Lecture 6
H Saibil

Contrast transfer and CTF correction

The weak phase approximation
Contrast transfer function
Determining defocus
CTF correction methods

Image processing for cryo microscopy

1 - 11 September 2015

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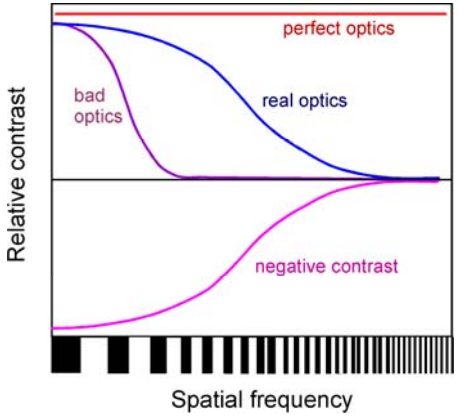
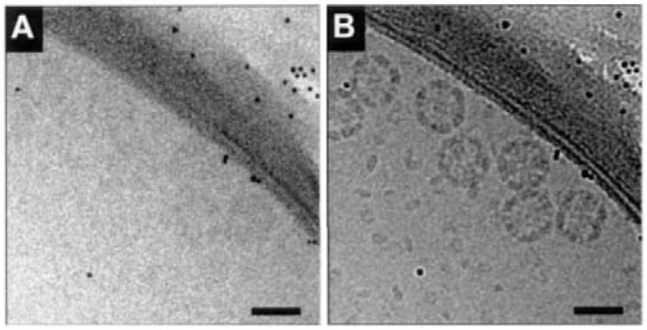
Practical Course
Birkbeck College London

Contrast transfer



perfect optics | normal optics | bad optics | negative contrast

Why do we need to bother with defocus?



2 μm 7 μm

Tricorn protease, Walz, J et al (1997) Mol Cell 1, 59-65

The weak phase approximation

Review of Lecture 3:

EM image = projected electron scattering density of object modified by the CTF

If the object is thin and weakly scattering (ie made of light atoms), a simplified form of the CTF function can be derived.

The phase shift $\Phi(\mathbf{r})$ from a **weak phase object** is small, and the wave expression $\psi \exp[i\Phi(\mathbf{r})]$ can be approximated by the series

$$\psi\,[1 + i\Phi(\mathbf{r}) - \tfrac{1}{2}\,\Phi(\mathbf{r})^2 + 1/3\,\Phi(\mathbf{r})^3 - \ldots]$$

Because the phase shift is small, the 3rd order and higher terms can be ignored.

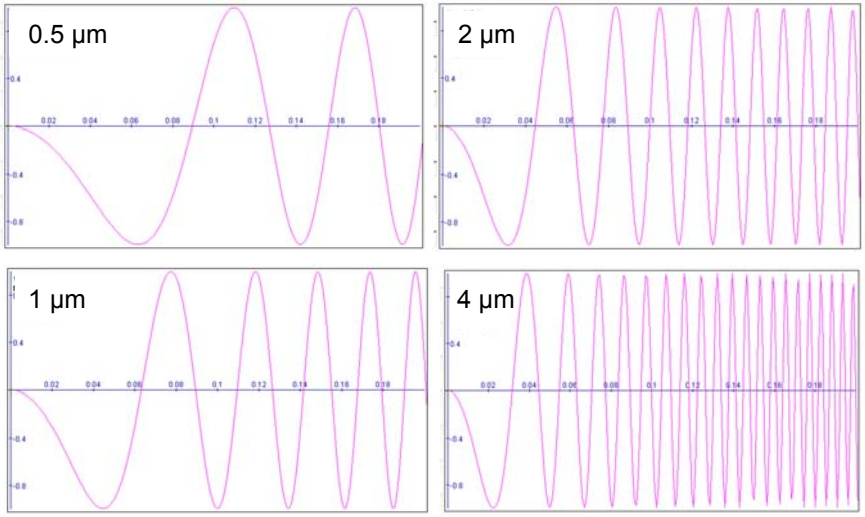
This approximation, combined with the phase shift introduction by **spherical aberration**, leads to the expression for the *phase contrast transfer function*, given on the next slide.

