

**High-Performance Analog Products**

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**Fourth Quarter, 2011**



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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>Data Acquisition</b>	
How delta-sigma ADCs work, Part 2 .....	5
<p>This article continues the exploration of the topology and functionality of delta-sigma ADCs that was begun in Part 1. The modulator described in Part 1 requires a digital/decimation filter to minimize high-frequency noise and reduce the output-data rate. Operation of this filter is discussed, including the conversion of the modulator's 1-bit data stream to 24-bit words and adjusting the decimation ratio by changing the master-clock and output-data-rate ratio.</p>	
<b>Power Management</b>	
Solar charging solution provides narrow-voltage DC/DC system bus for multicell-battery applications .....	8
<p>Systems powered directly by a solar panel typically do not allow the solar panel to operate at maximum efficiency. This article presents a solution that efficiently charges multicell batteries and provides system bus voltage by operating the solar panel at its maximum power point (MPP). This solution also intelligently connects and disconnects the battery from the system.</p>	
Solar lantern with dimming achieves 92% efficiency .....	12
<p>Solar lanterns with LEDs have become very popular, and switching regulators are typically used to efficiently drive LEDs from a variety of battery voltages. Analog and PWM dimming techniques provide an easy method of controlling light output and extending operating time between charges. This article presents two 2.8-W solar-lantern solutions, one configured with analog dimming and the other with PWM dimming. The linearity and efficiency of the two techniques are evaluated to determine how various operating conditions affect dimming performance.</p>	
<b>Interface (Data Transmission)</b>	
Extending the SPI bus for long-distance communication .....	16
<p>Communications between integrated circuits typically use a single-ended interface designed for short distances. As the distance increases, interface designs that work in the lab may fail on the factory floor because of added propagation delay and other problems prevalent in the harsh environment. This article describes typical problems and solutions related to clock synchronization, noise immunity, large ground-potential differences, unterminated data lines, and electrical transients.</p>	
<b>General Interest</b>	
Analog linearization of resistance temperature detectors .....	21
<p>Precision temperature measurements often use resistance temperature detectors (RTDs) because they are very stable and useful for temperatures ranging from cryogenic to over 800°C. RTDs have second-order nonlinearity of approximately 0.38% per 100°C measurement range. In applications where digital compensation is not available, an analog technique for RTD linearization can be used. This article describes this technique, which can also be used with bridge sensors and other ratiometric devices.</p>	
<b>Index of Articles</b> .....	25
<b>TI Worldwide Technical Support</b> .....	31

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# Introduction

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These applications are not intended as “how-to” instructions for specific circuits but as examples of how devices could be used to solve specific design requirements. Readers will find tutorial information as well as practical engineering solutions on components from the following categories:

- Data Acquisition
- Power Management
- Interface (Data Transmission)
- Amplifiers: Audio
- Amplifiers: Op Amps
- Low-Power RF
- General Interest

Where applicable, readers will also find software routines and program structures. Finally, *Analog Applications Journal* includes helpful hints and rules of thumb to guide readers in preparing for their design.

# How delta-sigma ADCs work, Part 2

By Bonnie Baker

Signal Integrity Engineer

A strong addition to the process-control design environment is the delta-sigma ( $\Delta\Sigma$ ) analog-to-digital converter (ADC). This device's claim to fame is its high 24-bit resolution, which provides  $2^{24}$  or about 16 million output codes. Granted, not all of the lower bits are noise-free, but it is not unusual for a  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADC to have 20 noise-free bits, or about 1 million noise-free output codes. This is at least four times better than the performance of 16-bit converters.

Figure 1 shows a block diagram of a  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADC. As explained in Part 1 of this article series (see Reference 1), the modulator of a  $\Delta\Sigma$  converter shapes the data in such a way as to allow high resolution by reducing low-frequency noise. Part 1 also pointed out that the undesirable characteristics of the modulator output are high-frequency noise and a high-speed, 1-bit output rate. Once the signal resides in the digital domain, a low-pass digital-filter function can be used to attenuate the high-frequency noise, and a

decimator-filter function can be used to slow down the output-data rate. This article, Part 2, will consider each function independently, although real-world designs intertwine them in the same silicon.

## The digital-filter function

The digital-filter function implements a low-pass filter by first sampling the modulator stream of the 1-bit code. Figure 2 shows a first-order, low-pass averaging filter. An averaging filter is the most common filter technique used in  $\Delta\Sigma$  converters. As can be seen, the digital filter in Figure 2 is a weighted averaging filter. Almost all  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADCs incorporate a class of averaging filters called sinc filters, named for their frequency response. Many  $\Delta\Sigma$  devices, especially audio devices, use other filters in conjunction with sinc filters as part of a process called two-stage decimation. Low-speed industrial  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADCs usually use only the sinc filter.

Figure 1. Block diagram of  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADC

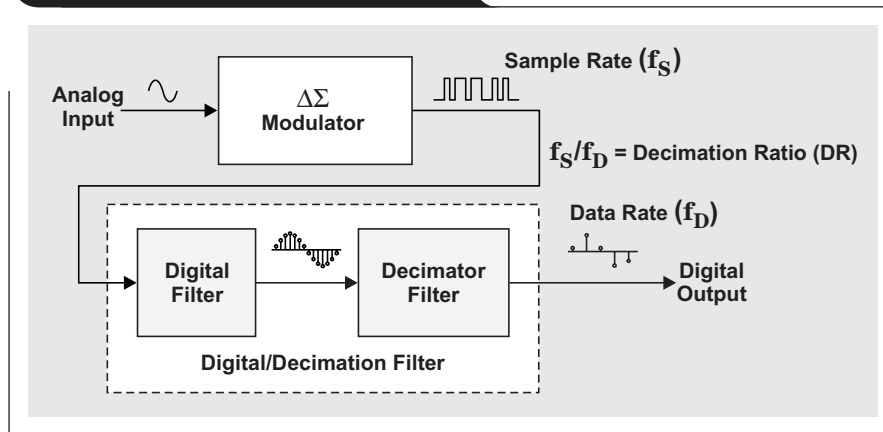
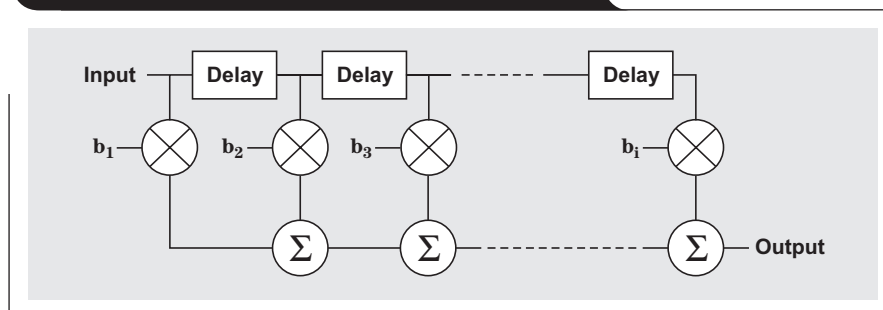


Figure 2. First-order, low-pass averaging filter



The output rate of a digital filter is the same as the sampling rate. Figure 3 shows a digital filter's outputs. In the time domain (Figure 3a), the digital filter is responsible for the high resolution of the  $\Delta\Sigma$  converter. Notice that the 24-bit code train resembles the original signal. However, in the frequency domain (Figure 3b), the digital filter applies only a low-pass filter to the signal. In so doing, it attenuates the modulator's quantization noise; but it also reduces the frequency bandwidth, as any good low-pass filter will. With the quantization noise reduced, the signal re-emerges in the time domain.

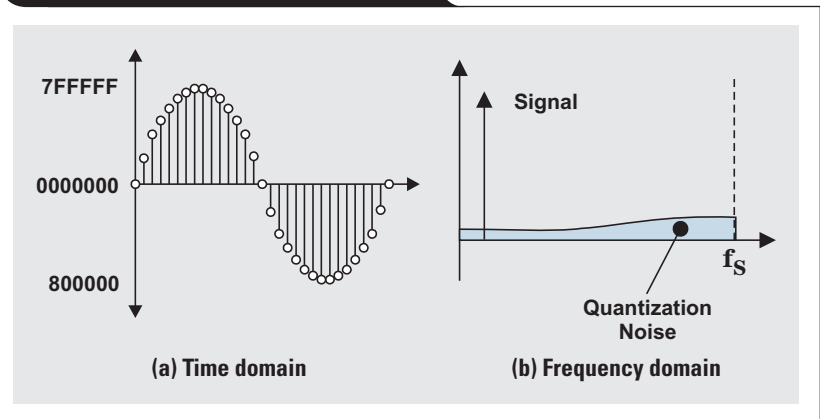
The signal is now a high-resolution, digital version of the input signal, but it is still too fast to be useful. The designer could have the converter deliver every one of the samples, but it would be pointless to do so because:

- This converter would require a very fast controller or processor.
- While it might appear that there is an abundance of high-quality samples at the high sampling rate of the modulator, most of them don't provide any useful information, since a low-pass filter has been applied. In other words, the extra samples are interpolations or intermediate results.

### The decimator-filter function

The second function of the digital/decimation filter is the decimator. The word "decimate" was originally used by the Roman army to mean the killing of every tenth man of a group that was guilty of mutiny. In the case of the digital/decimation filter, the "decimation" of the digital filter's samples is much more dramatic. In the decimation circuit, the digital signal's output rate is reduced by throwing away or "killing" portions of the output data. The way to do this is to discard some of the samples.

**Figure 3. Outputs of a digital filter**



This may seem a bit distressing. Previously, there was a beautiful sine wave that was well-defined with a large number of samples. Throwing away a large number of those samples leaves a skeleton of the original signal; but, remember, most of those samples are not "real." They can be thought of as the filter's work-in-process samples. In fact, according to the Nyquist theorem, the new "skeletal" version of the signal has exactly the same informational content as the previous waveform, but now it is at a manageable data rate. Decimating some of the samples has not caused any information to be lost.

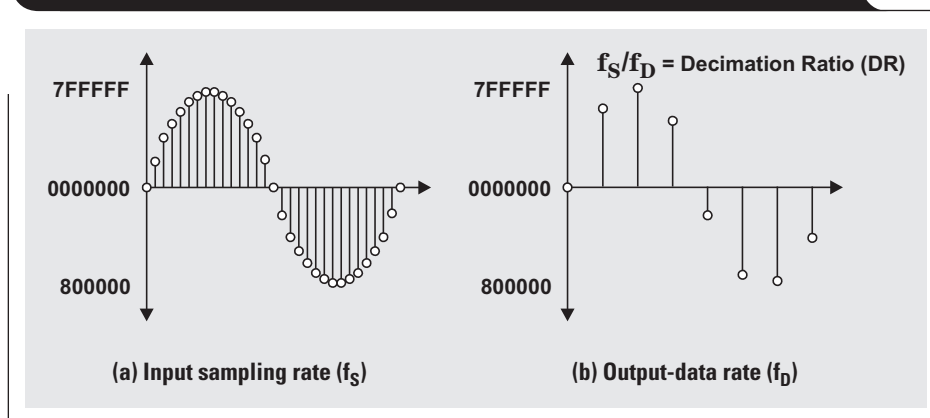
Figure 4 conceptually shows the decimation process. The digital filter's time-domain output in Figure 3a has been brought forward to Figure 4a. Figure 4b shows the decimator-filter function's output signal.

This completes the description of the digital-filter and decimator-filter functions in a  $\Delta\Sigma$  converter.

### Pulling the $\Delta\Sigma$ ADC together

Part 1 of this series showed the inner workings of the modulator in the time and frequency domains. It also showed how the modulator shaped noise into higher

**Figure 4. Digital/decimation filter's output from decimation process**



frequencies because of an oversampling system with negative feedback. As previously stated in the present article, the digital/decimation filter reduces high-frequency noise and passes the input signal to the output of the converter at a reduced data rate. The combination of these two components provides a high-resolution ADC.

The meaningful variables in this system are the modulator's sampling rate ( $f_s$ ) and the digital/decimation filter's output-data rate ( $f_D$ ). The ratio between these two variables is defined as the decimation ratio (DR). The decimation ratio is equal to the number of modulator samples per data output. Decimation ratio values range anywhere from 4 in the Texas Instruments (TI) ADS1605 ADC to a maximum of 32,768 for TI's ADS1256 ADC.

Consider the output spectrum of the  $\Delta\Sigma$  modulator in Figure 5. The modulator samples at a frequency of  $f_s$  and, in doing so, shapes the quantization noise into higher frequencies. Many  $\Delta\Sigma$  converters permit the designer to program the data rate directly by adjusting the decimation ratio. Suppose the data rate is chosen to be some fraction of  $f_s$ , as shown in Figure 5a. The frequencies from 0 to  $f_D$ , which constitute the output, are in the signal band. Note the noise level in the signal band.

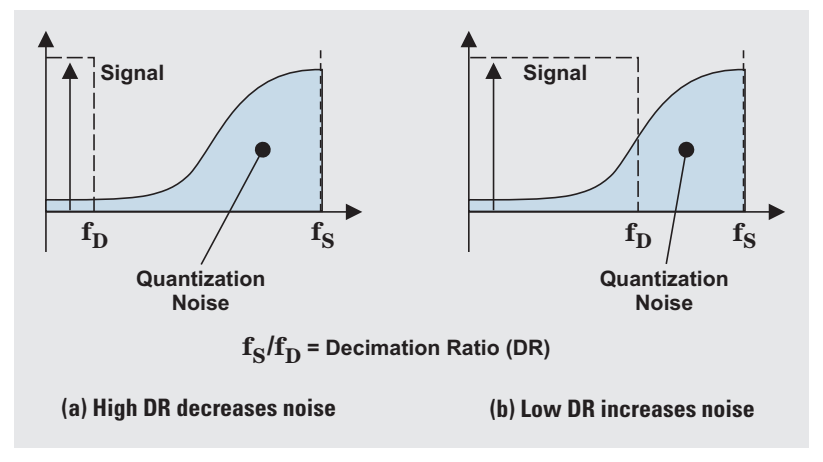
In Figure 5a, the effective number of bits (ENOB) is very high. Since the output-data rate ( $f_D$ ) is determined by the decimator-filter function, it depends on the decimation ratio (DR), where  $DR = f_s/f_D$ . Figure 5b shows that the value for  $f_D$ , which has moved to the right, is now higher. Unfortunately, there is also more noise. Most of the noise is in the higher frequencies, decreasing the signal-to-noise ratio and the ENOB.

