

Shunt Resistors, High-Performance Op-Amps, Zener Diodes

Low-Side Current Sensing Circuit Design

In the areas of automotive and industrial equipment, low-side current sensing circuits are used for functions including current (voltage) control, over current limiting, and remaining battery level detection. The low-side current sensing circuits, which are achieved with a shunt resistor, an op-amp, and external components, can be incorporated most simply at a lower cost compared with other methods. This application note explains the criteria for selecting parts and determining circuit constants for the low-side current sensing circuits.

Low-side current sensing circuit

Figure 1 shows a typical low-side sensing circuit. Load current (I_{LOAD}) from load (LOAD) via the shunt resistor (R_{SHUNT}) causes a voltage drop (ΔV_{SHUNT}). This voltage is differentially amplified by the op-amp (OPAMP), connected to an A/D converter, microcontroller, or other devices in the subsequent stage. Then, the current value is measured and used for system control.

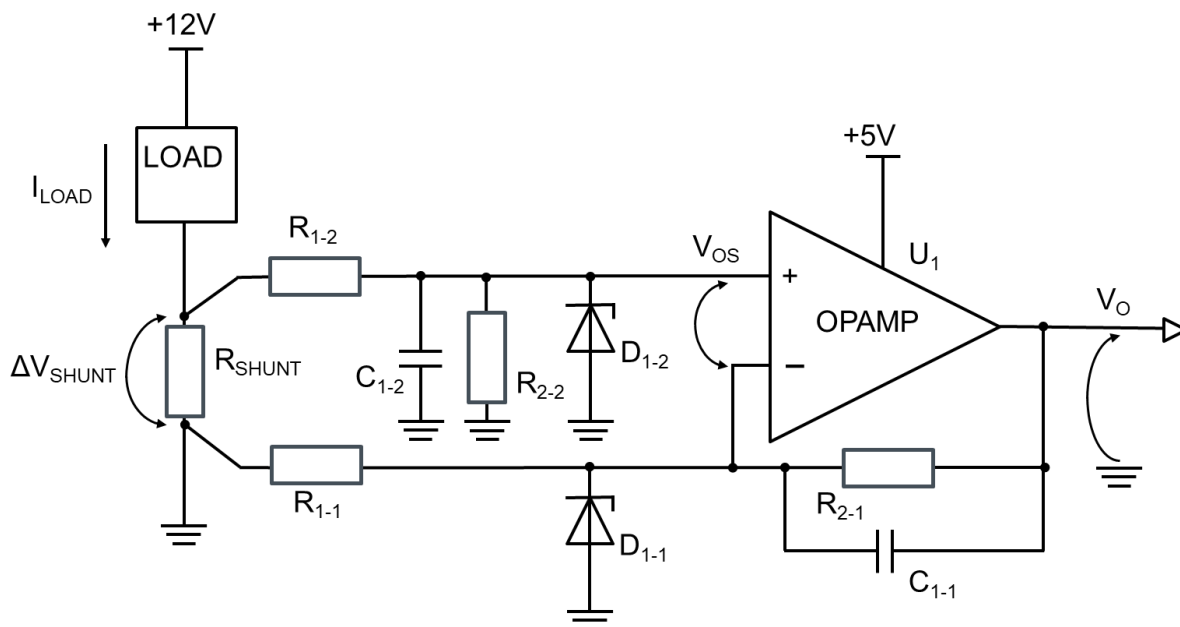


Figure 1. Typical low-side current sensing circuit

The symbols in Figure 1 represent the following:

OPAMP: Op-amp

LOAD: Load

I_{LOAD} : Load current

R_{SHUNT} : Shunt resistor

V_{OS} : op-amp offset voltage

ΔV_{SHUNT} : Shunt voltage

$R_{1-1} = R_{1-2} = R_1$, $R_{2-1} = R_{2-2} = R_2$: Gain setting resistors

$C_{1-1} = C_{1-2} = C_1$: Filter capacitor

D_{1-1} , D_{1-2} : Protection diodes

In an ideal circuit where an op-amp without an input offset voltage is used the following equation with the circuit in Figure 1.

