



# Telecommunications Technologies Reference

A comprehensive guide to North American and international telecommunications standards

## **Telecommunications Technologies Reference**

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# Introduction

Over the past several years, markets have opened up around the world that require a broader understanding of service provider networks and telecommunications technologies. In that time, it has become difficult to find a single comprehensive reference guide for both North American and international technology.

This book is designed to serve as a reference guide for a broad range of technology that is found in modern telecommunications networks. The coverage in this book is not limited to the technologies in North America, as it details many of the international communication methods as well. The intention is to be informative of service provider technology regardless of your location.

There are many books on the market that cover specific aspects of telecommunication technologies. Many of them are technology specific or cover only North American methods. This book was created to act as a comprehensive reference guide for individuals whose knowledge must span both international boundaries and various technologies. You will learn about telecommunication methodology as it is deployed around the world, as well as how it operates.

## Who Should Read This Book

This book is written for individuals who wish to learn about the technologies used throughout the world for data and voice communication. It is written in such a way that someone with little background in telecommunications can read and understand the material, but it is also technical enough for a field engineer to use as a reference guide.

It is recommended that the reader have the following prerequisite knowledge:

- Fundamental understanding of WAN communication
- CCNA or equivalent experience

## Expert Whiteboards

Expert Whiteboards are sections that have been included in most chapters. The purpose of these sections is to discuss an advanced topic of the technology or to detail a specific deployment solution. These sections are written by a variety of engineers to add real-world applications to technologies discussed in each chapter.

## Chapter Summaries and Review Questions

The “Summary” and “Review Questions” sections at the end of each chapter are designed to reinforce some of the most important topics that are discussed in that chapter. Use them to assess your understanding of the chapter’s subject and then review as necessary. The review questions are in multiple choice, lab-based, and fill in the blank format. The answer for each question is discussed in detail and explained for complete understanding. You can find the answers to the review questions in Appendix A.

# Analog-to-Digital Conversion

## Understanding Digital Communication

Digital communication is the transmission of information by discrete pulses of electricity or light impulses. The simplicity in digital communication belies its vast power. Often, you can get away with paying attention only to whether a pulse exists in a particular moment of time. Contrast this with the need to monitor every infinite change in signal strength to correctly duplicate a waveform, as in the case of analog communication.

In digital communication, you need concern yourself only with on or off, yes or no, true or false. Only two states exist, which greatly simplifies the information that needs to be transmitted across a communications medium. This alone greatly improves the quality of what you transmit, by eliminating endless “shades of gray” and concentrating only on “black and white.”

## Motivation for Digital Communication

Just imagine being tasked with the chore of recognizing every shade of gray possible. This presents, literally, an infinite number of possibilities. Contrast this with having to recognize only black and white (see Figure 3-1). All of a sudden, the job gets a lot easier. Furthermore, the chance of committing an error in recognition diminishes, as does the possibility of, for example, a little dust introducing some form of recognition difficulty. Dingy white is still white, and faded black is still black, as long as black and white are the only two choices. As you will see shortly, this reduction in the possibility of error and this loose tolerance for recognition are also benefits of digital communication.

**Figure 3-1** *Shades of Gray Analogy*



With this analogy in mind, consider that the main impetus for the development of digital communication was the need for a better way to store musical information, with fewer errors and more quality. In the 1920s, for example, music had to be stored as analog waveforms etched in wax, which could then be read only a limited number of times.

## Evolution of Digital Communication

The idea was that analog information could be represented as distinct pulses of information, like Morse code, where only a few simple combinations are combined to represent a larger, more complex set of symbols. After conversion, analog information is stored and retrieved with more accuracy and quality than by directly recording analog information. The idea arose early on to use a bi-state mechanism as the combining element for digital communication. This was the dawn of what is now known as binary digital communication, where 1s and 0s are used exclusively in the transmission and storage of information.

This might be a good time to clarify a fact that is sometimes overlooked when talking about binary digital information. It is important to realize that the 1s and 0s referred to in digital communication are simply human interpretations of what is being stored or communicated. For example, a 1 might indicate that a memory location is holding a charge, or that a communications line is electrified at that moment in time, and a 0 might indicate that no such charge or electrification exists. The use of 1s and 0s is just a way to work with large quantities of binary information and to mathematically predict or analyze various trends and situations.

## Improvements Over Analog Communication

Recall the earlier analogy of being tasked with recognizing shades of gray, as opposed to just black and white. The point was made that dust could settle on the object, making it more difficult to correctly identify exactly which shade of gray you were looking at, especially if the shades were infinitesimally close to begin with. Quality assurance in this task would be tricky, at best.

However, if you had to identify the objects only as black or white, it would take quite a bit of dust to obscure the underlying blackness or whiteness. This is also the case with digital signals. So much tolerance is built into the receiving mechanism, that common interference does not alter the perceived value of the digital signal. A slightly stronger or weaker pulse is still read as a pulse. A slight to medium disturbance in the signal, where no pulse should be, is still perceived as the lack of a pulse.

In contrast, analog transmission systems accumulate interference and impairments. After being introduced, these anomalies cannot be easily eliminated. Any change to the original signal permanently alters the quality of the signal, sometimes distorting it to an unrecognizable extent. The effect is heightened when you amplify the analog signal to compensate for signal loss. Any interference that the signal has already picked up is amplified, along with the original signal.

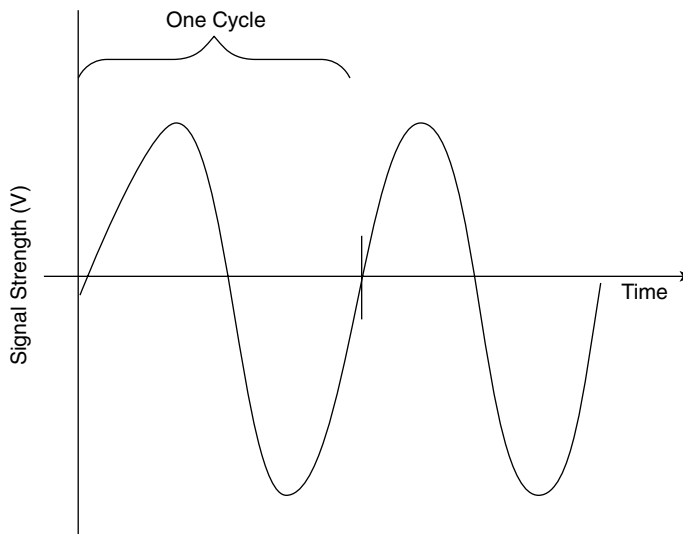
If you go back to the black and white analogy, you can see that if you were asked to perform the recognition process in a slightly darkened room, you would have more trouble identifying the shades of gray, but the identification of black or white would still be relatively simple. This is an example of signal loss. Because colors and grayscale are transmitted by relative reflection of light, less light means less signal arrives at your eye. In fact, a complete signal loss (complete darkness) makes even the recognition of black and white lean entirely to the black (which translates as no optical data or “0”). In this case, it doesn’t matter if you’re being asked to recognize shades of gray or just black and white. You can’t see or recognize anything. The point is, perceived as all 0s, a complete loss of signal is as equally catastrophic in digital transmission, as it is in analog.