Phase CTF formula from the weak phase approximation

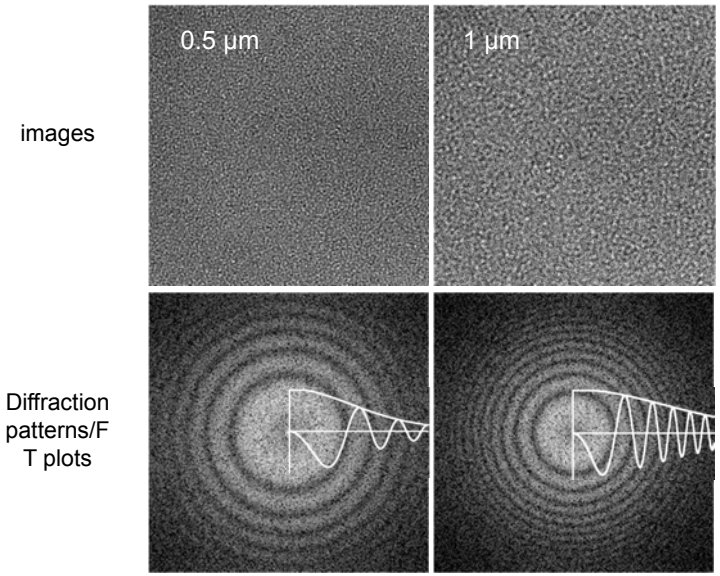
$$\text{Phase CTF} = -2 \sin\left[\pi\left(\Delta z \lambda q^2 - C_s \lambda^3 q^4/2\right)\right]$$

C_s – spherical aberration coefficient
ΔZ – defocus
q – spatial frequency
λ – electron wavelength

Ideal CTF curves

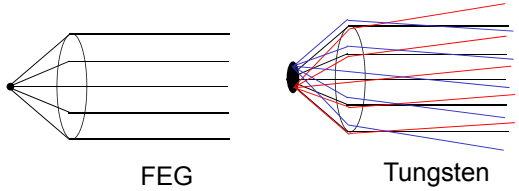


FEG images of carbon film



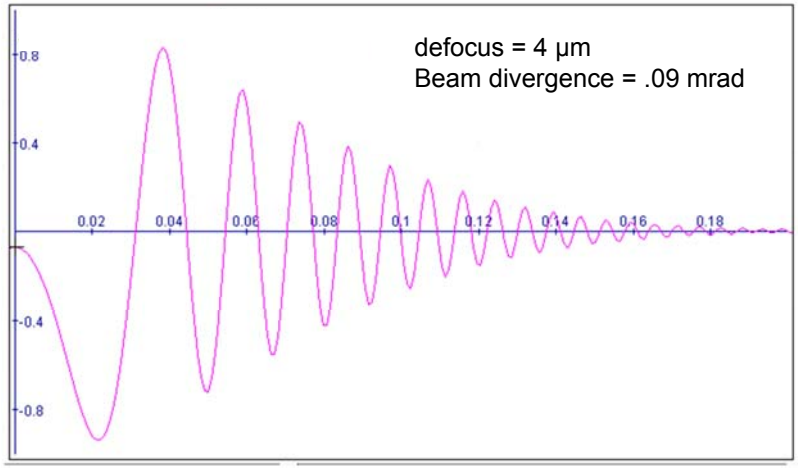
Causes of CTF decay

- Loss of spatial coherence - source size

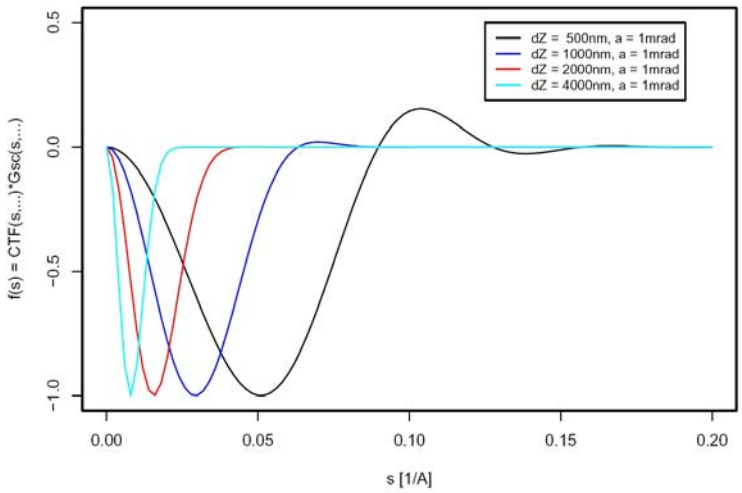


- Image drift
- Thick ice
- Specimen charging
- Chromatic aberration - variation in voltage
- Variation of lens current