There is a way to increase the sampling speed ( $f_s$ ) while keeping the ENOB the same, and that is to increase the master-clock rate. This will also increase  $f_D$  but will not decrease the decimation ratio. Unfortunately, increasing the master-clock rate will also increase power consumption. Additionally, most converters have a practical limit for  $f_s$  beyond which they will not function properly.

## Conclusion

A  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADC fundamentally includes a modulator and a digital/decimation filter. The modulator converts the analog signal directly into the digital domain by using a 1-bit ADC and oversampling. The modulator topology implements a noise-shaping function that drives the lower-frequency quantization noise into higher frequencies. The low-pass digital/decimation filter throws away the high-frequency

**Figure 5. Increased DR provides a lower-noise, slower output signal**



noise that was shaped by the modulator stage and reduces the data-output rate of the device to a usable frequency.

There is a strong relationship between the output-data rate and the converter's resolution. If the sample rate is kept constant, lower data rates provide high effective resolution, or ENOB, at the output of the converter.

$\Delta\Sigma$  ADCs have other functions besides the basics in these two articles, acting as current sources, voltage sources, input buffers, etc. However, examining any  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADC will always reveal a modulator and a digital/decimation filter. In choosing a  $\Delta\Sigma$  ADC, it is best to start with the fundamentals and then see what else the device has to offer.

## References

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# Solar charging solution provides narrow-voltage DC/DC system bus for multicell-battery applications

By **Wang Li**, *Battery Power Applications Engineer*,  
and **Michael Day**, *Power Applications Manager*

## Introduction

Solar-powered systems typically must operate from a very wide input-voltage range due to the large variations in a solar panel's output voltage. This wide operating range limits the system's ability to consume maximum power from the solar cell under all light conditions. The ideal solar charging application operates the solar cell at its maximum power point (MPP) while simultaneously limiting the input-voltage range of the system. This goal is achieved by integrating a narrow-voltage DC/DC (NVDC) battery-charging architecture with a solar-charger design. The narrow voltage range for the system power bus provides higher system efficiency, minimizing battery charging times and extending battery run times.<sup>1</sup> This article shows the NVDC charging architecture in a solar charging application and introduces a circuit that provides acceptable charger operation under several operating conditions, such as battery overtemperature, a discharged battery, a fully charged battery, and a system-current overload.

## Conventional charger topology

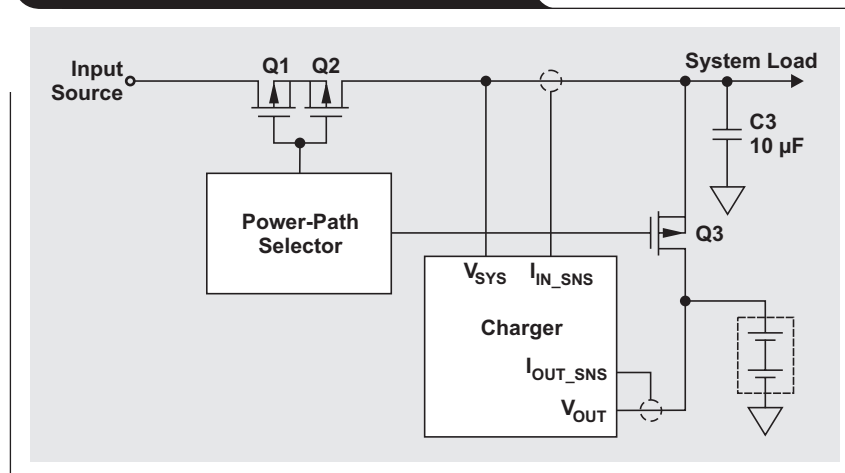
Figure 1 shows a conventional charger topology used with high-power switching chargers. Notebook charging is a typical application for this topology. One drawback is the system's wide operating voltage range, which requires more expensive, less efficient power supplies to generate the

power rails for the downstream circuitry.<sup>1</sup> The system voltage ranges from the highest AC adapter voltage (typically 22 V for a lightly loaded adapter) to the lowest battery voltage, which is 9 V for a 3S2P laptop battery pack. (3S2P is an abbreviation for three batteries in series with two of these series connections in parallel.) When the AC adapter is present, the power-path-selector MOSFETs (Q1 and Q2) turn on, and the battery MOSFET (Q3) turns off. The AC adapter voltage is applied to both the system voltage and the battery charger's input, delivering power to both circuits simultaneously. If the AC adapter voltage drops due to a brownout, an overcurrent condition, or unplugging the adapter, Q1 and Q2 turn off to prevent battery power from flowing backwards into the adapter. Q3 turns on and connects the battery-pack voltage directly to the system. In this way, the system is always supplied with power—either from the adapter or the battery.

## Requirements of a solar-powered charger

The battery-charger architecture in Figure 1 is acceptable for systems that use an AC adapter, but it is not ideal for solar charging applications because there is no way to limit the input current. To keep the solar cell always operating at its MPP, which will minimize battery charge time and the solar cell's size and cost, the charger needs a current-limiting mechanism. Unlike a conventional AC wall adapter,

**Figure 1. Conventional charger topology**





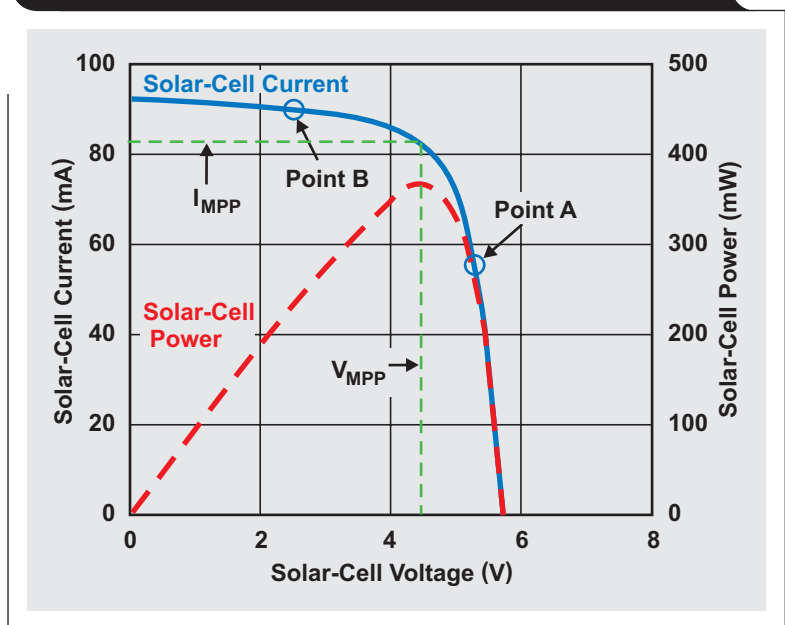
a solar cell should be operated with very tight control over its load current. Figure 2 shows the V-I characteristics of a typical solar cell under one light condition and helps explain this concept. The solid line represents the output current of the solar panel as its voltage varies, while the dashed line represents the output power. Because the panel's voltage drops as the current it delivers increases, an MPP is created at a specific voltage and current. A solar cell's MPP varies with different light conditions and temperatures. If very little charging and system current are required, the solar cell may operate at Point A in Figure 2, which is below its MPP. The solar cell delivers less than its maximum power, which is acceptable because the system is getting the power it needs. However, if the battery charge current or system power requirements increase, the charger pulls more current and the solar cell operates at Point B in Figure 2. At Point B, the solar cell's output current has increased, but the actual delivered power has gone down because of the drop in voltage. With reduced power from the solar cell, it takes longer to charge the battery. A well-designed solar-cell charger should contain circuitry that separates the solar cell from the system as well as circuitry that controls the solar cell's total current so the cell can be operated at its MPP. This combination of circuitry can fully utilize the solar cell's available power, resulting in a less expensive system because the designer does not have to oversize the solar cell to meet charging requirements.

### Basics of maximum-power-point tracking

Solar-cell chargers include special circuitry called maximum-power-point tracking (MPPT) circuitry that prevents the charger from consuming more than the solar cell's maximum power. This is typically implemented by setting the minimum operating voltage that corresponds with the solar cell's MPP.

A design using the solar cell in Figure 2 allows the charger and system to draw any current from the solar cell as long as the solar cell's voltage remains above  $V_{MPP}$ . When the current increases to the point where the voltage drops to  $V_{MPP}$ , a special control loop in the charger takes over and regulates the total current from the solar cell to maintain the solar cell's voltage at  $V_{MPP}$ . At this operating point, the solar cell delivers its maximum power. Any power not required for the system load is used to charge the battery. This voltage-based MPPT circuitry is fairly accurate at providing maximum power, even with varying solar-cell illumination levels. Although reduced light lowers the solar cell's maximum power and current capability, the

Figure 2. Solar panel's V-I curve and output-power curve

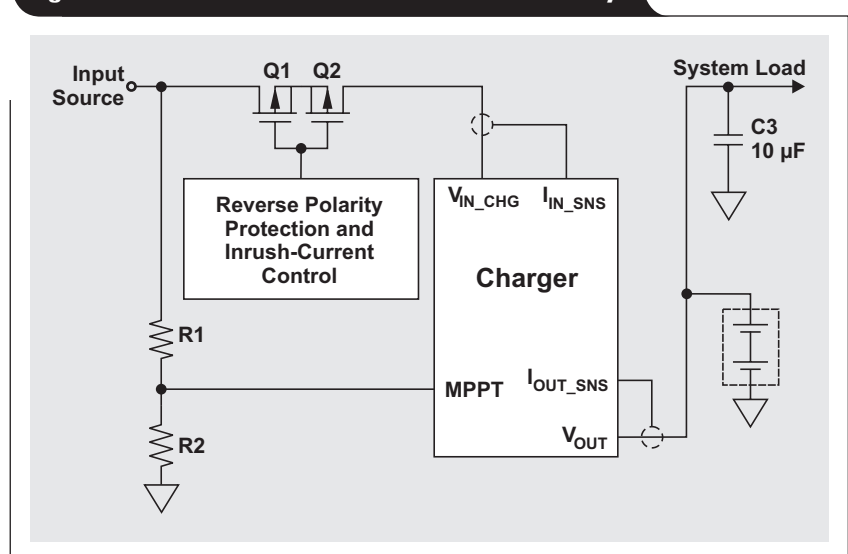


MPP is still achieved at approximately the same voltage.<sup>2</sup> Voltage-based MPPT circuitry typically consists of only two resistors external to the battery charger.<sup>3</sup> All other circuitry is integrated into the charger IC itself. A solar cell's  $V_{MPP}$  does vary significantly with temperature. If desired, additional circuitry can be added to track a solar cell's  $V_{MPP}$  change with temperature. Tracking MPP over temperature can reduce charging times by 40%.<sup>4</sup>

### Adding NVDC charging architecture

Figure 3 shows how a narrow-voltage DC/DC (NVDC) charging architecture can separate the solar cell from the system. Rather than being connected to the solar cell via

Figure 3. NVDC architecture with MPPT circuitry



the power-path-selector FETs, the system is connected directly to the battery. The system voltage is now equal to the battery voltage, regardless of the input voltage of the adapter or solar cell. The narrow operating voltage allows the designer to optimize the system power supplies for size, cost, and efficiency.<sup>1</sup> It also eliminates the need for the battery FET. The NVDC architecture is useful for solar charging because it routes all current through the charger. This allows the MPPT circuitry to effectively control the total current from the solar cell and maintain operation at the maximum rated power.

Connecting the system directly to the battery as in Figure 3 has significant advantages, but it also has disadvantages under certain operating conditions that should be considered. These conditions are as follows:

1. When the battery voltage is lower than the battery's precharge voltage, the battery current must be limited to the precharge current, which may not be sufficient to operate the system.
2. When the battery temperature is outside the allowable range for charging, the charger must disable charging, which also disables the system's power.
3. When the battery is fully charged, it should be disconnected from the charging source to extend battery life, but the system should remain on.

All of these conditions can be addressed with the addition of FETs Q4 and Q5 to the NVDC architecture (see Figure 4). A gas gauge or a host controller monitors voltages, current, and battery temperature and uses these inputs to control the FETs, which connect or disconnect the battery to or from the charger depending on the operating conditions. The host can be as complicated as a microprocessor with analog-to-digital converters that continuously monitors operating conditions and adjusts charger performance based on the system's needs, or it can be

simple, discrete circuitry that monitors only battery voltage and temperature.

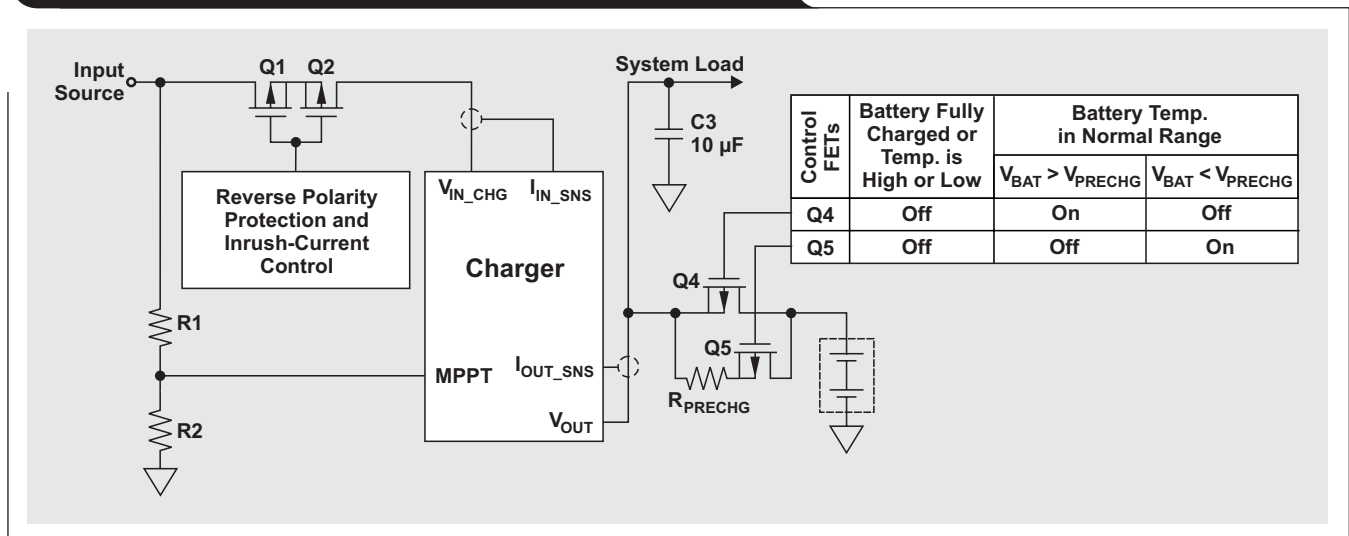
A deeply discharged battery requires preconditioning prior to being charged. Typical Lithium-Ion (Li-Ion) batteries require the charger to apply a precharge current that is 1/10 of the fast-charge current until the battery voltage rises above a specific voltage, typically 3 V/cell. When the host detects a battery voltage that is less than the specified precharge voltage ( $V_{BAT} < V_{PRECHG}$ ), it turns Q5 on and provides a precharge current through  $R_{PRECHG}$ . The value of  $R_{PRECHG}$  is chosen to provide the maximum allowable precharge current when the battery voltage is fully discharged. In this operating mode, the system is effectively isolated from the battery voltage, which allows the charger to maintain the NVDC regulation voltage even with a discharged battery. When the battery voltage increases above the precharge voltage, the host turns Q5 off and Q4 on, effectively shorting the battery and the system together. The battery's charge current increases to the charger's maximum output current minus the current into the system. If the system current exceeds the charger's fast-charge current, the battery enters supplement mode where current flows out of the battery to the system.