In the case of analog and digital communication, you are hindered more by the loss and amplification of the analog signal than by the loss and regeneration of the digital signal. It is a simple task to restore a digital pulse to its original strength and shape, as compared to restoring a potentially distorted analog signal to its original form. A distorted pulse is still a pulse. This is because the digital signal is distorted by analog interference, which is easily ignored. This same analog interference hides within an analog signal, which makes it all but impossible to reverse.

## The Signal Conversion Process

By way of review, an analog signal is one in which each point on the waveform is meaningful (a continuous waveform). Analog signals are graphically depicted as sinusoidal waves (see Figure 3-2). This is also the motion that a guitar string exhibits when plucked. The string moves through and past the origin (the x-axis showing time, here), which is nearly an equivalent distance toward the guitar as away from the guitar.

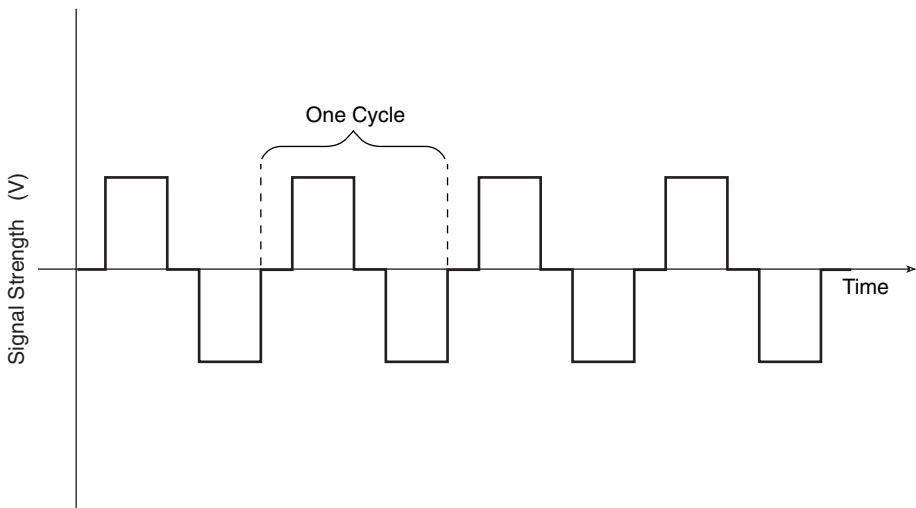
**Figure 3-2** *Sinusoidal Analog Waveform*



Although the positive amplitude is often illustrated to be the same as the negative amplitude within the same cycle, in reality, because the signal is usually trailing off or attenuating (losing signal strength) as time goes on, these depictions can be slightly inaccurate. The amplitude of a crest in the waveform often is smaller than that of the previous crest. The concept of a cycle, in graphical terms, which might be easier to understand than the technical definition, is the portion of a waveform that begins and ends at the horizontal axis that is heading in the same direction at the beginning and end. This means that one upswEEPing and one downswEEPing crest makes up a cycle. Figure 3-2 shows a waveform with two cycles.

In contrast, a digital signal contains discrete pulses, in which only the existence or absence of a pulse, and sometimes the rising or falling disposition of one or more edges of the pulse (as in Manchester encoding), is meaningful. Only the amplitude of the pulse, not the voltage levels attained throughout the creation of the pulse, is important. Digital signals are graphically depicted as square waves (see Figure 3-3). Digital waveforms are also discussed as having cycles, although the physics of analog waves do not govern digital waves.

**Figure 3-3** *Square Digital Waveform*



The physical difference between digital waves and analog waves is that unless you employ some form of bipolar line coding scheme (positive and negative representation of the 0s and 1s in a form designed for the transmission medium), such as alternate mark inversion (AMI) or bipolar 8-zero substitution (B8ZS), and transmit all 1s, you might not answer every positive crest with a negative, as in the case of an analog waveform. Line coding schemes such as AMI and B8ZS are covered in more detail later in this book during the discussion of T1. After being coded into digital, the analog source can be represented by a series of bits that have few 1s over various stretches of the bit stream. These 0s are often depicted as no pulse, hence no crest in the wave. Nevertheless, even two consecutive 0s, because of the



time slots assigned to the lack of electrical activity, can be considered to make up one cycle in the digital waveform.

Figure 3-3 shows a digital pulse stream that represents some form of bipolar return to zero (BRZ) technology, which is transmitting all 1s in this case. The half-pulse width transmission of zero for each pulse helps keep true to the zero-voltage reference, especially during the transmission of all 1s. This can occur for an extended period during testing or in certain equipment failure conditions to keep the line up. In this case, an extended period without a return to zero might allow the signal to wander, which causes the positive or negative pulses to read as 0s, depending on which way the signal wandered. Digital line coding schemes are covered in detail in Chapter 5, “T1 Technology.”

Converting an analog signal into a digital form that adequately represents the original waveform, after its conversion back to analog, is accomplished by a series of four time-tested processes:

- Filtering
- Sampling
- Quantizing
- Encoding

When grouped together, these processes are known collectively as *pulse code modulation* (PCM), which is documented in the International Telecommunication Union Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T, formerly the CCITT) standard G.711. The sections that follow discuss all four processes in greater detail.

## Filtering

Filtering can be thought of as the process of isolating only the contiguous frequencies that you are interested in digitizing. One of the simplest examples is that of an analog voice source, which is intended for digitization and subsequent transmission over digital circuits.

In the case of an analog voice source, the contiguous range of frequencies of interest that communicate across a circuit is the 3100 Hz (often expressed 3.1 kHz) range, from 300 Hz to 3400 Hz, inclusive. This is the most common range of spoken voice.

If frequency, which is expressed in hertz (Hz) or cycles per second, is foreign to you, think of it as pitch or tone. A higher frequency produces a higher pitch, which some might consider more treble, whereas a lower frequency produces a lower, more bass pitch.

Filtering, in this example, is the exclusion of any frequencies below 300 Hz and above 3400 Hz. For the purpose of computing sampling frequency (which is discussed next), the maximum frequency is 4 kHz. This provides a more than adequate sampling rate for what is known as voice frequency (VF).

