Announcement: We are closely monitoring and following precautions regarding the coronavirus. To learn more, read the latest CUI Devices Coronavirus Statement.

Model Number/Keyword

All Blog Posts Audio Interconnect Motion Thermal Management About the Blog

# **Buzzer Basics - Technologies, Tones, and Drive Circuits**

By Bruce Rose



## In This Post...

- 1. Magnetic and Piezo Buzzers
- 2. Transducers and Indicators
- 3. Application Circuit for Magnetic or Piezo Indicator
- 4. Application Circuit for Magnetic Transducer
- 5. Application Circuit for Piezo Transducer
- 6. Full Bridge Circuit for Piezo Transducers
- 7. Conclusion
- 8. Additional Resources

There are many choices for communicating information between a product and the user. One of the most common choices for audio communication is a buzzer. Understanding some of the technologies and configurations of buzzers is useful during the design process, so in this blog post we will describe typical configurations, provide example buzzer tones, and present common drive circuit options.

# Magnetic and Piezo Buzzers

The two most common technologies used in buzzer designs are magnetic and piezo. Many applications use either a magnetic or a piezo buzzer, but the decision regarding which of the two technologies to use is based upon many different constraints. Magnetic buzzers operate at lower voltages and higher currents (1.5~12 V, > 20 mA) compared to piezo buzzers (12~220 V, < 20 mA), while piezo buzzers often have greater maximum sound pressure level (SPL) capability than magnetic buzzers. However, it should be noted that the greater SPL available from piezo buzzers requires larger footprints.

In a magnetic buzzer, a current is driven through a coil of wire which produces a magnetic field. A flexible ferromagnetic disk is attracted to the coil when the current is present and returns to a "rest" position when the current is not flowing through the coil. The sound from a magnetic buzzer is produced by the movement of the ferromagnetic disk in a similar manner to how the cone in a speaker produces sound. A magnetic buzzer is a current driven device, but the power source is typically a voltage. The current through the coil is determined by the applied voltage and the impedance of the coil.



Construction of a typical piezo buzzer

A piezo buzzer differs from a magnetic buzzer in that it is driven by a voltage rather than a current. A piezo buzzer is modeled as a capacitor while a magnetic buzzer is modeled as a coil in series with a resistor. The frequency of the sound produced by both magnetic and piezo buzzers can be controlled over a wide range by the frequency of the signal driving the buzzer. A piezo buzzer exhibits a reasonably linear relationship between the input drive signal strength and the output audio power while a magnetic buzzer's audio output declines rapidly with a decreasing input drive signal.



Graph showing the relationship between drive signal and audio output in piezo and magnetic buzzers

# **Transducers and Indicators**

The following are some examples of the sounds that buzzers are able to create. The continuous tone and slow/fast pulse sounds can be produced by either an indicator or a transducer.

## Continuous (Feedback/ Warning Signal)

- Indicator Vdc: continuously on
- Transducer excitation waveform: continuous fixed frequency
- Slow/Fast Pulse (Feedback/ Warning Signal)
  - Indicator Vdc: switched on and off
  - Transducer excitation waveform: pulsed fixed frequency

The high/low tone, siren and chime sounds can be produced only by a transducer and the associated support circuitry due to the multiple frequencies of the signal.

## High/Low Tone (Warning Signal)

- Transducer excitation waveform: rapidly alternating between two frequencies
- Siren (Alarm)
  - Transducer excitation waveform: periodic ramping of frequency from low to high
- Chime (Door Bell)
  - Transducer excitation waveform: single slow cycle between high and low frequencies

## Application Circuit for Magnetic or Piezo Indicator



An indicator requires only a dc voltage to operate and sound is produced whenever the voltage is present.

# **Application Circuit for Magnetic Transducer**



A magnetic transducer requires an excitation waveform to drive the buzzer. Arbitrary wave shapes and a wide range of frequencies can be used for the excitation waveform. The switch in the schematic is used to amplify the excitation waveform and is typically either a BJT or a FET. The diode is required to clamp the fly-back voltage created when the switch (transistor) is shut off quickly.

