# Technical Article Getting Started with PMBus

🔑 Texas Instruments

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I'm working as a product marketing engineer intern, and immediately received several tasks working with many different devices in the TI arsenal. The biggest problem I had was understanding the differences between them. One word that kept coming up (among many) was PMBus – PMBus with telemetry, PMBus without telemetry, etc. Every piece of TI support material highlighted this distinction, but what was it? After answering a few (actually many) questions, my manager asked me to research what PMBus actually was and how to use it, and write a blog post about what I learned for other people in my shoes.

## So, What Exactly is PMBus?

Power management (PM)Bus is an I<sup>2</sup>C-based communication standard for power-supply management; in other words, it's a monitoring and warning system. It's like when a car starts making a dinging noise because your door is open or you haven't buckled up. In PMBus, the car is the device, you are the host, and the dinging is the signal PMBus gives so that the host can decide how to respond. In a device, PMBus can monitor input/output (I/O) voltage/current, temperature, fan speed, etc.

The four types of communication between the host and device are command, control, sequence and monitor. The difference between I<sup>2</sup>C and PMBus is similar to the difference between a sentence and a language, respectively. I<sup>2</sup>C can write out commands to push through, but it is prone to many errors and is very basic. I<sup>2</sup>C is preferable if you want to transfer a lot of data, since with PMBus you have to be more specific with commands. This need to be explicit enables more complex commands, along with error prevention.

#### What Benefits Does PMBus Provide?

Since PMBus can monitor many different parameters in real time, you can program the device to react to certain parameters in a way that will increase efficiency and reliability while decreasing power consumption, which translates to cost savings. The basic form of PMBus has adaptive voltage scaling (AVS) (reduced power usage), multiple rail control (supply sequencing) and power-supply monitoring capabilities. AVS allows you to measure values such as temperature and pressure and use that information for optimizing power, current or voltage. Telemetry is the function of converting the measured information into binary data for optimization and analysis.

## How Do You Set up and Use PMBus?

TI has a huge variety of devices that include PMBus and are coming out with new ones every day, like the TPS546C23. For this post, I was able to sit down and use a TPS544C20. To program TI's PMBus devices, there are Fusion Digital Power™ graphical user interfaces (GUIs) designed to help engineers program and design the chips to their exact specifications. Let's look at how.

## Using the PMBus GUI

Make sure to download the correct GUI. There are three different types designed for different functions: Fusion Digital Power Designer, Fusion Digital Power Studio and Fusion Digital Power Manufacturing.

Fusion Digital Power Designer is the original GUI, and is used for low-voltage and multiphase parts. Designed for engineers trying to configure and monitor devices used in projects, this GUI supports power products, including the UCD9xxx and TPS5xxx families, and is the only tool for configuring devices without having to code.

Fusion Digital Power Studio, a branch off of the original GUI, does the same monitoring and configuring to design devices into projects. The difference is that this GUI supports power products, where coding is necessary.



The tool is much simpler than the original, and is a debugging tool. It's designed for use in conjunction with TI's Code Composer Studio<sup>™</sup> integrated development environment (IDE), or other ARM processor IDEs.

Fusion Digital Power Manufacturing is a simplified version of the GUI and has only three buttons. It is usually used for production, with no built-in debugging features. The GUI programs supported devices to the specified configuration.

For this post, I will be using Fusion Digital Power Designer.

## **Choosing Online or Offline Modes**

Use online when you have a physical device to configure and want to see a real-time response. This is usually when debugging, or in my case, when you just want to mess around with a prototype. If you are using a physical board to program, go ahead and connect it. To start, plug the USB/I/O cord into your device and then into your computer (there will be a small green light-emitting diode [LED] that turns on, indicating that the adapter is connected). From there, attach the ribbon cable to the I/O port of the board, paying attention to the grooves on the connector. Last, plug the power source in. When you open the GUI, it should recognize that a device is connected.

Use offline when you do not have the actual device, but still want to see what the response will be. This is very useful when designing and getting ahead on projects, or simply evaluating which device is the best fit for your system.

After you open the application, the screen shown in Figure 1 will appear. Chose Offline Mode if you do not have a physical device. If you have a physical device, make sure to connect it and select retry and skip.