$$V_O = I_{LOAD} \times R_{SHUNT} \times \left(\frac{R_2}{R_1}\right) \quad [V] \quad \dots (1)$$

In actual circuits, the current sensing error is affected by the input offset voltage of the op-amp, the tolerance of the shunt resistor and the relative tolerance of gain setting resistors R_1 and R_2 . The output voltage with these considerations (V_O') can be expressed with the following equation.

$$V_O' = \left[I_{LOAD} \times R_{SHUNT}' \times \left(\frac{R_2'}{R_1'}\right) \right] + \left[V_{OS} \times \left(\frac{R_1' + R_2'}{R_1'}\right) \right] \quad [V] \quad \dots (2)$$

Where R_{SHUNT}' , R_1' , and R_2' are the values including the respective tolerances. For the input offset voltage for the op-amp (V_{OS}), only the positive direction is described for convenience of calculation.

Furthermore, the current sensing error (E_{rr}) attainable with this circuit can be expressed with the following equation.

$$E_{rr} = \frac{V_O' - V_O}{V_O} \times 100 \quad [\%] \quad \dots (3)$$

How to determine the circuit constants

This section explains how to select the electronic components and determine the circuit constants based on the equations above. First, determine the following items as the required specifications of the current sensing circuit.

Current sensing range: $I_{LOADmin}$ to $I_{LOADmax}$ [A]

Current sensing error: E_{rr} [%]

Current sensing frequency: f_{sense} [Hz]

The current sensing frequency represents how fast the current can be measured relative to the current variation. If the current sensing speed is too slow, the sensing cannot follow the variation in the load current, leading to incorrect measurement. If the current sensing speed is too fast, noise and other irregularities may be detected, also leading to incorrect measurement. Therefore, it is necessary to define the sensing frequency that matches the time transient of the current to be measured.

Maximum voltage drops at the shunt resistor: $\Delta V_{SHUNTmax}$ [V]

The current sensing error is falling with increasing voltage drop (ΔV_{SHUNT}) at shunt resistor (R_{SHUNT}). (see Footnote 1). Since voltage drop (ΔV_{SHUNT}) of is between load and ground in low -side current sense circuit setup, ground voltage level seems to be raised. This can lead to instability of load circuit.

Maximum output voltage of the op-amp: V_{Omax} [V]

Determine the specification based on a balance between the maximum voltage which can provided at output of op-amp and the input voltage range that can be accepted by an A/D converter or other devices in the subsequent stage.

After determining the specifications, select the electric components and calculate the constants according to the procedures described in the following pages.

Step 1: Selection of the shunt resistor

The shunt resistor value is calculated with Equation (4) based on the required specifications determined above. In addition, since a large current flows through the shunt resistor, it is necessary to pay attention to the power rating. Along with, of course, using the shunt resistor within its own rating, it is recommended that a shunt resistor with a sufficient margin for the power capacity rating should be selected, considering the effect of heat generation by the shunt resistor on the surrounding area. The power rating is calculated with Equation (5). Select a shunt resistor satisfying these conditions.

$$\text{Shunt resistor value} \quad R_{SHUNT} = \frac{\Delta V_{SHUNTmax}}{I_{LOADmax}} \quad [\Omega] \quad \dots (4)$$

$$\text{Shunt resistor power rating} \quad P_{SHUNT} \geq \Delta V_{SHUNT} \times I_{LOADmax} \quad [W] \quad \dots (5)$$

Step 2: Design of the gain setting resistors

The signal gain is expressed with Equation (6). If either of R_1 or R_2 is determined, the resistor value of the other can be calculated.

$$\text{Gain} = \frac{V_{Omax}}{\Delta V_{SHUNTmax}} \quad [V/V] \quad \dots (6)$$

$$= \frac{R_2}{R_1} \quad [V/V] \quad \dots (7)$$

Step 3: Selection of the op-amp

When selecting the op-amp, it is necessary to pay attention to the following items.

