

# **VLSI Design Flow: RTL to GDS**

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## **Lecture 44**

### **Basic Concepts for Physical Design - I**

Hello everybody. Welcome to the course VLSI design flow RTL to GDS. This is the 35th lecture. In this lecture, we will be looking at basic concepts for physical design. In the earlier lectures, we have discussed logic synthesis and at the end of logic synthesis, we get a net list. And then we have looked into DFT techniques and we have inserted some features in the net list for example, scan cells which help us improve the testability of our design.

So, after doing logic synthesis and carrying out a DFT task, we get a net list of our design. So next, the next task is to carry out physical design. So to recap, what we do in physical design is that we take the net list and create a layout for it which will finally go to the foundry for fabrication. So, the primary task involved in physical design is to place all the entities that are in our design at appropriate places on the layout and then make interconnections using metal layers.

So the placement and making connections or routing is the primary job of physical design. Now, to understand the physical design task, we need to understand we need to be familiar with some basic concepts. So, we will be looking at some basic concepts which are related to physical design. In particular, we will be looking at fabrication of IC and then we will be looking at interconnects and we will be discussing parasitics in interconnects in this lecture. And in the next lecture, we will be continuing with some more basic concepts related to physical design.

And then we will be actually starting or in the rest of this lectures or rest of the lectures of this course, we will be discussing various physical design tasks. So let us first start with some basic concepts related to IC fabrication. In our earlier lectures, we had seen that photolithography is the key step in fabrication. And just to recap in photolithography, what we do is that we have features on masks. On the mask is a transparent material and the features are marked using some opaque materials such as chromium.

And then with the help of light and optical instruments and using some materials which are sensitive to light, those materials are known as photoresist, we get patterns on the substrate as we have on the mask. So photolithography is the most important or the most critical step in IC fabrication and it is carried out multiple times. Multiple times for various layers, we carry out photolithography. So in general, we divide the IC fabrication task into two types of processes. So the first type of process is known as front end of line processes.

So in this, what we do is that we create active elements like transistors, diodes and capacitors. And in the second group of processes of fabrication are known as back end of line processes. In these processes, we create layers of wires. So just to recap the structure of an integrated circuit, if we draw a crude structure of a crude cross section of an IC. So in IC, there are two kinds of layers.

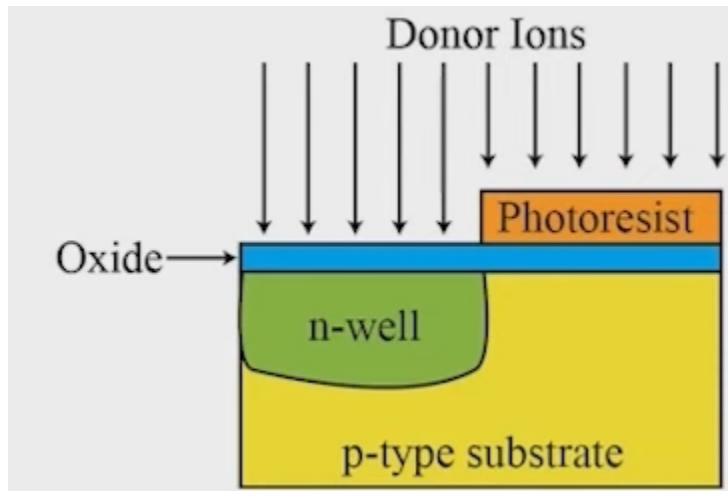
The bottom layers are where the transistors and devices are there. So these are the bottom layers and over these layers, so these are device layers, we can say that these are device layers. And these structures or these transistors and devices and other things are built within the semiconductor. This is silicon substrate, silicon substrate. And over these device layers, there are multiple interconnect layers.

So these interconnect layers are typically metal layers, which are used to interconnect or make connections between devices. So the lower device layers are fabricated in the FEOL processes or front end of line processes. And then the back end of line processes are carried out in which the metal layers are made on the top of the device layers. Now let us look into these FEOL processes and back BEOL processes in some more detail. Now let us understand how devices are made.

So in devices, when we make say transistors, we use MOSFETs in our device as devices. Now if we want to make MOSFET or a transistor, then what we need is that we need to have p-n junctions. We have say drain, source and these drain and source are made by doping into the semiconductor. And also the MOSFETs are typically built in say n-well or p-well, which are again doped semiconductors. So basically we need to dope a semiconductor that is silicon multiple times during the IC fabrication.

And how do we do it? So we dope it using a process known as ion implantation. So doping basically means that if our original substrate is silicon, then dope doping means we are adding impurities to the silicon crystal. For example, the dopant can be an acceptor, and the acceptor impurities are say boron and aluminum, and the donor impurities are phosphorus. So these, so we are using these dopant materials, the dopant ions which go into the silicon which goes into the silicon. If we dope the pure silicon

with the dopant of acceptor and donor, then the properties of the silicon changes. For example, its conductivity increases and so on.

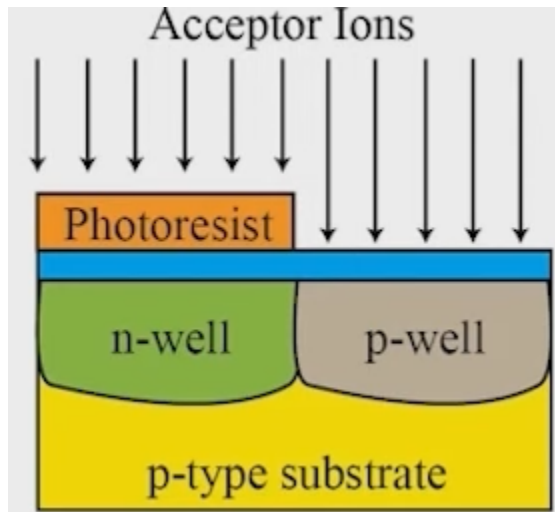


And using this modulation of conductivity and the properties of silicon material, we are able to create various kinds of devices. And to dope these impurities into the silicon, we use the process which is known as ion implantation. So what do we do in ion implantation In ion implantation, the first thing is that we need to create

ions, The ions of appropriate material for example, boron or phosphorus depending on what kind of material we want to implant into our silicon substrate, we will use appropriate materials and using those materials, we create ions using arc discharge, So once these ions are created, we accelerate them and or take the ions to appropriate energy, And then and also we need to apply the ions at appropriate places on the substrate, And therefore, we use electric and magnetic fields to accelerate those ions and also filter out unwanted ions so that the impurities do not get implanted into our substrate, So once we have the ions of the required energy and in pure form, we bombard the substrate through a thin layer of screening silicon dioxide, So what we do is that we suppose there are donor ions, Donor ions, for example, donor ions can be phosphorus, So we bombard the substrate with the phosphorus ions and we use a thin layer of screening silicon dioxide so that our substrate does not get damaged excessively by these ions. And when we bombard the silicon substrate with the ions, then those ions get lost inside our silicon substrate, Now we want this implantation to happen only in specific areas of the silicon substrate and not everywhere. And we use photoresist, So we have discussed what a photoresist is.

