

# 6 Introduction to Alternating Current Technology

## Student Group

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## Table of Contents

- 6. Introduction into Alternating Current Technology** ..... 3
  - 6.1 Classification of time-dependent Signals** ..... 3
    - Goals ..... 3
  - 6.2 Descriptive Values of AC Signals** ..... 5
    - Goals ..... 5
    - Notice: ..... 6
  - 6.3 Averaging of AC Signals** ..... 7
    - Goals ..... 7
    - The Arithmetic Mean ..... 8
    - The Rectified Value ..... 8
      - Exercise 6.3.1 The Rectified Value of rectangular and triangular signals ..... 9
    - The RMS Value ..... 9
      - Note: ..... 9
      - Exercise 6.3.2 The RMS Value of rectangular and triangular signals ..... 10
    - Comparison of the different averages ..... 10
  - 6.4 AC Two-Poles** ..... 10
    - Goals ..... 10
    - Resistance ..... 11
    - Capacitance ..... 11
      - Notice: ..... 12
    - Inductance ..... 12
  - 6.5 AC Impedance** ..... 13
    - Goals ..... 13
  - 6.6 Insertion: Complex Numbers** ..... 13
    - Goals ..... 13
    - Video ..... 13
  - 6.7 Complex AC Impedance** ..... 15

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Goals .....	15
Video .....	15
<b>6.8 Power in AC</b> .....	17
Goals .....	17
Video .....	17
<b>6.9 Generation of AC</b> .....	17
Goals .....	18
<b>6.10 Exercises</b> .....	18
Video .....	18

# 6. Introduction into Alternating Current Technology

Up to now we had analysed DC signals (chapters 1. - 4.) and abrupt voltage changes for (dis)charging capacitors (chapter 5.). In households we use instead of a constant voltage (DC) alternating voltage (AC). This is due to at least three main facts

1. Often the voltage given by the **power plant is AC**. This is true for example in all power plants which use electric generators. In these, an mechanic energy of a rotating system is transformed into electric energy by means of moving magnets, which induce an alternating electric voltage. Some modern plants, like photovoltaic plants do not primary generate AC voltages.
2. For long-range power transfer the power losses  $P_{\text{loss}}$  can be reduced by reducing the currents  $I$  since  $P_{\text{loss}} = R \cdot I^2$ . Therefore, for constant power transfer the voltage have to be increased. This is much easier done with AC voltages: **AC enables to transform lower voltages to higher** by the use of alternating magnetic fields in a transformer.
3. AC signals have **at least one more value** which can be used for understanding the situation of the source or load. This simplifies the power and load management in a complex power network.

This does not mean that DC power lines are useless or only full of disadvantages:

- A lot of modern loads need DC voltages, like battery based systems (laptops, electric cars, smartphones). Others can simply be changed into DC loads like systems with electric motors (refridgerators, oven, lighting, heating).
- Long-range power transfer with DC voltages show often much lower power losses.

Besides the applications in power systems AC values are also important in communication engineering. Acoustic and visual signals like sound and images can often be considered as wavelike AC signals. Additionally, also for signal transfer like Bluetooth, RFID, antenna design AC signals are important.

In order to understand these systems a bit more, we will start in this chapter with a first introduction into AC systems.

## 6.1 Classification of time-dependent Signals

### Goals

After this lesson, you should:

1. know which types of time-dependent waveforms there are and be able to assign them

Voltages and currents in the following chapters will be time-dependent values. As already used in chapter 5. for the time-dependent values lowercase letters will be written.

By this time-dependent values any temporal form of the voltage / current curves are possible (see

figure 1).

- We distinguish periodic and non periodic signals
- One important family of periodic signals are sinusoidal signals
- Sinusoidal signals can be mixed with DC signals

Fig. 1: Classification of time-dependent values



In the following we will investigate mainly pure AC signals.

## 6.2 Descriptive Values of AC Signals

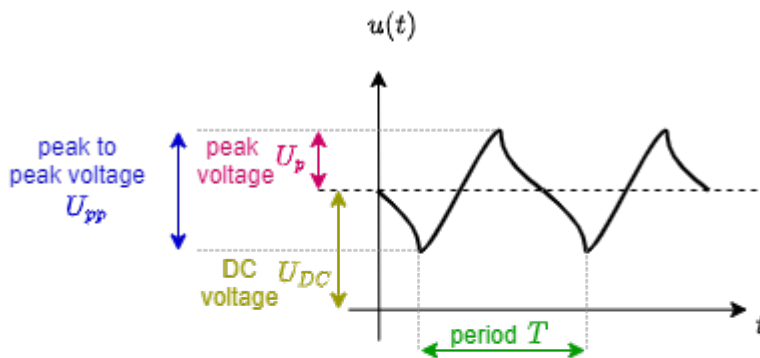
### Goals

After this lesson, you should:

1. Know the relationship between amplitude and peak-to-peak value.
2. Know the relationship between period, frequency and angular frequency.
3. Know the difference between zero phase angle and phase shift angle.
4. Know the direction of the phase shift angle.
5. know the formula symbols of the above-mentioned quantities.

