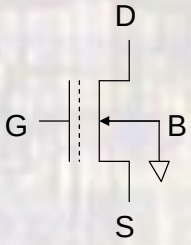
Memory - Flash

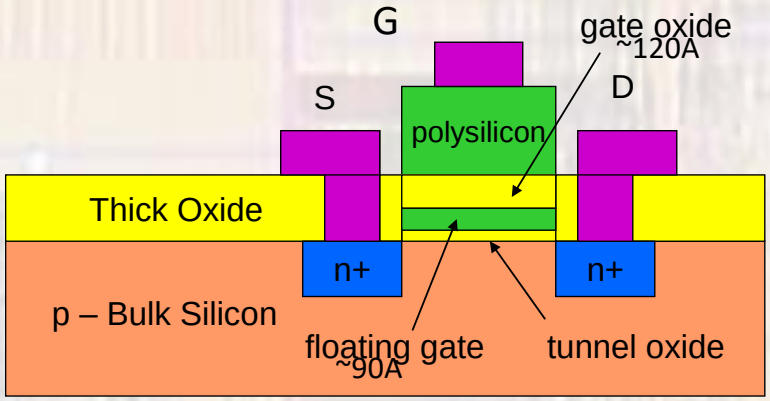
Last updated 3/26/25

Memory - Flash

- Flash Memory - basics
  - Memory cell (1 bit) is based on charge stored on a floating capacitor
    - The capacitor modifies the threshold voltage of a MOSFET
      - with negative charge stored – need higher gate voltage to turn on the MOSFET
    - Creates 2 possible threshold voltages

