Using the Synopsys[®] Design Constraints Format Application Note

Version 2.1, December 2017



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Preface

This preface includes the following sections:

- What's New in This Release
- About This Application Note

What's New in This Release

The Synopsys Design Constraints (SDC) format version 2.1 includes the following changes:

- The set_clock_sense command is no longer an SDC command in SDC version 2.1. If you have existing scripts use the set_clock_sense command, you must either change the command to set_sense -type clock or use the read_sdc -version 2.0 command to read in the script.
- The set_sense command is now supported:

```
set_sense
[-type clock | data]
[-non_unate]
[-positive]
[-negative]
[-clock_leaf]
[-stop_propagation]
[-pulse pulse_type]
[-clocks clock_list]
pin_list
```

• The following command options are now supported:

```
set_clock_latency
  [-dynamic]

set_timing_derate
  [-static]
  [-dynamic]
  [-increment]

set_max_delay
  [-ignore_clock_latency]

set_min_delay
  [-ignore_clock_latency]
```

• The set_driving_cell -multiply_by option is no longer supported.

About This Application Note

This application note describes the methodology and commands used to transfer constraint information between Synopsys tools and third-party tools using the SDC format.

SDC version 2.1 was introduced in December 2017. It is the recommended SDC version.

Conventions

The following conventions are used in Synopsys documentation.

Convention	Description
Courier	Indicates syntax, such as write_file.
Courier italic	Indicates a user-defined value in syntax, such as write_file design_list.
Courier bold	Indicates user input—text you type verbatim—in examples, such as
	<pre>prompt> write_file top</pre>
[]	Denotes optional arguments in syntax, such as write_file [-format fmt]
	Indicates that arguments can be repeated as many times as needed, such as pin1 pin2 pinN
I	Indicates a choice among alternatives, such as low medium high
Ctrl+C	Indicates a keyboard combination, such as holding down the Ctrl key and pressing C.
\	Indicates a continuation of a command line.
1	Indicates levels of directory structure.
Edit > Copy	Indicates a path to a menu command, such as opening the Edit menu and choosing Copy.

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Using the Synopsys Design Constraints Format

The Synopsys Design Constraints (SDC) format is used to specify the design intent, including the timing, power, and area constraints for a design. SDC is based on the tool command language (Tcl). The Synopsys Design Compiler, IC Compiler, IC Compiler II, and PrimeTime tools use the SDC description to synthesize and analyze a design. In addition, these tools can generate SDC descriptions for and read SDC descriptions from third-party tools.

Figure 1-1 shows the SDC-based flow for sharing constraint information between Synopsys tools and third-party EDA tools.

Figure 1-1 SDC-Based Constraint Interface



To learn about the SDC-based interface, see the following sections:

- About the SDC Format
- Managing Large SDC Files

About the SDC Format

SDC is a Tcl-based format. All commands in an SDC file conform to the Tcl syntax rules.

You use an SDC file to communicate the design intent, including timing and area requirements between EDA tools. An SDC file contains the following information:

- SDC version (optional)
- SDC units (optional)
- Design constraints
- · Design objects
- Comments (optional)

Note:

An SDC file does not contain commands to load or link the design. You must perform these tasks before reading an SDC file.

Specifying the SDC Version

SDC version 2.1 was introduced in December 2017. It is the recommended SDC version.

If you do not specify a version, the assumed version depends on the tool reading the file. Set this variable in your SDC file to ensure compatibility.

To specify the SDC version in an SDC file, begin the file with the following command:

set sdc_version value

Specifying Units

The set_units command specifies the units used in the SDC file. You can specify the units for capacitance, resistance, time, voltage, current, and power. For the complete list of options for the set units command, see "SDC Syntax" in Appendix A.

Specifying Design Constraints

Specify design constraints using constraint commands. You can break up a long command line into multiple lines by using the backslash character (\) to indicate command continuation. The SDC format consists of the constraint commands listed in Table 1-1.

Note:

The SDC format supports a subset of the command arguments, as compared to the arguments supported by individual tools. For a listing of the SDC arguments, see "SDC Syntax" in Appendix A.

