and the rest of the array.

Midpoint DNL



- δC > 0 results in positive DNL
- δC < 0 results in negative DNL or even nonmonotonicity

Output Glitches



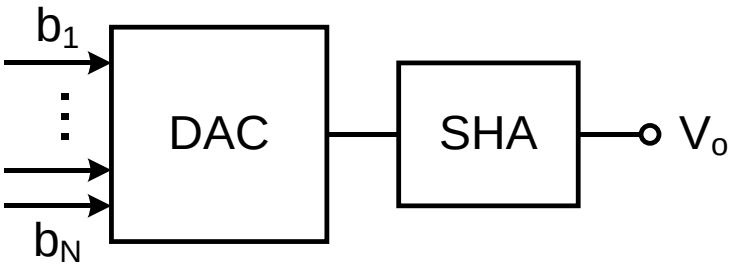
- Cause: Signal and clock skew in circuits
- Especially severe at MSB transition where all bits are switching –

  0111…111 →

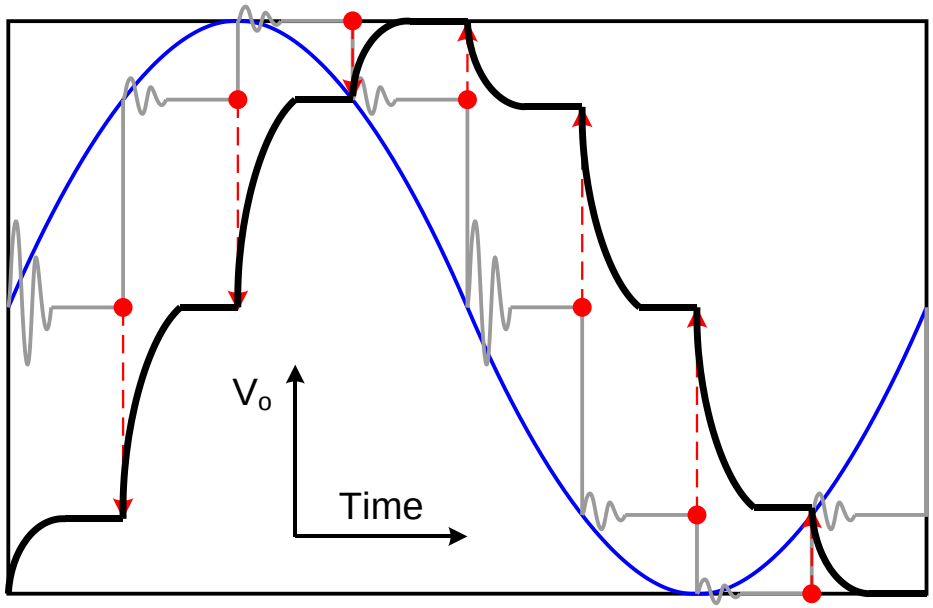
  1000…000

- Glitches cause waveform distortion, spurs and elevated noise floors
- High-speed DAC output is often followed by a de-glitching SHA

De-Glitching SHA

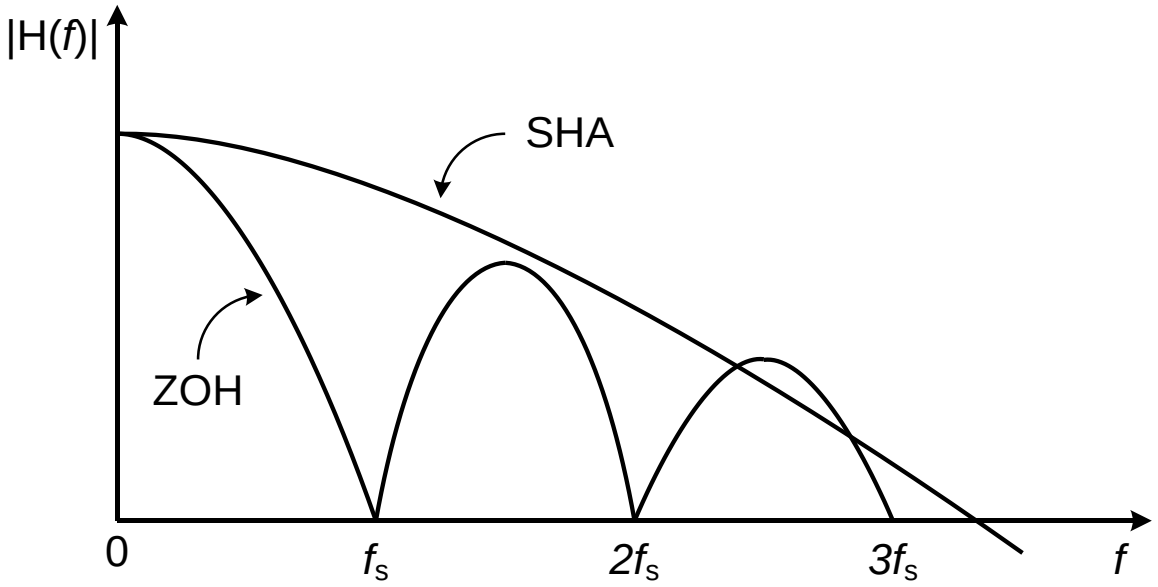


SHA samples the output of the DAC after it settles and then hold it for T, removing the glitching energy.



SHA output must be smooth (exponential settling can be viewed as pulse shaping → SHA BW does not have to be excessively large).

Frequency Response

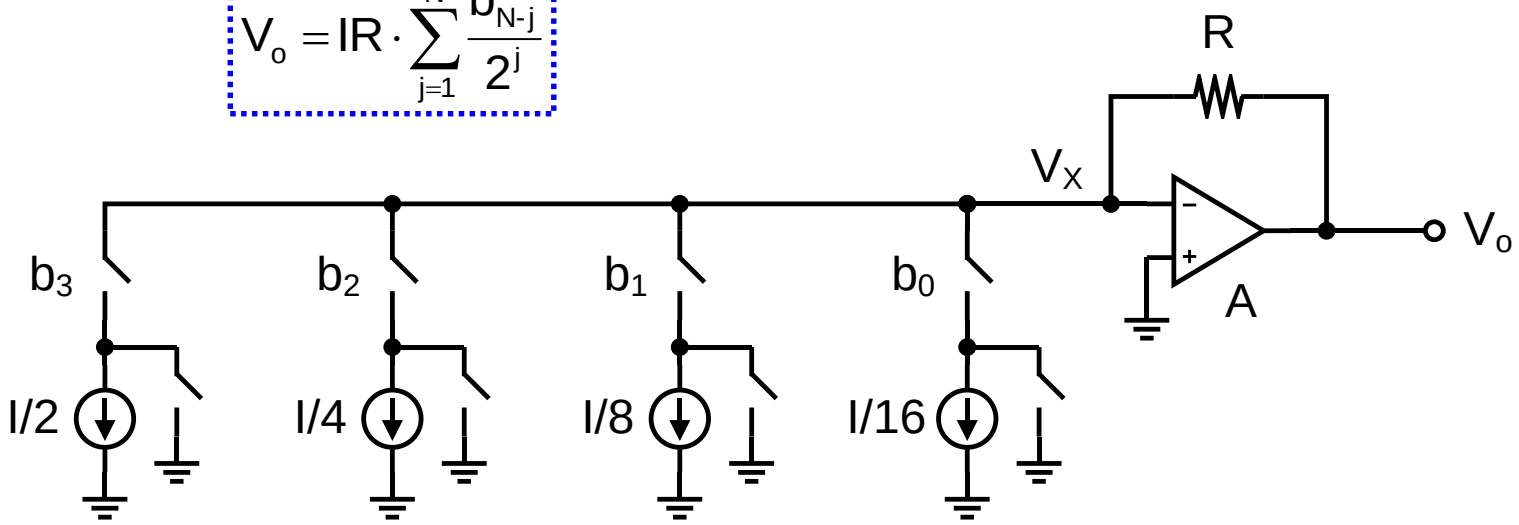


$$H_{ZOH}(j\omega) = e^{-j\frac{\omega T}{2}} \cdot \frac{\sin\left(\omega T/2\right)}{\omega T/2}$$

