7 spreadCycle and Classic Chopper

While stealthChop is a voltage mode PWM controlled chopper, spreadCycle is a cycle-by-cycle current control. Therefore, it can react extremely fast to changes in motor velocity or motor load. The currents through both motor coils are controlled using choppers. The choppers work independently of each other. In Figure 7.1 the different chopper phases are shown.

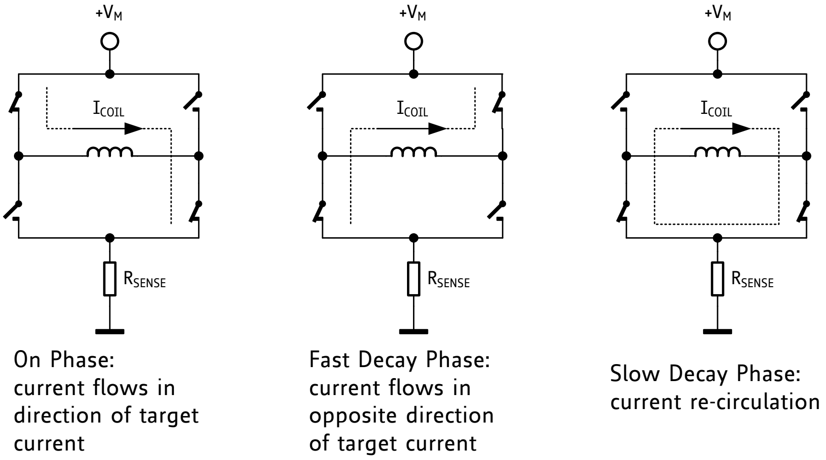

Figure 7.1 Chopper phases

Although the current could be regulated using only on phases and fast decay phases, insertion of the slow decay phase is important to reduce electrical losses and current ripple in the motor. The duration of the slow decay phase is specified in a control parameter and sets an upper limit on the chopper frequency. The current comparator can measure coil current during phases when the current flows through the sense resistor, but not during the slow decay phase, so the slow decay phase is terminated by a timer. The on phase is terminated by the comparator when the current through the coil reaches the target current. The fast decay phase may be terminated by either the comparator or another timer.

When the coil current is switched, spikes at the sense resistors occur due to charging and discharging parasitic capacitances. During this time, typically one or two microseconds, the current cannot be measured. Blanking is the time when the input to the comparator is masked to block these spikes.

There are two cycle-by-cycle chopper modes available: a new high-performance chopper algorithm called spreadCycle and a proven constant off-time chopper mode. The constant off-time mode cycles through three phases: on, fast decay, and slow decay. The spreadCycle mode cycles through four phases: on, slow decay, fast decay, and a second slow decay.

The chopper frequency is an important parameter for a chopped motor driver. A too low frequency might generate audible noise. A higher frequency reduces current ripple in the motor, but with a too high frequency magnetic losses may rise. Also, power dissipation in the driver rises with increasing frequency due to the increased influence of switching slopes causing dynamic dissipation. Therefore, a compromise needs to be found. Most motors are optimally working in a frequency range of 16 kHz to 30 kHz. The chopper frequency is influenced by a number of parameter settings as well as by the motor inductivity and supply voltage.

Hint
A chopper frequency in the range of 16 kHz to 30 kHz gives a good result for most motors when using spreadCycle. A higher frequency leads to increased switching losses.

Three parameters are used for controlling both chopper modes:

Parameter	Description	Setting	Comment
TOFF	Sets the slow decay time (*off time*). This setting also limits the maximum chopper frequency. For operation with stealthChop, this parameter is not used, but it is required to enable the motor. In case of operation with stealthChop only, any setting is OK. Setting this parameter to zero completely disables all driver transistors and the motor can free-wheel.	0	chopper off
		1…15	off time setting N_{CLK}= 12 + 32*$TOFF$ (1 will work with minimum blank time of 24 clocks)
TBL	Selects the comparator *blank time*. This time needs to safely cover the switching event and the duration of the ringing on the sense resistor. For most applications, a setting of 1 or 2 is good. For highly capacitive loads, e.g. when filter networks are used, a setting of 2 or 3 will be required.	0	16 t_{CLK}
		1	24 t_{CLK}
		2	36 t_{CLK}
		3	54 t_{CLK}
chm	Selection of the *chopper mode*	0	spreadCycle
		1	classic const. off time
TPFD	Adds passive fast decay time after bridge polarity change. Starting from 0, increase value, in case the motor suffers from mid-range resonances.	0…15	Fast decay time in multiple of 128 clocks (128 clocks are roughly 10µs)