Fig. 2: Values of AC signals

a)



b)



There are some important characteristic values when investigating AC signals (figure 2). For the signal itself these are:

- The **DC voltage** or DC offset is given by the value  $U_{DC}$  or  $V_{DC}$  (in German: Gleichanteil). The DC component also defines the average value of an AC signal.
- The maximum deviation from the DC value is called **peak voltage**  $U_p$  (in German: Spitzespannung). Specifically for sinusoidal signals the **peak voltage**  $U_p$  is also called **amplitude**  $\hat{U}$  (in German: Scheitelwert or Amplitude).
- The voltage difference between maximum and minimum deviation is called **peak-to-peak voltage**  $U_{pp}$  (in German: Spitze-Spitze-Spannung).

Be aware, that in English texts often amplitude is also used for (non sinusoidal)  $U_{pp}$  - based on German DIN standards the term amplitude is only valid for the sinusoidal peak voltage.

Additionally, there are also characteristic values related to the time:

- The shortest time difference for the signal to repeat is called **period**  $T$ .
- Based on the period  $T$  the frequency  $f = \frac{1}{T}$  can be derived. The unit of the frequency is  $1 \text{ Hz} = 1 \text{ Hertz}$ .
- For calculation, often the **angular frequency**  $\omega$  is used. The angular frequency is given by  $\omega = \frac{2\pi}{T}$  with the unit  $\frac{1}{s}$ . The angular frequency represents the angle which is covered in one second.
- Another handy value is the time offset between the start of the sinus wave ( $u(t)=0V$  and rising) and  $t=0s$ . This difference is often written based on an angular difference and is called the **phase angle** or **initial phase**  $\varphi_U$  (in German: Nullphasenwinkel). This then has to be calculated back to a time value:  $\Delta t = \frac{\varphi_U}{\omega} = \varphi_U \cdot \frac{T}{2\pi}$

Mathematically, the AC voltages and currents can be written as:  $u(t) = \hat{U} \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_U)$   
 $i(t) = \hat{I} \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_I)$

Between the AC voltages and currents there is also another important characteristic: The **phase difference**  $\Delta \varphi$  is given by  $\Delta \varphi = \varphi_U + \varphi_I$ . The phase difference shows how far the momentary value of the current is ahead of the momentary value of the voltage.

### Notice:

The initial phase  $\varphi_0$  has a direction / sign which has to be considered. In the case **a)** in the picture the zero-crossing of the sinusoidal signal is before  $t=0$  or  $\omega t = 0$ . Therefore, the initial phase  $\varphi_0$  is positive.



Similarly also for the phase difference  $\Delta \varphi$  the direction has to be taken into account. In the following image the zero-crossing of the voltage curve is before the zero-crossing of the current. This leads to a positive phase difference  $\Delta \varphi$ .



## 6.3 Averaging of AC Signals

### Goals

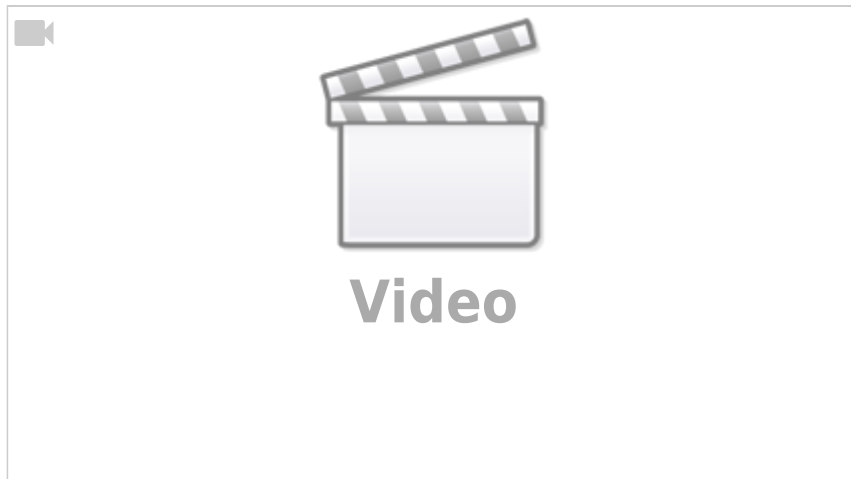
After this lesson, you should:

1. be able to calculate the arithmetic mean, the rectified value and the rms value.
2. know these mean values for sinusoidal quantities.
3. know the reason for using the rms value.

In order to analyse AC signals more, often different types of averages are taken into account. The most important values are:

1. the arithmetic mean  $\overline{X}$
2. the rectified value  $\overline{|X|}$
3. the rms value  $X$

These shall be discussed in the following. The video “Alternating Current AC Basics - Part 1” of EEVblog explains the ideas behind these values alternatively to the following subchapter:



## The Arithmetic Mean

The arithmetic mean is given by the (equally weighted) averaging of the signed measuring points. For finite values the arithmetic mean is given by: 
$$\overline{X} = \frac{1}{n} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^n x_i$$

For functions it is given by: 
$$\overline{X} = \frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t=t_0}^{t_0 + T} x(t) dt$$

For pure AC signals, the arithmetic mean  $\overline{X} = 0$ , since the unsigned value of the integral between upper half-wave and  $0$  is equal to the unsigned value of the integral between lower half-wave and  $0$ .