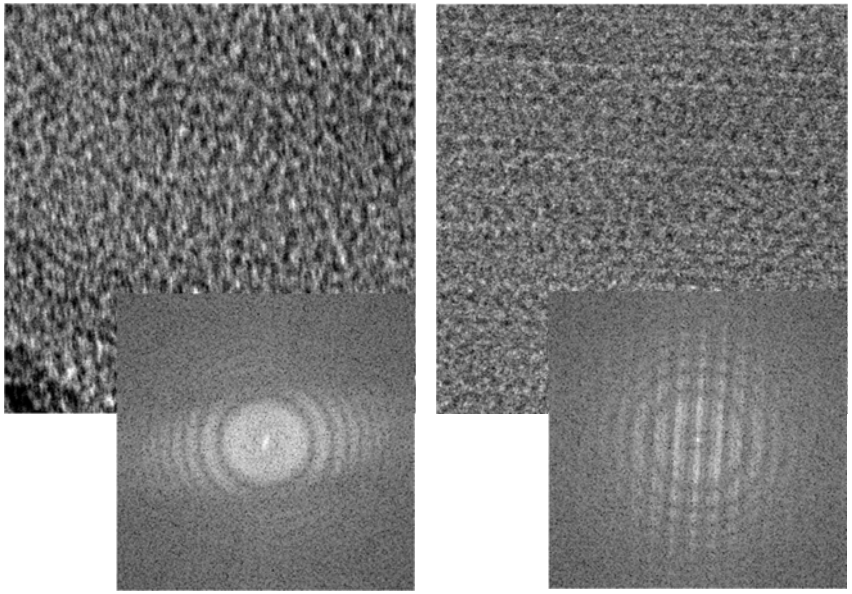
Decay caused by loss of spatial coherence



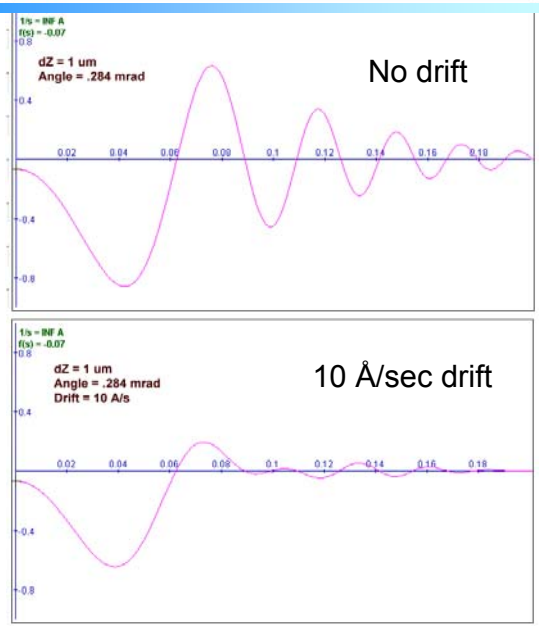
defocus = 0.5 - 4 µm
Beam divergence = 1 mrad



