

# High-Speed Interconnect Tuning by Time-Domain Reflectometry

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# Introduction

In signal integrity (SI) applications, time-domain reflectometry (TDR) is a useful technique to analyze the effect of discontinuities in the signal path by observing the reflected signal strength. The signal quality is degraded mainly by impedance mismatch along the transmission line if there is no external noise source, crosstalk or other undesired coupling. In this example, a staircase step function with a fast rise time is launched on a microstrip line connected from layer to layer through a metalized via hole. The signal path discontinuities are identified from the reflected signal. In a subsequent step, the geometry parts in the circuit, where the discontinuities are observed, are modified to lower the distortion.



Figure 1: A microstrip line on a multilayer circuit board. A 20 mil (0.508 mm) microwave substrate is used for each dielectric layer. The ground plane with an anti-via pad is located between two dielectric layers. The top and bottom microstrip lines are connected with a metalized via hole.

# Model Definition

A ground plane with a 0.8 mm anti-via pad is shared by two 20 mil (0.508 mm) substrates with a dielectric constant  $\varepsilon_r = 3.38$ . 50  $\Omega$  microstrip lines are patterned on the top and bottom surfaces of the stacked dielectric layers. The perfect electric conductor (PEC)

boundary condition is applied to all metallic parts including the patterned lines, via pad, via hole and bottom ground plane. The microstrip lines are 135° bent and connected through a metalized via.

The small rectangular surfaces, bridging the microstrip lines and ground plane, are used to model lumped ports where the microstrip lines are excited or terminated by 50  $\Omega$ . The air domain outside the circuit board is defined using vacuum material properties. The simulation domain is truncated by a scattering boundary condition that is an absorbing boundary describing an open space.

A staircase step function is used as an input signal to excite the microstrip line. To avoid undesirable high-frequency components from the signal, it is necessary to apply a long enough rise time, defined by the transition zone size of the step function. Thus, the rise time of the step function is set to one eighth of the period for the 12 Gbit/s signal.

Since the mode in the microstrip line is quasi-TEM and there is no dispersive material properties used in this model, the maximum simulation time is approximated by the traveling time for the wave passing through the microstrip line given the phase velocity. The effective dielectric constant for the phase velocity calculation is obtained using an equation in Ref. 1

$$\frac{\varepsilon_{\rm r}+1}{2} + \frac{\varepsilon_{\rm r}-1}{2\sqrt{1+12\frac{d}{W}}}$$

where d is the thickness of the substrate and W is the width of the line.

The mesh size must be small enough to resolve also the wavelengths corresponding to the highest frequencies in the signal. For this model, the maximum frequency is approximated to 96 GHz. This corresponds to a period that is half of the step function rise time. Since the wave is guided mostly between the microstrip line and the ground plane, only the maximum mesh size of the dielectric layers is set to:

$$0.2\lambda_{\rm g} = 0.2 \frac{\rm c}{f_{\rm max} \sqrt{\epsilon_{\rm eff}}}$$

where c is the speed of light,  $f_{\text{max}}$  is the maximum frequency, and  $\varepsilon_{\text{eff}}$  is the effective dielectric constant. The remaining area is coarsely meshed.

It is also important to define a time step that resolves the wave equally well in time as the mesh does in space. A too long time step would have a poor temporal resolution so the fast time-varying signal, especially in the smoothed transition zone, cannot be analyzed

properly while a too short time step would lead to a longer simulation time without making the results more accurate. While running a transient simulation with default solver settings, the time step is continuously adjusted to meet the specified tolerances for the time-dependent solver. For this simulation, a manual time step will be used. This is done in the settings for the Time-Dependent Solve node, as explained in the following step-bystep instructions.

After the first simulation, the corner of  $135^{\circ}$  bent part of the microstrip line is trimmed to form a mitered bend using a chamfer geometry operation. The radius of the metalized via hole is also increased. The geometry modification is performed to adjust the impedance closer to the ideal 50  $\Omega$  transmission line characteristic impedance.

