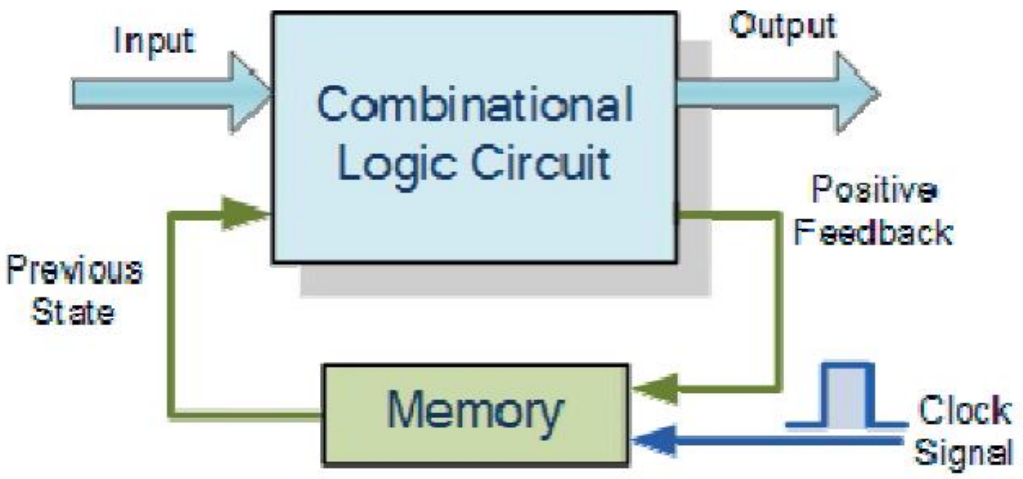
3.1 Sequential Logic Representation

The word “Sequential” means that things happen in a “sequence”, one after another and in Sequential Logic circuits, the actual clock signal determines when things will happen next. Simple sequential logic circuits can be constructed from standard Bistable circuits such as: Flipflops, Latches and Counters and which themselves can be made by simply connecting together universal NAND Gates and/or NOR Gates in a particular combinational way to produce the required sequential circuit.



Microprocessors

3.1.2 Classification of Sequential Logic

As standard logic gates are the building blocks of combinational circuits, bistable latches and flipflops are the basic building blocks of sequential logic circuits. Sequential logic circuits can be constructed to produce either simple edge-triggered flip-flops or more complex sequential circuits such as storage registers, shift registers, memory devices or counters. Either way sequential logic circuits can be divided into the following three main categories:

1. Event Driven – asynchronous circuits that change state immediately when enabled.

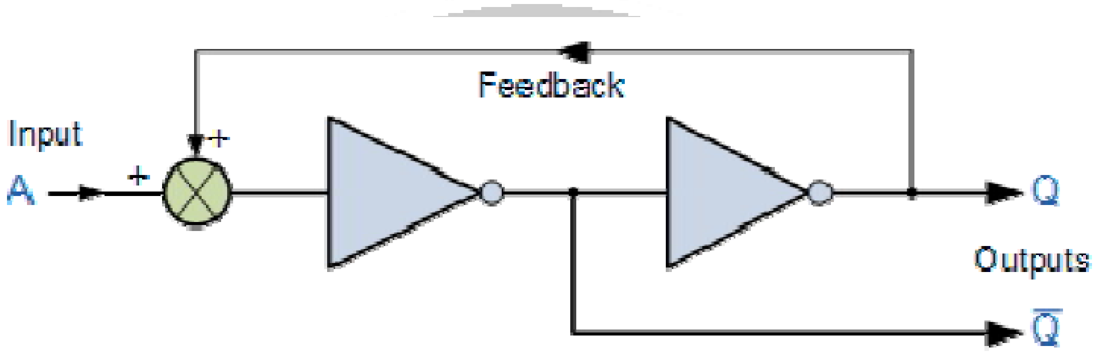
2. Clock Driven – synchronous circuits that are synchronised to a specific clock signal.

3. Pulse Driven – which is a combination of the two that responds to triggering pulses.

As well as the two logic states mentioned above logic level “1” and logic level “0”, a third element is introduced that separates sequential logic circuits from their combinational logic counterparts, namely TIME. Sequential logic circuits return back to their original steady state once reset and sequential circuits with loops or feedback paths are said to be “cyclic” in nature.

We now know that in sequential circuits changes occur only on the application of a clock signal making it synchronous, otherwise the circuit is asynchronous and depends upon an external input. To retain their current state, sequential circuits rely on feedback and this occurs when a fraction of the output is fed back to the input and this is demonstrated as:

Sequential Feedback Loop



The two inverters or NOT gates are connected in series with the output at Q fed back to the input. Unfortunately, this configuration never changes state because the output will always be the same, either a “1” or a “0”, it is permanently set. However, we can see how feedback works by examining the most basic sequential logic components, called the SR flip-flop.