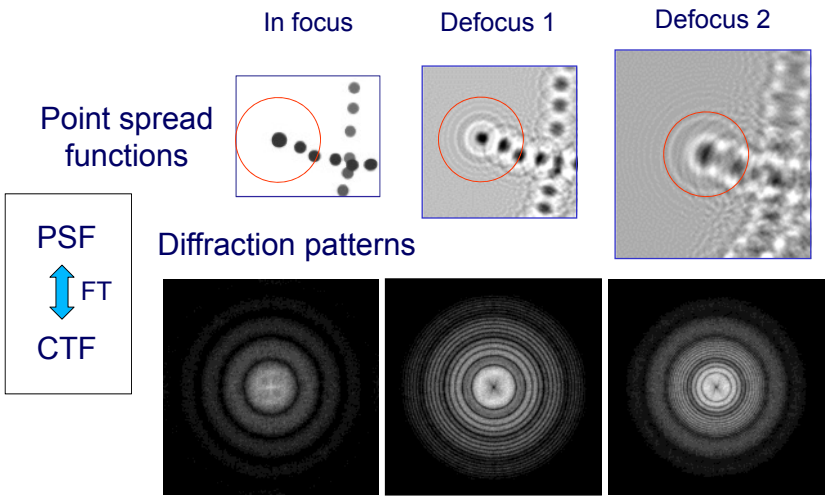
Drift and jumping



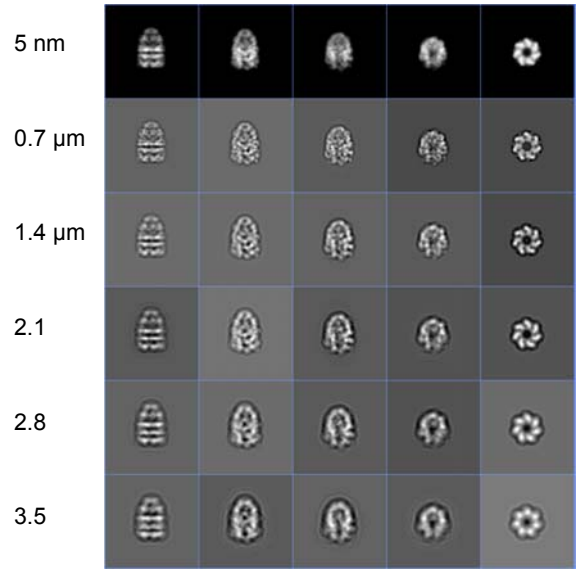
Effect of drift on the CTF



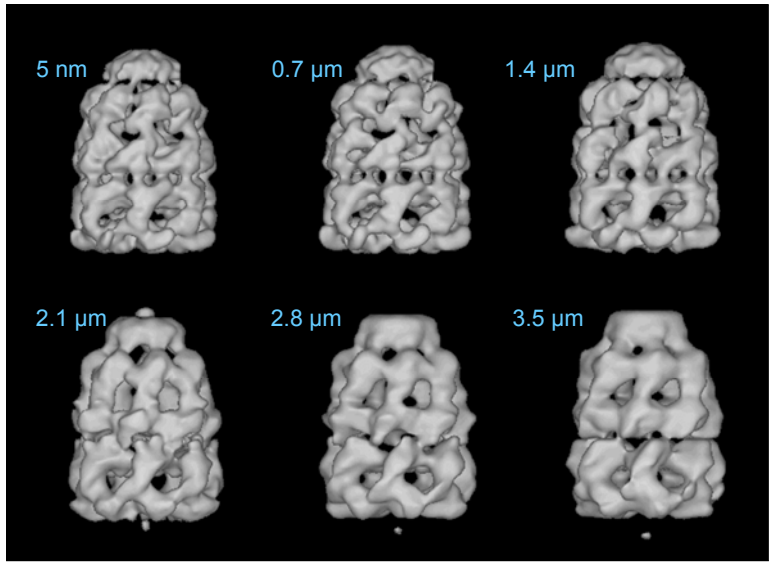
The CTF is the FT of the Point Spread Function



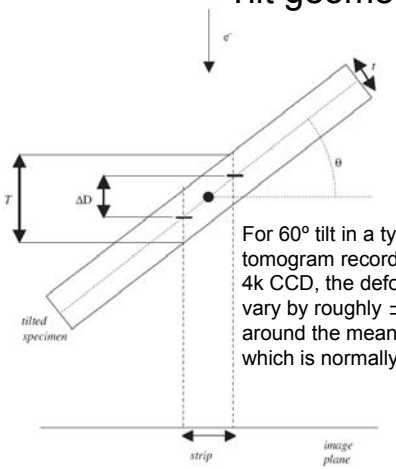
Effects of CTF on 2D projections



Effects of CTF on a 3D map



Tilt geometry and defocus



For 60º tilt in a typical tomogram recorded on a 4k CCD, the defocus will vary by roughly ±1 µm around the mean value, which is normally 4-15 µm.

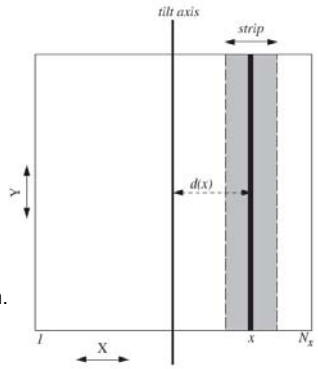


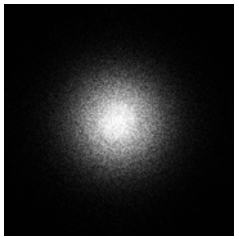
Fig. 1. Computation of a strip in an image of a tilted specimen. ΔD represents the defocus range considered as a single defocus value, T denotes the defocus range in the strip, t is the thickness of the specimen and θ is the tilt angle. The tilt axis runs perpendicular to the sheet and is marked by the black circle in the middle of the specimen slab.

Fig. 4. Extraction of a strip with a single effective defocus value from a tilted specimen. The square represents an image acquired from the tilted specimen. The tilt axis runs along the Y-axis. x denotes the index of the x-line around which the strip is extracted. $d(x)$ represents the distance from the x-line to the tilt axis.

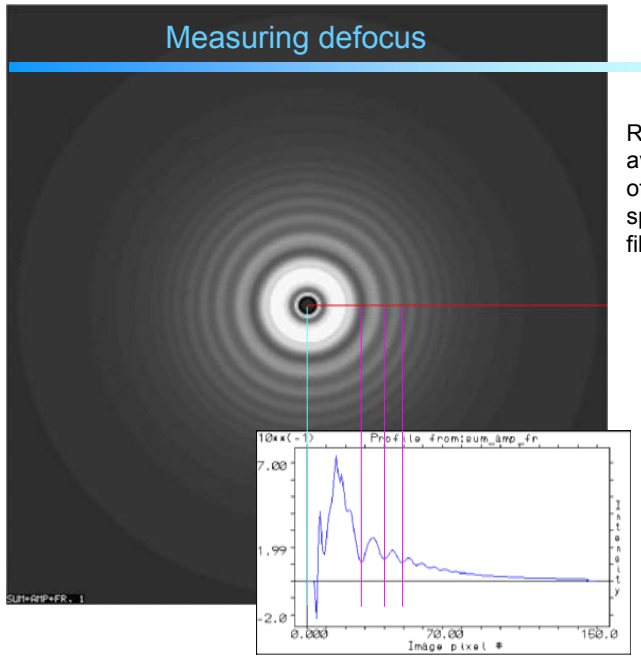
from Fernandez, Li & Crowther (2006) CTF determination and correction in electron cryotomography. Ultramicrosc. 106, 587-596. Strip CTF correction is implemented in IMOD

Why don't I see Thon rings???