# Results and Discussion

Figure 2 and Figure 3 present the voltage and impedance during the TDR simulation. The reflected wave due to the parts that have impedance discontinuities causes the signal distortions at lumped port 1. The two major impedance mismatching parts are the bent microstrip line and the metalized via hole. A mitered bend is known to reduce the discontinuity of the bent microstrip line. The undershoot of the TDR response in each plot indicates that the effective width of the microstrip line at the bent part before tuning is wider than that of the 50  $\Omega$  line. After chamfering the corner of the bent part, the undesired undershoot of the TDR response is removed. The initial radius of the metalized via hole is quite small and it is expected to have high inductance. By increasing the radius, the overshoot response from the via hole is reduced.



Figure 2: The time-domain voltage measured at lumped port 1. The undesired voltage fluctuation from the discontinuities is suppressed after tuning.



Figure 3: The time-domain impedance at lumped port 1. After tuning, the measured impedance is closer to 50  $\Omega$ .

Reference

1. D.M. Pozar, Microwave Engineering, John Wiley & Sons, 1998.

**Application Library path:** RF\_Module/EMI\_EMC\_Applications/

high\_speed\_interconnect\_tdr

# Modeling Instructions

From the File menu, choose New.

## NEW

In the New window, click 🙆 Model Wizard.

#### MODEL WIZARD

- I In the Model Wizard window, click 间 3D.
- 2 In the Select Physics tree, select Radio Frequency>Electromagnetic Waves, Transient (termw).
- 3 Click Add.
- 4 Click 🔿 Study.
- 5 In the Select Study tree, select General Studies>Time Dependent.
- 6 Click 🗹 Done.

#### GLOBAL DEFINITIONS

Parameters 1

- I In the Model Builder window, under Global Definitions click Parameters I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Parameters, locate the Parameters section.
- **3** Click **b** Load from File.
- **4** Browse to the model's Application Libraries folder and double-click the file high\_speed\_interconnect\_tdr\_parameters.txt.

## GEOMETRY I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Geometry I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Geometry, locate the Units section.

3 From the Length unit list, choose mm.

Block I (blkI)

- I In the **Geometry** toolbar, click 🗍 Block.
- 2 In the Settings window for Block, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Width text field, type sub\_1.
- 4 In the **Depth** text field, type sub\_w.
- 5 In the **Height** text field, type sub\_t.
- 6 Locate the Position section. From the Base list, choose Center.
- 7 In the z text field, type sub\_t/2.
- 8 Click 📄 Build Selected.
- **9** Click the **Graphics** toolbar.

Work Plane I (wp1)

In the Geometry toolbar, click 📥 Work Plane.

Work Plane I (wpI)>Plane Geometry

In the Model Builder window, click Plane Geometry.

Work Plane I (wp1)>Rectangle I (r1)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click Rectangle.
- 2 In the Settings window for Rectangle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- **3** In the **Width** text field, type sub\_1/4.
- 4 In the **Height** text field, type line\_w.
- 5 Locate the Position section. From the Base list, choose Center.
- 6 In the **xw** text field, type sub\_1/8.

Work Plane I (wp1)>Rotate I (rot1)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click 💭 Transforms and choose Rotate.
- 2 Select the object rI only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Rotate, locate the Rotation section.
- 4 In the Angle text field, type 45.
- 5 Click 📄 Build Selected.

Work Plane 1 (wp1)>Rectangle 2 (r2)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click 📃 Rectangle.
- 2 In the Settings window for Rectangle, locate the Size and Shape section.

- 3 In the Width text field, type sub\_1/2-sub\_1/2/2/sqrt(2)+line\_w/2/sqrt(2).
- 4 In the **Height** text field, type line\_w.
- 5 Locate the Position section. From the Base list, choose Center.
- 6 In the xw text field, type -sub\_1/2+(sub\_1/2-sub\_1/2/2/sqrt(2)+line\_w/2/sqrt(2))/2.
- 7 In the yw text field, type -sub\_1/2/2/sqrt(2)+(line\_w/2-line\_w/2/sqrt(2)).

