

### 3 COMPUTER NETWORKS

The merging of computers and communications has had a profound influence on the way computer systems are organized. The once-dominant concept of the “computer center” as a room with a large computer to which users bring their work for processing is now totally obsolete (although data centers holding thousands of Internet servers are becoming common). The old model of a single computer serving all of the organization’s computational needs has been replaced by one in which a large number of separate but interconnected computers do the job. These systems are called computer networks. They are usually connected together to make larger networks, with the Internet being the most well-known example of a network of networks.

There is considerable confusion in the literature between a computer network and a distributed system. The key distinction is that in a distributed system, a collection of independent computers appears to its users as a single coherent system. Usually, it has a single model or paradigm that it presents to the users. Often a layer of software on top of the operating system, called middleware, is responsible for implementing this model. A well-known example of a distributed system is the World Wide Web. It runs on top of the Internet and presents a model in which everything looks like a document (Web page).

In a computer network, this coherence, model, and software are absent. Users are exposed to the actual machines, without any attempt by the system to make the machines look and act in a coherent way. If the machines have different hardware and different operating systems, that is fully visible to the users. If a user wants to run a program on a remote machine, he has to log onto that machine and run it there.

In effect, a distributed system is a software system built on top of a network. The software gives it a high degree of cohesiveness and transparency. Thus, the distinction between a network and a distributed system lies with the software (especially the operating system), rather than with the hardware.

A computer network is made up of three basic parts:

- **Hardware** - hardware used to build computer network. That includes a transmission medium (optic fiber cable, radio waves, infrared radiation, laser, etc.), Electronics (with the function of broadcasting, receiving, repetition and routing transmitted signals) and stations (service stations, ie servers and workstations). To differentiate the functions of computers in a computer network we define two terms:
  - **Server** - a computer that provides its clients with resources, services and performance. Most servers are running continuously, resulting in a need for higher reliability.
  - **Workstation** - a personal computer, laptop or thin client. These devices have their own operating system, local drives (except the thin client) and topical application. These devices can also benefit from the resources and services on the network.
- **Software**, which is represented by software tools (software in specific electronic equipment eg. Switch, firewall, network server operating system and application software on the PC).

- Organizational support (orgware) - is the latest and often underestimated part of the network. This includes network administration, network management and a set of rules for users connected to the network.

## 5.1 Data transmission

### Signals

When data is sent over physical medium, it needs to be first converted into electromagnetic signals. Data itself can be analog such as human voice, or digital such as file on the disk. Both analog and digital data can be represented in digital or analog signals.

#### *Digital Signals*

Digital signals are discrete in nature and represent sequence of voltage pulses. Digital signals are used within the circuitry of a computer system.

#### *Analog Signals*

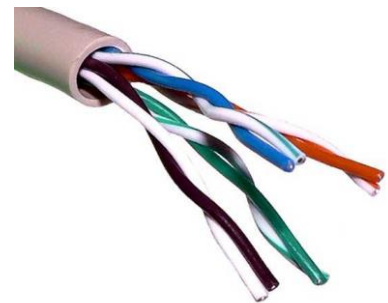
Analog signals are in continuous wave form in nature and represented by continuous electromagnetic waves.

### 5.1.1 Transmission media

#### Twisted Pair Cable

A twisted pair cable is made of two plastic insulated copper wires twisted together to form a single media. Out of these two wires, only one carries actual signal and another is used for ground reference. The twists between wires are helpful in reducing noise (electro-magnetic interference) and crosstalk.

Figure 5.1 Twisted Pair Cable



There are two types of twisted pair cables:

- Shielded Twisted Pair (STP) Cable
- Unshielded Twisted Pair (UTP) Cable

STP cables comes with twisted wire pair covered in metal foil. This makes it more indifferent to noise and crosstalk.

UTP has seven categories, each suitable for specific use. In computer networks, Cat-5, Cat-5e, and Cat-6 cables are mostly used. UTP cables are connected by RJ45 connectors.

Figure 5.2 Coaxial Cable

#### Coaxial Cable

Coaxial cable has two wires of copper. The core wire lies in the center and it is made of solid conductor. The core is enclosed in an insulating sheath. The second wire is wrapped around over the sheath and that too in turn encased by insulator sheath. This all is covered by plastic cover.



