



AN1019: Using the NodeTest Application

NodeTest is a pre-built application supplied by Silicon Labs for the purpose of performing RF evaluation, functional testing, and hardware validation on development boards or custom-designed hardware. It contains RF test functions pertinent to IEEE 802.15.4-based radio configurations such as those used by the Silicon Labs EmberZNet PRO networking stack on platforms such as the EFR32MG family.

Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) and other non-802.15.4-based modulation schemes are not supported by NodeTest. RF testing of other modulation schemes requires a different application or mechanism, such as BLE's Direct Test Mode (DTM) or a test application based on Silicon Labs Radio Abstraction Interface Layer (RAIL) libraries. For more information on DTM, refer to *AN1046: Bluetooth® Radio Frequency Physical Layer Evaluation*.

KEY POINTS

- Uploading and running the NodeTest application.
- Performing a simple functional test using NodeTest.

1. Introduction

NodeTest is a pre-built application supplied by Silicon Labs for the purpose of performing RF evaluation, functional testing, and hardware validation on development boards or custom-designed hardware. The NodeTest application provides low-level control of the radio and can be used to perform these tasks:

- Characterize radio performance.
- Set manufacturing and stack parameters (tokens).
- Verify proper functionality after manufacturing.
- Control the radio properly for the certification process required by many countries.

The NodeTest application supports a command parser and provides results in a consistent, easy-to-parse format.

While no source code is available for NodeTest, most of NodeTest's RF test functionality is also available through the Manufacturing Library API ("mfglib") exposed in EmberZNet PRO through the mfglib library (for SOC platforms) or mfglib serial commands (for NCP platforms). As a result, custom-built applications can incorporate this functionality natively in an application designed specifically for their board configuration without relying on the pre-built NodeTest firmware.

The NodeTest application is included in the EmberZNet PRO stack installation directory, which contains a set of /build/nodetest-xxx subdirectories for a given processor/architecture variant, xxx. These directories contain .s37 and .bl file images that can be installed onto a chip through the normal SerialWire- or JTAG-based firmware loading procedure.

Note: The NodeTest file images are built to expect a bootloader in the main flash.

Before loading and running NodeTest, you must upload a bootloader. If you do not see serial output indicating that NodeTest is starting up after having reset the device and pressed a carriage return on one of the serial ports, check that you've uploaded a bootloader to the device and haven't erased the main flash block since that upload was performed.

Note: Every time NodeTest resets, it will not automatically print any characters. Instead, NodeTest will listen on both the Physical UART ("serial 1" in software) and, if supported, the Virtual UART (an emulated serial port hosted over the SerialWire debug interface, enumerated as "serial 0" in software) looking for a carriage return (Enter key). Whichever port NodeTest finds a carriage return on first will become the port that NodeTest uses for all serial interaction until NodeTest resets again.

2. Uploading and Running NodeTest

NodeTest can be installed using either Simplicity Studio to upload the application or using a Command Line Interface (CLI) with Simplicity Commander. The following is an example of loading NodeTest and an accompanying bootloader using the Simplicity Commander CLI:

```
$ commander flash nodetest.s37 ..\..\tool\bootloader-efr32mg1p132f256gm48\serial-uart-bootloader\serial-uart-bootloader.s37
```

Replace the `bootloader-efr32mg1p132f256gm48` string with the proper `bootloader-xxx` subdirectory for your variant and bootloader choice.

The command above flashes the NodeTest firmware and serial UART bootloader firmware to the USB-connected target device during a single process.

Note: Additional `--serialno` or `--ip` arguments can be added to the command to specify a particular target WSTK. For more information on how to program chips using Simplicity Commander from a command line, refer to *UG162: Simplicity Commander Reference Guide*.

Once the upload completes, you can interact with NodeTest via the TTL USART pins of the Expansion Header (EXP HDR) connector of the WSTK or the virtual COM port provided by the WSTK's USB-to-serial connection (known as "VCOM"). Using the VCOM port is done by accessing Simplicity Studio's **Launch Console** action from the Adapters view for your USB-connected connected WSTK and attaching to the **Serial 1** tab to interact with the VCOM port. This process can also be used for Ethernet-connected WSTK boards. If your NodeTest version and WSTK firmware have support for Virtual UART, a similar process can be used to access NodeTest via Virtual UART on an Ethernet-connected WSTK. Just choose the **Serial 0** tab of the Simplicity Studio console after selecting **Launch Console**.

Press **Enter** in the Console window or serial terminal window to start the NodeTest application.

Note: If you are using the Physical UART directly rather than via the VCOM USB-to-serial interface through the WSTK, you must configure your serial terminal program to 115200 bps, no parity bits, 1 stop bit.

3. NodeTest Commands

A Return key initiates the NodeTest application on reset. This displays the power-up prompt, ending in the > (greater than) symbol. Pressing the Return key at the prompt will always cause another prompt to be displayed. Executing the `help` command causes NodeTest to print a list of all available commands with a brief description of the commands. The commands are listed by functional modules. All input parameters to NodeTest are specified in hexadecimal without a "0x" prefix.