# **Application Circuit for Piezo Transducer**



A piezo transducer can be driven with a circuit similar to a magnetic transducer. The diode across the piezo transducer is not required because the inductance of a piezo transducer is small, but a resistor is required to reset the voltage when the switch is open. This circuit is not normally used to drive a piezo transducer because the resistor dissipates power. Other circuits can be used to increase the sound level from a piezo transducer by increasing the peak to peak voltage applied to the transducer.



# Full Bridge Circuit for Piezo Transducers



A full bridge circuit is often used for driving piezo transducers. The advantage of using the full bridge comprised of four switches is the peak-to-peak voltage applied across the transducer is twice as large as the available supply voltage. The use of a full bridge driver will cause a resultant increase in the sound volume of about 6 dB due to the doubling of the voltage applied to the transducer.

## Conclusion

Buzzers are a simple and inexpensive means of providing communication between electronic products and the user. Piezo and magnetic buzzers are used in similar applications with the primary differences being that magnetic buzzers operate from lower voltages and higher currents than their piezo buzzer counterparts, while piezo buzzers offer users higher SPLs in generally larger footprints. Buzzers configured as indicators require only a dc voltage to operate but are limited to a single audio frequency of operation, whereas transducers require external circuitry, but provide a wider range of audio frequencies.

## Additional Resources



Have comments regarding this post or topics that you would like to see us cover in the future? Send us an email at cuiinsights@cuidevices.com





## Bruce Rose

Technical Contributor

During his many years in the electronics industry working in design, sales, and marketing, Bruce Rose has focused on analog circuits and power delivery. His range of work experience includes organizing and chairing international workshops, publishing and presenting in more than 40 technical conferences and journals, and having been awarded seven patents. While he enjoys his time at work, Bruce further enjoys the time he is able to spend with his family hiking, biking, and canoeing as well as pursuing his passion of full scale and model aviation.



Learn More | Privacy Policy

## PRODUCTS

Audio Interconnect Motion Sensors Switches Thermal Management

RESOURCES Parametric Search CAD Model Library **CUI Insights Blog Quality Center** 

COMPANY About Us Contact Us Distributor Stock

Find a Representative

Subscribe



1-877-323-3576



Newsroom

Contact Us | 🚱 ENG

Model Number/Keyword



#### Indicators vs. Transducers

As mentioned earlier in the presentation, piezo and magnetic indicators have the driving circuitry built into the design, creating a "plug and play" solution. Because of this, engineers do not need to worry about building a complex circuit to drive the buzzer. The disadvantage, however, is that indicators operate on a fixed frequency, reducing the flexibility offered to achieve an alternate frequency as application requirements change. Transducers, on the other hand, do not have the driving circuit built-in, so engineers are offered a greater range of flexibility when designing their circuit. The downside comes in the fact that transducers do require an external driving signal to operate properly, potentially adding complexity and time to the design cycle.

#### **Indicator Characteristics**

- Built-in driving circuit (frequency generator)
- Simple to design-in
- Fixed frequency (function)



## **Transducer Characteristics**

- External driving circuit required • Complex to design-in
- User-selected frequencies or multiple frequencies



#### Key Buzzer Specifications

#### **Frequency Response**

How efficiently a buzzer produces sound at a given frequency.

#### Sound Pressure Level (Unit: dB Pa)

Sound pressure level, SPL, is the deviation from atmospheric pressure caused by the soundwave expressed in decibel Pascals. It is generally proportional to input voltage and decays by 6 dB's when doubling the distance from the buzzer.

#### **Resonant Frequency (Unit: F0 Hz)**

All things have a specific frequency at which they tend to vibrate. This frequency is called the resonant frequency. For buzzers, the resonant frequency is the frequency at which they will be the loudest.

#### Impedance (Unit: ohm)

Electrical impedance is the ratio of applied voltage to current. The electrical impedance varies with frequency.