## The Rectified Value

Since the arithmetic mean of pure AC signals with  $\overline{X} = 0$  does not really give an insight into the signal, different other (weighted) average can be used.

One of them is the rectified value. For this the signal is first rectified (visually: negative values are folded up onto the x-axis) and then averaged.

For finite values the rectified value is given by: 
$$\overline{|X|} = \frac{1}{n} \cdot \sum_{i=1}^n |x_i|$$

For functions it is given by: 
$$\overline{|X|} = \frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t=t_0}^{t_0 + T} |x(t)| dt$$

For pure AC signals this results in:

$$\overline{|X|} = \frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t=t_0}^{t_0 + T} |\hat{X} \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi)| dt$$

Without limiting the generality, we use  $\varphi = 0$  and  $t_0 = 0$

$$\overline{|X|} = \frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t=0}^T |\hat{X} \cdot \sin(\omega t)| dt$$

Since  $\sin(\omega t) \geq 0$  for  $t \in [0, \pi]$ , the integral can be changed and the absolute value bars can be excluded like the following

$$\overline{|X|} = \frac{1}{T} \cdot 2 \cdot \int_{t=0}^{T/2} \hat{X} \cdot \sin\left(\frac{2\pi}{T} t\right) dt = 2 \cdot \frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t=0}^{T/2} \hat{X} \cdot \sin\left(\frac{2\pi}{T} t\right) dt$$

$$\int_0^T \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{T}t\right) dt = 2 \int_0^{T/2} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{T}t\right) dt = \frac{2T}{\pi} \int_0^{\pi/2} \cos(x) dx = \frac{2T}{\pi} \left[ \sin(x) \right]_0^{\pi/2} = \frac{2T}{\pi} \cdot 1 = \frac{2T}{\pi}$$

**Exercise 6.3.1 The Rectified Value of rectangular and triangular signals**

Calculate the rectified value of rectangular and triangular signals! Use similar symmetry simplifications like shown for AC signals. Compare it to the values shown in [figure 3](#).

**The RMS Value**

Often it is important be able to compare AC signals to DC signals by having equivalent values. But what does equivalent mean?

Most importantly, these “equivalent values” are used to compare the output power of a system. One of this equivalent value is supply voltage value of \$230V\$ (or in some countries \$110V\$).

How do we come to this values?

We want to find the voltage \$U\_{DC}\$ and \$I\_{DC}\$ of a DC source, that the output power \$P\_{DC}\$ on a resistor \$R\$ is similar to the output power \$P\_{AC}\$ of an AC source with the instantaneous values \$u(t)\$ and \$i(t)\$. For this, we have to consider the instantaneous power \$p(t)\$ for a distinct time \$t\$ and integrate this over one period \$T\$.

$$P_{DC} = P_{AC} \implies U_{DC} \cdot I_{DC} = \frac{1}{T} \int_0^T u(t) \cdot i(t) dt \implies I_{DC}^2 \cdot R = \frac{1}{T} \int_0^T R \cdot i^2(t) dt \implies I_{DC} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \int_0^T i^2(t) dt}$$

The similar approach can be used on instantaneous voltage \$u(t)\$. Generally, the RMS values is given by 
$$X_{RMS} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \int_0^T x^2(t) dt}$$

$$X_{RMS} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \int_0^T x^2(t) dt}$$

*Root Mean Squared*

What is the meaning of RMS? Simple:

By this abbreviation, one can also not forget in which order the formula has to be written... Often the rms value is also called effective value (in German: Effektivwert).

**Note:**

- The heat dissipation on an resistor \$R\$ of an AC current with the rms value of \$I\_{rms}=1A\$ is equal to the heat dissipation of an DC current with \$I\_{DC}=1A\$.
- To shorten writing formulas, the values of AC signals given with uppercase letters will represent the RMS value in the following: \$U = U\_{RMS}\$, \$I = I\_{RMS}\$.

- It holds for AC signals and their RMS values:
  - The resistance is  $R = \frac{U}{I}$
  - The power dissipation on a resistor is  $P = U \cdot I$

For pure AC signals this results in:

$$\begin{aligned} X &= \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t_0}^{t_0 + T} x^2(t) dt} \quad \&= \\ &= \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t=0}^T \hat{X}^2 \cdot \sin^2(\omega t) dt} \quad \&= \\ &= \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \cdot \int_{t=0}^T \hat{X}^2 \cdot \frac{1}{2} \cdot (1 - \cos(2 \cdot \omega t)) dt} \quad \&= \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \cdot \hat{X}^2 \cdot \frac{1}{2} \cdot [t + \frac{1}{2\omega} \cdot \sin(2 \cdot \omega t)]_0^T} \quad \&= \sqrt{\frac{1}{T} \cdot \hat{X}^2 \cdot \frac{1}{2} \cdot (T - 0 + 0 - 0)} \quad \&= \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}} \cdot \hat{X} \\ X &= \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \cdot \hat{X} \approx 0.707 \cdot \hat{X} \end{aligned}$$

This can also be seen in this [youtube video](#).