Because of its structure, the coax cable is capable of carrying high frequency signals than that of twisted pair cable. The wrapped structure provides it a good shield against noise and cross talk. Coaxial cables provide high bandwidth rates of up to 450 mbps. There are three categories of coax cables namely, RG-59 (Cable TV), RG-58 (Thin Ethernet), and RG-11 (Thick Ethernet). RG stands for Radio Government. Cables are connected using BNC connector and BNC-T. BNC terminator is used to terminate the wire at the far ends.

### **Power Lines**

Power Line communication (PLC) is Layer-1 (Physical Layer) technology which uses power cables to transmit data signals. In PLC, modulated data is sent over the cables. The receiver on the other end de-modulates and interprets the data.

Because power lines are widely deployed, PLC can make all powered devices controlled and monitored. PLC works in half-duplex.

There are two types of PLCs:

- Narrow band PLC
- Broad band PLC

Narrow band PLC provides lower data rates up to 100s of kbps, as they work at lower frequencies (3-5000 kHz). They can be spread over several kilometers.

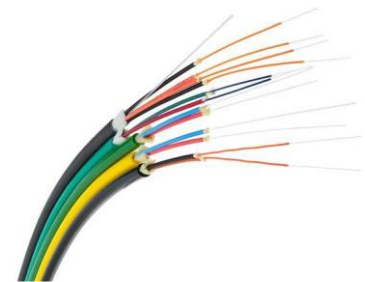
Broadband PLC provides higher data rates up to 100s of Mbps and works at higher frequencies (1.8 – 250 MHz). They cannot be as much extended as Narrowband PLC.

### **Fiber Optics**

Fiber Optic works on the properties of light. When light ray hits at critical angle, it tends to refracts at 90 degree. This property has been used in fiber optic. The core of fiber optic cable is made of high quality glass or plastic. From one end of it light is emitted, it travels through it and at the other end light detector detects light stream and converts it to electric data.

Fiber Optic provides the highest mode of speed. It comes in two modes; one is single mode fiber and second is multimode fiber. Single mode fiber can carry a single ray of light whereas multimode is capable of carrying multiple beams of light.

**Figure 5.3 Fiber Optics**



Fiber Optic also comes in unidirectional and bidirectional capabilities. To connect and access fiber optic special type of connectors are used. These can be Subscriber Channel (SC), Straight Tip (ST), or MT-RJ.

### **Wireless Transmission**

Wireless transmission is a form of unguided media. Wireless communication involves no physical link established between two or more devices, communicating wirelessly.

Wireless signals are spread over in the air and are received and interpreted by appropriate antennas.

When an antenna is attached to electrical circuit of a computer or wireless device, it converts the digital data into wireless signals and spread all over within its frequency range. The receptor on the other end receives these signals and converts them back to digital data. A little part of electromagnetic spectrum can be used for wireless transmission.

**Figure 5.4 Electromagnetic spectrum**

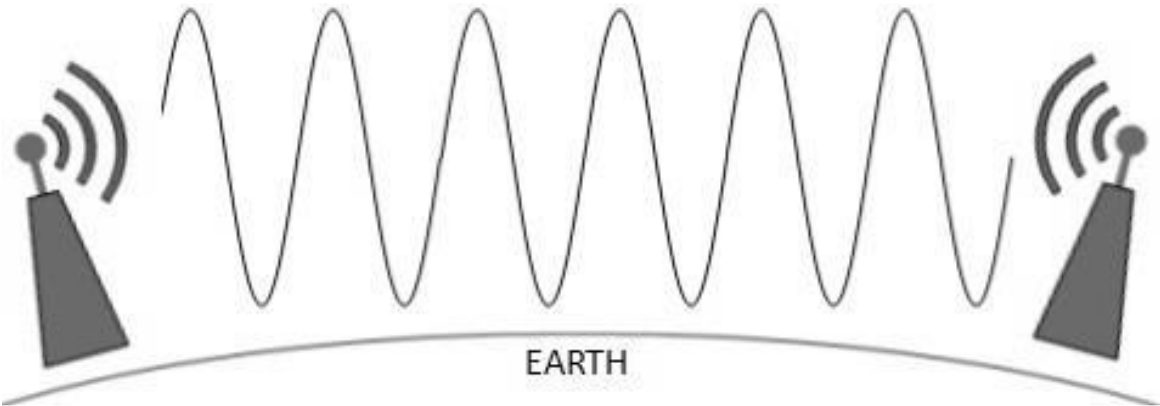


**Radio Transmission**

Radio frequency is easier to generate and because of its large wavelength it can penetrate through walls and structures alike. Radio waves can have wavelength from 1mm – 100,000km and have frequency ranging from 3Hz (Extremely Low Frequency) to 300 GHz (Extremely High Frequency). Radio frequencies are sub-divided into six bands.