SR Flip-Flop

The **SR flip-flop**, also known as a *SR Latch*, can be considered as one of the most basic sequential logic circuit possible. This simple flip-flop is basically a one-bit memory bistable device that has two inputs, one which will “SET” the device (meaning the output = “1”), and is labelled **S** and one which will “RESET” the device (meaning the output = “0”), labelled **R**. Then the SR description stands for “Set-Reset”.

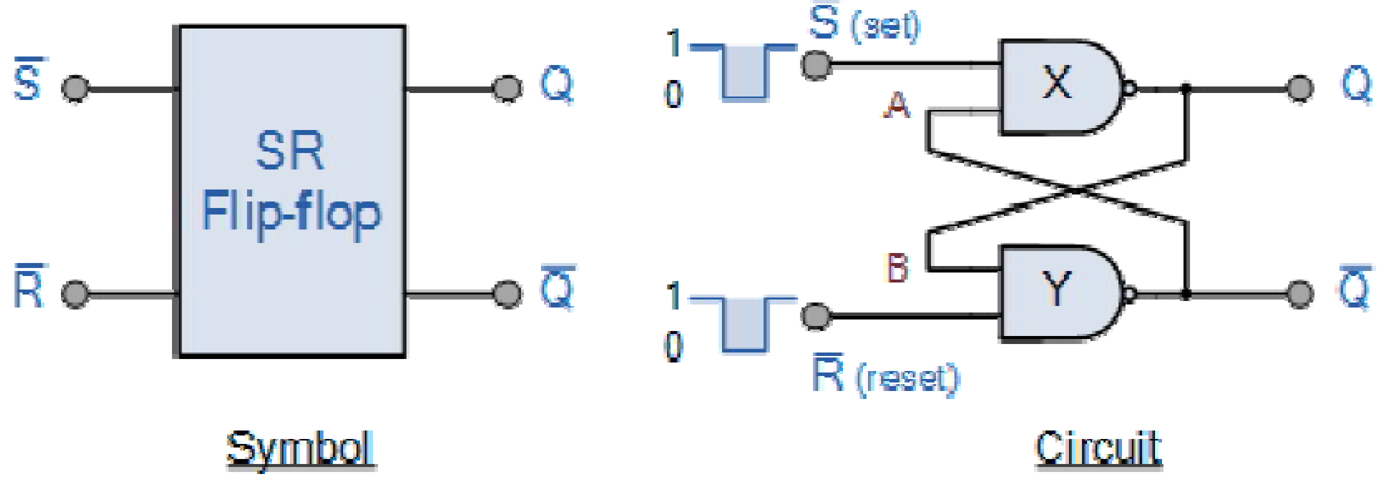
The reset input resets the flip-flop back to its original state with an output Q that will be either at a logic level “1” or logic “0” depending upon this set/reset condition. A basic NAND gate SR flip-flop circuit provides feedback from both of its outputs back to its opposing inputs and is commonly used in memory circuits to store a single data bit. Then the SR flip-flop actually has three inputs, Set, Reset and its current output Q relating to it’s current state or history.

The term “Flip-flop” relates to the actual operation of the device, as it can be “flipped” into one logic Set state or “flopped” back into the opposing logic Reset state.

The NAND Gate SR Flip-Flop

The simplest way to make any basic single bit set-reset SR flip-flop is to connect together a pair of cross-coupled 2-input NAND gates as shown, to form a Set-Reset Bistable also known as an active LOW SR NAND Gate Latch, so that there is feedback from each output to one of the other NAND gate inputs. This device consists of two inputs, one called the *Set*, S and the other called the *Reset*, R with two corresponding outputs Q and its inverse or complement Q (not-Q) as shown below.

