ON-CHIP OSCILLATOR DESIGN

Design and build reliable, cost-effective, on-chip oscillator circuits that are trouble free. PUTTING OSCILLATOR THEORY INTO A PRACTICAL DESIGN MAKES FOR A MORE DEPENDABLE CHIP.

INTRODUCTION

This Application Note (App Note) is written for designers using Zilog Integrated Circuits with on-chip oscillators; circuits in which the amplifier portion of a feedback oscillator is contained on the IC. This App Note covers common theory of oscillators, and requirements of the circuitry (both internal and external to the IC) which comes from the theory for crystal and ceramic resonator based circuits.

Purpose and Benefits

The purposes and benefits of this App Note include:

1. Providing designers with greater understanding of how oscillators work and how to design them to avoid problems.
2. To eliminate field failures and other complications resulting from an unawareness of critical on-chip oscillator design constraints and requirements.

Problem Background

Inadequate understanding of the theory and practice of oscillator circuit design, especially concerning oscillator startup, has resulted in an unreliable design and subsequent field problems (See on page 10 for reference materials and acknowledgments).

OSCILLATOR THEORY OF OPERATION

The circuit under discussion is called the Pierce Oscillator (Figures 1, 2). The configuration used is in all Zilog on-chip oscillators. Advantages of this circuit are low power consumption, low cost, large output signal, low power level in the crystal, stability with respect to V_{CC} and temperature, and low impedances (not disturbed by stray effects). One drawback is the need for high gain in the amplifier to compensate for feedback path losses.

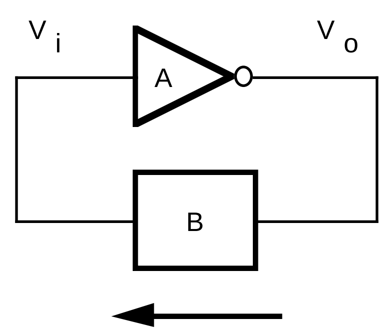


Figure 1. Basic Circuit and Loop Gain

OSCILLATOR THEORY OF OPERATION (Continued)

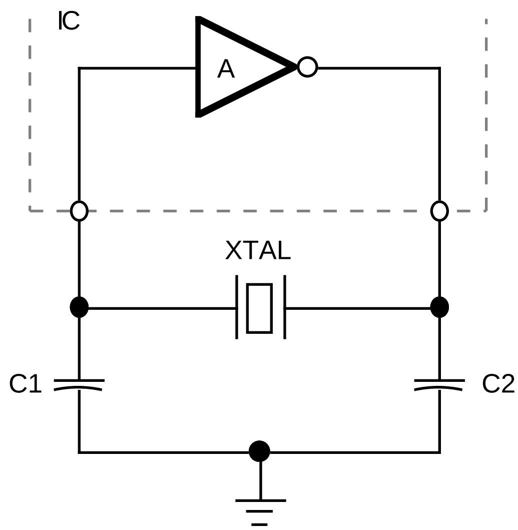


Figure 2. Zilog Pierce Oscillator

Pierce Oscillator (Feedback Type)

The basic circuit and loop gain is shown in Figure 1. The concept is straightforward; gain of the amplifier is A = Vo/Vi. The gain of the passive feedback element is B = Vi/Vo. Combining these equations gives the equality AB = 1. Therefore, the total gain around the loop is unity. Also, since the gain factors A and B are complex numbers, they have phase characteristics. It is clear that the total phase shift around the loop is forced to zero (i.e., 360 degrees), since V_{IN} must be in phase with itself. In this circuit, the amplifier ideally provides 180 degrees of phase shift (since it is an inverter). Hence, the feedback element is forced to provide the other 180 degrees of phase shift.

Additionally, these gain and phase characteristics of both the amplifier and the feedback element vary with frequency. Thus, the above relationships must apply at the frequency of interest. Also, in this circuit the amplifier is an active element and the feedback element is passive. Thus, by definition, the gain of the amplifier at frequency must be greater than unity, if the loop gain is to be unity.