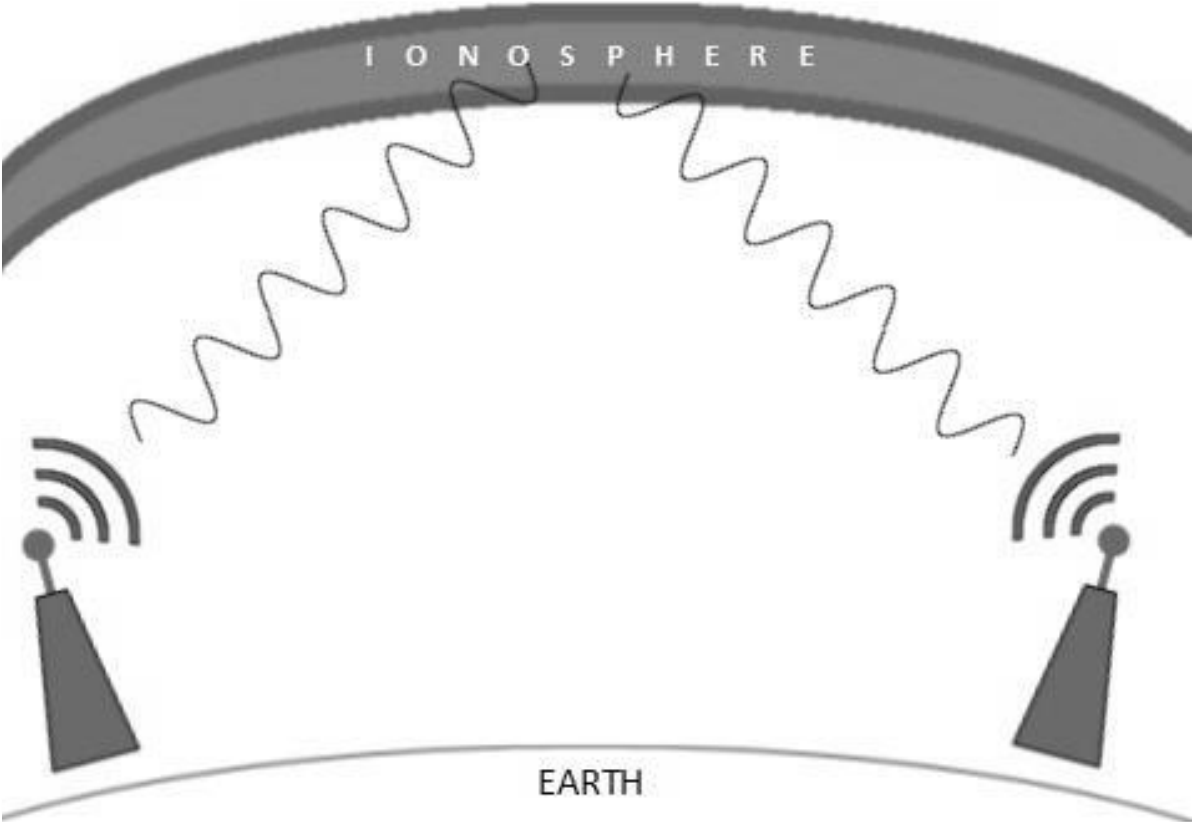
Radio waves at lower frequencies can travel through walls whereas higher RF can travel in straight line and bounce back. The power of low frequency waves decreases sharply as they cover long distance. High frequency radio waves have more power. Lower frequencies such as VLF, LF, MF bands can travel on the ground up to 1000 kilometers, over the earth’s surface.

**Figure 5.5 Radio waves**



Radio waves of high frequencies are prone to be absorbed by rain and other obstacles. They use Ionosphere of earth atmosphere. High frequency radio waves such as HF and VHF bands are spread upwards. When they reach Ionosphere, they are refracted back to the earth.

