

Two-Layer Board, 3.3V/3A, Wide-Input, Synchronous, Step-Down DC-DC Converter Using the MAX17574

MAXREFDES1046

Introduction

The MAX17574, high-efficiency, high-voltage, synchronous step-down DC-DC converter with integrated MOSFETs operates over a 4.5V to 60V input. The converter can deliver up to 3A current. Output voltage is programmable from 0.9V to 90%VIN. The feedback voltage regulation is accurate to ±0.9% over -40°C to +125°C. The MAX17574 features a peak-current-mode control architecture. The device can be operated in the pulse-width modulation (PWM), pulse-frequency modulation (PFM), or discontinuous-conduction mode (DCM) control schemes. A programmable soft-start feature allows users to reduce input inrush current. The device also incorporates an output enable/undervoltage lockout pin (EN/UVLO) that allows the user to turn on the part at the desired input voltage level. An open-drain RESET pin provides a delayed power-good signal to the system upon achieving successful regulation of the output voltage.

Key benefits and features include the following:

- Reduces Number of External Components and Reduces Total Cost
- Reduces Number of DC-DC Regulators to Stock
- Reduces Power Dissipation
- Operates Reliably in Adverse Industrial Environments

Hardware Specification

A small size, high-efficiency buck converter using the MAX17574 is demonstrated for a 3.3V/3A application.

Table 1 provides an overview of the design specification.

Table 1. Design Specification

PARAMETER	SYMBOL	MIN	MAX
Input Voltage	V_{IN}	12	48
Frequency	f_{SW}	500kHz	
Maximum Efficiency	η	91%	
Output Voltage	V_{OUT}	3.3V	
Load Step	I_{STEP}	1.5A	
Transient Deviation	ΔV_{OUT}	150mV	
Output Current	I_{OUT}	0A	3A
Output Power	P_{OUT}	9.9W	

Designed–Built–Tested

This document describes the hardware shown in Figure 1. It provides a detailed systematic technical guide to design in a high-efficiency buck converter using the MAX17574 step-down DC-DC converter. The power supply has been built and tested, details of which follow later in this document.



Figure 1. MAXREFDES1046 hardware.

Synchronous Buck

In today's low-voltage, high-current applications, synchronous buck converters can be much more efficient than conventional buck converters because synchronous converters use MOSFETs, rather than conventional catch diodes. As a result, the power they dissipate in off-periods is reduced significantly. In a steady state, the low-side MOSFET is driven to complement the high-side MOSFET. In other words, whenever one of these switches is on, the other is off. In steady-state conditions, the complementary switching of high-side and low-side MOSFETs regulates V_{OUT} to its set value.

Figure 2 is a simple circuit diagram that illustrates the basic operation of a synchronous buck converter. The main operation depends on the current in the inductor operated through the S1 main switch (generally a MOSFET) and the S2 secondary switch. Initially, when S1 is in the on-state and S2 is in the off-state, the current starts flowing from the source through S1, the inductor, and then to the load. The operation time of S1 depends on the duty cycle. The current through the inductor then charges the inductor. During this interval, when the switch is in the on state, S2 is in reverse bias, so it does not conduct.

For the next interval, when S1 is in the off-state, the charged energy stored in the inductor starts discharging, at which time the circuit must be closed. Because the inductor is being discharged, the polarities of the inductor reverse, and the S2 conducting state becomes forward-biased. When the duty cycle is very low, the inductor's charging time is less than the discharging time. Because S2 is in the on-state during the discharging time, the secondary switch S2 conducts for a longer period than the main switch.

The synchronous rectifier switch is open when the main switch is closed; the converse is also true. To prevent cross-conduction (when both top and bottom switches are on simultaneously), a break-before-make switching scheme must be employed. Because of this, a diode must still conduct during the interval between the opening of the main switch and the closing of the synchronous-rectifier switch (dead time). When a MOSFET is used as a synchronous switch, the current normally flows in reverse (source to drain), allowing the integrated body diode to conduct current during the dead time. When the synchronous rectifier switch closes, the current flows through the

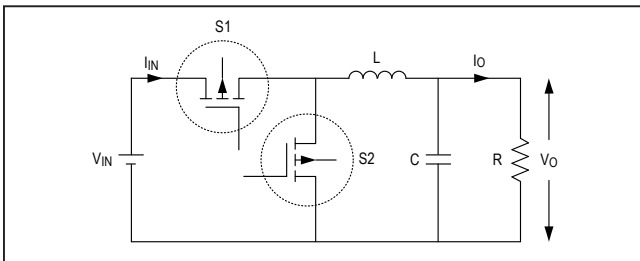


Figure 2. Synchronous converter topology.