- Offset voltage. Using Equations (1), (2), and (3), calculate the input offset voltage for the op-amp required to achieve current sensing error E_r .
- The input voltage range of the op-amp must have a margin for ΔV_{SHUNT} .
- The output voltage range of the op-amp must be wider than the input voltage range of the system in the subsequent stage (for example, an A/D converter or microcontroller).
- The op-amp must be operable with the given system supply voltage.
- The frequency characteristics of the op-amp must be at least approximately 10 times higher than f_{sense} .

Step 4: Design of the frequency characteristics

Value of capacitor C_1 can be calculated with Equation (8).

$$C_1 = \frac{1}{2\pi \times f_{sense} \times 10 \times R_2} \quad [F] \quad \dots (8)$$

Step 5: Other peripheral circuits

- Protection circuit

In Figure 1, Zener diodes are used for over voltage protection on the input terminal of the op-amp in case of an open failure of the shunt resistor. If the shunt resistor opens, a voltage of +12 V at maximum may be applied to the input terminal of the op-amp [+12 V is the same voltage applied to the load (LOAD)]. Therefore, it is necessary to insert protective elements so that the voltage rating of the input terminal of the op-amp is not exceeded.

Depending on the circuit protection requirements, it is necessary to design the circuit protection including the protection circuit method and the type of protection diode.

How to determine the circuit constants (design example)

Within next chapter, according to the procedures for selecting the electronic components and setting the constants described in the previous section, select the electronic components and determine the circuit constants.

Assume that the required specifications of the low-side current detection circuit are as follows.

Current sensing range: $I_{LOADmin}$ to $I_{LOADmax} = 30\text{ A to }50\text{ A}$

Current sensing error: $E_r = 7\%$

Current sensing frequency: $f_{sense} = 1\text{ kHz}$

Voltage drop at shunt resistor: $\Delta V_{SHUNTmax} = 50\text{ mV}$

Maximum output voltage of the op-amp: $V_{Omax} = 3.3\text{ V}$

Step 1: Selection of the shunt resistor

Value of shunt resistor is determined by substituting the values into Equations (4) and (5) above.

$$\text{Shunt resistor value} \quad R_{SHUNT} = \frac{\Delta V_{SHUNTmax}}{I_{LOADmax}} = \frac{50m}{50} = 1 \quad [\text{m}\Omega]$$

$$\text{Shunt resistor power rating} \quad P_{SHUNT} \geq \Delta V_{SHUNT} \times I_{LOADmax} = 50m \times 50 = 2.5 \quad [\text{W}]$$

In this example, the smallest type is selected from ROHM's shunt resistors.

PSR100 1mΩ, power rating 4 W (at 140°C), size 6.4 mm × 3.2 mm

Step 2: Design of the gain setting resistors

Values of resistors R1 and R2 for setting gain is determined with Equations (6) (7). Set $R_1 = 2\text{ k}\Omega$ and calculate R_2 .

$$\text{Gain} = \frac{V_{Omax}}{\Delta V_{SHUNTmax}} = \frac{R_2}{R_1}$$

$$R_2 = R_1 \times \left(\frac{V_{Omax}}{\Delta V_{SHUNTmax}} \right) = 2k \times \frac{3.3}{50m} = 132k \quad [\Omega]$$

For circuits where the gain is set with external resistors, it is necessary to consider the relative tolerance of R_1 and R_2 to determine the gain. Furthermore, to reduce the number of electronic components, select 120kΩ from the E24 series. Chip resistors from ROHM's series MCR01, MCR03, MCR10, or MCR18 can be selected. For these resistors, the tolerance of the resistor value is Class D ±0.5%, and the temperature characteristics are ±50 ppm/°C (between 100Ω and 1MΩ).

