

Lab 2: Using UART

EE-379 Embedded Systems and Applications
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1. Objective

The objective of this lab is to utilize the Universal Asynchronous Receiver/Transmitter (UART) to connect the MCB1700 board to the host computer. Also, we introduce the concept of interrupts briefly. In the example project, we send characters to the microcontroller unit (MCU) of the board by pressing keys on the keyboard. These characters are sent back (i.e., echoed, looped-back) to the host computer by the MCU and are displayed in a hyperterminal window.

2. UART

The most basic method for communication with an embedded processor is asynchronous serial. It is implemented over a symmetric pair of wires connecting two devices (referred as host and target here, though these terms are arbitrary). Whenever the host has data to send to the target, it does so by sending an encoded bit stream over its transmit (TX) wire. This data is received by the target over its receive (RX) wire. The communication is similar in the opposite direction. This simple arrangement is illustrated in Fig.1. This mode of communications is called “asynchronous” because the host and target share no time reference (no clock signal). Instead, temporal properties are encoded in the bit stream by the transmitter and must be decoded by the receiver.

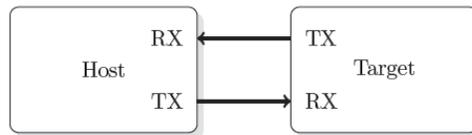


Figure 1 Basic serial communication.

A commonly used device for encoding and decoding such asynchronous bit streams is a Universal Asynchronous Receiver/Transmitter (UART). UART is a circuit that sends parallel data through a serial line. UARTs are frequently used in conjunction with the RS-232 standard (or specification), which specifies the electrical, mechanical, functional, and procedural characteristics of two data communication equipment.

A UART includes a transmitter and a receiver. The transmitter is essentially a special shift register that loads data in parallel and then shifts it out bit by bit at a specific rate. The receiver, on the other hand, shifts in data bit by bit and reassembles the data. The serial line is '1' when it is idle. The transmission starts with a start-bit, which is '0', followed by data-bits and an optional parity-bit, and ends with stop-bits, which are '1'. The number of data-bits can be 6, 7, or 8. The optional parity bit is used for error detection. For odd parity, it is set to '0' when the data bits have an odd number of '1's. For even parity, it is set to '0' when the data-bits have an even number of '1's. The number of stop-bits can be 1, 1.5, or 2. The transmission with 8 data-bits, no parity, and 1 stop-bit is shown in Fig.2 (note that the LSB of the data word is transmitted first).

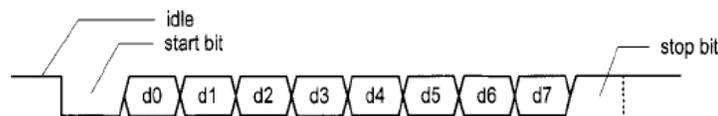


Figure 2 Transmission of a byte.

No clock information is conveyed through the serial line. Before the transmission starts, the transmitter and receiver must agree on a set of parameters in advance, which include the baud-rate (i.e., number of bits per second), the number of data bits and stop bits, and use of parity bit.

To understand how the UART's receiver extracts encoded data, assume it has a clock running at a multiple of the baud rate (e.g., 16x). Starting in the idle state (as shown in Fig.3), the receiver “samples” its RX signal until it detects a high-low transition. Then, it waits 1.5 bit periods (24 clock periods) to sample its RX signal at what it estimates to be the center of data bit 0. The receiver then samples RX at bit-period intervals (16 clock periods) until it has read the remaining 7 data bits and the stop bit. From that point this process is repeated. Successful extraction of the data from a frame requires that, over 10.5 bit periods, the drift of the receiver clock relative to the transmitter clock be less than 0.5 periods in order to correctly detect the stop bit.

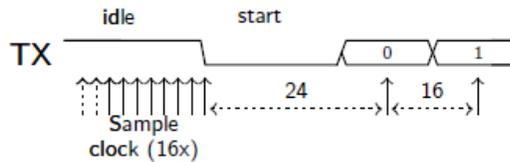


Figure 3 Illustration of signal decoding.

UARTs can be used to interface to a wide variety of other peripherals. For example, widely available GSM/GPRS cell phone modems and Bluetooth modems can be interfaced to a microcontroller UART. Similarly GPS receivers frequently support UART interfaces.

