

OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS AND SYSTEM DESCRIPTION FOR THE

BA-1S

INTRACELLULAR BRIDGE MODE AMPLIFIER



VERSION 4.3

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About this Manual

This manual should help to setup and use the BA-1S system correctly and to perform reliable experiments.

If you are not familiar with the use of instruments for intracellular recording of electrical signals please read the manual completely. The experienced user should read at least chapters, 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Important: Please read chapter 1 carefully! It contains general information about the safety regulations and how to handle highly sensitive electronic instruments.

Signs and conventions

In this manual all elements of the front panel are written in capital letters as they appear on the front panel.

System components that are shipped in the standard configuration are marked with ✓, optional components with ⇔. In some chapters the user is guided step by step through a certain procedure. These steps are marked with □.

Important information and special precautions are highlighted in gray.

Abbreviations

C_m : cell membrane capacitance

C_{stray} : electrode stray capacitance

GND: ground

I_{max} : maximal current

R_m : cell membrane resistance

R_{EL} : electrode resistance

τ_{Cm} : time constant of the cell membrane

V_{REL} : potential drop at R_{EL}

1. Safety Regulations

VERY IMPORTANT: Instruments and components supplied by npi electronic are NOT intended for clinical use or medical purposes (e.g. for diagnosis or treatment of humans), or for any other life-supporting system. npi electronic disclaims any warranties for such purpose. Equipment supplied by npi electronic must be operated only by selected, trained and adequately instructed personnel. For details please consult the **GENERAL TERMS OF DELIVERY AND CONDITIONS OF BUSINESS** of npi electronic, D-71732 Tamm, Germany.

- 1) **GENERAL:** This system is designed for use in scientific laboratories and must be operated only by trained staff. General safety regulations for operating electrical devices should be followed.
- 2) **AC MAINS CONNECTION:** While working with npi systems, always adhere to the appropriate safety measures for handling electronic devices. Before using any device please read manuals and instructions carefully.
The device is to be operated only at 115/230 Volt 60/50 Hz AC. Please check for appropriate line voltage before connecting any system to mains.
Always use a three-wire line cord and a mains power-plug with a protection contact connected to ground (protective earth).
Before opening the cabinet, unplug the instrument.
Unplug the instrument when replacing the fuse or changing line voltage. Replace fuse only with an appropriate specified type.
- 3) **STATIC ELECTRICITY:** Electronic equipment is sensitive to static discharges. Some devices such as sensor inputs are equipped with very sensitive FET amplifiers, which can be damaged by electrostatic charge and must therefore be handled with care. Electrostatic discharge can be avoided by touching a grounded metal surface when changing or adjusting sensors. **Always turn power off when adding or removing modules, connecting or disconnecting sensors, headstages or other components from the instrument or 19" cabinet.**
- 4) **TEMPERATURE DRIFT / WARM-UP TIME:** All analog electronic systems are sensitive to temperature changes. Therefore, all electronic instruments containing analog circuits should be used only in a warmed-up condition (i.e. after internal temperature has reached steady-state values). In most cases a warm-up period of 20-30 minutes is sufficient.
- 5) **HANDLING:** Please protect the device from moisture, heat, radiation and corrosive chemicals.

2. BA-1S Components

The following items are shipped with the BA-1S system:

- ✓ BA-1S amplifier
- ✓ Headstage
- ✓ Ground connector for headstage (2.6 mm)
- ✓ Power cord
- ✓ User manual

Optional accessories:

- ⇨ Electrode holder
- ⇨ Suction electrode holder
- ⇨ Electrode holder adapter with BNC- and SMB connector



- ⇨ Remote switch for penetration unit
- ⇨ Active cell model
- ⇨ Passive cell model (see Figure 6)
- ⇨ Low noise / low bias current headstage with a reduced current range (:10 headstage, i.e. maximal current is 1.2 nA)
- ⇨ Headstage with differential input

3. BA-1S System

This manual is related to the standard configuration of the BA-1S system consisting a standard headstage and standard calibrations of bridge balance, electrode resistance display range etc.

Other configurations are available, e.g. if the BA-1S system is used only for whole cell patch clamp recordings with suction electrodes the BA-1S system can be delivered with adapted calibrations and a low noise / low bias current headstage (see **Optional accessories** in chapter 2). For details contact npi.

3.1. System Description

The npi BA-1S intracellular recording systems are precise current clamp instruments with a bridge circuit to compensate for the resistance of the recording intracellular electrode. For current injection and potential recording a very high impedance voltage-to-current converter with a special input capacitance compensation circuit is used. For methodical reviews see Lalley et al. (1999), Richter et al. (1996), Ogden (1994) and Boulton et al. (1990).

The system consists of standard desktop cabinet and a headstage which should be placed close to the recording site. The recording electrode is connected to the headstage via an electrode holder (see also Figure 5). In some setups there is no space for placing the headstage very

close to the recording site. In that case the electrode holder can be connected to the headstage via an electrode adapter (see **Optional accessories** in chapter 2).

All electrode connectors use a driven shield approach (for details of this approach see Ogden (1994)) to minimize the effect of the connecting cables. In addition, all headstages are equipped with a ground connector providing system ground. The standard system is equipped with a headstage capable of injecting a maximal current of approximately ± 12 nA into a resistance of 100 M Ω .

With this headstage the system can be used either with high resistance electrodes for intracellular recordings or with low resistance suction electrodes for whole cell patch clamp recordings.

To cover all the needs of electrophysiological research all systems have a large variety of operation- and control elements such as cell penetration mode (BUZZ), ELECTRODE CLEAR facility, ten-turn controls for BRIDGE BALANCE, CAPACITANCE COMPENSATION, OFFSET and HOLDING CURRENT, an automated electrode resistance test, a digital display for potential, membrane current and electrode resistance, a GATE and linear CURRENT STIMULUS INPUT.

3.2. Description of the Front Panel

In the following description of the front panel elements each element has a number that is related to that in Figure 1. The number is followed by the name (in uppercase letters) written on the front panel and the type of the element (in lowercase letters). Then, a short description of the element is given. Some elements are grouped in functional units (e.g. BUZZ unit) and are described as units regardless of the order of numbers.