$$H_{SHA}(j\omega) = \frac{1}{1 + j\omega/\omega_{-3dB}}$$

Binary-Weighted Current-Steering DAC

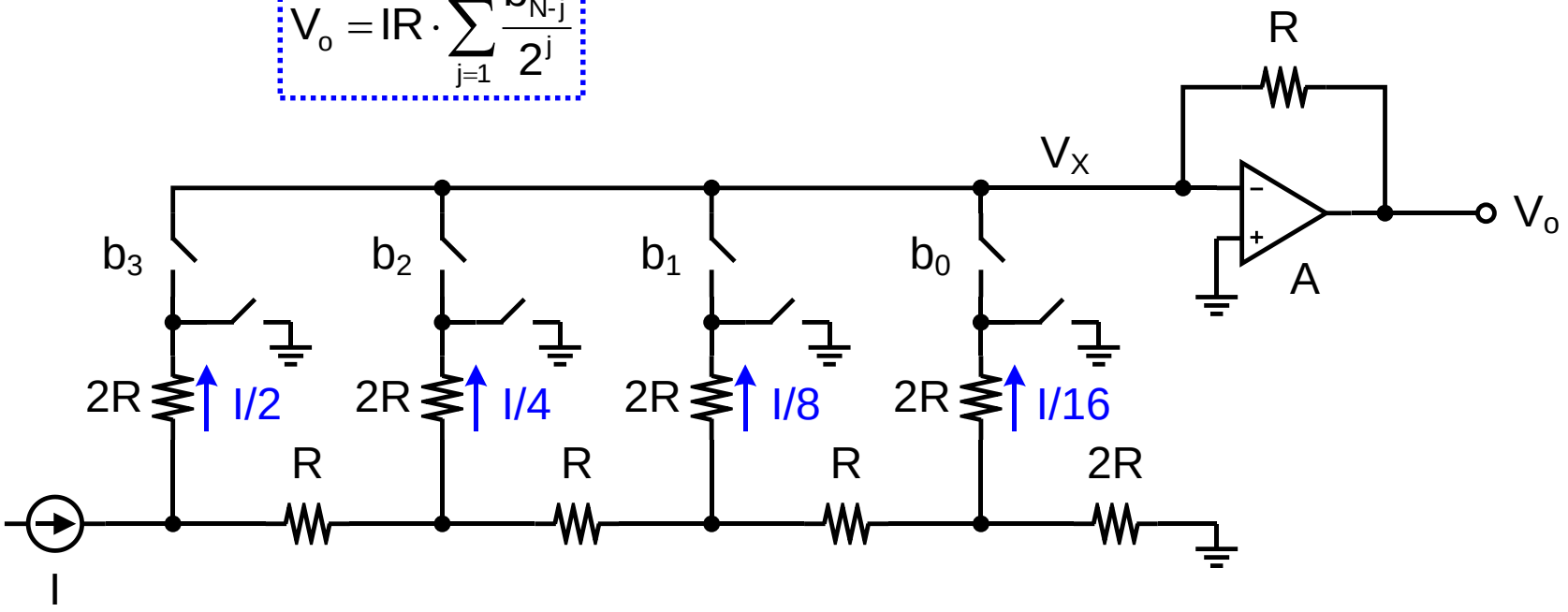
$$V_o = IR \cdot \sum_{j=1}^{N} \frac{b_{N-j}}{2^j}$$



- Current switching is simple and fast
- V_o depends on R_{out} of current sources without op-amp
- INL and DNL depend on matching, not inherently monotonic
- Large component spread (2^{N-1}:1)

R-2R DAC

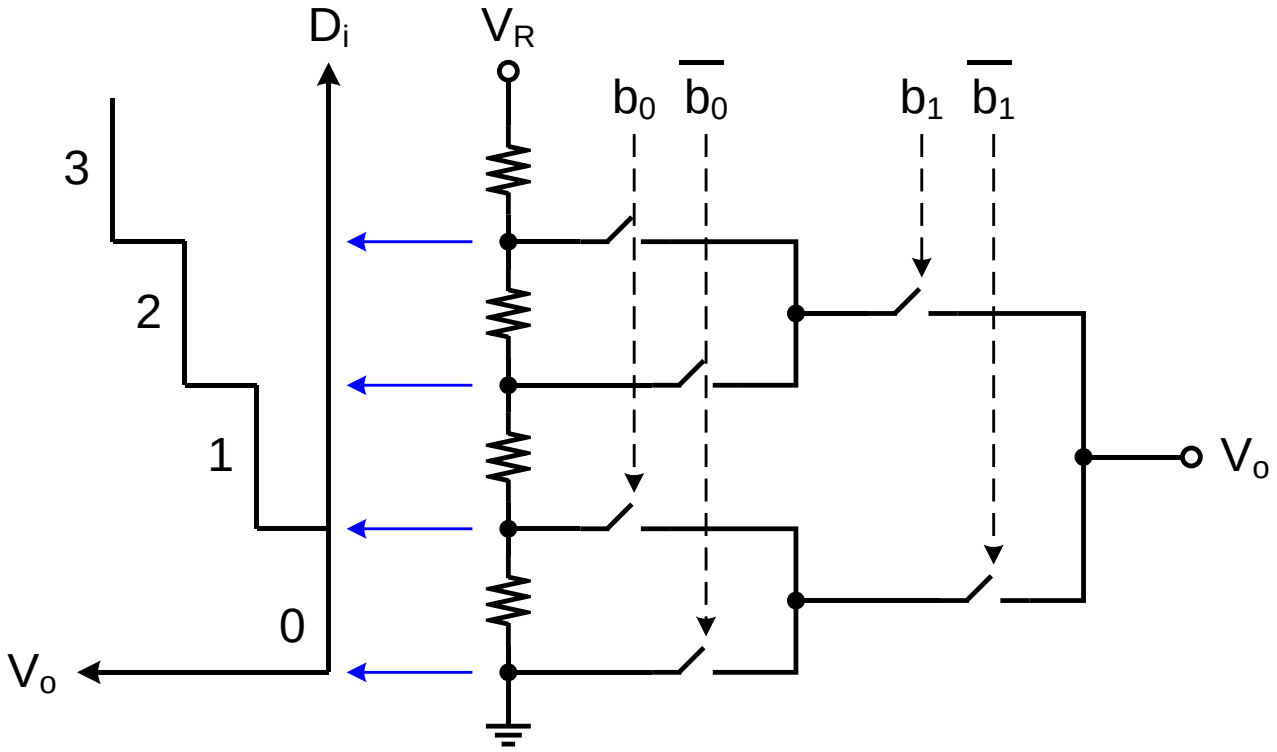
$$V_o = IR \cdot \sum_{j=1}^{N} \frac{b_{N-j}}{2^j}$$