4. Performing Functional Testing

This section describes the procedure to use the NodeTest application to perform a simple send/receive test on a target device to determine its range and generally test its radio functionality. A typical usage scenario for the NodeTest application is measurement of Packet Error Rate (PER). PER is defined in the 802.15.4 specification as the percentage of transmitted packets that are not detected correctly. The NodeTest application provides two commands, `rx` and `tx`, that are designed to interoperate with each other across two nodes running this application.

Note: When programming a device for test or retest, use the `--erase` option to ensure that all previous calibration data is erased. Silicon Labs recommends erasing the flash contents of a device prior to testing to ensure the calibration is executed at the time the device is tested.

1. Connect a device known to be in good operating order either to your computer or to a different computer through a serial port.
2. Upload NodeTest to the known good device and then run it.
3. Make sure that NodeTest is installed and running on the target device (you should see the `>` prompt).
4. Set both devices to a channel by typing `setchannel X`, where `X` is the channel in hex.
5. Optional: Set a power level on the test device by typing `settxpower X`, where `X` is the power level in hex.
6. On the known good device, type `rx`, which sets the device to receive and display statistics for each packet received. Type `e` to exit the test.
7. On the test device, type `tx X` to transmit `X` packets where `X` is in hex. (Note that `tx 0` sends infinite packets.) Type `e` to exit the test.

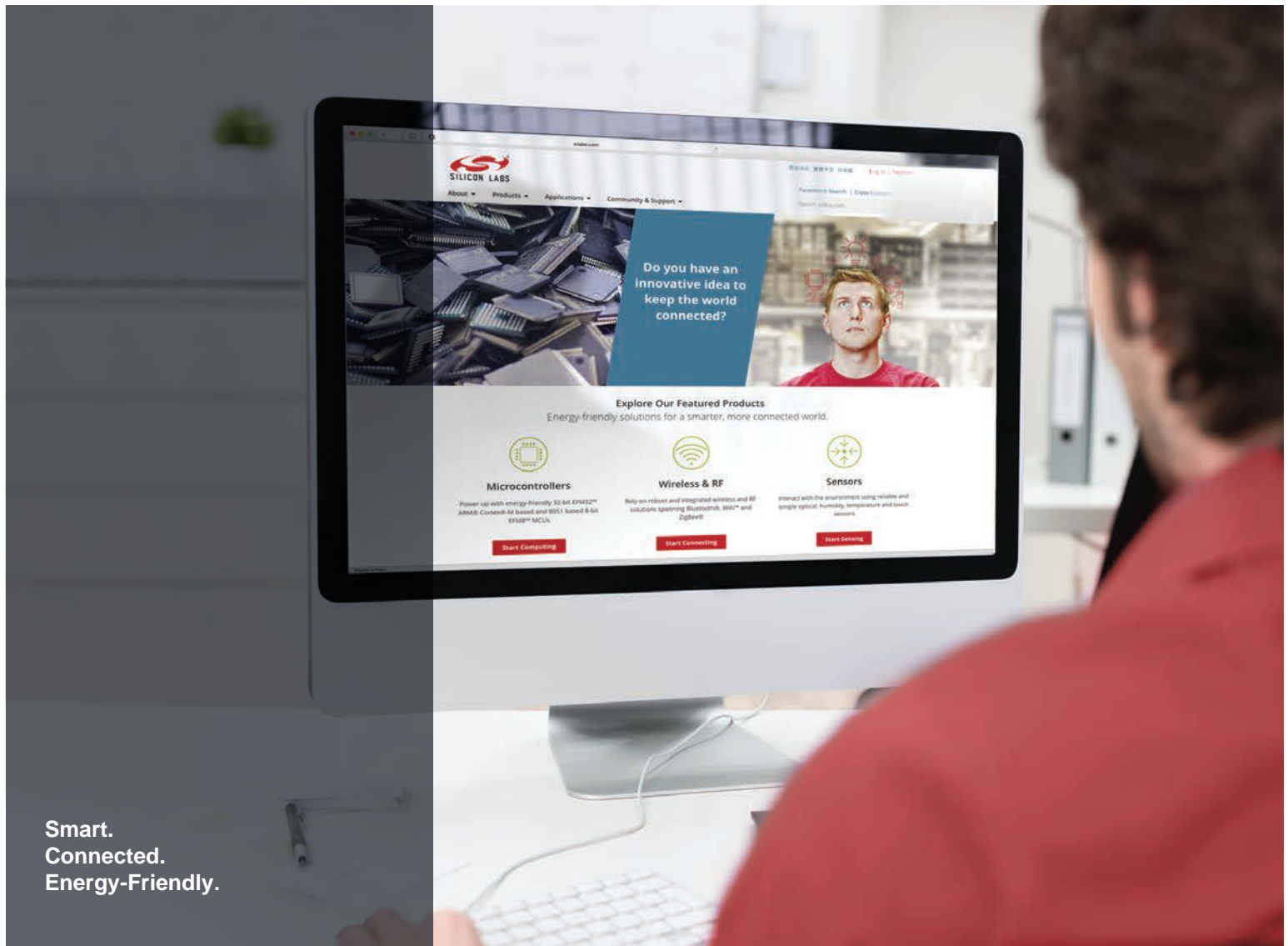
This command will transmit 10 (hex `a`) packets of the form required for PER analysis. For actual PER analysis, send 1000 or more packets.