If the host detects an over- or undertemperature fault condition, it turns off both Q4 and Q5. This stops the battery charging while still allowing the charger to power the system. The host can also turn Q4 and Q5 off when the battery reaches its full-charge voltage to increase battery life. Detailed information on the battery-disconnect circuitry can be found in Reference 5.

### Conclusion

The NVDC charger architecture coupled with MPPT and the battery-disconnect circuitry provides several advantages over standard charging architectures. It intelligently connects and disconnects the battery from the system

Figure 4. NVDC architecture with battery-disconnect circuitry



under the appropriate operating conditions, allowing the designer to optimize the solar panel's output power for the system's needs. The charger also provides a narrow system operating voltage, which optimizes efficiency and extends battery life.

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# Solar lantern with dimming achieves 92% efficiency

By Chris Glaser

*Applications Engineer*

Solar lanterns are becoming increasingly popular, especially for decorative nighttime lighting or in areas with unreliable or nonexistent electrical service. These lanterns charge a battery during the day and then use that stored energy during the night to provide light on outdoor paths and sidewalks, or for indoor activities such as cooking or reading. Since the lanterns typically are powered by low-cost and robust multicell lead-acid batteries, a common problem encountered is how to efficiently convert this chemical energy to lumens (visible light output). To solve this, LEDs are frequently used because they produce many lumens per watt of energy consumed. A switching regulator is usually employed to efficiently convert the variable battery voltage to a regulated yet changeable (dimnable) current in the LED, which creates light. Efficiency must remain high over the battery voltage and dimming range in order to prolong battery life. A complete, cost-effective solution is needed to efficiently convert the 6, 9, 12, or 15 V of a common lead-acid battery pack to light with dimming capabilities.

## Single LED versus an LED string

When designing a solar-lantern system, designers must choose whether to produce the desired amount of light with multiple smaller, lower-power LEDs or one larger, high-brightness LED. Typically, a single LED driver drives a string of smaller LEDs in a series configuration. The advantages of this approach are that the current in each LED is exactly the same and the LEDs can be positioned to illuminate a wider area than is possible with a single LED. However, even with equal currents, the LEDs cannot each emit exactly the same color of light unless they are tested and binned before assembly. This is more costly.

A single high-brightness LED emits light to a smaller area, but this can be overcome by a diffuser cover placed over the LED. When pick-and-place costs in assembly are considered, a single high-brightness LED is usually more cost-effective overall than several smaller LEDs. A single

LED does not need to be binned, which also reduces costs. This article discusses use of the low-cost, single high-brightness LED. The LED current is set to 800 mA for a dimmable 2.8-W power output, which is typical for solar lanterns.

## Easily dimmable

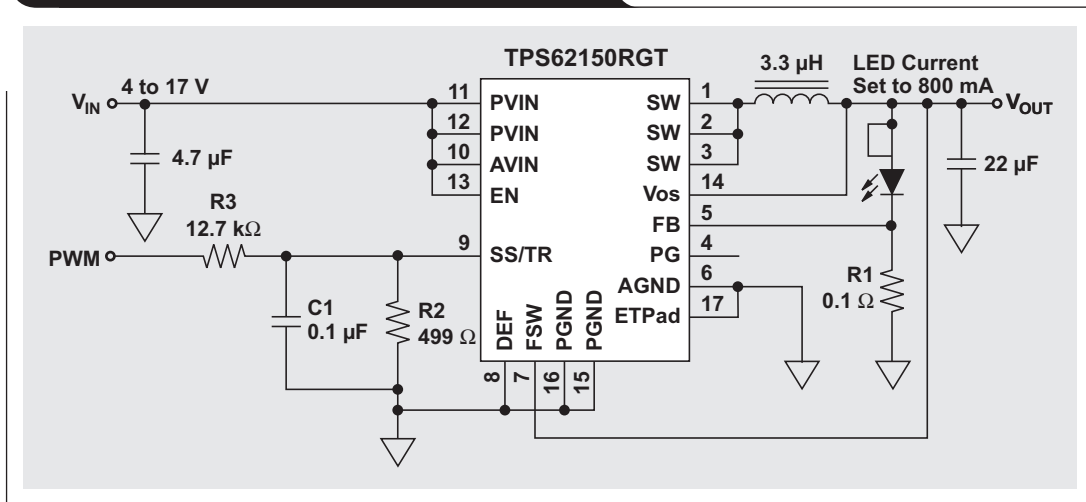
The light output of the solar lantern must be adjustable according to the needs of the user. For instance, more light might be required for reading than for cooking. Dimming the light output draws less energy from the battery and results in a longer battery run time.

Analog dimming and pulse-width-modulator (PWM) dimming are two methods that can be implemented to reduce the LED's light output. Analog dimming reduces the average current in the LED, while PWM dimming operates the LED at full current but varies the duty cycle at which this full current is applied. Thus, PWM dimming creates an average LED current equivalent to the full current multiplied by the duty cycle of the applied PWM signal. The PWM dimming frequency should be above the bandwidth detectable by the human eye so that the viewer does not notice any flicker. In general, analog dimming is more efficient, but PWM dimming eliminates the LED color shift that occurs when the LED is driven at different currents (as in analog dimming). So, the LED light color remains the same across the dimming range. Since both dimming methods have advantages and disadvantages, the ideal solar-lantern LED driver should accommodate both dimming methods. A PWM signal from a microcontroller, which typically is present in the solar-lantern system for battery management and other tasks, should be the single dimming interface with the LED driver for both methods. The Texas Instruments TPS62150 supports analog and PWM dimming from a PWM signal, as shown in Figures 1 and 2 (see next page). Detailed design equations are found in References 1 and 2.

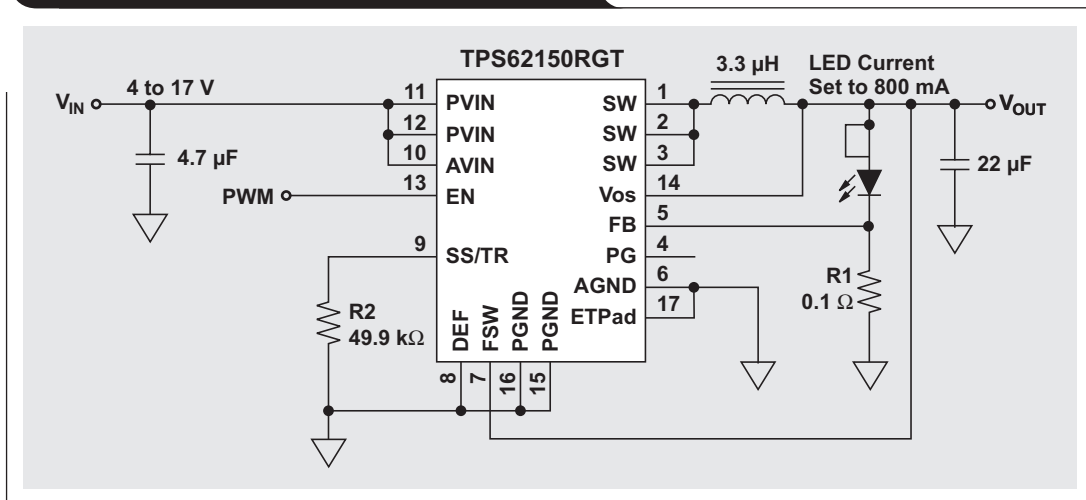
The advantage of these circuits is their similarity. Only small schematic changes and a change to the PWM signal's frequency are needed to implement analog or PWM dimming in a given design. This means that the same LED driver circuit can be used for multiple solar-lantern designs. Simply populate the circuit with different components and load a slightly different code to the microcontroller, and the solar lantern is optimized for either highest efficiency or most constant light color through the use of either analog or PWM dimming.

Another major concern is the dimming linearity. Does the rate of change in the LED current (and thus the light output) across the dimming range correspond to the rate of change of the input signal (in this case, the duty cycle of the PWM signal)? If this is true for the given LED driver, then the code development is quite simple, as a 10% increase in duty cycle results in a 10% increase in light output. If this were not true, then additional testing and code would be needed to correlate a given change in the input signal to the desired change in light output. This

**Figure 1. Circuit schematic for analog dimming**



**Figure 2. Circuit schematic for PWM dimming**



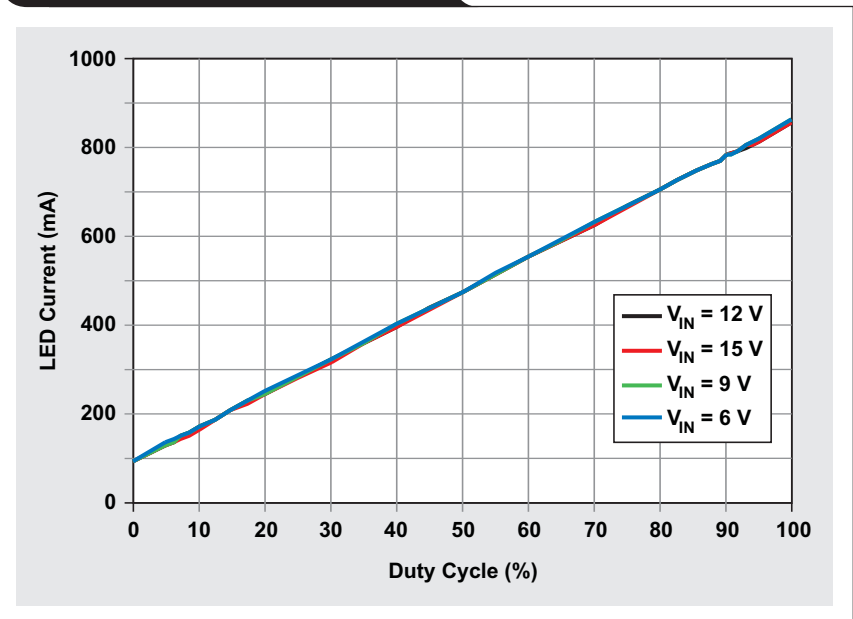
correlation might also vary across the dimming range, resulting in further complications to the dimming algorithm. Fortunately, the circuits in Figures 1 and 2 support very high dimming linearity, as shown in Figures 3 and 4. Each circuit has a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$  value) of 1, which indicates perfect linearity. (The  $R^2$  value is a statistical measure of the variability in a data set, and a value of 1 indicates zero variability.) This results in a very simple code development for the dimming algorithm and provides a pleasant user experience in the smooth dimming behavior of the lantern.

However, for analog dimming, the linear equations modeling this linearity have a y-axis intercept of 94 mA. This shows another limitation of analog dimming—an inability to dim the LED at very low output currents. To solve this, PWM dimming is used, with a y-axis intercept of  $-7$  mA. This allows very low LED currents to be achieved at very low PWM duty cycles.

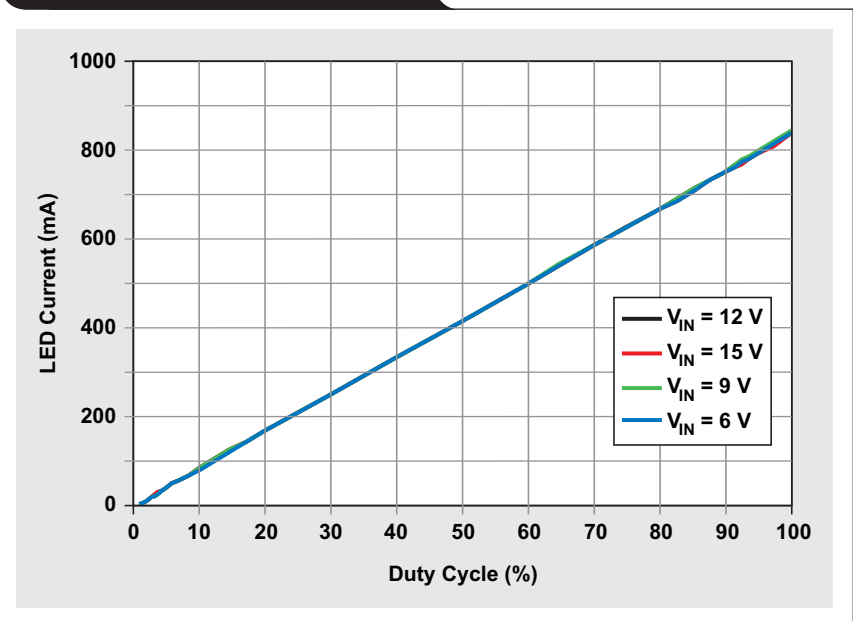
### Achieving high efficiency

Efficiency is critical in any battery-powered system, but especially in a solar lantern. Since it cannot be assumed that every day will have sunlight, the batteries have to last for more than one day at a time without a recharge. By an efficient conversion of stored chemical energy to light and a reduction of the light output through dimming, the LED driver increases the battery run time. In addition to supporting dimming, an efficient LED driver should (1) operate at a relatively low switching frequency to reduce the switching losses, (2) have a power-save mode to boost the efficiency at low light levels, and (3) have a cost-effective method to reduce the losses in the current-sensing resistor, R1 in Figure 1. The TPS62150 is a good choice because it has these three features and produces the efficiency

**Figure 3. Analog dimming linearity**



**Figure 4. PWM dimming linearity**



shown in Figures 5 and 6. Due to a higher voltage drop when the LED is driven at its full current, and due to reduced efficiency during the turn-on and turn-off of the IC, the efficiency of PWM dimming is lower than that of analog dimming.

