

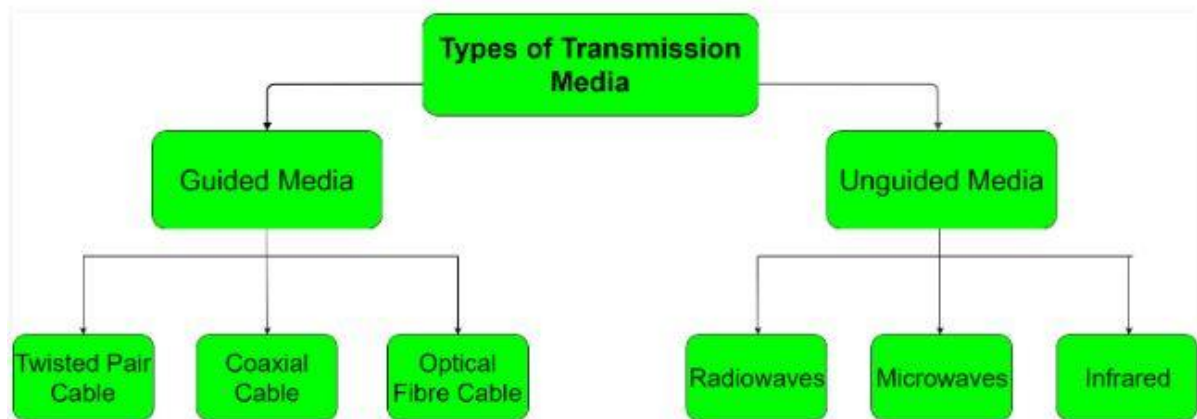
Unit 2: Transmission Media and Switching

Transmission Media

In data communication terminology, a transmission medium is a physical path between the transmitter and the receiver i.e. it is the channel through which data is sent from one place to another.

Types of Transmission Media

Transmission Media is broadly classified into the following types:



A. Guided Media:

It is also referred to as Wired or Bounded transmission media. Signals being transmitted are directed and confined in a narrow pathway by using physical links.

Features:

- High Speed
- Secure
- Used for comparatively shorter distances

There are 3 major types of Guided Media:

(i). Twisted Pair Cable –

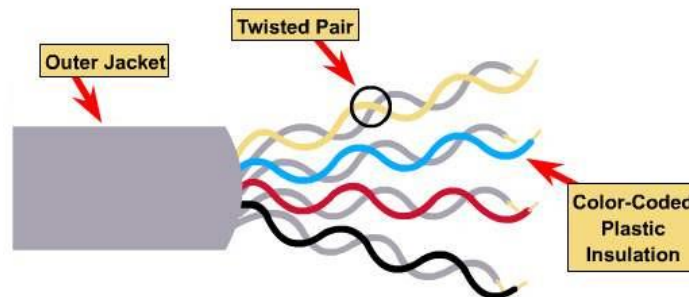
- It consists of 2 separately insulated conductor wires wound about each other. Generally, several such pairs are bundled together in a protective sheath.
- It is made by putting two separate insulated wires together in a twisted pattern and running them parallel to each other which helps to reduce crosstalk or electromagnetic induction between pairs of wires.
- When electrical current flows through a wire, it creates a small, circular magnetic field around the wire. Noise is generated within signal lines through magnetic fields. Therefore the noise in data outlines is the consequence of the magnetic field.
- Within the straight cable connection, all sound current is moving in the same direction, exactly like within a regular transformer coils. Once the cable is actually twisted, their magnetic fields are opposite to each other.

- Thus, the two magnetic fields cancel each other and any outside magnetic fields. Due to this, the noise current in a twisted cable is lower than in an ordinary cable.

They are the most widely used Transmission Media. Twisted Pair is of two types:

1. Unshielded Twisted Pair (UTP):

Unshielded Twisted Pair (UTP)



This type of cable has the ability to block interference and does not depend on a physical shield for this purpose. It is used for telephonic applications.