Table 1-1 SDC Commands

Commands
set_operating_conditions
set_wire_load_min_block_size
set_wire_load_mode
set_wire_load_model
set_wire_load_selection_group
set_drive set_driving_cell
set_fanout_load
set_input_transition
set_load
set_port_fanout_number
set_max_capacitance
set_min_capacitance
set_max_fanout
set_max_transition

Table 1-1 SDC Commands (Continued)

Type of information	Commands
Timing constraints	create_clock
	create_generated_clock
	group_path
	set_clock_gating_check
	set_clock_groups
	set_clock_latency
	set_sense
	set_clock_transition
	set_clock_uncertainty
	set_data_check
	set_disable_timing
	set_ideal_latency
	set_ideal_network
	set_ideal_transition
	set_input_delay
	set_max_time_borrow
	set_min_pulse_width
	set_output_delay
	set_propagated_clock
	set_resistance
	set_timing_derate
Timing exceptions	set_false_path
	set_max_delay
	set_min_delay
	set_multicycle_path
Area constraints	set_max_area
Multivoltage and power	create_voltage_area
optimization constraints	set_level_shifter_strategy
	set_level_shifter_threshold
	set_max_dynamic_power
	set_max_leakage_power

Table 1-1 SDC Commands (Continued)

set_case_analysis
set_logic_dc
set_logic_one
set_logic_zero

Specifying Design Objects

Most of the constraint commands require a design object as a command argument. SDC supports both implicit and explicit object specification.

If you specify a simple name for an object, the Synopsys tools determine the object type by searching for the object using a prioritized object list. The priority order varies by command and is documented in the tool's man page of each command. This is called implicit object specification.

To avoid ambiguity, explicitly specify the object type by using a nested object access command. For example, if you have a cell in the current instance named U1, the implicit specification is U1, while the explicit specification is [get_cells U1].

Table 1-2 shows the design objects supported by the SDC format and the access commands used for explicit object specification.

Note:

The SDC format supports a subset of the access command syntax, as compared to the syntax supported by individual tools. For a listing of the SDC syntax, see "SDC Syntax" in Appendix A.

Table 1-2 SDC Design Objects

Design object	Access command	Description
design	current_design	A container for cells. A block.
clock ¹	get_clocks all_clocks	A clock in a design. All clocks in a design.
port	<pre>get_ports all_inputs all_outputs</pre>	An entry point to or exit point from a design. All entry points to a design. All exit points from a design.
cell	get_cells	An instance of a design or library cell.
pin	get_pins	An instance of a design port or library cell pin.
net	get_nets	A connection between cell pins and design ports.
library	get_libs	A container for library cells.
lib_cell	get_lib_cells	A primitive logic element.
lib_pin	get_lib_pins	An entry point to or exit point from a lib_cell.
register	all_registers	A sequential logic cell.

^{1.} The clock design object includes both standard clocks and generated clocks.

Specifying Multiple Objects

Both the constraint commands and the object access commands follow the Tcl syntax rules. Use a Tcl list or wildcard characters to specify multiple objects. SDC supports the following wildcard characters:

- ? Matches exactly one character.
- Matches zero or more characters.

Note:

If you do not specify an object argument for an object access command, SDC interprets the command as if you specified the \ast wildcard character.

Specifying Hierarchical Objects

The reference point for all object specifications is the current instance. By default, the top-level design is the current instance. You can change the current instance by using the current_instance command.

In some cases, the character used to indicate hierarchy levels (the hierarchy separator character) is also used within design object names. This can lead to an ambiguous hierarchy definition within the SDC file.

The SDC format supports the following characters as hierarchy separator characters: slash (/), at sign (@), caret $(^)$, pound sign (#), period (.), and vertical bar (|). By default, the hierarchy separator is the slash (/).

To create an unambiguous hierarchy definition, the SDC file uses another character as the hierarchy separator character whenever a design uses a slash (/) within object names. Within the SDC file, a nondefault hierarchy separator character is specified either globally, using the set_hierarchy_separator statement, or locally, by using the -hsc option on the object access commands.