Step 3: Selection of the op-amp

The offset voltage of the op-amp required to achieve a current sensing error E_r of 7% or less is derived from Equations (1), (2), and (3). Substitute Equations (1) and (2) into Equation (3), and rearrange it into an equation for calculating V_{OS} . For R_1' , R_2' , and R_{SHUNT}' , the calculation includes the tolerance of the resistor values and the temperature characteristics of the resistor values. Current sensing error E_r reaches its maximum under the following conditions. Substitute them into the equation to calculate V_{OS} .

$$R_1' = (\text{Tolerance}) \times (\text{Temperature characteristics}) \times R_1 = (-0.5\%) \times (-50\text{ ppm/}^\circ\text{C}) \times R_1$$

$$R_2' = (\text{Tolerance}) \times (\text{Temperature characteristics}) \times R_2 = (+0.5\%) \times (+50\text{ ppm/}^\circ\text{C}) \times R_2$$

$$R_{SHUNT}' = (\text{Tolerance}) \times (\text{Temperature characteristics}) \times R_{SHUNT} = (+1\%) \times (+100\text{ ppm/}^\circ\text{C}) \times R_{SHUNT}$$

$$V_{OS} \leq 847\mu \quad (\text{at } T_A = 125^\circ\text{C}) \quad [\text{V}]$$

Considering the other characteristics required for the op-amp, in this example ROHM's LMR1802G-LB is selected.

(Why ROHM's op-amp LMR1802G-LB has been selected is described within Footnote 2.)

Step 4: Design of the frequency characteristics

Equation (8) is used to calculate filter capacitor C_1 . 150pF is selected from E6 series.

$$C_1 = \frac{1}{2\pi \times f_{sense} \times 10 \times R_2} = \frac{1}{2\pi \times 1k \times 10 \times 120k} = 133 \quad [\text{pF}]$$

Step 5: Other peripheral circuits

For the selected op-amp, LMR1802G-LB, the rating of the input terminal voltage is 7 V. Furthermore, Zener Voltage (V_Z) is set to +5V, the supply voltage of the op-amp. If it is assumed that the shunt resistor is open Current flow through the Zener diodes (I_{ZD}) is calculated with below equation.

$$I_{ZD} = \frac{V_{in} - V_Z}{R_1} = \frac{12 - 5}{2k} = 3.5m \quad [\text{A}]$$

If a zener diode with 5V Zener voltage and 3.5mA Zener current is required, ROHM's products can be selected such as TDZV5.1, UDZV4.7B, EDZV4.7B, and CDZV4.7B.

Following example circuit can now set up with calculated and selected electronic components.

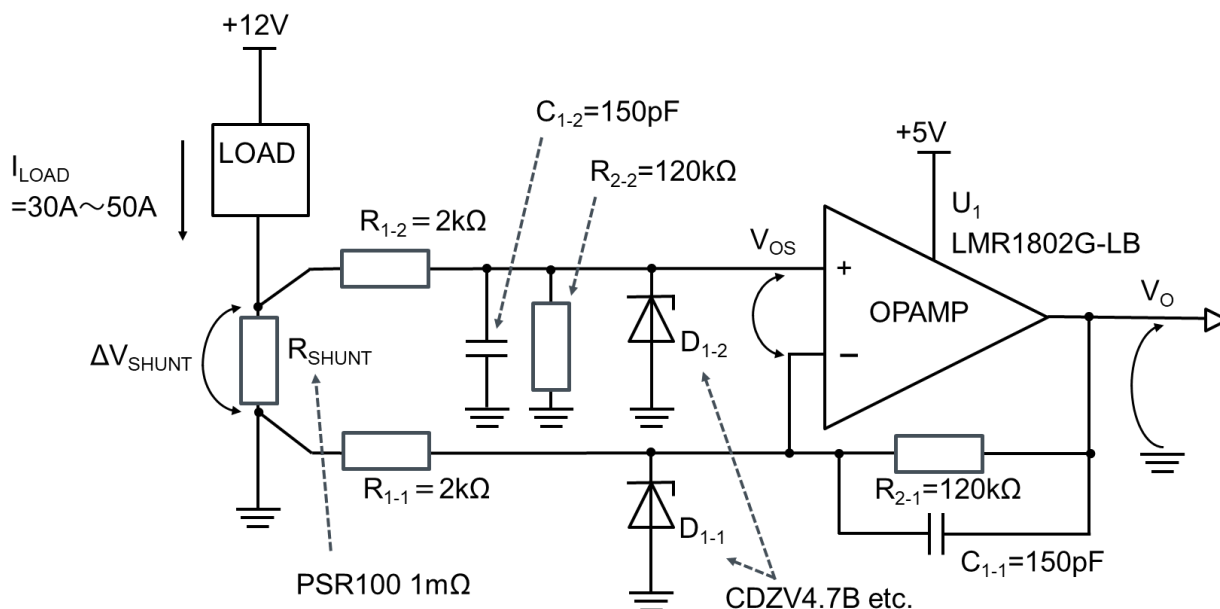


Figure 2. Circuit satisfying the required specifications of the Current Sensing Circuit

Bill of materials for the designed circuit.