7.1 spreadCycle Chopper

The spreadCycle (patented) chopper algorithm is a precise and simple to use chopper mode which automatically determines the optimum length for the fast-decay phase. The spreadCycle will provide superior microstepping quality even with default settings. Several parameters are available to optimize the chopper to the application.

Each chopper cycle is comprised of an on phase, a slow decay phase, a fast decay phase and a second slow decay phase (see Figure 7.3). The two slow decay phases and the two blank times per chopper cycle put an upper limit to the chopper frequency. The slow decay phases typically make up for about 30%-70% of the chopper cycle in standstill and are important for low motor and driver power dissipation.

Calculation of a starting value for the slow decay time *TOFF*:

EXAMPLE:

Target Chopper frequency: 25kHz.
Assumption: Two slow decay cycles make up for 50% of overall chopper cycle time

$$t_{OFF} = \frac{1}{25kHz} * \frac{50}{100} * \frac{1}{2} = 10\mu s$$

For the *TOFF* setting this means:

$$TOFF = (t_{OFF} * f_{CLK} - 12)/32$$

With 12 MHz clock this gives a setting of TOFF=3.4, i.e. 3 or 4.
With 16 MHz clock this gives a setting of TOFF=4.6, i.e. 4 or 5.

The hysteresis start setting forces the driver to introduce a minimum amount of current ripple into the motor coils. The current ripple must be higher than the current ripple which is caused by resistive losses in the motor in order to give best microstepping results. This will allow the chopper to precisely regulate the current both for rising and for falling target current. The time required to introduce the current ripple into the motor coil also reduces the chopper frequency. Therefore, a higher hysteresis setting will lead to a lower chopper frequency. The motor inductance limits the ability of the chopper to follow a changing motor current. Further the duration of the on phase and the fast decay must be longer than the blanking time, because the current comparator is disabled during blanking.

It is easiest to find the best setting by starting from a low hysteresis setting (e.g. *HSTRT*=0, *HEND*=0) and increasing *HSTRT*, until the motor runs smoothly at low velocity settings. This can best be checked when measuring the motor current either with a current probe or by probing the sense resistor voltages (see Figure 7.2). Checking the sine wave shape near zero transition will show a small ledge between both half waves in case the hysteresis setting is too small. At medium velocities (i.e. 100 to 400 fullsteps per second), a too low hysteresis setting will lead to increased humming and vibration of the motor.

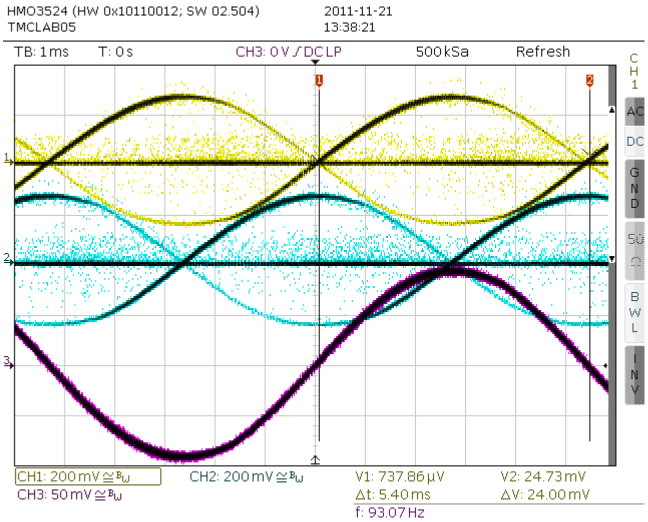

Figure 7.2 No ledges in current wave with sufficient hysteresis (magenta: current A, yellow & blue: sense resistor voltages A and B)

A too high hysteresis setting will lead to reduced chopper frequency and increased chopper noise but will not yield any benefit for the wave shape.