So we can pattern the photoresist using optical techniques. So on the substrate, we apply photoresist uniformly and then pattern it and we get a required pattern where we want the dopant to go and where we do not want to go, where we want the dopant to not penetrate and so the required pattern is created using photoresist and we implant through

the photoresist, So the area where there is no photoresist, there the ions will penetrate and get lost, But once the ions have lost into the, once the ions have penetrated and have taken place into the substrate, the next task that we need to do is annealing, So in annealing what we do is that we take this substrate to a higher temperature and then allow it to cool. What it does is that the ions that get lost into our substrate occupy random locations in the lattice.



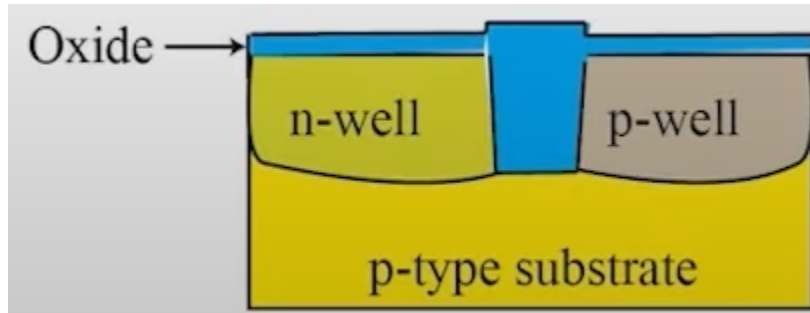
But what we want is that the dopant atom occupy the place of silicon in the lattice and as a result, we will get electrons and holes in the material where we have doped it, So to activate those dopants, meaning that we want the dopant to sit on the site where silicon was there in the lattice and as a result of that extra electrons or extra holes will be created inside or will be available in the silicon substrate, that phenomenon occurs, So we activate the dopant using annealing and also annealing also it reduces or it heals the defects which were, which

are introduced by bombarding the silicon substrate with the ions, So now this kind of ion implantation is done many times in our FEOL processes to make devices and it is also used to adjust the threshold voltage, So typically we make MOSFETs in say N-well, N-well as it is shown here or P-well, So we can make N-well by doping donor ions and we can make N-well, sorry P-well by doping acceptor ions So we are, the photoresist here is stopping acceptor ions to go and therefore P-well is created only in the required location, Now the threshold voltage of the transistor depends on what is the electron hole concentration in the channel And to adjust those threshold voltage we can use another threshold adjustment implant at the required position, So suppose there are say 1 million transistors, out of them say we want say, say 500 k transistors to have different kinds of threshold voltage. Then we can use, we can, what we can do is that we can implant, we can, we can do ion implantation at the required, required transistors where we want to adjust the threshold voltage and as such the threshold voltage of some of the transistors will change as per our requirement.

Another thing to note is that all these, all these devices are created on a single crystal of silicon, So there is a single crystal of silicon that is shown here, Now if we create multiple devices on a single, single crystal of silicon then these devices can interact among themselves through the substrate, For example, this and this, these both can interact, But what we want is that devices interact through the interconnect and not through the, through the substrate, And to stop that what we need to do is that we need

to isolate, we need to isolate transistors, So there are various techniques to isolate transistors. One of the common techniques is to use shallow trench isolation,

Now in shallow trench isolation what we do is that we create a, create a kind of trench in



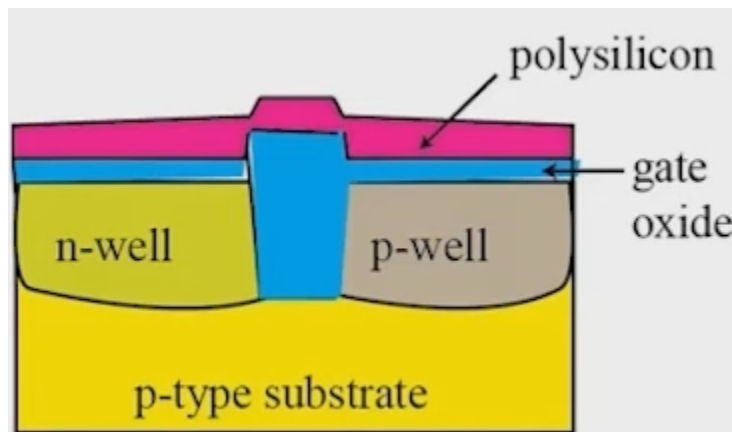
the, or create a hollow space at the required places where we want to have a, have an isolating ox, isolating insulator material which is typically silicon dioxide. So we create hollow structures and then fill those

hollow, hollow places with the insulator for example, silicon dioxide and then planarize it, So we get the, so the devices for example, this n-well and this p-well get, they both get isolated through this silicon dioxide. So this is a silicon dioxide and silicon dioxide is an insulator and therefore if the current or there is an interaction between n-well and p-well through the substrate it will get inhibited, Now once we have created say n-well and p-well in our, in our substrate, , the next thing is to create the transistors, And so typically we use CMOS technology and in CMOS technology the MOSFETs are the active elements or active transistors that we use, Now in MOSFETs there are three main terminals, So those are gate, source and drain. So we need to now fabricate or make MOSFETs in these n-wells, So to make the MOSFET first we need to have the gate structure, Now for the MOSFET let me just recap what is a MOSFET.