- Ice too thick
- No carbon in image
- Too little specimen – vitreous ice alone does not give Thon rings! (and too thin ice excludes sample)
- Too close to focus on a non-FEG source



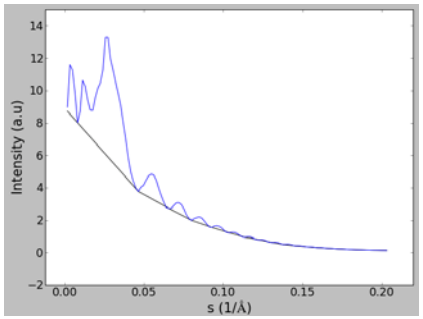
Measuring defocus

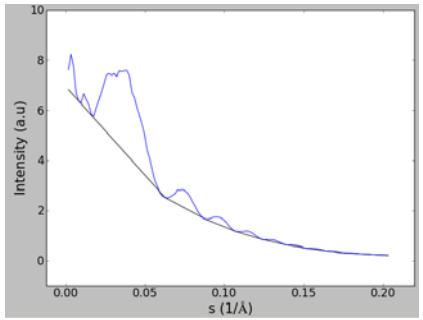


Rotationally averaged total sum of image power spectra; band-pass filtered

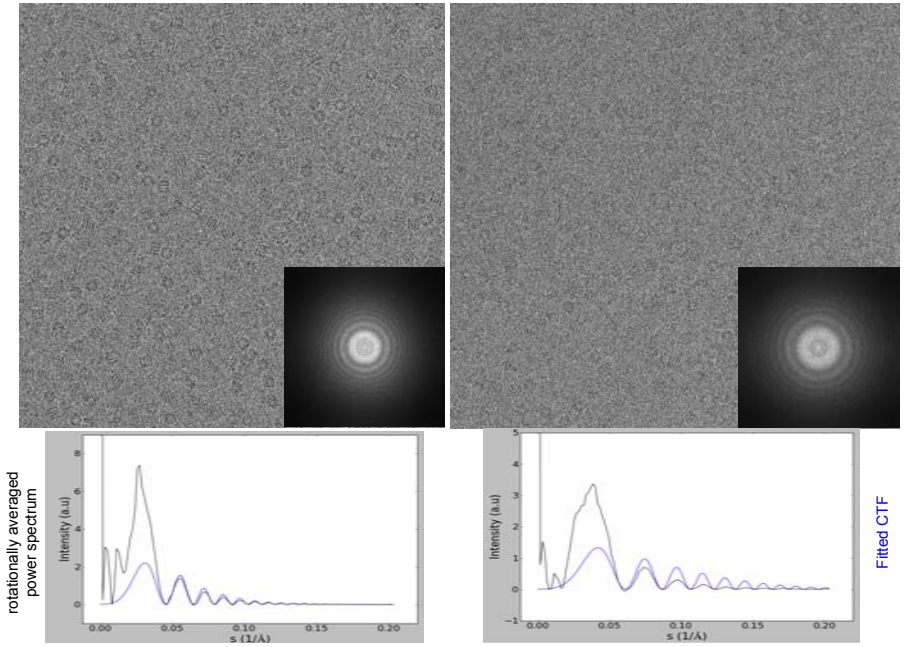
Profile of the averaged spectrum

CTF ripples are superposed on a large background of incoherent scattering, noise and other features

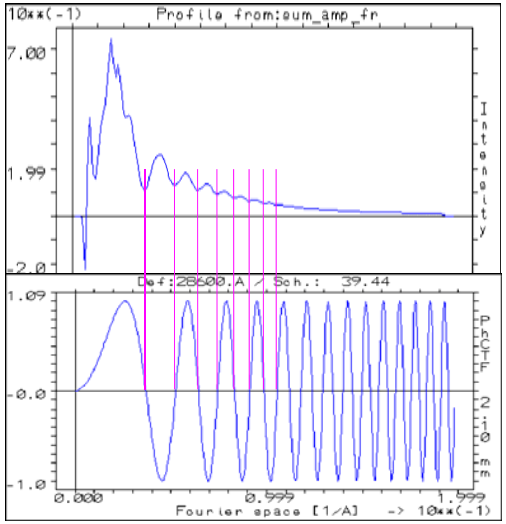




Background fitting and subtraction give a more accurate view of the CTF ripples



Comparison of the line profile of the rotationally averaged spectrum with the calculated contrast transfer function of the microscope



