Lecture 17 - The Bipolar Junction Transistor (I)

FORWARD ACTIVE REGIME

April 12, 2001

Contents:

1. BJT: structure and basic operation
2. I-V characteristics in forward active regime

Reading assignment:

Howe and Sodini, Ch. 7, §§7.1, 7.2

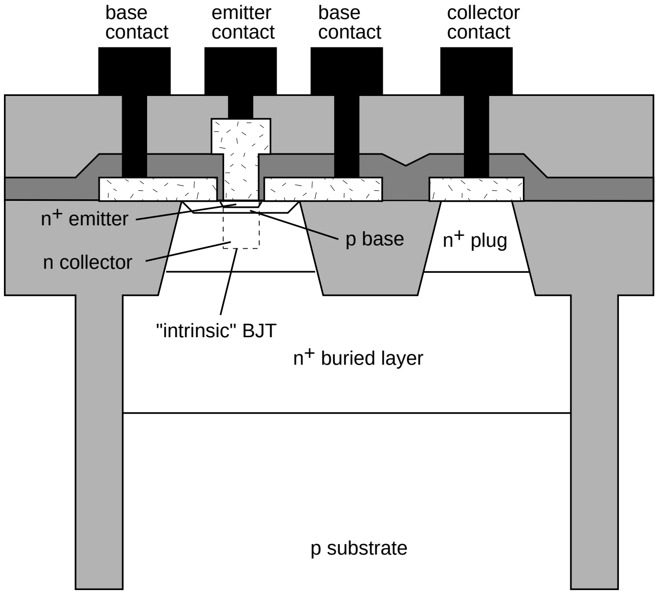
Announcement:

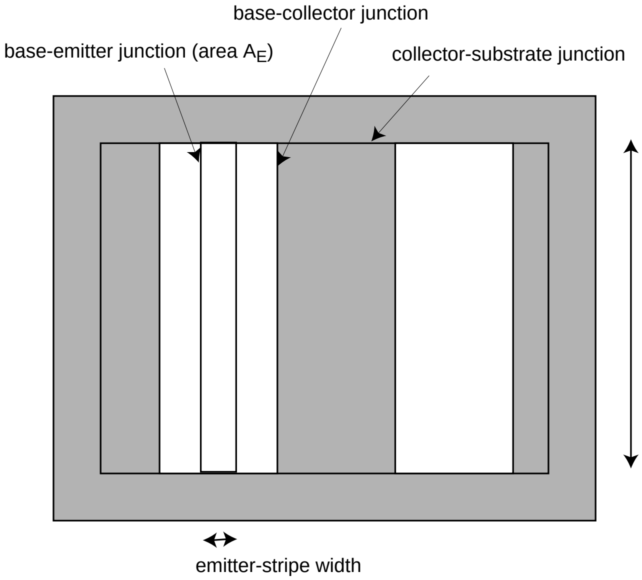
Quiz 2: 4/18, 7:30-9:30 PM, Walker (lectures #10-17) open book, must bring calculator

Key questions

- How does a bipolar junction transistor look like?
- How does a bipolar junction transistor operate?
- What are the leading dependencies of the terminal currents of a BJT in the forward active regime?

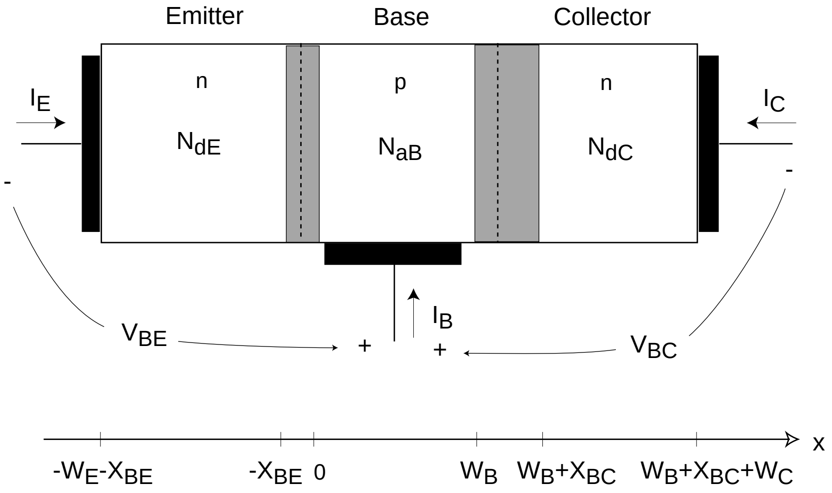
1. BJT: structure and basic operation





Uniqueness of BJT: high-current drivability per input capacitance ⇒ fast ⇒ excellent for analog and front-end communications applications.