<callout icon="fa fa-exclamation" color="red" title="Note:"> In the following we will often use  $\sqrt{2}X$  instead of  $\hat{X}$ , e.g.:  $u(t) = \hat{X} \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_u)$   
 $\rightarrow u(t) = \sqrt{2} \cdot U \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_u)$

</callout>

### Exercise 6.3.2 The RMS Value of rectangular and triangular signals

Calculate the RMS value of rectangular and triangular signals! Use similar symmetry simplifications like shown for AC signals. Compare it to the values shown in [figure 3](#).

## Comparison of the different averages

Fig. 3: The averages of different signals

## 6.4 AC Two-Poles

### Goals

After this lesson, you should:

1. know that real, lossy components are described by equivalent circuits of ideal components.
2. know and be able to apply the definition of apparent resistance, apparent conductance,

impedance, and admittance.

In the chapters [2. Simple Circuits](#) and [3 Non-ideal Sources and Two Pole Networks](#) we already have seen, that it is possible to reduce complex circuitries down to equivalent resistors (and ideal sources). This we will try to adopt for AC components, too.

We want to analyze

## Resistance

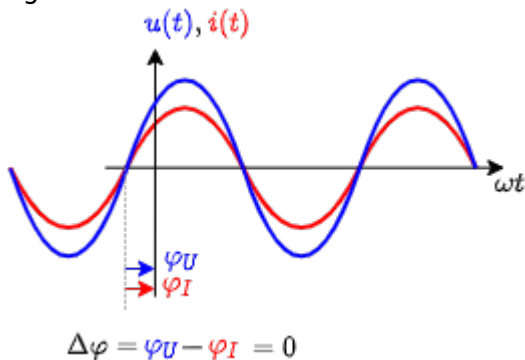
We start with Ohms law, which states, that the instantaneous voltage  $u(t)$  is proportional to the instantaneous current  $i(t)$  by the factor  $R$ .  $u(t) = R \cdot i(t)$

Then we insert the functions representing the instantaneous signals:  $x(t) = \sqrt{2} \cdot X \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_x)$ :  $\sqrt{2} \cdot U \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_u) = R \cdot \sqrt{2} \cdot I \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_i)$

Since we know, that  $u(t)$  must be proportional to  $i(t)$  we conclude that for a resistor  $\varphi_u = \varphi_i$ !

$$\begin{aligned} R &= \frac{\sqrt{2} \cdot I \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_i)}{\sqrt{2} \cdot U \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_i)} \\ &= \frac{U}{I} \end{aligned}$$

Fig. 4: time course of instantaneous voltage and current on a resistance



This was not too hard und quite obvious. But, what about the other types of passive two-poles - namely the capacitance and inductance?

## Capacitance

For the capacitance we have the principle formula:  $C = \frac{Q}{U}$  This formula is also true for the instantaneous values:  $C = \frac{q(t)}{u(t)}$  Additionally we know, that the instantaneous current is defined by  $i(t) = \frac{dq(t)}{dt}$ .

By this we can set up the formula: 
$$i(t) = \frac{dq(t)}{dt} = \frac{d}{dt} (C \cdot u(t))$$

Now, we insert the functions representing the instantaneous signals and calculate the derivative: 
$$\sqrt{2} \cdot I \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_i) = \frac{d}{dt} (C \cdot \sqrt{2} \cdot U \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_u)) = C \cdot \sqrt{2} \cdot U \cdot \omega \cdot \cos(\omega t + \varphi_u)$$

$$\cos(\omega t + \varphi_u) \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_i) = C \cdot U \cdot \omega \cdot \sin(\omega t + \varphi_u + \frac{1}{2}\pi) \tag{6.4.1}$$

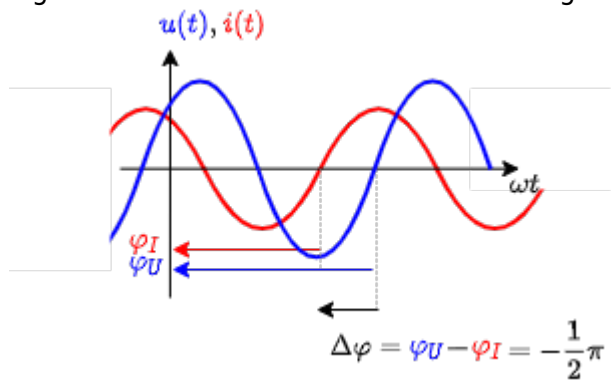
Equating coefficients in (6.4.1) leads to:  $I = C \cdot U \cdot \omega$  and  $\varphi_i = \varphi_u + \frac{1}{2}\pi$

**Notice:**  
 In order not to mix up the definitions, for AC signals the fraction of rms voltage by rms current is called apparend resistance

We can conclude that for a

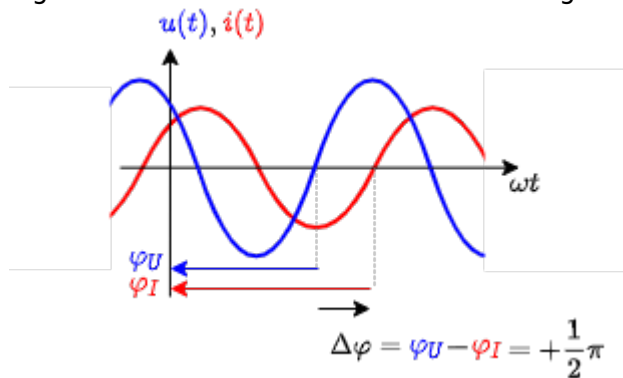
Fig. 6: time course of instantaneous voltage and current on a capacitance

Fig. 5: time course of instantaneous voltage and current on a capacitance



## Inductance

Fig. 5: time course of instantaneous voltage and current on a inductance



By the concept of AC two-poles we are also able to use the DC methods of network analysis in order to solve AC networks.