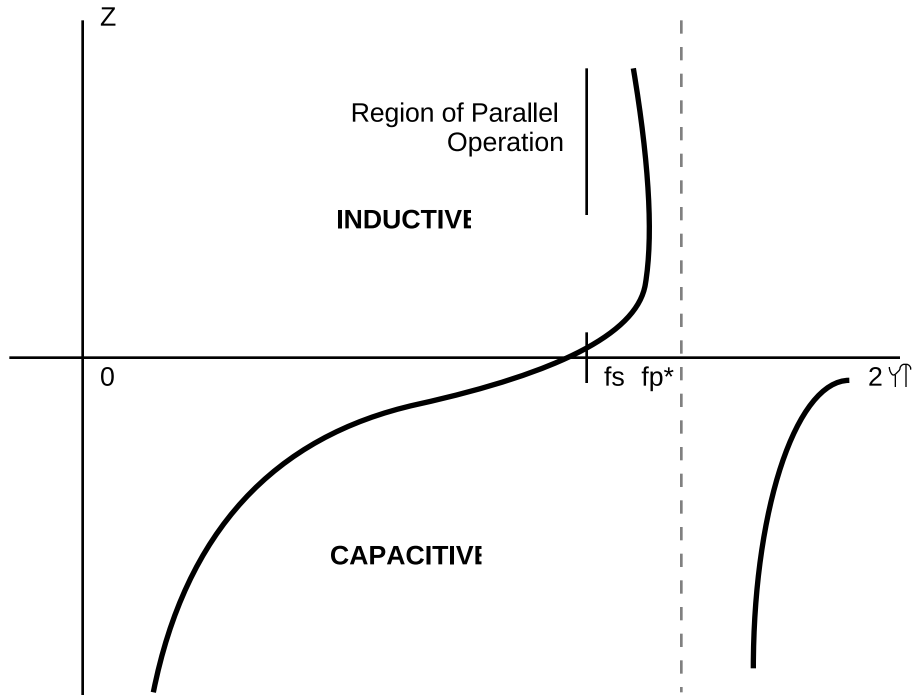
The described oscillator amplifies its own noise at startup until it settles at the frequency which satisfies the gain/phase requirement AB = 1. This means loop gain equals one, and loop phase equals zero (360 degrees). To do this, the loop gain at points around the frequency of oscillation must be greater than one. This achieves an average loop gain of one at the operating frequency.

The amplifier portion of the oscillator provides gain > 1 plus 180 degrees of phase shift. The feedback element provides the additional 180 degrees of phase shift without attenuating the loop gain to < 1. To do this the feedback element is inductive, i.e., it must have a positive reactance at the frequency of operation. The feedback elements discussed are quartz crystals and ceramic resonators.

Quartz Crystals

A quartz crystal is a piezoelectric device; one which transforms electrical energy to mechanical energy and vice versa. The transformation occurs at the resonant frequency of the crystal. This happens when the applied AC electric field is sympathetic in frequency with the mechanical resonance of the slice of quartz. Since this characteristic can be made very accurate, quartz crystals are normally used where frequency stability is critical. Typical frequency tolerance is .005 to 0.3%.

The advantage of a quartz crystal in this application is its wide range of positive reactance values (i.e., it looks inductive) over a narrow range of frequencies (Figure 3).



* fs - fp is very small (approximately 300 parts per million)

Figure 3. Series vs. Parallel Resonance

However, there are several ranges of frequencies where the reactance is positive; these are the fundamental (desired frequency of operation), and the third and fifth mechanical overtones (approximately 3 and 5 times the fundamental frequency). Since the desired frequency range in this application is always the fundamental, the overtones must be suppressed. This is done by reducing the loop gain at these frequencies. Usually, the amplifier's gain roll off, in combination with the crystal parasitics and load capacitors, is sufficient to reduce gain and prevent oscillation at the overtone frequencies.

The following parameters are for an equivalent circuit of a quartz crystal (Figure 4):

L - motional inductance (typ 120 mH @ 4 MHz)

C - motional capacitance (typ .01 pf @ 4 MHz)

R - motional resistance (typ 36 ohm @ 4 MHz)

Cs - shunt capacitance resulting from the sum of the capacitor formed by the electrodes (with the quartz as a dielectric) and the parasitics of the contact wires and holder (typ 3 pf @ 4 MHz).