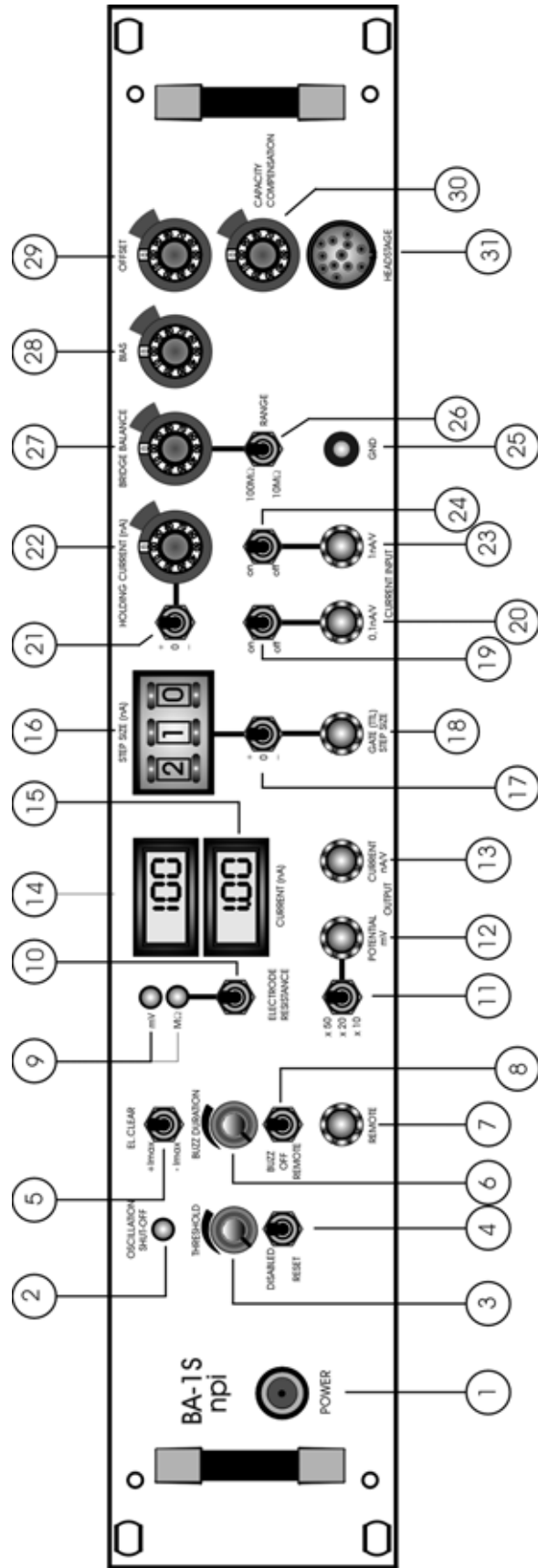


Figure 1: BA-1S front panel view (the numbers are related to those in the text below)

(1) POWER pressure switch

Switch to turn POWER on (switch pushed) or off (switch released).

OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF unit

The OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF unit consists of (2) OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF LED, (3) THRESHOLD potentiometer and the (4) DISABLED/RESET switch.

(2) OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF LED

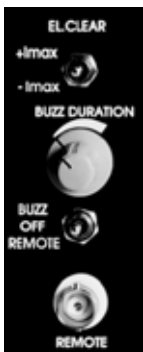
Indicates whether the OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF circuit is active (LED: red) or not (LED: green).

(3) THRESHOLD potentiometer

Control to set the activation THRESHOLD of the OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF circuit (potentiometer, linear clockwise, range: 0-1200 mV).

(4) DISABLED/RESET switch

Switch to DISABLE the OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF unit or RESET the circuit. RESET is done if one wants to reset the circuit after previous activation. After resetting the OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF unit is active again.

BUZZ unit / EL.CLEAR unit

The BUZZ / EL.CLEAR unit consists of (6) BUZZ DURATION potentiometer, (8) BUZZ / OFF / REMOTE switch, (5) EL.CLEAR switch and (7) REMOTE connector.

(6) BUZZ DURATION potentiometer

Control to set the duration of the BUZZ (potentiometer, clockwise, range: ~50 ms to ~500 ms). The duration is dependent on the setting of CAP.COMP (30). It is effective in both modes (REMOTE and BUZZ), see also (8).

(8) BUZZ / OFF / REMOTE switch

Toggle switch to set the mode of BUZZ operation.

BUZZ: Switching to BUZZ activates the BUZZ circuit (duration set by **(6)**). To facilitate the penetration of the cell membrane the BUZZ circuit is provided which is based on oscillations caused by overcompensating the capacitance compensation system. The overcompensation of capacitance compensation yields to very powerful high-frequency oscillations (see Figure 2).

OFF: Switching to OFF disables the BUZZ circuit.

REMOTE: In the REMOTE position either a hand-held switch or a foot-switch can be used to operate the BUZZ circuit remotely. The remote device is connected via a grounded BNC cable (at connector **(7)**).

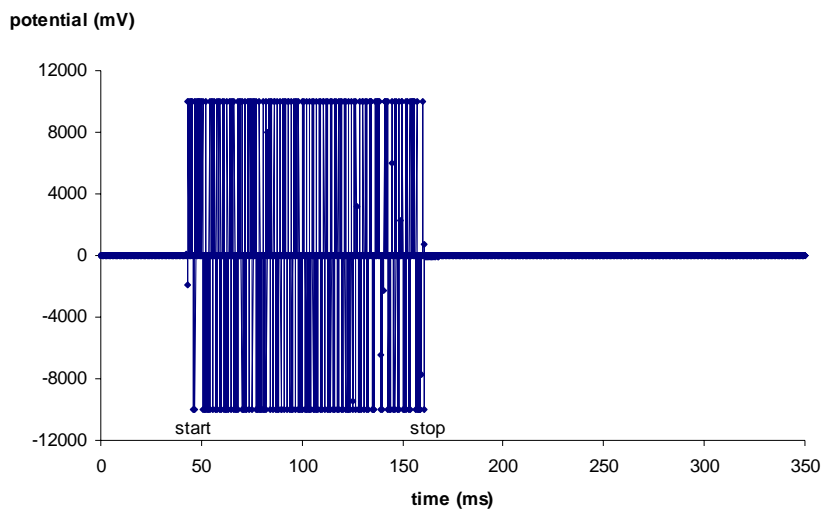


Figure 2: buzz function of the BA-1S

(5) EL.CLEAR switch

The ELECTRODE CLEAR switch is used to activate the ELECTRODE CLEAR circuit that can be used to clean the tip of the electrode by passing large amounts of positive or negative currents. The circuit is operated by pushing this switch to $+I_{\max}$ (maximum positive current) or $-I_{\max}$ (maximum negative current).

(7) REMOTE connector

BNC connector to attach a remote switch to the BUZZ unit (see also **(8)**).

DISPLAY unit



The DISPLAY unit consists of **(14, 15)** two displays, **(9)** mV, MΩ LEDs and **(10)** ELECTRODE RESISTANCE switch.

(14) DISPLAY

LC-Display for the recorded potential in mV (XXX mV) or the electrode resistance in MΩ (XXX MΩ, i.e. 100 correspond to 100 MΩ), selected by pushing switch **(10)**.

(15) DISPLAY CURRENT (nA)

LC-Display for the electrode current in nA (XX.XX nA).

(10) ELECTRODE RESISTANCE switch

Switch to test the resistance of the electrode. When this switch is pushed the DISPLAY **(14)** shows the electrode resistance in MΩ (see **(14)**).

(9) mV, MΩ LEDs

LEDs which indicate the unit of the reading of the DISPLAY **(14)**.

The selected mode is indicated by the LEDs mV or MΩ **(14)**. The resistance is measured accurately regardless of the correct setting of other front panel elements such as OFFSET, BRIDGE BALANCE etc.