**Figure 5.6 High frequency radio waves**

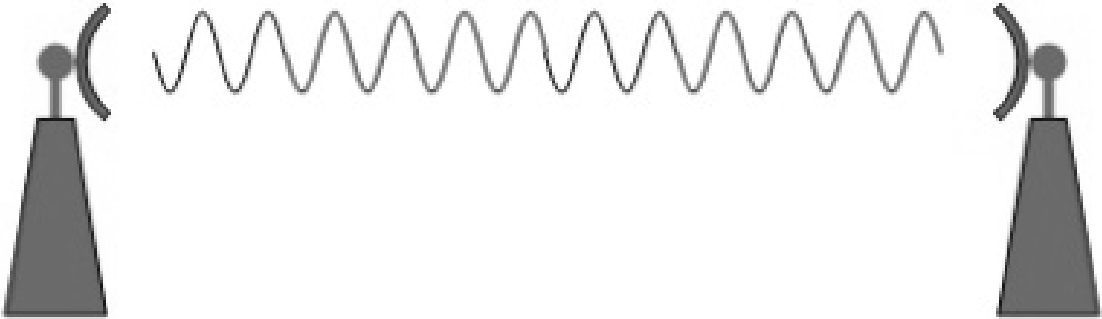


**Microwave Transmission**

Electromagnetic waves above 100MHz tend to travel in a straight line and signals over them can be sent by beaming those waves towards one particular station. Because Microwaves travels in straight lines, both sender and receiver must be aligned to be strictly in line-of-sight.

Microwaves can have wavelength ranging from 1mm – 1meter and frequency ranging from 300MHz to 300GHz.

**Figure 5.7 Microwave transmission**



Microwave antennas concentrate the waves making a beam of it. As shown in picture above, multiple antennas can be aligned to reach farther. Microwaves have higher frequencies and do not penetrate wall like obstacles.

Microwave transmission depends highly upon the weather conditions and the frequency it is using.

### **Infrared Transmission**

Infrared wave lies in between visible light spectrum and microwaves. It has wavelength of 700nm to 1mm and frequency ranges from 300GHz to 430THz.

Infrared wave is used for very short range communication purposes such as television and its remote. Infrared travels in a straight line hence it is directional by nature. Because of high frequency range, Infrared cannot cross wall-like obstacles.

## **5.2 Types of computer networks**

Generally, networks are distinguished based on their geographical span. A network can be as small as distance between your mobile phone and its Bluetooth headphone and as large as the internet itself, covering the whole geographical world.

### **Personal Area Network**

A Personal Area Network (PAN) is smallest network which is very personal to a user. This may include Bluetooth enabled devices or infra-red enabled devices. PAN has connectivity range up to 10 meters. PAN may include wireless computer keyboard and mouse, Bluetooth enabled headphones, wireless printers, and TV remotes.

For example, Piconet is Bluetooth-enabled Personal Area Network which may contain up to 8 devices connected together in a master-slave fashion.

### **Local Area Network**

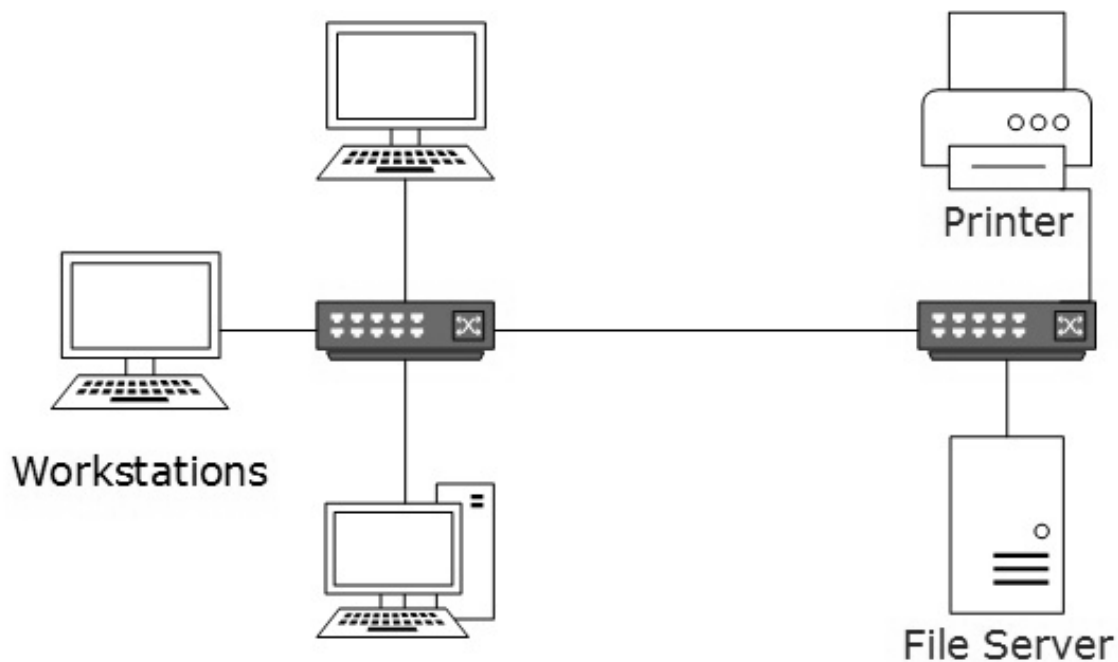
A computer network spanned inside a building and operated under single administrative system is generally termed as Local Area Network (LAN). Usually, LAN covers an organization offices, schools, colleges or universities. Number of systems connected in LAN may vary from as least as two to as much as 16 million.