So in a MOSFET we have n plus n, n. So this is an n-channel MOSFET. So we have n plus source, n plus drain and over this we have oxide and over this we have metal, This is metal, this is oxide and this is silicon and that is why we have MOS kind of structure, metal oxide semiconductor, So MOSFET stands for metal oxide semiconductor field effect transistor. So MOS is metal oxide semiconductor and why this name Because there is a structure, we have a metal, then oxide and then semiconductor, So now we have to make this kind of structure in our, on our substrate, Now typically what we use is that instead of metal we use polysilicon, polysilicon, So polysilicon is basically polycrystalline silicon and we dope it either with n plus impurity or p plus impurity so that its conductivity is higher than normal silicon, And we use metal instead of polysilicon also for making interconnects, making gates and also local interconnects So the first thing to create, to create the gate structure we need to create the lower oxide, Oxide layer So to create an oxide layer what we do is that we either grow oxide or deposit oxide and this oxide should be high quality meaning that its dense, its thickness should be very well controlled. So in typical MOSFETs the thickness of these oxides

can be as low as say 2 nanometer, 2 nanometer, 3 nanometer and if we count the number of atoms it will be tens of atoms, That will, that is involved, that is with, that needs to be created in this, in this layer of oxide.

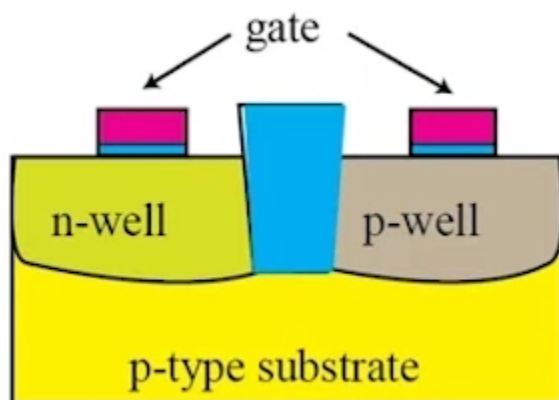
So it is very, very thin, And if the thickness varies slightly even, A few layers of atoms are different or extra or less then the threshold voltage of the transistor can change widely, So therefore the thickness of this oxide layer must be controlled very accurately, And then what we do is that we deposit polysilicon, As I said, instead of metal we use polysilicon for the gate.



So we deposit first the oxide, a high quality oxide meaning that its thickness is very well controlled and in advanced technology it may not be silicon dioxide, it may be high key dielectric. For example, now we use hafnium, hafnium dioxide, HFO<sub>2</sub> also as gate oxide because it leads to a better drive strength and, and, and the, and the speed of the

transistor improves if we use high K dielectric, high K dielectric, So we can use, we can deposit a layer of SiO<sub>2</sub> or HFO<sub>2</sub> and then we deposit a layer of polysilicon, Now we deposit it using a process which is known as chemical vapor deposition or CV, Once we

have deposited polysilicon, the next thing is to pattern it, Now again for patterning we use the process of photolithography, So we have a mask, on the mask we know where we need to remove the material, where to keep it and based on that we do the etching and finally we get a structure like this.

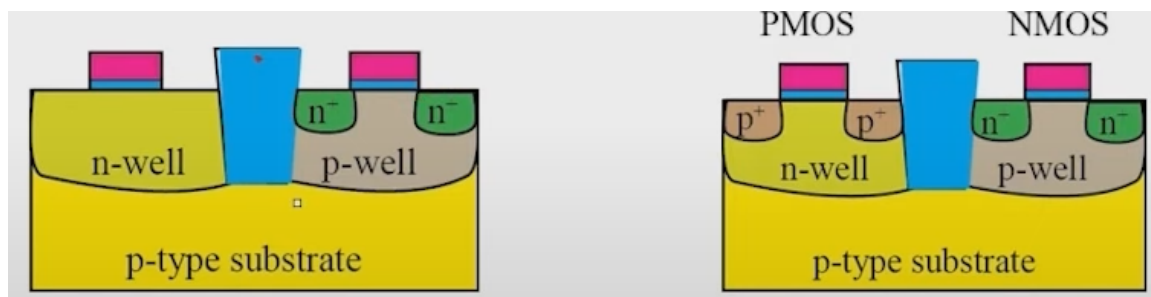


So from this region, this region, this region the oxide and the polysilicon has been removed. Now polysilicon can also be used for local interconnects, So local

interconnects meaning that connecting two transistors at the lower levels, those connections can be made using polysilicon also instead of metal And those kinds, so the, the, in, when we are creating this gate, , when we are creating that gate and suppose two

gates are connected, This was one gate and this was another gate.

So if these two gates were connected, , and these both are shaped polysilicon, then those connections can be made by patterning the polysilicon itself and this is a kind, this polysilicon here is acting as a local interconnect, So there is a transistor here. So I am showing the top level view of the IC. So we have transistors here, So this is the gate and then these are, here also we have polysilicon which is acting as a local interconnect connecting this gate G1 and this gate G2 of the two transistors. Now once we have created the gate, the next task is to create the, the, the drain and source, So first we can create the, using again ion implantation and photolithography, we can dope n plus, n plus dopants, For example, phosphorus and we will get a kind of, of source and drain, source and drain for p channel or p type, sorry n channel or NMOS, So we have no MOS in this region. And then in the next step using another, another mask and your photolithography, we can dope up plus and we will get a PMOS, So this is how we can create transistors on the substrate.



Now the description that I gave is very, very simplistic, Just to get an intuitive feel of what things will be done and how physical design tasks will be affected by this. We will see later in, in, in due course, Now once we have made the devices, The next task is to connect them and to connect them we have layers of wires over the device layer, So layers of wires and these layers of wires are separated by interlayer dielectric or ILD and typically this ILD material can be SiO<sub>2</sub> on silicon dioxide. Now how do we use wires? So typically we use copper and why do we use copper? Copper we use copper because the copper has a very good conductivity, And also it is more resistant to a phenomenon which is known as electromigration. So what is electromigration What is, why is it important and other things We will discuss in later, later, later lectures where we discuss how we can control electromigration and other things for, not just understand or just take a note that we use copper for, because of its good conductivity and also it is fairly, fairly resistant to electromigration effects. And how do we create this, these wires, layers of wires So we use a process which is known as a dual damascene process. There are other processes also to make interconnects, but this is the most popular, that is the dual damascene process.