8. Reverse this procedure to test receiving on the test device.

Note: The fourth column in the display output, labeled “per”, shows the packet error rate. For this value to be accurate, the two devices being used must be configured as described in section [Uploading and Running the NodeTest Application](#), and the receiver should not hear any other devices. Exiting the test and restarting clears the values and reset the values being displayed. Your packet lengths may be different than the ones shown in the example.

```
> rx
{{(rx)} test start ('e'nd)}
#{{(rx)}
{num} {oflo} {seq} {per} {err} {lqi} {rssi} {ed} {gain} {status} {time} {fp} {length}}
{ { 1} { 0} { 1} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x0000659F} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 2} { 0} { 2} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x0000CD76} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 3} { 0} { 3} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x0001354E} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 4} { 0} { 4} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x00019D26} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 5} { 0} { 5} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x000204FE} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 6} { 0} { 6} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x00026CD6} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 7} { 0} { 7} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x0002D4AE} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 8} { 0} { 8} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x00033C86} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 9} { 0} { 9} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x0003A45D} {0} {0x12} }
{ { 10} { 0} { 10} { 0} { 0} { 0xFF} {-41} {0xEC} {0x00000090} {0x4000} {0x00040C35} {0} {0x12} }
```

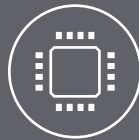
Note: NodeTest attempts to print packet data as fast as it can, but it is possible to receive packets faster than NodeTest can print. Therefore, there may be gaps in the printed packets



Smart.
Connected.
Energy-Friendly.



Products
www.silabs.com/products



Quality
www.silabs.com/quality



Support and Community
community.silabs.com

Disclaimer

Silicon Labs intends to provide customers with the latest, accurate, and in-depth documentation of all peripherals and modules available for system and software implementers using or intending to use the Silicon Labs products. Characterization data, available modules and peripherals, memory sizes and memory addresses refer to each specific device, and "Typical" parameters provided can and do vary in different applications. Application examples described herein are for illustrative purposes only. Silicon Labs reserves the right to make changes without further notice to the product information, specifications, and descriptions herein, and does not give warranties as to the accuracy or completeness of the included information. Without prior notification, Silicon Labs may update product firmware during the manufacturing process for security or reliability reasons. Such changes will not alter the specifications or the performance of the product. Silicon Labs shall have no liability for the consequences of use of the information supplied in this document. This document does not imply or expressly grant any license to design or fabricate any integrated circuits. The products are not designed or authorized to be used within any FDA Class III devices, applications for which FDA premarket approval is required, or Life Support Systems without the specific written consent of Silicon Labs. A "Life Support System" is any product or system intended to support or sustain life and/or health, which, if it fails, can be reasonably expected to result in significant personal injury or death. Silicon Labs products are not designed or authorized for military applications. Silicon Labs products shall under no circumstances be used in weapons of mass destruction including (but not limited to) nuclear, biological or chemical weapons, or missiles capable of delivering such weapons. Silicon Labs disclaims all express and implied warranties and shall not be responsible or liable for any injuries or damages related to use of a Silicon Labs product in such unauthorized applications.

Trademark Information

Silicon Laboratories Inc.®, Silicon Laboratories®, Silicon Labs®, SiLabs® and the Silicon Labs logo®, Bluegiga®, Bluegiga Logo®, ClockBuilder®, CMEMS®, DSPLL®, EFM®, EFM32®, EFR®, Ember®, Energy Micro, Energy Micro logo and combinations thereof, "the world's most energy friendly microcontrollers", Ember®, EZLink®, EZRadio®, EZRadioPRO®, Gecko®, Gecko OS, Gecko OS Studio, ISOModem®, Precision32®, ProSLIC®, Simplicity Studio®, SiPHY®, Telegesis, the Telegesis Logo®, USBXpress®, Zentri, the Zentri logo and Zentri DMS, Z-Wave®, and others are trademarks or registered trademarks of Silicon Labs. ARM, CORTEX, Cortex-M3 and THUMB are trademarks or registered trademarks of ARM Holdings. Keil is a registered trademark of ARM Limited. Wi-Fi is a registered trademark of the Wi-Fi Alliance. All other products or brand names mentioned herein are trademarks of their respective holders.



Silicon Laboratories Inc.
400 West Cesar Chavez
Austin, TX 78701
USA

<http://www.silabs.com>