Advantages:

- Least expensive
- Easy to install
- High speed capacity

Disadvantages:

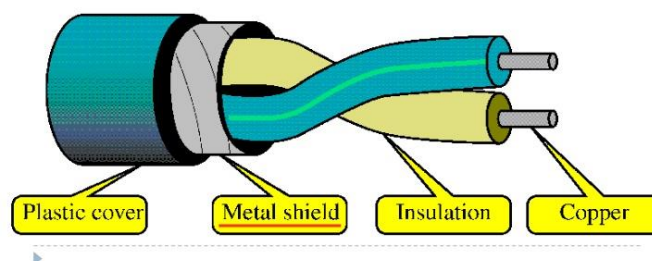
- Susceptible to external interference
- Lower capacity and performance in comparison to STP
- Short distance transmission due to attenuation

2. Shielded Twisted Pair (STP):

Shielded twisted pair (STP) cable combines the technique of shielding, cancellation and wire twisting. Each pair of wires is wrapped in a metallic foil. The four pairs of wires then are wrapped in an overall metallic braid of foil. STP cable is used to eliminate inductive and capacitive coupling.

Shielded Twisted-Pair (STP)

- ▶ STP cables are similar to UTP cables, except there is a metal foil or braided-metal-mesh cover that encases each pair of insulated wires



This type of cable consists of a special jacket to block external interference. It is used in fast-data-rate Ethernet and in voice and data channels of telephone lines.

Advantages:

- Better performance at a higher data rate in comparison to UTP

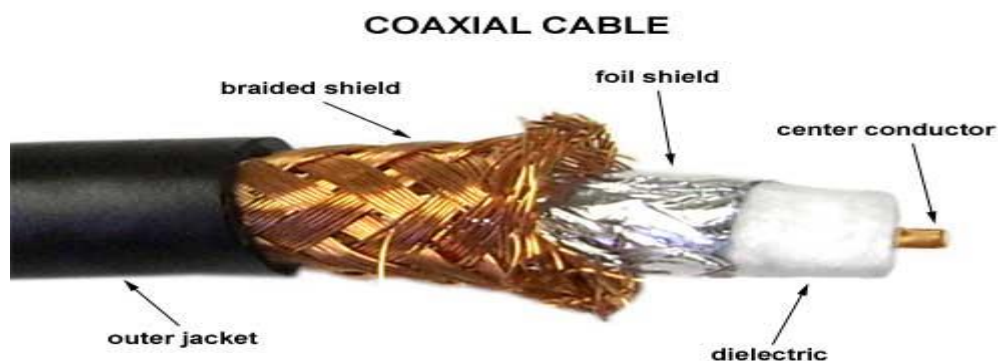
- Eliminates crosstalk
- Comparitively faster

Disadvantages:

- Comparitively difficult to install and manufacture
- More expensive
- Bulky

(ii) Coaxial Cable –

- Sometimes It is known as coax cable, is an electrical cable which transmits radio frequency (RF) signals from one point to another.
- Coaxial cables are a popular choice because their shielded design allows the centre conductor to transmit data quickly while being protected from damage and interference.
- Coaxial cables are mainly built up of these four different layers:
 1. A centre conductor which is usually a copper wire, which data and video travels through
 2. Surrounding the copper wire is a dielectric plastic insulator
 3. A braided mesh made from copper then helps to shield the cable from electromagnetic interference (EMI)
 4. The external layer is a plastic coating which protects the internal layers from damage
- Coaxial cable works by carrying data in the centre conductor, while the surrounding layers of shielding stop any signal loss (also called attenuation loss) and help reduce EMI.
- The first layer, called the dielectric, provides distance between the core conductor and the outer layers, as well as some insulation.
- The next layers, collectively referred to as the shield, keep electrical impulses and radio transmissions out. The different layers of a coaxial cable are shown in the image below:



It has an outer plastic covering containing 2 parallel conductors each having a separate insulated protection cover. Coaxial cable transmits information in two modes: Baseband mode(dedicated cable bandwidth) and Broadband mode(cable bandwidth is split into separate ranges). Cable TVs and analog television networks widely use Coaxial cables.