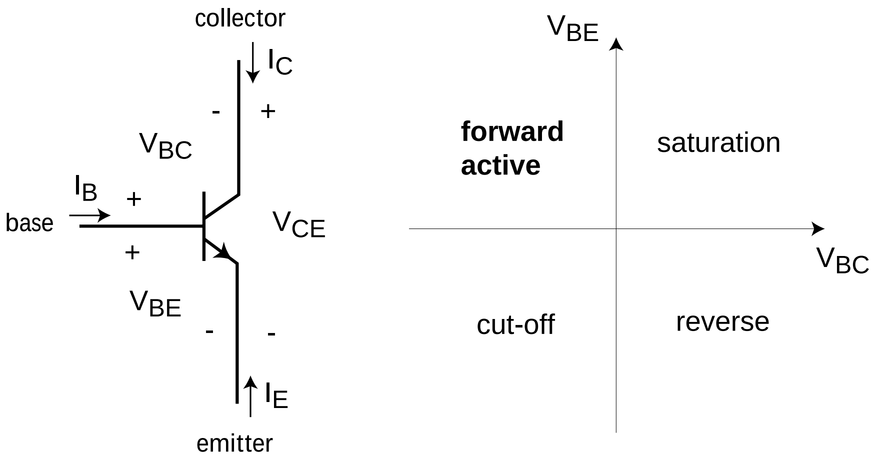
Simplified one-dimensional model of intrinsic device:



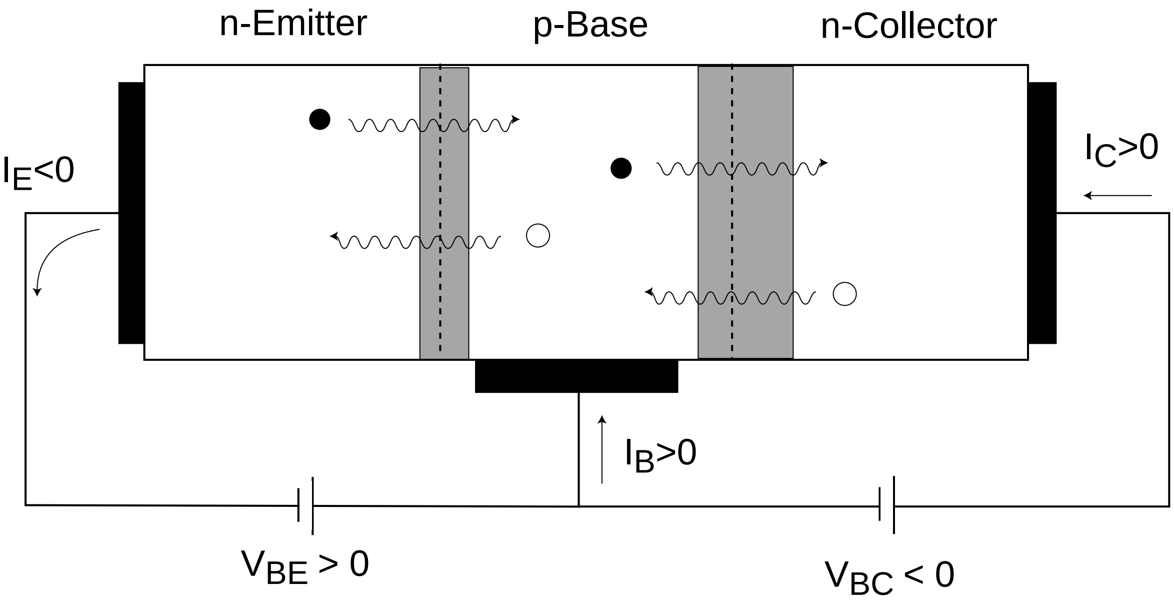
BJT = two neighbouring pn junctions back-to-back:

- close enough for minority carriers to interact (can diffuse quickly through base)
- far apart enough for depletion regions not to interact (prevent ”punchthrough”)

Regimes of operation:



Basic operation in *forward-active regime*:

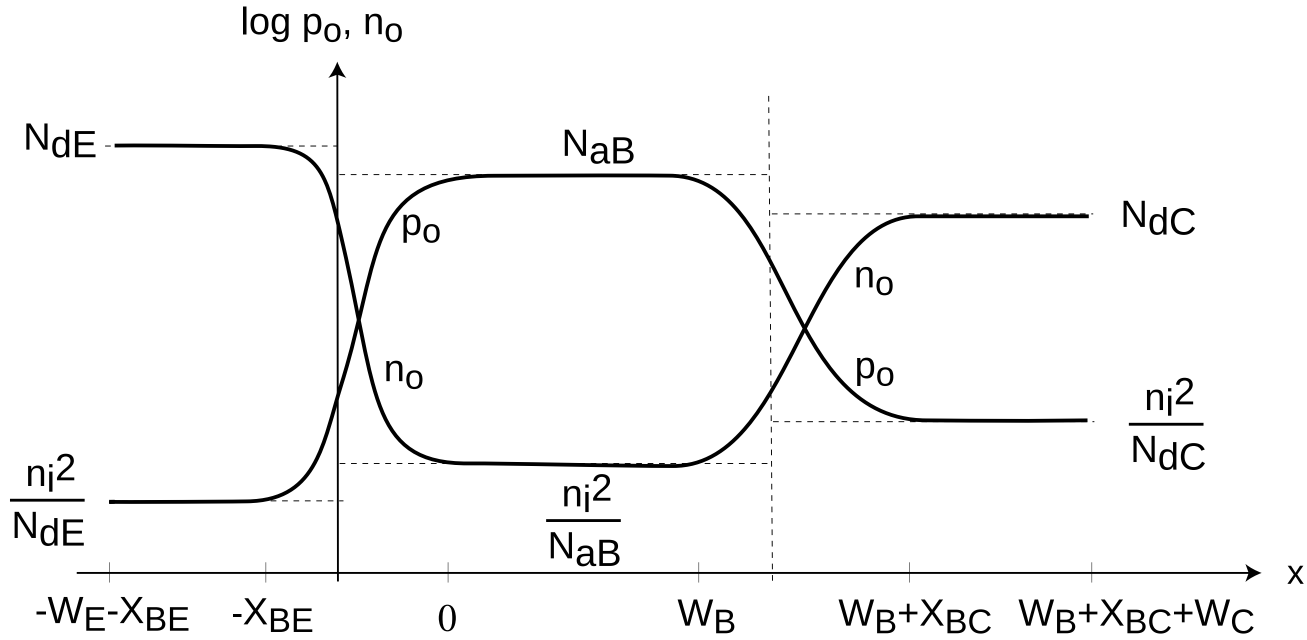


$V_{BE} > 0 \;\Rightarrow$ injection of electrons from E to B
injection of holes from B to E

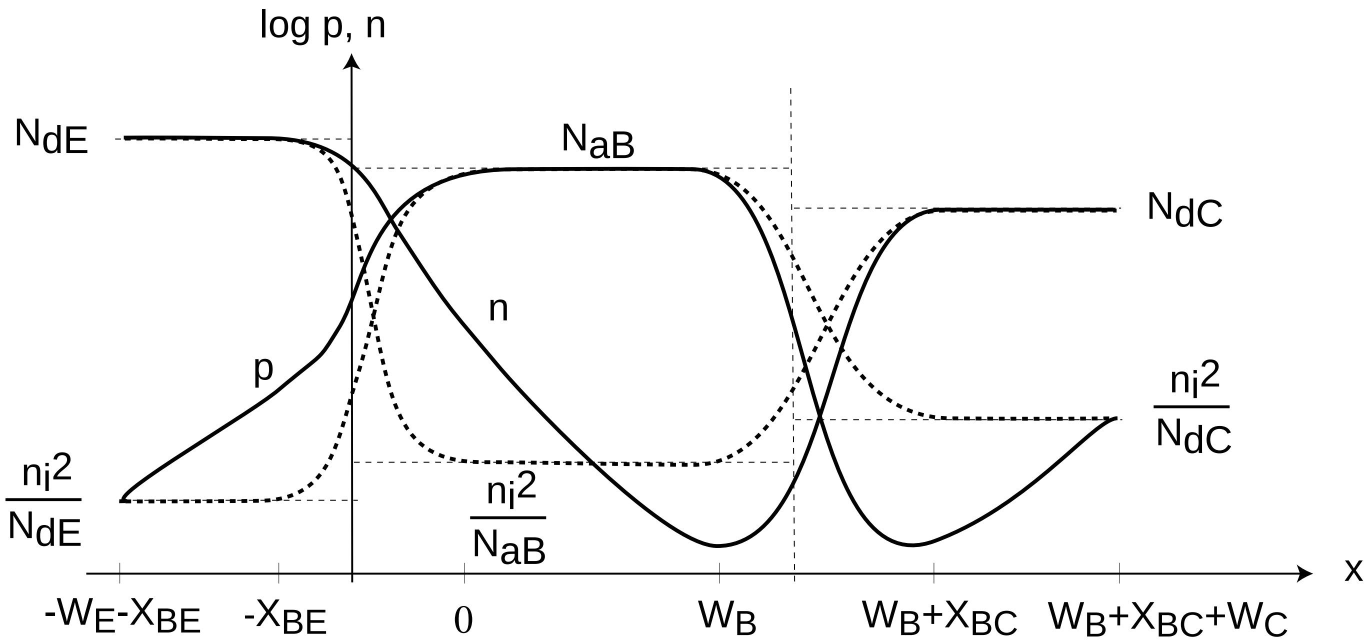
$V_{BC} < 0 \;\Rightarrow$ extraction of electrons from B to C
extraction of holes from C to B

Transistor effect:
electrons injected from E to B, extracted by C!