Designator	Electronic component	Product item number
U1	Op-amp	LMR1802G-LB
R_{SHUNT}	Shunt resistor for current sensing	PSR100 1mΩ
D_{1-1} , D_{1-2}	Zener diodes for op-amp input terminal protection	TDZV5.1 , UDZV4.7B , EDZV4.7B , CDZV4.7B , etc.
R_{1-1} , R_{1-2}	Gain setting resistors	MCR01/03/10/18 series 2kΩ, Class D ($\pm 0.5\%$)
R_{2-1} , R_{2-2}	Gain setting resistors	MCR01/03/10/18 series 120kΩ, Class D ($\pm 0.5\%$)
C_{1-1} , C_{1-2}	Capacitors for frequency characteristics	150 pF

Note: For the detailed specifications of each electronic component, refer to the data sheet on the ROHM website.

Table 1. Bill of material

Current sensing error and other characteristics of the designed circuit

At first, current sensing error is to verify. A current sensing error E_{rr} of 7% is to ensure in respect to input offset voltage, tolerance of each electronic component and temperature characteristics. Under the conditions for the input offset voltage for the op-amp, tolerance of the resistor value, and temperature characteristics as described in Table 2, current sensing error E_{rr} is to check.

Conditions	Input offset voltage V_{OS} (LMR1802G-LB)	Shunt resistor value R_{SHUNT} (PSR100)	Gain setting resistors R_1 and R_2
(1) Typ condition	Typ = 5 μ V	Typ value	Typ value
(2) Only the offset voltage is at maximum ($T_A = 25^\circ\text{C}$)	Max. 450 μ V ($T_A = 25^\circ\text{C}$)	Typ value	Typ value
(3) The offset voltage is at maximum and the tolerance of the resistor value is included ($T_A = 25^\circ\text{C}$)	Max. 450 μ V ($T_A = 25^\circ\text{C}$)	Class F ($\pm 1\%$)	Class D ($\pm 0.5\%$)
(4) The offset voltage is at maximum and the tolerance of the resistor value is included ($T_A = 125^\circ\text{C}$)	Max. 500 μ V ($T_A = 125^\circ\text{C}$)	Class F ($\pm 1\%$) +100 ppm/ $^\circ\text{C}$	Class D ($\pm 0.5\%$) ± 50 ppm/ $^\circ\text{C}$

Note: For the temperature characteristics, increase in temperature due to self-heating is not considered.

Care must be taken if the parts may generate heat in actual equipment.