Caution: When the ELECTRODE RESISTANCE switch is set to R_{EL} , the BA-1S automatically applies current pulses of ± 1 nA to the electrode. Therefore it should not be used during recordings from cells since this current may stimulate or damage the cell.

Note: With high resistance electrodes ($R_{EL} > 20$ MΩ) the displayed value is dependent on the setting of the capacitance compensation.

OUTPUT unit



The OUTPUT unit consists of **(11)** x10, x20, x50 switch, **(12)** POTENTIAL mV OUTPUT and **(13)** CURRENT OUTPUT.

(11) x10, x20, x50 switch

Switch to set the gain of the POTENTIAL OUTPUT **(12)**. The measured potential at the electrode tip is multiplied by a factor of 10 (x10), 20 (x20) or 50 (x50).

(12) POTENTIAL mV OUTPUT connector

BNC connector monitoring the recorded membrane potential with a gain set by x10, x20, x50 switch **(11)**, (resistance: 250 Ω, range: ± 1000 mV membrane potential)

(13) CURRENT nA/V OUTPUT connector

BNC connector monitoring the stimulating current passed through the electrode (sensitivity: 1 nA/V, resistance: 250 Ω , range: approximately ± 12 nA).

gated stimulus unit



The gated stimulus unit consists of **(16)** STEP SIZE (nA) digital potentiometer, **(17)** + / 0 / - switch (STEP SIZE switch) and **(18)** GATE (TTL) STEP SIZE connector.

(16) STEP SIZE (nA) digital potentiometer

Control to set the amplitude of the gated stimulus (digital potentiometer (X.XX nA) range: ± 9.99 nA, resolution 10 pA).

(17) + / 0 / - switch (STEP SIZE switch)

+ / 0 / - toggle switch to disable the gated stimulus set by STEP SIZE **(16)** and gated by GATE (TTL) STEP SIZE **(18)** or to select the polarity of the gated stimulus (+: gated stimulus positive, 0: gated stimulus disabled, -: gated stimulus negative).

(18) GATE (TTL) STEP SIZE connector

With this input a current step (gated stimulus) can be generated set by the digital potentiometer STEP SIZE **(16)** and the polarity switch **(17)**. This current step is gated by a positive digital pulse (3-15 V) applied to the BNC connector. Two examples are given in Figure 3. The duration of the current step is set by the duration of the gating signal. The amplitude of the current step is set by STEP SIZE **(16)**.

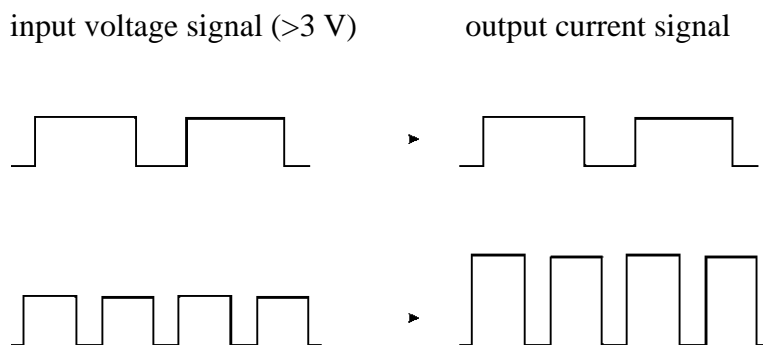
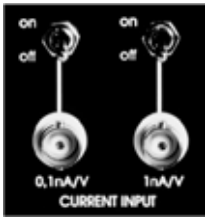


Figure 3: input-output relation using GATE (TTL) STEP SIZE

CURRENT INPUT unit

The CURRENT INPUT unit consists of (19) (24) on / off switches, (20) 0.1 nA/V connector and (23) 1 nA/V connector.

(19) on / off switch

Switch to enable (on) or disable (off) CURRENT INPUT via 0.1 nA/V connector.

To avoid interferences always switch to off position if the INPUT is not used.

(20) CURRENT INPUT 0.1 nA/V connector

Analog input BNC connector for applying signals from an external stimulus source. The voltage signal that is connected here is transformed to a proportional current at the electrode with a sensitivity of 0.1 nA/V, i.e. an input voltage of 5 V is transformed to an output current of 0.5 nA. The signal form remains unchanged. Two examples are given in Figure 4. The amplitude of the output current signal (current stimulus) is determined by the amplitude of the input voltage signal.

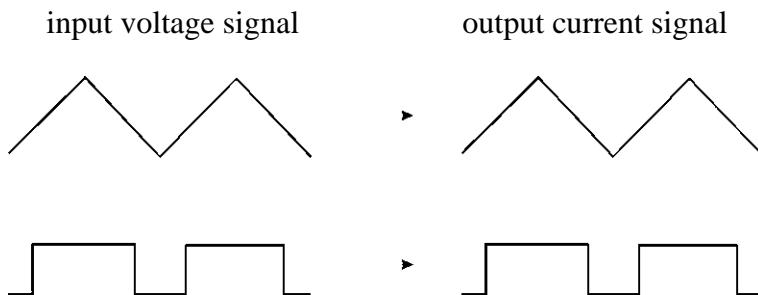


Figure 4: input-output relation using CURRENT INPUT

(24) on / off switch

Switch to enable (on) or disable (off) CURRENT INPUT via 1 nA/V connector.

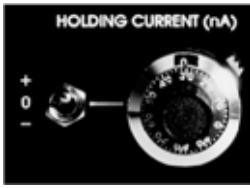
Hint: To avoid interferences always switch to off position if the INPUT is not used.

(23) CURRENT INPUT 1 nA/V connector

Analog input BNC connector for applying signals from an external stimulus source. The voltage signal that is connected here is transformed to a proportional current at the electrode with a sensitivity of 1 nA/V, i.e. an input voltage of 5 V is transformed to an output current of 5 nA. The signal form remains unchanged (see also (20) and Figure 4).

Important: The current injected through the electrode is always the sum of the input signal at CURRENT INPUT (20 or 23), the holding current set by HOLDING CURRENT (22) and switch (21) and the gated stimulus set by STEP SIZE (16) and switch (17).

HOLDING CURRENT unit



The HOLDING CURRENT unit consists of **(21)** + / 0 / - switch (holding current switch) and **(22)** HOLDING CURRENT (nA) potentiometer.

(21) + / 0 / - switch (holding current switch)

Switch to disable holding current generation or to set the polarity of the holding current (+: current positive, 0: holding current disabled, -: current negative).

(22) HOLDING CURRENT (nA) potentiometer

With this control a constant current (holding current) can be generated (ten turn potentiometer, clockwise), calibrated in nA ($I_{\max} = 10 \text{ nA}$). The polarity of this holding current is set by toggle switch **(21)**.

BRIDGE BALANCE unit



The BRIDGE BALANCE unit consists of **(26)** 100 MΩ / 10 MΩ RANGE switch and **(27)** BRIDGE BALANCE potentiometer.