Work Plane I (wp1)>Union I (uni1)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click 💻 Booleans and Partitions and choose Union.
- 2 Click in the Graphics window and then press Ctrl+A to select both objects.

3 In the Settings window for Union, locate the Union section.

- 4 Clear the Keep interior boundaries check box.
- 5 Click 틤 Build Selected.



Extrude I (extI)

- I In the Model Builder window, right-click Geometry I and choose Extrude.
- 2 In the Settings window for Extrude, locate the Distances section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

# Distances (mm)

sub\_t

Rotate I (rotI)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click 💭 Transforms and choose Rotate.
- 2 Click in the Graphics window and then press Ctrl+A to select both objects.
- 3 In the Settings window for Rotate, locate the Input section.
- **4** Select the **Keep input objects** check box.
- 5 Locate the Rotation section. In the Angle text field, type 180.

## Cylinder I (cyl1)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click 🔲 Cylinder.
- 2 In the Settings window for Cylinder, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Radius text field, type 0.15[mm].
- 4 In the Height text field, type sub\_t\*2.
- 5 Locate the Position section. In the z text field, type -sub\_t.
- 6 Locate the Rotation Angle section. In the Rotation text field, type 45.

#### Move I (movI)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click 💭 Transforms and choose Move.
- 2 Select the objects rot1(1) and rot1(2) only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Move, locate the Displacement section.
- 4 In the z text field, type -sub\_t.

#### Work Plane 2 (wp2)

- I In the Geometry toolbar, click 📥 Work Plane.
- 2 In the Settings window for Work Plane, locate the Plane Definition section.
- 3 In the **z-coordinate** text field, type sub\_t.

#### Work Plane 2 (wp2)>Plane Geometry

In the Model Builder window, click Plane Geometry.

## Work Plane 2 (wp2)>Circle 1 (c1)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click 📀 Circle.
- 2 In the Settings window for Circle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Radius text field, type 0.4[mm].

#### Copy I (copyI)

- I In the Model Builder window, right-click Geometry I and choose Transforms>Copy.
- 2 Select the object wp2 only.

- 3 In the Settings window for Copy, locate the Displacement section.
- 4 In the z text field, type -sub\_t\*2.
- 5 Click 틤 Build Selected.

Work Plane 3 (wp3)

In the Geometry toolbar, click 📥 Work Plane.

Work Plane 3 (wp3)>Plane Geometry

In the Model Builder window, click Plane Geometry.

Work Plane 3 (wp3)>Circle 1 (c1)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click 🕑 Circle.
- 2 In the Settings window for Circle, locate the Size and Shape section.
- 3 In the Radius text field, type 0.8[mm].
- 4 Locate the Rotation Angle section. In the Rotation text field, type 45.

Block 2 (blk2)

- I In the Model Builder window, right-click Geometry I and choose Block.
- 2 In the Settings window for Block, locate the Size and Shape section.
- **3** In the **Width** text field, type sub\_1+4[mm].
- 4 In the **Depth** text field, type sub\_w.
- 5 In the **Height** text field, type sub\_t\*30.
- 6 Locate the Position section. From the Base list, choose Center.
- 7 Click to expand the Layers section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Layer name	Thickness (mm)
Layer 1	2[mm]

- 8 Find the Layer position subsection. Select the Left check box.
- 9 Select the **Right** check box.
- **IO** Clear the **Bottom** check box.

II In the Geometry toolbar, click 📗 Build All.



**12** Click the 4 **Zoom Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.

## DEFINITIONS

Step I (step I)

- I In the Home toolbar, click f(x) Functions and choose Global>Step.
- 2 In the Settings window for Step, click to expand the Smoothing section.
- **3** In the **Size of transition zone** text field, type T0/8.