The NXP LPC1768 microcontroller includes four such devices/peripherals called UARTs: UART0/2/3 and UART1. See pages 298 and 318 of the LPC17xx User's Manual [1]. See also page 27 of the Datasheet [2]. UART0 and UART1 of the microcontroller are connected on the MCB1700 board to the ST3232C (IC6), which converts the logic signals to RS-232 voltage levels. This connection is realized from pins {P0.2/TXD0/AD0.7 and P0.3/RXD0/AD0.6} and {P2.0/PWM1.1/TXD1 and P2.1/PWM1.2/RXD1} of the microcontroller to the pins {10, 9, 11, and 12} ST3232C chip. The ST3232C chip drives the two COM0 and COM1 represented by the two *female* DB9 connectors (Note: if you use an Embest LPC1700 board, then, note that these two connectors are *male* DB9 connectors). To see these connections, take a look on pages 1 and 3 of the schematic diagram of the board [3] (included also in the downloadable files of this lab#2).

For more details on UART and RS-232, please read references [1-6].

In this lab we will explore serial communication between the (target) LPC1768 UART and a serial communication port of the host PC.

3. EXAMPLE 1: Microcontroller “echoes” back the characters sent by host computer

(a) Experiment

In the first example of this lab, we'll use an example project that comes with the “LPC1700 code bundle”.

The LPC1700 Code Bundle is a free software package from NXP that demonstrates the use of the built-in peripherals on the NXP LPC17xx series of microcontrollers. The example software includes a common library, peripheral APIs, and test modules for the APIs.

Download LPC1700 Code Bundle from [7] (<http://ics.nxp.com/support/software/code.bundle.lpc17xx.keil/>) and save it in your own work directory. Save it with the plan to keep it as we'll revisit some other example in the future. Unzip it to get the **keil_examples** folder created with several examples therein. Take a minute and read **keil_example/readme.txt** now.

Launch Keil uVision4 and then open the project UART from among the example just downloaded. The UART project is a simple program for the NXP LPC17xx microcontrollers using Keil's MCB1700 evaluation board. When sending some characters from a terminal program on the PC at a speed of 57600 Baud to the LPC17xx UART0 or UART1 the LPC17xx will echo those same characters back to the terminal program.

Step 1: Connect the board, ULINK2, and the host computer as shown in Fig.4. Ask the TA for the COM0/1 to Serial Port cable.

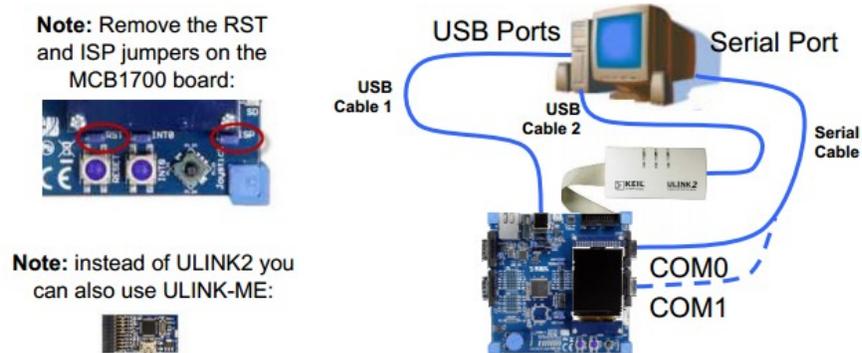


Figure 4 Hardware setup.

Remove the RST and ISP jumpers. Please keep the jumpers safe and place them back when you are done with this lab.

Note: If you are doing this lab using a laptop which does not have a serial port, you can use a USB Serial Converter. I got mine for about \$12 from Amazon [8] and it works great.

Step 2: Familiarize yourself with the following files:

- uart.c**: contains the UART0 / UART1 handlers / driver functions
- uarttest.c**: contains a small test program utilizing the UART driver
- system_LPC17xx.c**: Cortex-M3 Device Peripheral Access Layer Source File
- startup_LPC17xx.s**: CMSIS Cortex-M3 Core Device Startup File
- Abstract.txt**: Describes what the uarttest.c program does

Change "#include "lpc17xx.h" to "#include <lpc17xx.h>". This is done in order to use the latest Keil's release of the header file (normally located in C:\Keil\ARM\INC\NXP directory).

Step 3: Make sure the uVision4 Target setting is FLASH. Then, build the project by rebuilding all target files. Download to the microcontroller and confirm that download is ok.