Acceleration VOLTAGE	:	200 kV
CHROMATIC aberration	:	None
SPHERICAL aberration	:	2.1 mm
FOCAL length of objective	:	1.6 mm
APERTURE	:	50.0 micrometer
DEFOCUS values	:	28600.00 A
PIXEL size in curve	:	2.52 A

Procedures for measuring defocus

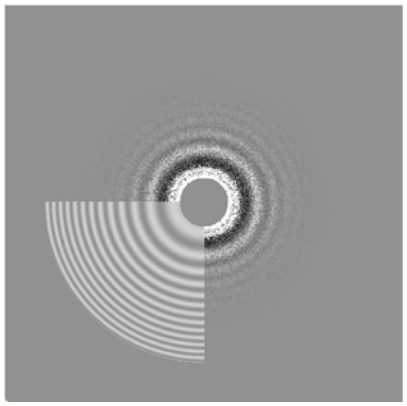
SPIDER/WEB - graphical interface for overlaying experimental and theoretical curves
http://spider.wadsworth.org/spider_doc/spider/docs/spider.html

EMAN2 - evalimage graphical interface
http://blake.bcm.edu/emanwiki/EMAN2/Programs/e2evalimage

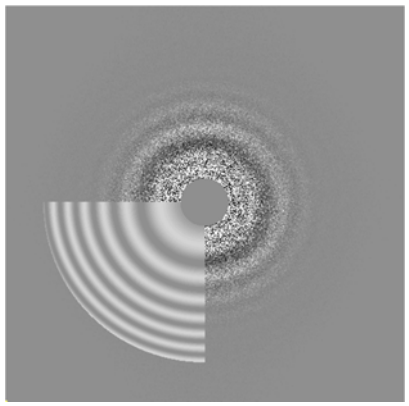
CTFFIND4 – graphical/automated
Chops up areas into boxes
Uses estimate of starting defocus
Searches over a specified range of defocus
Estimates astigmatism
Gives split display output for verification of result
http://grigoriefflab.janelia.org/ctffind4

BSOFT graphical/automated
http://lsbr.niams.nih.gov/bsoft/

CTFFIND4 output

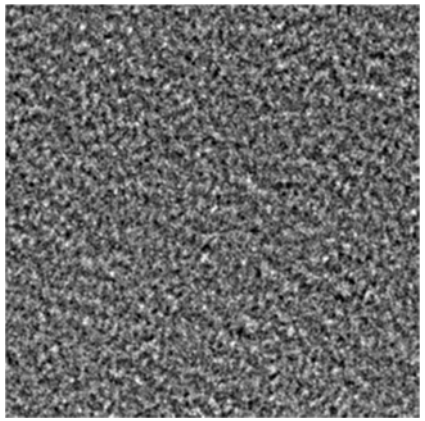


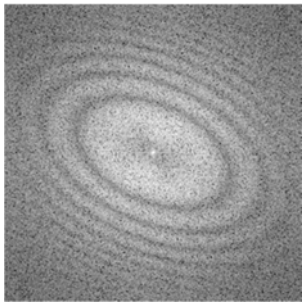
Defocus 2.405, 2.442 µm



Defocus 1.146, 1.219 µm

Astigmatism





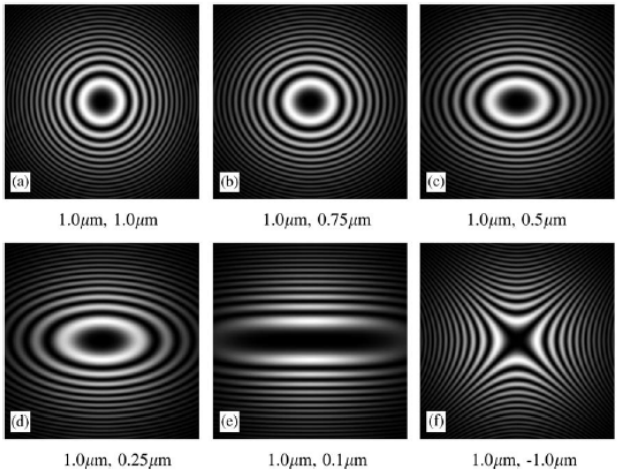
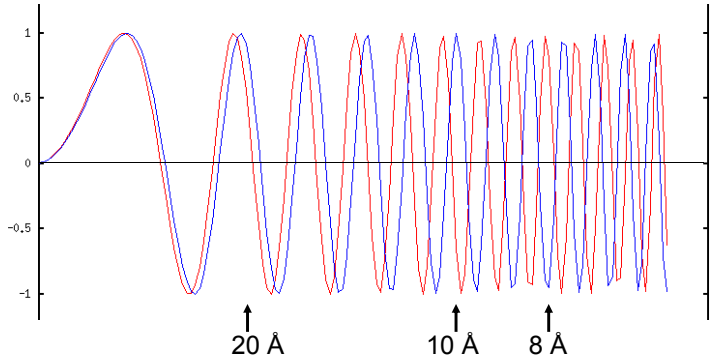
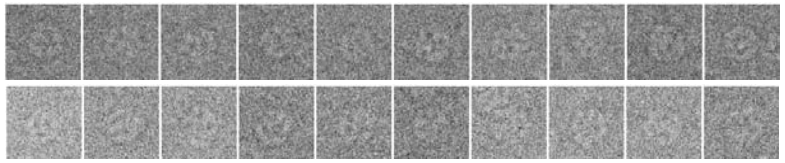


