

Laboratory #1

Simulation of a Simple Digital Communications System

SYSC 4600 Digital Communications

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© September 2016

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this laboratory experiment is to provide familiarity with some of the key building blocks of digital transmission systems.

In this lab you will write a MATLAB simulator for a simple digital communication system. Simulation is an invaluable tool for assessing the performance of communication systems in a controlled environment while avoiding expensive field trials. Furthermore, because much of the functionality of modern digital transceivers is implemented in software using digital signal processing, writing a simulator for a transmitter or receiver is very similar to actually building one.

Background

A simplified block diagram of a bandpass communication system is shown in Figure 1.

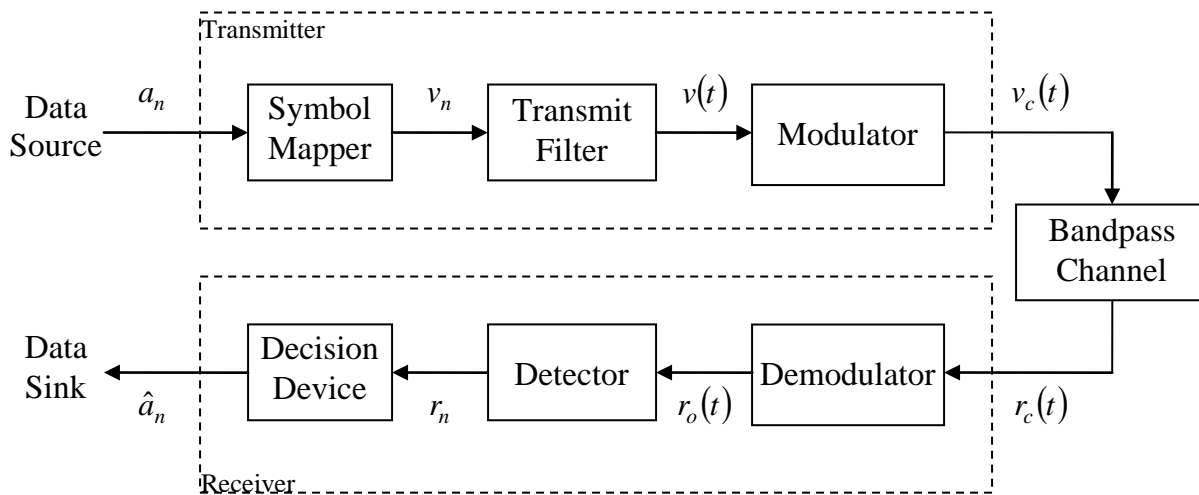


Figure 1: Simplified block diagram of a digital communication system.

Messages (sequences of bits) are to be transmitted from the data source to the data sink. The transmitter consists of a symbol mapper, which converts the bits to amplitudes, a transmit filter which generates an analogue baseband signal, and a modulator which up-converts the baseband signal to a higher frequency suitable for transmission over the channel. The receiver consists of a demodulator to down-convert the received bandpass signal back to the baseband, a detector which filters and samples the baseband signal, and a decision device which estimates the value of each transmitted bit. Each of these components is described in more detail below.

Data Source:

The transmitted message sequence consists of N_a message bits. It is given by

$$\underline{a} = [a_0 \ a_1 \ a_2 \ \cdots \ a_{N_a-1}] ,$$

where $a_n \in \{0,1\}$ is the n^{th} message bit.

Symbol Mapper:

The *symbol mapper* converts the message bits into real-valued amplitudes. The mapping between bits and amplitudes depends on the communication scheme that is used. For this lab we will use what is known as *antipodal signaling*, where the mapping is defined by

$$v_n = \text{SM}[a_n] = \begin{cases} +1 & \text{if } a_n = 0 \\ -1 & \text{if } a_n = 1 \end{cases}.$$

That is, message bit values of 0 are converted to +1, and bit values of 1 are converted to -1.

Transmit Filter:

The *transmit filter* (also known as the *pulse shaping filter*) uses the amplitudes from the symbol mapper, $\underline{v} = [v_0 \ v_1 \ v_2 \ \cdots \ v_{N_a-1}]$, to generate an analogue pulse train,

$$v(t) = \sum_{n=0}^{N_a-1} v_n h_T(t - nT),$$

where T is the *pulse duration* (also known as the *symbol duration* or *symbol period*), and $h_T(t)$ is the *pulse shape*. As will be discussed later in this course, there are many different choices for the pulse shape, each with its own advantages and disadvantages. For this lab we will use a simple rectangular pulse, as shown in Figure 2.