TEXAS INSTRUMENTS	
Fusion Digital Power Designer Version 7.0.15 [2017-06-30]	
No USB Adapter Found! A Texas Instruments USB serial bus adapter does not appear to be connected to your PC. Please check your connection. You should see a green light on the adapter when it is attached to the PC. Retry Adapter Mode Offline Mode Dit Program	

Figure 1. Opening Window

Select the first option to start a new project from scratch (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Project Selection

Since you are offline, you need to select the device you want to program (Figure 3).

Select device from GUI supp (If you cannot find the device yo	C	Select Device			
Select device from GUI sam	C	Select Sample			
From file:					Select File
File Name	- Part ID	Existing	Selected Address	Import Order	Note

#### **Figure 3. Device Selection**

2



Make sure to select one of the three options listed in Figure 4 to make the list of devices in those sections appear. Once you've selected a device, press OK and Finish.

A family of fully i	10. Co. Co. Co. Co. Co. Co. Co. Co. Co. Co		
- Income and the second	3xxx/TPS544xxx/TPS546 log control power ICs with	and the second	
A family of power of up to 13 power	ir supply votage, current i	nitor and sequilities in the sequilities of the sequence of th	vence up to 33 independent voltage rails. Devices integrate a 12-bit ADC with a 2.5V internal reference for monitori sputs, or fan tachometers. Up to 25 GPIO pins can be used for power supply enables, voltage margining, power-or 1234 devices, or other system functions.
ielect a device you	would like to add to the d	esign. Click a	row in the grid and then dick the OK button.
Select a device you Device	would like to add to the d	esign. Click a Num Rails	row in the grid and then dick the OK button. Description
	x	Num	
Device	A. Package	Num	Description
Device TPS40400	A Package	Num	Description Synchronous buck controller with PMBkis interface.
Device 1PS40400 1PS40422	Package     QFN     QFN	Num	Description Synchronous buck controller with PMBus interface. Dual-Output, Single-Phase Synchronous buck controller with PMBus interface

Figure 4. Device Category Selection

You have now arrived at the home page of the GUI. If you have a physical device and are in online mode, Figure 5 should be your initial landing page. From here, you can configure the device. Click Start Polling to see how the device reacts to the configurations.

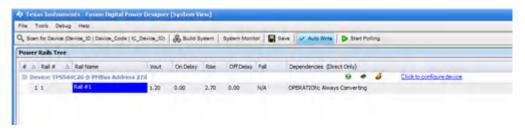


Figure 5. Main Page

To navigate, use the tabs in the lower left-hand side of the screen shown in Figure 6. When you have changed something, make sure to Write to Hardware by using the button in the upper left-hand side of the screen. To save the configuration, use the Store Config to NVM button.



File Device Tools				TPS544C20 @ PMBus Address 27d			
Write to Hardware	Charlot Charlots Store Config 1						
Configure	Units & On/Off Other All Config						
	Current Limits		Temperature Limits				
	Sout OC Warn Limit:	28.0 💮 A	Temp Warn Limit:	125 💭 4C			
	Sout OC Fault Limit:	39.0 📳 A	Temp Fault Limit:	150 💭 °C			
	Voltage & Power Good Lin	Voltage & Power Good Limits					
	Input VOUT NOMINAL:	1.2 😴 v	UV Fault PG Low PG High	OV Fault			
	UV Fault:	0.9984 V	.16.80 % -12.50 % +12.50	*36.80 %			
	OV Fault:	1.4016 V	O -12.00 % -7.00 % +7.00				
	PG Low:	1.05 V	O -28.00 % -22.00 % +7.00				
	PG High:	1.25 V	O 42.00% -36.00% +7.00	1% +12.00 %			
	Over-Current / Under-Voltage Fault Response						
	<ul> <li>Do Not Restart The device does not attempt to restart. The output remains disabled until the fault is cleared.</li> <li>Restart Continuously The device goes through a normal startup (Soft start) continuously, without limitation, until it is commanded off or bias power is removed or tendents for its more than the device.</li> </ul>						
Configure							
Monitor							
0 Status	PMBus Log						

#### Figure 6. Control Window

When I first sat down to look at how to use the PMBus and GUI, I was a little overwhelmed. I hadn't even opened the package and I was imagining the complicated software I would need to learn to configure the device. After I had a chance to sit down and play with the PMBus and GUI, I realized that it was quite simple to set up and use, almost a plug-and-play type of equipment. What has your experience been using PMBus for the first time?

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