- A binary-weighted current DAC
- Component spread greatly reduced (2:1)

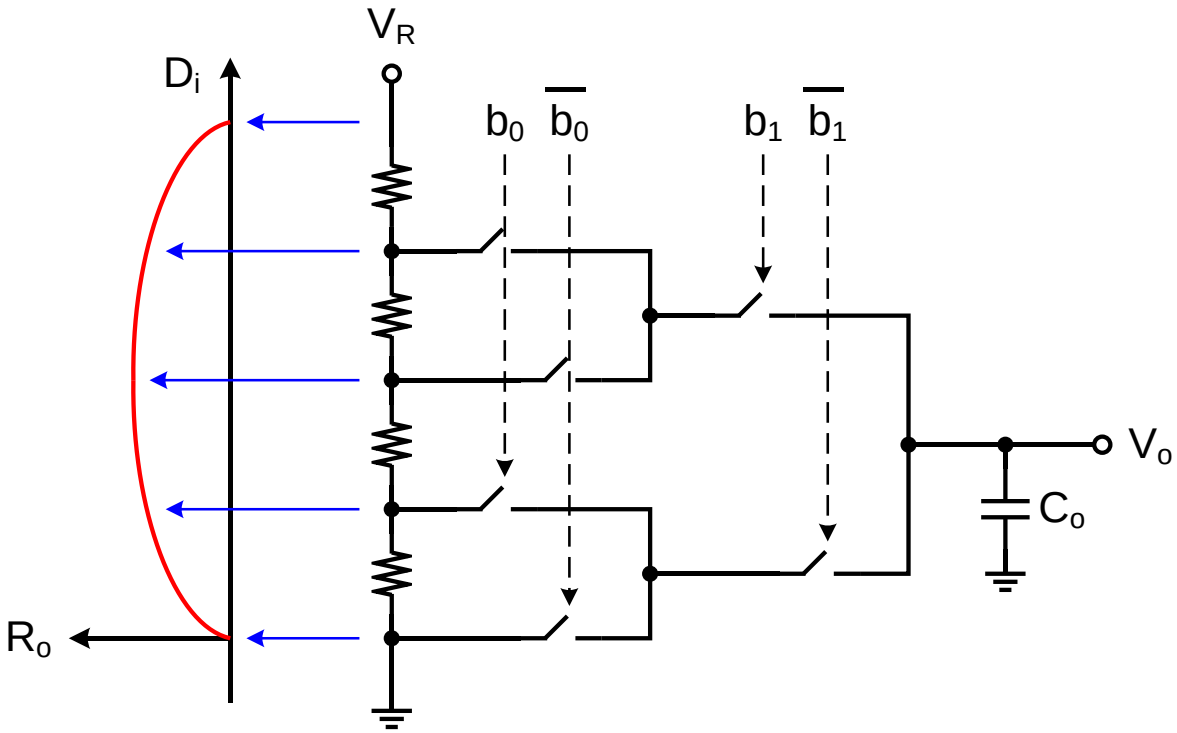
Unit-Element DAC

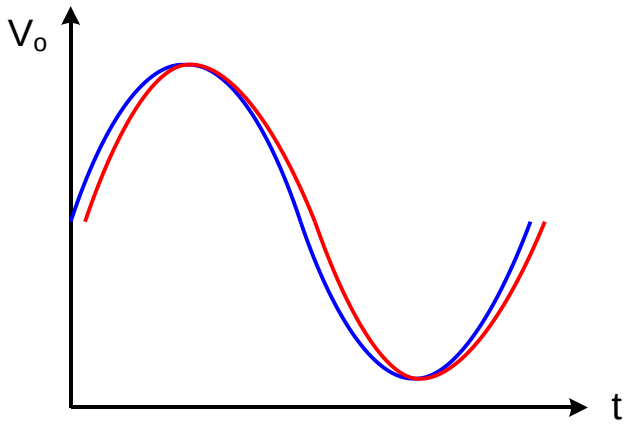
Resistor-String DAC



- Simple, inherently monotonic → good DNL performance
- Complexity ↑ speed ↓ for large N, typically N ≤ 8 bits

Code-Dependent R_o

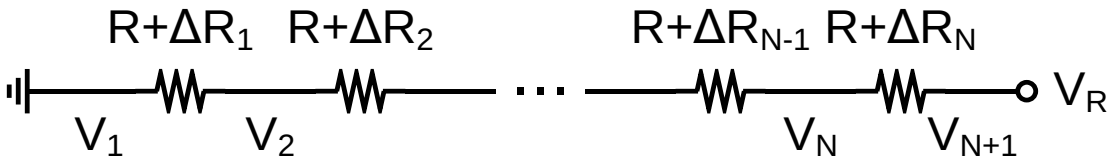




Signal-dependent R_oC_o causes HD

- R_o of ladder varies with signal (code)
- On-resistance of switches depend on tap voltage

DNL



$$\Delta R = [0, \sigma_R]$$

$$V_j = \frac{\sum_{1}^{j-1} R_k}{\sum_{1}^{N} R_k} \cdot V_R = \frac{(j-1)R + \sum_{1}^{j-1} \Delta R_k}{NR + \sum_{1}^{N} \Delta R_k} \cdot V_R$$

$$V_{j-1} = \frac{(j-2)R + \sum_{1}^{j-2} \Delta R_k}{NR + \sum_{1}^{N} \Delta R_k} \cdot V_R$$

$$V_j - V_{j-1} = \frac{R + \Delta R_{j-1}}{NR + \sum_{1}^{N} \Delta R_k} \cdot V_R \approx \frac{V_R}{N} + \frac{\Delta R_{j-1}}{NR} \cdot V_R$$

$$DNL_j = \left(V_j - V_{j-1} - \frac{V_R}{N} \right) \Big/ \frac{V_R}{N} \approx \frac{\Delta R_{j-1}}{R} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \overline{DNL} = 0, \ \sigma_{DNL} = \frac{\sigma_R}{R}$$

INL

$$V_j = \frac{\sum_{1}^{j-1} R_k}{\sum_{1}^{N} R_k} \cdot V_R = \frac{(j-1)R + \sum_{1}^{j-1} \Delta R_k}{NR + \sum_{1}^{N} \Delta R_k} \cdot V_R \approx \frac{j-1}{N} V_R + \frac{(N-j+1)\sum_{1}^{j-1} \Delta R_k - (j-1)\sum_{j}^{N} \Delta R_k}{N^2 R} V_R$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad \overline{V_j} = \frac{j-1}{N} V_R, \quad \sigma_{V_j}{}^2 \approx \frac{(j-1)(N-j+1)}{N^3} \frac{\sigma_R{}^2}{R^2} V_R{}^2$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad \sigma_{V_j}{}^2 (\max) \approx \frac{1}{4N} \frac{\sigma_R{}^2}{R^2} V_R{}^2, \quad \text{when} \quad j = \frac{N}{2} + 1 \approx \frac{N}{2}$$

$$INL_j = \left(V_j - \frac{j-1}{N} V_R \right) \Big/ \frac{V_R}{N} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \overline{INL} = 0, \; \sigma_{INL} (\max) \approx \frac{\sqrt{N}}{2} \left(\frac{\sigma_R}{R} \right)$$