## Sampling

While working for AT&T in 1928, a scientist by the name of Harry Nyquist published the paper “Certain Topics in Telegraph Transmission Theory,” in which he outlined what is now referred to as the Nyquist Theorem. This paper was many years ahead of its time. Decades passed before the equipment was available to enable this theorem for digitizing voice for storage or transmission.

Before getting into the Nyquist Theorem, you need to understand the term sampling. *Sampling*, in this case, is the measuring of the amplitude of the analog waveform at regular (equal) intervals. These equal intervals are computed by using the Nyquist Theorem.

The Nyquist Theorem states that to adequately represent an analog wave in digital form, you must sample the analog waveform at a rate at least twice that of the highest frequency to be transmitted. As noted earlier, the maximum voice frequency, for the purpose of computing the sampling frequency of the analog waveform, is 4 kHz.

Using the Nyquist Theorem, you can determine that you need to sample the analog signal that is being transmitted at a rate of 8000 times per second. The Nyquist Theorem dictates that you multiply the maximum frequency of 4000 Hz by two, which yields 8000 samples per second. Figure 3-4 illustrates this mathematical relationship, including units of measure. This numeric value is important to consider in the encoding phase of PCM, which is discussed later in this chapter.

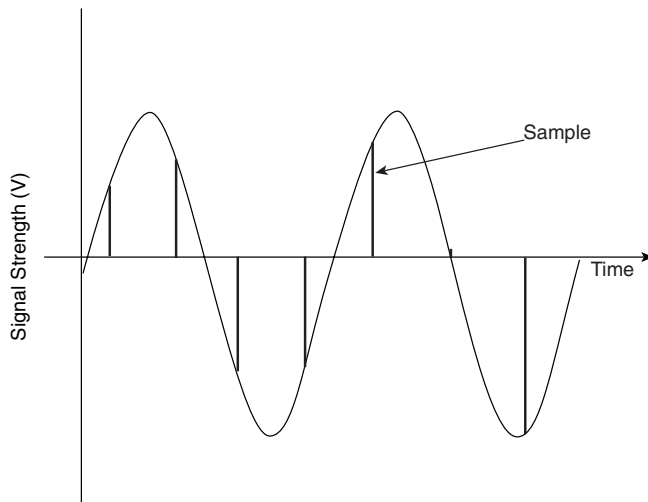
**Figure 3-4** *Nyquist Theorem Calculations*

$$\begin{array}{r}
 4000 \text{ Cycles / Second} \quad (\text{Maximum Frequency}) \\
 \times 2 \text{ Samples / Cycle} \quad (\text{Nyquist Multiplier}) \\
 \hline
 8000 \text{ Samples / Second}
 \end{array}$$

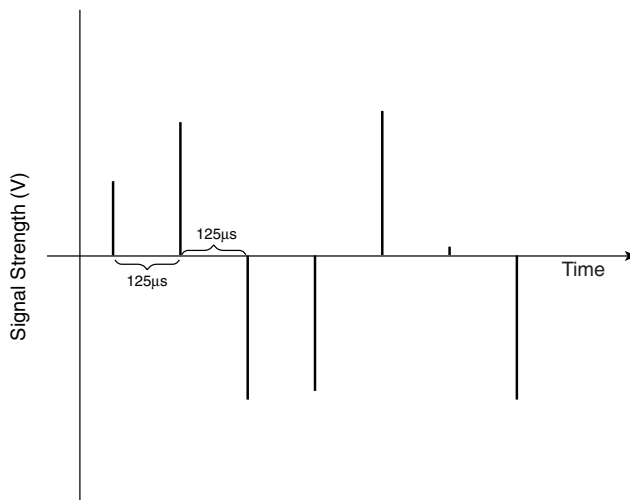
The equipment responsible for capturing these samples 8000 times per second uses two inputs. One of these inputs is the constant stream of analog information from the source. The other input is a clock signal that occurs 8000 times a second. The result is that only the source signal that exists each time the clock pulse arrives at the gate is captured (sampled).

These 8000 samples become the only part of the original analog waveform to remain after the sampling process. If you think of these samples as pulses of varying amplitude, you have what is known as a pulse stream (or pulse train). These pulses are modulated (or varied), based on how the original analog waveform varies. By definition, this is pulse amplitude modulation (PAM). You can consider a PAM signal as the result of the sampling process and the input for the quantizing process.

It's a simple task to compute the equal interval between samples. By splitting a second 8000 ways, you come up with the value 0.000125 seconds (or 125  $\mu$ s). Therefore, every 125 millionths of a second, regardless of the frequency or amplitude of the analog waveform, a sample is taken. Figure 3-5 illustrates the sampling process.

**Figure 3-5** *The Sampling Process*

a. Samples at Regular Intervals



b. The PAM Pulse Train with the Waveform Removed

As shown in Figure 3-5, samples taken at adequate intervals provide a guideline to aid receiving equipment in the reconstruction of the original waveform. The receiving equipment performs a sort of “connect-the-dots” with the pulses in the PAM pulse train.

This, together with specialized circuitry, provides a waveform that is indistinguishable from the original version by the human ear.

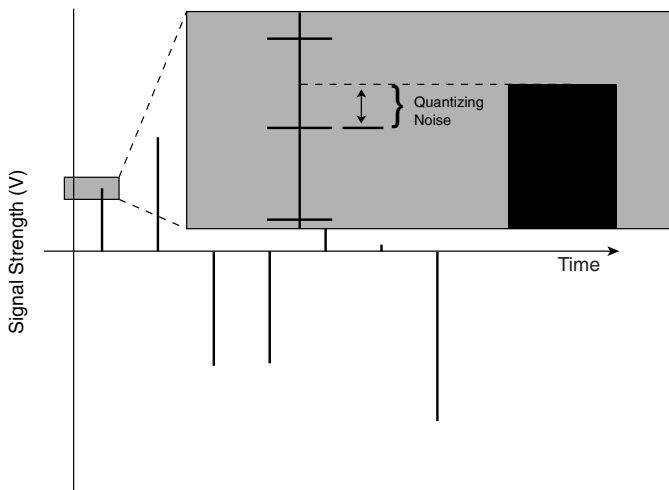
Looking at the pulse stream in Part b of Figure 3-5, you might assume that the digital conversion is well in hand, but consider the fact that the amplitude of each pulse in the train is but one in an infinite range of possible amplitudes. By definition, this is still an analog signal. Nevertheless, only one step stands between the PAM signal and being ready to encode a true digital bit stream—quantizing or quantization.

## Quantizing

Now that you have a PAM signal in the form of a pulse train, you need to evaluate the voltage levels of the individual pulses, based upon a standard scale. Only by adjusting each pulse's amplitude to match a value from a finite set can you hope to use a finite series of digital bit patterns to turn each sample into a portion of a bit stream that can reconstruct the pulse train at the receiving end. This is the object of the encoding process that is discussed in the next section.