### dB's

#### L<sub>p</sub> = 10log<sub>10</sub> (Prms/Pref) = 20log<sub>10</sub> (Vrms/Vref)

A decibel is the scaled logarithm of the ratio of a measured value with respect to a reference value. Decibels are useful because they can show a huge range of values in a small space. For instance a sound pressure scale going from 0-120 dB can represent sound pressures from 20  $\mu\text{Pa}$  (micro-pascals) to 20,000,000,000,000  $\mu$ Pa. This roughly represents the lowest SPL a human can hear all the way up to uncomfortably loud sounds. Note: The generally accepted value for "Pref" in the formula above is 20  $\mu$ Pa.

- dB stands for decibel
- It is not a unit, but rather a ratio
- Values increase exponentially, instead of linearly as in counting numbers
- Expressed in "normal" numbers, 20 dB is ten times the power of 10 dB • Allows for a huge range of values to be expressed in relatively little space

#### Frequency Response





In a perfect world all devices would recreate every frequency at the exact same amplitude. In real life every device will have frequencies which it may amplify and frequencies which it will tend to reduce or attenuate. Frequency response curves show how a particular device responds to each frequency. SPL is plotted against frequency to indicate how the device will handle certain frequencies. Note: frequency is plotted on an exponential basis, similar to dB's, it allows the full range of human hearing to be fit in a compact space.

## The Human Ear and A-Weighting

Comparison of Different SPL's				
Jet engine at 30 m	632 Pa	150 dB		
Threshold of pain	63.2 Pa	130 dB		
Hearing damage (possible)	20 Pa	Approx. 120 dB		
Jet at 100 m	6.32-200 Pa	110-140 dB		
Jack hammer at 1 m	2 Pa	Approx. 100 dB		
Traffic on a busy roadway at 10 m	2x10 <sup>-1</sup> -6.32x10 <sup>-1</sup> Pa	80-90 dB		
Passenger car at 10 m	2x10 <sup>-2</sup> -210 <sup>-1</sup> Pa	60-80 dB		
Normal conversation at 1 m	2x10 <sup>-3</sup> -2x10 <sup>-2</sup> Pa	40-60 dB		
Very calm room	2x10 <sup>-4</sup> -6.32x10 <sup>-4</sup> Pa	20-30 dB		
Auditory threshold at 1 kHz	2x10 <sup>-5</sup> Pa (RMS)	0 dB		

20 Hz to 20 kHz tends to be the general range for human ears. This range is reduced with age, especially in males. In older males 13 kHz tends to be the upper end of the audible range. The human ear does not have a flat frequency response over the audible range. Certain frequencies tend to be attenuated while others are magnified. A-weighting attempts to compensate for this by discounting frequencies which the human ear is less sensitive to. It places priority on sounds between 1 kHz and 7 kHz.

- Generally, most humans can perceive frequencies from 20 Hz ~ 20,000 Hz
- However, the human ear is more sensitive to some frequencies than others
- A-weighting places more value on frequencies which the human ear is more sensitive to
- Some CUI Devices buzzers specify SPL using the A-weight system, i.e. dBA

**Resonant Frequency** 

The classic experiment showing that a crystal wine glass can be shottered when excited by a sound that matches its resonant frequency

Every system has a particular frequency that it tends to vibrate at. For instance, if you pluck a string on a guitar that string will vibrate very near, or at, its resonant frequency. By driving a system at its resonant frequency, very large displacements, relative to the input signal strength can be achieved. Driving a buzzer with an input signal which has the same frequency as the buzzer's resonant frequency, will create the greatest SPL with the least input power.

- Resonant frequency is the natural frequency a system tends to oscillate at
- Driving a system at its resonant frequency will create the largest amplitudes with the smallest input
- Buzzers are loudest when driven at their resonant frequency

#### SPL Calculator



CUI Devices has developed an SPL calculator to allow users to convert a buzzer's specified SPL on the datasheet to different real-world conditions, or to compare SPLs between two devices with different specified parameters. This tool makes it quick and easy for designers to specify the proper buzzer for

their application.