The series resonant frequency is given by:

Fs = 1/(2π x sqrt of LC),
where Xc and Xl are equal.

Thus, they cancel each other and the crystal is then R shunted by Cs with zero phase shift.

The parallel resonant frequency is given by:

Fp = 1/[2π x sqrt of L (C Ct/C+Ct)],
where: Ct = C_L+ C_S

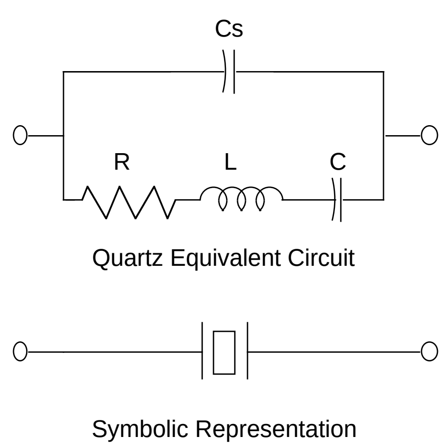


Figure 4. Quartz Oscillator

OSCILLATOR THEORY OF OPERATION (Continued)

Series vs. Parallel Resonance. There is very little difference between series and parallel resonance frequencies (Figure 3). A series resonant crystal (operating at zero phase shift) is desired for non-inverting amplifiers. A parallel resonant crystal (operating at or near 180 degrees of phase shift) is desired for inverting amps. Figure 3 shows that the difference between these two operating modes is small. Actually, all crystals have operating points in both serial and parallel modes. A series resonant circuit will NOT have load caps C1 and C2. A data sheet for a crystal designed for series operation does not have a load cap spec. A parallel resonant crystal data sheet specifies a load cap value which is the series combination of C1 and C2. For this App Note discussion, since all the circuits of interest are inverting amplifier based, only the parallel mode of operation is considered.

Ceramic Resonators

Ceramic resonators are similar to quartz crystals, but are used where frequency stability is less critical and low cost is desired. They operate on the same basic principle as quartz crystals as they are piezoelectric devices and have a similar equivalent circuit. The frequency tolerance is wider (0.3 to 3%), but the ceramic costs less than quartz. Figure 5 shows reactance vs. frequency and Figure 6 shows the equivalent circuit.

Typical values of parameters are L = .092 mH, C = 4.6 pf, R = 7 ohms and Cs = 40 pf, all at 8 MHz. Generally, ceramic resonators tend to start up faster but have looser frequency tolerance than quartz. This means that external circuit parameters are more critical with resonators.