Analytic I (an I)

- I In the Home toolbar, click f(x) Functions and choose Global>Analytic.
- 2 In the Settings window for Analytic, locate the Definition section.
- 3 In the Expression text field, type step1((x-T0/16)/1[s]).
- 4 Locate the **Units** section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Argument	Unit
x	S

**5** In the **Function** text field, type V.

# MATERIALS

Material I (mat1)

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) right-click Materials and choose Blank Material.
- 2 In the Settings window for Material, locate the Material Contents section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Property	Variable	Value	Unit	Property group
Relative permittivity	epsilonr_iso ; epsilonrii = epsilonr_iso, epsilonrij = 0	1	I	Basic
Relative permeability	mur_iso ; murii = mur_iso, murij = 0	1	I	Basic
Electrical conductivity	sigma_iso ; sigmaii = sigma_iso, sigmaij = 0	0	S/m	Basic

Material 2 (mat2)

- I Right-click Materials and choose Blank Material.
- 2 In the Settings window for Material, locate the Geometric Entity Selection section.
- 3 Click i Paste Selection.
- 4 In the Paste Selection dialog box, type 3, 4, 6, 7 in the Selection text field.

5 Click OK.



- 6 In the Settings window for Material, locate the Material Contents section.
- 7 In the table, enter the following settings:

Property	Variable	Value	Unit	Property group
Relative permittivity	epsilonr_iso ; epsilonrii = epsilonr_iso, epsilonrij = 0	er_sub	1	Basic
Relative permeability	mur_iso ; murii = mur_iso, murij = 0	1	I	Basic
Electrical conductivity	sigma_iso ; sigmaii = sigma_iso, sigmaij = 0	0	S/m	Basic

# ELECTROMAGNETIC WAVES, TRANSIENT (TEMW)

Perfect Electric Conductor 2

I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) right-click Electromagnetic Waves, Transient (temw) and choose Perfect Electric Conductor.

- **2** In the Settings window for Perfect Electric Conductor, locate the Boundary Selection section.
- 3 Click Paste Selection.
- 4 In the Paste Selection dialog box, type 14, 21-22, 25, 34-35, 38, 41-44, 46-47, 51, 54, 58-59, 61 in the Selection text field.
- 5 Click OK.



**Perfect Electric Conductor** includes all metallic surfaces: microstrip line, metalized via, via-pad, and ground plane. Make sure that the anti-via pad on the ground plane is excluded.

## Scattering Boundary Condition 1

- I In the Physics toolbar, click 🔚 Boundaries and choose Scattering Boundary Condition.
- **2** In the Settings window for Scattering Boundary Condition, locate the Boundary Selection section.
- **3** Click **Paste Selection**.
- 4 In the Paste Selection dialog box, type 1-5, 7-8, 10, 13, 16, 18, 26-29, 67-68, 72, 75-76 in the Selection text field.

5 Click OK.



These are all exterior boundaries.

Lumped Port I

- I In the Physics toolbar, click 📄 Boundaries and choose Lumped Port.
- **2** Select Boundary 19 only.



#### 15 | HIGH-SPEED INTERCONNECT TUNING BY TIME-DOMAIN REFLECTOMETRY

- 3 In the Settings window for Lumped Port, locate the Boundary Selection section.
- 4 Click here a Create Selection.

Use this selection to store solutions only on the excited Lumped Port boundary.

5 In the Create Selection dialog box, click OK.

For the first port, wave excitation is **on** by default.

- 6 In the Settings window for Lumped Port, locate the Settings section.
- 7 In the  $V_0$  text field, type an1(t).

# Lumped Port 2

- I In the Physics toolbar, click 📄 Boundaries and choose Lumped Port.
- 2 Select Boundary 73 only.



#### MESH I

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) click Mesh I.
- 2 In the Settings window for Mesh, locate the Sequence Type section.
- 3 From the list, choose User-controlled mesh.