Specifying Buses

Specify buses using the Verilog-style naming convention *name*[index] and enclose the name in curly braces. For example,

```
create_clock -period 10 [get_clocks {CLK[0]}]
```

Adding Comments

You can add comments to an SDC file either as complete lines or as fragments after a command. To identify a line as a comment, start the line with a pound sign (#). For example,

```
# This is an SDC comment line.
```

Add inline comments using a semicolon to end the command, followed by the pound sign (#) to begin the comment. For example,

```
create_clock -period 10 [get_ports CLK]; # comment fragment
```

Using the -comment Option

To include user-specific comments, use the <code>-comment</code> option. The comment string associated with the specific command is written out when you use the <code>write_sdc</code> or <code>write_script</code> command. The tool issues a message if a comment is too long or the overall allocated storage is reached. The following SDC commands support the <code>-comment</code> option:

- create clock
- create_generated_clock
- group_path
- set_clock_groups
- set_false_path
- set max delay
- set_min_delay
- set multicycle path

The following example shows how to use the -comment option:

```
create_clock -period 10 [get_ports CLK] -comment "for blk1 in Test Mode"
```

Managing Large SDC Files

Because constraints are written in expanded form, the SDC file size can become large. In particular, using wildcard characters to specify timing exceptions can result in large SDC files. One way to reduce the disk space required for an SDC file is to compress the file using the UNIX gzip utility, as shown in Example 1-1.

Note:

You can use this method only on UNIX platforms with a Tcl-based tool.

Example 1-1 Tcl Procedure for Writing a Compressed SDC File

```
proc write_sdc_gzip {fname} {
   sh mknod my_pipe p
   sh gzip -c < my_pipe > $fname &
   write_sdc -output my_pipe
   sh rm my_pipe
}
```

The read_sdc command automatically detects gzip compressed files and uncompresses the files as it reads them. For example,

```
read_sdc design.sdc.gz
```



SDC Syntax

The following sections list the commands and arguments supported by SDC version 2.1:

- General-Purpose Commands
- Object Access Commands
- Timing Constraints
- Environment Commands
- Multivoltage and Power Optimization Commands

General-Purpose Commands

Table A-1 General-Purpose Commands

Command	Supported arguments
current_instance	[instance]
expr	arg1 arg2 argn
list	arg1 arg2 argn
set	variable_name value
set_hierarchy_separator	separator
set_units	[-capacitance cap_units]
	[-resistance res_unit]
	[-time time_unit]
	<pre>[-voltage voltage_units]</pre>
	[-current current_unit]
	[-power power_unit]

Object Access Commands

Table A-2 Object Access Commands

Command	Supported arguments
all_clocks	
all_inputs	<pre>[-level_sensitive] [-edge_triggered] [-clock clock_name]</pre>
all_outputs	<pre>[-level_sensitive] [-edge_triggered] [-clock clock_name]</pre>

Table A-2 Object Access Commands (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
all_registers	[-no_hierarchy]
(supported only by read_sdc)	[-hsc separator]
	[-clock clock_name]
	[-rise_clock clock_name]
	<pre>[-fall_clock clock_name]</pre>
	[-cells]
	[-data_pins]
	[-clock_pins]
	[-slave_clock_pins]
	[-async_pins]
	[-output_pins]
	[-level_sensitive]
	[-edge_triggered]
	[-master_slave]
current_design	
get_cells	[-hierarchical]
	[-regexp]
	[-nocase]
	-of_objects objects
	patterns
get_clocks	[-regexp]
	[-nocase]
	patterns
get_lib_cells	[-regexp]
	[-hsc separator]
	[-nocase]
	patterns
get_lib_pins	[-regexp]
	[-nocase]
	patterns

Table A-2 Object Access Commands (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments	
get_libs	[-regexp]	
	[-nocase]	
	patterns	
get_nets	[-hierarchical]	
	[-hsc separator]	
	[-regexp]	
	[-nocase]	
	-of_objects objects	
	patterns	
get_pins	[-hierarchical]	
	[-hsc separator]	
	[-regexp]	
	[-nocase]	
	-of_objects objects	
	patterns	
get_ports	[-regexp]	
	[-nocase]	
	patterns	