MOSFET channel. Because of the low-channel resistance for power MOSFETs, the standard forward drop of the rectifying diode can be reduced to a few millivolts. Synchronous rectification can provide efficiencies well above 90%.

The MAX17574 offers a feature called skip mode. Skip mode allows the regulator to skip cycles when they are not needed, greatly improving efficiency at light loads. These light-load efficiencies, however, come at the expense of noise, because the switching frequency is not fixed and is proportional to the load current.

Figure 3 shows various waveforms for the synchronous buck topology. During the first cycle, when Q1 conducts, the input current gradually rises and flows through the inductor and capacitor. This results in the energy being stored in the inductor and capacitor. During the second cycle, Q1 turns off and, after some dead time, Q2 turns on. This results in the energy stored in the magnetic field of the inductor being released back into the circuit. As the energy stored in the inductor dissipates, the capacitor starts discharging, keeping the current flowing until the next cycle. Note that the MOSFETs Q1 and Q2 cannot be on simultaneously, as this would result in the input being connected to the ground. Hence, a time interval must be present between the on-states of the MOSFETs. This interval is the dead time.

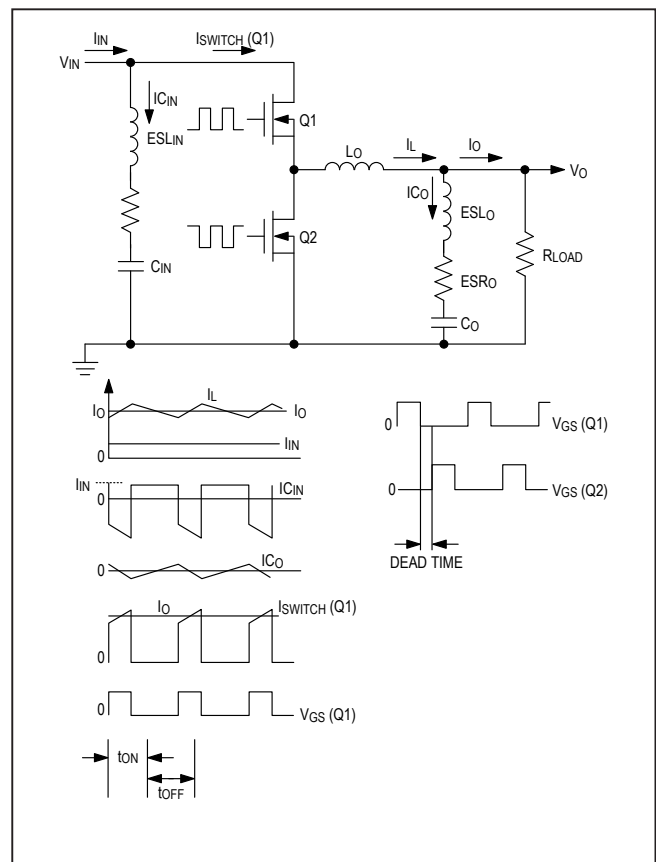


Figure 3. Synchronous buck waveforms.

Design Procedure for High-Efficiency Buck Converter

The previous section introduced the principles of synchronous buck operation. This section discusses a practical design example. The design process can be divided into the following stages: output voltage selection, inductor and capacitor selection, and setup of the compensation loop. This document complements the information contained in the MAX17574 data sheet.

