# Power-supply margining circuit for LDOs using a precision DAC

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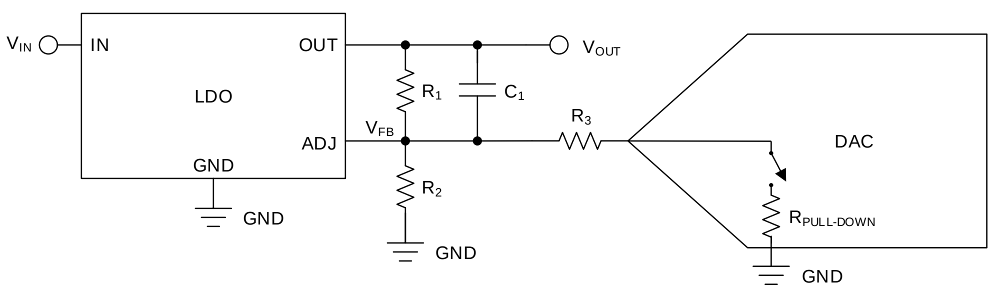
## Design Goals

| Power Supply (VDD) | Nominal Output | Margin High | Margin Low |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5V | 3.3V | 3.3V + 10% | 3.3V – 10% |

## Design Description

A power-supply margining circuit is used for tuning the output of a power converter. This is done either to adjust the offset and drift of the power supply output or to program a desired value at the output. Adjustable power supplies like Low-Dropout Regulators (LDOs) and DC/DC converters provide a feedback or adjust input that is used to set the desired output. A precision voltage output digital-to-analog converter (DAC) is suitable for controlling the power-supply output linearly. The following image shows an example power-supply margining circuit. Typical applications of power-supply margining is in Test and Measurement, Communications Equipment, and Power Delivery.




## Design Notes

1. Choose a DAC with the required resolution, pulldown resistor value, and output range.
2. Derive the relationship of the DAC output to $V_{OUT}$.
3. Choose $R_1$ based on typical current through the feedback circuit.
4. Calculate the start-up or nominal value of $V_{DAC}$ considering the power-down and power-up conditions of the DAC.
5. Select $R_2$, and $R_3$ such that the desired start-up output voltage is met along with the DAC output voltage range for the desired tuning range.
6. Calculate the margin low and margin high DAC outputs.
7. Choose a compensation capacitor to achieve the desired step response.

**Design Steps**

1. Select the LDO TPS79501 device for the calculations. The DAC53608 device is an ultra-low cost, 10-bit, 8-channel, unipolar output DAC suitable for such applications
2. The output voltage of the power supply is given by:

$$V_{OUT} = V_{REF} + I_1 R_1 = V_{REF} + (I_2 + I_3) R_1$$

where

- $I_1$ is the current flowing through $R_1$
- $I_2$ is the current flowing through $R_2$
- $I_3$ is the current flowing through $R_3$

DACs in this application typically include power-down mode, which includes an internal pulldown resistor at the voltage output. Hence, replacing the values of the currents in the previous equation yields:

- When the DAC is in *Power Down* mode:

$$V_{OUT} = V_{REF} + \left( \left( \frac{V_{REF}}{R_2} \right) + \left( \frac{V_{REF}}{R_3 + R_{PULL\text{-}DOWN}} \right) \right) R_1$$

- When the DAC output is powered-up:

$$V_{OUT} = V_{REF} + \left( \left( \frac{V_{REF}}{R_2} \right) + \left( \frac{V_{REF} - V_{DAC}}{R_3} \right) \right) R_1$$

For DAC53608, $R_{PULL\text{-}DOWN}$ is 10kΩ. For the LDO part number TPS79501, the value of $V_{REF}$ is 1.225V.