Advantages:

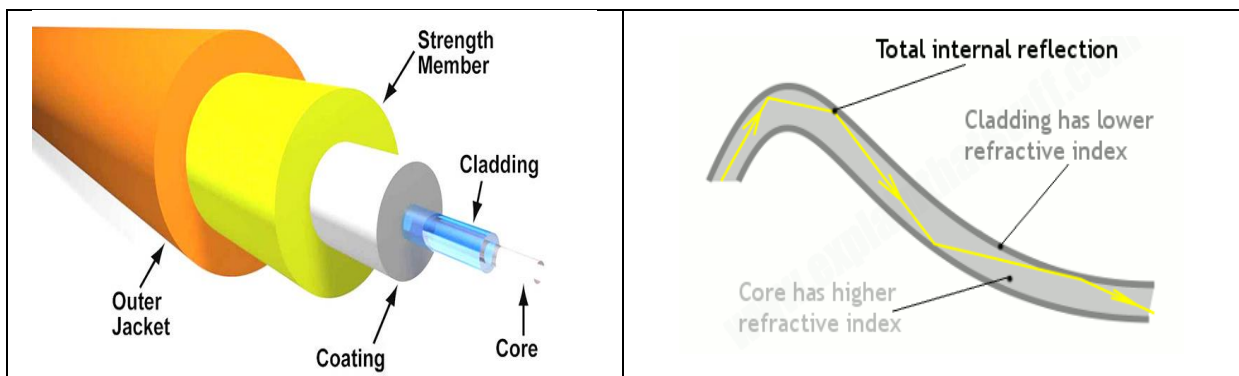
- High Bandwidth
- Better noise Immunity
- Easy to install and expand
- Inexpensive

Disadvantages:

- Single cable failure can disrupt the entire network

(iii) Optical Fibre Cable –

- It sends information coded in a beam of light down a glass or plastic pipe.
- A fiber-optic cable is made up of incredibly thin strands of glass or plastic known as optical fibers; one cable can have as few as two strands or as many as several hundred. Each strand is less than a tenth as thick as a human hair and can carry something like 25,000 telephone calls, so an entire fiber-optic cable can easily carry several million calls.
- Light travels down a fiber-optic cable by bouncing repeatedly off the walls. Each tiny photon (particle of light) bounces down the pipe like a bobsleigh going down an ice run. Now you might expect a beam of light, traveling in a clear glass pipe, simply to leak out of the edges. But if light hits glass at a really shallow angle (less than 42 degrees), it reflects back in again—as though the glass were really a mirror. This phenomenon is called total internal reflection. It's one of the things that keep light inside the pipe.



Types of fiber-optic cables



Single-mode fiber



Multi-mode fiber

1. Single Mode:

The simplest type of optical fiber is called single-mode. It has a very thin core about 5-10 microns (millionths of a meter) in diameter. In a single-mode fiber, all signals travel straight down the middle without bouncing off the edges. Cable TV, Internet,

and telephone signals are generally carried by single-mode fibers, wrapped together into a huge bundle. Cables like this can send information over 100 km (60 miles).

2. multi-mode:

Another type of fiber-optic cable is called multi-mode. Each optical fiber in a multi-mode cable is about 10 times bigger than one in a single-mode cable. This means light beams can travel through the core by following a variety of different paths—in other words, in multiple different modes. Multi-mode cables can send information only over relatively short distances and are used (among other things) to link computer networks together.

It uses the concept of reflection of light through a core made up of glass or plastic. The core is surrounded by a less dense glass or plastic covering called the cladding. It is used for transmission of large volumes of data.

Advantages:

- Increased capacity and bandwidth
- Light weight
- Less signal attenuation
- Immunity to electromagnetic interference
- Resistance to corrosive materials

Disadvantages:

- Difficult to install and maintain
- High cost
- Fragile
- unidirectional, i.e., will need another fibre, if we need bidirectional communication

B. Unguided Media:

It is also referred to as Wireless or Unbounded transmission media. No physical medium is required for the transmission of electromagnetic signals.

Features:

- Signal is broadcasted through air
- Less Secure
- Used for larger distances

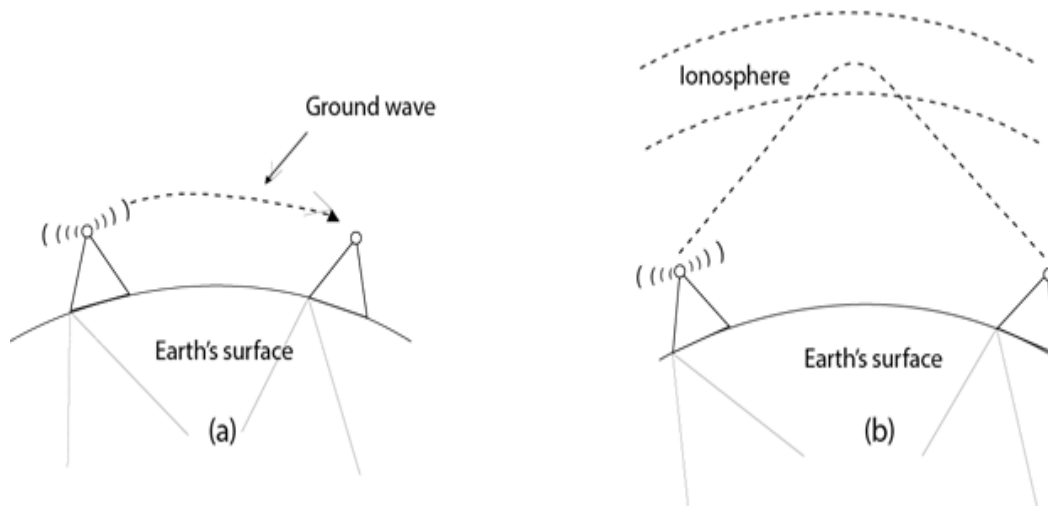
There are 3 major types of Unguided Media:

(i). Radiowaves –

These are easy to generate and can penetrate through buildings. The sending and receiving antennas need not be aligned. Frequency Range: 3KHz – 1GHz. AM and FM radios and cordless phones use Radiowaves for transmission.

- Radio waves are the electromagnetic waves that are transmitted in all the directions of free space.
- Radio waves are omnidirectional, i.e., the signals are propagated in all the directions.
- The range in frequencies of radio waves is from 3Khz to 1 khz.

- In the case of radio waves, the sending and receiving antenna are not aligned, i.e., the wave sent by the sending antenna can be received by any receiving antenna.
- An example of the radio wave is FM radio.



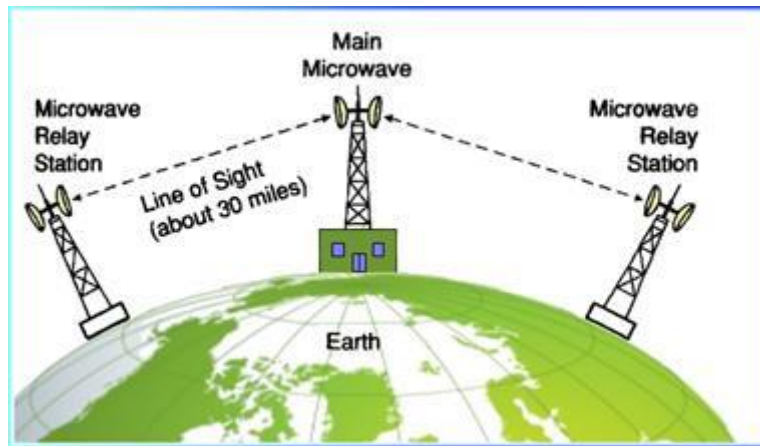
Applications Of Radio waves:

- A Radio wave is useful for multicasting when there is one sender and many receivers.
- An FM radio, television, cordless phones are examples of a radio wave.

Advantages Of Radio transmission:

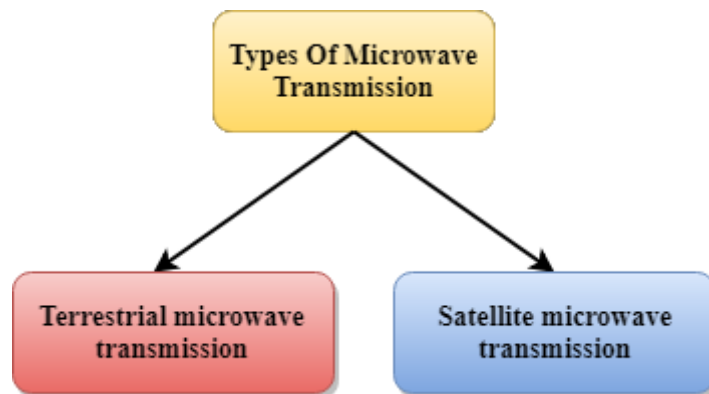
- Radio transmission is mainly used for wide area networks and mobile cellular phones.
- Radio waves cover a large area, and they can penetrate the walls.
- Radio transmission provides a higher transmission rate.

