MCL Bootcamp

Gerber Files

What is a Gerber File?

- Standard electronics industry file format
- Used to communicate design information to manufacturers
- The electronics industry's equivalent of a PDF



Types of Gerber Files

- O RS-274D "old" standard
 - Spreads information for a single layer across at least two files
 - External aperture list or file
- RS-274X most common
 - Allows all information for a layer to be contained in a single file
 - The aperture list is embedded
- ODB++
 - Intelligent, single data-structure to transferring PCB designs into fabrication, assembly, and test
- More file types may evolve as the industry progresses

How to View Gerber Files

- Many programs out there to view Gerber files
- MCL uses:
 - CAM350
 - Pentalogix View Mate
 - O GC Prevue
 - O Ucamco









Typical File Types Inside a Gerber

- Fabrication drawing/specs
- NC Drill file
- Drill map there may be multiple drill files if blind/buried vias are present
- Individual copper layers top/bottom copper, any internal layers
- Silkscreen files
- Solder mask files
- Outline or profile layer
- May have carbon print file, any other separate manufacturing processes, or paste

Fabrication File/Specs

- May be in PDF formal, DXF, DWG, Gerber, Readme, or Microsoft Office
- Stack up
- May contain the drill map file

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NC Drill File vs Drill Map

- NC drill file shows x and y coordinates of all the holes, but it shows them so that they are measurable
 - Typically in Excellon format
- Drill map lists all the drills in a chart
 - Uses symbols to differentiate between the drills

NC Drill File

Drill Map



Side by Side NC Drill File vs Drill Map

Individual Copper Layers

- Typically shown as positive image
- All layers will appear similar but can differentiate the top and bottom due to the presence of component footprints as well as the extension of the Gerber File
 - Top layer .top, .tl, .cs,
 - Bottom layer .bot, .bl, .ss

Top Copper Layer





Bottom Copper Layer

Inner Layers

- Thermals
- Won't see any component footprints
- Differentiated by extensions such as .l2, .gnd, .pwr, .in1, etc.





Silkscreen Files

- Viewed as the marking or the nomenclature that shows the component locations
- Any text on the board
- Typically shown as .to, .bo, .tsilk, .silk, .silk



Solder Mask Files

- Actually a resist file typically the black areas shown in the Gerber will translate to where solder mask will be placed
 - The areas with color denote the locations in which solder mask will not be added
 - During manufacturing any locations that have exposed copper and no solder mask will result in the finish of the board



Outline or Profile Layer

- The outline of the board it may show internal cutouts/routes
- May show v-scores



How to Differentiate One Layer From Another

- How the file extension was named
- Information in the stack up only way to know for sure
- Component footprints