LAN provides a useful way of sharing the resources between end users. The resources such as printers, file servers, scanners, and internet are easily sharable among computers.

LANs are composed of inexpensive networking and routing equipment. It may contain local servers serving file storage and other locally shared applications. It mostly operates on private IP addresses and does not involve heavy routing. LAN works under its own local domain and controlled centrally.

LAN uses either Ethernet or Token-ring technology. Ethernet is most widely employed LAN technology and uses Star topology, while Token-ring is rarely seen. LAN can be wired, wireless, or in both forms at once.

**Figure 5.8 Local Area Network**



### **Metropolitan Area Network**

The Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) generally expands throughout a city such as cable TV network. It can be in the form of Ethernet, Token-ring, ATM, or Fiber Distributed Data Interface (FDDI).

Metro Ethernet is a service which is provided by ISPs. This service enables its users to expand their Local Area Networks. For example, MAN can help an organization to connect all of its offices in a city.

Backbone of MAN is high-capacity and high-speed fiber optics. MAN works in between Local Area Network and Wide Area Network. MAN provides uplink for LANs to WANs or internet.

### **Wide Area Network**

As the name suggests, the Wide Area Network (WAN) covers a wide area which may span across provinces and even a whole country. Generally, telecommunication networks are Wide Area Network. These networks provide connectivity to MANs and LANs. Since they are equipped with very high speed backbone, WANs use very expensive network equipment.

WAN may use advanced technologies such as Asynchronous Transfer Mode (ATM), Frame Relay, and Synchronous Optical Network (SONET). WAN may be managed by multiple administrations.

### **Internetwork**

A network of networks is called an internetwork, or simply the internet. It is the largest network in existence on this planet. The internet hugely connects all WANs and it can have connection to LANs and Home networks. Internet uses TCP/IP protocol suite and uses IP as its addressing protocol. Present day, Internet is widely implemented using

IPv4. Because of shortage of address spaces, it is gradually migrating from IPv4 to IPv6.

Internet enables its users to share and access enormous amount of information worldwide. It uses WWW, FTP, email services, audio, and video streaming etc. At huge level, internet works on Client-Server model. Internet uses very high speed backbone of fiber optics. To inter-connect various continents, fibers are laid under sea known to us as submarine communication cable.

Internet is widely deployed on World Wide Web services using HTML linked pages and is accessible by client software known as Web Browsers. When a user requests a page using some web browser located on some Web Server anywhere in the world, the Web Server responds with the proper HTML page. The communication delay is very low.

Internet is serving many proposes and is involved in many aspects of life. Some of them are:

- Web sites
- E-mail
- Instant Messaging
- Blogging
- Social Media
- Marketing
- Networking
- Resource Sharing
- Audio and Video Streaming

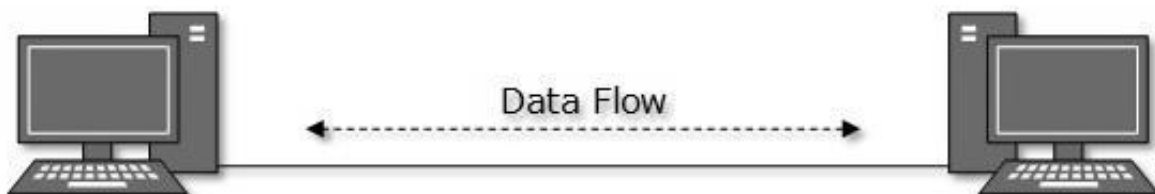
### 5.3 Computer Network Topologies

A Network Topology is the arrangement with which computer systems or network devices are connected to each other. Topologies may define both physical and logical aspect of the network. Both logical and physical topologies could be same or different in a same network.