Step 4: Establish a Terminal connection

--**Method 1:** If your Windows is XP or older, you can use HyperTerminal:

--Start HyperTerminal by clicking Start -> All Programs -> Accessories -> Communications -> HyperTerminal

--Connect HyperTerminal to the serial port that is connected to the COM0 port of the evaluation board for example. For the HyperTerminal settings you should use: COM1 (double check that it the host's serial port is indeed COM1 in your case – you can do that by Start->Control Panel->System->Hardware->Device Manager and click on Ports (COM & LPT); if in your case it's a different port number then use that; for example, in my case as I use the USB to serial adapter with my laptop, the port is COM14), baud rate 57600, 8 data bits, no parity, 1 stop bit, and no flow control.

--**Method 2:** If your Windows is 7 or newer, you first must make sure you download and/or install a serial connection interface (because HyperTerminal is not part of Windows 7 or later). On the machines in the lab, you can use Putty (<http://www.putty.org>):

--Start->All Programs->Putty->Putty

--Then, select Connection, Serial and type COM1 (or whatever is in your case; find what it is as described in Method 1), baud rate 57600, 8 data bits, no parity, 1 stop bit, and no flow control.

--Click on Session and choose the type of connection as Serial. Save the session for example as "lab2".

--Finally, click on Open; you should get HyperTerminal like window.

--**Method 3:** You can use other programs such as:

TeraTerm (<http://logmett.com/index.php?/products/teraterm.html>) or

HyperSerialPort (<http://www.hyperserialport.com/index.html>) or

RealTerm (<http://realterm.sourceforge.net>) or CoolTerm (<http://freeware.the-meiers.org>), etc.

Step 5: Type some text. It should appear in the HyperTerminal window. This is the result of: First, what you type is sent to the microcontroller via the serial port (that uses a UART). Second, the MCU receives that via its own UART and echoes (sends back) the typed characters using the same UART. The host PC receives the echoed characters that are displayed in the HyperTerminal.

Disconnect the serial cable from COM0 and connect it to COM1 port on the MCB1700 board. The behavior of project should be the same.

Step 6: (optional – do **not** do it on computers in the lab): On your own computer only, download and install NXP's FlashMagic tool from here:

<http://www.flashmagictool.com/>

Then, follow the steps that describe how to use this tool as presented in the last part of the UART documentation for the code bundle:

<http://ics.nxp.com/literature/presentations/microcontrollers/pdf/code.bundle.lpc17xx.keil.uart.pdf> (included in the downloadable archive of files for this lab).

Note: With this approach one does not need the ULINK2 programmer/debugger.

(b) Brief program description

Looking at the **main()** function inside the **uarttest.c** file we can see the following main actions:

--UART0 and UART1 are initialized:

```
UARTInit(0, 57600); /* baud rate setting */
UARTInit(1, 57600); /* baud rate setting */
```

--A while loop which executes indefinitely either for UART0 or for UART1. The instructions executed inside this loop (let's assume the UART0) are:

- Disable Receiver Buffer Register (RBR), which contains the next received character to be read. This is achieved by setting all bits of the Interrupt Enable Register (IER) to '0' except bits THRE and RLS. In this way the LSB (i.e., bit index 0 out of 32 bits) of IER register is set to '0'. The role of this bit (as explained in the LPC17xx User's Manual [1] on page 302) when set to '0' is to disable the Receive Data Available interrupt for UART0.
- Send back to the host the characters from the buffer UART0Buffer. This is done only if there are characters in the buffer (the total buffer size is 40 characters) which have been received so far from the host PC. The number of characters received so far and not yet echoed back is stored and updated in UART0Count.
- Once the transmission of all characters from the buffer is done, reset the counter UART0Count.
- Enable Receiver Buffer Register (RBR). This is achieved by setting to '1' the LSB of IER, which in turn is achieved using the mask IER_RBR.

(c) Source code discussion

Please take your time now to thoroughly browse the source code in files **uart.c** and **uarttest.c** files. Open and read other files as necessary to track the declarations and descriptions of variables and functions.

For example, in **uarttest.c** we see:

--A function call **SystemClockUpdate();**

This is **described** in source file **system_LPC17xx.c** which we locate in the Project panel of the uVision4 IDE. Click on the name of this file to open and search inside it the description of **SystemClockUpdate()**.

This function is declared in header file **system_LPC17xx.h**. Open these files and try to understand how this function is implemented; what each of the source code lines do?

--A function call **UARTInit(0, 57600);**

This function is described in source file **uart.c**. The declaration of this function is done inside header file **uart.h**. Open these files and read the whole code; try to understand each line of the code.