The following design parameters are used throughout:

V_{IN}	= Input voltage
V_{FB}	= Feedback threshold voltage
V_{OUT}	= Output voltage
ΔV_{OUT}	= Transient deviation
I_{OUT}	= Output current
η	= Target minimum efficiency
P_{IN}	= Input power
f_{SW}	= Switching frequency
D	= Duty cycle

Step 1: Setting the Output Voltage

The MAX17574 output voltage is adjustable from 0.9V to 90% V_{IN} output voltage by connecting FB to the center tap of the resistor-divider between the output and GND. We choose the R5 (up side) and R6 (down side) resistor values so that the DC errors due to the FB input bias current do not affect the output voltage accuracy. With lower value resistors, the DC error is reduced, but the power consumption increases. In the MAX17574, the feedback resistors also affect the stability of the system.

$$R5 = R6 \left(\frac{V_{OUT}}{V_{FB}} - 1 \right)$$

Setting $V_{OUT} = 3.3V$ and $V_{FB} = 0.9V$ (typ), considering the crossover frequency, we use following equation to determine R5:

$$R5 = \frac{216 \times 10^3}{f_C \times C_{OUT}}$$

where:

$$\frac{R5}{R6} = \frac{8}{3}$$

We get $C_{OUT} = 39.7\mu F$ and $F_C = 55kHz$ in the following step, so select $R5 = 75k\Omega$ and $R6 = 28k\Omega$. You can also use Maxim's **EE-Sim® tool** to get feedback resistors and output capacitors for a given transient deviation value.

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Step 2: Selecting the Inductor

A high-valued inductor results in reduced inductor-ripple current, leading to a reduced output-ripple voltage. However, a high-valued inductor results in either a larger physical size or a high series resistance (DCR) and a lower saturation current rating. Typically, we choose an inductor value to produce a current ripple, ΔI_L , equal to 30% of load current, giving an LIR of 0.3. A lower LIR reduces the peak current in the MOSFET, which reduces the heat generation of the IC.

We select the inductor with the following equation:

$$L = \frac{V_{OUT}}{f_{SW} \times LIR \times I_{LOAD}} \left(1 - \frac{V_{OUT}}{V_{IN}} \right)$$

We get $L = 6.6\mu H$.

Additionally, we must ensure that the following relationship is satisfied:

$$I_{LPEAK} = I_{LOAD} + \frac{1}{2} \Delta I_{L(P-P)} < \min(I_{LSAT})$$

where:

$$\Delta I_{L(P-P)} = \frac{V_{OUT}}{f_{SW} \times L} \left(1 - \frac{V_{OUT}}{V_{IN}} \right)$$

Hence:

$$I_{LPEAK} = 0.86A + 3A = 3.86A$$

We chose MSS1260-682ML with 6.8 μH inductance and 7.4A I_{LSAT} saturation current.

Step 3: Selecting the Input Capacitor

The input filter capacitor reduces peak currents drawn from the power source and reduces noise and voltage ripple on the input caused by the circuit's switching. Use low-ESR ceramic capacitors with high ripple-current capability at the input. X7R capacitors are recommended in industrial applications for their temperature stability. Calculate the input capacitance using the following equation:

$$C_{IN} = \frac{I_{LOAD} \times D \times (1-D)}{\eta \times f_{SW} \times \Delta V_{IN}}$$

where D is the duty ratio ($D = V_{OUT}/V_{IN}$) and η is the expected efficiency of the converter, which equals 90%, and ΔV_{IN} is the input voltage ripple, which is 0.48V. The ΔV_{IN} varies in different applications. Determine the ΔV_{IN} to get the C_{IN} value. Here $C_{IN} = 1.6\mu F$. Due to the capacitor's DC bias characteristics and temperature characteristics, considering the derating of ceramic capacitors, some margin should be reserved. So we chose $C_{IN} = 2 \times 4.7\mu F$.

The input capacitor RMS current requirement (I_{RMS}) is defined by the following equation:

$$I_{RMS} = I_{LOAD(MAX)} \times \frac{\sqrt{V_{OUT}(V_{IN} - V_{OUT})}}{V_{IN}}$$

where $I_{LOAD(MAX)}$ is the maximum load current. I_{RMS} has a maximum value when the input voltage equals twice the output voltage ($V_{IN} = 2 \times V_{OUT}$), so $I_{RMS} = I_{LOAD(MAX)}/2$. Choose an input capacitor that exhibits less than +10°C temperature rise at the RMS input current for optimal long-term reliability.