3. $R_1$ can be calculated by the following method.
The current through the FB pin of TPS79501 is 1µA. To make this current negligible, $I_1$ should be >> $I_{FB}$. Choose $I_1$ to be 50µA. Calculate $R_1$ as follows:

$$R_1 = \frac{V_{OUT} - V_{REF}}{I_1} = 41.5\ k\Omega$$

The nominal value of $I_1$ can be given by:

- When the DAC is in *Power Down* mode

$$I_{1-Nom} = \left( \frac{V_{REF}}{R_2} \right) + \left( \frac{V_{REF}}{R_3 + 10\ k\Omega} \right)$$

- When the DAC output is powered-up

$$I_{1-Nom} = \left( \frac{V_{REF}}{R_2} \right) + \left( \frac{V_{REF} - V_{DAC}}{R_3} \right)$$

The values of $I_1$ at *Margin High* and *Margin Low* outputs are given by:

$$I_{1\text{-HIGH}} = \frac{V_{OUT\text{-HIGH}} - V_{REF}}{R_1} = 57.95\ \mu A$$

$$I_{1\text{-LOW}} = \frac{V_{OUT\text{-LOW}} - V_{REF}}{R_1} = 42.05\ \mu A$$

$$I_{1\text{-HIGH}} - I_{1\text{-Nom}} = I_{1\text{-Nom}} - I_{1\text{-LOW}} = 7.65\ \mu A$$

4. The nominal or startup value of $V_{DAC}$ can be calculated using the following method:

To make sure the 10-kΩ resistor does not impact when the DAC is transitioning from power-down to power-up, the power-up value for the DAC voltage can be calculated with:

$$\frac{V_{REF}}{R_3 + 10\ k\Omega} = \frac{V_{REF} - V_{DAC}}{R_3}$$

The previous equation can be further simplified to:

$$V_{DAC} = V_{REF} \left( \frac{10\ k\Omega}{R3 + 10\ k\Omega} \right)$$

5. The values of $R_2$ and $R_3$ can be calculated as follows:

   If the power-up or nominal value of $V_{DAC}$ is kept at one-third of $V_{REF}$, that is, 408.3mV, then $R_3$ will be 2 × 10kΩ = 20kΩ. $R_2$ can be calculated as:

   $$\frac{V_{REF}}{R_2} + \frac{V_{REF}}{R_3 + 10\,k\Omega} = 50\mu A$$

   Replacing the value of $R_3$, $R_2$ can be calculated to equal 133kΩ.

6. Subtracting the *Margin High* and *Nominal* values of $I_1$ and the corresponding equations, we get

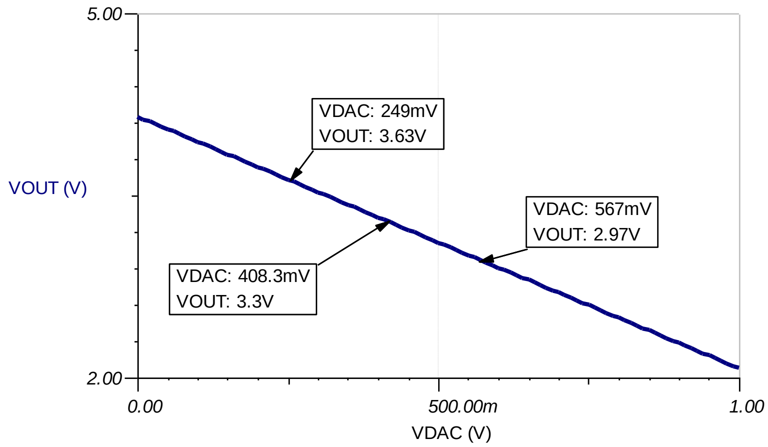
   $$\frac{V_{REF} - V_{DAC}}{R_3} - \frac{V_{REF}}{R_3 + 10\ k\Omega} = 7.95\ \mu A$$

   So, the *Margin High* value of $V_{DAC}$ will be 249mV and similarly, the *Margin Low* value can be calculated as 567mV from the following equation:

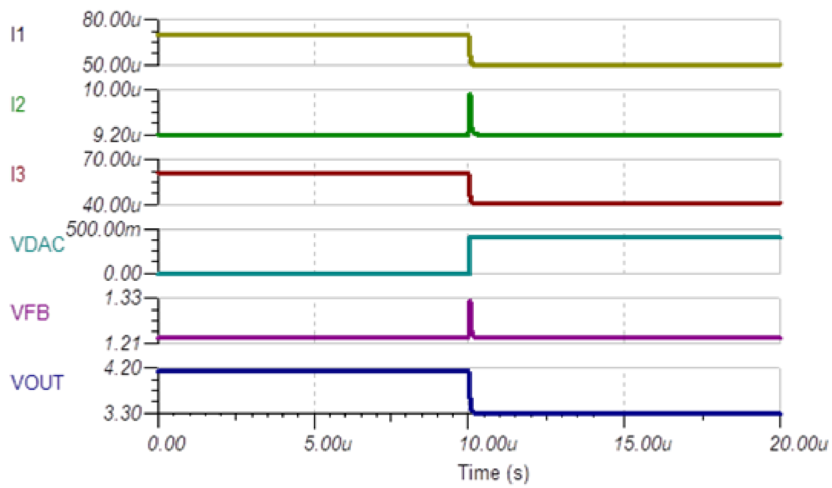
   $$\frac{V_{REF}}{R_3 + 10\ k\Omega} - \frac{V_{REF} - V_{DAC}}{R_3} = 7.95\ \mu A$$

7. The step response of this circuit without a compensation capacitor has some overshoot and ringing as shown in the following curves. This kind of transient response can cause errors at the load circuits. To minimize this, use a compensation capacitor $C_1$. The value of this capacitance is usually obtained through simulation. A comparative output shows the waveforms with a compensation capacitor of 22pF.

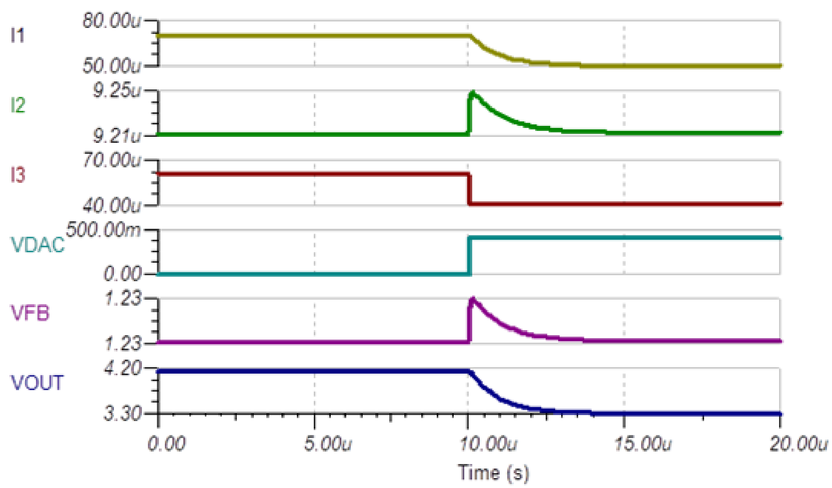
### DC Transfer Characteristics




### Small Signal Step Response Without Compensation




### Small-Signal Step Response With $C_1$= 22pF



## Design Featured Devices and Alternative Parts

| Device | Key Features | Link |
|---|---|---|
| DAC53608 | 8-channel 10-bit, I2C interface, buffered-voltage-output DAC | http://www.ti.com/product/DAC53608 |
| DAC60508 | 8-channel, true 12-bit, SPI, voltage-output DAC with precision internal reference | http://www.ti.com/product/DAC60508 |
| DAC60501 | 12-bit, 1-LSB INL, DAC with precision internal reference | http://www.ti.com/product/DAC60501 |
| DAC8831 | 16-bit, ultra-low power, voltage output DAC | http://www.ti.com/product/DAC8831 |
| TPS79501-Q1 | Automotive catalog single output LDO, 500mA, adj.(1.2 to 5.5V), low-noise, high PSRR | http://www.ti.com/product/TPS79501-Q1 |

## Design References

See *Analog Engineer's Circuit Cookbooks* for TI's comprehensive circuit library.

## Link to Key Files

TINA source files – http://www.ti.com/lit/zip/sbam415.

## For direct support from TI Engineers use the E2E community

e2e.ti.com

## Revision History

| Revision | Date | Change |
|---|---|---|
| A | September 2019 | Updated circuit image on first page.<br>Fixed typographical error in the first equation on the third page. |

# IMPORTANT NOTICE AND DISCLAIMER



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