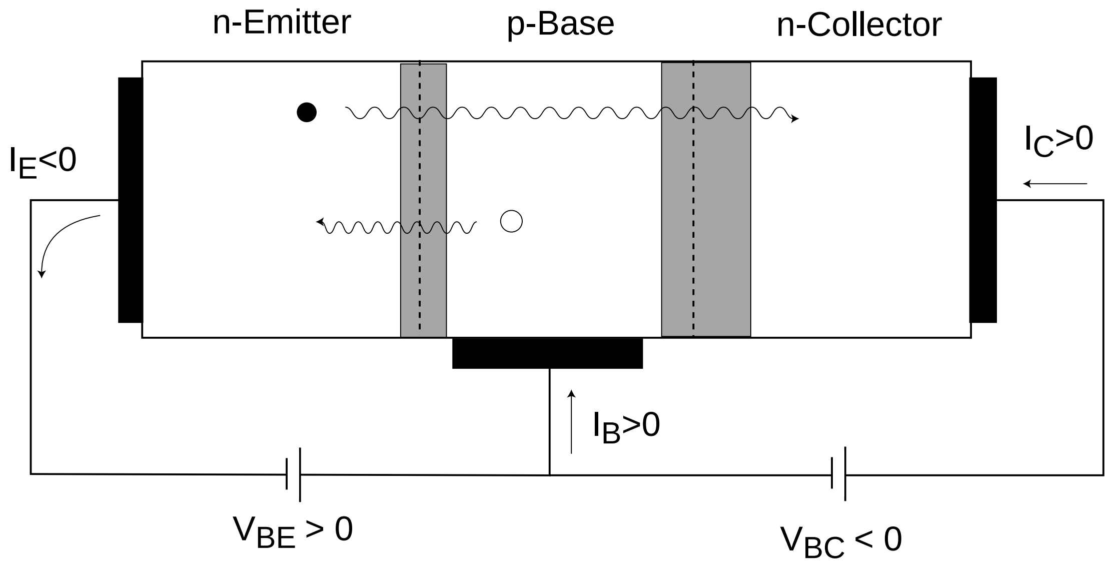
- Carrier profiles in thermal equilibrium:



- Carrier profiles in forward-active regime:



Dominant current paths in forward active regime:



I_C: electron injection from E to B and collection into C
I_B: hole injection from B to E
$I_E = -I_C - I_B$

Key dependencies (choose one):

I_C on V_{BE}: $e^{qV_{BE}/kT}$, $1/\sqrt{V_{BE}}$, *none*, *other*

I_C on V_{BC}: $e^{qV_{BC}/kT}$, $1/\sqrt{V_{BC}}$, *none*, *other*

I_B on V_{BE}: $e^{qV_{BE}/kT}$, $1/\sqrt{V_{BE}}$, *none*, *other*

I_B on V_{BC}: $e^{qV_{BC}/kT}$, $1/\sqrt{V_{BC}}$, *none*, *other*

I_C on I_B: *exponential*, *quadratic*, *none*, *other*

In forward-active regime:

- V_{BE} controls I_C (”transistor effect”)
- I_C independent of V_{BC} (”isolation”)
- price to pay for control: I_B

Comparison with MOSFET:

feature	**ideal MOSFET in saturation**	**ideal BJT in FAR**
controlling terminal	gate	base
common terminal	source	emitter
controlled terminal	drain	collector
functional dependence of controlled current	quadratic	exponential
DC current in controlling terminal	0	exponential

Figures of merit for BJT:

- *common-emitter current gain:*

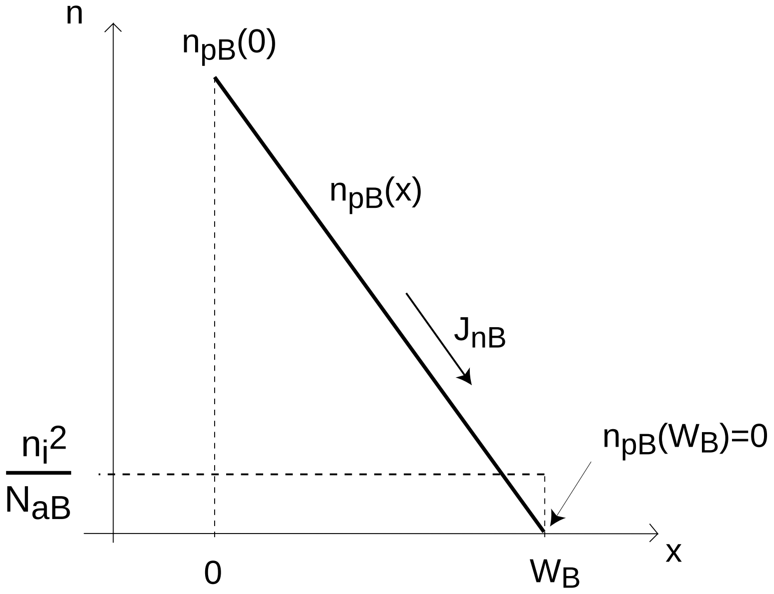
$$\beta_F = \frac{I_C}{I_B} \qquad \text{(want big)}$$