The Basic SR Flip-flop



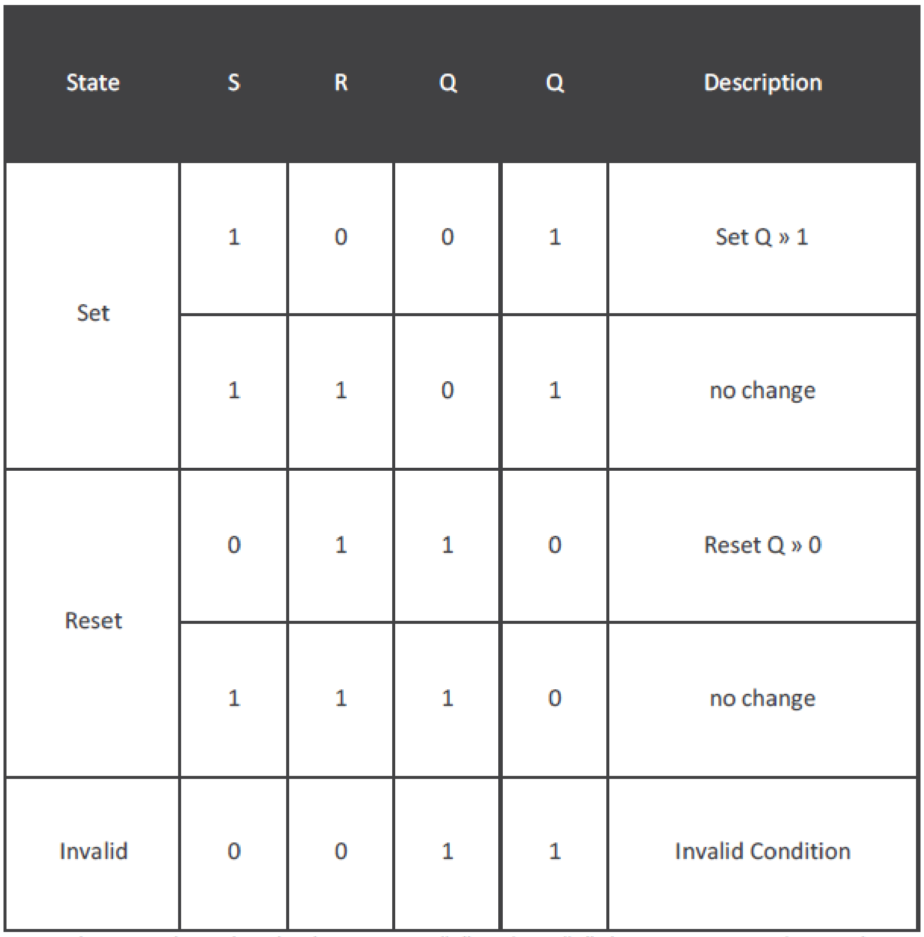
The Set State

Consider the circuit shown above. If the input R is at logic level “0” (R = 0) and input S is at logic level “1” (S = 1), the NAND gate Y has at least one of its inputs at logic “0” therefore, its output Q must be at a logic level “1” (NAND Gate principles). Output Q is also fed back to input “A” and so both inputs to NAND gate X are at logic level “1”, and therefore its output Q must be at logic level “0”. Again NAND gate principals. If the reset input R changes state, and goes HIGH to logic “1” with S remaining HIGH also at logic level “1”, NAND gate Y inputs are now R = “1” and B = “0”.

Since one of its inputs is still at logic level “0” the output at Q still remains HIGH at logic level “1” and there is no change of state. Therefore, the flip-flop circuit is said to be “Latched” or “Set” with Q = “1” and Q = “0”.

Reset State

In this second stable state, Q is at logic level “0”, (not Q = “0”) its inverse output at Q is at logic level “1”, (Q = “1”), and is given by R = “1” and S = “0”. As gate X has one of its inputs at logic “0” its output Q must equal logic level “1” (again NAND gate principles). Output Q is fed back to input “B”, so both inputs to NAND gate Y are at logic “1”, therefore, Q = “0”. If the set input, S now changes state to logic “1” with input R remaining at logic “1”, output Q still remains LOW at logic level “0” and there is no change of state. Therefore, the flip-flop circuits “Reset” state has also been latched and we can define this “set/reset” action in the following truth table.



State	S	R	Q	Q	Description
Set	1	0	0	1	Set Q » 1
	1	1	0	1	no change
Reset	0	1	1	0	Reset Q » 0
	1	1	1	0	no change
Invalid	0	0	1	1	Invalid Condition

It can be seen that when both inputs S = “1” and R = “1” the outputs Q and Q can be at either logic level “1” or “0”, depending upon the state of the inputs S or R BEFORE this input condition existed. Therefore the condition of S = R = “1” does not change the state of the outputs Q and Q. However, the input state of S = “0” and R = “0” is an undesirable or invalid condition and must be avoided. The condition of S = R = “0” causes both outputs Q and Q to be HIGH together at logic level “1” when we would normally want Q to be the inverse of Q. The result is that the flip-flop looses control of Q and Q, and if the two inputs are now switched “HIGH” again after this condition to logic “1”, the flip-flop becomes unstable and switches to an unknown data state based upon the unbalance as shown in the following switching diagram.