#### Point-to-Point

Point-to-point networks contains exactly two hosts such as computer, switches, routers, or servers connected back to back using a single piece of cable. Often, the receiving end of one host is connected to sending end of the other and vice versa.

Figure 5.9 Point-to-point network



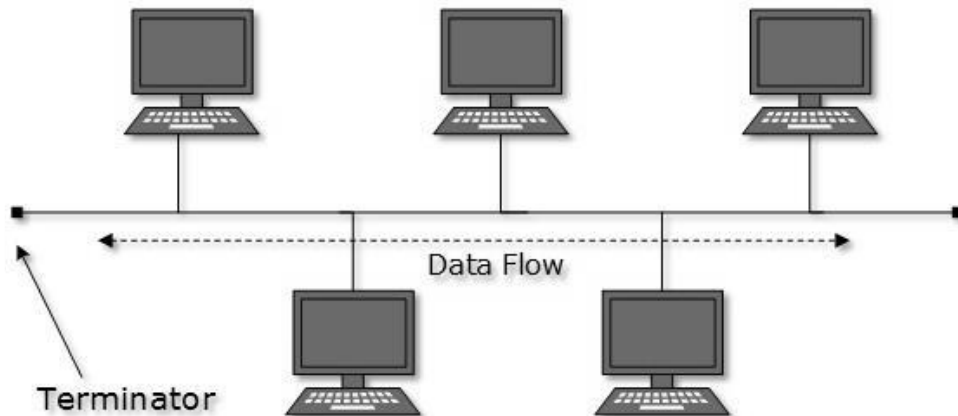
If the hosts are connected point-to-point logically, then may have multiple intermediate devices. But the end hosts are unaware of underlying network and see each other as if they are connected directly.



## Bus Topology

In case of Bus topology, all devices share single communication line or cable. Bus topology may have problem while multiple hosts sending data at the same time. Therefore, Bus topology either uses CSMA/CD technology or recognizes one host as Bus Master to solve the issue. It is one of the simple forms of networking where a failure of a device does not affect the other devices. But failure of the shared communication line can make all other devices stop functioning.

Figure 5.10 Bus topology



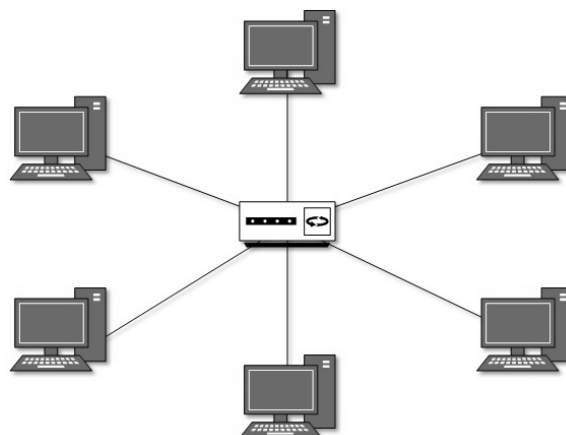
Both ends of the shared channel have line terminator. The data is sent in only one direction and as soon as it reaches the extreme end, the terminator removes the data from the line.

## Star Topology

All hosts in Star topology are connected to a central device, known as hub device, using a point-to-point connection. That is, there exists a point to point connection between hosts and hub. The hub device can be any of the following:

- Layer-1 device such as hub or repeater
- Layer-2 device such as switch or bridge
- Layer-3 device such as router or gateway

Figure 5.11 Star topology

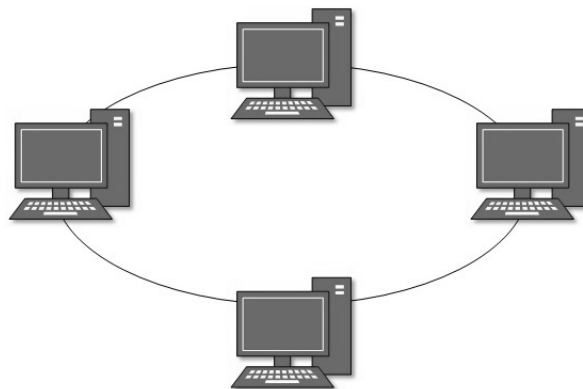


As in Bus topology, hub acts as single point of failure. If hub fails, connectivity of all hosts to all other hosts fails. Every communication between hosts takes place through only the hub. Star topology is not expensive as to connect one more host, only one cable is required and configuration is simple.