## Size

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Mesh I click Size.
- 2 In the Settings window for Size, locate the Element Size section.
- 3 Click the **Custom** button.

- 4 Locate the Element Size Parameters section. In the Maximum element size text field, type 5.
- 5 In the Minimum element size text field, type 0.5.
- 6 In the Maximum element growth rate text field, type 2.

#### Size 1

- I In the Model Builder window, right-click Mesh I and choose Size.
- 2 In the Settings window for Size, locate the Geometric Entity Selection section.
- 3 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Domain.
- 4 Click **Paste Selection**.
- 5 In the Paste Selection dialog box, type 6-11 in the Selection text field.
- 6 Click OK.



- 7 In the Settings window for Size, locate the Element Size section.
- 8 Click the **Custom** button.
- 9 Locate the Element Size Parameters section.
- 10 Select the Maximum element size check box. In the associated text field, type hmax.

II Select the Minimum element size check box. In the associated text field, type hmax/2.

Size 2

I Right-click Mesh I and choose Size.

- 2 In the Settings window for Size, locate the Geometric Entity Selection section.
- 3 From the Geometric entity level list, choose Boundary.
- 4 Click **Paste Selection**.
- 5 In the Paste Selection dialog box, type 32-33, 40, 57 in the Selection text field.
- 6 Click OK.



- 7 In the Settings window for Size, locate the Element Size section.
- 8 Click the **Custom** button.

9 Locate the Element Size Parameters section.

**10** Select the **Maximum element size** check box. In the associated text field, type hmax.

II Select the Minimum element size check box. In the associated text field, type hmax/3.

Size 1

In the Model Builder window, right-click Size I and choose Move Up.

Size 2

In the Model Builder window, right-click Size 2 and choose Move Up.

# DEFINITIONS

### Hide for Physics 1

I In the Model Builder window, right-click View I and choose Hide for Physics.

2 Select Domains 1, 2, 5, and 12 only.



# MESH I

I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl) right-click Mesh I and choose Build All.

2 Click the **Zoom Extents** button in the **Graphics** toolbar.



# STUDY I

Step 1: Time Dependent

- I In the Model Builder window, under Study I click Step I: Time Dependent.
- 2 In the Settings window for Time Dependent, locate the Study Settings section.
- **3** In the **Output times** text field, type range(0, sim\_time\_step, sim\_time\_max).
- **4** Click to expand the **Values of Dependent Variables** section. Find the **Store fields in output** subsection. From the **Settings** list, choose **For selections**.
- 5 Under Selections, click + Add.
- 6 In the Add dialog box, select Explicit I in the Selections list.
- 7 Click OK.
- 8 In the Model Builder window, click Study I.
- 9 In the Settings window for Study, locate the Study Settings section.
- **IO** Clear the **Generate default plots** check box.

### Solution 1 (soll)

I In the Study toolbar, click **Show Default Solver**.

- 2 In the Model Builder window, expand the Solution I (soll) node, then click Time-Dependent Solver I.
- **3** In the **Settings** window for **Time-Dependent Solver**, click to expand the **Time Stepping** section.
- 4 From the Steps taken by solver list, choose Manual.
- 5 In the Time step text field, type sim\_time\_step.
- 6 In the Study toolbar, click **=** Compute.

#### RESULTS

ID Plot Group I

- I In the Home toolbar, click 🚛 Add Plot Group and choose ID Plot Group.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, click to expand the Title section.
- **3** From the **Title type** list, choose **Manual**.
- 4 In the **Title** text area, type Time domain voltage response at the input port.
- 5 Locate the Legend section. From the Position list, choose Lower right.

Global I

- I Right-click ID Plot Group I and choose Global.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the y-Axis Data section.
- **3** In the table, enter the following settings:

Expression	Unit	Description
an1(t)	V	Input voltage

- 4 Click to expand the **Coloring and Style** section. Find the **Line markers** subsection. From the **Marker** list, choose **Cycle**.
- **5** From the **Positioning** list, choose **Interpolated**.