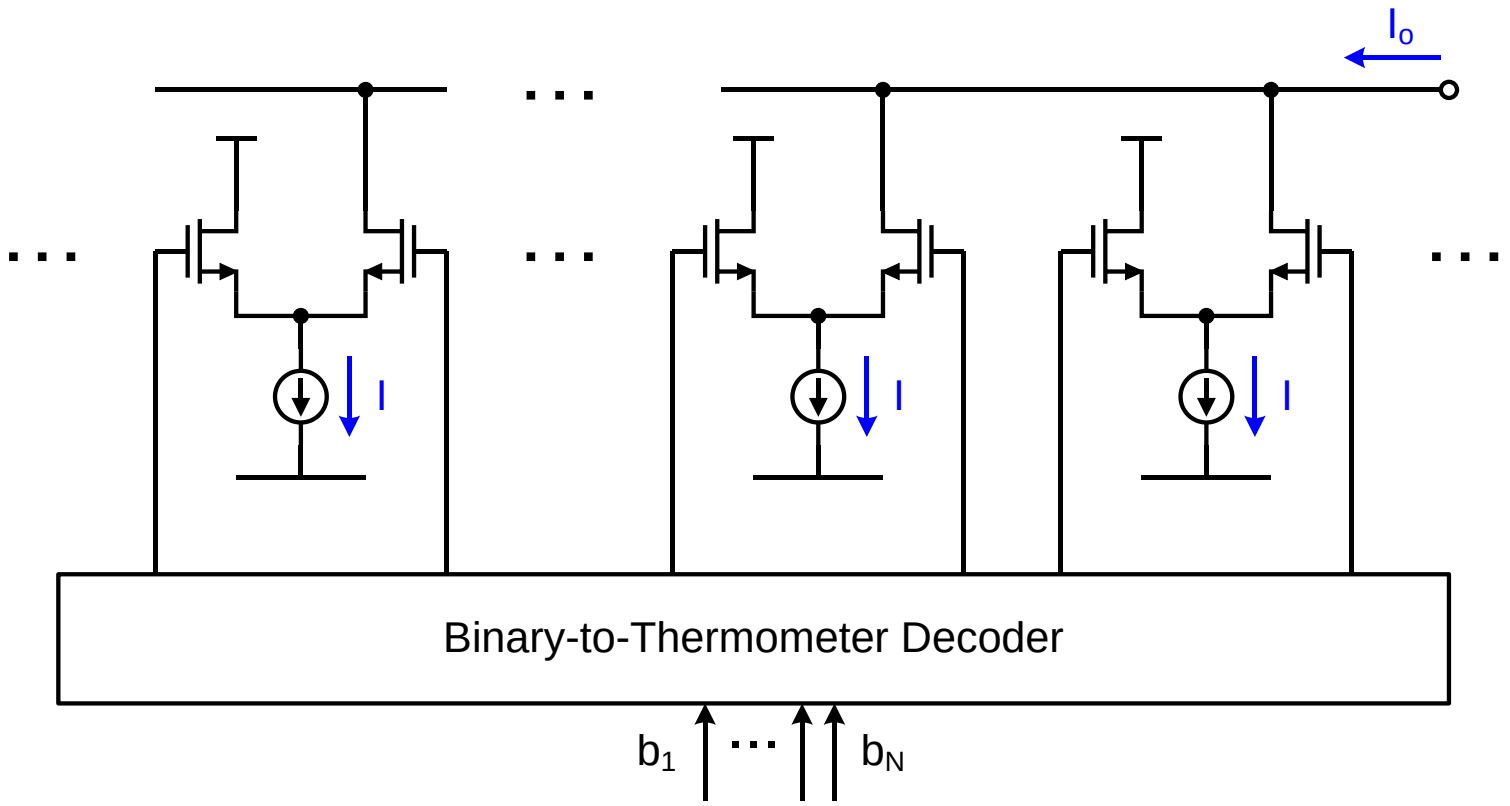
INL and DNL of Binary-Wtd DAC

A Binary Weighted DAC is typically constructed using unit elements, the same way as that of a Unit Element DAC, for good component matching accuracy.

$$\Rightarrow \quad \overline{INL} = 0,\ \sigma_{INL}(max) \approx \frac{\sqrt{N}}{2}\left(\frac{\sigma_R}{R}\right)$$

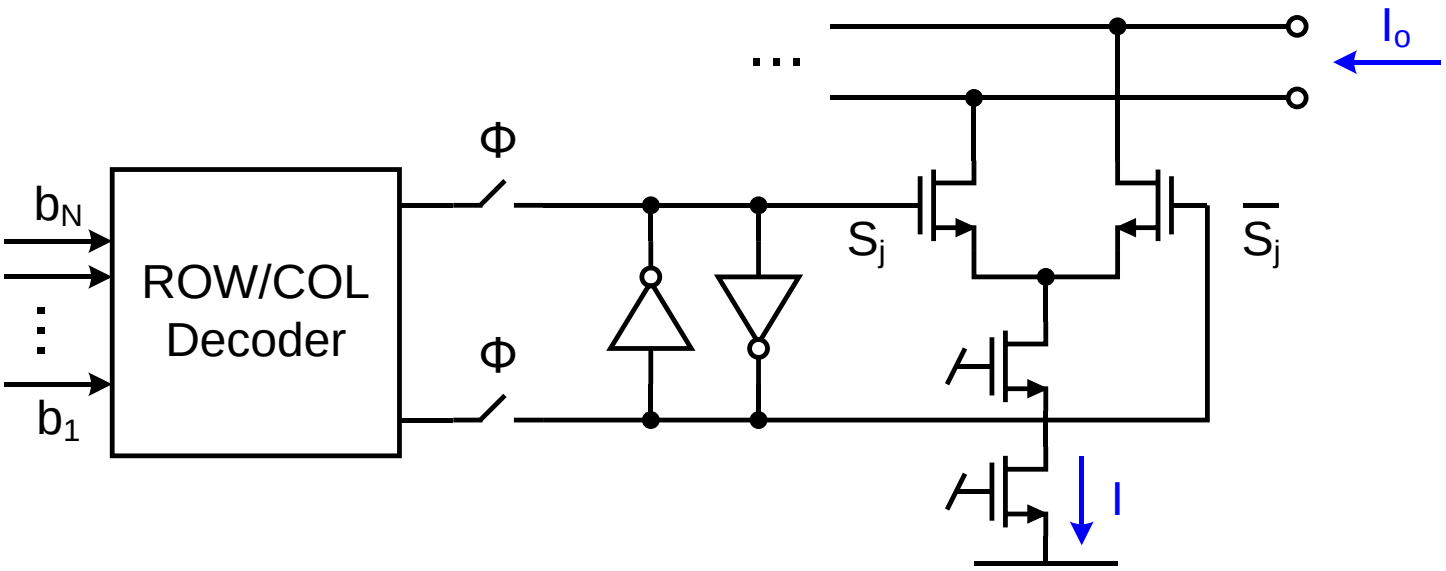
$$\overline{DNL} = 0,\ \sigma_{DNL}(max) = 2 \cdot INL \approx \sqrt{N}\left(\frac{\sigma_R}{R}\right)$$