(26) 100 MΩ / 10 MΩ RANGE switch

Switch to set the RANGE of the BRIDGE BALANCE potentiometer (100 MΩ position: RANGE 0 MΩ to 1000 MΩ, 10 MΩ position: RANGE 0 MΩ to 100 MΩ)

(27) BRIDGE BALANCE(MΩ) potentiometer

If current is passed through the recording electrode the potential deflection caused at the electrode resistance is compensated with this control (ten turn potentiometer, clockwise, calibrated in MΩ, RANGE: set by switch **(26)**, see also chapter 7.4).

(25) GROUND connector



This connector is linked to the internal system ground which has no connection to the 19" cabinet and the mains ground to avoid ground loops.

(28) BIAS (bias current) potentiometer



With this 10 turn trim potentiometer the output current of the headstage (headstage BIAS current) can be tuned to zero (ten-turn potentiometer, symmetrical, i.e. 0 pA = 5 on the dial), range: $\pm 150 \text{ pA}$, (see chapter 7.1).

(29) OFFSET potentiometer

Control to set the output of the electrode preamplifier to zero (ten-turn potentiometer, symmetrical, i.e. 0 mV = 5 on the dial), range: ± 200 mV (see chapter 7.2).

(30) CAPACITY COMPENSATION potentiometer

Control for the compensation of the input capacitance (ten turn potentiometer, clockwise, range: 0-30 pF, see chapter 7.3).

Caution: This circuit is based on a positive feedback circuit. Overcompensation leads to oscillations which may damage the cell.

(31) HEADSTAGE connector

The HEADSTAGE is connected via a flexible cable and a 12-pole connector to the mainframe (see also chapter 4).

Caution: Please always adhere to the appropriate safety regulations (see chapter 1). Please turn power off when connecting or disconnecting the headstage from the HEADSTAGE connector!

4. Headstage

The BA-1S comes with the standard headstage (range: ± 12 nA) for connecting glass electrodes with high resistances or suction electrodes for whole cell patch clamp recordings with lower resistances via an electrode holder (see Figure 5).

A low noise / low bias current headstage (range: ± 1.2 nA, see also **Optional accessories** in chapter 2) for measurement of very small currents is also available. For details contact npj.

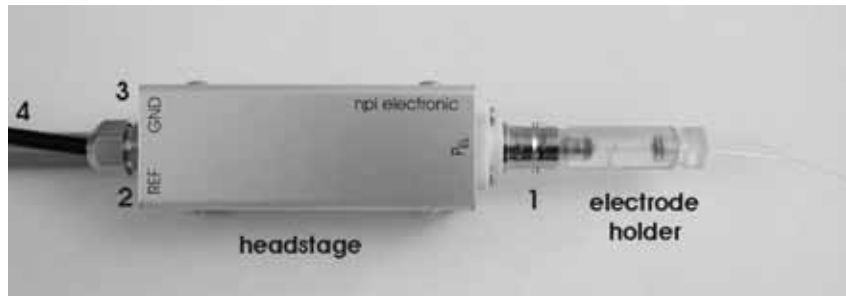


Figure 5: electrode holder (optional) and headstage of the BA-1S

4.1. Headstage Elements

- 1 BNC connector for the electrode holder
- 2 REF: not connected
- 3 GND: Ground connector
- 4 holding bar

The electrode filled with electrolyte is inserted into an electrode holder (optional, see Figure 5) that fits into the BNC connector of the headstage or into an electrode holder adapter (optional, see also **Optional accessories** in chapter 2). The electrical connection between the electrolyte and the headstage is established using a carefully chlorided silver wire. Chloriding of the silver wire is very important since contact of silver to the electrolyte leads to electrochemical potentials causing varying offset potentials at the electrode, deterioration of the voltage measurement etc. (for details see Kettenmann and Grantyn (1992)). For optimal chloriding of silver wires an automated chloriding apparatus (ACL-01) is available (contact npj for details).

Ground provides system ground and is linked to the bath via an agar-bridge or a Ag-AgCl pellet. The headstage is attached to the amplifier with the headstage cable (see #4, Figure 5) and a 8-pole connector. The headstage is mounted to a holding bar that fits to most micromanipulators.

Note: The shield of the BNC connector is linked to the driven shield output and must not be connected to ground.

Caution: Please always adhere to the appropriate safety precautions (see chapter 1). Please turn power off when connecting or disconnecting the headstage from the HEADSTAGE connector!

5. Setting up the BA-1S

The following steps should help you set up the BA-1S correctly. Always adhere to the appropriate safety measures (see chapter 1).

After unpacking, the BA-1S is attached to the setup by assembling the electrical connections. It is assumed that a cell model will be attached. The connection of the Ag-AgCl pellet or the agar-bridge for grounding the bath is described in chapter 8.

① Electrical connections

- Turn POWER off.
- Plug the instrument into a grounded outlet.
- Connect the headstage to the HEADSTAGE connector (#31, Figure 1) at the BA-1S.
- Connect a cell model (see chapter 6). Connect a digital/analog timing unit or a stimulation device to CURRENT INPUT or to GATE (TTL) STEP SIZE if you intend to use the gated stimulus unit.
- Connect a store oscilloscope or a data recording device (i.e. a computer with data acquisition card) to the POTENTIAL OUTPUT and to the CURRENT OUTPUT triggered from the stimulation device. Set the desired gain at the potential range switch (#11, Figure 1).

Before using the BA-1S always make the basic settings to avoid oscillations.

② Basic settings

- Turn all controls to low values (less than 1) and the OFFSET in the range of 5 (zero position, see chapter 3.2).
- Turn POWER switch on.

Now the BA-1S is ready for an initial check with the cell model.

6. Passive Cell Model

The BA-1S can be ordered with a passive SEC (Single Electrode Clamp amplifier) cell model as an optional accessory. An active cell model is also available by request (for ref. see Draguhn et al. (1997)).

The passive cell model is designed for use with single electrode amplifiers to check the function of the instrument in the following circumstances:

1. just after unpacking to see whether the instrument has been damaged during transport or
2. to train personnel using the instrument or
3. in case of trouble (see also chapter 9) to check which part of the setup does not work correctly e.g. to find out whether the amplifier or headstage is damaged or something is wrong with the electrodes or holders etc.

The passive cell model consists only of passive elements i.e. resistors that simulate the resistance of the cell membrane and the electrodes and capacitances that simulate the capacitance of the cell membrane (see Figure 7). A switch allows simulation of two different cell types: a “small” cell with 100 M Ω membrane resistance and 100 pF membrane capacitance or a “large” cell with 20 M Ω and 500 pF. The headstage of the amplifier can be connected to one of two different types of electrodes (see below).