From the preceding discussion, you might have already surmised that the result of the quantizing phase is still not the final digital signal, though the quantized PAM signal can be thought of as digital. Because 256 discrete voltage levels are more difficult to transmit and receive with as few errors as only two or three levels (in the case of bipolar line coding), further refinement of the quantized digital signal occurs next, in the encoding phase. This portion of the conversion process might well have the least distinguishable output. Nevertheless, it is a crucial step towards digitization. Figure 3-6 clarifies the fairly abstract nature of the quantizing phase.

**Figure 3-6** Imperfections in the Quantizing Process



Because the original PAM signal is made up of pulses that can have amplitudes within an infinite range, it is necessary to use a finite scale to prepare the PAM signal for the encoding phase, at which point each pulse in the train is converted to a series of 0s and 1s. You cannot expect each original PAM pulse to fall exactly on one of the finite points of the scale, which means that you end up with some altered pulses, with no accompanying information to guide you back to the original pulse. These discrepancies are referred to as *quantizing errors* or *quantizing noise*. These errors do not produce audible differences to the human ear. In fact, minimizing the effect of quantizing errors is the subject of an upcoming discussion on a process called companding.

The PAM pulse is rounded to the nearest point on the scale, regardless of whether that point is higher or lower than the actual sample. This is the first step toward minimizing quantizing errors. The biggest reduction in quantizing noise comes from the use of a non-linear companding law.

Two algorithms are in use today for error reduction in the quantizing phase:

- **$\mu$ -Law (pronounced mu-law—also known as  $\mu$ -255)**—Used in North America and Japan
- **A-Law**—Used in Europe and the rest of the world

These are known as *companding algorithms* because they effectively compress the PAM signal for error reduction on the transmitting end and expand the signal back to normal on the receiving end.

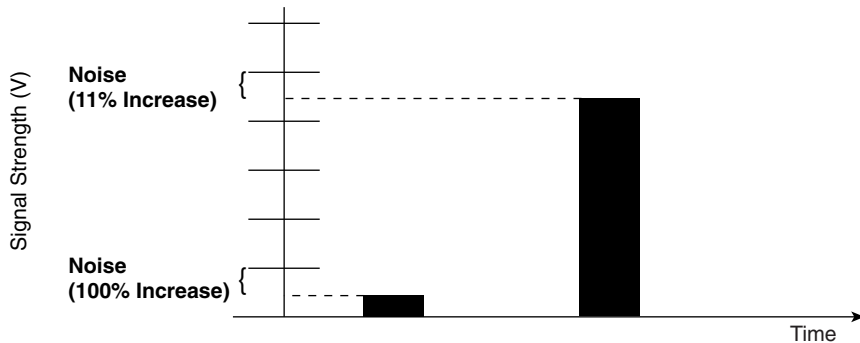
Analog information that has been quantized by one algorithm becomes incompatible with equipment that uses the other. It is common to convert between the two standards for communication between conflicting equipment. The digital signal level 0 (DS-0) created by North American or Japanese equipment can be converted to the DS-0 that is common in other parts of the world. Then, traffic that might have been multiplexed into a T1 or other T-carrier circuit can be multiplexed into an E1 or other related circuit. The responsibility of conversion usually falls on the party using  $\mu$ -Law companding; meaning that international communication takes place with A-Law companding. A DS-0 can be defined as the 64-kbps bit stream that has not yet been multiplexed and is the direct product of the PCM process.

Remember that the process of quantizing exists solely to prepare the analog waveform for digitization during the encoding phase. You are limited to 8 bits per sample when encoding. If you take 8000 samples per second, you wind up with 64,000 bits per second (64 kbps) for each original analog waveform. Eight bits can vary  $2^8$  (256) ways, which means that you are allowed only 256 discrete points on the y-axis during the quantizing phase. If this logic is not apparent to you, consider that the word “bit” comes from a concatenation of the words “binary digit.” This implies the use of the binary (or base-2) numbering system. Because there are only two possible values in this numbering system (0 and 1), the total number of possible values able to be represented by eight binary digits is found by raising two (the number of discrete values in the numbering system to which each digit can be set) to the power of eight (the number of digits being considered at one time—eight bits per sample). To further dilute the effect, these 256 points must be divided evenly between positive and negative pulses.

Depending upon whom you ask, you are liable to hear that toll-quality voice needs 4000 or more points on the vertical scale to reproduce the original signal on the other end in an acceptable manner. This assumes a linear relationship between the original PAM signal and the PAM signal that you use for encoding, which is a technical way of saying the two PAM signals are the same. Unfortunately, this approach would require 12 or more bits per sample during the encoding phase, which would result in higher bit rates, which in turn would result in higher circuit frequencies, which would lead to shorter circuit run lengths because of the increased attenuation of higher frequencies. Companding offers a compromise. Remember that companding would not be necessary if you could encode the information with 12 or more bits, instead of just 8.

The principle of companding is based primarily on the idea that lower amplitude PAM pulses are more sensitive to quantizing noise (a higher signal-to-noise ratio) than are higher amplitude pulses and, to a lesser degree, on the statistical probability that analog traffic presents with lower amplitudes (lower volume) most of the time. This simply means that in a linear quantizing arrangement (all intervals between points on the vertical axis are equal), the quantizing noise can represent a larger percentage increase/decrease in lower-amplitude pulses than in higher ones, which greatly affects the reproduced fidelity of low-volume information. As Figure 3-7 illustrates, an equal amount of quantizing noise, in absolute terms, winds up being an appreciably larger increase for the lower-amplitude pulse, in relative terms. This is the same concept as the perception of time to humans. As you get older, a year (although the same as every other year, in absolute terms) seems shorter because it represents a relatively shorter period, compared to the years of life you have stored away in your memory. To the toddler, however, that same absolute year seems like forever because it is a relatively larger portion of their existence.

**Figure 3-7** *The Greater Effect on Low-amplitude Pulses*



Because the noise is relatively greater at these more popular and vulnerable amplitudes, concentrate on reducing the quantizing error at these amplitudes by placing the points on the vertical axis closer at the lower amplitudes than at the higher ones. This way, you have excellent quality for the majority of the traffic and surprisingly good quality for the rest. For those that would like to follow along mathematically, Figure 3-8 shows the formulas for computing the quantized PAM signal ( $y$ ) from the original PAM signal ( $x$ ), for both  $\mu$ -Law and A-Law. For many of us, it suffices to merely understand that the two technologies are different and that conversion is required between them.