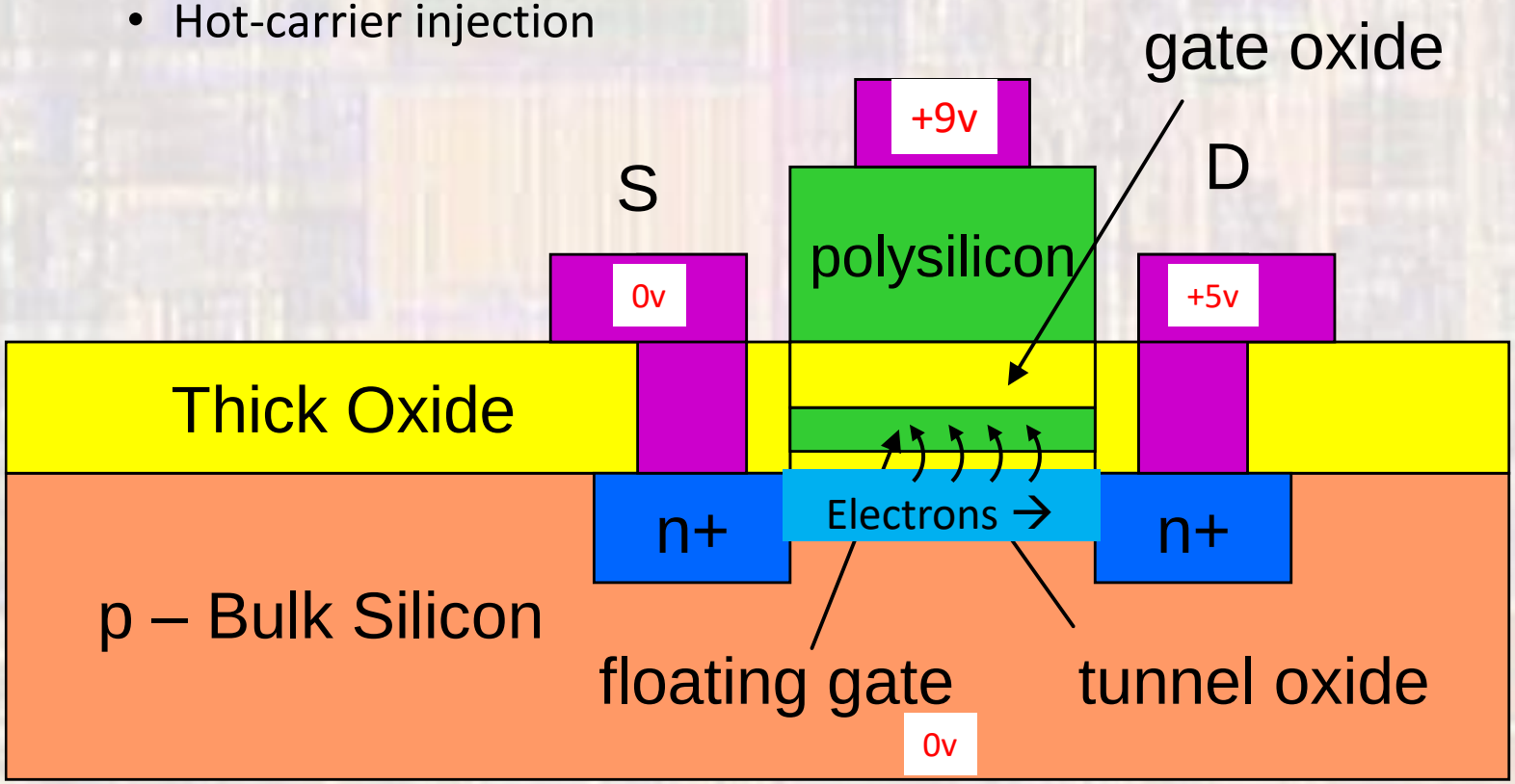
      Different for NOR and NAND





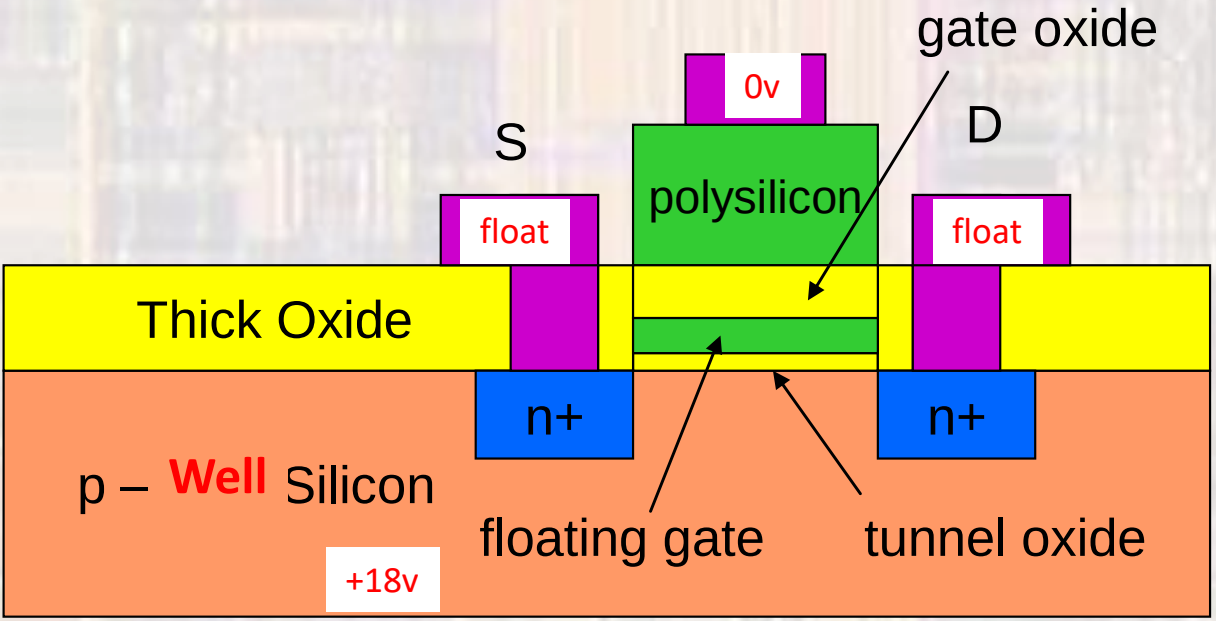
Memory - Flash

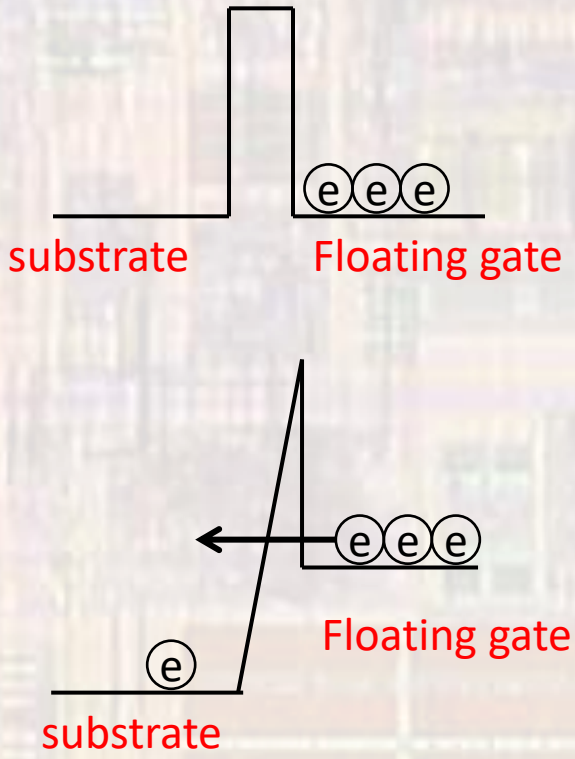
- Flash Memory
  - Cell write
    - High voltage process that allows electrons to be injected into the floating gate
    - Hot-carrier injection



Memory - Flash

- Flash Memory
  - Cell erase
    - High voltage process that allows electrons to tunnel out of the floating gate
    - Fowler-Nordheim Tunneling



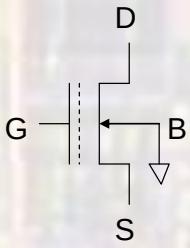


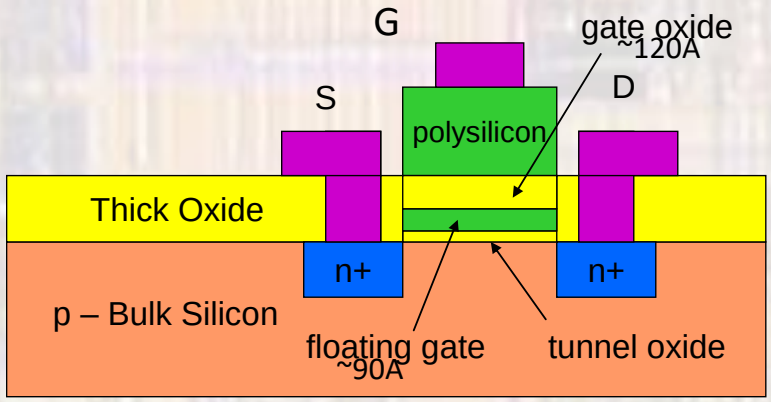
Memory - Flash

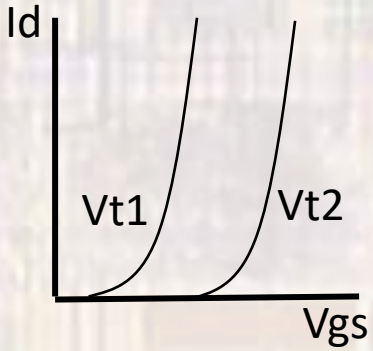