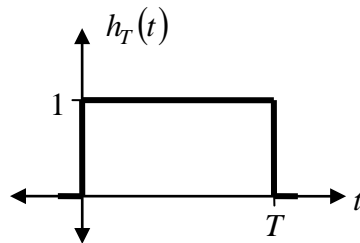


Figure 2: Rectangular pulse used by the transmit filter.

Figure 3 illustrates an example of the relationship between a message sequence, \underline{a} , the corresponding amplitudes, \underline{v} , and the baseband signal, $v(t)$.

Modulator:

The modulator up-converts the baseband signal to a higher frequency band by modulating the amplitude of a carrier wave. The resulting bandpass signal is given by

$$v_c(t) = v(t) \cos(2\pi f_c t)$$

where f_c is the carrier frequency.

Channel:

The bandpass signal, $v_c(t)$, is transmitted over the physical communication link (the channel). In practice, the signal is distorted as it propagates over the channel, so the signal observed at the receiver, $r_c(t)$, is different from the transmitted signal. For this lab, however, we will only consider an ideal channel, where $r_c(t) = v_c(t)$.

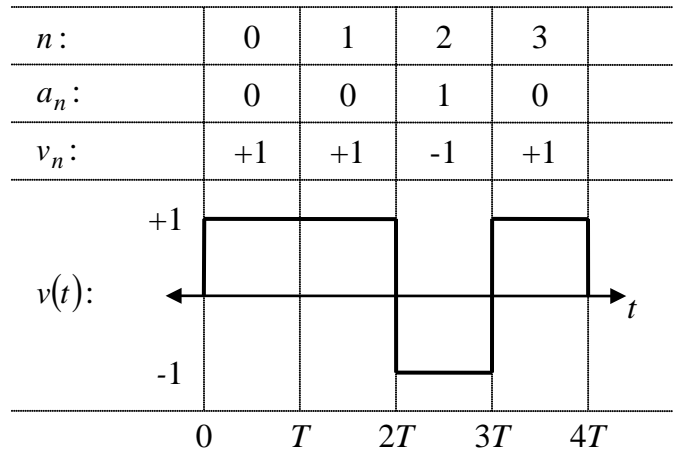


Figure 3: Example output of the transmit filter, for $\underline{a} = [0\ 0\ 1\ 0]$.

Demodulator:

The demodulator in the receiver down-converts the received bandpass signal back to the baseband. The received baseband signal is given by

$$r_o(t) = r_c(t) \cos(2\pi f_c t)$$

where f_c is the same carrier frequency as used at the transmitter.

Detector:

The detector filters and samples the received signal. The receive filter, with impulse response $h_R(t)$, acts as a lowpass filter to remove the high-frequency signal components that arise from the down-conversion process (the filter also suppresses unwanted noise that may be introduced in a non-ideal channel). The filtered signal is

$$r(t) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} r_o(t - \tau) h_R(\tau) d\tau .$$

In this lab we will use what is known as a *matched filter*. A filter with impulse response $h_R(t)$ is said to be matched to $h_T(t)$ if $h_R(t) = h_T(T - t)$, where T is the pulse duration.

The filtered received signal is then sampled, with one sample collected every T seconds. The first sample is collected at time $t = T$. For $n = 0, 1, 2, \dots, N_a - 1$, the n^{th} sample is given by

$$r_n = r([n+1]T) .$$

Decision Device:

The decision device tries to determine the value of each message bit, based on the value of each received sample. The receiver output is the estimate of the transmitted message bits, $\hat{\underline{a}} = [\hat{a}_0\ \hat{a}_1\ \hat{a}_2\ \dots\ \hat{a}_{N_a-1}]$. The decision rule for this system is:

$$\hat{a}_n = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } r_n \geq 0 \\ 1 & \text{if } r_n < 0 \end{cases} .$$

If everything goes well, then \hat{a}_n should be equal to a_n for every n , indicating error-free communication.

Prelaboratory Exercises

1. Read the lab manual, particularly its background section.
2. Sketch $v(t)$ if $N_a = 10$, $\underline{a} = [0110100010]$, and $h_T(t)$ is given as shown in Figure 2.
3. Sketch $h_R(t)$ if $h_T(t)$ is given as shown in Figure 2 and $h_R(t)$ is matched to $h_T(t)$.

Laboratory

In this lab you will write a MATLAB simulator for this simple digital communication system. Good computer programming practice involves developing the simulator in stages, thoroughly testing each stage before implementing the next stage. You will follow this approach when implementing your simulator, adding stages from left to right in Figure 1.