**Figure 3-8** *Companding Equations*

**μ-Law**

$$y = \text{sgn}(x) \frac{\ln(1 + \mu |x|)}{\ln(1 + \mu)}, -1 \leq x \leq 1$$

sgn(x) : + or -, based on x  
 μ = 255 (hence the name μ-255)

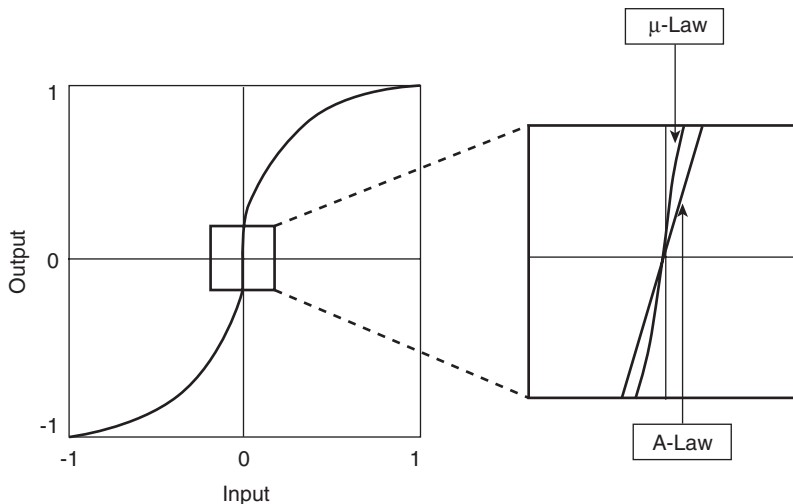
**A-Law**

$$y = \begin{cases} \text{sgn}(x) \frac{A |x|}{1 + \ln A}, & 0 \leq |x| \leq 1/A \\ \text{sgn}(x) \frac{1 + \ln A |x|}{1 + \ln A}, & 1/A \leq |x| \leq 1 \end{cases}$$

A = 87.6

The ranges for PAM signals (x and y) are normalized to ±1 volt, for the purposes of these equations. Figure 3-9 shows these equations graphed. Pay special attention to the logarithmic S curve.

**Figure 3-9** *Graphs Comparing A-Law and μ-Law*



In Figure 3-9, you also see that the A-Law curve is straighter near (0,0) than is the  $\mu$ -Law curve. In reality, these algorithms approximate logarithmic behavior by specifying segments, within which quantized values are actually linear. Although technically there are 16 segments in these pseudo-logarithmic curves, eight in the positive quadrant and eight in the negative, toward the origin, segments are effectively combined because of the collinear nature of these segments.

The difference in the graphs of the two companding algorithms stems from the fact that A-Law combines more linear segments than does  $\mu$ -Law. In fact, whereas  $\mu$ -Law is considered a 15-segment curve (two are combined to form one), A-Law is credited with only 13 segments (four are combined). Although the difference in the equations causes the (x, y) coordinates to plot differently, both algorithms are made up of 16 quantum values (quantized values) in each of 16 linear segments, for the 256 total values represented by an 8-bit code.

The relationship between consecutive linear segments is fairly straightforward. Each segment exhibits half the slope of the preceding segment (it splits the difference between the previous segment and horizontal). Each consecutive segment also doubles the range of amplitudes covered by the previous segment. This also implies that the resolution is cut in half (the quantizing error can as much as double for a sample), because each segment has a fixed 16 quantum values that increasingly must occupy larger ranges of amplitude on the vertical axis.

In practice, both algorithms employ a scheme of 128 positive decimal quantum values (0 to 127) and 128 negative values (-0 to -127) in their quantizing scales, although these values map differently. This difference follows to the encoding phase. In addition, a few mathematical tricks are performed, in the case of encoding A-Law, all of which contribute to the incompatibility between the companding algorithms, and between the resulting PAM signals and encoded bit streams. One-way transmission is a common ramification of mismatched companding algorithms at opposite ends of a circuit.

---

**NOTE**

There are 256 discrete values, 0 to 127 and -0 to -127. The actual zero signal level is not represented. The first bit is the sign bit, which allows for a value of 0 with a negative sign bit, basically -0, as the first value below the x-axis.

---

## Encoding

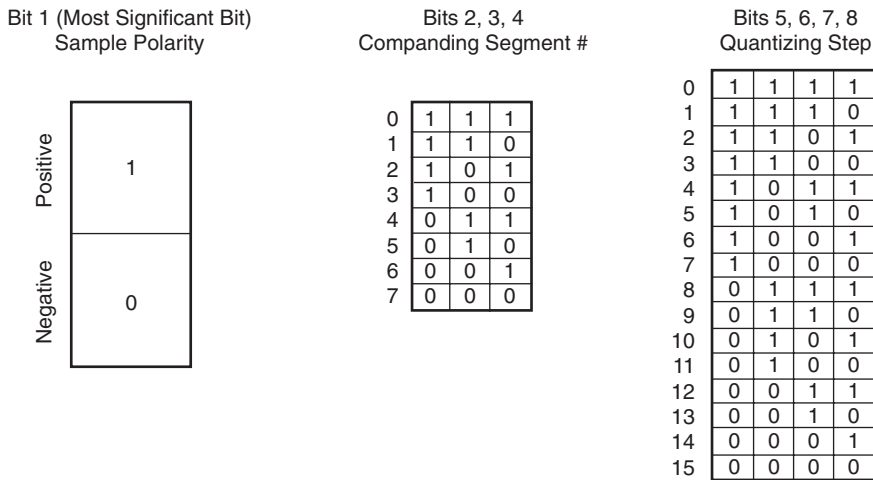
The final phase of the conversion process is one that this chapter has been alluding to for a while. This is what it's all about. After this phase, you have a stream of binary digits that is the digital traffic for transmission across the digital circuit. First, you need to understand that the term *encoding*, as it is used here, does not mean the same thing as encoding when it applies to transforming a bit stream into pulses of electricity. That type of encoding is discussed in chapters relating to digital circuits.



This type of encoding refers to taking the adjusted (quantized) PAM signal and converting each sample into a stream of 8 bits, based on that sample's pulse amplitude. Similar to the quantizing scheme, the encoding method is based on the companding algorithm in use. As you will see, the 8-bit codes that each algorithm generates for the same quantum value are completely different.

Figure 3-10 shows a graphical representation of the segmented approach to encoding  $\mu$ -Law quantum values. Although the bit patterns are opposite from what you might expect in the seven least significant bits (minimum is all 1s, whereas maximum is all 0s), it is easier to diagram than the A-Law process. Even though the A-Law algorithm equates values in a more logical way (zero basically means zero), the final product is the result of performing an exclusive OR (XOR) function with 0x55 (01010101). This process has its roots in days gone by but remains as an artifact of the original technology. Basically, during the transmission of a low-amplitude (silent) signal, the XOR operation ensures that pulses are still encoded, as opposed to the encoding of mostly 0s, which can jeopardize synchronization.