### **Ring Topology**

In ring topology, each host machine connects to exactly two other machines, creating a circular network structure. When one host tries to communicate or send message to a host which is not adjacent to it, the data travels through all intermediate hosts. To connect one more host in the existing structure, the administrator may need only one more extra cable.

**Figure 5.12 Ring topology**

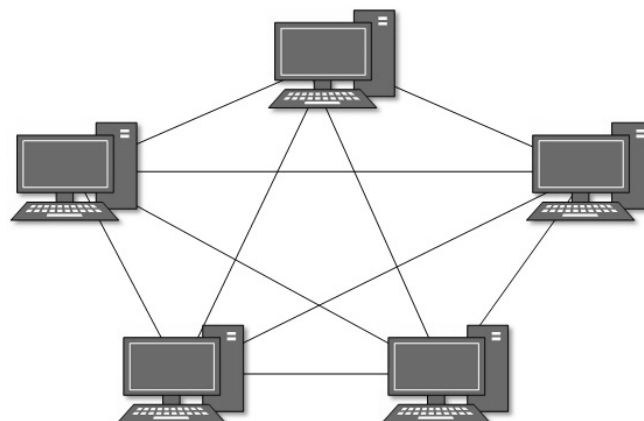


Failure of any host results in failure of the whole ring. Thus, every connection in the ring is a point of failure. There are methods which employ one more backup ring.

### **Mesh Topology**

In this type of topology, a host is connected to one or multiple hosts. This topology has hosts in point-to-point connection with every other host or may also have hosts which are in point-to-point connection with few hosts only.

**Figure 5.13 Mesh topology**



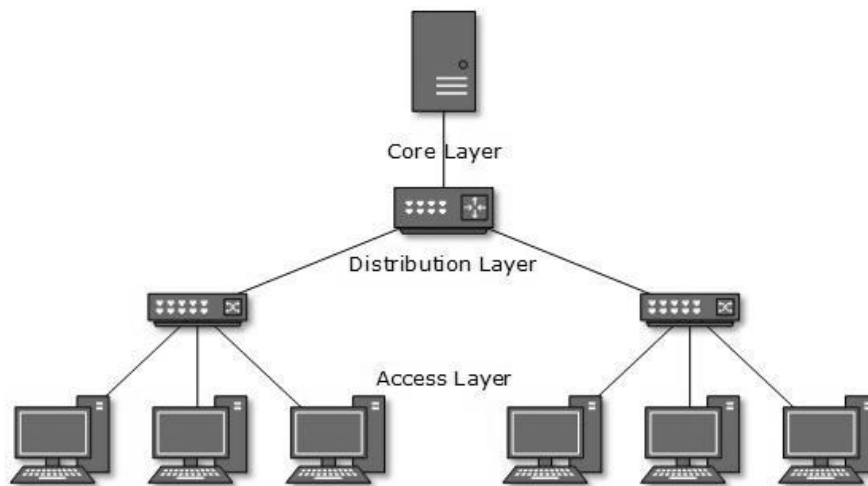
Hosts in Mesh topology also work as relay for other hosts which do not have direct point-to-point links. Mesh technology comes into two types:

- Full Mesh: All hosts have a point-to-point connection to every other host in the network. Thus for every new host  $n$   $(n-1)/2$  connections are required. It provides the most reliable network structure among all network topologies.
- Partially Mesh: Not all hosts have point-to-point connection to every other host. Hosts connect to each other in some arbitrarily fashion. This topology exists where we need to provide reliability to some hosts out of all.

### Tree Topology

Also known as Hierarchical Topology, this is the most common form of network topology in use presently. This topology imitates as extended Star topology and inherits properties of Bus topology.