Step 1: Ideal Digital Channel

To get started, we will first simulate the ideal digital communication system shown in Figure 4.

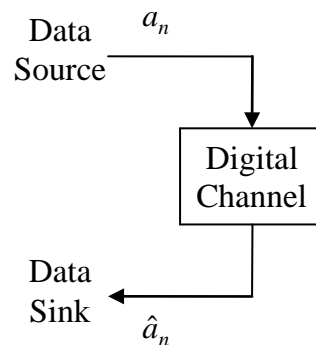


Figure 4. Block diagram of an ideal digital communication system.

The data source generates a message consisting of N_a randomly selected bits, which are transmitted over the digital channel. For this lab we will consider an ideal digital channel, so the received bits are identical to the transmitted bits. The data sink displays the received bits, and prints the number of message bits that were received incorrectly. Since the channel is ideal, this number should be zero. If it isn't, then you have a bug in your simulator, which you should correct before moving on to the next step. Finding the number of errors will be even more useful in future labs, where you will be expected to estimate the probability of error for non-ideal channels.

Enter the MATLAB code given below into a MATLAB .m file and execute it.

```

%
% Data Source
%
Na = 10;                               % Message word length (in bits)
a = randint(1, Na);
disp(sprintf('Transmitted Message: %s', sprintf('%d ', a)));

%
% Ideal Digital Channel
  
```

```

%
ah = a;

%
% Data Sink
%
disp(sprintf('Received Message:   %s', sprintf('%d ', ah)));
nErrs = sum(xor(a, ah));
disp(sprintf('Number of errors: %d', nErrs));

```

Verify that there were no errors.

Question 1. Explain how the statement

```
nErrs = sum(xor(a, ah));
```

determines the number of errors. Try manually setting `ah` to something different than `a` before running this statement.

To simplify debugging (and to make marking easier), for the remainder of this lab you will just use the message $\underline{a} = [0110100010]$ instead of the randomly generated message. Modify your data source accordingly.

Step 2: Ideal Discrete-time Channel

Replace the ‘Digital Channel’ from Step 1 with the combination of a symbol mapper, an ideal discrete-time channel, and a decision device, as shown in Figure 5. The ideal discrete-time channel just passes the transmitted amplitudes without distortion, so $r_n = v_n$.

You must write code to implement the symbol mapper and decision device as described in the Background section of this lab manual. You should not change the data source or data sink. Keep $N_a = 10$ and $\underline{a} = [0110100010]$.

Verify that there are no transmission errors before proceeding to Step 3.

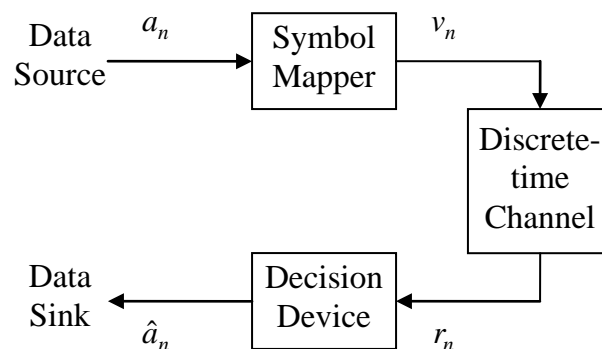


Figure 5. Block diagram of a discrete-time communication system.

Step 3: Ideal Baseband Channel

Replace the ‘Discrete-time Channel’ from Step 2 with the combination of a transmit filter, an ideal baseband channel, and a detector, as shown in Figure 5. The ideal baseband channel conveys with transmitted baseband signal without distortion, so $r_o(t) = v(t)$.

Add the transmit filter and detector to your simulator. Use $T = 1$ msec for the symbol duration of the rectangular pulse shown in Figure 2.

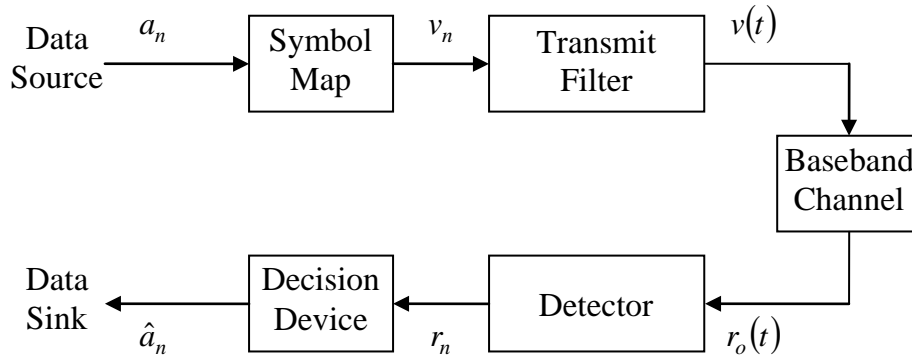


Figure 6. Block diagram of a baseband communication system.