Quick Start
For a quick start, see the Quick Configuration Guide in chapter 18.
For detail procedure see Application Note AN001 - *Parameterization of spreadCycle*

As experiments show, the setting is quite independent of the motor, because higher current motors typically also have a lower coil resistance. Therefore, choosing a low to medium default value for the hysteresis (for example, effective hysteresis = 4) normally fits most applications. The setting can be optimized by experimenting with the motor: A too low setting will result in reduced microstep accuracy, while a too high setting will lead to more chopper noise and motor power dissipation. When measuring the sense resistor voltage in motor standstill at a medium coil current with an oscilloscope, a too low setting shows a fast decay phase not longer than the blanking time. When the fast decay time becomes slightly longer than the blanking time, the setting is optimum. You can reduce the off-time setting, if this is hard to reach.

The hysteresis principle could in some cases lead to the chopper frequency becoming too low, e.g. when the coil resistance is high when compared to the supply voltage. This is avoided by splitting the hysteresis setting into a start setting (*HSTRT+HEND*) and an end setting (*HEND*). An automatic hysteresis decrementer (HDEC) interpolates between both settings, by decrementing the hysteresis value stepwise each 16 system clocks. At the beginning of each chopper cycle, the hysteresis begins with a value which is the sum of the start and the end values (*HSTRT+HEND*), and decrements during the cycle, until either the chopper cycle ends or the hysteresis end value (*HEND*) is reached. This way, the chopper frequency is stabilized at high amplitudes and low supply voltage situations, if the frequency gets too low. This avoids the frequency reaching the audible range.

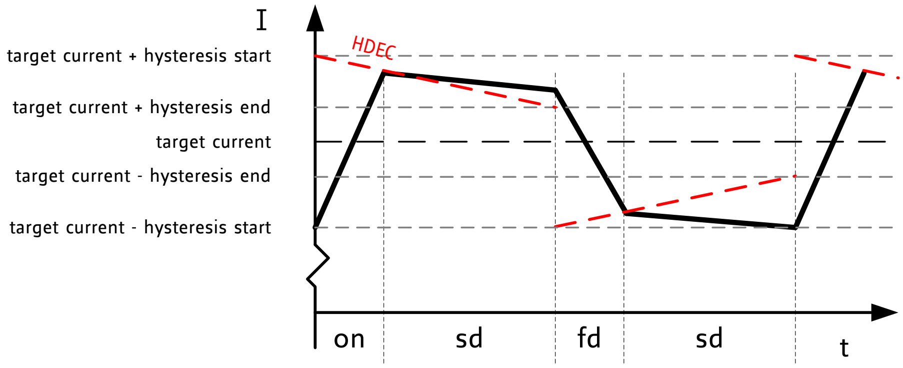

Figure 7.3 spreadCycle chopper scheme showing coil current during a chopper cycle

Two parameters control spreadCycle mode:

Parameter	Description	Setting	Comment
HSTRT	*Hysteresis start* setting. This value is an offset from the hysteresis end value *HEND*.	0…7	*HSTRT*=1…8 This value adds to HEND.
HEND	*Hysteresis end* setting. Sets the hysteresis end value after a number of decrements. The sum *HSTRT+HEND* must be ≤16. At a current setting of max. 30 (amplitude reduced to 240), the sum is not limited.	0…2	-3…-1: negative HEND
		3	0: zero HEND
		4…15	1…12: positive HEND

With HSTRT=0 and HEND=0, the hysteresis is 0 (off).

EXAMPLE:

A hysteresis of 4 has been chosen. You might decide to not use hysteresis decrement. In this case set:

HEND=6 (sets an effective end value of 6-3=3)
HSTRT=0 (sets minimum hysteresis, i.e. 1: 3+1=4)

In order to take advantage of the variable hysteresis, we can set most of the value to the HSTRT, i.e. 4, and the remaining 1 to hysteresis end. The resulting configuration register values are as follows:

HEND=0 (sets an effective end value of -3)
HSTRT=6 (sets an effective start value of hysteresis end +7: 7-3=4)

Hint
Highest motor velocities sometimes benefit from setting TOFF to 2 or 3 and a short TBL of 2 or 1.