Fig. 3: example of a circuit

## 6.5 AC Impedance

### Goals

After this lesson, you should:

1. know how sine variables can be symbolized by a vector.
2. know which parameters can determine a sinusoidal quantity.
3. be able to graphically derive a pointer diagram for several existing sine variables.
4. be able to plot the phase shift on the vector and time plots.
5. Be able to add sinusoidal quantities in vector and time representation.
6. know and be able to apply the impedance of components.
7. know the frequency dependence of the impedance of the components. In particular, you should know the effect of the ideal components at very high and very low frequencies and be able to apply it for plausibility checks.

## 6.6 Insertion: Complex Numbers

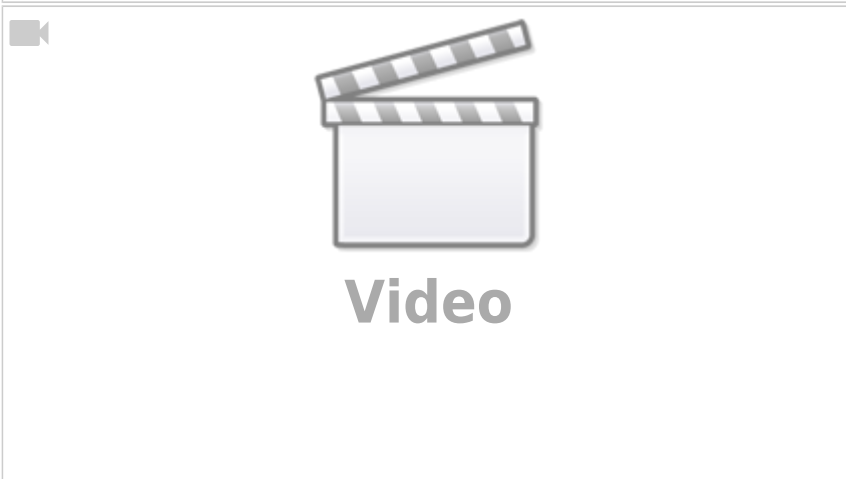
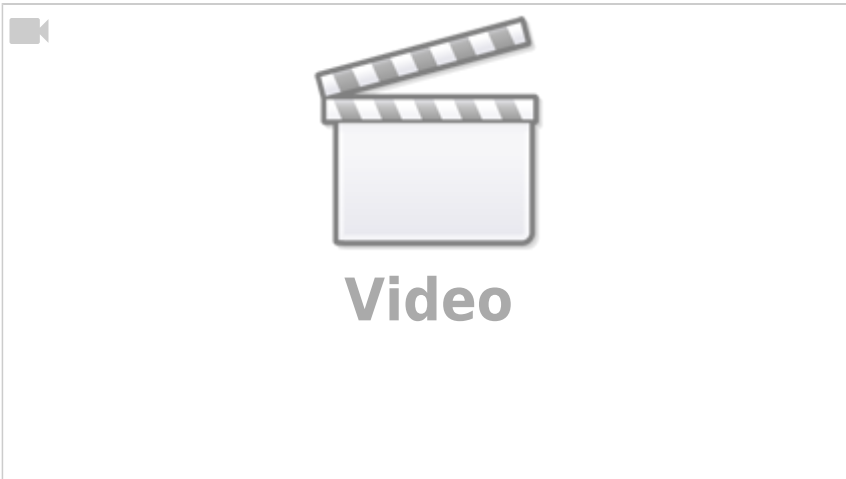
### Goals

After this lesson you should be able to:

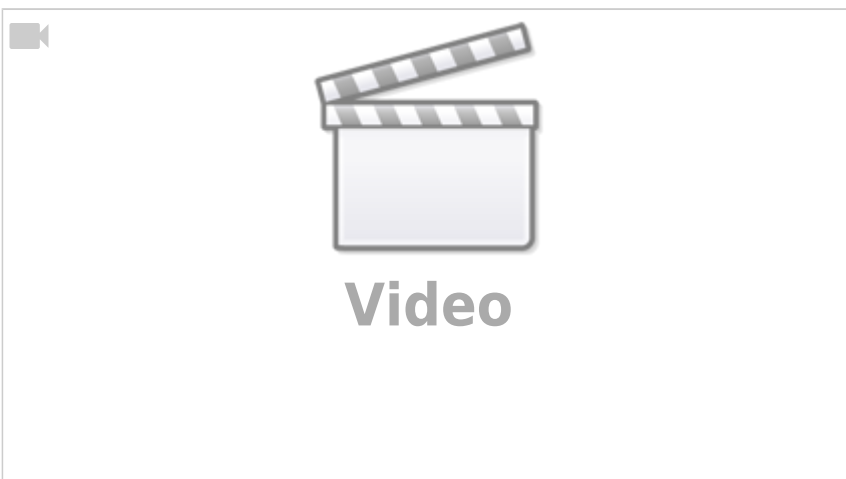
1. be able to convert complex-valued numbers from polar to Cartesian coordinates and vice versa.
2. know how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide two complex-valued numbers using a formula and complex plane.
3. know what multiplication by / division by  $j$  means graphically.
4. know how to find the absolute value of a complex number.