So in this dual damascene process what we do is that we create vias and interconnect

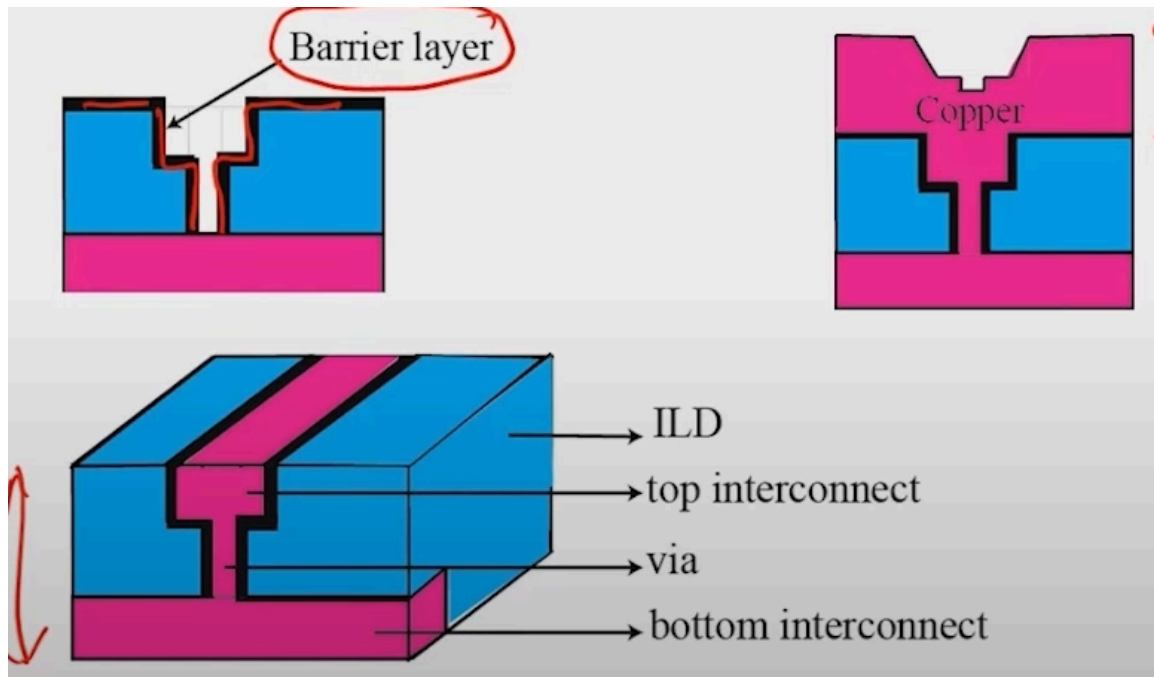
layers together, So we make both of them together and that is why it is known as the dual damascene process. Now how do we carry out the dual damascene process? So in the dual damascene process, first we do etching, say using plasma etching technique we create hollow space in the interlayer dielectric. So this is interlayer dielectric or SiO<sub>2</sub>. So in the SiO<sub>2</sub> layer we create hollow space, Using etching and photolithography and the appropriate mask, so we want vias to be made only at appropriate locations, not everywhere in our design or in the layout, So wherever there is a, wherever we want vias to be made, there will be, the photoresist will be removed, Using the photolithography step, exposing photoresist to the mask and so on. And then we carry out etching through the photoresist and therefore we get these hollows only in the location, only in those locations where we want vias to be made. Now the next task is to, to create hollow space for the interconnects, So now what we are doing is that we are trying to, suppose there is one layer of wire already there, One layer of wire already there, we want to make the next layer of wire and that is what we are showing how to make the next layer of wire, So we want this layer, this copper layer to be connected to the next layer using this via, So I am using this connection so that we can, we can show how vias and the wires can be made together.

So once we have created the opening for vias, then the next step is to create the opening for the interconnects, The interconnects. And then what we do is that we create a barrier layer. Now the copper material, the copper material is very good from the conductivity and electromagnetism of properties or the resistance to electromagnetism properties, but there is a downside of copper. The downside is that it is easily soluble in silicon dioxide and silicon. And as a result what can happen is that if we do not block this copper or have something, some material between copper interconnect and silicon dioxide, what can happen is that this copper material can penetrate through silicon dioxide and go to the lower device layers and damage our transistors. So when copper atoms goes into, into the, or reaches the device layers, then those, those copper create extra defect levels in the transistors and as such the threshold voltage and even the operation of the MOSFET will get affected. So we want that copper to be restricted to a particular layer only.

It does not get penetrated through the silicon dioxide and silicon to the lower layers. And to do that we have a barrier layer, We first create a barrier layer typically of a tantalum or titanium or say some silicide material. We deposit that over the, over this created openings. So these barrier layers are created first, And then after that we are using an electroplating method, we deposit copper in this, copper in this hollow space, We deposit copper in this hollow space, So once we have deposited this copper in the hollow space, we have got a connection, So there was one layer, one layer of copper already there, First layer. And now we have got the second layer also.



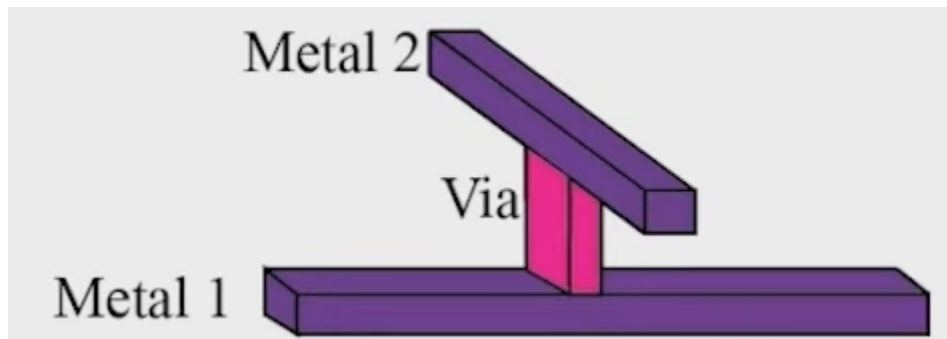
This is the first layer and we have got the second layer and we have also got a connection through them through the via, And then what we do is that we carry out a process which is known as chemical mechanical polishing, Or in short it is known as CMP. So in CMP we take the wafer and put it face down on a polishing machine. And using a high pH slurry material, the complete wafer is polished and planarized, And we get this kind of structure, So we have, so once we remove this extra material, then we are left with this part, And that is what it is shown, So the upper part, that is this part from here to here, gets removed by the CMP process or chemical mechanical process. And we get two layers of interconnects, one running in this direction and the next running in orthogonal direction. And we have a via at the place where we wanted to have an interconnection between these two layers. Now this task of creating interconnects is repeated multiple times. I have just shown one layer, It will be repeated many times and many layers of interconnects will be created,



So we have just looked into IC fabrication tasks very, very briefly, So to just get an intuitive understanding of what is done in IC fabrication so that the IC fabrication basically must be considered even during physical design.