- Flash Memory
  - Creates 2 possible threshold voltages

    Vth $_{High}$ is required to turn on the MOSFET if charge is stored

    Vth $_{Low}$ is required to turn on the MOSFET if no charge is stored

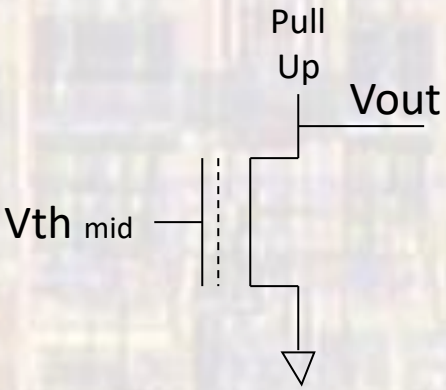






Memory - Flash

- Flash Memory
  - Cell read
    - Place a voltage on the gate midway between Vth $_{High}$ and Vth $_{Low}$
    - Use the circuit to determine if the MOSFET is on or off
    - Erased state – no charge stored = “1”
    - Programmed state – charge stored = “0”

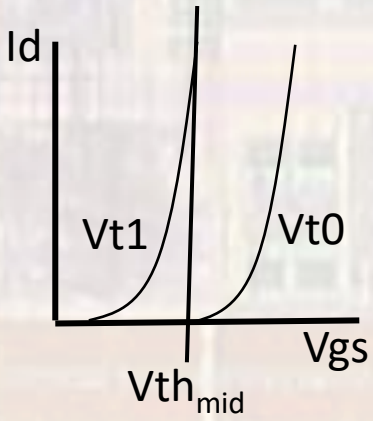


If charge stored on capacitor (programmed)