Table 2. Calculation conditions for plots in Figure 3

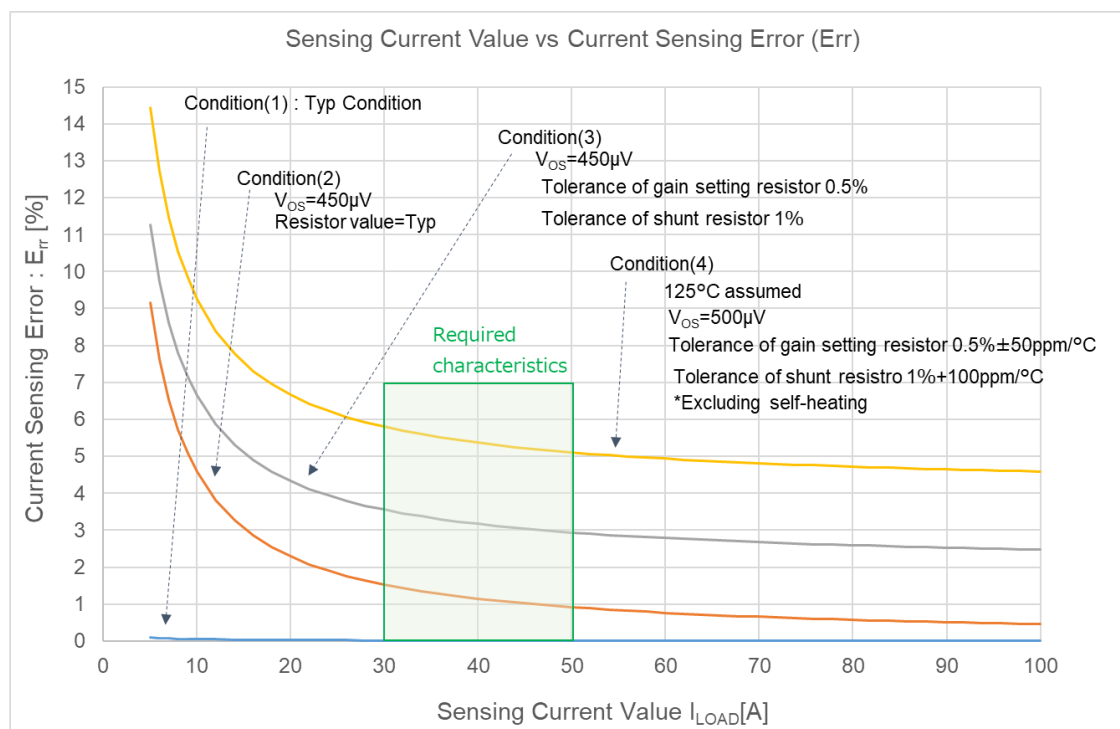


Figure 3. Current sensing error vs. sensing current value for the designed circuit

In the range $I_{LOAD} = 30 \text{ A}$ to 50 A as set in the specification, the current sensing error is below 7%.

Other characteristics are calculated as follows. It is confirmed that the circuit design can satisfy the required specifications.

Output maximum voltage $V_{Omax} = 3.153 \text{ V}$ [under Condition (4)] $\leq 3.3 \text{ V}$

Frequency characteristics $f_{sense} = 8.85 \text{ kHz}$ (Secured 8.85 times the actual operation frequency of 1 kHz.)

Summary

How to determine circuit constants, calculating and selecting electronic components for a low side-current sensing circuit is explained within this application note.

ROHM manufactures both shunt resistors and high-performance op-amps that can meet the required specifications of various applications. For the products and product lineups listed in this application note, and for related application notes, refer to the following resources.

The calculation of the current detection accuracy in this application note does not include errors due to the noise characteristics and CMRR characteristics of the operational amplifier. If you need to calculate the accuracy more accurately, please take these factors into account.

References

[Shunt Resistor Press Release: Expanding Lineup of Shunt Resistors Contributes to Miniaturization In High Power Applications](#)

[Application Note: Op-Amp/Comparator Tutorial](#)

Related products

Shunt resistor	Lineup of shunt resistors
High-performance op-amp	Lineup of high-performance op-amps
Diode	Lineup of Zener diodes

Footnote1

Why is current sensing error falling with increasing voltage drop (ΔV_{SHUNT}) at shunt resistor (R_{SHUNT})? As can also be seen from Equation (2), the current sensing error depends on the voltage drop at the shunt resistor (ΔV_{SHUNT}) and the input offset voltage for the op-amp (V_{OS}).

The sensing error can be improved by selecting an op-amp with a smaller input offset voltage. A balance between the sensing error and the cost or characteristics should be considered.