- *common-base current gain:*

$$\alpha_F = \frac{I_C}{I_E} \qquad \text{(want close to 1)}$$

2. I-V characteristics in forward active regime

☐ *Collector current*: focus on electron diffusion in base



Boundary conditions:

$$n_{pB}(0) = n_{pBo} exp \frac{qV_{BE}}{kT}, \qquad n_{pB}(W_B) = 0$$

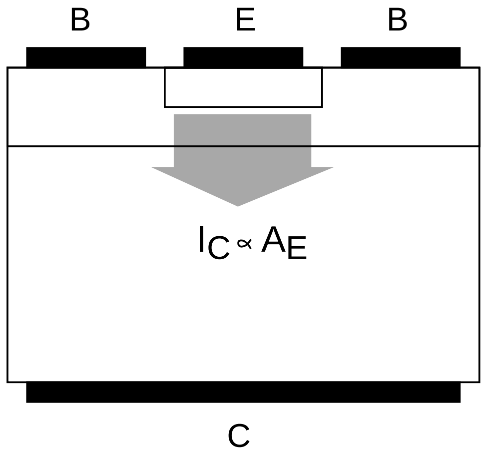
Electron profile:

$$n_{pB}(x) = n_{pB}(0)(1 - \frac{x}{W_B})$$

Electron current density:

$$J_{nB} = qD_n \frac{dn_{pB}}{dx} = -qD_n \frac{n_{pB}(0)}{W_B}$$

Collector current scales with area of base-emitter junction A_E:



Collector terminal current:

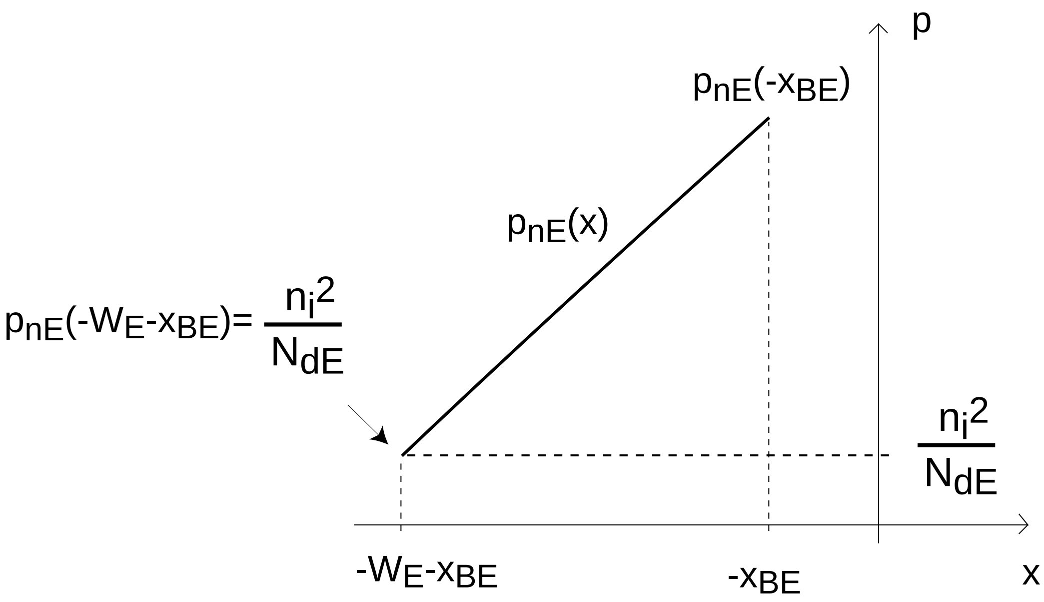
$$I_C = -J_{nB}A_E = qA_E \frac{D_n}{W_B} n_{pBo} exp \frac{qV_{BE}}{kT}$$

or

$$I_C = I_S \; exp \frac{qV_{BE}}{kT}$$

$$I_S \equiv \; transistor \; saturation \; current$$

□ *Base current*: focus on hole injection and recombination in emitter



Boundary conditions:

$$p_{nE}(-x_{BE}) = p_{nEo} exp\frac{qV_{BE}}{kT}, \quad p_{nE}(-W_E - x_{BE}) = p_{nEo}$$