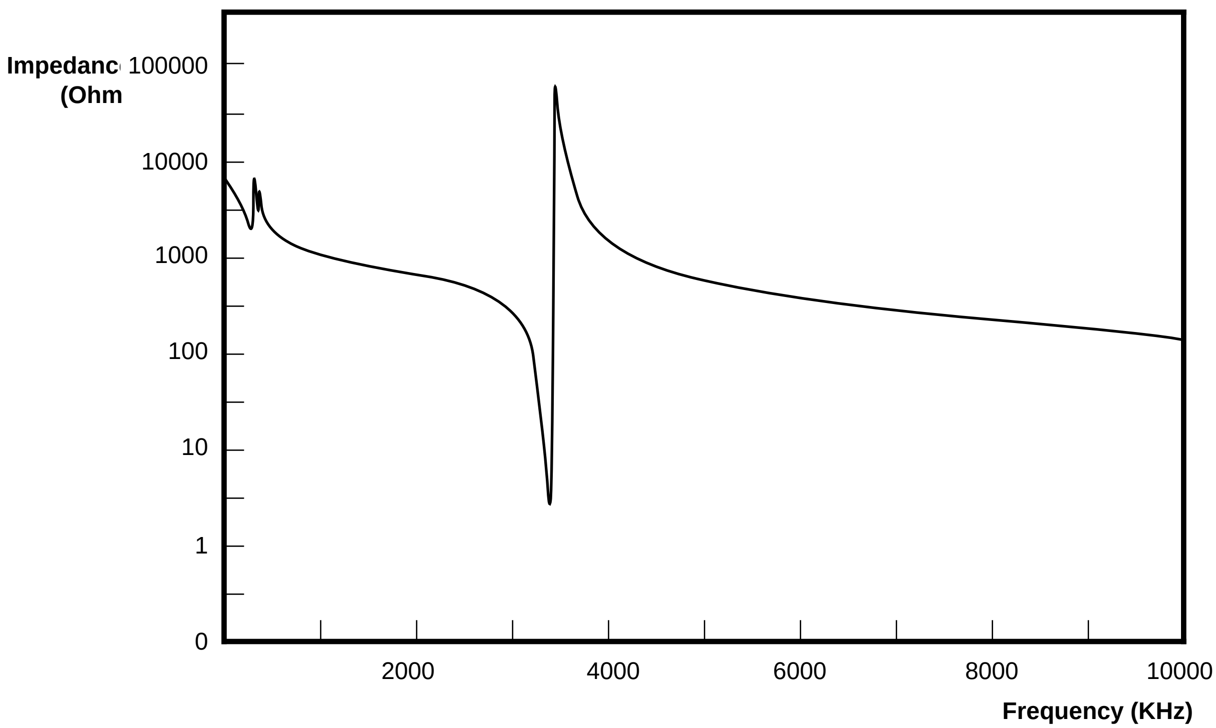


Figure 5. Ceramic Resonator Reactance

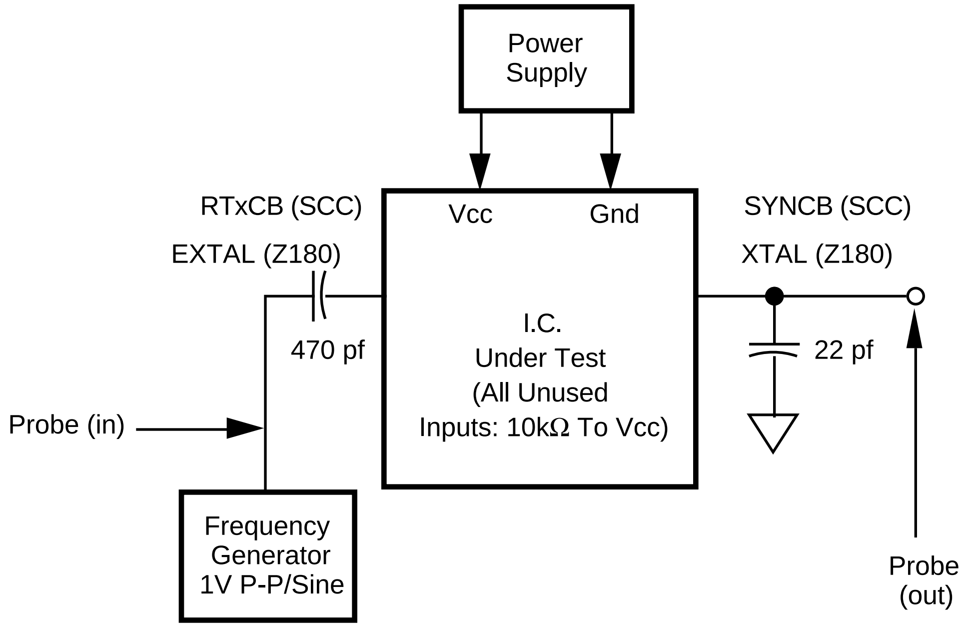


Figure 6. Gain Measurement

Load Capacitors

The effects/purposes of the load caps are:

Cap C2 combined with the amp output resistance provides a small phase shift. It also provides some attenuation of overtones.

Cap C1 combined with the crystal resistance provides additional phase shift.

These two phase shifts place the crystal in the parallel resonant region of Figure 3.

Crystal manufacturers specify a load capacitance number. This number is the load seen by the crystal which is the series combination of C1 and C2, including all parasitics (PCB and holder). This load is specified for crystals meant to be used in a parallel resonant configuration. The effect on startup time; if C1 and C2 increase, startup time increases to the point at which the oscillator will not start. Hence, for fast and reliable startup, over manufacture of large quantities, the load caps should be sized as low as possible without resulting in overtone operation.