Step 4: Selecting Output Capacitors

X7R ceramic output capacitors are preferable because of their stability over temperature in industrial applications. The output capacitors are usually sized to support a step load of 50% of the maximum output current in the application, so the output voltage deviation is contained to 3% of the output voltage change. The minimum required output capacitance can be calculated as follows:

$$C_{OUT} = \frac{1}{2} \times \frac{I_{STEP} \times t_{RESPONSE}}{\Delta V_{OUT}}$$

$$t_{RESPONSE} = \left(\frac{0.33}{f_C} + \frac{1}{f_{SW}} \right)$$

where I_{STEP} is the load current step, $t_{RESPONSE}$ is the response time of the controller, ΔV_{OUT} is the allowable output voltage deviation, f_C is the target closed-loop crossover frequency, and f_{SW} is the switching frequency. For the MAX17574, if the switching frequency is less than or equal to 500kHz, select f_C to be 1/9th of f_{SW} . If the switching frequency is more than 500kHz, select f_C to be 55kHz. Derating of ceramic capacitors with DC voltage and temperature must be considered while selecting the output capacitor. Derating curves are available from all major ceramic capacitor vendors. In our application, we want to get 150mV output ripple at 1.5A load step. We got $C_{OUT} = 39.7\mu F$. Considering the derating of ceramic capacitors, we chose $2 \times 22\mu F$ as the output capacitor.

Step 5: Compensation

The MAX17574 is internally loop compensated. However, if the switching frequency is less than 500kHz, connect a 0402 capacitor, C11, between the CF pin and the FB pin. Use [Table 2](#) to select the C11 value.

Table 2. C11 Values at Various Switching Frequencies

SWITCHING FREQUENCY RANGE (KHZ)	C11 (pF)
200 to 300	2.2
300 to 400	1.2
400 to 500	0.75

Step 6: Setting the Soft-Start Time

The MAX17574 implements adjustable soft-start operation to reduce inrush current. A capacitor connected from the SS pin to SGND programs the soft-start time. The selected output capacitance (C_{SEL}) and the output voltage (V_{OUT}) determine the minimum required soft-start capacitor as follows:

$$C_{SS} \geq 28 \times 10^{-6} \times C_{SEL} \times V_{OUT}$$

The soft-start time (t_{SS}) is related to the capacitor connected at SS (C_{SS}) by the following equation:

$$t_{SS} = \frac{C_{SS}}{5.55 \times 10^{-6}}$$

For example, to program a 2ms soft-start time, a 12nF capacitor should be connected from the SS pin to SGND.

Step 7: PCB Layout Guidelines

- All connections carrying pulsed currents must be very short and as wide as possible. The inductance of these connections must be kept to an absolute minimum due to the high di/dt of the currents. Because inductance of a current carrying loop is proportional to the area enclosed by the loop, if the loop area is made very small, inductance is reduced. Additionally, small current loop areas reduce radiated electromagnetic interference (EMI).
- A ceramic input filter capacitor should be placed close to the IC's V_{IN} pins. Also, its ground loop to PGND should be short. This eliminates as much trace inductance effects as possible and gives the IC a cleaner voltage supply. A bypass capacitor for the V_{CC} pin also should be placed close to the pin to reduce effects of trace impedance. Its ground loop to PGND should be short.
- When routing circuitry around the IC, the analog small-signal ground and the power ground for switching currents must be kept separate. They should be connected where switching activity is minimal, typically the return terminal of the V_{CC} bypass capacitor. Doing so helps keep the analog ground quiet. The ground plane should be kept continuous/unbroken as far as possible. No trace carrying high switching current should be placed directly over any ground plane discontinuity.
- PCB layout also affects the thermal performance of the design. A number of thermal vias that connect to a large ground plane should be provided under the IC's exposed pad for efficient heat dissipation. The PCB size, copper thickness, and board layer numbers affect the temperature dissipation capacity of the board. For this reference design, it can support a 3A load current with 1oz copper, two layers, and 30.5mm x 40.5mm board. For larger load current, up to 3.5A, you can modify the board by enlarging the board size to 42mm x 38mm.

Design Resources

Download the complete set of [Design Resources](#) including the schematics, bill of materials, PCB layout, and test files.

Revision History

REVISION NUMBER	REVISION DATE	DESCRIPTION	PAGES CHANGED
0	5/18	Initial release	—

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