**Figure 3-10** *The Segmented Encoding Process for  $\mu$ -Law*



The segmented encoding process follows the same structure for both companding algorithms, but differs in the encoded values for similar sample-pulse amplitudes. The common structure is illustrated in Figure 3-10, but the values for bits two through eight are decidedly not the same. The first, or most significant, bit represents the PAM pulse's polarity. The next 3 bits represent the eight possible segments, based on the polarity already discussed. Yes, there are 16 segments in all, but recall that these are distributed as eight for each of the two polarities. Therefore, you obtain the unique values for the 16 segments when you consider the first 4 bits together (polarity and segment number). The last 4 bits represent the 16 linear steps in the segment indicated.

The conversion of the encoded value into a binary quantum value that ranges between the decimal values 0 and 255 can be accomplished by leaving bit one alone, the polarity, and inverting bits two through eight. For example, referring to Figure 3-10, an encoded value of 11000101 represents a quantized pulse in the fourth positive segment (marked segment 3) that falls closest to the eleventh quantizing step (marked 10 in the diagram). To turn this into a value between 0 and 255 in binary, leave the first bit alone and invert the remaining 7 bits. This results in 10111010, which is a decimal 186. On the positive scale, encode quantum values between 128 and 255, inclusive. The quantum value 186 is near the halfway point on the positive scale, which is where the description of the encoded value 11000101 would have placed the pulse.

What the preceding paragraph is talking about is  $\mu$ -Law encoding. A-Law, although more difficult to illustrate, is fairly simple to explain. In fact, the quantum value matches the initially encoded value, so that no inversion of bits two through eight is necessary. The trick comes when the initially encoded value is obtained. Before a true A-Law bit stream is realized, you must XOR the initially encoded value with the hexadecimal value 55 (decimal 85), which in binary is 01010101. As you can see, the even bits are inverted in the final product. Figure 3-11 illustrates the use of the XOR Boolean operation.

**Figure 3-11** *The XOR Operation*

	0		1		0		1
XOR	0	XOR	0	XOR	1	XOR	1
	0		1		1		0

In English, Figure 3-11 says that a single operand (and only a single operand) must be a 1 to get a yes (1) answer. Otherwise a no (0) is the result, even when both operands are 1s, which would return a yes answer if you were using either the OR or the AND operation, but not with XOR. Whenever a 0 is XORed with the original data, the same value as the original results, but when it is a 1, the opposite value is the solution. This is the phenomenon that causes the XOR of 0x55 to invert only the even bits for samples quantized and encoded by using the A-Law algorithm.

So, for the same quantum value as in the previous example, which was 186, the initial A-Law encoded value is actually decimal 186 or binary 10111010. This is read as the eleventh step in the fourth positive segment. Sound familiar? Remember that just because both  $\mu$ -Law and A-Law describe a quantum value of 186 the same way, the two algorithms place this step of this segment at slightly different points on the scale. A quantized pulse that maps to 186 in one companding algorithm does not map to 186 in the other.

What this means is that, contrary to what you might think, the conversion process is not a simple numerical replacement. In fact, one of the simpler methods requires two conversions. The  $\mu$ -Law information must first be converted to a 16-bit code, which provides sufficiently generic information. Then this 16-bit code can be converted into A-Law.

Never mind conversion headaches. You're simply trying to produce an A-Law byte from a sample. However, one more step remains. The 10111010 value must be XORed with 01010101. This produces 11101111, a value that does not directly resemble either the quantum value or the initially encoded byte. The one detail that has remained throughout the manipulation is the sample's polarity. The most significant bit has not been altered. For this reason, the polarity (most significant) bit has the same values in the same situations for both  $\mu$ -Law and A-Law. The same cannot be said for bits two through eight.

## Variations on the PCM Theme

PCM is great when you have an application that requires 56 to 64 kbps of digital bandwidth. Sometimes analog traffic can handle a little more loss of integrity. As long as you go in realizing integrity might be jeopardized, you can do quite a few things to preserve bandwidth and get the most out of your digital circuits. Some modern techniques make it difficult for the average human ear to detect anything different from the quality afforded by good old-fashioned PCM. This section introduces two fairly well established technologies that provide an alternative to standard PCM and allow more devices to communicate over the same medium, with minimal to no loss. Additional standards should not be difficult to grasp, after you understand the two presented here. They are differential pulse code modulation (DPCM) and adaptive differential pulse code modulation (ADPCM).

### DPCM

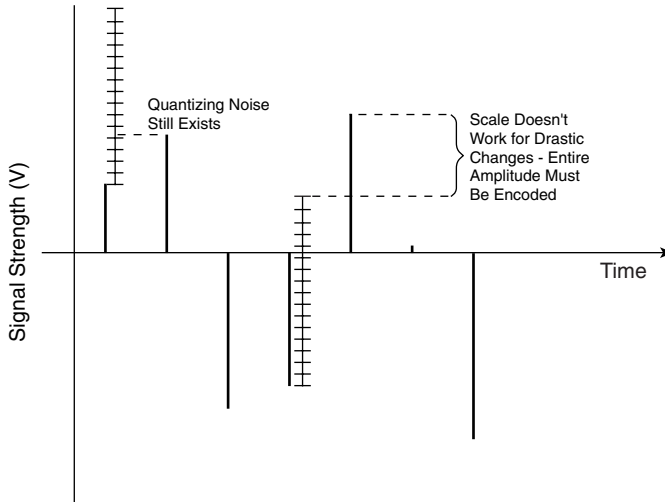
DPCM capitalizes on the fact that the amplitudes of samples of analog information that are captured at the Nyquist rate (twice the limited maximum frequency of the analog source), or higher, tend to be close to one another a high percentage of the time. If this is the case, why not simply look at this difference between the amplitudes of adjacent samples, rather than the amplitudes of the samples themselves? Noting only this differential provides the ability to represent the samples in a way that uses fewer bits than if you were to directly encode the amplitudes of the samples, as in standard PCM. Figure 3-12 illustrates the concept of measuring only the difference between amplitudes of adjacent samples.

An important difference between these differential methods and standard PCM is that quantizing in DPCM and ADPCM is not performed on the actual sample pulses, but instead on the difference between the pulses. If the difference is small, as expected, the quantizing noise can actually be less, especially at higher amplitudes, than in the case of PCM. So with potentially less noise and fewer bits required for transmission (often only 3 or 4 bits per sample, as opposed to 8), it's no wonder these technologies are so popular.