6.1. Cell Model Description

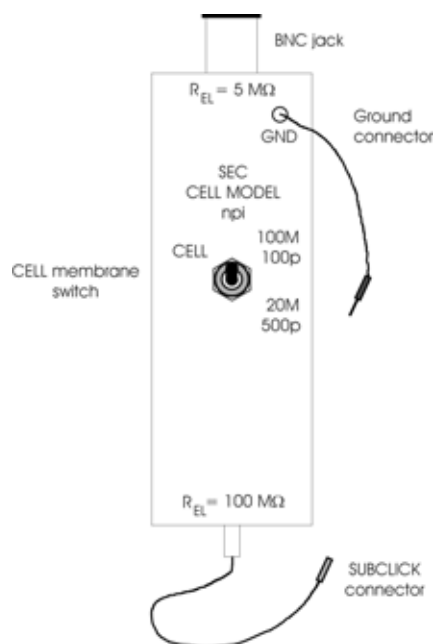
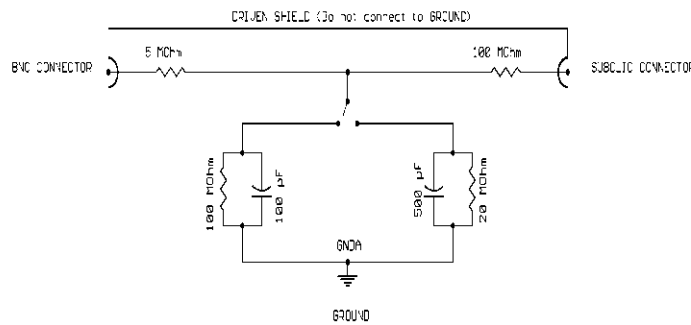


Figure 6: SEC passive cell model

R_{EL} BNC:	connector for the suction electrode (whole cell recording), resistance: 5 M Ω
GND:	ground connector
CELL:	switch for cell membrane representing a membrane of either 100 M Ω and 100 pF or 20 M Ω and 500 pF
R_{EL} SUBCLICK:	connector for the sharp electrode (sharp electrode recording), resistance: 100 M Ω



SEC / BA-1S / BRAMP CELL MODEL

Figure 7: Schematic diagram of the passive cell model

6.2. Connections and Operation

It is assumed that all connections are built as described in chapter 5.

Checking the configuration

- Turn POWER switch of the amplifier off.
- a) For simulation of an experiment using a suction electrode
 - Connect the BNC jack of the cell model to the BNC connector MICROELECTRODE of the headstage.
- b) For simulation of an experiment using a sharp electrode
 - Connect the SUBCLICK connector of the cell model to the BNC connector MICROELECTRODE at the headstage.

For a) and b)

- Connect GND of the cell model to GND of the headstage.
- Leave REF untouched.
- Switch the CELL membrane switch (see Figure 6) to the desired position.
- Turn all controls at the amplifier to low values (less than 1) and the OFFSET in the range of 5 (zero position, see chapter 3.2).
- Turn POWER switch of the amplifier on.

Now you can adjust the amplifier (see below) and apply test pulses to the cell model. Connection to the BNC jack gives access to the cell via an electrode with 5 MΩ resistance. Connection to SUBCLICK adapter simulates access to the cell via an electrode with 100 MΩ resistance. The upper position the CELL membrane switch simulates a small cell with a resistance of 100 MΩ and a capacitance of 100 pF. In the lower position a cell membrane with 20 MΩ and 500 pF is simulated.

7. Test and Tuning Procedures

Important: The BA-1S should be used only in warmed-up condition i.e. 20 to 30 minutes after turning power on.

The following test and tuning procedures are necessary for optimal recordings. It is recommended to first connect a cell model to the amplifier to perform some basic adjustments and to get familiar with these procedures. It is assumed that all connections are built as described in chapter 5.

Important: Except for *Headstage bias current adjustment* (see 7.1) all adjustments described below should be carried out every time before starting an experiment or after changing the electrode.

7.1. Headstage Bias Current Adjustment

Caution: It is important that this tuning procedure is performed ONLY after a warm-up period of at least 30 minutes!

The BA-1S system is equipped with a voltage-to-current converter with a very high output impedance which is connected to the recording electrode. The zero current of this unit is tuned with the BIAS current control (#28, Figure 1, chapter 3.2).

The tuning procedure must be performed regularly (at least once a month) since the bias current changes over time. If very small currents are used (in the 10 pA range) the procedure must be repeated in shorter intervals.

The tuning procedure is performed using high-value resistors and/or a cell model. It cannot be performed with an electrode, since there are always unknown potentials involved (tip potential, junction potentials).

- Disconnected **all** input signals (except the headstage). Put the holding current switch to position 0 (+ / 0 / - switch, #17, Figure 1).
- Connect the MICROELECTRODE connector of the headstage to ground. If parasitic oscillations occur use a 10 k Ω resistor for grounding.
- Tune the OFFSET to zero using the OFFSET control (#29, Figure 1, see also chapter 7.2).
- After tuning the OFFSET connect the cell model via the SUBCLICK connector (sharp electrode). If you do not use a cell model simulate an electrode by replacing the 10 k Ω resistor with a large resistor (10-100 M Ω).
- The value displayed at the DISPLAY (#14, Figure 1) is related to the BIAS current of the headstage according to Ohm's Law. Cancel this voltage by tuning the headstage BIAS current potentiometer (#28, Figure 1).
- Accuracy:* Now both DISPLAYs (potential / current) the should read 000. Due to the limited resolution of the display, unbalanced offsets and thermal drifts an offset of ± 001 to ± 002 can occur on the display. This small deviation can be trimmed internally, but this procedure is necessary only if very small currents in the pA range are recorded.

7.2. Offset Compensation

If an electrode is immersed into the bath solution an offset voltage will appear, even if no current is passed. This offset potential is the sum of various effects at the tip of the electrode filled with electrolyte (“tip potential”, junction potential etc.). This offset voltage must be compensated i.e. set to zero carefully with the OFFSET control (#29, Figure 1) before recording from a cell. When adjusting the OFFSET make sure that no current flows through the electrode. Thus, it is recommended to disconnect CURRENT INPUT and to disable GATE (TTL) STEP SIZE and the HOLDING CURRENT unit (see chapter 3.2).

If a cell model is connected the OFFSET control should read a value around 5, otherwise it is likely that the headstage or the amplifier is damaged.

7.3. Capacitance Compensation

High resistances of electrodes and stray capacitances (C_{stray}) form a low-pass filter which deteriorates the shape of recorded intracellular signals (see also Figure 10). The frequency response of the amplifier is improved considerably by using the capacitance compensation function. This function is based on positive feedback (“negative capacitance”) circuit. The tuning of the capacitance compensation control is performed using pulses applied to the CURRENT INPUT or pulses provided by the electrode resistance test circuit.

With the cell model connected or the electrode in the bath the CAP. COMP. control is turned clockwise until there is no artifact on the POTENTIAL OUTPUT (see Figure 8).

- Make the basic settings at the amplifier (see chapter 5).
- Connect a cell model or immerse the electrode into the bath as deep as necessary during the experiment.
- Tune the OFFSET to zero (see chapter 7.2)
- Push the ELECTRODE RESISTANCE switch (#10, Figure 1) or apply pulses to the CURRENT STIMULUS INPUT and watch the POTENTIAL OUTPUT.
- Compensate the input capacitance as shown in Figure 8 using the CAPACITY COMPENSATION potentiometer (#30, Figure 1).