--An instruction:

```
LPC_UART0->IER = IER_THRE | IER_RLS;          /* Disable RBR */
```

Based on what's been studied in lab#1 you should know already that **LPC_UART0** is an address of a memory location – the UART0 peripheral is “mapped” to this memory location. Starting with this memory location, several consecutive memory locations represent “registers” associated with this peripheral/device called UART0. All 14 such registers (or memory locations) are listed on page 300 of the User Manual. Utilizing this peripheral is done through reading/writing into these registers according to their meaning and rules described in the manual. For example, one of the 14 registers associated with UART0 is Interrupt Enable Register (**IER**).

From a C programming perspective, **LPC_UART0** is declared inside header file **LPC17xx.h**:

```
#define LPC_UART0          ((LPC_UART_TypeDef *) LPC_UART0_BASE )
```

Which also declares what **LPC_UART0_BASE** as:

```
#define LPC_UART0_BASE    (LPC_APB0_BASE + 0x0C000)
```

Where **LPC_APB0_BASE** is declared at its turn in the same file:

```
#define LPC_APB0_BASE    (0x40000000UL)
```

This effectively makes **LPC_UART0_BASE** to have value: **0x4000C000**, which not surprisingly coincides with what is reported on page 14 of the LPC17xx User's Manual!

Furthermore, the Interrupt Enable Register (IER) contains individual interrupt enable bits for the 7 potential UART interrupts. The IER register for UART0 is “mapped” (or associated with) to memory address **0x4000C004** as seen on page 300 of the LPC17xx User’s Manual. This fact is captured in the **struct** declaration of **LPC_UART_TypeDef** inside the header file **LPC17xx.h** (open this file and double check it!). As a result, in our C programming, we can refer to the IER register as in the instruction that we are currently discussing: **LPC_UART0->IER**, which basically stores/represents the address **0x4000C004**. In addition, note that **IER_THRE** and **IER_RLS** are declared inside the header file **uart.h** as:

```
#define IER_THRE  0x02
#define IER_RLS   0x04
```

Which are utilized as masks in our instruction:

```
LPC_UART0->IER = IER_THRE | IER_RLS;          /* Disable RBR */
```

So, finally as we see, the effect of this instruction is simply to turn ‘1’ bit index 1 (the second LSB out of 32 bits) and bit index 2 (the third LSB out of 32 bits) of the IER register! All other bits are set to ‘0’.

Having bit index 1 of this register set to ‘1’ enables the Transmit Holding Register Empty (THRE) flag for UART0 – see page 302, Table 275 of the LPC17xx User’s Manual. Having bit index 2 of this register set to ‘1’ enables the UART0 RX line status interrupts – see page 302, Table 275 of the LPC17xx User’s Manual. As already said, all other bits are set therefore via this masking to ‘0’. This includes the LSB (i.e., bit index 0 out of 32 bits) of IER register, which is set to ‘0’. The role of this bit (as explained in the LPC17xx User’s Manual on page 302) when set to ‘0’ is to disable the Receive Data Available interrupt for UART0.

You should be able now to explain what the following instruction does:

```
LPC_UART0->IER = IER_THRE | IER_RLS | IER_RBR; /* Re-enable RBR */
```

Summarizing, what the code inside **uarttest.c** does is (as also mentioned in the previous section):

```
--disable receiving data
--send back data to the PC from the buffer (i.e., array variable UART0Buffer)
--reset counter of characters stored in buffer
--enable receiving data
```

*Note: As mentioned in lab#1, in general one would not need to worry about these details about addresses to which registers are mapped. It would be sufficient to just know of for example the definition and declaration of **LPC_UART_TypeDef** inside the header file **LPC17xx.h**. To the C programmer, it is transparent to what exact address the register IER is mapped to for example. However, now at the beginning, it’s instructive to track these things so that we get a better global picture of these concepts. It also forces us to get better used with the LPC17xx User’s Manual and the datasheets.*

Notice that inside the source file **uart.c** we have these two function descriptions:

```
void UART0_IRQHandler (void) {...}
void UART1_IRQHandler (void) {...}
```

which are not called for example inside **uarttest.c**, but they appear inside **startup_LPC17xx.s**:

```
DCD      UART0_IRQHandler      ; 21: UART0
DCD      UART1_IRQHandler      ; 22: UART1
```

The function **void UART0_IRQHandler (void)** is the UART0 interrupt handler. Its name is **UART0_IRQHandler** because it is named like that by the startup code inside the file **startup_LPC17xx.s**. **DCD** is an assembler directive (or pseudo-op) that defines a 32-bit constant.