There's no magic to this technology. It's mathematical prediction. Like any prediction, however, the results can be off sometimes, though more so with DPCM than ADPCM. DPCM has a simple prediction mechanism. It starts with a fully described initial value, as PCM does for all samples. It then predicts the next sample will be the same as the last. The fact that it is

not the same is not a problem, because it only encodes the error in the prediction. The receiving end predicts by using exactly the same algorithm and circuitry as the transmitting end, so it understands how to reconstruct the actual pulse from the prediction error that is transmitted. The problem arises when there are not enough bits in the scheme to represent the prediction error. In other words, the change between sample amplitudes is off the scale.

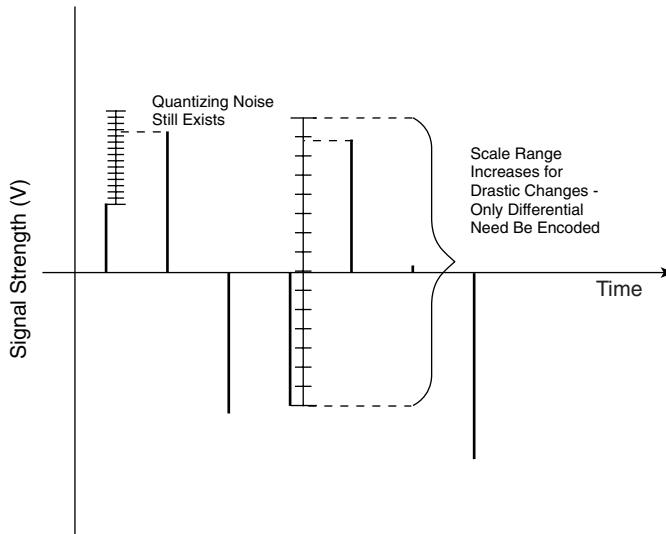
**Figure 3-12** *DPCM's Focus*



## ADPCM

What happens during the less common occurrences when the change between amplitudes of consecutive samples is not close enough to be represented adequately with DPCM? Basically, the quantizing noise can be great. With DPCM, there is no mechanism to circumvent this situation, aside from encoding the actual sample, rather than what might have become an inaccurate prediction. Enter ADPCM. The adaptive part of ADPCM is an enhancement to DPCM. In general, everything works the same, but with ADPCM the range that the 3 or 4 bits represent can change, as necessary (see Figure 3-13).

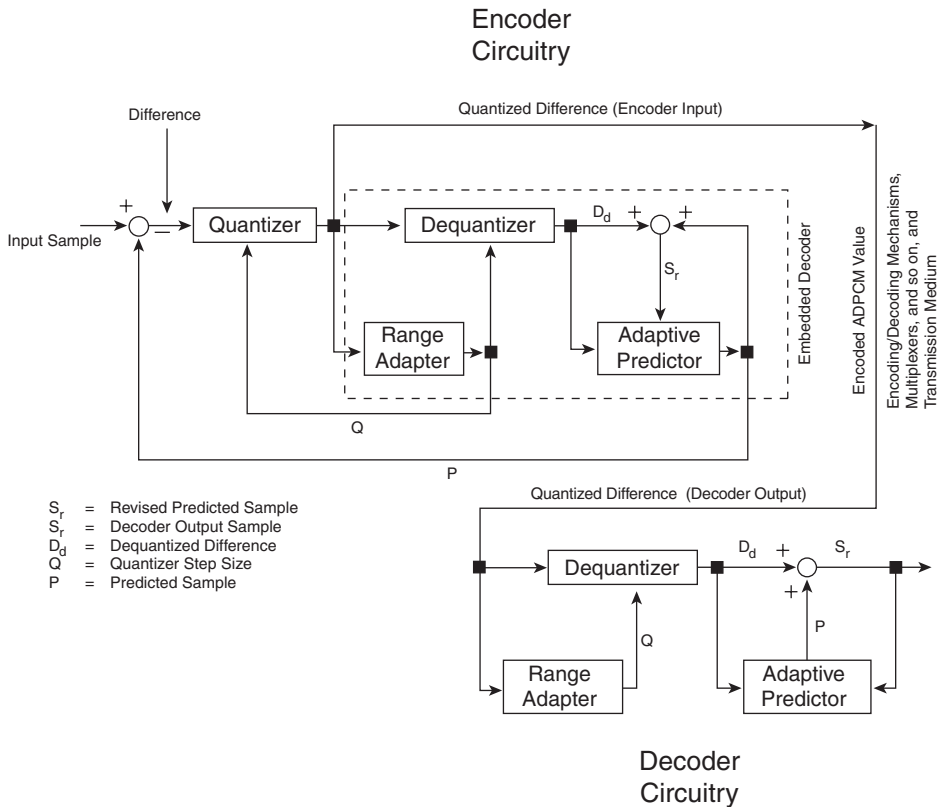
With this ability for the encoding circuitry to alter the range, when the distance between amplitudes increases beyond what the current range can handle, the range can grow to accommodate the distance, although quantizing noise might increase. But the converse is also true. If the distance decreases, the range can decrease, likely reducing quantizing noise in the process. These alterations in noise occur because regardless of the range, with a fixed number of bits representing the difference in amplitudes, the number of points in the adaptive range remains the same. So the same fact that causes the wider ranges to be more loss-inducing causes the narrower ranges to be less so.

**Figure 3-13** ADPCM's Adjustable Range

The prediction mechanism that ADPCM uses is a bit more complex than that of DPCM. In general, ADPCM keeps a running average of a set number of previous differences that were encoded. It keeps its prediction current by also incorporating two or more of the most recent predictions, which forms a weighted average. A good example of this is ITU-T standard G.721. In the case of G.721, the adaptive predictor forms an average by using the last six difference values before they are quantized (or more appropriately, dequantized by the embedded decoder circuitry) and the last two predicted values. Proprietary versions of ADPCM can work differently, although the principles are the same. In fact, G.721 (also see more current G.726) specifies only a 32-kbps ADPCM algorithm, although other implementations specify rates such as 40 kbps, 24 kbps, and 16 kbps.