Amplifier Characteristics

The following text discusses open loop gain vs. frequency, open loop phase vs. frequency, and internal bias.

Open Loop Gain vs. Frequency over lot, VCC, Process Split, and Temp. Closed loop gain must be adequate to start the oscillator and keep it running at the desired frequency. This means that the amplifier open loop gain must be equal to one plus the gain required to overcome the losses in the feedback path, across the frequency band and up to the frequency of operation. This is over full process, lot, V_{CC}, and temperature ranges. Therefore, measuring the open loop gain is not sufficient; the losses in the feedback path (crystal and load caps) must be factored in.

Open Loop Phase vs. Frequency. Amplifier phase shift at and near the frequency of interest must be 180 degrees plus some, minus zero. The parallel configuration allows for some phase delay in the amplifier. The crystal adjusts to this by moving slightly down the reactance curve (Figure 3).

Internal Bias. Internal to the IC, there is a resistor placed from output to input of the amplifier. The purpose of this feedback is to bias the amplifier in its linear region and to provide the startup transition. Typical values are 1M to 20M ohms.

PRACTICE: CIRCUIT ELEMENT AND LAY OUT CONSIDERATIONS

The discussion now applies prior theory to the practical application.

Amplifier and Feedback Resistor

The elements of the circuit, internal to the IC, include the amplifier, feedback resistor, and output resistance. The amplifier is modeled as a transconductance amplifier with a gain specified as I_{OUT}/V_{IN} (amps per volt).

Transconductance/Gain. The loop gain AB = gm x Z1, where gm is amplifier transconductance (gain) in amps/volt and Z1 is the load seen by the output. AB must be greater than unity at and about the frequency of operation to sustain oscillation.

Gain Measurement Circuit. The gain of the amplifier can be measured using the circuits of Figures 6 & 7. This may be necessary to verify adequate gain at the frequency of interest and in determining design margin.

Gain Requirement vs. Temperature, Frequency and Supply Voltage. The gain to start and sustain oscillation (Figure 8) must comply with:

$gm > 4\pi^2 f^2 Rq\ C_{IN}\ C_{OUT} t \times M$
where:
M is a quartz form factor = $(1 + C_{OUT}/C_{IN} + C_{OUT}/C_{OUT})_2$

Output Impedance. The output impedance limits power to the XTAL and provides small phase shift with load cap C2.

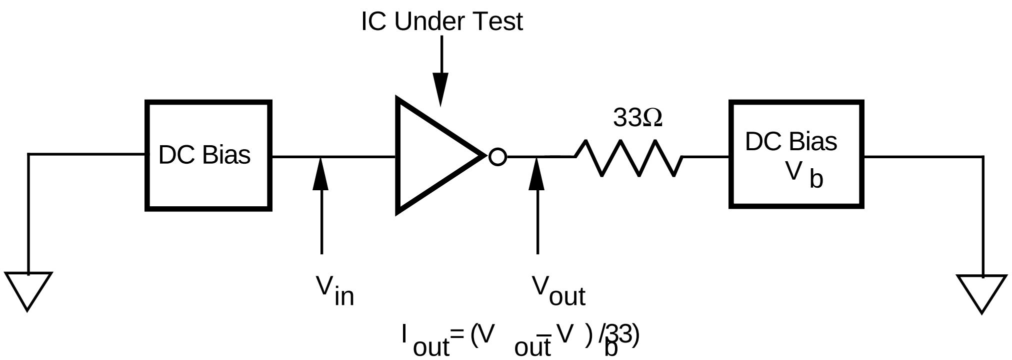
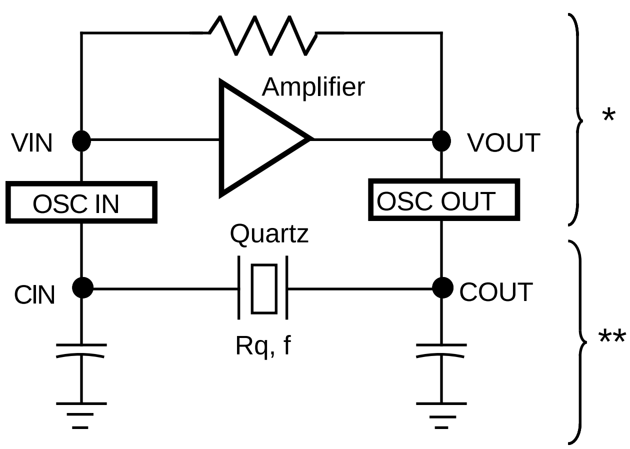


Figure 7. Transconductance (gm) Measurement



* Inside chip, feedback resistor biases the amplifier in the high gm region.

