

Field Guide to

Laser Pulse Generation

Rüdiger Paschotta

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Field Guide to Laser Pulse Generation

Lasers and related devices have an amazing potential for generating both very intense and extremely short light pulses. Within four decades, a wide range of techniques for pulse generation has been developed; these techniques can be applied to different laser types and span a huge parameter space in terms of pulse duration, peak power, and pulse repetition rate. It is therefore not surprising that laser pulses have found an extremely wide range of applications.

The primary objective of this *Field Guide* is to provide an overview of all essential methods of laser pulse generation, including Q switching, gain switching, mode locking, and also the amplification of ultrashort pulses to high energies. Some material on pulse characterization is also provided. Both the physical aspects involved and the various technical limitations are discussed in significant depth. This *Field Guide* should therefore be very useful for a wide audience, including practitioners in industry as well as researchers. Even those who only apply, but do not themselves develop, pulsed and ultrafast laser systems can learn, for example, about the potential of different pulse generation methods.

I am greatly indebted to my wife, Christine, who strongly supported the creation of this *Field Guide* by improving many of the figures.

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Table of Contents

Glossary of Symbols	x
Introduction to Optical Pulses	1
Optical Pulses in the Time Domain	2
Optical Pulses in the Frequency Domain	4
Bandwidth-Limited Pulses	5
Pulse Trains and Frequency Combs	6
Carrier–Envelope Offset	7
Overview of Laser Sources for Optical Pulses	9
Q Switching	10
Active and Passive Q Switching	11
Essentials of Laser Dynamics	12
Pumping the Gain Medium	13
Dynamics of Active Q Switching	14
Achievable Pulse Energy	15
Pulse Duration and Buildup Time	16
Influence of Pulse Repetition Rate	17
Dynamics of Passive Q Switching	18
Pulse Duration and Pulse Energy	20
Saturable Absorbers for Q Switching	21
Influence of Pump Fluctuations	22
Mode Beating in Multimode Lasers	23
Q-Switched Solid-State Bulk Lasers	24
Q-Switched Microchip Lasers	26
Q-Switched Fiber Lasers	27
Multiple Pulsing and Instabilities	28
Cavity Dumping	29
Gain Switching	30
Comparison with Other Techniques	32
Mode Locking	33
Active Mode Locking	34
Passive Mode Locking	36
Mode Locking with Fast Saturable Absorbers	37
Mode Locking with Slow Saturable Absorbers	38

Table of Contents (cont.)

Mode Locking (cont.)

Chromatic Dispersion	39
Dispersive Pulse Broadening	40
Effect of Dispersion in Mode-Locked Lasers	41
Dispersion Compensation	42
The Kerr Nonlinearity	44
Self-Phase Modulation	45
Self-Phase Modulation and Chromatic Dispersion	46
Optical Solitons	47
Quasi-Soliton Pulses in Laser Resonators	48
Semiconductor Saturable Absorbers	50
Other Saturable Absorbers for Mode Locking	54
Initiation of Mode Locking	55
Q-Switching Instabilities	56
Actively Mode-Locked Solid-State Bulk Lasers	58
Harmonic Mode Locking	59
Passively Mode-Locked Solid-State Bulk Lasers	60
Performance Figures of Mode-Locked Bulk Lasers	61
Choice of Solid-State Gain Media	62
Additive-Pulse Mode Locking	63
Kerr Lens Mode Locking	64
Generation of Few-Cycle Pulses	65
Mode-Locked High-Power Thin-Disk Lasers	67
Miniature Lasers with High Repetition Rates	69
Mode-Locked Fiber Lasers	70
Soliton Fiber Lasers	71
Limitations of Soliton Fiber Lasers	73
Stretched-Pulse Fiber Lasers	74
Similariton Fiber Lasers	75
Mode-Locked Diode Lasers	77
Mode-Locked VECSELs	79
Mode-Locked Dye Lasers	80
Instabilities of Mode-Locked Lasers	81
Cavity Dumping	83

Amplification of Ultrashort Pulses 84

Multipass Solid-State Bulk Amplifiers	86
Regenerative Amplifiers	87
Fiber Amplifiers	88

Table of Contents (cont.)

Amplification of Ultrashort Pulses (cont.)

Chirped-Pulse Amplification	89
Optical Parametric Amplifiers	91

Pulse Characterization 92

Measurement of Pulse Energy and Peak Power	93
Autocorrelators	94
Pulse Characterization with FROG	97
Pulse Characterization with SPIDER	98
Measurement of Carrier–Envelope Offset	99
Timing Jitter of Mode-Locked Lasers	100
Measurement of Timing Jitter	101

Equation Summary 102

Bibliography 105

Index 117

Glossary of Symbols

$A(t)$	electric field envelope function
c	velocity of light in vacuum
D_2	group delay dispersion
E	electric field strength
E_p	pulse energy
E_{sat}	saturation energy (e.g., of a laser medium)
f	frequency (e.g., noise frequency)
f_m	modulation frequency
f_{rep}	pulse repetition rate
g	gain coefficient
g_f	final gain coefficient
g_i	initial gain coefficient
g_{ss}	gain coefficient in the steady state
G	power amplification factor [= exp(g)]
h	Planck's constant
I	optical intensity (power per unit area)
I_{sat}	saturation intensity (e.g., of a laser medium)
l	loss coefficient (e.g., for round-trip losses of a resonator)
n	refractive index
n_2	nonlinear index
P	optical power
P_{av}	average power
P_p	peak power
q	coefficient saturable loss
ΔR	modulation depth of saturable absorber
t	time
T_{rt}	round-trip time of a resonator
T_{oc}	output coupler transmission

Glossary of Symbols (cont.)

γ	nonlinear coefficient
ϕ	change of spectral phase
λ	wavelength
ν	optical frequency
$\nu(t)$	instantaneous frequency
ν_{ceo}	carrier-envelope offset frequency
$\Delta\nu$	optical bandwidth
$\Delta\nu_{\gamma}$	gain bandwidth
τ_g	upper-state lifetime
τ_p	pulse duration
ω	angular frequency