Why? Because when we are making a layout, we need to understand the constraints that are imposed by the fabrication process on the physical design task and maybe carry out some physical design task which will help solve the problem that will be encountered during fabrication. So in subsequent lectures, we will be looking into what those tasks are, and how we can make our designs such that we do not encounter problems during

fabrication. Now let us look into interconnects or wires, some properties of these interconnect layers which will be very important during physical design.



So metal layers are of two types. We have already seen that we have one lower metal layer and the other

metal layer, these two metal layers are making interconnections. So these run parallel to the surface, So we have one metal layer which is running parallel to the silicon substrate.

The other metal two layers are running parallel to the silicon substrate in another direction, So these are wiring layers. And the second type of metal layer is the via layer, So this is the via layer. We have seen how to create via. So via connect two wiring layers and they run perpendicular to the surface. So the current will flow in this direction, then it will go this and this, So the direction of the current flow through the via will be in this direction, either this direction or in this direction.

It will be orthogonal to the substrate. Now if we consider interconnect or a wiring layer, then it is a kind of a 3D structure, It has 3D structure, it has got length, it has got width and it has also got thickness, Now in IC technology, what do we do that we do not allow the thickness of the metal of the wiring layer to be varying for a given layer For a given layer, the thickness of the wiring layer that is predefined by the foundry and we are not as a designer, we are not allowed to change the thickness of the wiring layer, So the interconnects have uniform thickness that is the height of the metal layers in the wiring layer that is fixed. And therefore, as a designer, we can ignore that what is the height of the interconnects and we can simply consider the interconnects as 2D features 2D structures and simply we can represent in our design as 2D, 2D structures So for example, for this metal one, we can say that its length is this much, its width is this much and its thickness is as defined in the foundry. As a designer, we are not allowed to change, So as a designer, we can only control the length and the width of the wires, Similarly for metal too, So in the layout, when we create the layout for our net list, there will be drawing the lines on the on the or the if the tool has produced the layout, we will see interconnects simply as a strip as a 2D strip, And therefore, the 3D in the third dimension is typically not true. It is implied because that the third the thickness of the interconnect is same as defined in the by the foundry and that information is there in the

library. So we will see how that information is captured by the tool and so on in later lectures.

Now shapes of wires in the layout decide where metal needs to be deposited during fabrication. So as a designer, we are creating a layout. So when will we be creating this kind of layout in physical design. Now, what is the implication of this design. Sorry, what will be the implication of creating such a layout. The implication is that wherever we have said that the metal line should run like this, it should have a width of this much and length of this much, the same this information will be used or that this information will be contained in the layout and that layout will be used by the foundry and the copper material will be deposited during fabrication as per what we have specified. Its length will be  $L$ , its width will be  $W$ . So the shapes of the wires in the layout decide where the metal needs to be deposited during fabrication. Now, in a typical or advanced fabrication technology and in high performance ICs, we can use as many as say 15 metal layers. So in this figure, we are showing only 6 metal layers M1, M2, M3, M4, M5 and 6. But in advanced processes, we can have as many as say 15 metal layers. Now, the metal layers are separated by dielectric. So we have say M1 layer, M2 layer, M3, M5 and between them, we have dielectric.

So here we have SiO<sub>2</sub> or dielectric. Here we have again dielectric or ILD interlayer dielectric. So metal layers are separated by dielectrics. Generally, it is used, generally what we use is SiO<sub>2</sub>, silicon dioxide. But we will see later that this dielectric material impacts the capacitance and therefore, the performance of our circuit and therefore, it is desirable that the dielectric constant of this interlayer dielectric should be small. So we can use low  $K$  material. For example, we can dope silicon dioxide with carbon or use air spaces to reduce the dielectric constant of the interlayer dielectric. Now, the height of the wiring layers can be different in different layers.

