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What Does My Oscilloscope Kit Do? by [Ewan Fisher](#)

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Seasoned electronics hobbyists and professionals will already know what an oscilloscope is for. Others may be wondering what their Oscilloscope kit is designed to do.

The oscilloscope has many names and a single function, which is to detect signal voltages where they are in constant variation (hence the name "oscilloscope", which refers to the oscillation of the voltage signal). In very general terms, the scope created by your Oscilloscope kit is used to test that there is a current going through the test object " and to find out the average rating of that current.

In technical terms, the oscilloscope is used to describe the shape of the wave made by the current being examined. They show the oscillating values of the voltage or power source being examined on a screen, normally as an undulating wave with peaks and troughs. You will be familiar with the screen from movies and hospitals (technically speaking your Oscilloscope kit could be used to visibly display the rhythm of a patient's heartbeat, as it is on an electrocardiogram).

For the oscilloscope to work, it needs to be attached to a test probe. The probe is inserted into the object to be tested " or in the case of something like an electrocardiogram, it is placed on the test object, where it uses some kind of contact to pick up the required signal.

Your Oscilloscope kit will create a device that is often used as a diagnostic tool. While any voltmeter can show the existence and current value of an electrical current, it is unlikely to be more helpful in pinning down the cause of a malfunction or unexpected voltage rating. An oscilloscope on the other hand is able to visually display the cycle of the current being measured " which can help determine why something is malfunctioning.

You can use the end product of your Oscilloscope kit to describe the exact timing or shape of a pulse, which may be important in diagnoses (as above) or in helping you to create other electronic gadgets " in this case the oscilloscope is used during the design and build phase to make sure that you have controlled or created a current in the correct way.

Your Oscilloscope kit is likely to create a digital oscilloscope. The digital version of the scope is most commonly used in normal industrial troubleshooting and monitoring applications. It converts the sampled pulses into binary through an analogue to digital converter. While a large scale digital oscilloscope is expensive and unwieldy, your Oscilloscope kit will likely produce a pocket sized, affordable scope with a more limited set of functions.

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[Ewan Fisher](#) - About Author:

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