#### Global 2

- I In the Model Builder window, right-click ID Plot Group I and choose Global.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, click Add Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-Axis Data section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)> Electromagnetic Waves, Transient>Ports>temw.Vport\_I - Lumped port voltage - V.

3 In the ID Plot Group I toolbar, click 💿 Plot.



The plot shows the input and measured voltage at lumped port 1. The fluctuation in the measured voltage at lumped port 1 indicates that the reflected wave from the discontinuities causes the signal distortion. The discontinuities are at the bent microstrip line and metalized via hole.

# ID Plot Group 2

- I In the Home toolbar, click 🚛 Add Plot Group and choose ID Plot Group.
- 2 In the Settings window for ID Plot Group, locate the Title section.
- 3 From the Title type list, choose Manual.
- 4 In the Title text area, type Time domain impedance at the input port.
- 5 Locate the Legend section. From the Position list, choose Lower right.

#### Global I

- I Right-click ID Plot Group 2 and choose Global.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, click Add Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-Axis Data section. From the menu, choose Component I (comp1)>
  Electromagnetic Waves, Transient>Ports>temw.Zport\_I Lumped port impedance Ω.
- **3** Locate the **Coloring and Style** section. Find the **Line markers** subsection. From the **Marker** list, choose **Cycle**.

- 4 From the **Positioning** list, choose **Interpolated**.
- 5 In the ID Plot Group 2 toolbar, click i Plot.



The impedance at lumped port 1 fluctuates around 50  $\Omega$ .

Improve the time domain response by tuning the parts where the impedance mismatching is observed.

## GEOMETRY I

Work Plane I (wpI)>Plane Geometry

In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Geometry I> Work Plane I (wpl) click Plane Geometry.

Work Plane I (wp1)>Chamfer I (cha1)

- I In the Work Plane toolbar, click Chamfer.
- 2 On the object unil, select Point 4 only.
- 3 In the Settings window for Chamfer, locate the Distance section.
- 4 In the **Distance from vertex** text field, type 0.8.



# Cylinder I (cyl1)

- I In the Model Builder window, under Component I (compl)>Geometry I click Cylinder I (cyll).
- 2 In the Settings window for Cylinder, locate the Size and Shape section.
- **3** In the **Radius** text field, type 0.3[mm].

4 Click 📳 Build All Objects.



## STUDY I

Solution 1 (soll)

In the Model Builder window, under Study I>Solver Configurations right-click
 Solution I (soll) and choose Solution>Copy.

The solution from the previous simulation will be used to compare with the results of the tuned device.

**2** In the **Home** toolbar, click **= Compute**.

## RESULTS

Global 3

- I Right-click ID Plot Group I and choose Global.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Study I/Solution I Copy I (sol2).
- 4 Click Add Expression in the upper-right corner of the y-Axis Data section. From the menu, choose Component I (compl)>Electromagnetic Waves, Transient>Ports> temw.Vport\_I Lumped port voltage V.

5 Locate the y-Axis Data section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Expression	Unit	Description
temw.Vport_1	V	Lumped port voltage before tuning

6 In the ID Plot Group I toolbar, click 💿 Plot.

In Figure 2, the input pulse and the voltage at lumped port 1 are plotted. After tuning of the circuit, the fluctuation of the voltage is less.

Global 2

- I In the Model Builder window, under Results>ID Plot Group 2 right-click Global I and choose Duplicate.
- 2 In the Settings window for Global, locate the Data section.
- 3 From the Dataset list, choose Study I/Solution I Copy I (sol2).
- 4 Locate the y-Axis Data section. In the table, enter the following settings:

Expression	Unit	Description
temw.Zport_1	Ω	Lumped port impedance before tuning

5 In the ID Plot Group 2 toolbar, click 💿 Plot.

Figure 3 shows the impedance at lumped port 1. After tuning of the circuit, the impedance is closer to 50  $\Omega$ .