

BUCK CONVERTERS

SUBMITTED BY

Name	SAP ID
Sujal C Jawarkar	60002231154
Krushna Sonwane	60002231151
Payal Vaishnav	60002230126
Shravan Lingayat	60002231063

IPD Project Group No. 51

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Shri Vile Parle Kelavani Mandal's
Dwarkadas J. Sanghvi College of Engineering
Plot no. U-15, JVPD Scheme, Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg,
Vile Parle (W), Mumbai – 400 056

Introduction:-

A buck converter is a type of DC-DC power converter that steps down the input voltage to produce a lower, regulated output voltage while maintaining high efficiency. The name "buck" refers to the way the converter "bucks" or reduces the voltage from a higher level to a lower level. Due to its efficiency and versatility, the buck converter has become a fundamental building block in power electronics, widely used in various applications such as battery-powered devices, power supply units, and embedded systems.

Buck converters belong to a broader category of switch-mode power supplies (SMPS), which operate by switching electronic components on and off rapidly, allowing energy to be transferred efficiently. Unlike linear regulators, which reduce voltage by dissipating power as heat, buck converters achieve high efficiency by using an energy storage element, typically an inductor, to smooth out the switching process and regulate the output.

With the increasing demand for energy-efficient power solutions, buck converters have gained widespread popularity across various sectors. Whether it's powering a microcontroller in an embedded system or stepping down voltage in an electric vehicle, buck converters play a crucial role in modern electronics by providing stable and efficient power delivery. Understanding how a buck converter works and the factors that influence its performance is essential for designing effective and reliable power management systems.

At its core, a buck converter works by regulating the amount of time that energy flows from the input to the output using a switch (typically a MOSFET), a diode, an inductor, and a capacitor. This switching action occurs at a high frequency (often tens or hundreds of kilohertz), and the energy is stored and transferred in controlled bursts. The buck converter relies on a process called pulse-width modulation (PWM) to adjust the duty cycle of the switch, which ultimately determines the output voltage.

The efficiency of buck converters, which can typically exceed 90%, makes them an attractive choice for applications where power conservation is critical, such as battery-operated devices. Additionally, by operating at high switching frequencies, buck converters allow for smaller components, reducing the size and weight of the overall circuit.

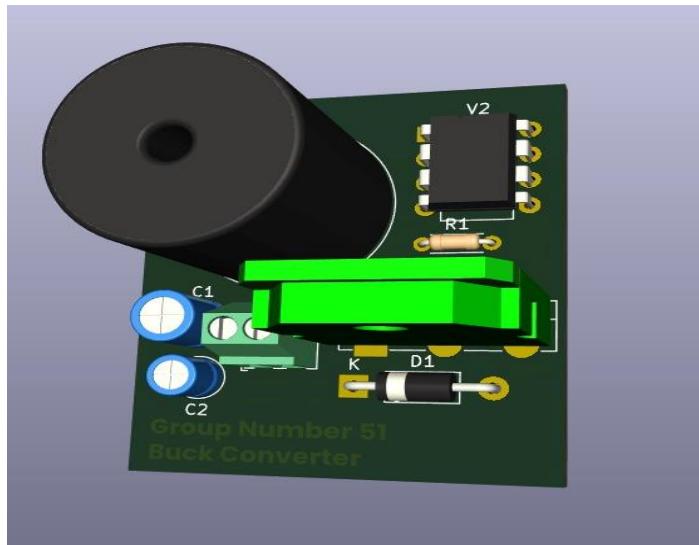


Fig. Buck converter

Importance of buck converters:-

Buck converters are widely used because they offer a highly efficient way to step down voltage in power-sensitive applications. As modern electronics become more complex and power-hungry, managing power distribution efficiently is critical. Here's why buck converters are indispensable in today's technology landscape:

1. **High Efficiency:** Buck converters provide significant efficiency advantages over traditional linear regulators, especially in applications where there is a large difference between input and output voltages. For instance, a buck converter can maintain efficiency levels of 85-95%, making it ideal for portable devices and energy-sensitive systems.
2. **Wide Application Range:** Buck converters can handle a wide range of input voltages and are scalable for different output power levels, making them useful in everything from small handheld gadgets to large industrial systems.
3. **Compact Design:** Operating at high switching frequencies allows buck converters to use smaller passive components (inductors and capacitors), which results in a more compact and lightweight power solution. This is critical in modern devices where space is limited, such as smartphones, laptops, and wearable devices.
4. **Flexibility:** With proper control circuitry, the output voltage of a buck converter can be dynamically adjusted by modifying the duty cycle of the PWM signal. This ability to fine-tune the output makes buck converters versatile for varying power demands.
5. **Thermal Efficiency:** Because buck converters switch power electronically rather than dissipating it as heat, they produce much less heat than linear regulators. This reduces the need for extensive cooling measures like heat sinks or fans, contributing to more energy-efficient and thermally optimized designs.

