

A-Core Container

Inverter output DC



Overview

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When science teachers explain the basic idea of electricity to us as a flow of electrons, they're usually talking about direct current (DC). We learn that the electrons work a bit like a line of ants, marching along with packets of electrical energy in the same way that ants carry leaves. That's a good enough analogy for something like a basic flashlight.

One of Tesla's legacies (and that of his business partner George Westinghouse, boss of the Westinghouse Electrical Company) is that most of the appliances we have in our homes are specifically designed to run from AC power. Appliances that need DC but have to take power from AC outlets need an extra piece of equipment called a rectifier, typically built.

We've just had a very basic overview of inverters—and now let's go over it again in a little bit more detail. Imagine you're a DC battery and someone taps you on the shoulder and asks you to produce AC instead. How would you do it?

If all the current you produce flows out in one direction, what about adding a simple switch to your output lead?

Switch in.

If you simply switch a DC current on and off, or flip it back and forth so its direction keeps reversing, what you end up with is very abrupt changes of current: all in one direction, all in the other direction, and back again. Draw a chart of the current (or voltage) against time and you'll get a square wave. Although electricity varying in that fashion.

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