Fig. 1. Simulated power spectra with increasing astigmatism are shown. The caption shows the two defocus values corresponding to the power spectrum. The Thon rings can distort to an ellipse, a parabola or a hyperbola.

Astigmatic: defocus 1 = 4.41 μm, defocus 2 = 4.14 μm

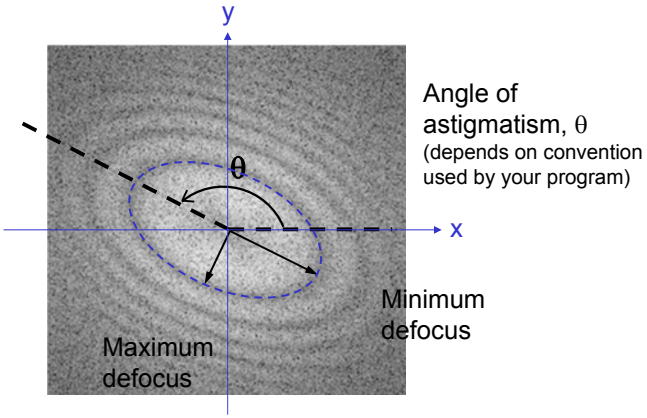


Astigmatic



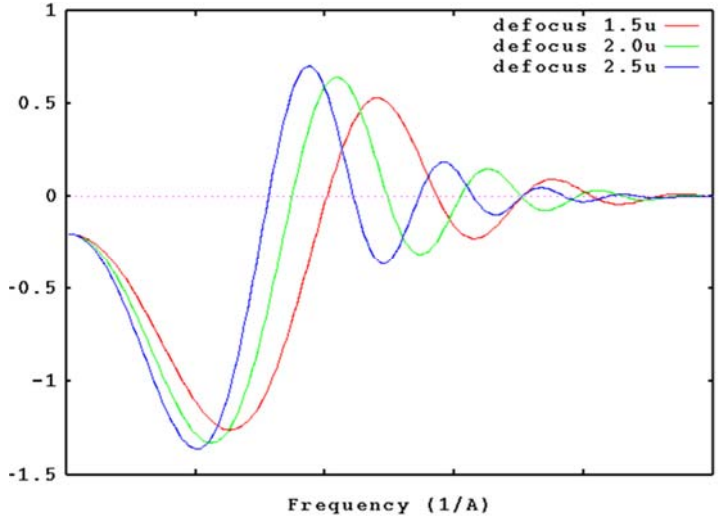
4 μm, no astigmatism

How to measure an astigmatic CTF

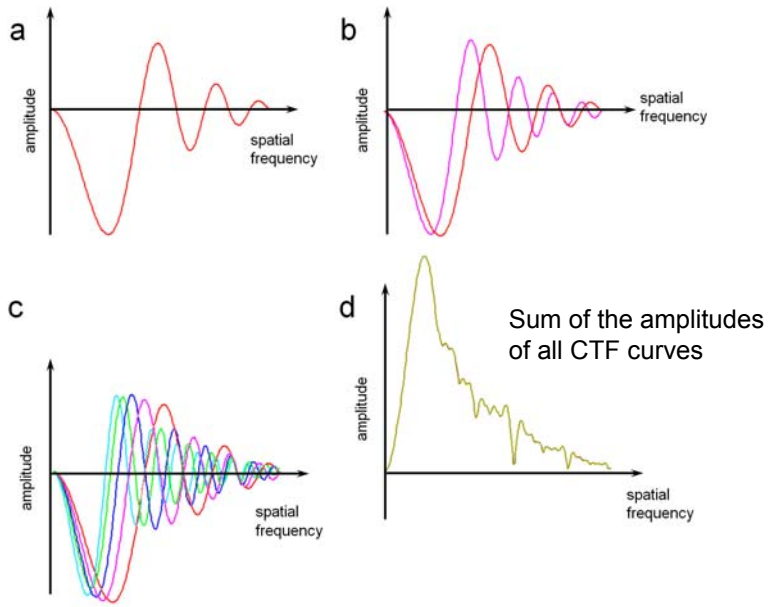


The ellipse must be fitted or measured in sectors to get the degree and angle of astigmatism so that the zeroes can be correctly determined for all directions.