**Conclusion**

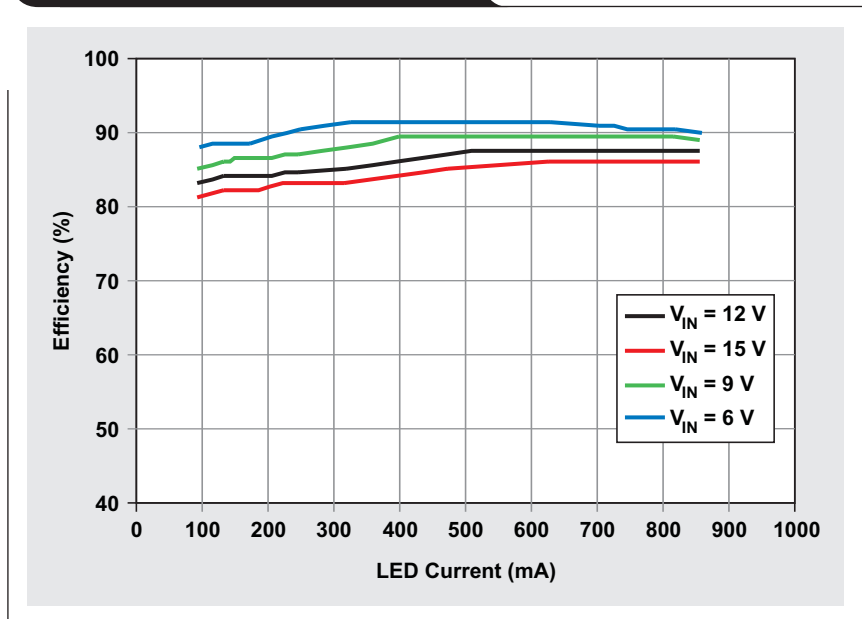
This article has presented an efficient 2.8-W solar-lantern solution that drives a single high-brightness LED and provides either analog or PWM dimming from a PWM signal. Analog dimming achieves better efficiency over the entire dimming range, while PWM dimming allows very low LED currents (for very low light levels) at low PWM duty cycles and has the best efficiency at full output power. Both dimming circuits are extremely linear. This design is well-suited for solar lanterns powered from rechargeable lead-acid, nickel, or lithium batteries.

**References**

For more information related to this article, you can download an Acrobat® Reader® file at [www.ti.com/lit/litnumber](http://www.ti.com/lit/litnumber) and replace “*litnumber*” with the **TI Lit. #** for the materials listed below.

Document Title	TI Lit. #
1. “Using the TPS62150 as step-down LED driver with dimming” . . . . .	SLVA451
2. “Design tool for analog dimming using a PWM signal” . . . . .	SLVC366

**Figure 5. Analog dimming efficiency**

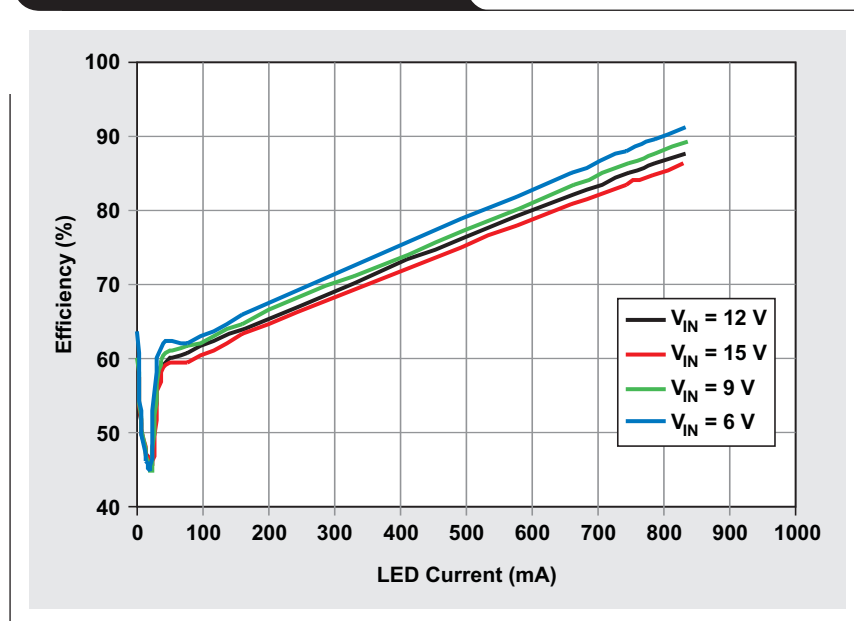


Document Title	TI Lit. #
3. “3-17V 1A step-down converter in 3×3 QFN package,” TPS62150/1/2/3 Datasheet. . . . .	SLVSAL5

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**Figure 6. PWM dimming efficiency**





# Extending the SPI bus for long-distance communication

By Thomas Kugelstadt  
Senior Applications Engineer

The serial peripheral interface (SPI) bus is an unbalanced or single-ended serial interface designed for short-distance communication between integrated circuits. Typically, a master device exchanges data with one or multiple slave devices. The data exchange is full-duplex and requires synchronization to an interface clock signal. However, recent trends in the design of industrial data-acquisition systems have not taken this synchronization requirement into account, and distances between the microcontroller and the corresponding analog-to-digital and digital-to-analog converters (ADCs and DACs) can reach 100 m or more.

The impact of the added propagation delay on the data-to-clock synchronicity is often ignored, and interface designs that operate perfectly in the lab environment cease operation when implemented on the factory floor. There can be multiple reasons for the interface malfunction. This article tries to shed light on the major ones, including:

- Lack of synchronization due to large propagation delays of the signal path
- Reduced noise immunity due to long-distance, unbalanced signal paths
- Damaged transceivers due to large ground-potential differences (GPDs)
- Data transmission errors due to unterminated data lines
- Transceiver latch-up and network downtime due to large electrical transients

## Synchronicity

An SPI primarily uses three interface lines:

- An interface clock initiated by the master device to ensure synchronous data transfers
- A data line for data sent from the master to a slave
- A data line for data sent from a slave to the master

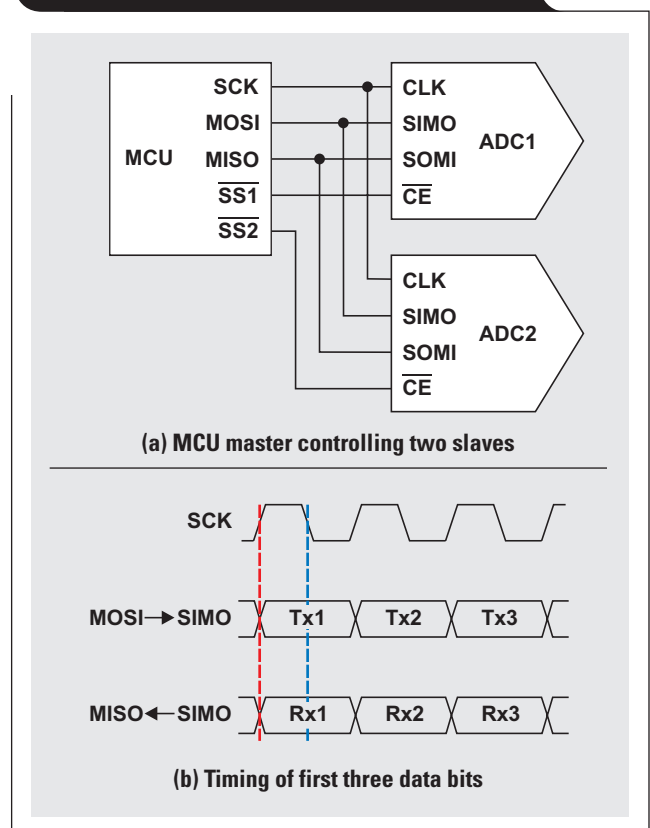
A fourth wire that carries what is known as the slave-select signal is not required for controlling interface flow but is needed for addressing a specific slave out of a range of slave devices. Figure 1a shows a simplified schematic of a microcontroller unit (MCU) operating as the master that controls two data converters representing the slaves.

With byte lengths ranging from 8 to 12 bits and multiples thereof, and data rates ranging from 1 to 20 Mbps, the standard SPI configuration allows for short propagation times and hence only short distances in order to maintain synchronicity between the interface clock and the data transmitted in both directions. Figure 1b shows the interface timing of the first three data bits when the SPI is configured to change data at the rising clock edge and to sample data at the falling clock edge.

Over long distances, however, the transmission cable introduces significant propagation delay into the signal path. Assuming a typical signal velocity of 5 ns/m, a 100-m cable will cause a propagation delay of 500 ns. Because the data sent from the master to the slave experiences the same delay as the master-initiated interface clock, both will remain in sync across the entire data link. In the opposite direction, however, the slave sends data to the master only when the first clock edge reaches the slave. Furthermore, this data will experience a second delay on its way back to the master, so the slave data will be out of sync by twice the cable's propagation delay.

Of course, communicating across a 100-m cable won't be possible without appropriate line drivers and receivers. These components will further increase the propagation delay by about another 50 ns, for a total of 550 ns. The slave data will therefore lag behind the first clock edge by a total of 1100 ns, or 11 bits when a data rate of 10 Mbps is assumed.

Figure 1. Simplified schematic of an SPI



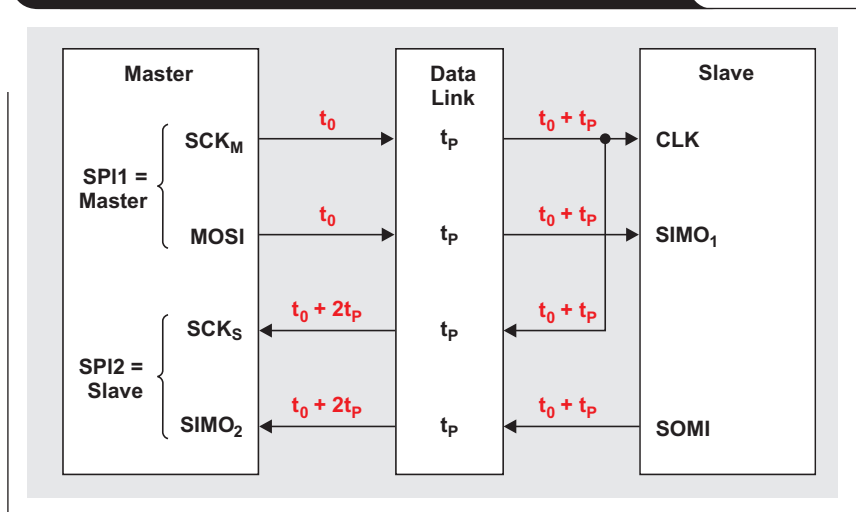
The only possible solution for restoring synchronicity between the slave data and the interface clock while maintaining a high data rate is to feed the clock signal from the slave back to the master. Figure 2 clarifies the benefit of clock feedback. Here  $t_0$  represents the first rising clock edge, or the start of a data transmission, and  $t_p$  is the data-link propagation delay. After traversing the data link, both the master clock ( $SCK_M$ ) and the master data (MOSI) remain in sync. Feeding back the master clock signal synchronizes the clock with the slave data so that both arrive equally delayed at the master. The only requirement is that the master provide two independent SPI ports, one configured as a master (SPI1) and the other configured as a slave (SPI2). Most modern microcontrollers possess two or more SPI ports, so this requirement poses no problem.

Nevertheless, implementing a long-distance, SPI-compatible interface in the real world is not a trivial task. Long-distance data links are always subject to external noise sources, ground-potential differences (GPDs), voltage and current surges due to inductive load switching, and often even reflections due to wrong or no termination. The flowing schematic in Figure 3 (see next page) tries to cover all of these aspects by showcasing the various transceiver and protection circuits that can counteract the derogating effects.

### Increasing noise immunity

Unbalanced or single-ended drivers and receivers are inadequate for accomplishing a robust data link over long distances, as they are susceptible to common-mode noise. An excellent method to eliminate common-mode noise in a synchronous, full-duplex interface such as an SPI is the use of RS-422 differential driver and receiver circuits in combination with twisted-pair cable.

**Figure 2. Clock-feedback path restores synchronicity**



Because the conductors of twisted-pair cable are closely electrically coupled, external noise induced equally into both conductors appears as common-mode noise at the receiver input. Although differential receivers are sensitive to signal differences, they are immune to common-mode signals. The receiver therefore rejects common-mode noise, and signal integrity is maintained.

Another benefit of close electric coupling is that the currents in the two conductors create magnetic fields that cancel each other. The initial transversal electromagnetic (TEM) waves of the two conductors are therefore largely reduced to electric fields that cannot radiate into the environment (see Figure 4). Only the far smaller fringing fields outside the conductor loop can radiate, thus yielding much lower electromagnetic interference (EMI).