Try the SPL calculator now >

## **Buzzer Sound Samples**

Buzzers are implemented across many applications, usually to act as a warning signal. Click on the sound icons to sample common sound effects available in the CUI Devices buzzer line.

#### Sound Effects

- Continuous (Feedback/ Warning Signal)
- High/Low Tone (Warning Signal)
- I Slow/Fast Pulse (Feedback/ Warning Signal)
- Siren (Alarm)
- Chime (Door Bell)

#### Applications

Buzzers are typically used for identification and alarm purposes across many major industries. The major application categories that utilize buzzers for indication or alert purposes include: home appliances, automotive electronics, medical, safety and security, industrial, and office automation.



#### Mounting Configurations

CUI Devices' buzzers are available in various mounting configurations depending on the application need, including SMT, PCB pin, wire lead, snap-in, vertical mount and panel mount.



Q Quickly find and compare models based on your key specifications >



## **CUI** DEVICES **Stay Connected** PRODUCTS RESOURCES COMPANY

Quality Center

Lake Oswego, OR 97035 1-877-323-3576 🗗 💟 🔯 in 🖸

## SUNROM

#### PIEZO PASSIVE BUZZER - VERTICAL

Externally driven piezoelectric sounders are used in washing machines, keyboard, timer, digital watches, electronic calculators, telephones and other consumer equipment. They are driven by a signal (ex.: 2048Hz or 4096Hz) from an LSI/MCU and provide melodious sound. Also, if the source is like a melody IC, you can also sound melody. Equivalent to Murata PKM22EPTH2001-B0.

#### Features

- 1. Low power consumption
- 2. No noise and high reliability
- 3. No electric noise and little influence on peripheral circuits
- 4. It complies with the JEITA standard (RC 8180A)

#### DIMENSIONS

PCB Holes we suggest of 3.2mm dia. with 12.5mm space apart





(in mm)

#### **SPECIFICATIONS**

Size	22.0×7.0×26.5 mm
Frequency	2 kHZ
Sound Pressure Level	70dB (min.)
Measure Condition of Sound Pressure Level	[3.0Vp-p,2.0kHz,square wave,10cm]
Capacitance	19nF
Capacitance Tolerance	±30%
Measurement Condition of Capacitance	[120Hz]
Maximum input voltage	±12.5Vo-p max. or 25.0Vo-p max
Operating Temperature Range	-20°C to 70°C
Storage Temperature Range	-40°C to 80°C
Shape	Lead
Lead Shape	Pin Type
Lead length	Lead length:4.0mm
Drive Type	External Drive
EIAJ Part Number	PS-RP2-V27-20

#### Figure 1 Frequency Characteristics (sine wave)



Figure 3 Typical Externally Driving circuit, Astable, NAND, Inverter gates

Figure 2 Frequency Characteristics (square wave)





Please note, Unlike electromagnetic types which has coil, This buzzer does not contains internal driving circuit, so do not expect to just power on and hear something. It needs square wave of 4Khz to drive. The black case provides cavity for resonance and protection. You can vary its frequency to create tones just like you hear from microwave or washing machine.

When compared to low cost electromagnetic type buzzer this piezo consumes only 2-3mA, while coil type can take upto 100mA. Low current consumption makes it ideal for battery operation. While electromagnetic type is high on EMI, this piezo's emi noise is very neglible.

#### **Buzzer Comparison**

Parameter	Piezo Buzzer This model	Other Electromagnetic Coil Type
Current	2-3mA	150-200mA
Moisture	Proof	Sensitive to moisture
Operation Life	Long, No moving parts	Coil heats and life is around 2 years
Operation Temp	High upto 150 deg C	approx 50 deg C
Noise	Does not emit	Emit high EMI noise over driving voltage
Technology	Piezo Vibration	Coil Oscillation
Frequency	Variable 1-10Khz	Fixed

You can use frequency from 1 Khz to 10 Khz but highest amplitude you will get around 4 Khz. Please see graph of frequency response above.