(ii) Microwaves –



Microwaves are of two types:

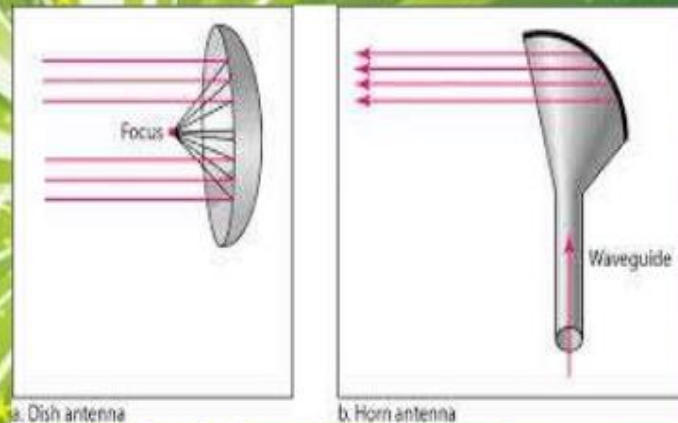
- Terrestrial microwave
- Satellite microwave communication.



It is a line of sight transmission i.e. the sending and receiving antennas need to be properly aligned with each other. The distance covered by the signal is directly proportional to the height of the antenna. Frequency Range:1GHz – 300GHz. These are majorly used for mobile phone communication and television distribution.

2. Microwave

Microwave signals are used to transmit data without the use of cables, similar to that of radio and television signals but at different frequency range. It is line-of-sight transmission, which means the signal travels in straight line free of material obstacles.



Terrestrial Microwave Transmission

- Terrestrial Microwave transmission is a technology that transmits the focused beam of a radio signal from one ground-based microwave transmission antenna to another.
- Microwaves are the electromagnetic waves having the frequency in the range from 1GHz to 1000 GHz.
- Microwaves are unidirectional as the sending and receiving antenna is to be aligned, i.e., the waves sent by the sending antenna are narrowly focussed.
- In this case, antennas are mounted on the towers to send a beam to another antenna which is km away.
- It works on the line of sight transmission, i.e., the antennas mounted on the towers are the direct sight of each other.

Characteristics of Microwave:

- **Frequency range:** The frequency range of terrestrial microwave is from 4-6 GHz to 21-23 GHz.
- **Bandwidth:** It supports the bandwidth from 1 to 10 Mbps.
- **Short distance:** It is inexpensive for short distance.
- **Long distance:** It is expensive as it requires a higher tower for a longer distance.
- **Attenuation:** Attenuation means loss of signal. It is affected by environmental conditions and antenna size.

Advantages Of Microwave:

- Microwave transmission is cheaper than using cables.
- It is free from land acquisition as it does not require any land for the installation of cables.

- Microwave transmission provides an easy communication in terrains as the installation of cable in terrain is quite a difficult task.
- Communication over oceans can be achieved by using microwave transmission.

Disadvantages of Microwave transmission:

- **Eavesdropping:** An eavesdropping creates insecure communication. Any malicious user can catch the signal in the air by using its own antenna.
- **Out of phase signal:** A signal can be moved out of phase by using microwave transmission.
- **Susceptible to weather condition:** A microwave transmission is susceptible to weather condition. This means that any environmental change such as rain, wind can distort the signal.
- **Bandwidth limited:** Allocation of bandwidth is limited in the case of microwave transmission.

Satellite Microwave Communication

- A satellite is a physical object that revolves around the earth at a known height.
- Satellite communication is more reliable nowadays as it offers more flexibility than cable and fibre optic systems.
- We can communicate with any point on the globe by using satellite communication.

How Does Satellite work?

The satellite accepts the signal that is transmitted from the earth station, and it amplifies the signal. The amplified signal is retransmitted to another earth station.

Advantages Of Satellite Microwave Communication:

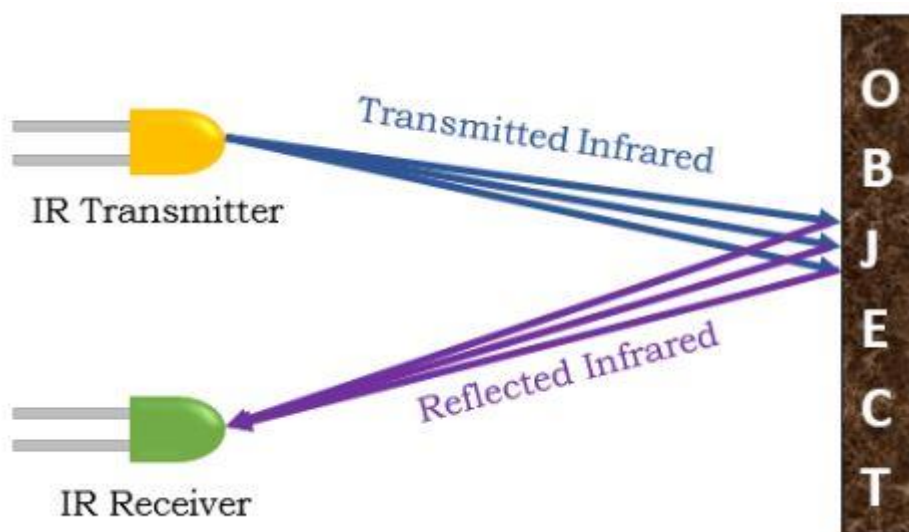
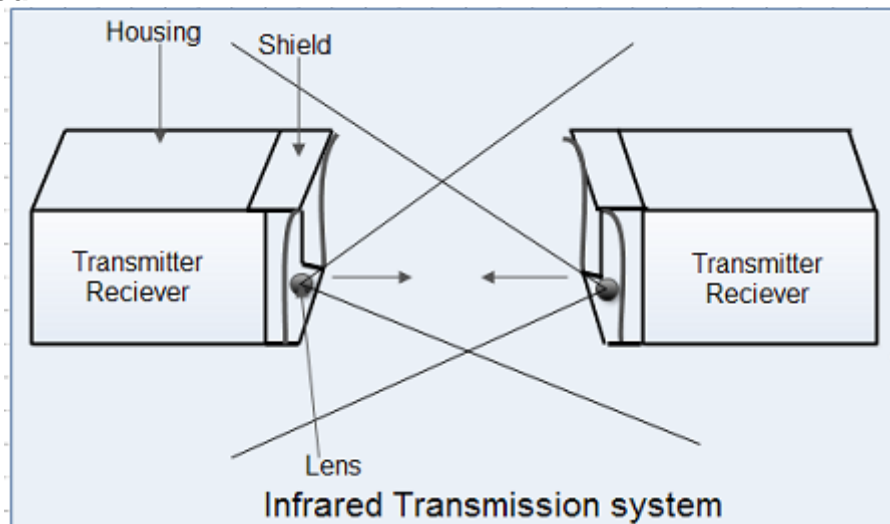
- The coverage area of a satellite microwave is more than the terrestrial microwave.
- The transmission cost of the satellite is independent of the distance from the centre of the coverage area.
- Satellite communication is used in mobile and wireless communication applications.
- It is easy to install.
- It is used in a wide variety of applications such as weather forecasting, radio/TV signal broadcasting, mobile communication, etc.

Disadvantages Of Satellite Microwave Communication:

- Satellite designing and development requires more time and higher cost.

- The Satellite needs to be monitored and controlled on regular periods so that it remains in orbit.
- The life of the satellite is about 12-15 years. Due to this reason, another launch of the satellite has to be planned before it becomes non-functional.

(iii) Infrared –



Infrared waves are used for very short distance communication. They cannot penetrate through obstacles. This prevents interference between systems. Frequency Range: 300GHz – 400THz. It is used in TV remotes, wireless mouse, keyboard, printer, etc.

- An infrared transmission is a wireless technology used for communication over short ranges.
- The frequency of the infrared is in the range from 300 GHz to 400 THz.
- It is used for short-range communication such as data transfer between two cell phones, TV remote operation, data transfer between a computer and cell phone resides in the same closed area.

Characteristics Of Infrared:

- It supports high bandwidth, and hence the data rate will be very high.
- Infrared waves cannot penetrate the walls. Therefore, the infrared communication in one room cannot be interrupted by the nearby rooms.
- An infrared communication provides better security with minimum interference.
- Infrared communication is unreliable outside the building because the sun rays will interfere with the infrared waves.

