

Fig. 1

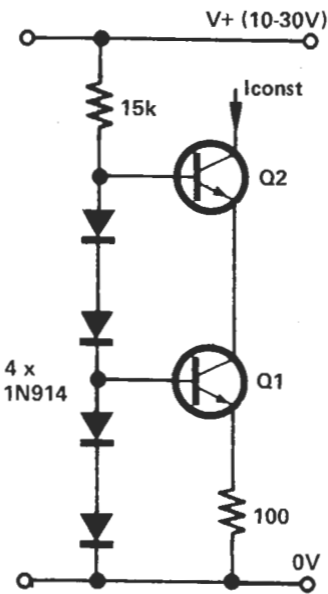


Fig. 2

DRIFT FREE CURRENT SOURCE

The conventional type of constant-current source, as shown in Fig.1, will drift in output current immediately after switch-on. This is because of the voltage drop across Q1, causing a significant amount of power to be dissipated in the transistor, heating it and its Vbe. Hence the output current slowly increases after switch-on, typically reaching a stable value about two minutes later. In tests the current increased by about 4% for a small signal transistor dissipating 100mW.

This effect is greatly reduced by the configuration shown in Fig.2, which fixes the voltage across Q1 at a very low level by virtue of the common-base transistor Q2. The main voltage drop occurs across Q2, leaving about 600mV across Q1, this being set up by the two extra diodes in the bias chain, (D1, D2) which fix the emitter potential of Q2.