Figure 8 illustrates the capacitance compensation procedure using a 100 M Ω resistor that represents the electrode. The pulses were generated using the automated electrode resistance test circuit of the BA-1S. The upper diagram shows an undercompensated capacitance. In the diagram in the middle the capacitance is slightly overcompensated and in the lower diagram it is well compensated.

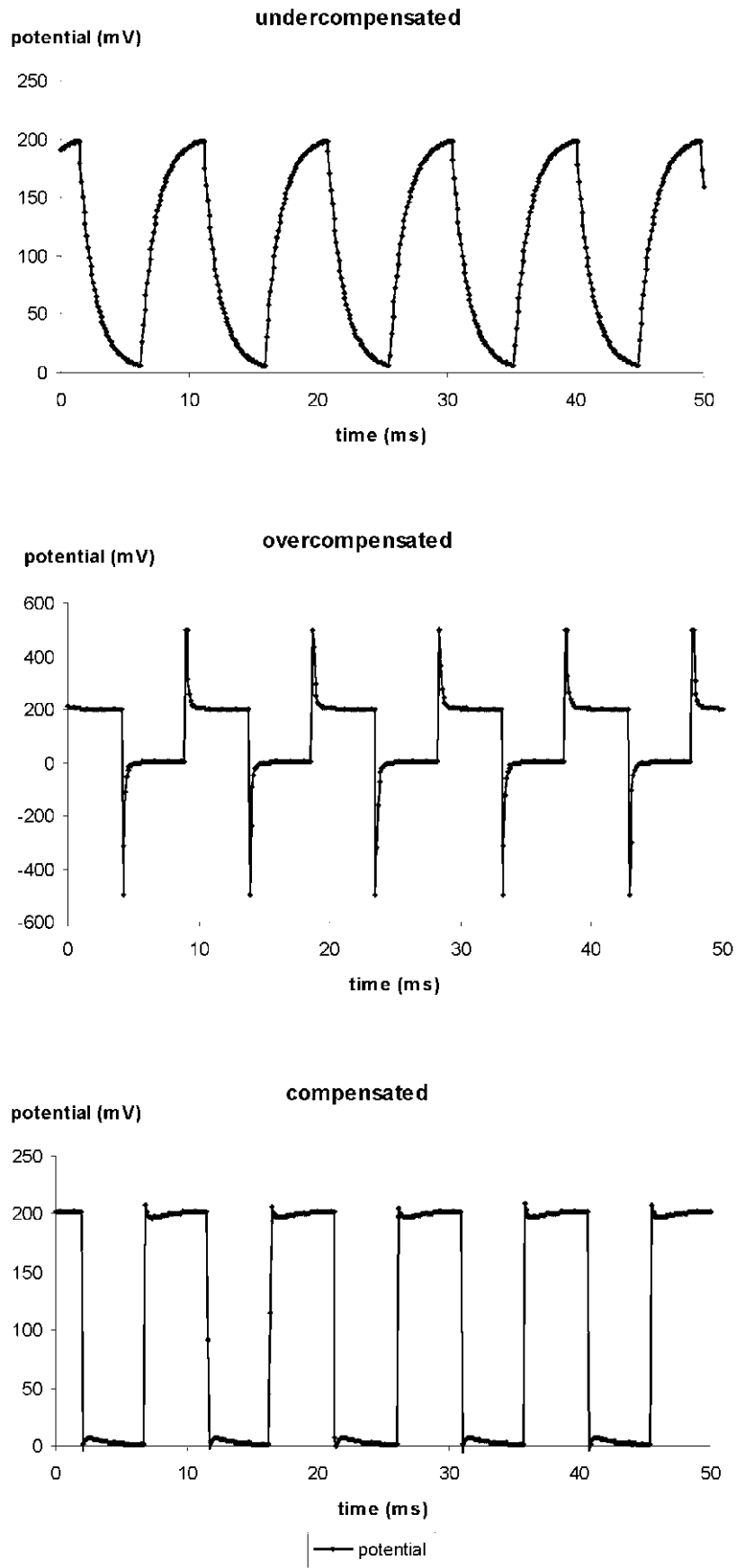


Figure 8: Tuning of the capacitance compensation using a 100 MΩ resistor

7.4. Bridge Balance

If current is passed through an electrode the occurring voltage deflection (potential drop at R_{EL}) affects the recording of membrane potential. Therefore this deflection must be compensated carefully by means of the BRIDGE BALANCE control. This control is calibrated in $M\Omega$ and has two ranges selected by a RANGE switch (#26, Figure 1).

With the cell model connected or the electrode in the bath the BRIDGE BALANCE control is turned on clockwise until there is no artifact on the POTENTIAL OUTPUT (see Figure 9).

- Make the basic settings at the amplifier (see chapter 5).
- Connect a cell model or immerse the electrode into the bath as deep as necessary during the experiment.
- Tune the OFFSET to zero (see chapter 7.2) and compensate the input capacitance (see chapter 7.3). This is very important since a badly compensated input capacitance prevents setting the BRIDGE BALANCE to correct values.
- Determine the electrode resistance using the ELECTRODE RESISTANCE switch and set the BRIDGE BALANCE RANGE switch (#26, Figure 1) accordingly.
- Apply current pulses to the electrode either using an external stimulator (via the CURRENT INPUT connector (#20, #23, Figure 1) or by using the gated stimulus unit.
- Watch the POTENTIAL OUTPUT at the oscilloscope and adjust the BRIDGE BALANCE as shown in Figure 9 using the BRIDGE BALANCE potentiometer (#27, Figure 1). After adjustment you should see a straight voltage trace without artifacts caused by the potential drop at R_{EL} .

Figure 9 illustrates the BRIDGE BALANCE procedure using a $100 M\Omega$ resistor that represents the electrode. The current stimuli were generated using the gated stimulus unit gated by two TTL pulses. The amplitude was set to 0.5 nA. In the upper diagram the bridge is slightly undercompensated and in the diagram in the middle it is slightly overcompensated. The lower diagram shows a well balanced bridge (compensated).

Important: BRIDGE BALANCE and CAP. COMP must be tuned several times during an experiment since most parameters change during a recording session. Figure 12 shows artifacts caused by uncompensated stray capacitance and bridge during recording from a cell. It also shows how to cancel these artifacts by tuning with CAP. COMP and BRIDGE BALANCE.

OFFSET deviations can be detected by comparing the readout on the potential display before and after an experiment (with the electrode in the tissue, but not in a cell).

7.5. Electrode Selection

Electrodes must be tested before use. This is done by applying positive and negative current pulses and by compensating with the BRIDGE BALANCE control. Electrodes which show significant changes in resistance (rectification) cannot be used for intracellular recordings. By increasing the current amplitude the capability of the electrode to carry current can be estimated. The test current must cover the full range of currents used in the experiment.

