A-LEVEL PHYSICS • EXERCISE SHEET

24.1 Production and use of ultrasound

Name: ______________ Class: __________ Date: ____________ **Total: 25 marks**

KEY WORDS ultrasound 超声波 • specific acoustic impedance 声阻抗 • transducer 换能器 • intensity reflection coe
• piezo-electric 压电

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **ultrasound** in medicine.

You must be able to:

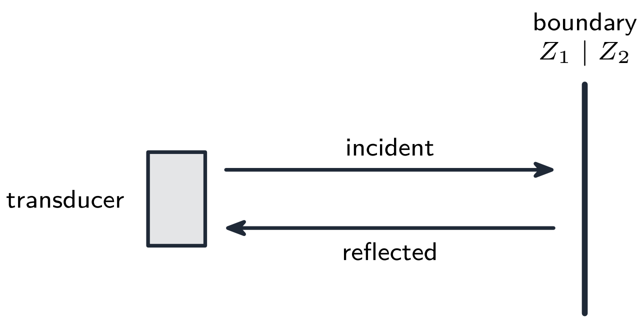
- explain the **piezo-electric** transducer (send and detect)
- use **acoustic impedance** $Z = \rho c$ and the **reflection coefficient**
- use the attenuation $I = I_0 e^{-\mu x}$

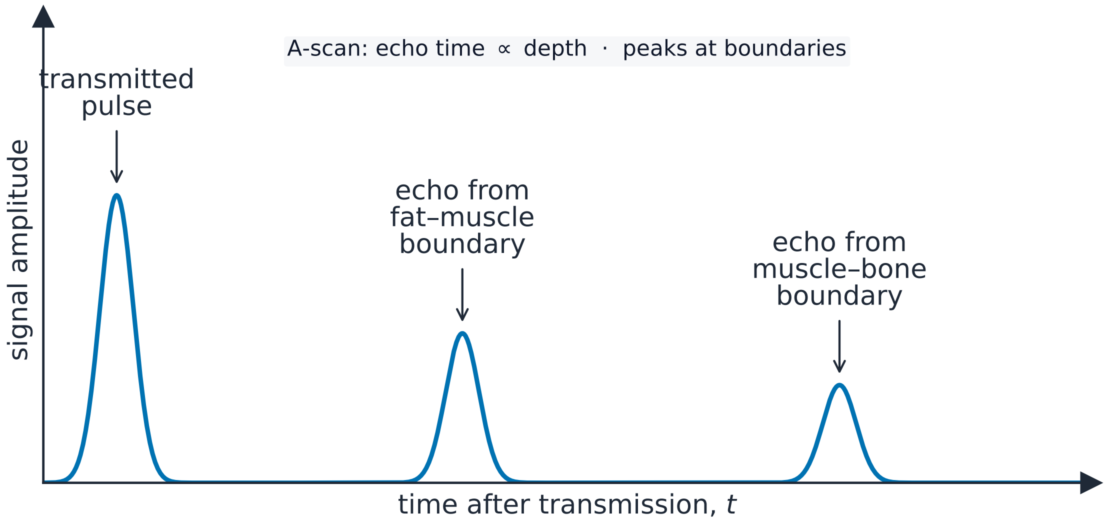
1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a question type used later — follow the steps and you can do the Practice and Exam-style questions yourself.

■ Transducer and pulse-echo

A **piezo-electric** crystal changes shape when a p.d. is applied (to **emit** ultrasound) and produces an e.m.f. when squeezed (to **detect** it) — so one transducer both sends and receives. A pulse partly **reflects** at a boundary between tissues:





An ultrasound A-scan trace

$$Z = \rho c, \qquad \frac{I_R}{I_0} = \frac{(Z_1 - Z_2)^2}{(Z_1 + Z_2)^2}, \qquad I = I_0 e^{-\mu x}.$$

A large impedance **mismatch** reflects strongly — which is why a **coupling gel** removes the air gap (air's Z is very different).