Current-Steering DAC



- Fast, inherently monotonic → good DNL performance
- Complexity increases for large N, requires B2T decoder

Unit Current Cell



- 2^N current cells typically decomposed into a ($2^{N/2} \times 2^{N/2}$) matrix
- Current source cascoded to improve accuracy (R_o effect)
- Coupled inverters improve synchronization of current switches

Segmented DAC

BW vs. UE DACs

Binary-weighted DAC

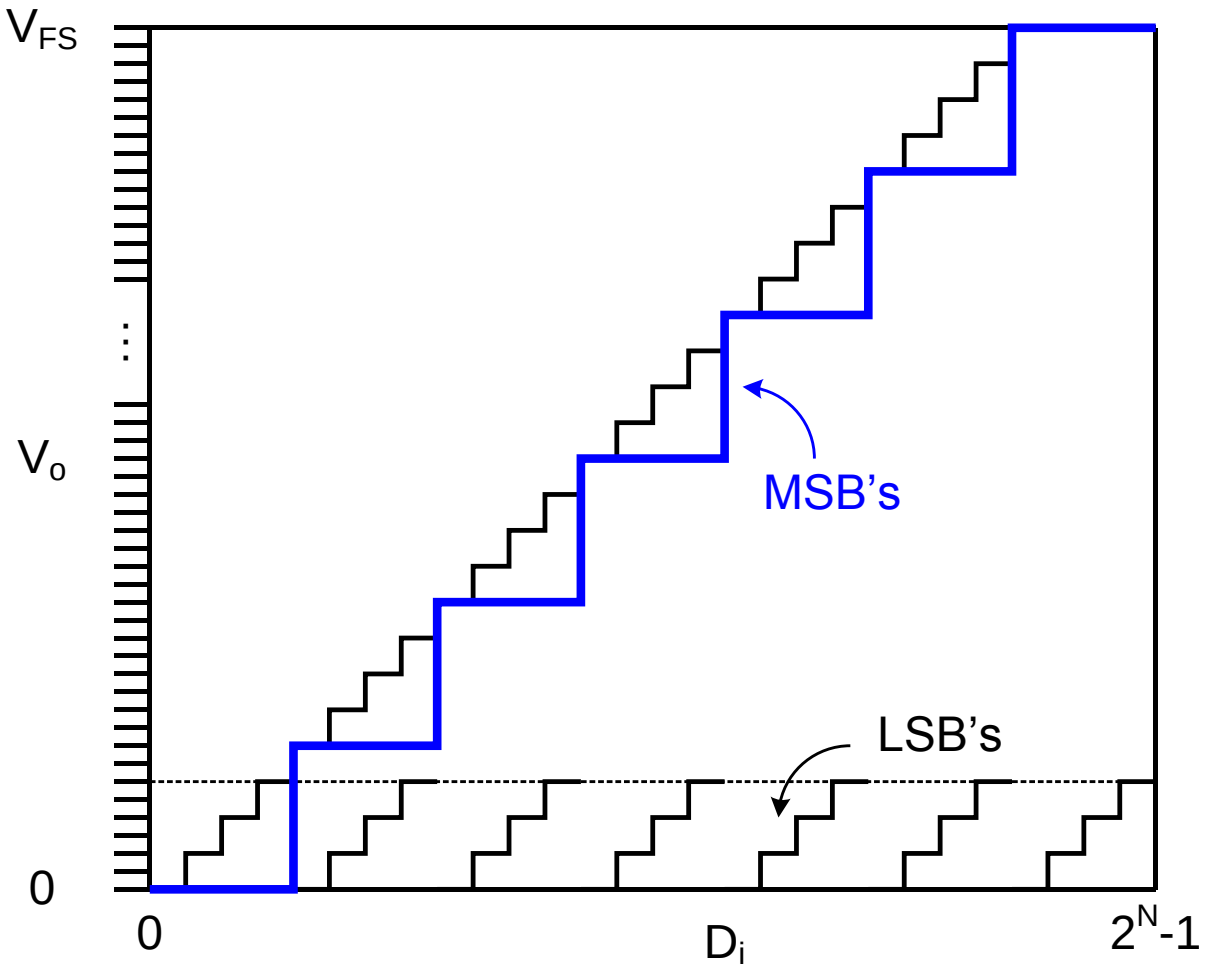
- Pros
  - Min. # of switched elements
  - Simple and fast
  - Compact and efficient
- Cons
  - Large DNL and glitches
  - Monotonicity not guaranteed
- INL/DNL
  - INL(max) ≈ (√N/2)σ
  - DNL(max) ≈ 2*INL

Unit-element DAC

- Pros
  - Good DNL, small glitches
  - Linear glitch energy
  - Guaranteed monotonic
- Cons
  - Needs B2T decoder
  - complex for N ≥ 8
- INL/DNL
  - INL(max) ≈ (√N/2)σ
  - DNL(max) ≈ σ

Combine BW and UE architectures → Segmentation

Segmented DAC



- MSB DAC: M-bit UE DAC
- LSB DAC: L-bit BW DAC
- Resolution: N = M + L
- 2^M+L switching elements
- Good DNL
- Small glitches
- Same INL as BW or UE