### Video

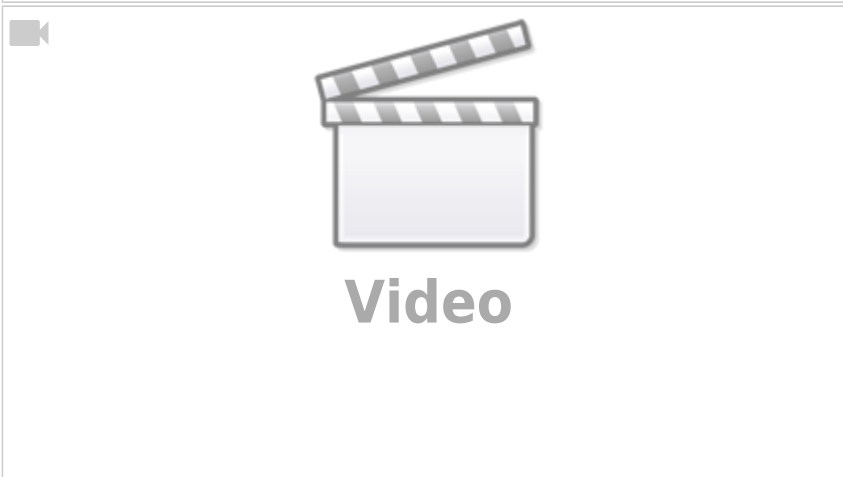
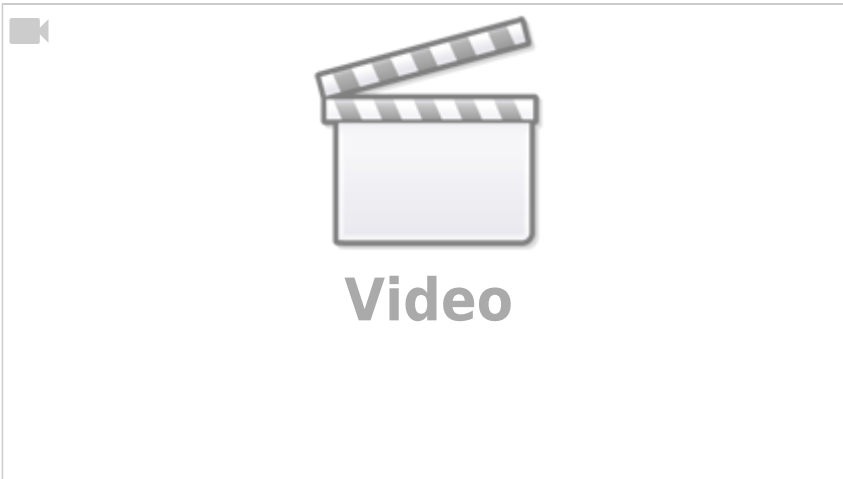
What's the point of complex numbers?



Calculating with complex numbers, sum, difference, product



Geometric interpretation of the complex multiplication  
Or: Why is the amount and angle to be added in the multiplication?



## 6.7 Complex AC Impedance

### Goals

After this lesson you should:

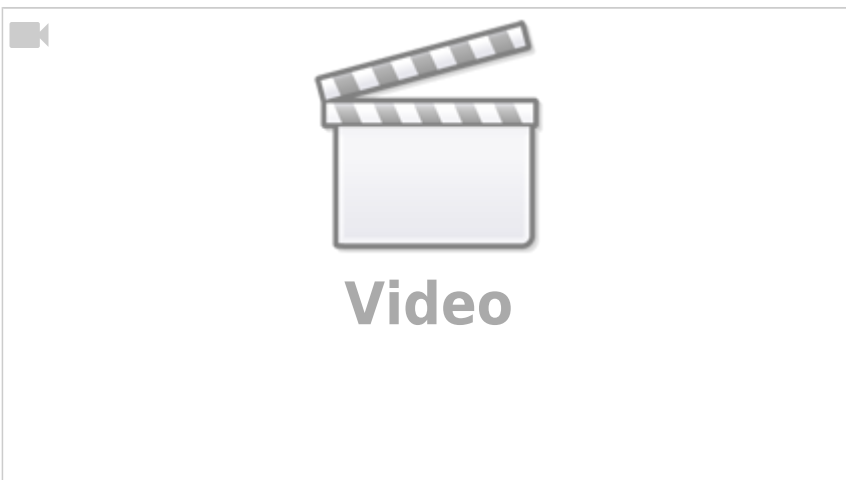
1. Be able to draw and read pointer diagrams.
2. Know and be able to apply the complex value formulas of impedance, reactance, resistance.