7.2 Classic Constant Off Time Chopper

The classic constant off time chopper is an alternative to spreadCycle. Perfectly tuned, it also gives good results. Also, the classic constant off time chopper (automatically) is used in combination with fullstepping in dcStep operation.

The classic constant off-time chopper uses a fixed-time fast decay following each on phase. While the duration of the on phase is determined by the chopper comparator, the fast decay time needs to be long enough for the driver to follow the falling slope of the sine wave, but it should not be so long that it causes excess motor current ripple and power dissipation. This can be tuned using an oscilloscope or evaluating motor smoothness at different velocities. A good starting value is a fast decay time setting similar to the slow decay time setting.

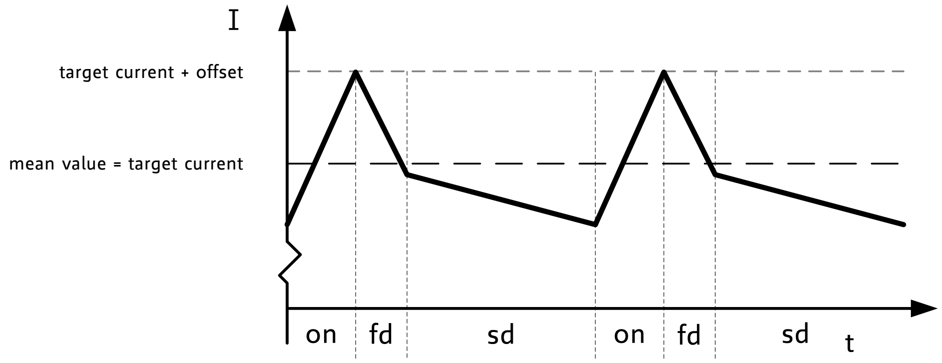

Figure 7.4 Classic const. off time chopper with offset showing coil current

After tuning the fast decay time, the offset should be tuned for a smooth zero crossing. This is necessary because the fast decay phase makes the absolute value of the motor current lower than the target current (see Figure 7.5). If the zero offset is too low, the motor stands still for a short moment during current zero crossing. If it is set too high, it makes a larger microstep. Typically, a positive offset setting is required for smoothest operation.

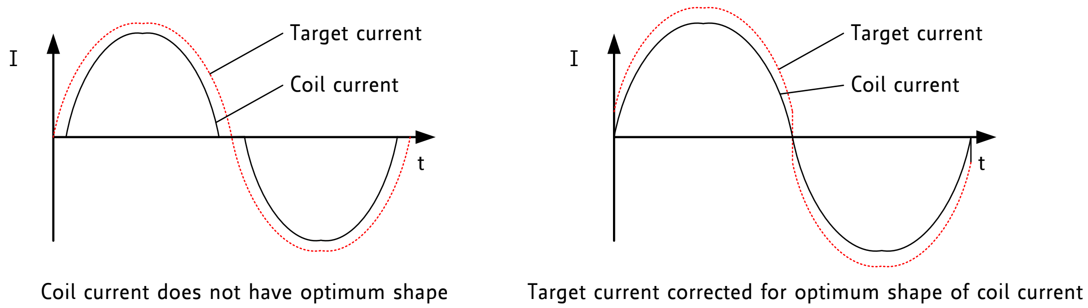

Figure 7.5 Zero crossing with classic chopper and correction using sine wave offset

Three parameters control constant off-time mode:

Parameter	Description	Setting	Comment
TFD (*fd3* & *HSTRT*)	*Fast decay time* setting. With CHM=1, these bits control the portion of fast decay for each chopper cycle.	0	slow decay only
		1…15	duration of fast decay phase
OFFSET (*HEND*)	*Sine wave offset*. With CHM=1, these bits control the sine wave offset. A positive offset corrects for zero crossing error.	0…2	negative offset: -3…-1
		3	no offset: 0
		4…15	positive offset 1…12
disfdcc	Selects usage of the *current comparator* for termination of the *fast decay* cycle. If current comparator is enabled, it terminates the fast decay cycle in case the current reaches a higher negative value than the actual positive value.	0	enable comparator termination of fast decay cycle
		1	end by time only