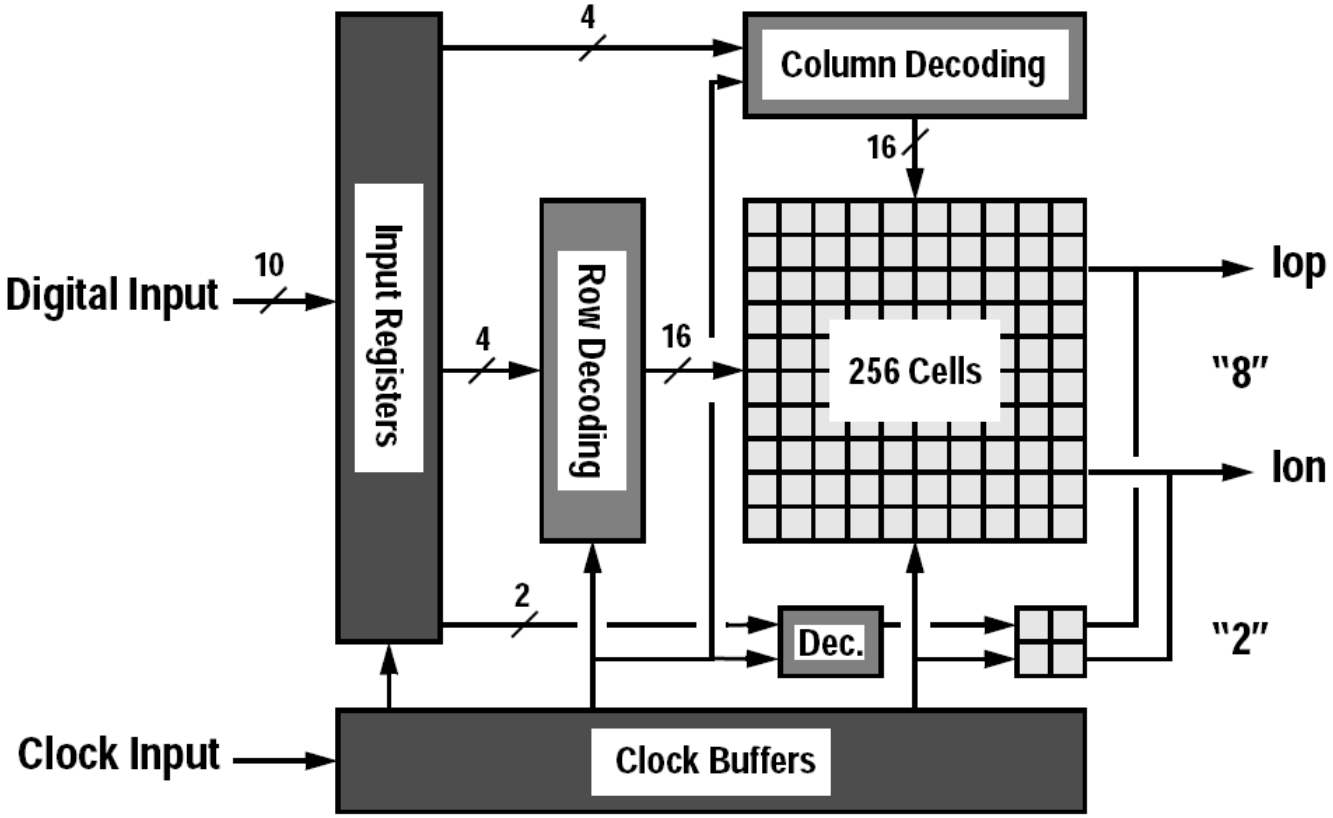
Comparison

Example: N = 12, M = 8, L= 4, σ = 1%

Architecture	σ_{INL}	σ_{DNL}	# of s.e.
Unit-element	0.32 LSB's	0.01 LSB's	2^N = 4096
Binary-weighted	0.32 LSB's	0.64 LSB's	N = 12
Segmented	0.32 LSB's	0.06 LSB's	2^M+L = 260

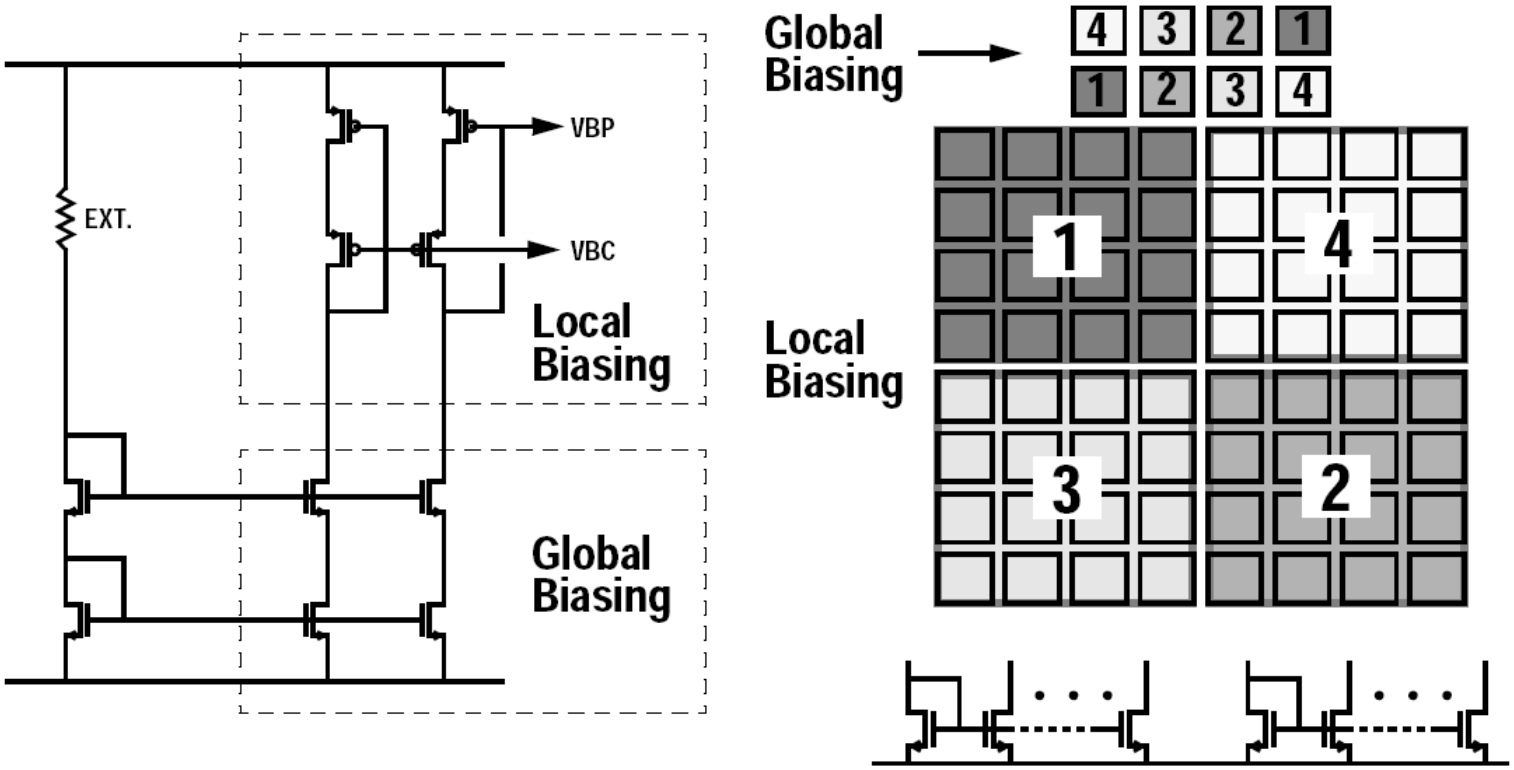
Max. DNL error occurs at the transitions of MSB segments