This is how we use it in our designs at Sunrom.



#### ORDERING DETAILS

Sunrom Part#	Ordering Page
5288	http://www.sunrom.com/m/5288

Electrical Engineering Stack Exchange is a question and answer site for electronics and electrical engineering professionals, students, and enthusiasts. It only takes a minute to sign up.

Sign up to join this community

# Anybody can ask a question ×

## 





3 I found a 3 pin piezo puzzer in a smoke detector and was wondering how it works (and why it's there). Now that you say it allows to produce the loudest sound, it makes sense... – tigrou May 2 '15 at 16:18 ₽

add a comment

Here is a good in-depth explanation of buzzers including self-driven ones + some usefull schematics: <u>Piezoelectric Sound Components Application Manual</u> (812kb).

Excerpt (from p.5):

## Self Drive

Method Fig. 9 shows a typical application of the self drive method. The piezoelectric diaphragm provided with feedback electrode shown in Fig. 9 (i) is involved in the closed loop of a Hartley types oscillation circuit. When the frequency is closed to the resonant frequency, the circuit satisfies oscillating conditions, and the piezoelectric diaphragm is driven with the oscillating frequency. Fig. 9 (ii) shows a simple oscillating circuit consisting of one transistor and three resistors. In general, the node support shown in Fig. 3 (a) is popular in the self drive method. Proper resonance of the piezoelectric diaphragm by the node support provides stable oscillation with high mechanical Qm of vibration but also a single high pressure tone.



- What are the different types of charge analysis?
- Quickest way to circulate outside air thru house?
- & What's a word for the exact opposite of regret?
- What do you call this nearby position?
- Should a UPS be unplugged when working on the electrical circuit it is plugged in to?
- 📧 Who are China's allies?
- Taping over a speed camera UK
- Why is Tolarian Kraken worded this way?
- 🚫 Pythagorean quilts
- Who was preventing Jesus's statement from being understood? Luke 9:45
- Where can I find software that was designed for Windows 1.0?
- Image: Section 1 and a section of the section of t
- 👩 It is a Geographical Region: Seriously
- Why should you add dry mix to water and not the other way round
- How can I use my dSLR or mirrorless camera as a webcam?
- Break lease agreement due to convid-19
- Why is the execution time of this function call changing?
- How to convey "to teach someone the ropes"
- ➡ How is data encoded in pipes/STDOUT/STDIN?
- 🔊 Question feed

9

Ð

share improve this answer follow edited Jun 2'17 at 12:40 answered Mar 23'14 at 19:13
1 I agree, it does, but linking to a pdf with all the information makes for a bad answer. Please include some of the relevant information in your answer text Passerby Mar 23 '14 at 19:36
<ul> <li>2 @hurufu Welcome to EE.SE. There is a slight problem with answers, which primarily consists of link to an external page (so called <i>link-only answer</i>). If that page moves in the future, then the link dies, and the answer becomes largely useless. So, include an abstract (or excerpt, or synopsis) along with the link.</li> <li>– Nick Alexeev ♦ Mar 23 '14 at 19:44</li> </ul>
this helps a lot to me and make this circuit clear~ – lukeluck Oct 12 '19 at 1:14
add a comment
Highly active question. Earn 10 reputation in order to answer this question. The reputation requirement helps protect this question from spam and non-answer activity.
Not the answer you're looking for? Browse other questions tagged piezo-buzzer or ask your own question.

ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING	COMPANY	STACK EXCHANGE NETWORK	Blog Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Instagram
Tour	Stack Overflow		
Help	Stack Overflow Business	Technology 🕑	
Chat	Developer Jobs	Life / Arts 🔊	
Contact	About	Culture / Recreation 🔊	
Feedback	Press	Science >	
Mobile	Legal	Other >	
Disable Responsiveness	Privacy Policy		site design / logo © 2020 Stack Exchange Inc; user contributions licensed under <b>cc by-sa</b> . rev 2020.7.3.37177