To get a better idea about these things, we need to make a parenthesis and discuss a bit about **interrupts** in the next section. For the time being this discussion is enough. We will discuss interrupts in more details in class lectures and in some of the next labs as well.

(d) Interrupts – a 1st encounter

An **interrupt** is the automatic transfer of software execution in response to a hardware event that is **asynchronous** with the current software execution. This hardware event is called a **trigger**. The hardware event can either be a *busy to ready transition* in an external I/O device (i.e., peripheral, like for example the UART input/output) or an internal event (like bus fault, memory fault, or a periodic timer). When the hardware needs service, signified by a busy to ready state transition, it will request an interrupt by setting its trigger flag.

A **thread** is defined as the path of action of software as it executes. The execution of the interrupt service routine (ISR) is called as a background thread, which is created by the hardware interrupt request and is killed when the ISR returns from interrupt (e.g., by executing a **BX LR** in an assembly program). A new thread is created for each interrupt request. In a **multi-threaded** system, threads are normally cooperating to perform an overall task. Consequently, we'll develop ways for threads to communicate (e.g., FIFOs) and synchronize with each other.

A **process** is also defined as the action of software as it executes. Processes do not necessarily cooperate towards a common shared goal. Threads share access to I/O devices, system resources, and global variables, while processes have separate global variables and system resources. Processes do not share I/O devices.

To **arm (disarm)** a device/peripheral means to enable (shut off) the source of interrupts. Each potential interrupting trigger has a separate “arm” bit. One arms (disarms) a trigger if one is (is not) interested in interrupts from this source.

To **enable (disable)** means to allow interrupts at this time (postponing interrupts until a later time). On the ARM Cortex-M3 processor, there is one interrupt enable bit for the entire interrupt system. In particular, to disable interrupts we set the interrupt mask bit, **I**, in **PRIMASK** register.

*Note: An interrupt is one of five mechanisms to **synchronize** a microcontroller with an I/O device. The other mechanisms are blind cycle, busy wait, periodic polling, and direct memory access. With an input device, the hardware will request an interrupt when input device has new data. The software interrupt service will read from the input device and save in global RAM. With an output device, the hardware will request an interrupt when the output device is idle. The software interrupt service will get data from a global structure, and write it to the device. Sometimes, we configure the hardware timer to request interrupts on a periodic basis. The software interrupt service will perform a special function; for example, a data acquisition system needs to read the ADC at a regular rate.*

On the ARM Cortex-M3 processor, exceptions include resets, software interrupts, and **hardware interrupts**. Each exception has an associated 32-bit vector that points to the memory location where the **ISR** that handles the exception is located. Vectors are stored in ROM at the beginning of the memory. Here is an example of a few vectors as defined inside **startup_LPC17xx.s**:

```
__Vectors
    DCD      __initial_sp          ; Top of Stack
    DCD      Reset_Handler        ; Reset Handler
```

```

DCD      NMI_Handler           ; NMI Handler
DCD      HardFault_Handler    ; Hard Fault Handler
...
; External Interrupts
DCD      WDT_IRQHandler        ; 16: Watchdog Timer
DCD      TIMER0_IRQHandler     ; 17: Timer0
...
DCD      UART0_IRQHandler     ; 21: UART0
...

```

ROM location 0x00000000 has the initial stack pointer and location 0x00000004 contains the initial program counter (PC), which is called the **reset vector**. It points to a function called reset handler, which is the first thing executed following reset.

Interrupts on the Cortex-M3 are controlled by the Nested Vector Interrupt Controller (NVIC). **To activate an “interrupt source” we need to set its priority and enable that source in the NVIC (i.e., activate = set priority + enable source in NVIC).** This activation is in addition to the “arm” and “enable” steps discussed earlier.

Table 50 in the User Manual (page 73) lists the interrupt sources for each **peripheral function**. Table 51 (page 76 in User Manual) summarizes the registers in the NVIC as implemented in the LPC17xx microcontroller. Read the entire Chapter 6 of the User Manual (pages 72-90) and identify the priority and enable registers and their fields of the NVIC. Pay particular attention to (i.e., search/watch for) UART0 in this Chapter. How would you set the priority and enable UART0 as a source of interrupts?

Coming back to our discussion of the function **void UART0_IRQHandler (void)** in **uart.c**, we see a first instruction:

```
IIRValue = LPC_UART0->IIR;
```

What does it do? It simply reads the value of **LPC_UART0->IIR** and assigns it to a variable whose name is IIRValue. **LPC_UART0->IIR** is the value of the register **IIR** (Interrupt IDentification Register - identifies which interrupt(s) are pending), which is one of several (14 of them) registers associated with the UART0 peripheral/device. You can see it as well as the other registers on page 300 of the User Manual. Take a while and read them all. The fields of the interrupt register **IIR** are later described on page 303 in the User Manual. Take another while and read them all on pages 303-304.