Example: “8+2” Segmented Current DAC



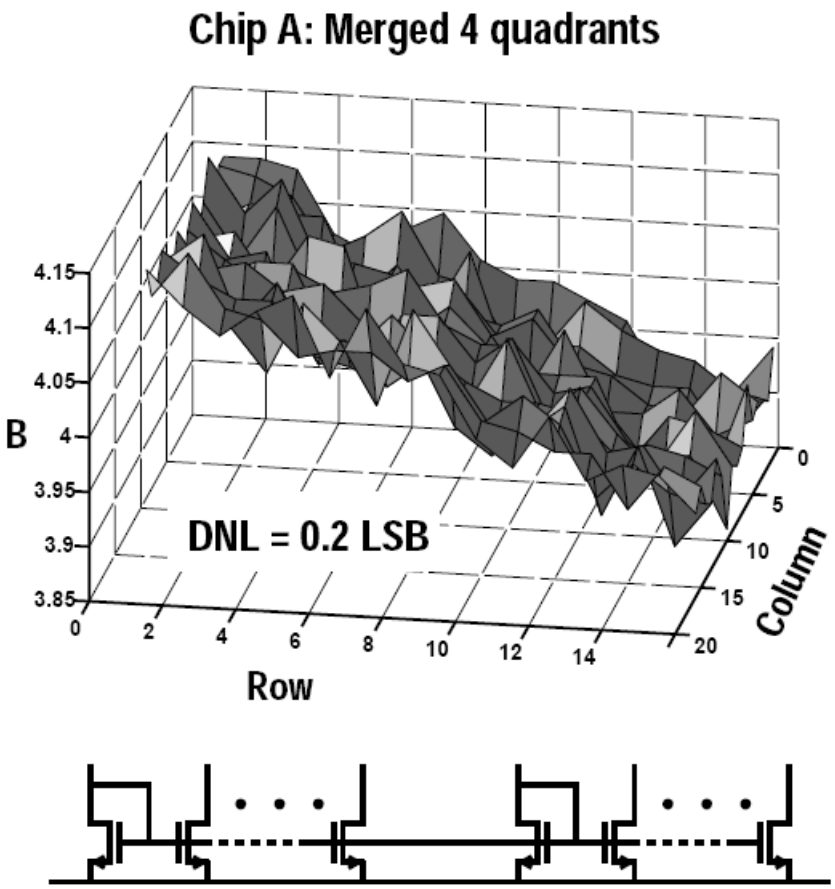
Ref: C.-H. Lin and K. Bult, “A 10-b, 500-MSample/s CMOS DAC in 0.6mm^2,” *IEEE Journal of Solid-State Circuits*, vol. 33, pp. 1948-1958, issue 12, 1998.

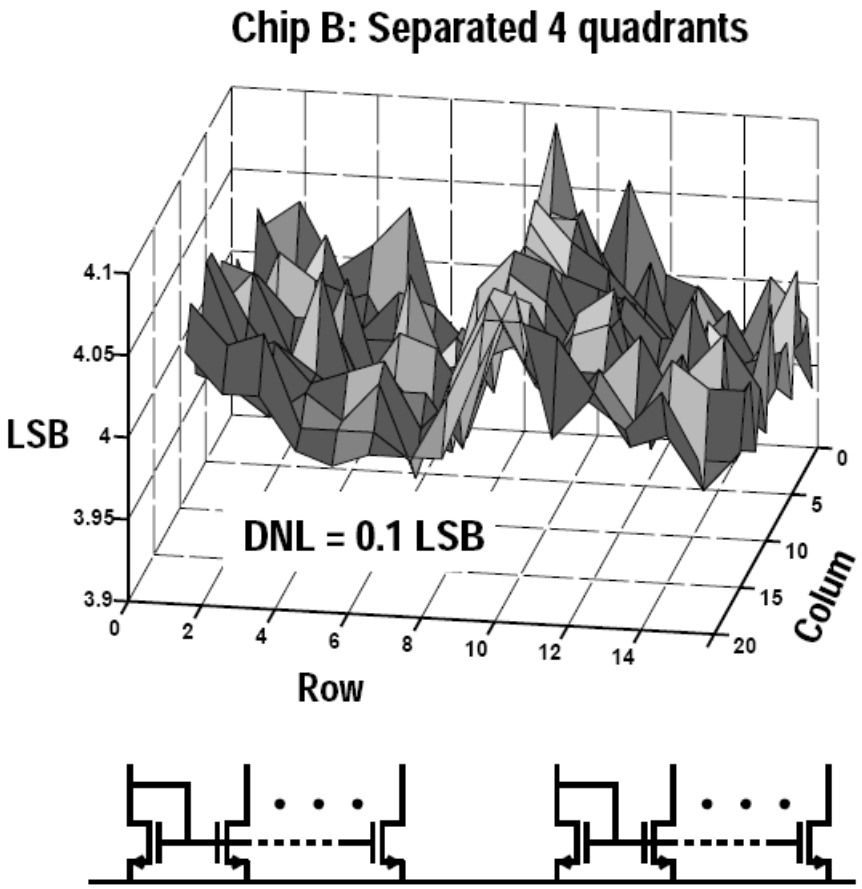
MSB-DAC Biasing Scheme



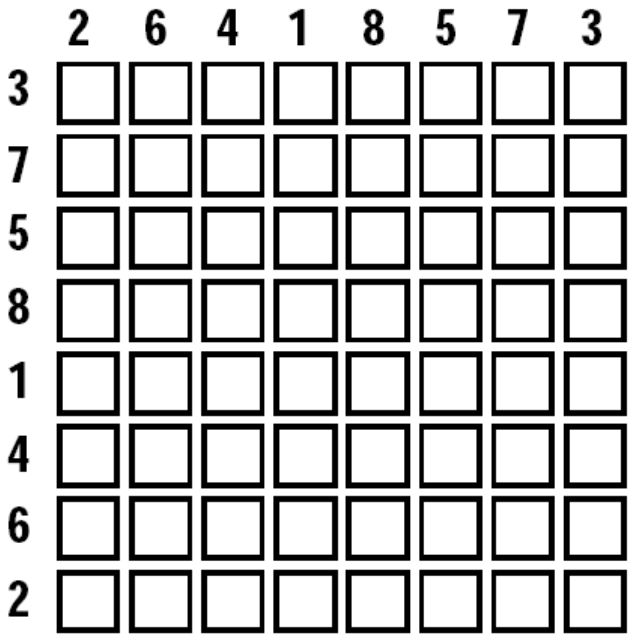
Common-centroid global biasing + divided 4 quadrants of current cells