Figure 5.14 Tree topology



This topology divides the network into multiple levels/layers of network. Mainly in LANs, a network is bifurcated into three types of network devices. The lowermost is access-layer where computers are attached. The middle layer is known as distribution layer, which works as mediator between upper layer and lower layer. The highest layer is known as core layer, and is central point of the network, i.e. root of the tree from which all nodes fork.

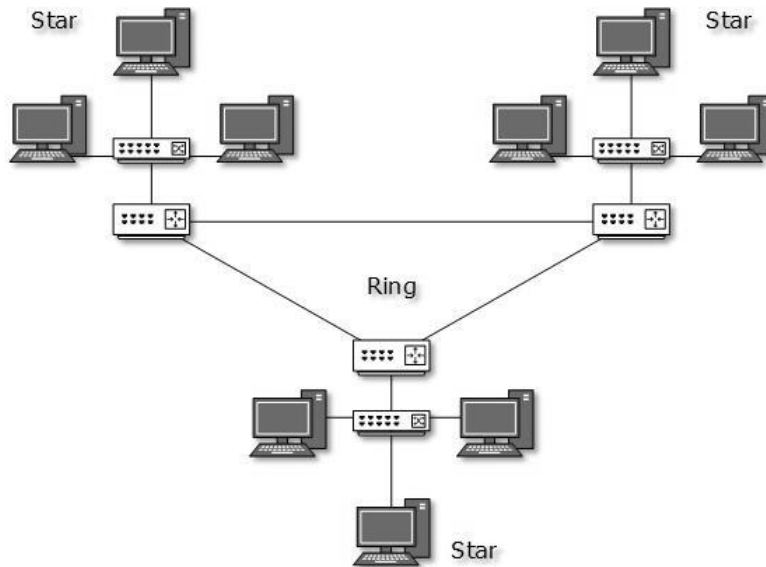
All neighboring hosts have point-to-point connection between them. Similar to the Bus topology, if the root goes down, then the entire network suffers even though it is not the single point of failure. Every connection serves as point of failure, failing of which divides the network into unreachable segment.

### Hybrid Topology

A network structure whose design contains more than one topology is said to be hybrid topology. Hybrid topology inherits merits and demerits of all the incorporating topologies.

The above picture represents an arbitrarily hybrid topology. The combining topologies may contain attributes of Star, Ring, Bus, and Daisy-chain topologies. Most WANs are connected by means of Dual-Ring topology and networks connected to them are mostly Star topology networks. Internet is the best example of largest Hybrid topology.

**Figure 5.15 Hybrid topology**



## 1.5 Network Addressing

Layer 3 network addressing is one of the major tasks of Network Layer. Network Addresses are always logical i.e. these are software based addresses which can be changed by appropriate configurations.

A network address always points to host / node / server or it can represent a whole network. Network address is always configured on network interface card and is generally mapped by system with the MAC address (hardware address or layer-2 address) of the machine for Layer-2 communication.

There are different kinds of network addresses in existence:

- IP
- IPX
- AppleTalk

We are discussing IP here as it is the only one we use in practice these days. IP addressing provides mechanism to differentiate between hosts and network. Because IP addresses are assigned in hierarchical manner, a host always resides under a specific network. The host which needs to communicate outside its subnet needs to know destination network address, where the packet/data is to be sent.

Hosts in different subnet need a mechanism to locate each other. This task can be done by DNS. DNS is a server which provides Layer-3 address of remote host mapped with

its domain name or FQDN. When a host acquires the Layer-3 Address (IP Address) of the remote host, it forwards its entire packet to its gateway. A gateway is a router equipped with all the information which leads to route packets to the destination host. Routers take help of routing tables, which has the following information:

- Address of destination network
- Method to reach the network

Routers upon receiving forwarding request, forwards packet to its next hop (adjacent router) towards the destination.

The next router on the path follows the same thing and eventually the data packet reaches its destination.

Network address can be of one of the following:

- Unicast (destined to one host)
- Multicast (destined to group)
- Broadcast (destined to all)
- Anycast (destined to nearest one)

A router never forwards broadcast traffic by default. Multicast traffic uses special treatment as it is most a video stream or audio with highest priority. Anycast is just similar to unicast, except that the packets are delivered to the nearest destination when multiple destinations are available.

### **Control questions**

- 1) Name the parts of computer network.
- 2) Name the types of computer networks.
- 3) What is computer topology?