** External components typically: CIN = COUT = 30 to 50 pf (add 10 pf pin cap).

Figure 8. Quartz Oscillator Configuration

Load Capacitors

In the selection of load caps it is understood that parasitics are always included.

Upper Limits. If the load caps are too large, the oscillator will not start because the loop gain is too low at the operating frequency. This is due to the impedance of the load capacitors. Larger load caps produce a longer startup.

Lower Limits. If the load caps are too small, either the oscillator will not start (due to inadequate phase shift around the loop), or it will run at a 3rd, 5th, or 7th overtone frequency (due to inadequate suppression of higher overtones).

Capacitor Type and Tolerance. Ceramic caps of ±10% tolerance should be adequate for most applications.

Ceramic vs. Quartz. Manufacturers of ceramic resonators generally specify larger load cap values than quartz crystals. Quartz C is typically 15 to 30 pF and ceramic typically 100 pF.

Summary. For reliable and fast startup, capacitors should be as small as possible without resulting in overtone operation. The selection of these capacitors is critical and all of the factors covered in this note should be considered.

Feedback Element

The following text describes the specific parameters of a typical crystal:

Drive Level. There is no problem at frequencies greater than 1 MHz and V_{CC} = 5V since high frequency AT cut crystals are designed for relatively high drive levels (5-10 mw max).

A typical calculation for the approximate power dissipated in a crystal is:

$$P = 2R (\pi \times f \times C \times V_{CC})_2$$

Where. R = crystal resistance of 40 ohms, C = C1 + Co = 20 pF. The calculation gives a power dissipation of 2 mW at 16 MHz.

Series Resistance. Lower series resistance gives better performance but costs more. Higher R results in more power dissipation and longer startup, but can be compensated by reduced C1 and C2. This value ranges from 200 ohms at 1 MHz down to 15 ohms at 20 MHz.

Frequency. The frequency of oscillation in parallel resonant circuits is mostly determined by the crystal (99.5%). The external components have a negligible effect (0.5%) on frequency. The external components (C1,C2) and layout are chosen primarily for good startup and reliability reasons.

Frequency Tolerance (initial temperature and aging). Initial tolerance is typically ±.01%. Temperature tolerance is typically ±.005% over the temp range (-30 to +100 degrees C). Aging tolerance is also given, typically ±.005%.

Holder. Typical holder part numbers are HC6, 18, 25, 33, 44.

Shunt Capacitance. (Cs) typically <7 pf.

Mode. Typically the mode (fundamental, 3rd or 5th overtone) is specified as well as the loading configuration (series vs. parallel).

The ceramic resonator equivalent circuit is the same as shown in Figure 4. The values differ from those specified in the theory section. Note that the ratio of L/C is much lower than with quartz crystals. This gives a lower Q which allows a faster startup and looser frequency tolerance (typically ±0.9% over time and temperature) than quartz.

Layout

The following text explains trace layout as it affects the various stray capacitance parameters (Figure 9).

Traces and Placement. Traces connecting crystal, caps, and the IC oscillator pins should be as short and wide as possible (this helps reduce parasitic inductance and resistance). Therefore, the components (caps and crystal) should be placed as close to the oscillator pins of the IC as possible.

Grounding/Guarding. The traces from the oscillator pins of the IC should be guarded from all other traces (clock, V_{CC}, address/data lines) to reduce crosstalk. This is usually accomplished by keeping other traces away from the oscillator circuit and by placing a ground ring around the traces/components (Figure 9).

Measurement and Observation

Connection of a scope to either of the circuit nodes is likely to affect operation because the scope adds 3-30 pF of capacitance and 1M-10M ohms of resistance to the circuit.