Design Considerations:-

1. Inductor Selection

The inductor is a key component in any buck converter design. The inductance value affects the ripple current, response time, and overall efficiency. Larger inductors reduce ripple but increase the size and cost of the converter. Smaller inductors are lighter and more compact but can lead to higher ripple and lower efficiency.

2. Switching Frequency

The switching frequency of the buck converter has a direct impact on its efficiency and size. Higher switching frequencies allow for smaller inductors and capacitors, making the circuit more compact. However, higher frequencies also result in increased switching losses in the MOSFET, which can reduce efficiency.

3. Duty Cycle and Output Voltage

The output voltage is determined by the input voltage and the duty cycle of the switch. A higher duty cycle (longer on-time) results in a higher output voltage, while a lower duty cycle results in a lower output voltage. In most designs, feedback mechanisms (like a PWM controller) are used to automatically adjust the duty cycle to regulate the output voltage.

4. Efficiency

Buck converters are known for their high efficiency compared to linear regulators, especially when the input voltage is much higher than the output voltage. Typical efficiencies range from 80% to 95%, depending on the design and load conditions.

Basic Calculation of a Buck Converter's Power Stage:-

Parameters of the Power Stage

- 1) $V_{in} = 24V$
- 2) $V_{out} = 5V$
- 3) $I_{in} = 1A$
- 4) $P_{in} = 24Watt$

$$P_{out} = 24 \times 0.90 = 21.6Watt$$

$$I_{out} = P_{out}/V_{out} = 21.6/5 = 4.32A$$

A) Maximum Switch Current

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Maximum Duty Cycle: } D &= V_{out}/V_{in} \times \eta \\ &= 0.231 \quad (\text{where efficiency } \eta = 90\%) \end{aligned}$$

Assume we want 30% ripple current:

$$\Delta I_L = 0.3 \times I_{out} = 0.3 \times 4.32A = 1.296A$$

Assuming Inductor value $L = 33\mu H$

$$\begin{aligned} f_{min} = f_s &= \frac{(V_{in} - V_{out}) \times D}{\Delta I_L \times L} \\ &= 102.623\text{KHz} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Maximum Switch current} &= I_{sw(max)} = \Delta I_L / 2 + I_{out} \\ &= 4.968A \end{aligned}$$

B) Inductor Selection

$$\begin{aligned} L &= \frac{V_{out} \times (V_{in} - V_{out})}{\Delta I_L \times f_s \times V_{in}} \\ &= 29.76\mu H \end{aligned}$$

C) Rectifier Diode Selection

$$\begin{aligned} \text{average forward current of the rectifier diode } I_f &= I_{out} \times (1 - D) \\ &= 3.32 A \end{aligned}$$

power dissipation of the diode $PD = IF \times VF$

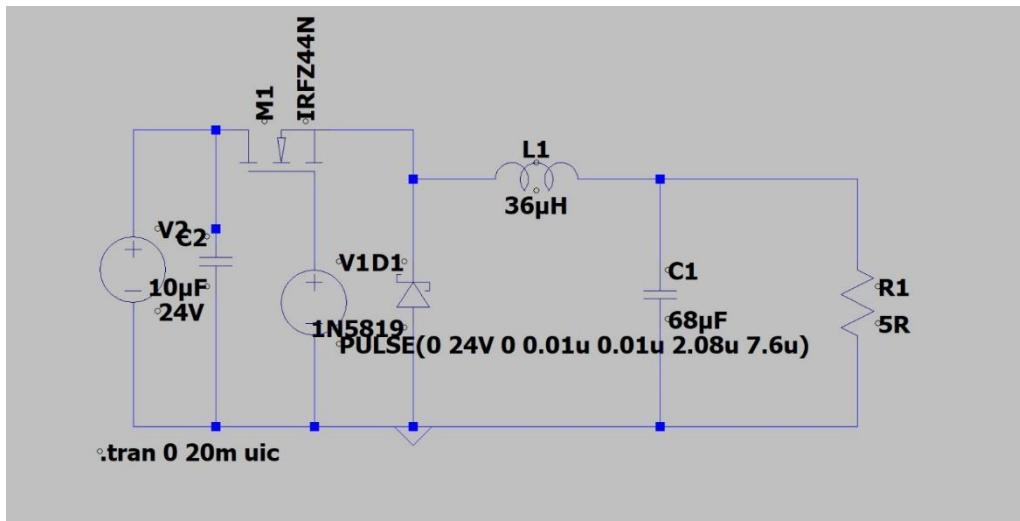
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D) Output Capacitor