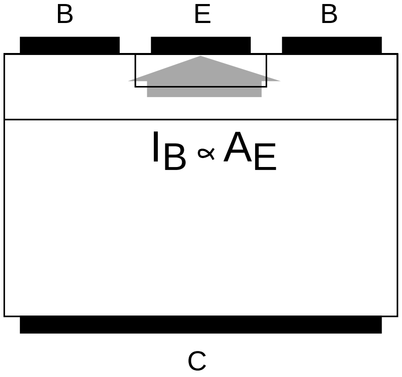
Hole profile:

$$p_{nE}(x) = [p_{nE}(-x_{BE}) - p_{nEo}](1 + \frac{x + x_{BE}}{W_E}) + p_{nEo}$$

Hole current density:

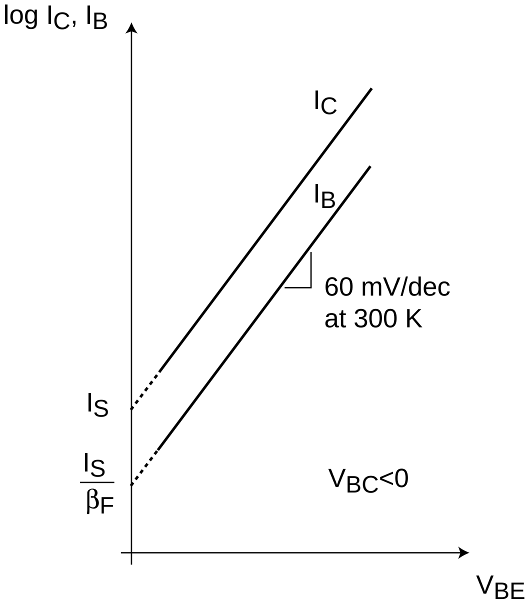
$$J_{pE} = -qD_p \frac{dp_{nE}}{dx} = -qD_p \frac{p_{nE}(-x_{BE}) - p_{nEo}}{W_E}$$

Base current scales with area of base-emitter junction A_E:



Base terminal current:

$$I_B = -J_{pE}A_E = qA_E \frac{D_p}{W_E} p_{nEo}(exp \frac{qV_{BE}}{kT} - 1)$$



☐ *Current gain*:

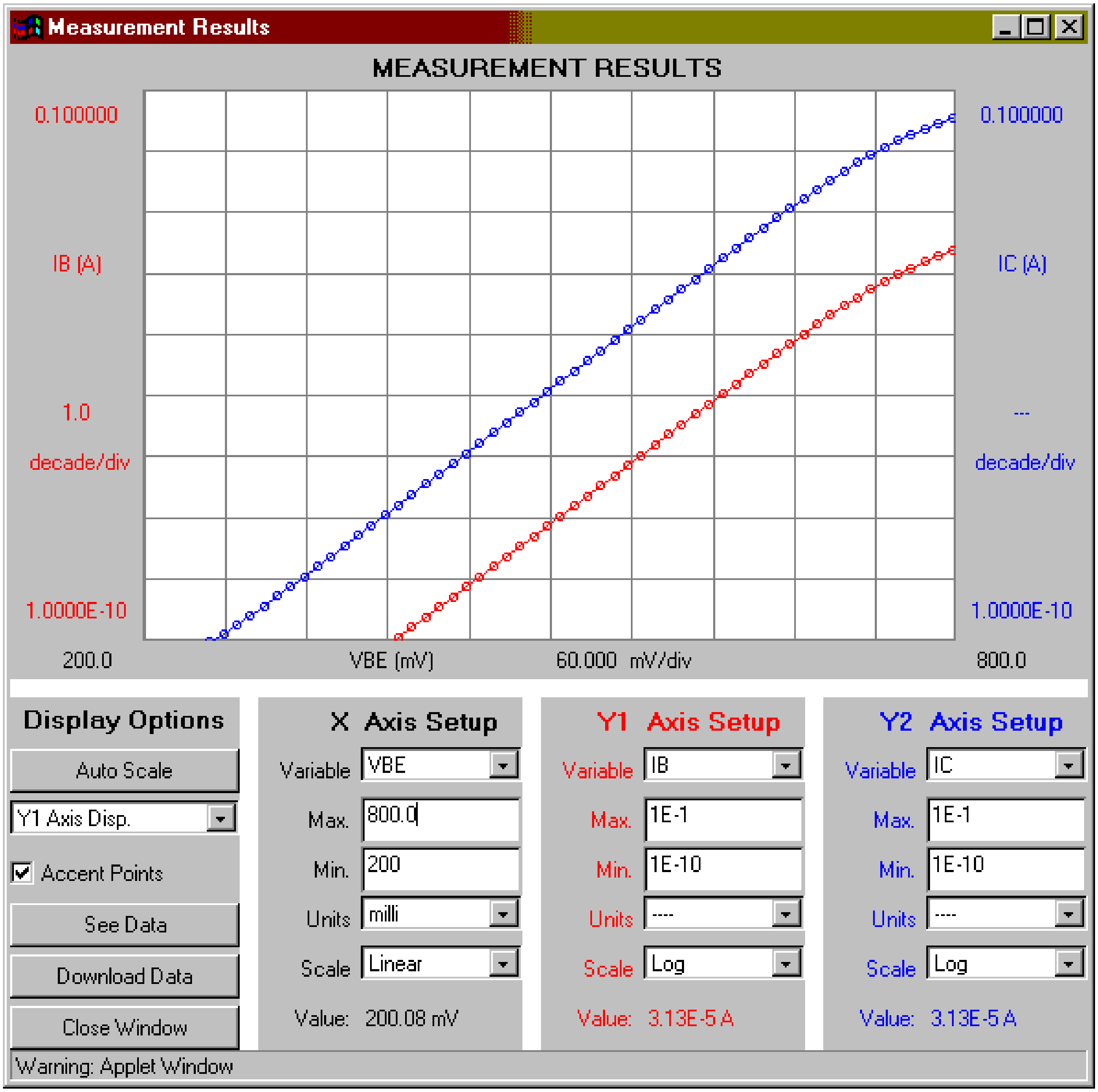
$$\beta_F = \frac{I_C}{I_B} = \frac{n_{pBo}\frac{D_n}{W_B}}{p_{nEo}\frac{D_p}{W_E}} = \frac{N_{dE}D_nW_E}{N_{aB}D_pW_B}$$