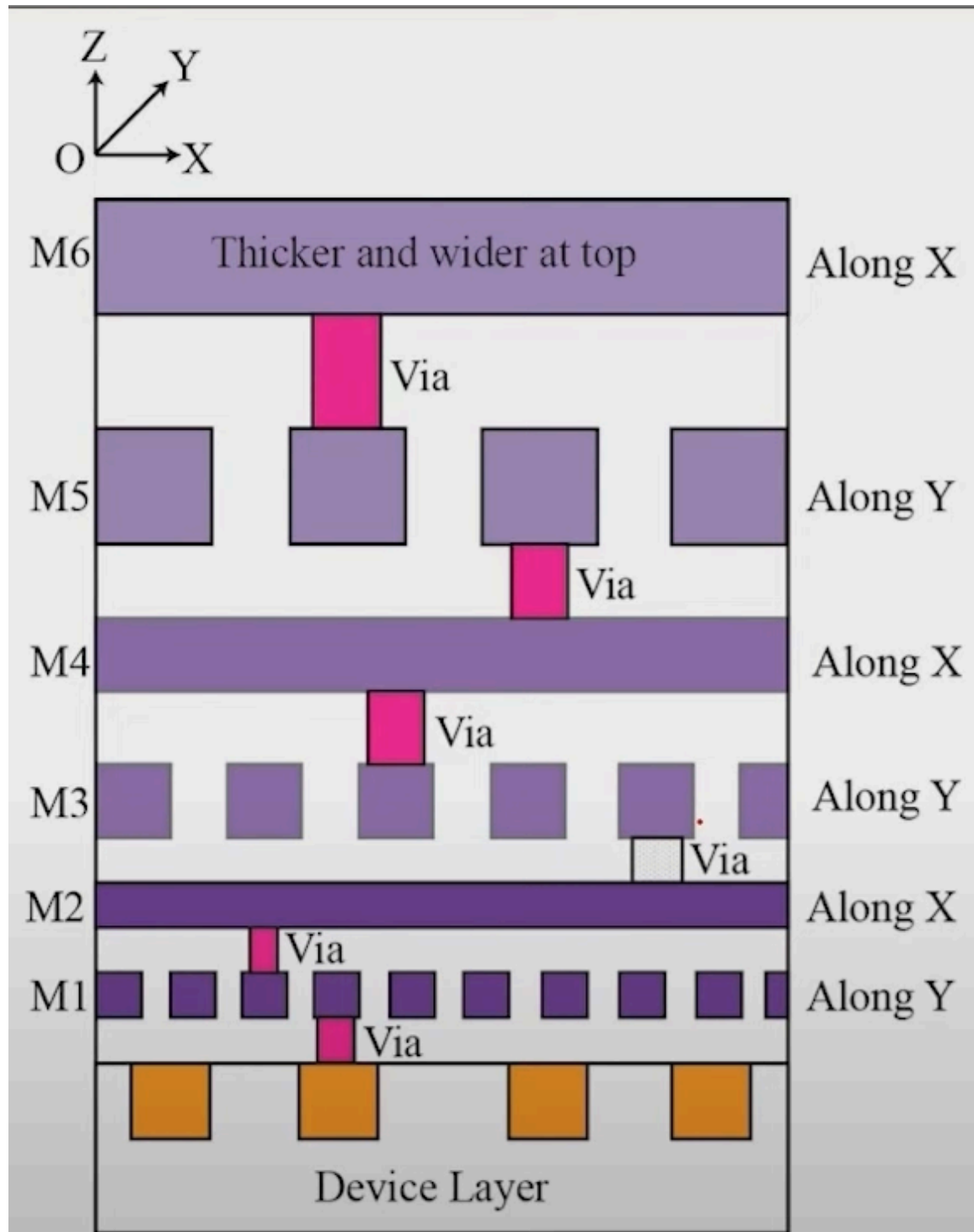
We said that the height for a given layer is fixed. For example, M1 layer everywhere on the layout, the height will be the same as defined by the boundary. But for different layers, the height can be different. For example, the height typically increases as we go up in the layer. So the top layer will be the thickest, then the thickness will reduce, then it can reduce further and so on. So we can utilize these properties to use layer of metal where we want for example, if we consider the top metal layer, so there the thickness of the metal layer is more and therefore, the cross sectional area will be more and therefore, the resistance per unit length that will be smaller for higher metal layers. So with this observation, we can think about which nets need lower resistance, we can route them in the upper metal layers and so on.

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So we will see how we can optimize our layout with the help of this information that the thickness of the metal layers goes on increasing as we go to the top or to the upper layers of interconnects. Another feature that we must note is that each wiring layer has a preferred direction, vertical or horizontal. For example, the M1 layer is running only along the y axis. So we are saying that y axis is coming out of the plane of the screen, So in the M1 all the lines will be going, going along or running, going out of the screen and in the next layer, so, each successive wiring layer alternates between vertical and horizontal direction. So meaning that if we have M1 layer which is along y axis, the next layer M2 will be along x axis that is orthogonal or orthogonal to it, So one will be horizontal, then vertical, then horizontal and vertical, So that is what we see in this figure.

So the M1 layer is along y, then M2 is along x, M3 is along y and so on. So now, why do we do this kind of allotment so that each layer has a preferred direction? So M1 all wires will be running only along y direction. For M2 it will all be running along the x direction and so on. So we specify preferred direction because it eases making interconnections, It eases the task of routing, but what is the downside of it So the downside of it is that whenever there is a change in direction, for example, if our wire is like this, So we cannot have it in one layer, So wherever there is a turn in the wire, we should go into, so this one will say M1 is running vertically.

So this will be M1, now M2 is running horizontally. So this one will be M2 and to connect M1 and M2 will have vias at this place. So wherever there is a turn in the wire, we will have to insert vias, And therefore, the via count can increase. So this is the downside of having preferred direction for each layer, Now we use this because it eases the task of routing, But understand that this is not a sacrosanct rule that if there is a preferred direction for M1 is along y, we cannot run for along x that is not it is not a sacrosanct rule, For a small distance, the wires can run for a for a for in orthogonal direction also and tools tools make those adjustment automatic.



Now let us look into what are interconnect parasitics, So typically for interconnects, the resistance and capacitances are more significant. The inductance for most of the nets are insignificant.

For some they are significant. We will see that in later lectures. But in this lecture, let

us look into what are resistances and capacitances of interconnects, Because resistance and capacitances impact the delay and performance and even power and other characteristics of our and other figures of merit of our design. Therefore, we should be aware of what are and from where does the resistance and capacitance appear in our interconnects. Ideally our interconnect should be something like this. If we apply a voltage signal here, the voltage signal should get exactly at the other end. There should not be any resistance capacitance in this path, That is an ideal interconnect.

But we do not have ideal interconnection in physical design. They will have some resistance and capacitance. In logic synthesis, we often assume them to be ideal. But now in physical design, we have to consider more realistic interconnects. So let us understand resistance and capacitances. Now suppose this is an interconnect which is running along this direction.

So current is going in this direction and it is leaving in this direction, So the thickness of this interconnect is T, The weight is W and length is L, Now what will be the resistance So from elementary physics, we know that the resistance is  $\rho L$  by A and in this case the area of this cross section is T, T multiplied by width, So T into W is the area of this cross section,

$$R = \rho L / TW$$

So the resistance will be  $\rho$  into L divided by A that is T into W, Now this is if we say that the thickness is fixed, For a given layer, the thickness is fixed. So in that case, it is better to represent resistance R is equal to  $\rho L$  by W where  $\rho$  is  $\rho$  by T. So what we have done is that we have just taken  $\rho$  divided by T as a constant  $R_s$  and we call this constant as sheet resistance. Now why  $\rho$  by T constant Because the thickness of this layer is fixed, It is T everywhere in the layer, For a given layer, For a given layer, the thickness is fixed and therefore the sheet resistance will be fixed,

$$R = R_s (L/W), R_s = (\rho / T)$$

So this sheet resistance typically will come from the foundry and these are there in the library and the tools will use this sheet resistance value in delay computation and other computation wherever resistance is required. So however, note that this is a very simplistic model of resistance. In some situations, for example, when there is a high frequency, when the conductor is carrying a signal of high frequency, the resistance of an interconnect tends to increase.