Ripple Voltage ΔV_{out} , Lets assume it 1%
 $\Delta V_{out} = 0.01 \times V_{out} = 0.05$

$$C_{out} = \Delta I_L / 8 \times f_s \times \Delta V_{out} = 31.57 \mu F$$

Circuit and working:-



This is a basic schematic of a buck converter, a DC-DC step-down converter that reduces the input voltage to a lower output voltage while maintaining energy efficiency. Here's how it works:

Components:

1. V1 (24V): This is the input DC voltage source, providing 24V to the circuit.
2. Q1 (IRFZ44N): A MOSFET switch, which controls the on-off cycle of the input voltage.
3. D1 (1N5819): A Schottky diode that allows current to bypass the MOSFET when it is off, ensuring continuous current flow to the output.
4. L1 (36µH): An inductor that smooths out the current and stores energy when the MOSFET is on, releasing it when the MOSFET is off.
5. C1 (100µF): An output capacitor that reduces voltage ripple and provides a steady output voltage.
6. R1 (5Ω): Represents the load, consuming the power supplied by the buck converter.
7. C2 (10µF): An input capacitor that helps in reducing noise and stabilizing the input voltage.
8. V2 (VPULSE): A pulse signal that controls the gate of the MOSFET Q1. This pulse determines the on and off state of the MOSFET, effectively controlling the output voltage.

Working:-

- **On-state (MOSFET Q1 ON):**
 - When the pulse from VPULSE turns on the MOSFET Q1, current flows from the 24V input source through the inductor (L1) and supplies power to the load (R1).
 - The inductor L1 stores energy in the form of a magnetic field. The output capacitor (C1) supplies the load during this time and smooths out the voltage.
- **Off-state (MOSFET Q1 OFF):**

- When Q1 is turned off (when the pulse goes low), the current path is broken, but the inductor L1 resists sudden changes in current. It continues to supply current to the load through the diode D1.
 - The diode D1 ensures that the current keeps flowing to the load even when the MOSFET is off.
 - The capacitor C1 also helps smooth the voltage, ensuring continuous power to the load.
- **Pulse Width Modulation (PWM):**
 - The pulse width from VPULSE controls the duty cycle of the MOSFET Q1. A higher duty cycle (longer on-time) increases the average voltage across the load, while a lower duty cycle reduces it.
 - The duty cycle and frequency of the PWM determine how much energy is transferred to the output, thus controlling the output voltage. In this case, the duty cycle seems to be approximately 27% ($2.08\mu s$ on-time / $7.6\mu s$ period).

Output waveform:-



Applications of Buck Converters:-

Buck converters are employed in a vast array of applications where efficiency and precise voltage control are essential. Some common applications include:

1. **Consumer Electronics:** Modern electronic devices such as smartphones, tablets, and laptops rely on buck converters to efficiently manage power. These converters are used to step down the battery voltage (often around 5V or 12V) to lower voltages needed by internal components like processors, sensors, and communication modules.
2. **Battery-Powered Devices:** Buck converters play a critical role in battery-powered systems, where efficient power regulation is essential to prolong battery life. For example, in laptops or electric vehicles, the battery supplies high voltage, but many subsystems need lower, stable voltages for proper operation.
3. **Embedded Systems and Microcontrollers:** Many embedded systems require a stable low voltage (3.3V or 5V) for microcontrollers or sensors, which is provided by buck converters stepping down the higher input voltage from a power supply.
4. **Electric Vehicles (EVs):** In electric and hybrid vehicles, buck converters manage the distribution of power from the high-voltage battery (200V-400V) to various subsystems like lights, infotainment systems, and auxiliary devices, which typically require lower voltages.
5. **Industrial Power Supplies:** In industrial settings, where robustness and efficiency are paramount, buck converters are used to regulate voltage for sensors, control circuits, and communication devices that operate at lower voltages than the main supply.
6. **Solar Power Systems:** Buck converters are utilized in solar energy applications to step down the voltage from photovoltaic cells to levels suitable for charging batteries or powering low-voltage devices.

Conclusion:-

Buck converters have become a cornerstone of modern power management systems due to their ability to efficiently step down voltage, their versatility, and their compact size. From consumer electronics to industrial systems, these converters play a crucial role in providing stable, regulated power in a wide range of applications. Their efficiency, particularly in handling large differences between input and output voltages, makes them indispensable for battery-powered devices and energy-sensitive applications.

Understanding the basic operation, components, and design considerations of a buck converter allows engineers to tailor power solutions for specific needs, ensuring optimal performance and reliability across various industries. Whether for portable electronics, renewable energy systems, or automotive applications, buck converters are essential in today's energy-conscious world, providing a highly efficient and scalable solution for DC-DC power conversion.

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