Because it is impossible to process analogue signals in a digital computer, in MATLAB we must work with a sampled version of the signal. The baseband signal $v(t)$ will be sampled with a sampling period of $T_s = T/\eta$ seconds per sample, or $\eta = T/T_s$ samples per symbol (bit), where η is the *oversampling ratio*. We will use $\eta = 64$ for this lab. The samples are given by

$$\tilde{v}_m = v(mT_s)$$

However, because we can't actually generate $v(t)$, we can't actually sample it. Instead, we must generate the samples directly. The most useful (although not necessarily the easiest or most efficient) way of doing this is to first generate a sampled impulse train based on the amplitudes $\{v_n\}$, and generate a sampled version of $h_T(t)$, and then perform a discrete-time convolution of the two. This is illustrated in Figure 7, for $\underline{v} = [1 \ -1 \ 1]$ with $N_a = 3$ and $\eta = 4$.

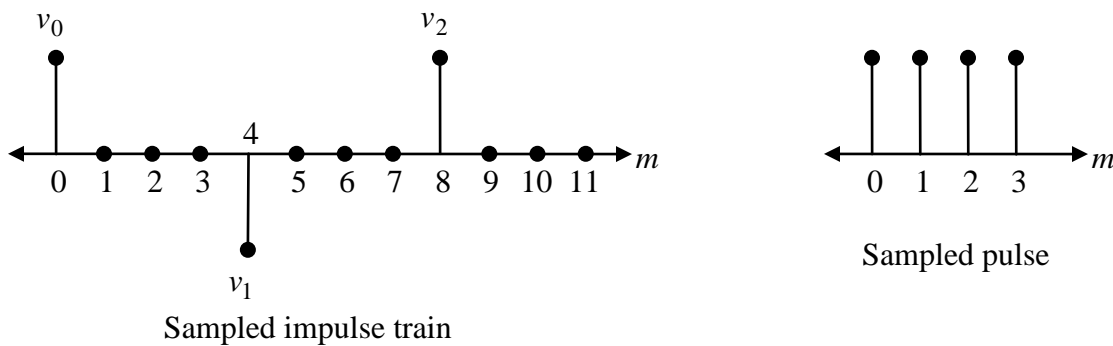


Figure 7. Examples of the sampled impulse train and sampled pulse used to generate samples of $v(t)$, for $\underline{v} = [1 \ -1 \ 1]$ and $\eta = 4$.

To generate the sampled impulse train you can use

```
upsample(v, eta)
```

where `eta` = η . The sampled pulse is just η ones (see the MATLAB `ones()` function). Use the MATLAB `conv()` function to perform the discrete-time convolution.

Question 2. Plot $v(t)$ vs. t (in seconds). Make sure your time scale is correct (hint: how long should your signal last, and does this match what is shown in your graph?). Use the MATLAB `ylim()` command to display the y-axis over the interval $[-1.1, 1.1]$. Compare your graph with your sketch from the pre-lab exercise.

To implement the detector, you will have to generate a sampled version of $h_R(t)$, and use `conv()` to perform a discrete-time convolution of this with your received signal, giving an over-sampled version of $r(t)$.

Question 3. Plot $r(t)$ vs. t (in seconds). From your graph, what are the values of $r(t)$ at the first four sampling instants, $t = [n+1]T$ for $n = 0,1,2,3$?

Down-sample $r(t)$ by a factor of η , making sure you keep only the samples at the correct sampling instants.

Question 4. Compare your first four values of r_n with the values from Question 3. Are they identical? Hint: If they aren't then you're probably sampling at the wrong times.

Question 5. Compare your values of \hat{a}_n with a_n . Are they identical?

Step 4: Ideal Bandpass Channel

Add the modulator and demodulator to finish off your simulation of the system in Figure 1. Use a carrier frequency of $f_c = 2$ kHz. Use an ideal bandpass channel, which does not introduce any distortion, so that

$$r_c(t) = v_c(t).$$

Question 6. Plot $v_c(t)$ vs. t (in seconds).

Question 7. Plot $r_o(t)$ vs. t (in seconds).

Question 8. Plot $r(t)$ vs. t (in seconds).

Question 9. Compare your values of \hat{a}_n with a_n . Are they identical?

Laboratory Report Instructions

Please email a soft-copy of your .m file to your TA, and include a hard-copy with your report.