Sometimes the performance of electrodes can be improved by breaking the tip or by using the BUZZ or ELECTRODE CLEAR facilities of the amplifier.

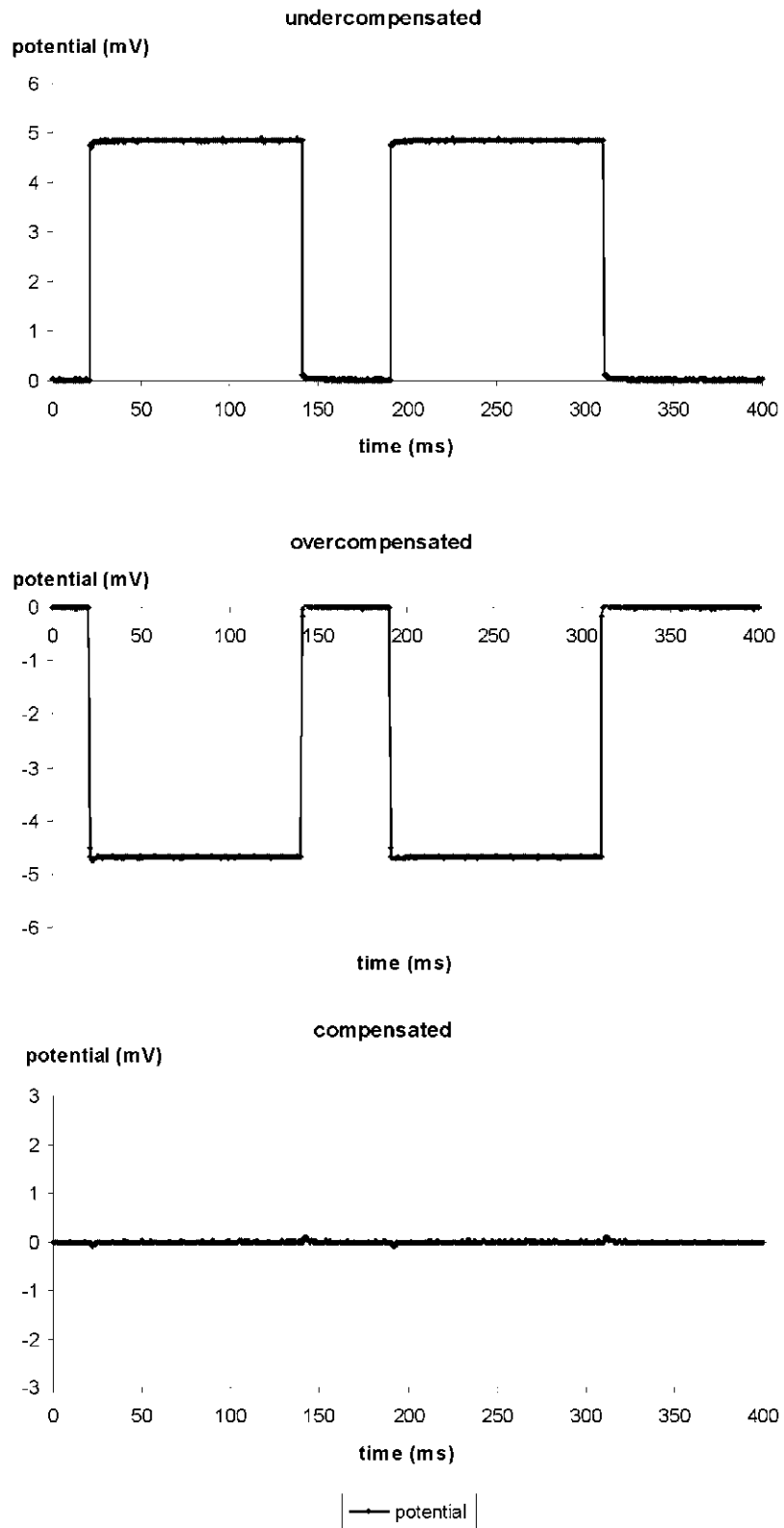


Figure 9: Tuning of the BRIDGE BALANCE using 100 MΩ resistor

8. Sample Experiments

In the following the basics of a simple experiment are described either using a sharp or a suction electrode.

It is assumed that all connections are built as described in chapter 5. Before starting remove the cell model.

8.1. Sample Experiment using a Sharp Electrode

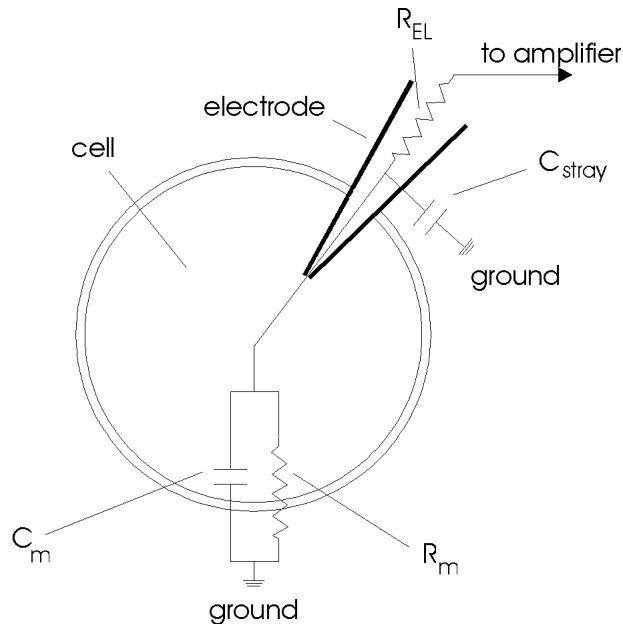


Figure 10: Model circuit for intracellular recording using a sharp electrode
 C_m : membrane capacitance, C_{stray} : electrode stray capacitance, R_{EL} : electrode resistance, R_m : membrane resistance

- Connect the electrode cable / holder to the BNC connector and the Ag-AgCl pellet or the agar-bridge for grounding the bath with GND at the headstage.
- Make the basic settings (see chapter 5).

Again: It is of major importance that the BA-1S systems are used only in warmed-up condition i.e. 20 to 30 minutes after turning power on.

- Adjust BIAS CURRENT to zero if necessary (see chapter 7.1)
- Reconnect the STIMULUS INPUT and/or the GATE (TTL) STEP SIZE and put an electrode into the electrode holder.
- Immerse the electrode into the bath (not in a cell) as deep as necessary during the experiment. Test the capability of the electrode to carry current (see chapter 7.4), compensate the potential offset (see chapter 7.2), measure the electrode resistance (see #10, chapter 3.2) and compensate the input capacitance (see chapter 7.3 and Figure 8).