To maximize β_F:

- $N_{dE} \gg N_{aB}$
- $W_E \gg W_B$
- want *npn*, rather than *pnp* design because $D_n > D_p$

β_F hard to control in manufacturing environment ⇒ need circuit techniques thar are insensitive to variations in β_F

β_F dependence on I_C:



X Axis Setup

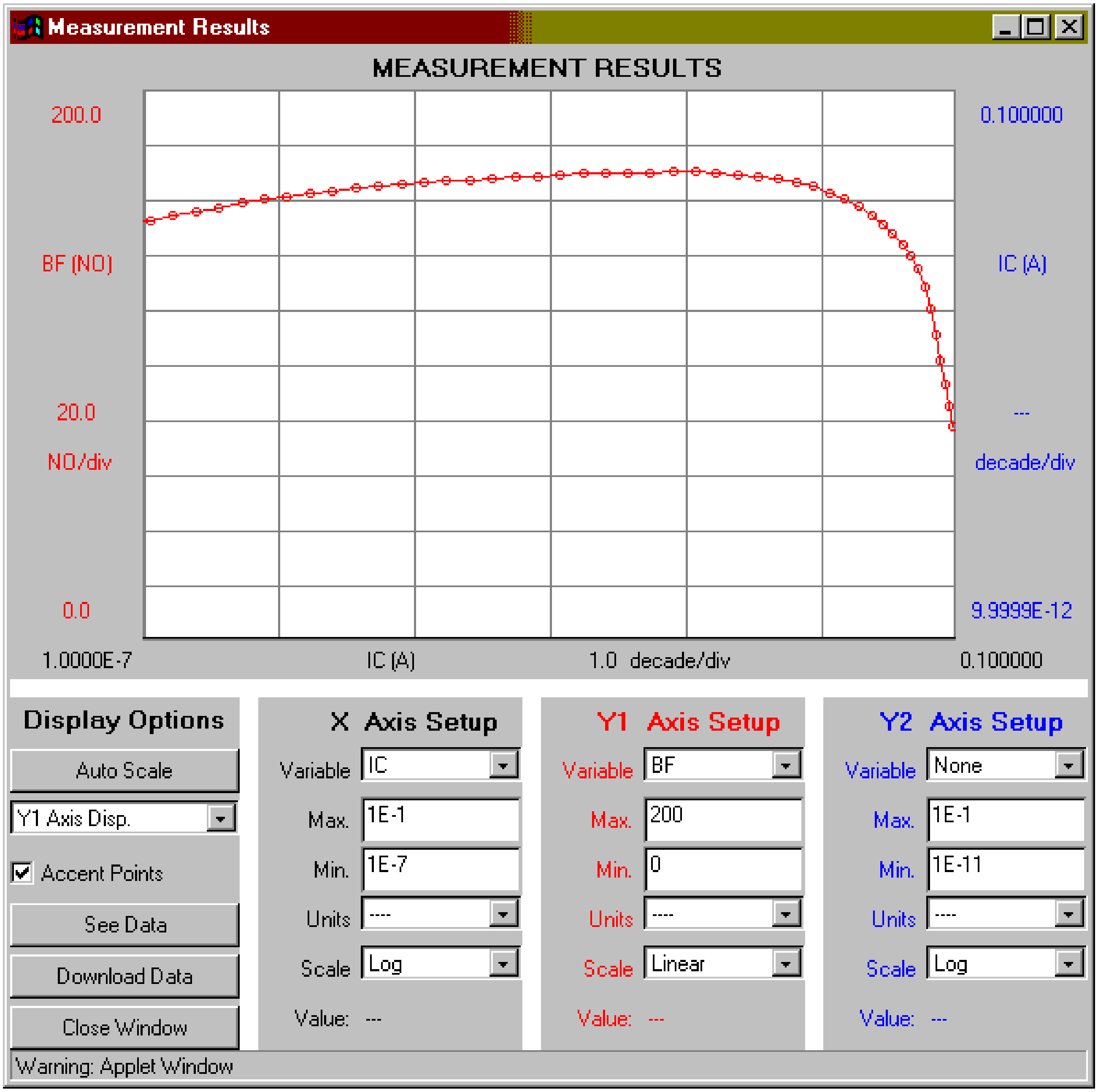
Variable: VBE
Max.: 800.0
Min.: 200
Units: milli
Scale: Linear
Value: 200.08 mV