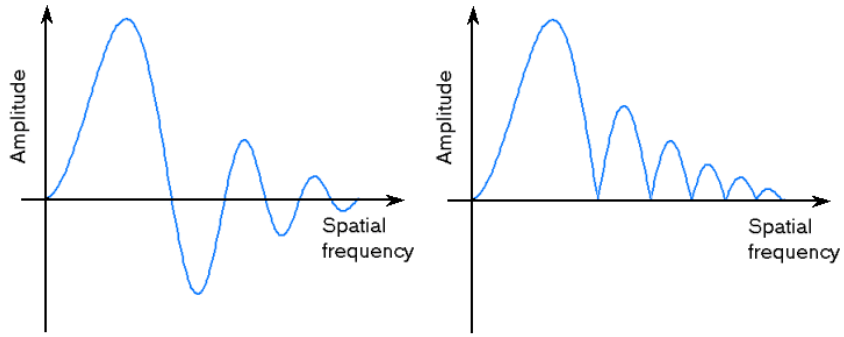
What range of defocus is needed?



CTF curves from different images in a dataset



Methods of CTF correction

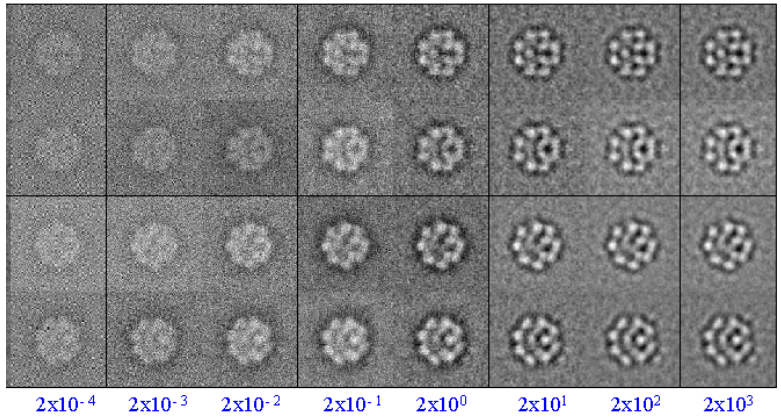


1. Phase flipping - can be done on raw images

2. Full restoration of amplitudes: Multiply each image FT by its own CTF, then add up all the equivalent views and divide the sum by the sum of all the CTF's squared, plus a constant related to the signal:noise ratio (Wiener factor) to avoid division by zero.

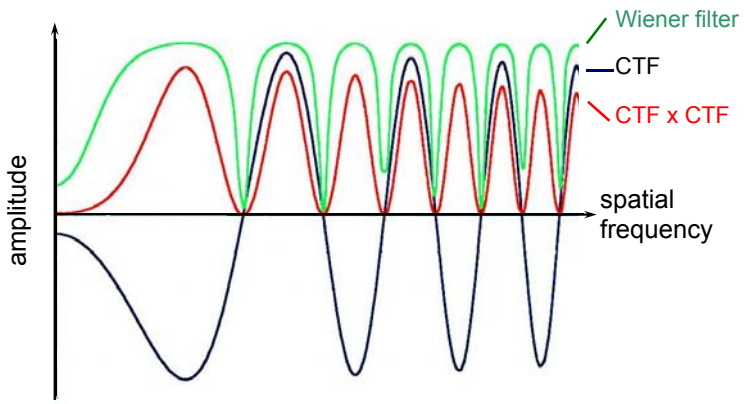
$$\text{FT\_Merged\_class} = \frac{\sum_{i=1,N} \text{FTclass}_i . \text{CTF}_i}{\sum_{i=1,N} (\text{CTF}_i^2) + w}$$

Effect of Wiener filtering



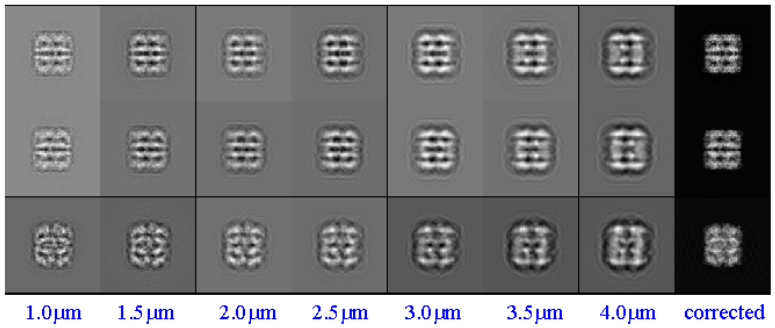
The larger the value of w, the more small fluctuations are suppressed - similar to low pass filtering

Steps in full amplitude restoration



This can only be done by combining images of different defocus

Merging images of different defocus – model data



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