### Eliminating ground loops and GPDs

While the RS-485 and RS-422 standards specify that a data link without a ground wire can be operated with a GPD of up to  $\pm 7$  V, it is advisable not to assume that these values

**Figure 4. TEM-wave radiation effects**

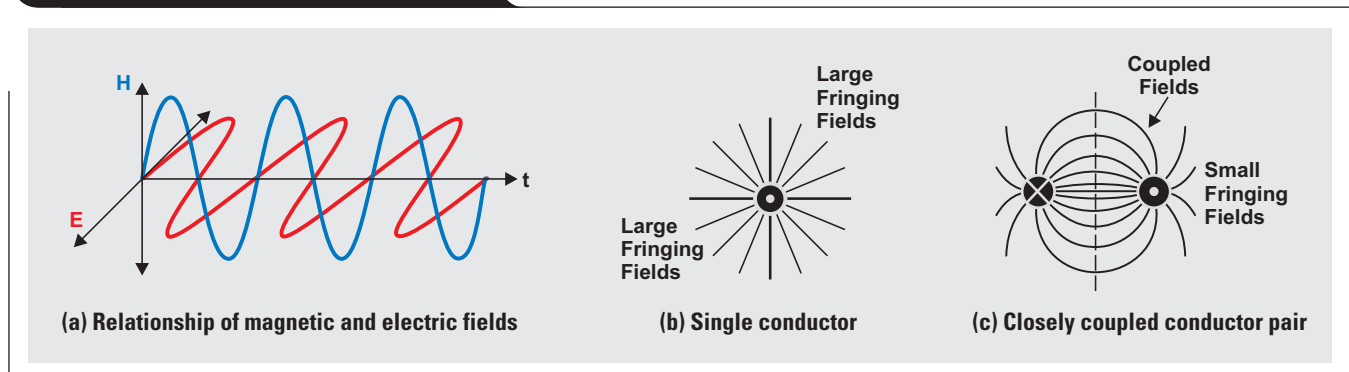
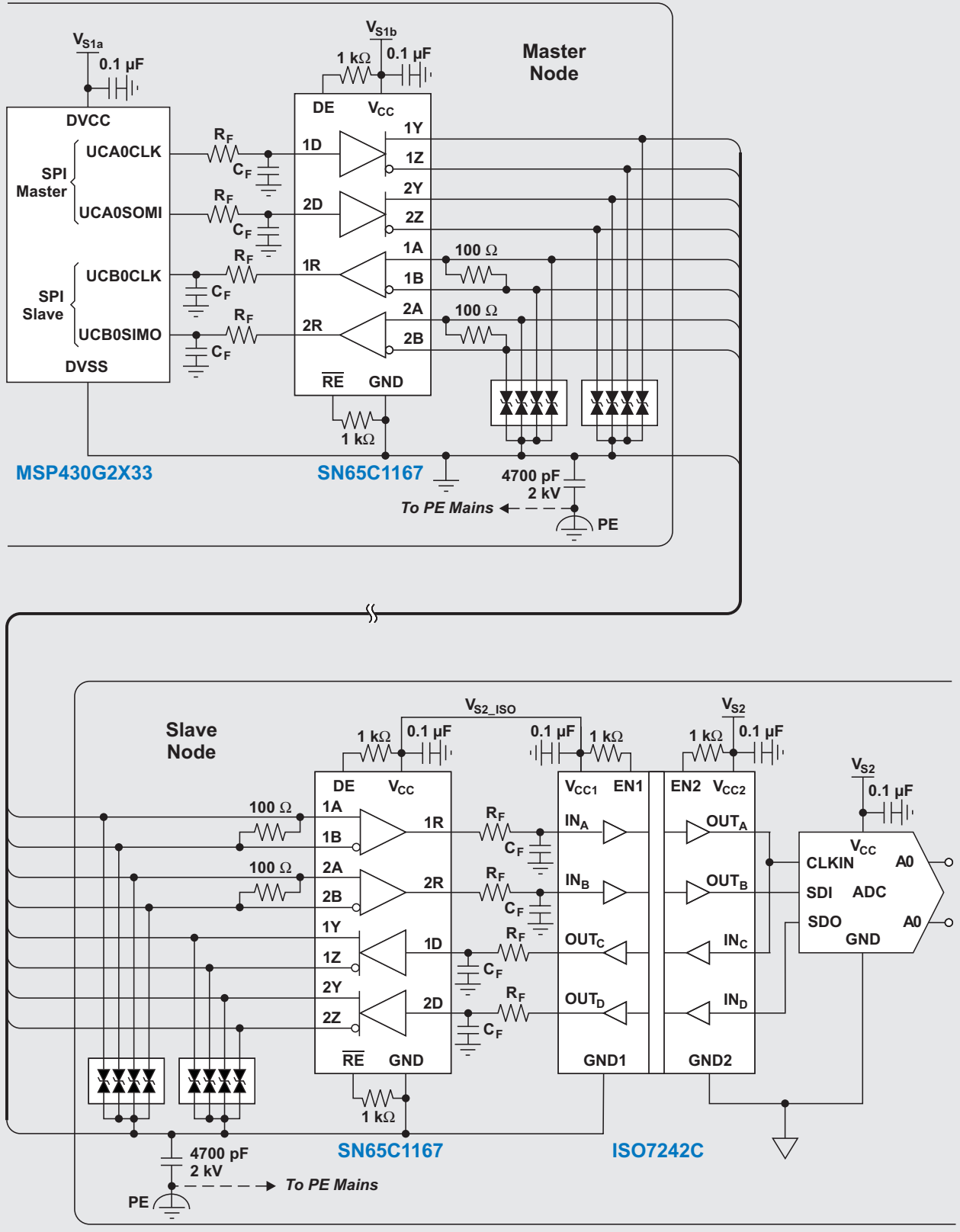


Figure 3. SPI extended via RS-422 data link



represent the maximum GPD. Much higher values are often encountered in industrial plants, sometimes reaching several hundreds and even thousands of volts. Because GPDs largely depend on factors outside the system designer's control, such as the electric installation and/or the number of electric motors and generators, the most secure way to prevent transceiver damage from large ground-potential variations is to galvanically isolate any remote network node from the bus. The circuit in Figure 3 demonstrates this by having only the remote transceiver connected to the bus, while the data-converter circuit is galvanically isolated.

Also, to provide the input and output signals of the remote transceiver with a stable ground reference, the transceiver's ground terminal as well as the digital isolator's ground terminal (GND1) are connected to the master ground potential via a separate ground conductor. This form of grounding is known as a single ground reference.

### Avoiding antennas through line termination

The data link in Figure 3 is terminated with 100-Ω resistors, as suggested by the RS-422 standard, matching the characteristic impedance of the bus cable. A myth exists that bus cables of a few meters in length or data links operating at low data rates don't need termination. Don't believe it. Operating the bus without termination can turn the transmission line into a nasty receiver/transmitter antenna. The lack of termination resistors, which usually absorb the incident wave power sent by the driver, causes standing waves to occur; and the entire incident wave is reflected into the bus. The reflected waves mix with other incident waves, thus yielding standing waves for signal frequencies whose quarter wavelengths, or multiples thereof, equal the length of the data link.

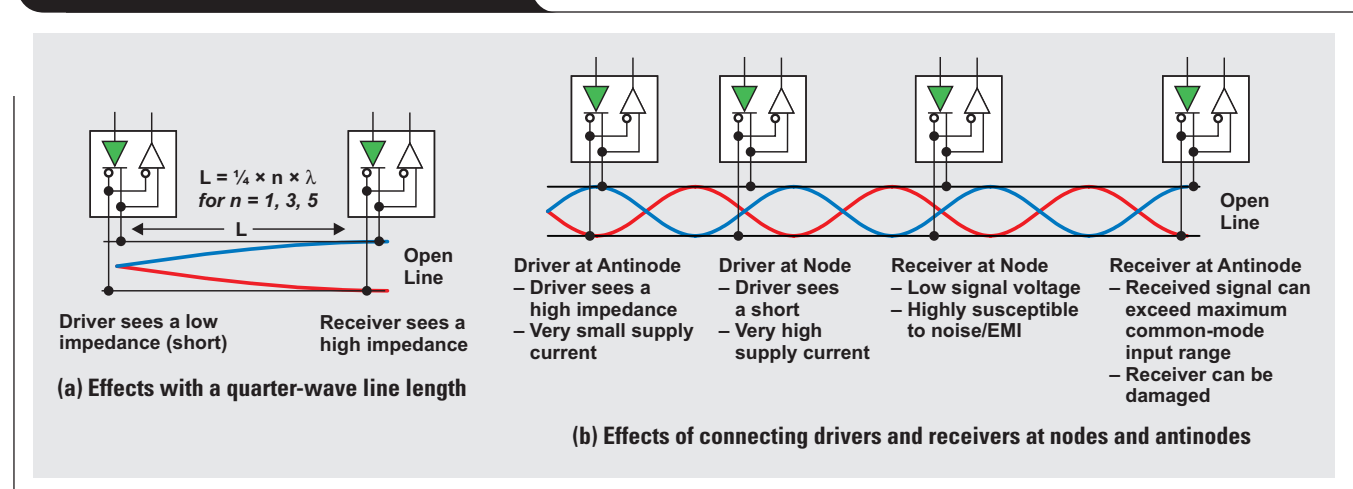
Depending on their location, the wave nodes (minima) and antinodes (maxima) can have varying effects on the bus transceivers (see Figure 5). A driver close to an antinode sees a high impedance and therefore transfers insufficient energy to the bus. A driver close to a node sees a very low impedance or a short. The resulting output current can exceed the driver's maximum drive capability and even trigger its current limit at around 250 mA. Receivers located at antinodes can be damaged by excessively large input signals that exceed the receiver's common-mode input range. Receivers close to nodes experience insufficient signal strength and are highly susceptible to noise and EMI. Any of the foregoing events will result in data errors from either the transmission or the reception of wrong data.

### Protecting the network against damaging transients

Electrical overstress transients caused by electrostatic discharge (ESD), switching of inductive loads, or lightning strikes will corrupt data transmission and damage bus transceivers unless effective measures are taken to diminish their impact. Modern transient-voltage suppressors, such as the ones in Figure 3, are the preferred protection components for high-speed data transmission due to their low capacitance, which allows them to be designed into every node of a multinode network without requiring a reduction in data rate.

Depending on the power rating of the transient-voltage suppressor chosen, the maximum clamp voltages can range from 25 to 35 V, which is higher than a standard transceiver's maximum bus voltage of 14 V. In this case, the internal protection circuit of the transceiver must

Figure 5. Effects of an unterminated bus



absorb the remaining clamp energy to protect the device from damage.

For ESD and burst transients, the clamp energy is rather low due to the short pulse duration and does not pose a problem to the internal ESD cells. Clamp energy from surge transients, however, can present a serious challenge due to the much longer pulse duration. For transceivers specified with low ESD immunity, series resistors might be necessary to reduce the remaining current flowing into the transceiver. Common resistor values range from 5 to 10  $\Omega$ . Note that these resistors must be surge-rated to provide high pulse robustness.

Although the transient-voltage suppressor's diodes divert large transient currents to ground, it must be ensured that these currents are further diverted to true earth potential without disturbing the ground reference of the remaining circuitry. Often this is accomplished by implementing a

high-voltage capacitor that has one plate connected to ground and the other plate connected to a protective-earth (PE) island. This island is then connected via a short, low-inductance earthing wire to the PE terminal of the local mains supply.

In addition to the suppressor's action on the bus side, further protection against signal degradation is required on the transceiver's single-ended sides. This is accomplished with R-C low-pass filters, which filter transient remnants in the reception path and stop high-frequency noise from entering the transmission path.

### Related Web sites

[interface.ti.com](http://interface.ti.com)

[www.ti.com/product/ISO7242C](http://www.ti.com/product/ISO7242C)

[www.ti.com/product/SN65C1167](http://www.ti.com/product/SN65C1167)

# Analog linearization of resistance temperature detectors

By Bruce Trump  
Staff Technologist

Resistance temperature detectors (RTDs) are commonly used in industrial and scientific temperature measurements. The most common types are pure platinum (Pt) formed into wire or evaporated in a thin film on a substrate. They rely on the fundamental temperature-dependent resistance properties of this noble metal. They are very stable and useful at temperatures ranging from cryogenic to over 800°C. A wide range of physical configurations, resistance ranges and accuracies is available.<sup>1</sup> The commonly used notation “Pt100” indicates a 100-Ω resistance at 0°C. The relationship between the RTD’s resistance and temperature is described by the Callendar-Van Dusen equation,

$$R_{\text{RTD}} = R_0[1 + AT + BT^2 + C(T - 100)T^3],$$

whose values are defined as follows:

$$R_0 \text{ is a } 100\text{-}\Omega \text{ resistance at } 0^\circ\text{C (Pt100)}$$

$$A = 3.9083 \times 10^{-3}$$

$$B = -5.775 \times 10^{-7}$$

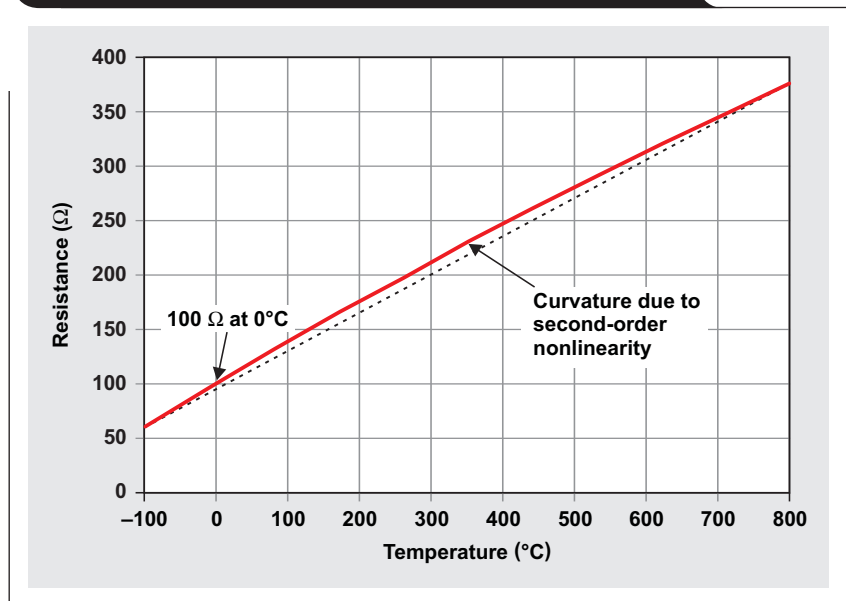
$$C = 0 \text{ for } T > 0^\circ\text{C, or } C = -4.23225 \times 10^{-12} \text{ for } T < 0^\circ\text{C.}$$

The resistance of a Pt100 RTD increases with temperature at approximately 0.39%/°C. While they are far more linear than thermocouples, RTDs have a significant second-order nonlinearity of approximately 0.38% per 100°C measurement range (see Figure 1). This nonlinearity is often corrected digitally, but there are many applications for purely analog processing and linearization of the RTD.