Timing Constraints

Table A-3 Timing Constraints

Command	Supported arguments
create_clock	-period <i>period_value</i>
	[-name clock_name]
	[-waveform edge_list]
	[-add]
	[-comment comment_string]
	[source_objects]
create_generated_clock	[-name clock_name]
	-source master_pin
	[-edges edge_list]
	[-divide_by factor]
	[-multiply_by factor]
	<pre>[-duty_cycle percent]</pre>
	[-invert]
	[-edge_shift shift_list]
	[-add]
	[-master_clock clock]
	[-combinational]
	[-comment comment_string]
	source_objects
group_path	[-name group_name]
	[-default]
	[-weight weight_value]
	[-from from_list]
	[-rise_from from_list]
	[-fall_from from_list]
	[-to to_list]
	[-rise_to to_list]
	[-fall_to to_list]
	[-through through_list]
	[-rise_through through_list]
	<pre>[-fall_through through_list]</pre>
	[-comment comment_string]

Table A-3 Timing Constraints (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_clock_gating_check	[-setup setup_value]
	[-hold hold_value]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-high]
	[-low]
	[object_list]
set_clock_groups	-group clock_list
	[-logically_exclusive]
	[-physically_exclusive]
	[-asynchronous]
	[-allow_paths]
	[-name name]
	[-comment comment_string]
set_clock_latency	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-min]
	[-max]
	[-source]
	[-dynamic]
	[-late]
	[-early]
	[-clock clock_list]
	delay
	object_list

Table A-3 Timing Constraints (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_sense	[-type clock data]
	[-non_unate]
	[-positive]
	[-negative]
	[-clock_leaf]
	[-stop_propagation]
	[-pulse pulse_type]
	[-clocks clock_list]
	pin_list
set_clock_transition	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-min]
	[-max]
	transition
	clock_list
set_clock_uncertainty	[-from from_clock]
	<pre>[-rise_from rise_from_clock]</pre>
	[-fall_from fall_from_clock]
	[-to to_clock]
	[-rise_to rise_to_clock]
	<pre>[-fall_to fall_to_clock]</pre>
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-setup]
	[-hold]
	uncertainty
	[object_list]

Table A-3 Timing Constraints (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_data_check	[-from from_object]
	[-to to_object]
	<pre>[-rise_from from_object]</pre>
	<pre>[-fall_from from_object]</pre>
	[-rise_to to_object]
	[-fall_to to_object]
	[-setup]
	[-hold]
	[-clock clock_object]
	value
set_disable_timing	[-from from_pin_name]
	[-to to_pin_name]
	cell_pin_list
set_false_path	[-setup]
	[-hold]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-from from_list]
	[-to to_list]
	-through through_list]
	<pre>[-rise_from rise_from_list]</pre>
	[-rise_to rise_to_list]
	[-rise_through rise_through_list]
	<pre>[-fall_from fall_from_list]</pre>
	[-fall_to fall_to_list]
	[-fall_through fall_through_list]
	[-comment comment_string]
set_ideal_latency	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-min]
	[-max]
	delay
	object_list

Table A-3 Timing Constraints (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_ideal_network	[-no_propagate]
	object_list
set_ideal_transition	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-min]
	[-max]
	transition_time
	object_list
set_input_delay	[-clock clock_name]
	[-reference_pin pin_port_name]
	[-clock_fall]
	[-level_sensitive]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-max]
	[-min]
	[-add_delay]
	[-network_latency_included]
	[-source_latency_included]
	delay_value
	port_pin_list

Table A-3 Timing Constraints (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_max_delay	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-from from_list]
	[-to to_list]
	[-through through_list]
	[-rise_from rise_from_list]
	[-rise_to rise_to_list]
	[-rise_through rise_through_list]
	<pre>[-fall_from fall_from_list]</pre>
	[-fall_to fall_to_list]
	<pre>[-fall_through fall_through_list]</pre>
	<pre>[-ignore_clock_latency]</pre>
	[-comment comment_string]
	delay_value
set_max_time_borrow	delay_value
	object_list
set_min_delay	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-from from_list]
	[-to to_list]
	[-through through_list]
	[-rise_from rise_from_list]
	[-rise_to rise_to_list]
	[-rise_through rise_through_list]
	<pre>[-fall_from fall_from_list]</pre>
	[-fall_to fall_to_list]
	[-fall_through fall_through_list]
	[-ignore_clock_latency]
	[-comment comment_string]
	delay_value