$Vth_{mid} <$ (Vth = Vth_{High}) → Vout = high → “0”

If no charge stored on capacitor (erased)

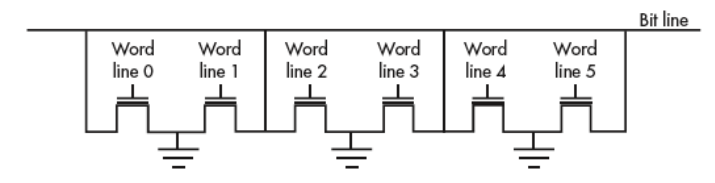
$Vth_{mid} >$ (Vth = Vth_{Low}) → Vout = low → “1”



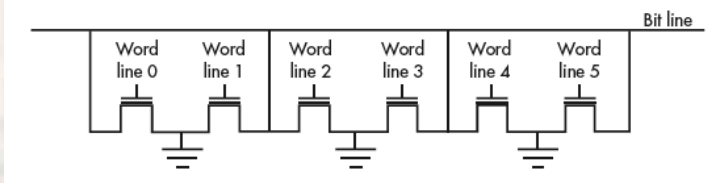
Memory - Flash

- Flash Memory

- NAND Flash
  - Page Write
  - Block Erase
  - More dense
  - Fast (required) sequential access
  - Used as file storage memory (Flash Drives)



- NOR Flash
  - Byte/word Write
  - Block Erase
  - Less dense
  - Fast random access
  - Used as program memory



Memory - Flash

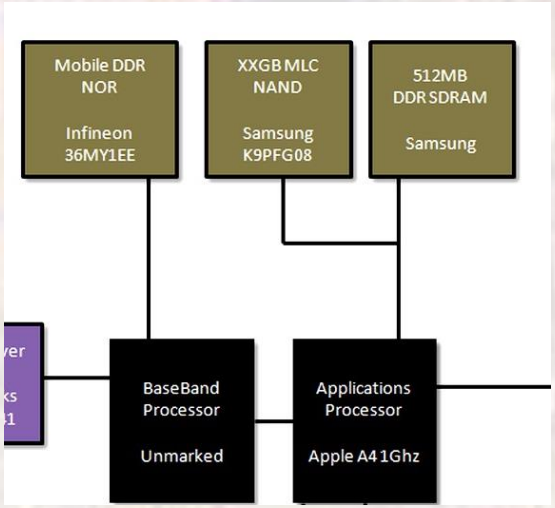
- Flash Memory
  - Damage – wear out
    - The tunneling process damages the oxide layer
      - Some electrons get trapped in the oxide
      - Physical damage to the lattice
    - Limits the number of write/erase cycles
      - 10K – 1M cycles
    - Wear leveling
      - Remap the external addresses to new physical blocks on erases
      - Dynamic – do this as changes occur
      - Static – do this to little used blocks to make them available
        - Allows all blocks to approach their failure limit

Memory - Flash

- Flash Memory
  - Multi-Level Cell
    - Instead of just having 2 threshold voltages – allow for 4 or 8
    - 4 → 2 bit MLC, 8→ 3bit MLC
  - All aspects of the design get harder (programming, read, wear leveling, speed) → ECC
  - Error Correction Coding – ECC
    - Additional bits are used to detect and correct bit level errors in a word

Memory - Flash

- Flash Memory
  - Shadowing
    - Store large amounts of program and data in Nand Flash
    - At boot, copy a portion of the Nand memory into SRAM or SDRAM
    - Use the SRAM/SDRAM as the processor program and data memory
    - As additional program or data are needed – swap out a portion of the SRAM/SDRAM



Memory - Flash

- Flash memory
  - XIP – Execute in Place
    - Execute directly out of NOR flash
      - Nor Flash densities are growing rapidly
      - Nor Flash speeds are fast enough to support the memory hierarchy
      - Requires a caching system

Memory - Flash

- Other Technologies
  - Phase Change Memory – PRAM
  - Ferro-Magnetic Ram – FeRAM
  - Magneto-resistive Ram - MRAM