This article explains an analog technique for linearization of the RTD. The same technique is also used with bridge sensors such as pressure and load cells. The principles can be applied to other ratiometric devices with primarily second-order nonlinearity; i.e., any sensor or system with an output that is proportional to an excitation voltage or current.

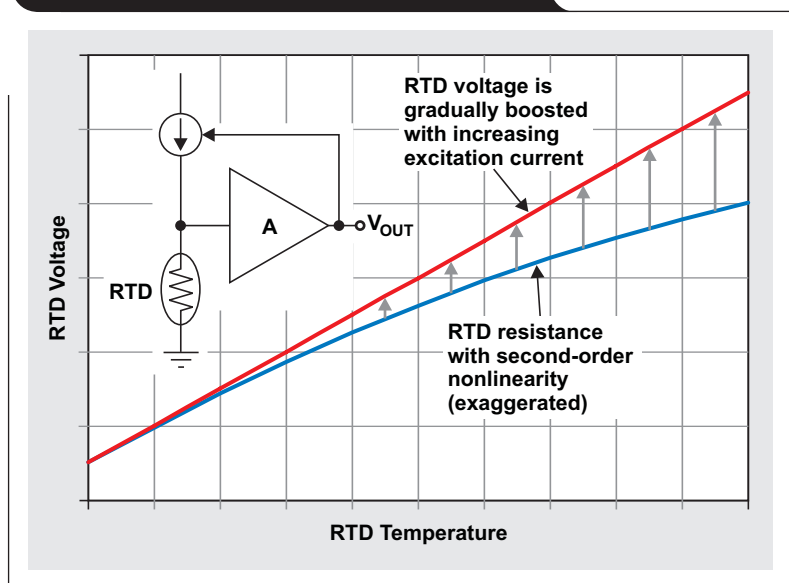
The exaggerated graph in Figure 2 shows that the temperature coefficient decreases with increasing temperature, producing an upward bow in the middle. Above 0°C, standardized data for the Pt100 has a purely second-order or parabolic function. Assuming calibration at two endpoint temperatures, this produces an error that is greatest at the midpoint temperature.

Figure 1. Resistance of Pt100 RTD versus temperature



When the RTD is excited with a current source, the resulting RTD voltage is directly proportional to the resistance, yielding the same nonlinearity. If, however, the excitation current is gradually increased as the RTD temperature

Figure 2. RTD voltage versus temperature





is increased, the nonlinearity can be greatly reduced. Figure 2 shows an increasing excitation current derived from the output of the amplified RTD voltage. This current is, in effect, a controlled amount of positive feedback. It yields an interesting “chicken-or-egg” dichotomy: The RTD voltage at the input of the amplifier is linearized when the output of the amplifier is linearized—and vice versa. The correct amount of positive feedback results in both.

When positive feedback is optimized, a much smaller s-shaped error remains with nearly equal negative and positive values, reaching maximums at ¼ and ¾ full scale (see Figure 3). This primarily third-order nonlinearity does not come from the RTD but is an artifact of the linearization technique. Its magnitude depends on the temperature range chosen for linearization. Figure 3 shows the initial nonlinearity error for a –100°C to +800°C temperature range—a 900°C span. The 3.7% RTD nonlinearity at midscale is reduced to approximately ±0.11%, a 33:1 improvement. The improvement is even greater for narrow temperature ranges, approaching 150:1 for a 200°C range.

The use of positive feedback might raise the concern of possible circuit instability. The magnitude of this feedback is small enough, however, to have negligible effect on the stability of commonly used circuits.

Figure 4 shows a practical implementation of an RTD. R1 provides the primary excitation current from V<sub>REF</sub>, a stable voltage reference. R5 provides the temperature-varying component of excitation current from the output of A1. R2, R3, and R4 set the required amplifier gain and offset to produce the desired output-voltage range. The Texas Instruments (TI) OPA188\* shown in this example is a new low-noise, chopper-stabilized operational amplifier that contributes negligible error to the circuit. Its very low and stable offset voltage makes it a possible upgrade to TI's OPA277 precision industrial amplifier.

The resistor values to achieve best correction can be calculated with iterative techniques. Many designers might optimize this type of circuit by using creative calculations or approximations. A closed-form solution is possible by

Figure 3. Percentage of RTD error versus temperature

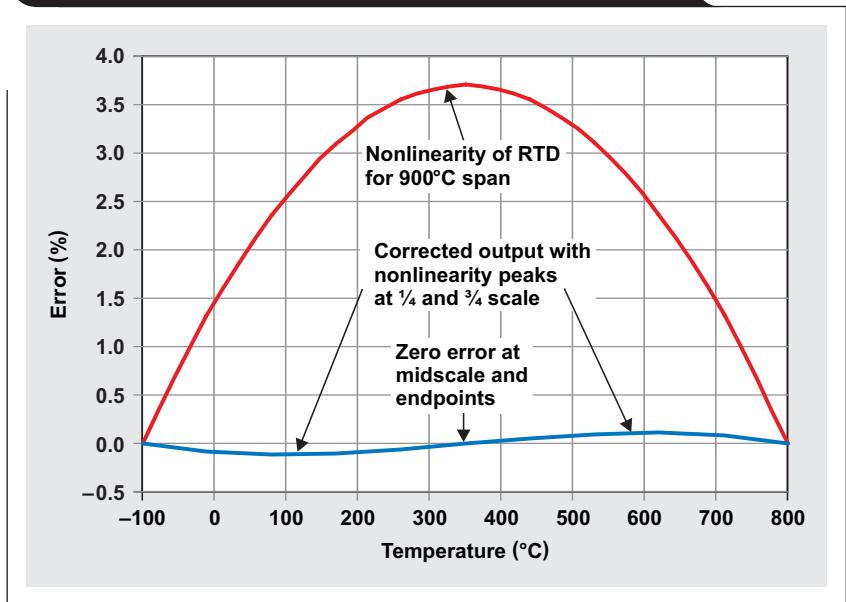
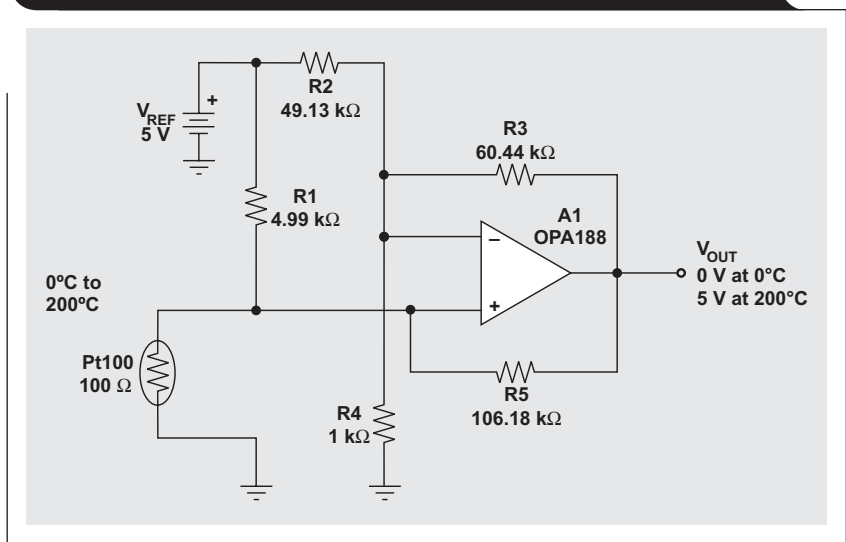


Figure 4. Typical RTD configuration with error compensation



solving the nodal equation that relates the RTD voltage, RTD resistance, V<sub>REF</sub>, R1, R5, and V<sub>OUT</sub>:

$$V_{RTD} = V_{REF} \times \frac{\frac{R_{RTD} \times R5}{R_{RTD} + R5}}{\frac{R_{RTD} \times R5}{R_{RTD} + R5} + R1} + V_{OUT} \times \frac{\frac{R_{RTD} \times R1}{R_{RTD} + R1}}{\frac{R_{RTD} \times R1}{R_{RTD} + R1} + R5}$$

\*The OPA188 is expected to be available in early 2012. For general specifications, please refer to the dual version, OPA2188, at [www.ti.com/product/OPA2188](http://www.ti.com/product/OPA2188)



Three conditions must be met to achieve zero error at the calibration endpoint temperatures and the midpoint temperature. Three separate variations of the preceding equation are written to describe the three zero-error conditions and are solved simultaneously for the only unknown variable,  $R_5$ . The resistance of the RTD at the midpoint temperature is not halfway between the endpoint resistances. This midpoint condition holds the key to the solution for best linearity correction.

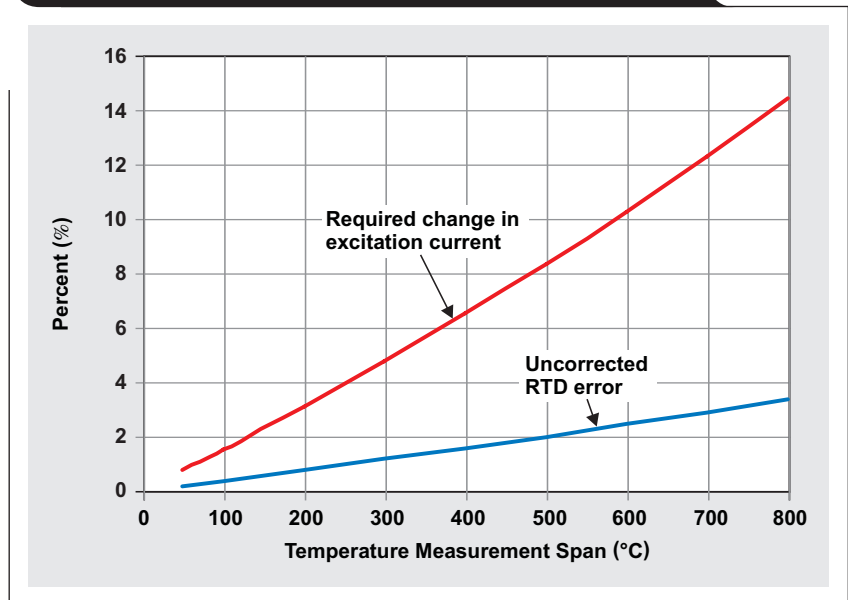
The math yields three results for  $R_5$ ; only one is a positive resistance. The expression for  $R_5$  is very long and impractical to present here. To download an Excel® worksheet that provides the calculations, go to <http://www.ti.com/lit/zip/SLYT442> and click Open to view the WinZip® directory online (or click Save to download the WinZip file for offline use). Then open the file RTD\_Linearization\_v7.xls to view the calculation worksheet. This closed-form solution is intellectually satisfying and avoids possible problems with convergence, but the results are no better than those produced with iterative calculations. Practical implementations often require trimming of resistors for calibration because accurate, non-standard values are often required. SPICE simulation can help determine actual performance with the nearest standard values. The WinZip file download listed above also includes two RTD simulation examples in TINA-TI™ SPICE files. One file implements an RTD linearization circuit based on an operational amplifier, and the other file is based on an instrumentation amplifier. Please see Reference 2 for more information on an RTD simulator for SPICE.

Figure 5 shows that uncorrected non-linearity of the RTD increases as the calibrated temperature range is increased, reaching approximately 2% for a 500°C span. The variation in the RTD's excitation current to compensate for this nonlinearity is approximately four times the nonlinearity. Thus, for a 500°C measurement span, the excitation current increases by approximately 8% from low-scale temperature to full scale.

Low-resistance connections to the RTD are crucial in maintaining accuracy with this circuit. For this reason, high-resistance RTDs such as Pt1000 or Pt5000 may be most practical. With a four-wire (or Kelvin) connection to the RTD and an additional operational amplifier, errors induced by wire resistance can be eliminated.

An integrated instrumentation amplifier with a three-wire RTD connection can provide an alternative solution (see

**Figure 5. Correlation of excitation current to RTD error**



**Figure 6. Amplifier with three-wire RTD connection**

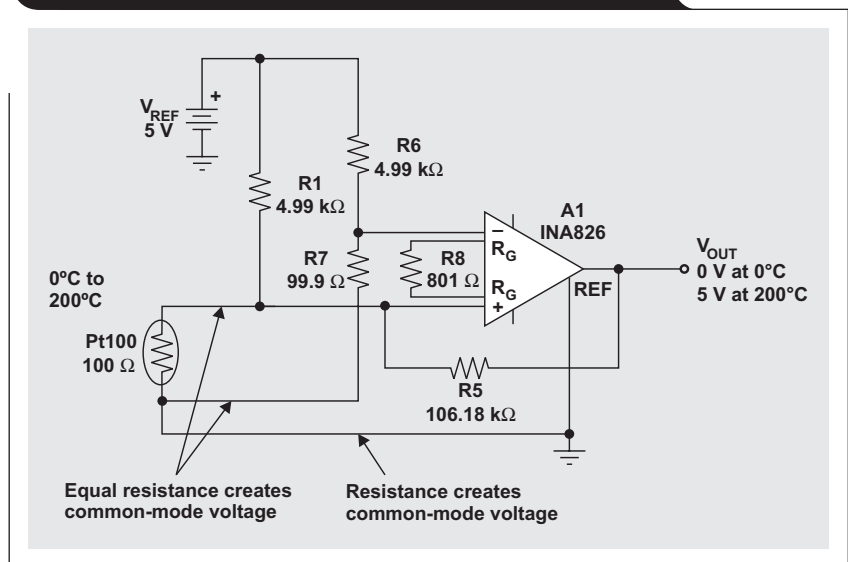


Figure 6). In the three-wire connection, two connections are used on the ground side of the RTD. Equal currents flowing in equal line resistances create a common-mode input voltage that is rejected by the instrumentation amplifier. Current flowing in the ground-wire connection also creates a common-mode voltage. Note that the currents in signal connections are not precisely equal. They differ due to the varying linearity correction current from  $R_5$ . Nevertheless, this configuration removes most of the error that is due to line resistance.