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 Describe the **piezo-electric effect**. [2]

2.2 Define the **specific acoustic impedance** of a medium. [1]

2.3 Explain how **one** transducer can both send and detect ultrasound. [2]

2.4 Write the equation for the **attenuation** of ultrasound. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 For a **strong** reflection at a tissue boundary, the two acoustic impedances must be: [1]

- **A** equal
- **B** very different
- **C** both zero
- **D** both very large

3.2 Calculate the intensity reflection coefficient for a boundary where $Z_1 = 1.6 \times 10^6$ and $Z_2 = 1.7 \times 10^6$ (SI units). [3]

3.3 Explain why a **coupling gel** is used between the transducer and the skin. [2]

3.4 Ultrasound of intensity I_0 passes through 5.0 cm of tissue with $\mu = 23\ \mathrm{m}^{-1}$. Calculate I/I_0. [2]

3.5 An ultrasound scanner sends a pulse into a patient. The specific acoustic impedance of soft tissue is $1.63 \times 10^6\ \mathrm{kg\,m^{-2}\,s^{-1}}$, of bone $6.40 \times 10^6\ \mathrm{kg\,m^{-2}\,s^{-1}}$ and of air $4.29 \times 10^2\ \mathrm{kg\,m^{-2}\,s^{-1}}$.

(a) **Define specific acoustic impedance**. [1]

(b) **Explain** how a piezoelectric crystal **detects** the reflected ultrasound. [2]

(c) **Determine** the intensity reflection coefficient at a soft tissue-bone boundary. [3]

(d) **Determine** the intensity reflection coefficient at a soft tissue-air boundary, and **explain** why a gel is smeared on the skin before a scan. [3]

(e) The pulse returns from a boundary 9.6 cm deep after 1.2×10^{-4} s. **Determine** the speed of ultrasound in the tissue. [2]

Solutions

2.1 Applying a p.d. across the crystal makes it **change shape**; changing its shape makes it produce an **e.m.f.**.

2.2 $Z = \rho c$, the product of the medium's density and the speed of sound in it.

2.3 An alternating p.d. makes the crystal **vibrate**, emitting ultrasound; a returning pulse makes it vibrate and produce an **e.m.f.**, which is detected.

2.4 $I = I_0 e^{-\mu x}$.

3.1 **B** — very different.

3.2 $\dfrac{I_\mathrm{R}}{I_0} = \dfrac{(1.6-1.7)^2}{(1.6+1.7)^2} = \dfrac{(0.1)^2}{(3.3)^2} = 9.2 \times 10^{-4}$.

3.3 Without gel there is an **air gap**, whose acoustic impedance is very different from skin, so almost all the ultrasound would be reflected; the gel removes the air gap so the ultrasound enters the body.

3.4 $I/I_0 = e^{-\mu x} = e^{-(23)(0.050)} = e^{-1.15} = 0.32$.

3.5 (a) The product of the **density** of the medium and the **speed of sound** in it, $Z = \rho c$.
(b) The reflected wave's pressure variation makes the crystal **change shape**, and a piezoelectric crystal produces a **potential difference** across its faces when it is deformed, giving an electrical signal that varies with the received wave.
(c) $\dfrac{I_\mathrm{R}}{I_0} = \dfrac{(Z_2-Z_1)^2}{(Z_2+Z_1)^2} = \dfrac{(6.40-1.63)^2}{(6.40+1.63)^2} = \dfrac{22.8}{64.5} = 0.35$.
(d) With air, $\dfrac{(1.63\times10^6-429)^2}{(1.63\times10^6+429)^2} \approx 0.999$ — essentially **all** the ultrasound is reflected at a skin-air boundary. Gel excludes the air layer and has an impedance close to that of skin, so the pulse actually enters the body.
(e) The pulse travels **there and back**, a distance of $2\times0.096 = 0.192$ m; $c = \dfrac{0.192}{1.2\times10^{-4}} = 1.6\times10^3$ m s^{-1}.