### Video

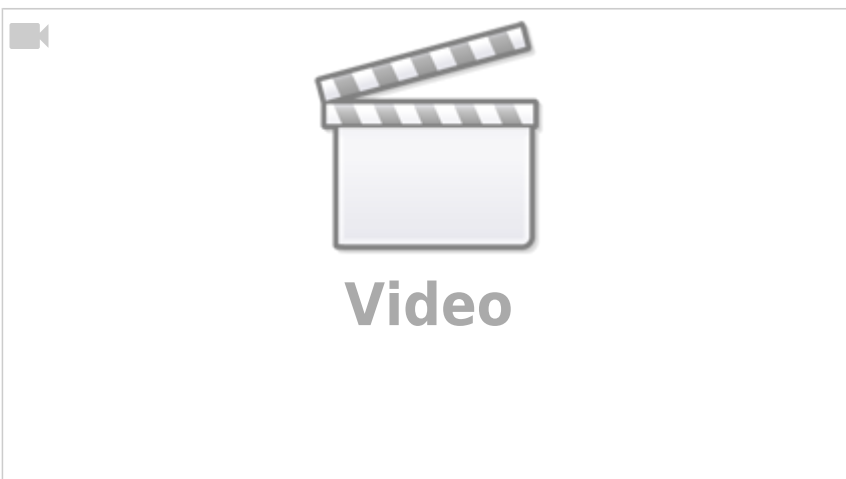
Pointer diagrams; complex alternating current calculus.



Complex alternating current calculation - basic terms: Impedance, Reactance, Resistance



Capacitor and inductance as complex resistors; pointer diagram



detailed explanation of impedances



## 6.8 Power in AC

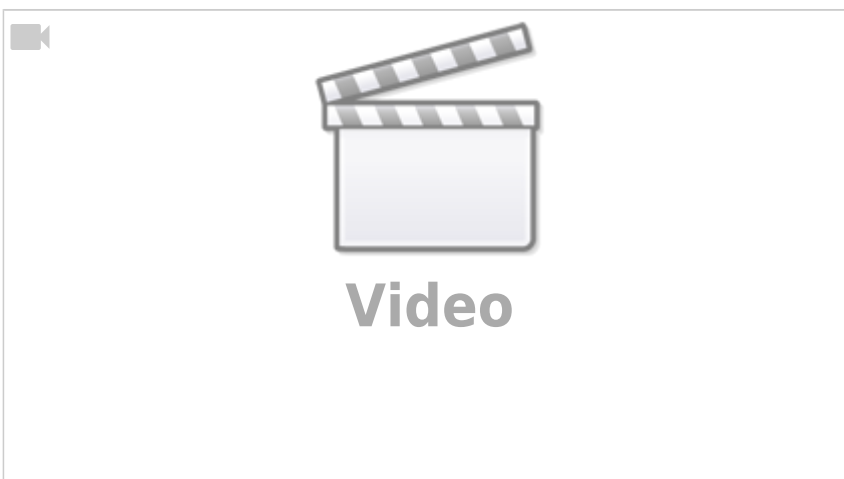
### Goals

After this lesson you should:

1. Know the formula of the instantaneous power of the resistor, coil and capacitor and be able to determine its values.

### Video

detailed explanation of power factor in alternating current technology



[Simulation of instantaneous power as a function of phase](#)

## 6.9 Generation of AC

## Goals

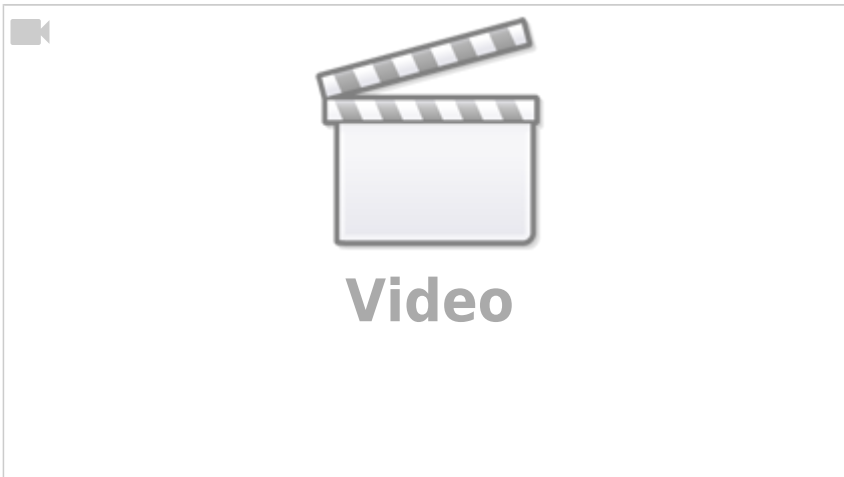
After this lesson, you should:

## 6.10 Exercises

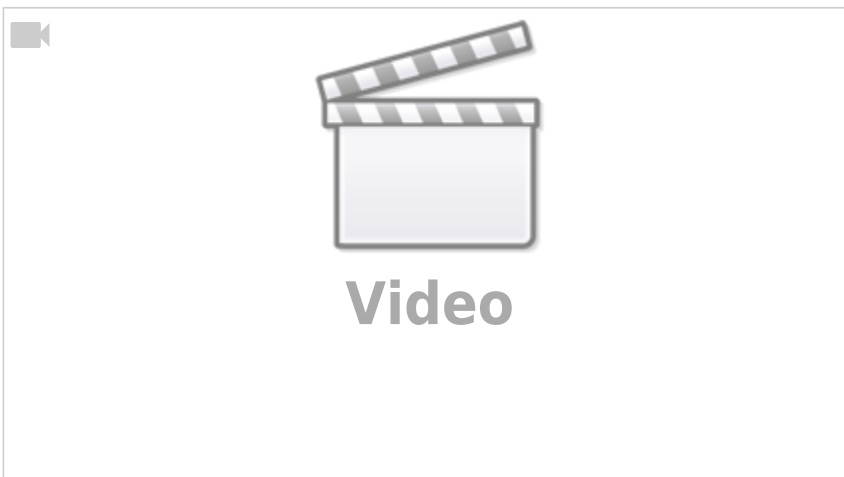
### Video

Parallel connection of complex resistors / impedances

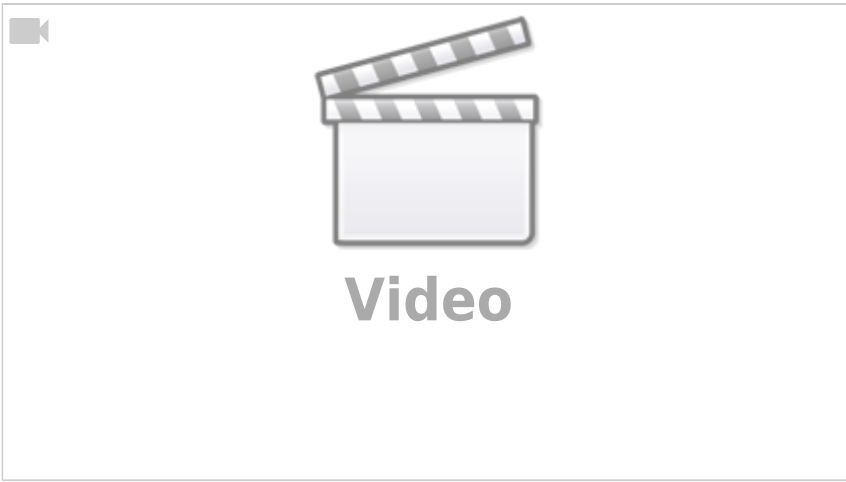
Why can a circuit with impedances only act purely ohmic?



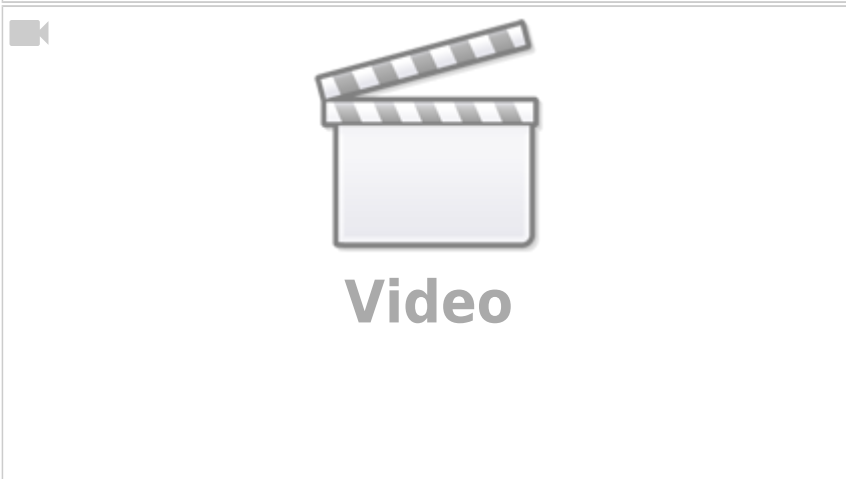
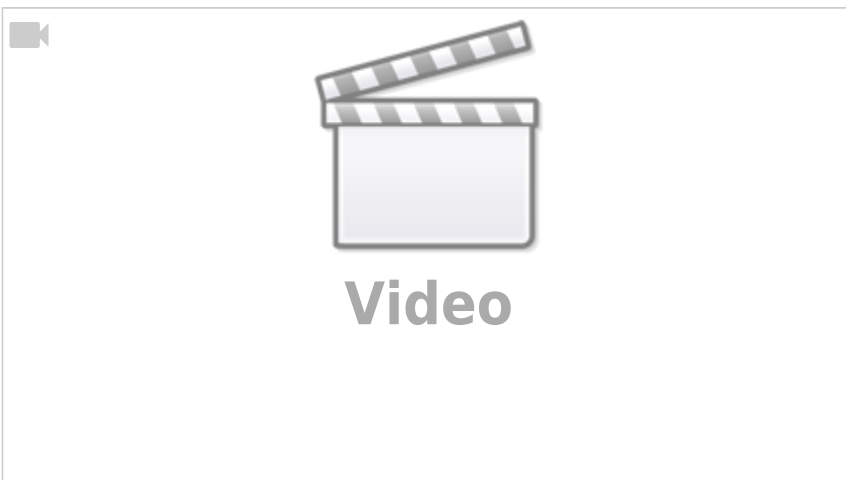
more complex exam task: complex circuit I



more complex exam task: complex circuit II



Examination task: complex circuit III





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