Why does it tend to increase? Because of an effect which is known as skin effect. So suppose this is our semiconductor, this is our interconnect, so cross sectional area of interconnect, So if we look into the cross sectional area of the interconnect, when the frequency is high, when the frequency is high, then the current tends to flow primarily on the surface of the conductor Along this. And in effect, the inner part of the semiconductor of the conductor that is this area typically remains unused. So ineffective the cross section area of the conductor reduces and therefore the resistance goes on increasing. This skin effect becomes important for wider and thicker wire at the top metal layers where clock lines work at high frequency.

So in that typically we route clock lines at the top metal layers where the thickness of the metal wires is greater and in those lines this skin effect will be more because the thickness is also larger and also that the clock lines work at a greater frequency. Now let us look into interconnect capacitance. So before going to interconnect capacitance, let us first understand why there is an interconnect capacitance, why there should be a capacitance associated with an interconnect. So interconnected, it lies in a kind of a sea of dielectric. So there is an interconnect in our IC and everywhere there is dielectric, Now whenever we apply voltage and the active computation is done in our circuit then the electric potential of interconnects change during the circuit operation So the electric potential of the interconnect, so this is an interconnect, And the electric potential of this can change. For example, initially it was 0 volt, now it will become VDD. Now when this happens, the electric field and the stored charge in the surrounding dielectric material also change, So it is not that only the electric field inside the interconnect changes.

The electric field in the surrounding dielectric also changes and the energy that is stored in the dielectric that is also gets changed by when the potential of the interconnect changes, So the electric field and the stored energy in the dielectric that gets changed by during the operation of the circuit. And consequently the interconnect exhibits substantial capacitance. So remember that capacitance is basically a kind of ability to store charge, So the stored charge in the dielectric gets changed as we change the voltage in the interconnect and that leads to basically a capacitance effect or we observe capacitance associated with the interconnects. Now what factors influence the interconnect capacitance So it depends on the geometry of the interconnect, then the environment, meaning the location and geometry of other interconnects which are in the vicinity of a given interconnect and the property of the surrounding dielectric, So these things primarily impact the capacitance of an interconnect. Now the computation of interconnect capacitance is a non-trivial problem, So when we have an interconnect and it is surrounded by many other interconnects, So this becomes a very complicated

system and computing the interconnect capacitance becomes very very challenging.

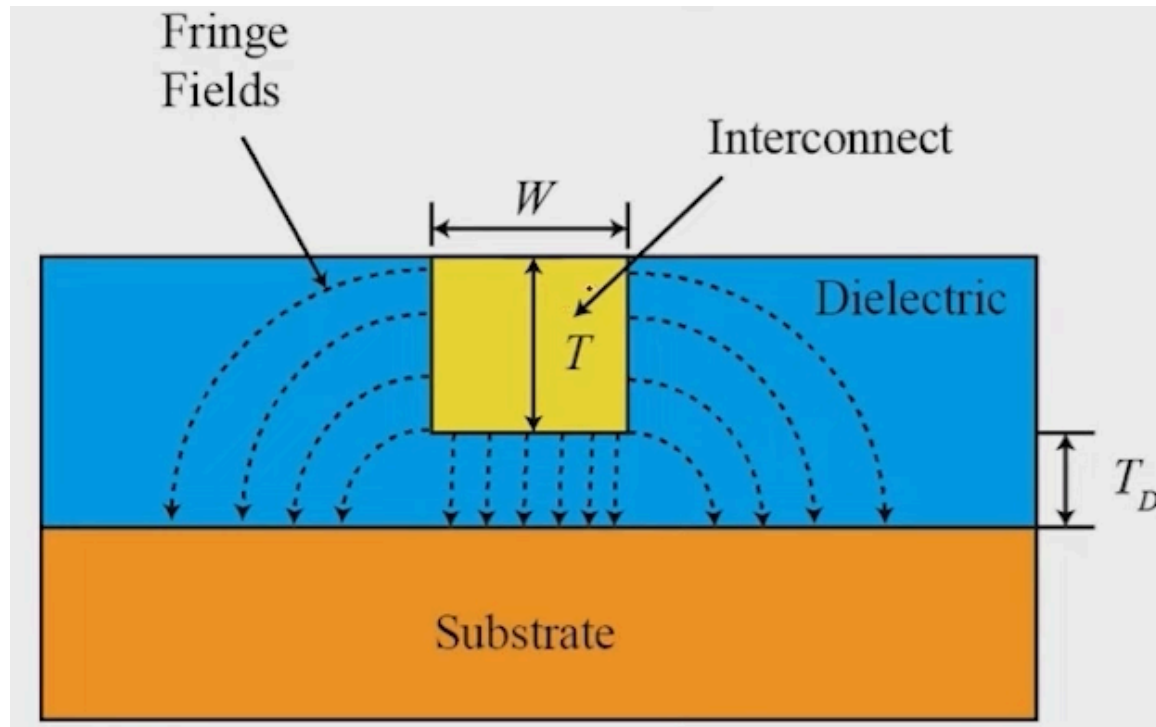
So typically what we do is that we take help of numerical simulation techniques, field solvers and other sophisticated techniques to compute the interconnect capacitance. However, for getting an intuitive understanding and the factors which influence the capacitance, let us briefly look into some of the system and what are the basic capacitance components for those system, so that we can understand that if you want to say change the capacitance, increase it, decrease it and so on during physical design, how can we accomplish it. But note that the exact computation of interconnect capacitance will be done with the help of tools that use sophisticated numerical techniques and field solvers to compute the capacitances. So let us first consider a system in which there is an interconnect. This interconnects, so these interconnects assume that it is coming out of the screen and there is a substrate, Now there is a substrate which is ground, Now we can associate two components of capacitance in this case. The first one is the parallel plate capacitance. So there is a, there are field lines which are emanating from, coming out from the bottom of the interconnect and ending on the substrate.