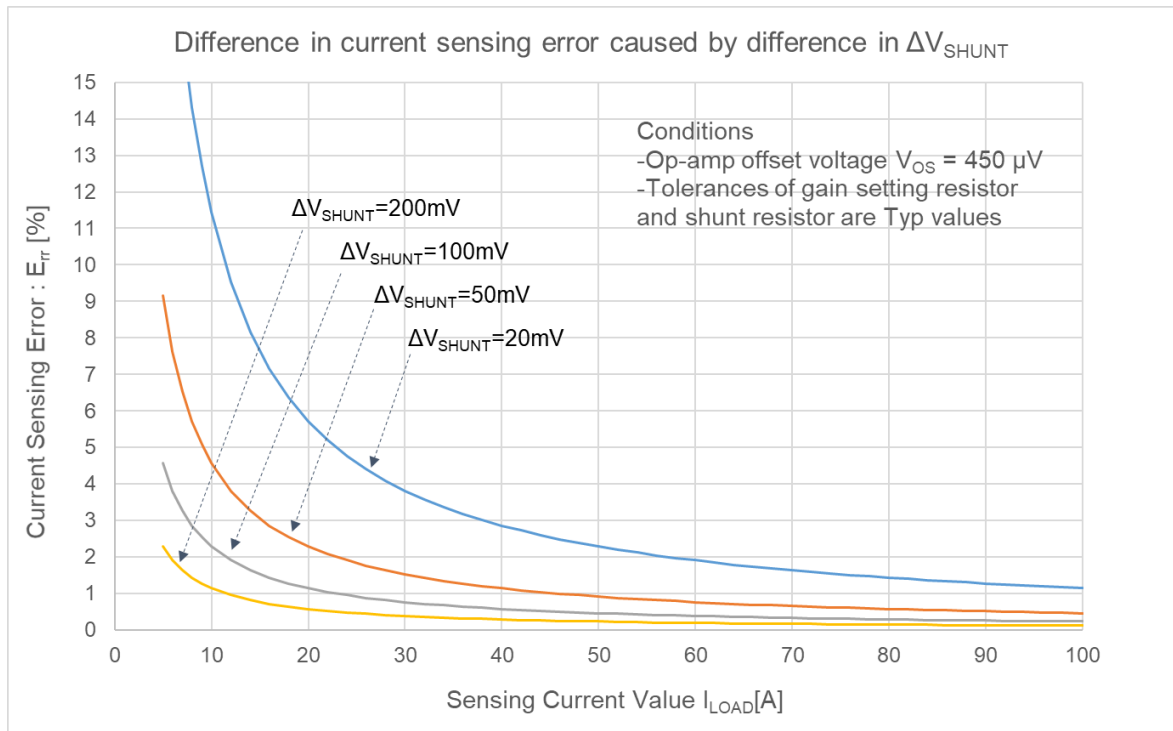


Figure 4. Effect of difference in ΔV_{SHUNT} on the current sensing error

Footnote2

This footnote explains characteristics of LMR1802G-LB and why this op-amp has been selected. The main characteristics of LMR1802G-LB and the result of their examination against the required specifications are shown below.

Parameter	Electrical characteristic	reason for choosing LMR1802G-LG
Supply voltage range	2.5 V to 5.5 V	Operable in the 3.3 V and 5 V systems.
Output voltage range	$V_{OH} = V_{DD} - V_{OUT}$: Max. 50 mV V_{OL} : Max. 50 mV	If the input voltage range of an A/D converter or other devices in the subsequent stage is set to approximately 4 V and the op-amp is operated in the 5 V system, the circuit can be designed so that $V_O < 4$ V.
Input voltage range	Input common-mode voltage range: V_{SS} to $V_{DD} - 1.0$ V	When the op-amp is operated normally, the input voltage will be increased only to the ΔV_{SHUNT} level at the highest, causing no issues.
Input offset voltage	$T_A = 25^\circ\text{C}$, Typ = 5 μV Max. 500 μV over the entire temperature range	Satisfies the offset voltage specification required for the op-amp.

Note: For the detailed specifications of LMR1802G-LB, refer to the data sheet.

Table 3. Summary of the LMR1802G-LB op-amp and result of examination

The required input offset voltage range is ensured over the entire temperature range. Op-amp LMR1802G-LB was selected because of: small temperature drift of the offset voltage (0.4 $\mu\text{V}/^\circ\text{C}$). In power applications, heat may be generated not only by the shunt resistor but also by peripheral circuits (for example, by a switching transistor). Therefore, it can be anticipated that the surrounding temperature environment is undesirable. In addition, if the gain setting is relatively high, the input referred noise voltage also emerges as an error. LMR1802G-LB has achieved an industry-leading low noise with excellent usability.

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