MSB-DAC Biasing Scheme

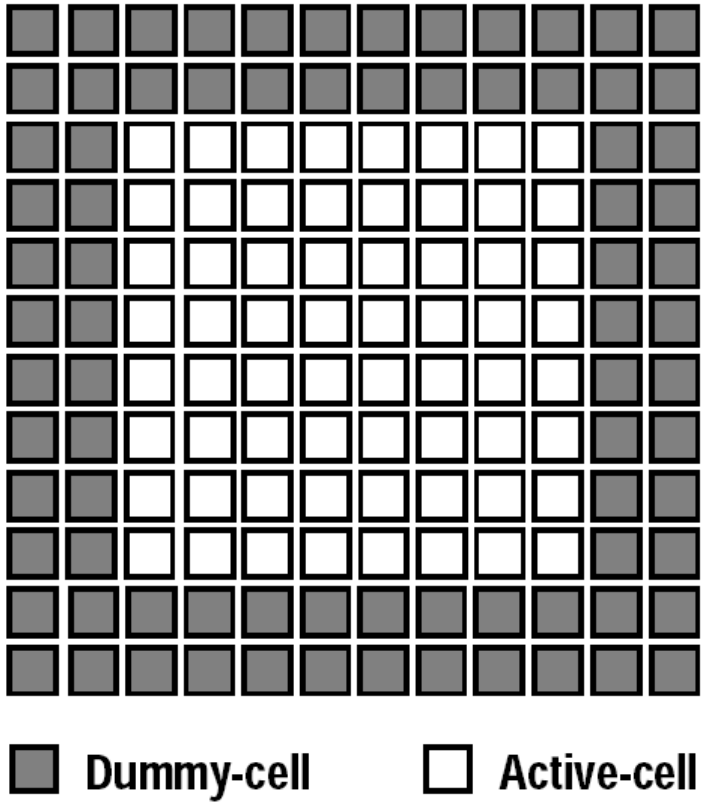




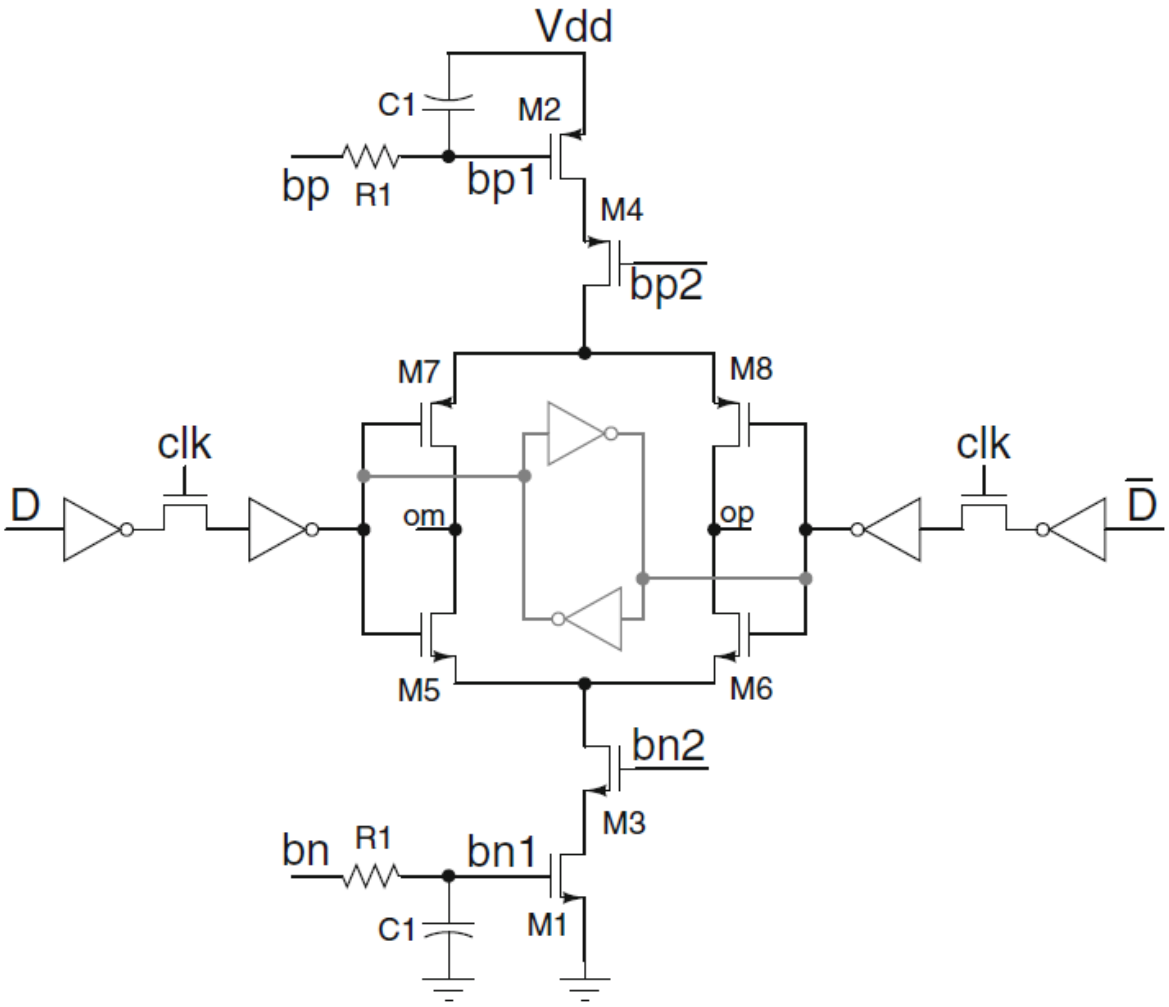
Randomization and Dummies



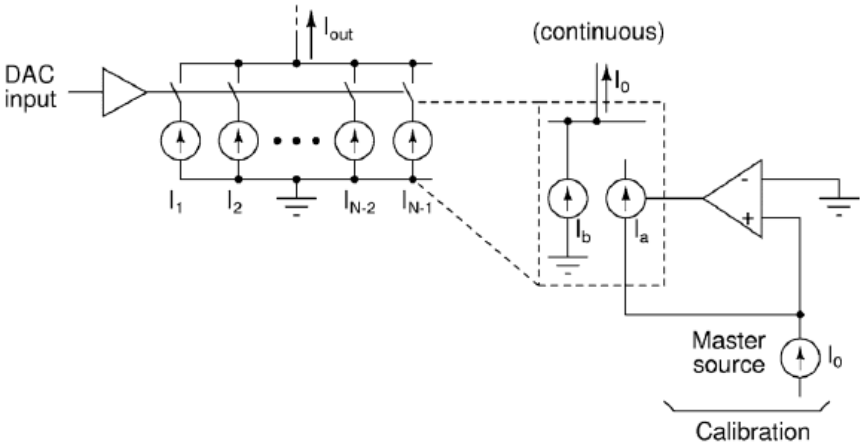
- Column and row randomization to improve INL

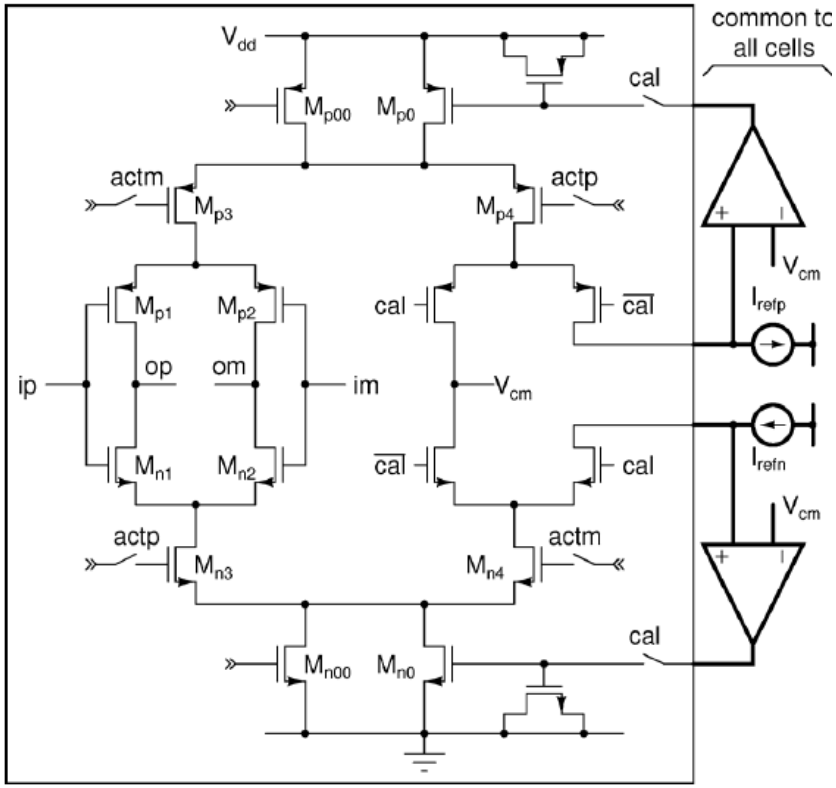


Current-Steering DAC Unit Cell



Current-Steering DAC Calibration





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