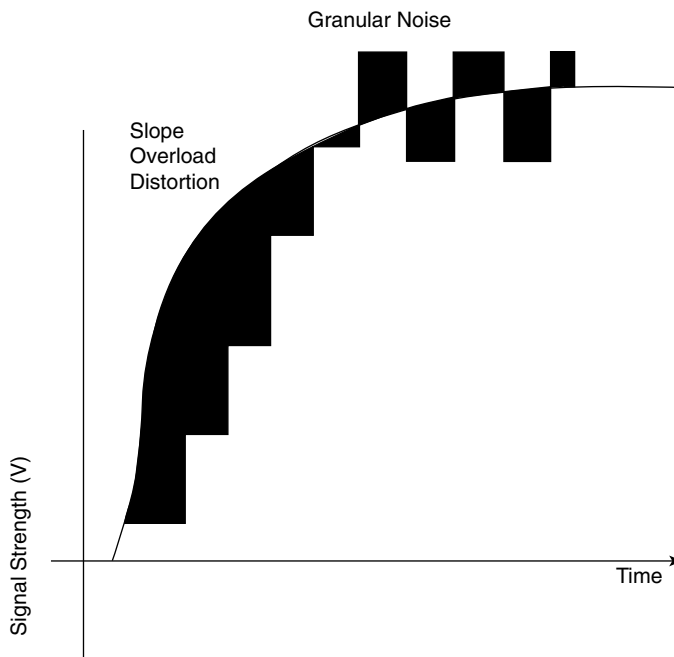
What's this about the encoder containing a decoder? Well, one way to make sure the decoder at the receiving end knows what step size (what range of quantizing steps) the transmitting device is using is if the encoder in the transmitting device is in synchronization with what the decoder at the receiving end is expecting. This way, if the transmitter changes its quantizing range, the receiving end uses the same data to change its dequantizing range. Figure 3-14 shows a block diagram of a sample ADPCM encoder and decoder pair. The encoder contains the decoder's blocks as a subset. The encoder circuitry has updated its predictions and quantizing steps (range) for the next round, by using the same binary code that it is sending to the decoder. This ensures that the identical circuitry of the decoder uses this same information to arrive upon the same results as the encoder's embedded decoder.

**Figure 3-14** Block Diagram of an ADPCM Encoder/Decoder Pair



## Other Modulation Schemes

Besides the popular versions of ADPCM (G.721 is definitely not the only one), several other encoding methods are in use today for various applications. One of these is Delta Modulation (DM). DM works on the basis that the relative change in the direction of the amplitude from one sample to the next is adequate information to successfully reconstruct the analog waveform at the receiving end. As a result, DM requires only a single bit to represent this directional information. The next sample's amplitude is greater than or less than the current sample's amplitude. It's as simple as that. What's not so simple is the solution for the unfortunate situations when the fixed step size assumed by the decoder on the receiving end becomes unfaithful to the reality of steeper or flatter slopes than the norm. Two forms of distortion error occur in these circumstances, slope overload and granular noise (see Figure 3-15).

**Figure 3-15** *Delta Modulation Distortion*

With DM, each bit represents an entire sample. As a result, each one of these samples encoded as a bit is represented in a primitive way, with a relatively small amount of information being transmitted about the sample. This is the main reason that the noise distortion discussed here can be so damaging to fidelity. One way of keeping both types of noise within acceptable limits is to make the step size fairly small, while sampling at a much higher rate than the Nyquist rate. Because there is only one bit per sample, the bit rate matches the sampling rate. Therefore, if you are producing 32 kbps of traffic, you are using a sampling rate of 32,000 samples per second. You must take care not to completely erode the compression benefits, in the form of bandwidth savings, that this technique is designed to offer. Thus, DM alone cannot always effectively overcome these issues, but there is another technique based on DM that can. It's called Continuously Variable Slope DM (CVSD). CVSD allows for the monitoring of a flow-control bit stream, which can come in the form of all 1s to increase the step size to avoid slope overload or all 0s to decrease the step size to allow for a less steep slope, thus curtailing the effects of granular noise.

Other adaptive forms of DM simply watch for trends by remembering previous directions. When the same direction is followed for many samples, the prediction is made that the slope might be fairly flat. So, to decrease the effects of granular noise, the step size is decreased. Conversely, if the direction has been alternating between positive and negative, the indication is that the slope is greater than expected. In this case, the step size is increased to avoid slope overload distortion.

In addition to the time-domain methods discussed in this chapter, frequency-domain approaches also exist, with certain advantages. With Sub-Band ADPCM (SB-ADPCM), the input speech is split into several frequency bands, or sub-bands, and each is coded independently by using ADPCM on the isolated frequencies. At the receiving end, the bits are decoded and the sub-band frequencies are recombined, which yields the reconstructed speech signal. The advantages of doing this come from the fact that the noise in each sub-band is dependent only on the coding in that particular sub-band. As a result, you can use tighter encoding schemes and quantizing steps with sub-bands that are perceived as more important to the human listener. In this way, the noise in these frequency regions is low, whereas in other sub-bands you can allow a higher level of noise, as these frequencies are perceived as less important. Sub-band *codecs* (coder/decoder) produce toll-quality speech by using only 16-32 kbps. Because of the filtering necessary to split the speech into sub-bands, these codecs are more complex than simple DPCM encoders and introduce more coding delay. The complexity and delay are still relatively low, when compared to most hybrid codecs.

## Summary

In this chapter, you learned the history and motivation behind the development of digital transmission and storage technology. You also learned why digital formats improve upon the quality offered by comparable analog technologies.

You were presented with each stage of the conversion process for producing a digital bit stream from an analog source. These stages are as follows:

- **Filtering**—Where only the standardized voice frequency is allowed to enter the process
- **Sampling**—Where the analog waveform is observed 8000 times per second, producing another form of analog signal known as the PAM signal
- **Quantizing**—Where each sample's pulse in the PAM signal is adjusted to match one of 256 discrete levels on the vertical axis, at which time the companding process is applied to the PAM signal, an event that must be reversed at the receiving end
- **Encoding**—Where the adjusted PAM signal is converted into a bit stream, by assigning an eight-bit code to each of the 256 quantization levels from the previous stage

Finally, this chapter presented alternate technologies that have their roots based in the analog-to-digital conversion technology outlined in the beginning of this chapter. These technologies include DPCM, ADPCM, DM, CVSD, and SB-ADPCM.



## Review Questions

Give or select the best answer or answers to the following questions. The answers to these questions are in Appendix A, “Answers to Review Questions.”

- 1 Which of the following are examples of the difference between analog and digital communication? (choose two)
  - a The term frequency only applies to digital communication.
  - b The term bit rate only applies to digital communication.
  - c The quality of an analog signal is generally better than that of a digital signal.
  - d The quality of a digital signal is generally better than that of an analog signal.
  - e Circuits and sending and receiving equipment are identical in analog and digital technologies.
  
- 2 Which of the following is *not* a stage in the analog-to-digital conversion process?
  - a Sampling
  - b Encoding
  - c Filtering
  - d Pulse conversion
  - e Quantizing
  
- 3 What is the earliest stage in the conversion process at which the signal technically can be considered digital?
  - a Sampling
  - b Quantizing
  - c Filtering
  - d Encoding
  - e Pulse conversion

- 4 Which of the following ITU-T recommendations covers PCM in general?
- a G.711
  - b G.721
  - c G.726
  - d G.729
- 5 Which of the following advanced processes adapts the quantizing scale to more closely match the wider or narrower variation between adjacent pulses?
- a PCM
  - b DPCM
  - c ADPCM
  - d DM
  - e CVSD
  - f SB-ADPCM

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