Switching

Switching is process to forward packets coming in from one port to a port leading towards the destination. When data comes on a port it is called ingress, and when data leaves a port or goes out it is called egress. A communication system may include number of switches and nodes. At broad level, switching can be divided into two major categories:

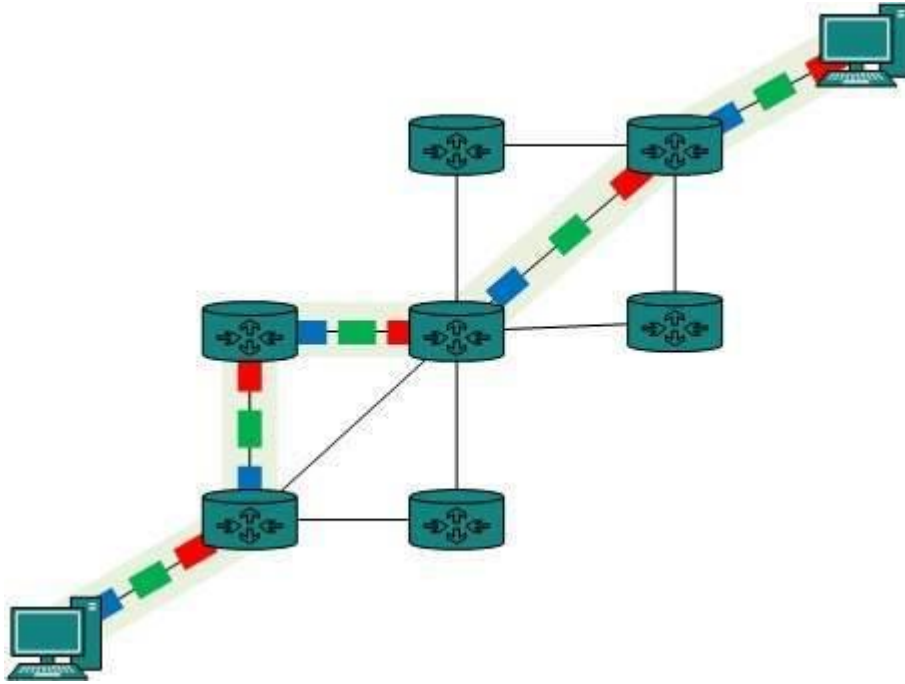
- **Connectionless:** The data is forwarded on behalf of forwarding tables. No previous handshaking is required and acknowledgements are optional.
- **Connection Oriented:** Before switching data to be forwarded to destination, there is a need to pre-establish circuit along the path between both endpoints. Data is then forwarded on that circuit. After the transfer is completed, circuits can be kept for future use or can be turned down immediately.

1. Circuit Switching

When two nodes communicate with each other over a dedicated communication path, it is called circuit switching. There is a need of pre-specified route from which data will travel and no other data is permitted. In circuit switching, to transfer the data, circuit must be established so that the data transfer can take place.

Circuits can be permanent or temporary. Applications which use circuit switching may have to go through three phases:

- Establish a circuit
- Transfer the data
- Disconnect the circuit

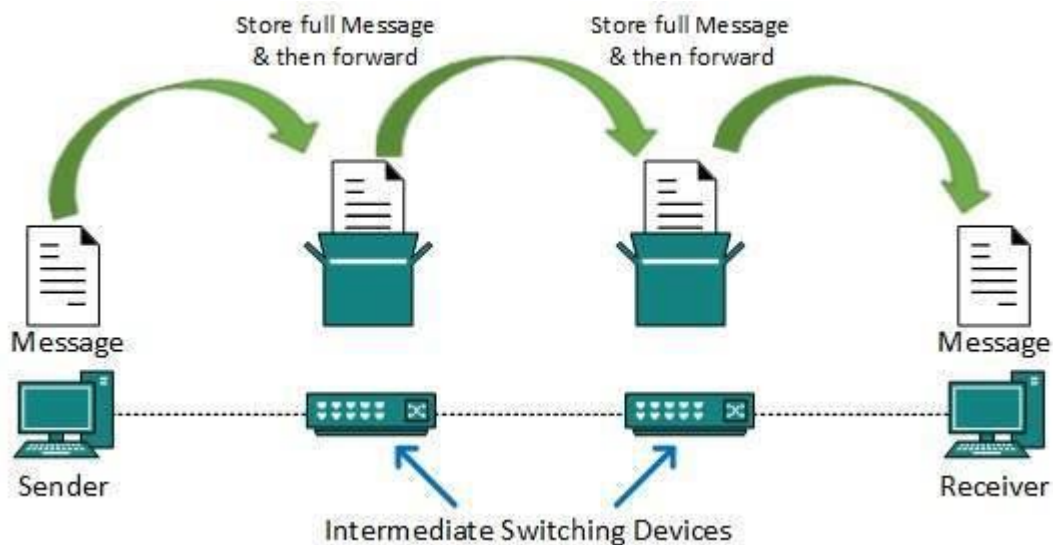


Circuit switching was designed for voice applications. Telephone is the best suitable example of circuit switching. Before a user can make a call, a virtual path between caller and callee is established over the network.