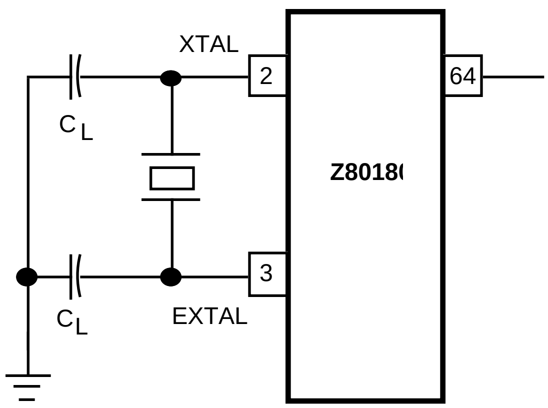
Indications of an Unreliable Design

There are two major indicators which are used in working designs to determine their reliability over full lot and temperature variations. They are:

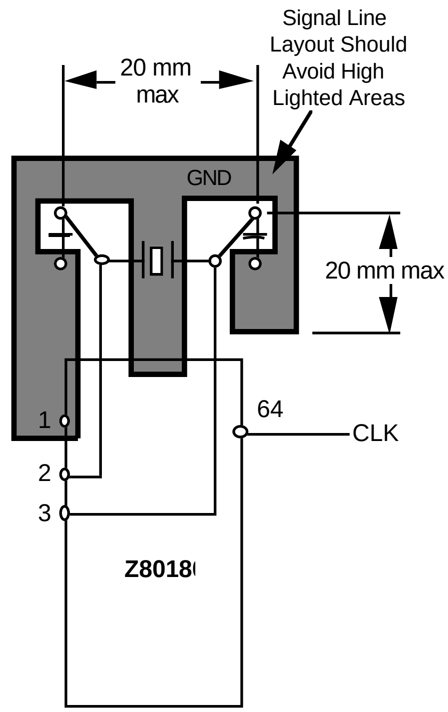
Start Up Time. If start up time is excessive, or varies widely from unit to unit, there is probably a gain problem. C1/C2 needs to be reduced; the amplifier gain is not adequate at frequency, or crystal Rs is too large.

PRACTICE: CIRCUIT ELEMENT AND LAY OUT CONSIDERATIONS (Continued)

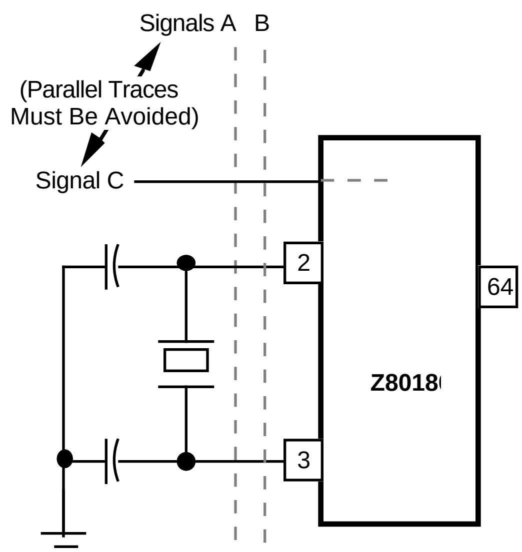
Output Level. The signal at the amplifier output should swing from ground to V_{CC}. This indicates there is adequate gain in the amplifier. As the oscillator starts up, the signal amplitude grows until clipping occurs, at which point, the loop gain is effectively reduced to unity and constant oscillation is achieved. A signal of less than 2.5 Vp-p is an indication that low gain may be a problem. Either C1/C2 should be made smaller or a low R crystal should be used.



Clock Generator Circuit



Board Design Example
(Top View)



- To prevent induced noice, the crystal and load capacitors should be physically located as close to the LSI as possible.
- Signal lines should not run parallel to the clock oscillator inputs. In particullar, the clock input circuitry and the system clock output (pin 64) should be separated as much as possible.
- V_{CC} power lines should be separated from the clock oscillator input circuitry.
- Resistivity between XTAL or EXTAL and the other pin should be greater than 10 MΩ

Figure 9. Circuit Board Design Rules

SUMMARY

Understanding the Theory of Operation of oscillators, combined with practical applications, should give designers enough information to design reliable oscillator circuits. Proper selection of crystals and load capacitors, along with good layout practices, results in a cost effective, trouble free design.Reference the following text for Zilog products with on-chip oscillators and their general/ specific requirements.