Y1 Axis Setup

Variable: IB
Max.: 1E-1
Min.: 1E-10
Units: ----
Scale: Log
Value: 3.13E-5 A

Y2 Axis Setup

Variable: IC
Max.: 1E-1
Min.: 1E-10
Units: ----
Scale: Log
Value: 3.13E-5 A



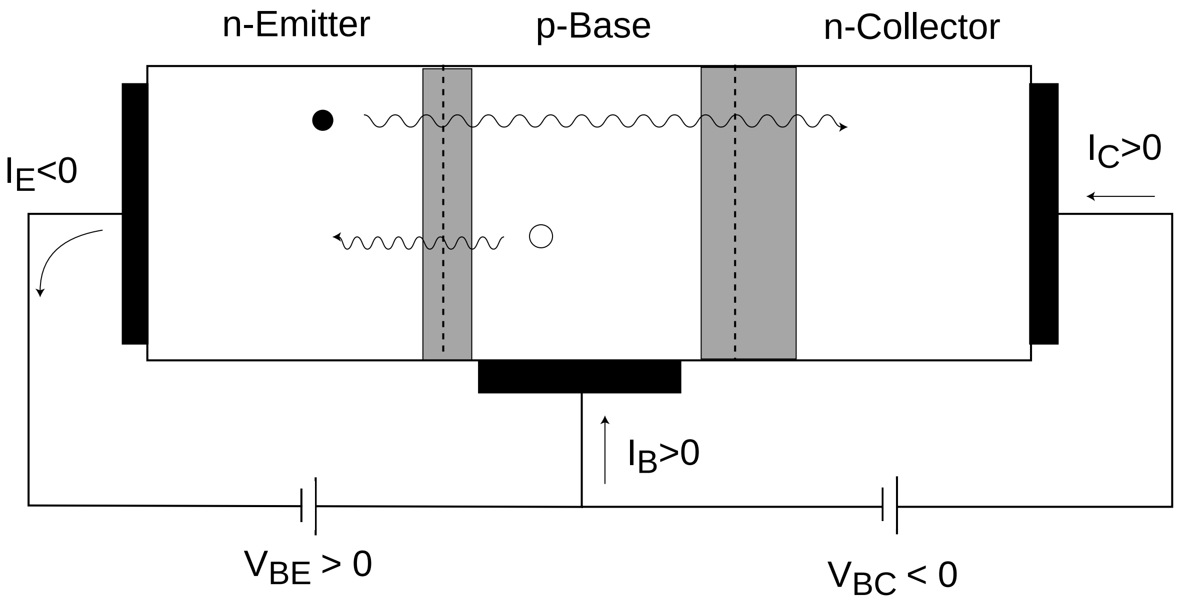
Y1 Axis Disp.

☑ Accent Points

	X Axis Setup	Y1 Axis Setup	Y2 Axis Setup
Variable	IC	BF	None
Max.	1E-1	200	1E-1
Min.	1E-7	0	1E-11
Units	----	----	----
Scale	Log	Linear	Log
Value:	---	---	---

Key conclusions

npn BJT in forward active regime:



- Emitter "injects" electrons into Base, Collector "collects" electrons from Base. $\Rightarrow I_C$ controlled by V_{BE}, independent of V_{BC} (*transistor effect*)

$$I_C \propto \exp \frac{qV_{BE}}{kT}$$

- Base injects holes into Emitter $\Rightarrow I_B$

$$I_B \propto I_C$$