**Table 1. Partial listing of TI's integrated circuits for RTDs and bridge sensors**

PRODUCT	SENSOR TYPE	EXCITATION	OUTPUT	FEATURES
XTR105	RTD	Dual 1-mA current	4 to 20 mA	Resistor-programmed range and linearization
XTR106	Pressure bridge	Voltage	4 to 20 mA	Corrects positive or negative second-order nonlinearity
XTR108	RTD	Dual programmable current	4 to 20 mA or voltage	Programmable excitation current and linearization
XTR112	High-impedance RTD	Dual 100- $\mu$ A current	4 to 20 mA	Excitation for Pt1000 RTD
XTR114	High-impedance RTD	Dual 250- $\mu$ A current	4 to 20 mA	Excitation for Pt5000 RTD
PGA309	Pressure bridge	Programmable voltage	Voltage	Digitally controlled analog-signal path with linearization

## Other sensor types

Bridge sensors such as strain gauges and load cells frequently require linearization with similar techniques. Voltage excitation is generally used for these applications, but the concept is the same. Excitation voltage is varied with amplifier output voltage. These sensors can have a downward bowing nonlinearity requiring that the excitation voltage decrease as pressure increases. Furthermore, nonlinearity may vary significantly from unit to unit, so individual calibration may be required.

## Integrated solutions

TI uses variable excitation for linearization in several integrated circuits intended for RTDs and bridge sensors (see Table 1). Some circuits are designed specifically for remote sensors with two-wire, 4- to 20-mA current-loop output. XTR106 and PGA309 provide voltage excitation, which is preferred for many strain-gauge bridge-sensor applications. Though designed for specific sensor types, these devices have been successfully adapted to a variety of sensor applications, with and without variable excitation for linearization.

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## Related Web sites

[www.ti.com/product/partnumber](http://www.ti.com/product/partnumber)

Replace *partnumber* with INA826, OPA277, OPA2188, PGA309, XTR105, XTR106, XTR108, XTR112, or XTR114

Support files with Excel spreadsheet and TINA-TI™ simulation examples:

[www.ti.com/lit/zip/SLYT442](http://www.ti.com/lit/zip/SLYT442)

# Index of Articles

Title	Issue	Page	Lit. No.
<b>Data Acquisition</b>			
Aspects of data acquisition system design	August 1999	1	SLYT191
Low-power data acquisition sub-system using the TI TLV1572	August 1999	4	SLYT192
Evaluating operational amplifiers as input amplifiers for A-to-D converters	August 1999	7	SLYT193
Precision voltage references	November 1999	1	SLYT183
Techniques for sampling high-speed graphics with lower-speed A/D converters	November 1999	5	SLYT184
A methodology of interfacing serial A-to-D converters to DSPs	February 2000	1	SLYT175
The operation of the SAR-ADC based on charge redistribution	February 2000	10	SLYT176
The design and performance of a precision voltage reference circuit for 14-bit and 16-bit A-to-D and D-to-A converters	May 2000	1	SLYT168
Introduction to phase-locked loop system modeling	May 2000	5	SLYT169
New DSP development environment includes data converter plug-ins	August 2000	1	SLYT158
Higher data throughput for DSP analog-to-digital converters	August 2000	5	SLYT159
Efficiently interfacing serial data converters to high-speed DSPs	August 2000	10	SLYT160
Smallest DSP-compatible ADC provides simplest DSP interface	November 2000	1	SLYT148
Hardware auto-identification and software auto-configuration for the TLV320AIC10 DSP Codec — a “plug-and-play” algorithm	November 2000	8	SLYT149
Using quad and octal ADCs in SPI mode	November 2000	15	SLYT150
Building a simple data acquisition system using the TMS320C31 DSP	February 2001	1	SLYT136
Using SPI synchronous communication with data converters — interfacing the MSP430F149 and TLV5616	February 2001	7	SLYT137
A/D and D/A conversion of PC graphics and component video signals, Part 1: Hardware	February 2001	11	SLYT138
A/D and D/A conversion of PC graphics and component video signals, Part 2: Software and control	July 2001	5	SLYT129
Intelligent sensor system maximizes battery life: Interfacing the MSP430F123 Flash MCU, ADS7822, and TPS60311	1Q, 2002	5	SLYT123
SHDSL AFE1230 application	2Q, 2002	5	SLYT114
Synchronizing non-FIFO variations of the THS1206	2Q, 2002	12	SLYT115
Adjusting the A/D voltage reference to provide gain	3Q, 2002	5	SLYT109
MSC1210 debugging strategies for high-precision smart sensors	3Q, 2002	7	SLYT110
Using direct data transfer to maximize data acquisition throughput	3Q, 2002	14	SLYT111
Interfacing op amps and analog-to-digital converters	4Q, 2002	5	SLYT104
ADS82x ADC with non-uniform sampling clock	4Q, 2003	5	SLYT089
Calculating noise figure and third-order intercept in ADCs	4Q, 2003	11	SLYT090
Evaluation criteria for ADSL analog front end	4Q, 2003	16	SLYT091
Two-channel, 500-kSPS operation of the ADS8361	1Q, 2004	5	SLYT082
ADS809 analog-to-digital converter with large input pulse signal	1Q, 2004	8	SLYT083
Streamlining the mixed-signal path with the signal-chain-on-chip MSP430F169	3Q, 2004	5	SLYT078
Supply voltage measurement and ADC PSRR improvement in MSC12xx devices	1Q, 2005	5	SLYT073
14-bit, 125-MSPS ADS5500 evaluation	1Q, 2005	13	SLYT074
Clocking high-speed data converters	1Q, 2005	20	SLYT075
Implementation of 12-bit delta-sigma DAC with MSC12xx controller	1Q, 2005	27	SLYT076
Using resistive touch screens for human/machine interface	3Q, 2005	5	SLYT209A
Simple DSP interface for ADS784x/834x ADCs	3Q, 2005	10	SLYT210
Operating multiple oversampling data converters	4Q, 2005	5	SLYT222
Low-power, high-intercept interface to the ADS5424 14-bit, 105-MSPS converter for undersampling applications	4Q, 2005	10	SLYT223
Understanding and comparing datasheets for high-speed ADCs	1Q, 2006	5	SLYT231
Matching the noise performance of the operational amplifier to the ADC	2Q, 2006	5	SLYT237
Using the ADS8361 with the MSP430™ USI port	3Q, 2006	5	SLYT244
Clamp function of high-speed ADC THS1041	4Q, 2006	5	SLYT253
Conversion latency in delta-sigma converters	2Q, 2007	5	SLYT264
Calibration in touch-screen systems	3Q, 2007	5	SLYT277
Using a touch-screen controller's auxiliary inputs	4Q, 2007	5	SLYT283

Title	Issue	Page	Lit. No.
<b>Data Acquisition (Continued)</b>			
Understanding the pen-interrupt (PENIRQ) operation of touch-screen controllers	2Q, 2008	5	SLYT292
A DAC for all precision occasions	3Q, 2008	5	SLYT300
Stop-band limitations of the Sallen-Key low-pass filter	4Q, 2008	5	SLYT306
How the voltage reference affects ADC performance, Part 1	2Q, 2009	5	SLYT331
Impact of sampling-clock spurs on ADC performance	3Q, 2009	5	SLYT338
How the voltage reference affects ADC performance, Part 2	3Q, 2009	13	SLYT339
How the voltage reference affects ADC performance, Part 3	4Q, 2009	5	SLYT355
How digital filters affect analog audio-signal levels	2Q, 2010	5	SLYT375
Clock jitter analyzed in the time domain, Part 1	3Q, 2010	5	SLYT379
Clock jitter analyzed in the time domain, Part 2	4Q, 2010	5	SLYT389
The IBIS model: A conduit into signal-integrity analysis, Part 1	4Q, 2010	11	SLYT390
The IBIS model, Part 2: Determining the total quality of an IBIS model	1Q, 2011	5	SLYT400
The IBIS model, Part 3: Using IBIS models to investigate signal-integrity issues	2Q, 2011	5	SLYT413
Clock jitter analyzed in the time domain, Part 3	3Q, 2011	5	SLYT422
How delta-sigma ADCs work, Part 1	3Q, 2011	13	SLYT423
How delta-sigma ADCs work, Part 2	4Q, 2011	5	SLYT438
<b>Power Management</b>			
Stability analysis of low-dropout linear regulators with a PMOS pass element	August 1999	10	SLYT194
Extended output voltage adjustment (0 V to 3.5 V) using the TI TPS5210	August 1999	13	SLYT195
Migrating from the TI TL770x to the TI TLC770x	August 1999	14	SLYT196
TI TPS5602 for powering TI's DSP	November 1999	8	SLYT185
Synchronous buck regulator design using the TI TPS5211 high-frequency hysteretic controller	November 1999	10	SLYT186
Understanding the stable range of equivalent series resistance of an LDO regulator	November 1999	14	SLYT187
Power supply solutions for TI DSPs using synchronous buck converters	February 2000	12	SLYT177
Powering Celeron-type microprocessors using TI's TPS5210 and TPS5211 controllers	February 2000	20	SLYT178
Simple design of an ultra-low-ripple DC/DC boost converter with TPS60100 charge pump	May 2000	11	SLYT170
Low-cost, minimum-size solution for powering future-generation Celeron™-type processors with peak currents up to 26 A	May 2000	14	SLYT171
Advantages of using PMOS-type low-dropout linear regulators in battery applications	August 2000	16	SLYT161
Optimal output filter design for microprocessor or DSP power supply	August 2000	22	SLYT162
Understanding the load-transient response of LDOs	November 2000	19	SLYT151
Comparison of different power supplies for portable DSP solutions working from a single-cell battery	November 2000	24	SLYT152
Optimal design for an interleaved synchronous buck converter under high-slew-rate, load-current transient conditions	February 2001	15	SLYT139
–48-V/+48-V hot-swap applications	February 2001	20	SLYT140
Power supply solution for DDR bus termination	July 2001	9	SLYT130
Runtime power control for DSPs using the TPS62000 buck converter	July 2001	15	SLYT131
Power control design key to realizing InfiniBand <sup>SM</sup> benefits	1Q, 2002	10	SLYT124
Comparing magnetic and piezoelectric transformer approaches in CCFL applications	1Q, 2002	12	SLYT125
Why use a wall adapter for ac input power?	1Q, 2002	18	SLYT126
SWIFT™ Designer power supply design program	2Q, 2002	15	SLYT116
Optimizing the switching frequency of ADSL power supplies	2Q, 2002	23	SLYT117
Powering electronics from the USB port	2Q, 2002	28	SLYT118
Using the UCC3580-1 controller for highly efficient 3.3-V/100-W isolated supply design	4Q, 2002	8	SLYT105
Power conservation options with dynamic voltage scaling in portable DSP designs	4Q, 2002	12	SLYT106
Understanding piezoelectric transformers in CCFL backlight applications	4Q, 2002	18	SLYT107
Load-sharing techniques: Paralleling power modules with overcurrent protection	1Q, 2003	5	SLYT100
Using the TPS61042 white-light LED driver as a boost converter	1Q, 2003	7	SLYT101
Auto-Track™ voltage sequencing simplifies simultaneous power-up and power-down	3Q, 2003	5	SLYT095
Soft-start circuits for LDO linear regulators	3Q, 2003	10	SLYT096
UCC28517 100-W PFC power converter with 12-V, 8-W bias supply, Part 1	3Q, 2003	13	SLYT097
UCC28517 100-W PFC power converter with 12-V, 8-W bias supply, Part 2	4Q, 2003	21	SLYT092
LED-driver considerations	1Q, 2004	14	SLYT084
Tips for successful power-up of today's high-performance FPGAs	3Q, 2004	11	SLYT079

