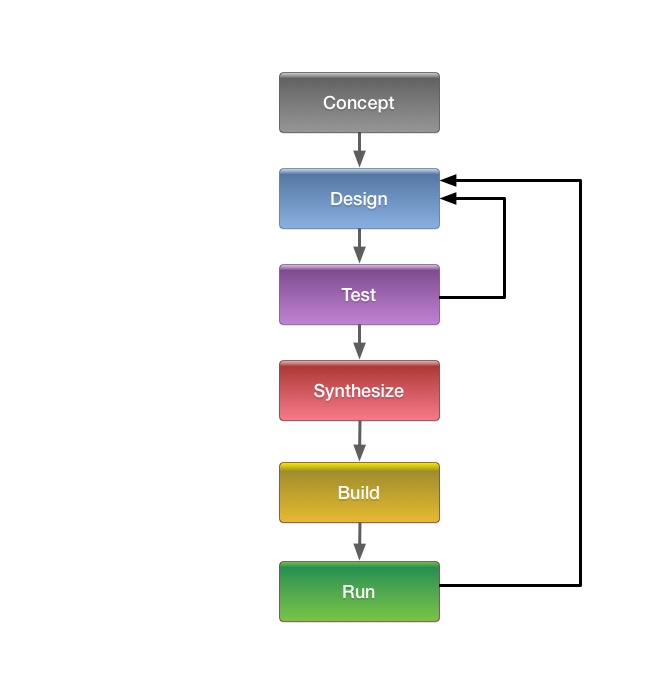
Step 2

Fair warning. You are about to enter a battle zone. This is not easy! It is fraught with peril and can be frustrating. Things worth doing are rarely easy. Some boards are easier to work with than others. Step 2 is where you sort out your particular development environment and document the steps required for someone else to duplicate it.

At all stages, we are going to share our work and help each other out. Radio functions are not mysteries. They are well-studied and can be mastered. Persistence reveals results!

# Learn FPGA Design Flow with a Frequency Divider Circuit

## Adapted from Chapter 2 of “Make: FPGAs”



Above is a diagram of how things like FPGA design almost always happen.

We begin with a concept.

We design an implementation.

We test the implementation, use what we learn to adjust the design, and then test the result. We may do this many times!

Once we’re satisfied with the result, we synthesize, build, and run. When we run the completed design, we may find that we need to make additional adjustments to the design, and we have to go back to the design-and-test loop. This is normal!

## Hardware Hacking Hello World

You may already be familiar with the Hello World concept, where the phrase “Hello World” is printed out on a screen or readout. In the software world, “Hello World” is often the first real test that the system can be programmed and is working.

On the hardware side, when you want to test that the system can be programmed and is working, the iconic “Hello World” is blinking an LED.

For this step, we’re going to combine blinking an LED with dividing down a fast signal to get a slower one. We’re going to take a fast clock signal and use division to create two slower ones. The slower ones will each control the blinking of an LED. We will also have a signal that holds the LEDs. This signal will be called reset.

In order to do this step with physical hardware, **you will have to choose some sort of evaluation board or development module or testbed. You need an FPGA that can be programmed.**

For Phase 4 Ground, we are going to be using a variety of SDRs. Do you have an SDR with an FPGA that Vivado can talk to? Great! If you need one, then this is your chance to go get one! You can tell whoever you need to that Michelle said it was ok.

Vivado talks to mid-scale and up Xilinx parts like Ultrascale, Virtex-7, Kintex-7, Artix-7, and Zynq-7000 series. If you have a board with any of these parts, then Vivado is what you need. It’s what you installed in Step 1.

If you want to use smaller Xilinx parts, like the Spartan-3, Spartan-6, Virtex-4, Virtex-5, and Virtex-6 families, then you will need the (discontinued) Xilinx ISE. Xilinx ISE is in “sustaining”, which means no new versions will be released, but you can still install it.

We strongly recommend Vivado. It’s the current version of the toolchain from Xilinx. The chips supported by Vivado are what we’re going to be dealing with.

Different boards may need different versions of Vivado. That’s ok. Install whatever is called out for your board. Don’t fight it, just install it.

For example, let’s look at the Red Pitaya.

http://pavel-demin.github.io/red-pitaya-notes/led-blinker/

These are a set of notes to get the Red Pitaya cooperating with Vivado, and also blinking an LED. Do you have a Red Pitaya? Then the link above is a great start!

If you’re using something like a USRP x310, then Xilinx Vivado 2016.2 Design Suite is what will be installed.

If you’re using something like a USRP x310, then Xilinx Vivado 2015.2 Design Suite is what you’ll need. Don’t bang your head against a wall. If something blows up, back off and double-check.

Getting things set up for development can be hard. Tribal lore, unclear directions, things that change out from under you – all of this and more is considered to be part of the embedded development landscape.

This is not an excuse. Difficult or badly designed environments should not be normal or put up with without complaint. However, dealing with the innards of an FPGA is not the same as firing up a word processor and printing off a document. With great power comes great responsibility and almost always a steep learning curve. A good attitude (and sympathetic co-conspirators) is irreplaceable!