Now if we consider this part, this is nothing but a parallel plate capacitor and therefore we can compute the capacitance simply as  $\epsilon A/D$ . So this is what we have, that we know from our class 12 physics, So for a parallel plate capacitor, the capacitance is given by  $\epsilon A/D$ . So  $\epsilon$  here is  $\epsilon_0 \epsilon_r$ . So  $\epsilon_r$  is the dielectric, relative dielectric constant for the materials. For example,  $\text{SiO}_2$ , if it is the material, then that will come into this, And then what is the distance between, distance between this  $\epsilon A/D$ , that is the formula,  $\epsilon A/D$ .

So the distance between is  $D$ , So this will be  $D$  here, That is what the distance is, And then the area So that area will be this  $W$  and the length of this. So this interconnect is coming out of the plane of the screen. So what is the length along that direction?  $L$  is coming, And  $W$  is the width of this, And  $D$  is the,  $D$  is the, is the thickness, is the distance between the bottom of the dial, of the interconnect and the substrate, So that will be the first component. The second component is because of the fringe lines, fringe fields. So there will be some field lines that emanate from or come out from the size of the interconnect, These are the field lines, These field lines are there, And because of these field lines also, there will be some stored charge in the dielectric and the, and the component of capacitance that is associated with it, we call it as fringe field capacitance.

So both these components can be added together. So if we want to get the total capacitance of the system, then we need to add this component which is a parallel plate component and with the fringe field component, Now one point to notice that with advancement in technology, what we do is that we miniaturize our, our, the features,





Now what are the features. So features are for example, the wire width, So we want to decrease the width of the transits, the width of the interconnects as much as possible, so that we can pack more interconnects in a small area, So with advancement in technology at the transistor size reduces, the interconnects width also reduces, So we try to do that. But when we reduce the width, we reduce the width, the resistance of the interconnect will increase. Why Because our cross sectional area has reduced, Now further if we decrease, decrease the, decrease the thickness also of the interconnect, then what will happen is that the resistance can go up drastically, So typically what we do is that with scaling we reduce the width, but do not reduce the thickness significantly, So as in, as, as a result what happens is that with advancement in technology, the wire width reduces and it is, the, the height of that wire or this  $T$  that remains fairly constant or decreases by small amount. So our wires become thinner and taller, And therefore the side wall area goes on increasing with, with, compared to the width and therefore the fringe component actually goes on increasing with the advancement in technology. So this point you should note because when we try to reduce the capacitance, we should be considering which factor is important or which component is important for an interconnect and we should target that while reducing the interconnect capacitance and so on.

Now this is the case of a very simple situation where there is one, there is only one interconnect and then there is a circuit. But a real, real integrated circuit will have this kind of system, a very complicated system. So we have an interconnect, for example, this interconnect which is coming out of the screen, And there are two similar interconnects which are coming out of the screen and two interconnects which are

running in parallel, , in orthogonal direction and all of them will be interacting, And even there is a substrate at the bottom

**Parallel plate component:** 
$$C_{pp} = \frac{\epsilon_d \epsilon_0}{T} WL$$

So all of them will be, will be interacting and it will, it is a very complex system, It is a complex system. So electric field lines emanating from an interconnect are modified by neighboring interconnects in a complicated manner and to compute the, the, the capacitance for a, for an interconnect 2 for example, is non-trivial, And tools will use numerical techniques and other sophisticated techniques to estimate the capacitance of 2, Nevertheless, we should understand what are the major components and if we try to reduce the capacitance or modulate the capacitance, what things can we do So there are three major components of capacitance if we consider this conductor 2 as our, as the conductor for which we are computing the capacitance.

So the first one is the overlap capacitance. So the overlap capacitance is due to the overlap between two conductors in different planes. So conductor 2 is in this plane and conductor 3 is orthogonal to it, So there are two, two conductors running in different planes. However, there is one space like this in this part, Where there is an overlap, There is an overlap of these two conductors, So this will lead to an overlap capacitance. So overlap is with conductor 3. So we have this component and we have overlap with conductor 1 and we have this component, So this is the overlap, overlap capacitance.

Then there are lateral capacitances formed by two parallel edges of non-overlapping conductors in the same plane. So if we consider say conductor 4 and 2, they are in the same plane. They are running in parallel, So there is a sidewall. This is the sidewall and this sidewall. These are working like a parallel plate capacitor, With a dielectric between them.

So we can identify lateral capacitance with. So this is the lateral capacitance for 2 and 4 and this is lateral capacitance between 2 and 1. And the third component is fringe capacitance. Now the fringe field lines will emanate, emanate from 2 and it will end on 3 through the sidewalls, not through the overlap. So this is the overlap part, So this is the overlap part, And this is the sidewall part, So fringe capacitance is between two conductors in different planes due to electric fields originating from the sidewalls. So we can identify from 2 and 3 along the left hand side and along the hand side, So there will be, I believe, 2 and 1 left hand side and hand side, So there will be 4 components

of fringe capacitance.

So for a given capacitor, for a given conductor, there are 3 different components, And the tool needs to compute all of them and then, then, then it needs to combine them and give the final capacitance value for an interconnect. But to get an intuitive feel, what a few things should, can be noted from the discussion. Now if we want to reduce the capacitance between two interconnects, then what can we do. The formula of parallel plate capacitance is  $C = \epsilon A / D$ . So if we reduce, if we increase  $D$ , then  $C$  will come down. So if we say make 4 and 2 further apart, then we can make, may, may, reduce the lateral capacitance component. If we make 2 and 3 non-overlapping, then that component will go away. Similarly, we can also consider how we can modulate  $\epsilon$ , So if we can modulate  $\epsilon$  by changing the dielectric constant of the ILD, then the capacitance will reduce. Now this decision needs to be taken at the foundry level, meaning which material to use.

As a designer, do we not have control over the dielectric material of the interconnects? So if you want to look into these concepts that we have discussed, you can look into these textbooks and this paper. Now to summarize in this lecture, what we have done is that we have looked into some basic aspects or basic concepts which are useful for understanding physical design tasks. We looked into IC fabrication, we looked into interconnects and we looked into interconnect capacitances. In the next lecture, we will be discussing some more basic concepts that are essential for physical design and then we will be moving to the various physical design tasks. Thank you very much.