ZILOG PRODUCT USING ON-CHIP OSCILLATORS

Zilog products that have on-chip oscillators:

Z8® Family: All
Z80®: C01, C11, C13, C15, C50, C90, 180, 181, 280
Z8000®: 8581
Communications Products: SCC™, ISCC™, ESCC™

ZILOG CHIP PARAMETERS

The following are some recommendations on values/parameters of components for use with Zilog on-chip oscillators. These are only recommendations; no guarantees are made by performance of components outside of Zilog ICs. Finally, the values/parameters chosen depend on the application. This App Note is meant as a guideline to making these decisions. Selection of optimal components is always a function of desired cost/performance tradeoffs.

Note: All load capacitance specs include stray capacitance.

Z8 Family

General Requirements:

Crystal Cut: AT cut, parallel resonant, fundamental mode
Crystal Co: < 7 pF for all frequencies.
Crystal Rs: < 100 ohms for all frequencies.
Load Capacitance: 10 to 22 pf, 15 pF typical.

Specific Requirements:

8604: xtal or ceramic, f = 1 - 8 MHz.
8600/10: f = 8 MHz.
8601/03/11/13: f = 12.5 MHz.
8602: xtal or ceramic, f = 4 MHz.
8680/81/82/84/91: f = 8, 12, 16, MHz.
8671: f = 8 MHz.
8612: f = 12, 16 MHz.
86C08/E08: f = 8, 12 MHz.
86C09/19: xtal/resonator, f = 8 MHz, C = 47 pf max.
86C00/10/20/30: f = 8, 12, 16 MHz
86C11/21/91/40/90: f = 12, 16, 20 MHz.
86C27/97: f = 4, 8 MHz.
86C12: f = 12, 16 MHz.
Super8 (all): f = 1 - 20 MHz.

Z8000 Family (8581 only)

General Requirements:

Crystal cut: AT cut, parallel resonant, fundamental mode.
Crystal Co: < 7 pF for all frequencies.
Crystal Rs: < 150 ohms for all frequencies.
Load capacitance: 10 to 33 pF.

Z80 Family

General Requirements:

Crystal cut: AT cut, parallel resonant, fundamental mode.
Crystal Co: < 7 pF for all frequencies.
Crystal Rs: < 60 ohms for all frequencies.
Load capacitance: 10 to 22 pF.

Specific Requirements:

84C01: C1 = 22 pF, C2 = 33 pF (typ); f = DC to 10 MHz.
84C90: DC to 8 MHz.
84C50: same as 84C01.
84C11/13/15: C1 = C2 = 20 -33 pf; f = 6 -10 MHz
80180: f = 12, 16, 20 MHz (Fxtal = 2 x sys. clock).
80280: f = 20 MHz (Fxtal = 2 x Fsysclk).
80181: TBD.

Communications Family

General Requirements:

Crystal cut: AT cut, parallel resonant, fundamental mode.
Crystal Co: < 7 pF for all frequencies.
Crystal Rs: < 150 ohms for all frequencies.
Load capacitance: 20 to 33 pF.
Frequency: cannot exceed PCLK.

Specific Requirements:

8530/85C30/SCC: f = 1 - 6 MHz (10 MHz SCC), 1 - 8.5 MHz (8 MHz SCC).
85130/ESCC (16/20 MHz), f = 1 - 16.384 MHz.
16C35/ISCC: f = 1 -10 MHz.

REFERENCES MATERIALS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Intel Corp., Application Note AP-155, “Oscillators for Micro Controllers”, order #230659-001, by Tom Williamson, Dec. 1986.

Motorola 68HC11 Reference Manual.

National Semiconductor Corp., App Notes 326 and 400.

Zilog, Inc., Steve German; Figures 4 and 8.

Zilog, Inc., Application Note, “Design Considerations Using Quartz Crystals with Zilog Components” - Oct. 1988.

Data Sheets; CTS Corp. Knights Div., Crystal Oscillators.