Next inside **uart.c** we see:

```

IIRValue >>= 1;           /* skip pending bit in IIR */
IIRValue &= 0x07;        /* check bit 1~3, interrupt identification */

```

Which shifts right with one bit IIRValue and then AND’s it with 0x07. This effectively “zooms-in” onto the field formed by bits index 1-3 from the original **LPC_UART0->IIR**, bits which are now in the position bits index 0-2 of IIRValue variable.

Going on, we find an “if” instruction with several branches:

```

if ( IIRValue == IIR_RLS )      /* Receive Line Status */
{
...
}
else if ( IIRValue == IIR_RDA ) /* Receive Data Available */
{
...
}
else if ( IIRValue == IIR_CTI ) /* Character timeout indicator */

```

```

{...
}
else if ( IIRValue == IIR_THRE ) /* THRE, transmit holding register empty */
{...
}

```

See in Table 276 on page 303 in the User Manual what is the meaning of the three bits 1-3 from the original IIR register:

```

011 1 - Receive Line Status (RLS).
010 2a - Receive Data Available (RDA).
110 2b - Character Time-out Indicator (CTI).
001 3 - THRE Interrupt

```

For each of these situations, something else is done inside the corresponding branch of the “if” instruction above. In other words, we first identify the interrupt, and for each ID we do something else. If none of the expected IDs is found, we do nothing. **Please take your time now to explain what’s done in each of these cases.** Read pages 303-304 in the User Manual for this. This is very important in order to understand the overall operation of the example of this lab.

4. Lab Assignment

1) (not graded and should **not** be discussed in the lab report) Use a Debug session to step through the execution of this program. The scope is for you to better understand its operation. See lab#1 for how to use/run a debug session. See also documentation of the code bundle from NXP [7].

2) Answer the question: Why did we need to remove the ISP and RST jumpers in Example 1?

3) Describe in less than a page (typed, font size 11, single line spacing) all instructions inside the function **void UART0_IRQHandler (void)** for each of the branches of the main “if” instruction. Include this in your lab report.

4) Modify Example 1 such that the characters typed on the host’s keyboard are also displayed on the LCD display on the board. (Hint: re-use code from Blinky2 example of lab#1)

5. Credits and references

[1] LPC17xx user’s manual; http://www.nxp.com/documents/user_manual/UM10360.pdf (part of lab#1 files)

[2] NXP LPC17xx Datasheet;

http://www.nxp.com/documents/data_sheet/LPC1769_68_67_66_65_64_63.pdf (part of lab#1 files)

[3] Schematic Diagram of the MCB1700 board; <http://www.keil.com/mcb1700/mcb1700-schematics.pdf> (part of lab#2 files)

[4] MCB1700 Serial Ports; http://www.keil.com/support/man/docs/mcb1700/mcb1700_to_serial.htm

[5] UART entry on Wikipedia (click also on the references therein for RS-232);

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_asynchronous_receiver/transmitter

[6]

--Jonathan W. Valvano, Embedded Systems: Introduction to Arm Cortex-M3 Microcontrollers, 2012. (Chapters 8,9)

--Pong P. Chu, FPGA Prototyping by VHDL Examples: Xilinx Spartan-3 Version, Wiley 2008. (Chapter 7)

--Lab manual of course <http://homes.soic.indiana.edu/geobrown/c335> (Chapter 5)

--EE 472 Course Note Pack, Univ. of Washington, 2009,

http://abstract.cs.washington.edu/~shwetak/classes/ee472/notes/472_note_pack.pdf (Chapter 8)

[7] LPC1700 Code Bundle;

Download: <http://ics.nxp.com/support/software/code.bundle.lpc17xx.keil/>

Documentation:

<http://ics.nxp.com/literature/presentations/microcontrollers/pdf/code.bundle.lpc17xx.keil.uart.pdf>

[8] Plugable USB to RS-232 DB9 Serial Adapter;

Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/Plugable-Adapter-Prolific-PL2303HX-Chipset/dp/B00425S1H8/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1359988639&sr=8-1&keywords=plugable+usb+to+serial

Tigerdirect: <http://www.tigerdirect.com/applications/SearchTools/item-details.asp?EdpNo=3753055&CatId=464>