Table A-3 Timing Constraints (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_min_pulse_width	[-low]
	[-high]
	value
	[object_list]
set_multicycle_path	[-setup]
	[-hold]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-start]
	[-end]
	[-from from_list]
	[-to to_list]
	[-through through_list]
	[-rise_from rise_from_list]
	[-rise_to rise_to_list]
	[-rise_through rise_through_list]
	[-fall_from fall_from_list]
	[-fall_to fall_to_list]
	[-fall_through fall_through_list]
	[-comment comment_string]
	path_multiplier
set_output_delay	[-clock clock_name]
	<pre>[-reference_pin pin_port_name]</pre>
	[-clock_fall]
	[-level_sensitive]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-max]
	[-min]
	[-add_delay]
	[-network_latency_included]
	[-source_latency_included]
	delay_value
	port_pin_list
set_propagated_clock	object_list

Environment Commands

Table A-4 Environment Commands

Command	Supported arguments
set_case_analysis	value
	port_or_pin_list
	Note:
	value can be 0, 1, rising, or falling.
set_drive	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-min]
	[-max]
	resistance
	port_list
set_driving_cell	[-lib_cell lib_cell_name]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-min]
	[-max]
	[-library lib_name]
	[-pin pin_name]
	[-from_pin from_pin_name]
	[-dont_scale]
	[-no_design_rule]
	[-clock clock_name]
	[-clock_fall]
	[-input_transition_rise rise_time]
	<pre>[-input_transition_fall fall_time]</pre>
	port_list
set_fanout_load	value
	port_list
	-

Table A-4 Environment Commands (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_input_transition	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-min]
	[-max]
	[-clock clock_name]
	[-clock_fall]
	transition
	port_list
set_load	[-min]
	[-max]
	[-subtract_pin_load]
	[-pin_load]
	[-wire_load]
	value
	objects
set_logic_dc	port_list
set_logic_one	port_list
set_logic_zero	port_list
set_max_area	area_value
set_max_capacitance	value
	object_list
set_max_fanout	value
	object_list
set_max_transition	[-clock_path]
	[-data_path]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	value
	object_list

Table A-4 Environment Commands (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_min_capacitance	value
	object_list
set_operating_conditions	[-library lib_name]
	[-analysis_type <i>analysis_type</i>]
	[-max max_condition]
	[-min min_condition]
	[-max_library max_lib]
	[-min_library min_lib]
	[-object_list objects]
	[condition]
set_port_fanout_number	value
	port_list
set_resistance	[-min]
	[-max]
	value
	net_list
set_timing_derate	[-cell_delay]
	[-cell_check]
	[-net_delay]
	[-data]
	[-clock]
	[-early]
	[-late]
	[-rise]
	[-fall]
	[-static]
	[-dynamic]
	[-increment]
	derate_value
	[object_list]

Table A-4 Environment Commands (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments
set_voltage	<pre>[-min min_case_value] [-object_list list_of_power_nets] max_case_voltage</pre>
set_wire_load_min_block_size	size
set_wire_load_mode	mode_name
set_wire_load_model	<pre>-name model_name [-library lib_name] [-min] [-max] [object_list]</pre>
set_wire_load_selection_group	<pre>[-library lib_name] [-min] [-max] group_name [object_list]</pre>

Multivoltage and Power Optimization Commands

Table A-5 Multivoltage and Power Optimization Commands

Command	Supported arguments
create_voltage_area	<pre>-name name [-coordinate coordinate_list] [-guard_band_x float] [-guard_band_y float] cell_list</pre>
set_level_shifter_strategy	[-rule rule_type]
set_level_shifter_threshold	<pre>[-voltage float] [-percent float]</pre>

Table A-5 Multivoltage and Power Optimization Commands (Continued)

Command	Supported arguments	
set_max_dynamic_power	<pre>power [unit]</pre>	
set_max_leakage_power	power	
bot_man_reanage_power	[unit]	