2. Message Switching

This technique was somewhere in middle of circuit switching and packet switching. In message switching, the whole message is treated as a data unit and is switching / transferred in its entirety.

A switch working on message switching, first receives the whole message and buffers it until there are resources available to transfer it to the next hop. If the next hop is not having enough resource to accommodate large size message, the message is stored and switch waits.



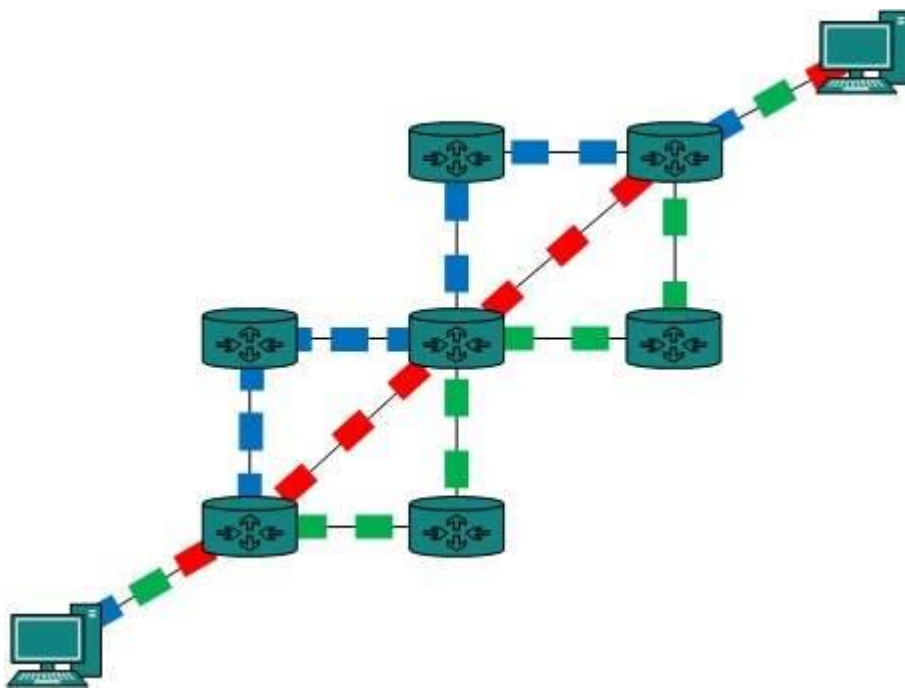
This technique was considered substitute to circuit switching. As in circuit switching the whole path is blocked for two entities only. Message switching is replaced by packet switching. Message switching has the following drawbacks:

- Every switch in transit path needs enough storage to accommodate entire message.
- Because of store-and-forward technique and waits included until resources are available, message switching is very slow.
- Message switching was not a solution for streaming media and real-time applications.

3. Packet Switching

Shortcomings of message switching gave birth to an idea of packet switching. The entire message is broken down into smaller chunks called packets. The switching information is added in the header of each packet and transmitted independently.

It is easier for intermediate networking devices to store small size packets and they do not take much resources either on carrier path or in the internal memory of switches.



Packet switching enhances line efficiency as packets from multiple applications can be multiplexed over the carrier. The internet uses packet switching technique. Packet switching enables the user to differentiate data streams based on priorities. Packets are stored and forwarded according to their priority to provide quality of service.

Comparison of circuit Switching, Packet switching & Message Switching

Parameter	Message switching	Circuit switching	Packet switching
Application	Telegraph network for transmission of telegrams	Telephone network for bi-directional, real time transfer of voice signals	Internet for datagram and reliable stream service between computers
End terminal	Telegraph, teletype	Telephone, modem	Computer
Information type	Morse, Baudot, ASCII	Analog voice or PCM digital voice	Binary information
Transmission system	Digital data over different transmission media	Analog and digital data over different transmission media	Digital data over different transmission media