Title	Issue	Page	Lit. No.
<b>Power Management (Continued)</b>			
A better bootstrap/bias supply circuit . . . . .	1Q, 2005 . . . . .	33	SLYT077
Understanding noise in linear regulators . . . . .	2Q, 2005 . . . . .	5	SLYT201
Understanding power supply ripple rejection in linear regulators . . . . .	2Q, 2005 . . . . .	8	SLYT202
Miniature solutions for voltage isolation . . . . .	3Q, 2005 . . . . .	13	SLYT211
New power modules improve surface-mount manufacturability . . . . .	3Q, 2005 . . . . .	18	SLYT212
Li-ion switching charger integrates power FETs . . . . .	4Q, 2005 . . . . .	19	SLYT224
TLC5940 dot correction compensates for variations in LED brightness . . . . .	4Q, 2005 . . . . .	21	SLYT225
Powering today's multi-rail FPGAs and DSPs, Part 1 . . . . .	1Q, 2006 . . . . .	9	SLYT232
TPS79918 RF LDO supports migration to StrataFlash® Embedded Memory (P30) . . . . .	1Q, 2006 . . . . .	14	SLYT233
Practical considerations when designing a power supply with the TPS6211x . . . . .	1Q, 2006 . . . . .	17	SLYT234
TLC5940 PWM dimming provides superior color quality in LED video displays . . . . .	2Q, 2006 . . . . .	10	SLYT238
Wide-input dc/dc modules offer maximum design flexibility . . . . .	2Q, 2006 . . . . .	13	SLYT239
Powering today's multi-rail FPGAs and DSPs, Part 2 . . . . .	2Q, 2006 . . . . .	18	SLYT240
TPS61059 powers white-light LED as photoflash or movie light . . . . .	3Q, 2006 . . . . .	8	SLYT245
TPS65552A powers portable photoflash . . . . .	3Q, 2006 . . . . .	10	SLYT246
Single-chip bq2403x power-path manager charges battery while powering system . . . . .	3Q, 2006 . . . . .	12	SLYT247
Complete battery-pack design for one- or two-cell portable applications . . . . .	3Q, 2006 . . . . .	14	SLYT248
A 3-A, 1.2-V <sub>OUT</sub> linear regulator with 80% efficiency and P <sub>LOST</sub> < 1 W . . . . .	4Q, 2006 . . . . .	10	SLYT254
bq25012 single-chip, Li-ion charger and dc/dc converter for Bluetooth® headsets . . . . .	4Q, 2006 . . . . .	13	SLYT255
Fully integrated TPS6300x buck-boost converter extends Li-ion battery life . . . . .	4Q, 2006 . . . . .	15	SLYT256
Selecting the correct IC for power-supply applications . . . . .	1Q, 2007 . . . . .	5	SLYT259
LDO white-LED driver TPS7510x provides incredibly small solution size . . . . .	1Q, 2007 . . . . .	9	SLYT260
Power management for processor core voltage requirements . . . . .	1Q, 2007 . . . . .	11	SLYT261
Enhanced-safety, linear Li-ion battery charger with thermal regulation and input overvoltage protection . . . . .	2Q, 2007 . . . . .	8	SLYT269
Current balancing in four-pair, high-power PoE applications . . . . .	2Q, 2007 . . . . .	11	SLYT270
Power-management solutions for telecom systems improve performance, cost, and size . . . . .	3Q, 2007 . . . . .	10	SLYT278
TPS6108x: A boost converter with extreme versatility . . . . .	3Q, 2007 . . . . .	14	SLYT279
Get low-noise, low-ripple, high-PSRR power with the TPS717xx . . . . .	3Q, 2007 . . . . .	17	SLYT280
Simultaneous power-down sequencing with the TPS74x01 family of linear regulators . . . . .	3Q, 2007 . . . . .	20	SLYT281
Driving a WLED does not always require 4 V . . . . .	4Q, 2007 . . . . .	9	SLYT284
Host-side gas-gauge-system design considerations for single-cell handheld applications . . . . .	4Q, 2007 . . . . .	12	SLYT285
Using a buck converter in an inverting buck-boost topology . . . . .	4Q, 2007 . . . . .	16	SLYT286
Understanding output voltage limitations of DC/DC buck converters . . . . .	2Q, 2008 . . . . .	11	SLYT293
Battery-charger front-end IC improves charging-system safety . . . . .	2Q, 2008 . . . . .	14	SLYT294
New current-mode PWM controllers support boost, flyback, SEPIC, and LED-driver applications . . . . .	3Q, 2008 . . . . .	9	SLYT302
Getting the most battery life from portable systems . . . . .	4Q, 2008 . . . . .	8	SLYT307
Compensating and measuring the control loop of a high-power LED driver . . . . .	4Q, 2008 . . . . .	14	SLYT308
Designing DC/DC converters based on SEPIC topology . . . . .	4Q, 2008 . . . . .	18	SLYT309
Paralleling power modules for high-current applications . . . . .	1Q, 2009 . . . . .	5	SLYT320
Improving battery safety, charging, and fuel gauging in portable media applications . . . . .	1Q, 2009 . . . . .	9	SLYT321
Cell balancing buys extra run time and battery life . . . . .	1Q, 2009 . . . . .	14	SLYT322
Using a portable-power boost converter in an isolated flyback application . . . . .	1Q, 2009 . . . . .	19	SLYT323
Taming linear-regulator inrush currents . . . . .	2Q, 2009 . . . . .	9	SLYT332
Designing a linear Li-Ion battery charger with power-path control . . . . .	2Q, 2009 . . . . .	12	SLYT333
Selecting the right charge-management solution . . . . .	2Q, 2009 . . . . .	18	SLYT334
Reducing radiated EMI in WLED drivers . . . . .	3Q, 2009 . . . . .	17	SLYT340
Using power solutions to extend battery life in MSP430™ applications . . . . .	4Q, 2009 . . . . .	10	SLYT356
Designing a multichemistry battery charger . . . . .	4Q, 2009 . . . . .	13	SLYT357
Efficiency of synchronous versus nonsynchronous buck converters . . . . .	4Q, 2009 . . . . .	15	SLYT358
Fuel-gauging considerations in battery backup storage systems . . . . .	1Q, 2010 . . . . .	5	SLYT364
Li-ion battery-charger solutions for JEITA compliance . . . . .	1Q, 2010 . . . . .	8	SLYT365
Power-supply design for high-speed ADCs . . . . .	1Q, 2010 . . . . .	12	SLYT366
Discrete design of a low-cost isolated 3.3- to 5-V DC/DC converter . . . . .	2Q, 2010 . . . . .	12	SLYT371
Designing DC/DC converters based on ZETA topology . . . . .	2Q, 2010 . . . . .	16	SLYT372
Coupled inductors broaden DC/DC converter usage . . . . .	3Q, 2010 . . . . .	10	SLYT380



Title	Issue	Page	Lit. No.
<b>Power Management (Continued)</b>			
Computing power going “Platinum”	3Q, 2010	13	SLYT382
A low-cost, non-isolated AC/DC buck converter with no transformer	4Q, 2010	16	SLYT391
Save power with a soft Zener clamp	4Q, 2010	19	SLYT392
An introduction to the Wireless Power Consortium standard and TI’s compliant solutions	1Q, 2011	10	SLYT401
Fine-tuning TI’s Impedance Track™ battery fuel gauge with LiFePO <sub>4</sub> cells in shallow-discharge applications	1Q, 2011	13	SLYT402
Implementation of microprocessor-controlled, wide-input-voltage, SMBus smart battery charger	2Q, 2011	11	SLYT410
Benefits of a coupled-inductor SEPIC converter	2Q, 2011	14	SLYT411
I <sub>Q</sub> : What it is, what it isn’t, and how to use it	2Q, 2011	18	SLYT412
Backlighting the tablet PC	2Q, 2011	23	SLYT414
Challenges of designing high-frequency, high-input-voltage DC/DC converters	2Q, 2011	28	SLYT415
A boost-topology battery charger powered from a solar panel	3Q, 2011	17	SLYT424
Solar charging solution provides narrow-voltage DC/DC system bus for multicell-battery applications	4Q, 2011	8	SLYT439
Solar lantern with dimming achieves 92% efficiency	4Q, 2011	12	SLYT440
<b>Interface (Data Transmission)</b>			
TIA/EIA-568A Category 5 cables in low-voltage differential signaling (LVDS)	August 1999	16	SLYT197
Keep an eye on the LVDS input levels	November 1999	17	SLYT188
Skew definition and jitter analysis	February 2000	29	SLYT179
LVDS receivers solve problems in non-LVDS applications	February 2000	33	SLYT180
LVDS: The ribbon cable connection	May 2000	19	SLYT172
Performance of LVDS with different cables	August 2000	30	SLYT163
A statistical survey of common-mode noise	November 2000	30	SLYT153
The Active Fail-Safe feature of the SN65LVDS32A	November 2000	35	SLYT154
The SN65LVDS33/34 as an ECL-to-LVTTL converter	July 2001	19	SLYT132
Power consumption of LVPECL and LVDS	1Q, 2002	23	SLYT127
Estimating available application power for Power-over-Ethernet applications	1Q, 2004	18	SLYT085
The RS-485 unit load and maximum number of bus connections	1Q, 2004	21	SLYT086
Failsafe in RS-485 data buses	3Q, 2004	16	SLYT080
Maximizing signal integrity with M-LVDS backplanes	2Q, 2005	11	SLYT203
Device spacing on RS-485 buses	2Q, 2006	25	SLYT241
Improved CAN network security with TI’s SN65HVD1050 transceiver	3Q, 2006	17	SLYT249
Detection of RS-485 signal loss	4Q, 2006	18	SLYT257
Enabling high-speed USB OTG functionality on TI DSPs	2Q, 2007	18	SLYT271
When good grounds turn bad— isolate!	3Q, 2008	11	SLYT298
Cascading of input serializers boosts channel density for digital inputs	3Q, 2008	16	SLYT301
RS-485: Passive failsafe for an idle bus	1Q, 2009	22	SLYT324
Message priority inversion on a CAN bus	1Q, 2009	25	SLYT325
Designing with digital isolators	2Q, 2009	21	SLYT335
Magnetic-field immunity of digital capacitive isolators	3Q, 2010	19	SLYT381
Interfacing high-voltage applications to low-power controllers	4Q, 2010	20	SLYT393
Designing an isolated I <sup>2</sup> C Bus® interface by using digital isolators	1Q, 2011	17	SLYT403
Isolated RS-485 transceivers support DMX512 stage lighting and special-effects applications	3Q, 2011	21	SLYT425
Industrial data-acquisition interfaces with digital isolators	3Q, 2011	24	SLYT426
Extending the SPI bus for long-distance communication	4Q, 2011	16	SLYT441
<b>Amplifiers: Audio</b>			
Reducing the output filter of a Class-D amplifier	August 1999	19	SLYT198
Power supply decoupling and audio signal filtering for the Class-D audio power amplifier	August 1999	24	SLYT199
PCB layout for the TPA005D1x and TPA032D0x Class-D APAs	February 2000	39	SLYT182
An audio circuit collection, Part 1	November 2000	39	SLYT155
1.6- to 3.6-volt BTL speaker driver reference design	February 2001	23	SLYT141
Notebook computer upgrade path for audio power amplifiers	February 2001	27	SLYT142
An audio circuit collection, Part 2	February 2001	41	SLYT145
An audio circuit collection, Part 3	July 2001	34	SLYT134

Title	Issue	Page	Lit. No.
<b>Amplifiers: Audio (Continued)</b>			
Audio power amplifier measurements	July 2001	40	SLYT135
Audio power amplifier measurements, Part 2	1Q, 2002	26	SLYT128
Precautions for connecting APA outputs to other devices	2Q, 2010	22	SLYT373
<b>Amplifiers: Op Amps</b>			
Single-supply op amp design	November 1999	20	SLYT189
Reducing crosstalk of an op amp on a PCB	November 1999	23	SLYT190
Matching operational amplifier bandwidth with applications	February 2000	36	SLYT181
Sensor to ADC — analog interface design	May 2000	22	SLYT173
Using a decompensated op amp for improved performance	May 2000	26	SLYT174
Design of op amp sine wave oscillators	August 2000	33	SLYT164
Fully differential amplifiers	August 2000	38	SLYT165
The PCB is a component of op amp design	August 2000	42	SLYT166
Reducing PCB design costs: From schematic capture to PCB layout	August 2000	48	SLYT167
Thermistor temperature transducer-to-ADC application	November 2000	44	SLYT156
Analysis of fully differential amplifiers	November 2000	48	SLYT157
Fully differential amplifiers applications: Line termination, driving high-speed ADCs, and differential transmission lines	February 2001	32	SLYT143
Pressure transducer-to-ADC application	February 2001	38	SLYT144
Frequency response errors in voltage feedback op amps	February 2001	48	SLYT146
Designing for low distortion with high-speed op amps	July 2001	25	SLYT133
Fully differential amplifier design in high-speed data acquisition systems	2Q, 2002	35	SLYT119
Worst-case design of op amp circuits	2Q, 2002	42	SLYT120
Using high-speed op amps for high-performance RF design, Part 1	2Q, 2002	46	SLYT121
Using high-speed op amps for high-performance RF design, Part 2	3Q, 2002	21	SLYT112
FilterPro™ low-pass design tool	3Q, 2002	24	SLYT113
Active output impedance for ADSL line drivers	4Q, 2002	24	SLYT108
RF and IF amplifiers with op amps	1Q, 2003	9	SLYT102
Analyzing feedback loops containing secondary amplifiers	1Q, 2003	14	SLYT103
Video switcher using high-speed op amps	3Q, 2003	20	SLYT098
Expanding the usability of current-feedback amplifiers	3Q, 2003	23	SLYT099
Calculating noise figure in op amps	4Q, 2003	31	SLYT094
Op amp stability and input capacitance	1Q, 2004	24	SLYT087
Integrated logarithmic amplifiers for industrial applications	1Q, 2004	28	SLYT088
Active filters using current-feedback amplifiers	3Q, 2004	21	SLYT081
Auto-zero amplifiers ease the design of high-precision circuits	2Q, 2005	19	SLYT204
So many amplifiers to choose from: Matching amplifiers to applications	3Q, 2005	24	SLYT213
Getting the most out of your instrumentation amplifier design	4Q, 2005	25	SLYT226
High-speed notch filters	1Q, 2006	19	SLYT235
Low-cost current-shunt monitor IC revives moving-coil meter design	2Q, 2006	27	SLYT242
Accurately measuring ADC driving-circuit settling time	1Q, 2007	14	SLYT262
New zero-drift amplifier has an $I_Q$ of 17 $\mu$ A	2Q, 2007	22	SLYT272
A new filter topology for analog high-pass filters	3Q, 2008	18	SLYT299
Input impedance matching with fully differential amplifiers	4Q, 2008	24	SLYT310
A dual-polarity, bidirectional current-shunt monitor	4Q, 2008	29	SLYT311
Output impedance matching with fully differential operational amplifiers	1Q, 2009	29	SLYT326
Using fully differential op amps as attenuators, Part 1: Differential bipolar input signals	2Q, 2009	33	SLYT336
Using fully differential op amps as attenuators, Part 2: Single-ended bipolar input signals	3Q, 2009	21	SLYT341
Interfacing op amps to high-speed DACs, Part 1: Current-sinking DACs	3Q, 2009	24	SLYT342
Using the infinite-gain, MFB filter topology in fully differential active filters	3Q, 2009	33	SLYT343
Using fully differential op amps as attenuators, Part 3: Single-ended unipolar input signals	4Q, 2009	19	SLYT359
Interfacing op amps to high-speed DACs, Part 2: Current-sourcing DACs	4Q, 2009	23	SLYT360
Operational amplifier gain stability, Part 1: General system analysis	1Q, 2010	20	SLYT367
Signal conditioning for piezoelectric sensors	1Q, 2010	24	SLYT369
Interfacing op amps to high-speed DACs, Part 3: Current-sourcing DACs simplified	1Q, 2010	32	SLYT368
Operational amplifier gain stability, Part 2: DC gain-error analysis	2Q, 2010	24	SLYT374
Operational amplifier gain stability, Part 3: AC gain-error analysis	3Q, 2010	23	SLYT383



Title	Issue	Page	Lit. No.
<b>Amplifiers: Op Amps (Continued)</b>			
Using single-supply fully differential amplifiers with negative input voltages to drive ADCs . . . . .	4Q, 2010 . . . . .	26	SLYT394
Converting single-ended video to differential video in single-supply systems . . . . .	3Q, 2011 . . . . .	29	SLYT427
<b>Low-Power RF</b>			
Using the CC2430 and TIMAC for low-power wireless sensor applications: A power-consumption study . . . . .	2Q, 2008 . . . . .	17	SLYT295
Selecting antennas for low-power wireless applications . . . . .	2Q, 2008 . . . . .	20	SLYT296
<b>General Interest</b>			
Synthesis and characterization of nickel manganite from different carboxylate precursors for thermistor sensors . . . . .	February 2001 . . . . .	52	SLYT147
Analog design tools . . . . .	2Q, 2002 . . . . .	50	SLYT122
Spreadsheet modeling tool helps analyze power- and ground-plane voltage drops to keep core voltages within tolerance . . . . .	2Q, 2007 . . . . .	29	SLYT273
Analog linearization of resistance temperature detectors . . . . .	4Q, 2011 . . . . .	21	SLYT442

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