- Enable the OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF unit (#4, Figure 1) and set the THRESHOLD (#3, Figure 1) in a way that the OSCILLATION SHUT-OFF unit activates if the system begins to oscillate. Test this by overcompensating the electrode capacitance in several positions of the THRESHOLD potentiometer.
- Now the system is preadjusted for measurements. Find a cell!
- Approach the desired cell. There are several indications that the electrode is very close to the cell membrane:
 - the electrode resistance increases (the bridge balance appears undercompensated)
 - extracellular action potentials (APs) are recorded
 - the acoustic monitor signal changes
- Set the BUZZ DURATION potentiometer to one fourth and apply a BUZZ to the electrode.
- If you are lucky the tip of the electrode is now inside the cell.
- If necessary readjust the BRIDGE BALANCE as shown in Figure 11.
- You read the membrane potential and can apply current pulses to the cell. After penetration the voltage responses of the cell to the test pulses should reflect the cell membrane resistance and time constant.
- Start the experiment.

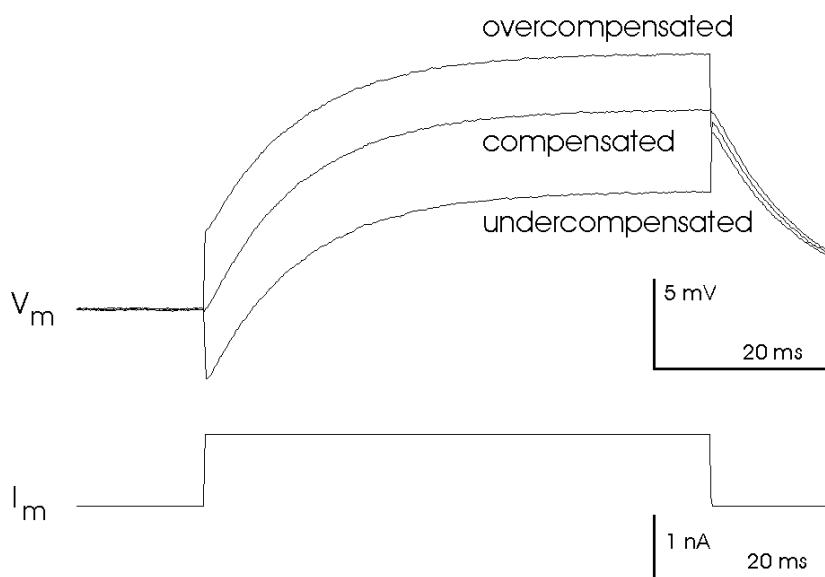


Figure 11: Adjustment of the bridge balance after penetrating a cell

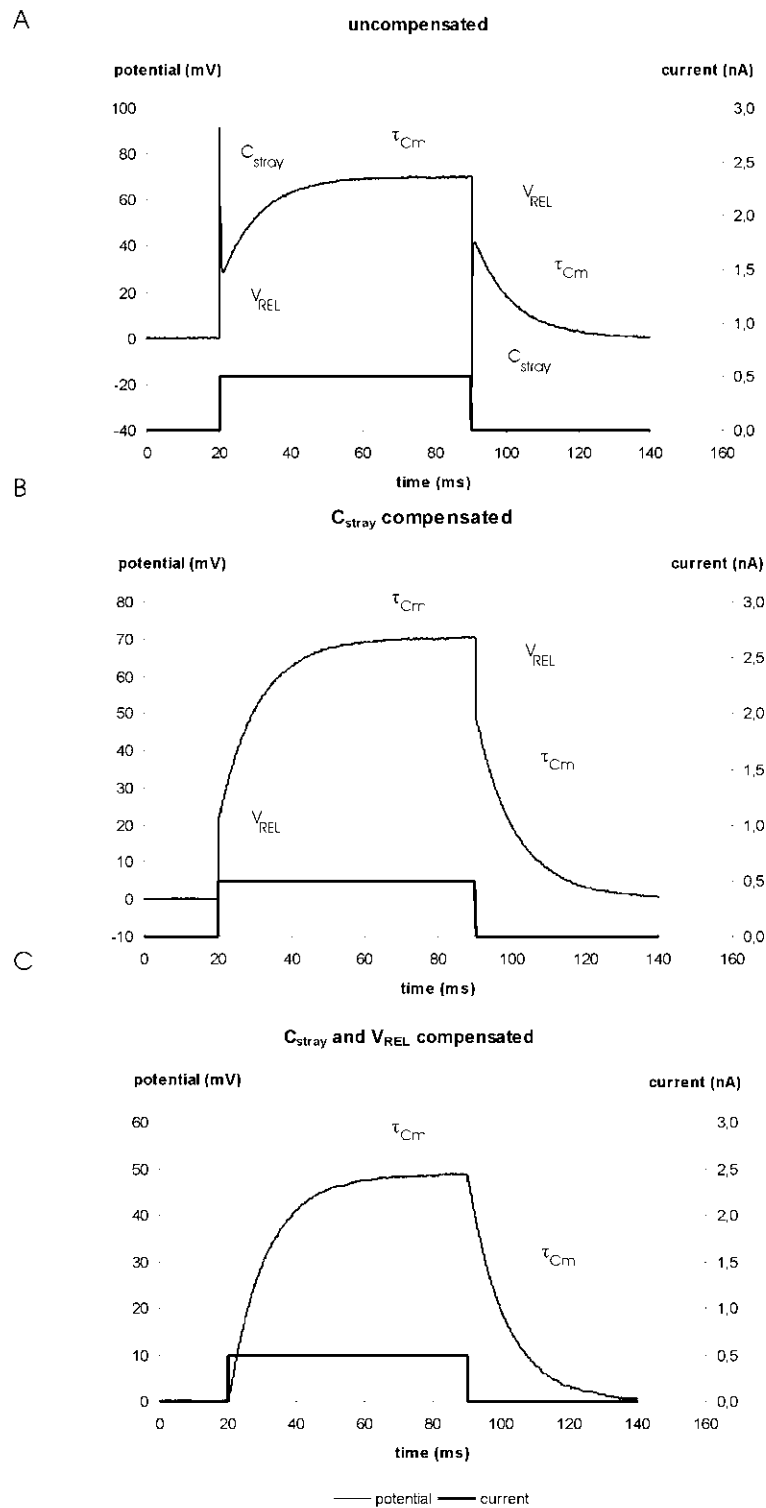


Figure 12: Artifacts caused by the recording electrode. The measurements were done using a cell model with 100 M Ω membrane resistance, 100 pF membrane capacitance and 100 M Ω electrode resistance.

A: C_{stray} and V_{REL} not compensated (bridge not balanced)

B: C_{stray} : compensated and V_{REL} not compensated

C: C_{stray} and V_{REL} compensated (bridge balanced)

C_m : membrane capacitance, C_{stray} : electrode stray capacitance, R_{EL} : electrode resistance, R_m : membrane resistance, τ_{Cm} : time constant of the cell membrane, V_{REL} : potential drop at R_{EL} (see also Figure 10)

8.2. Sample Experiment using a Suction Electrode

If suction electrodes are used for whole cell recordings they are usually called “pipettes”. Thus, in this subchapter “pipette” means “suction electrode”.

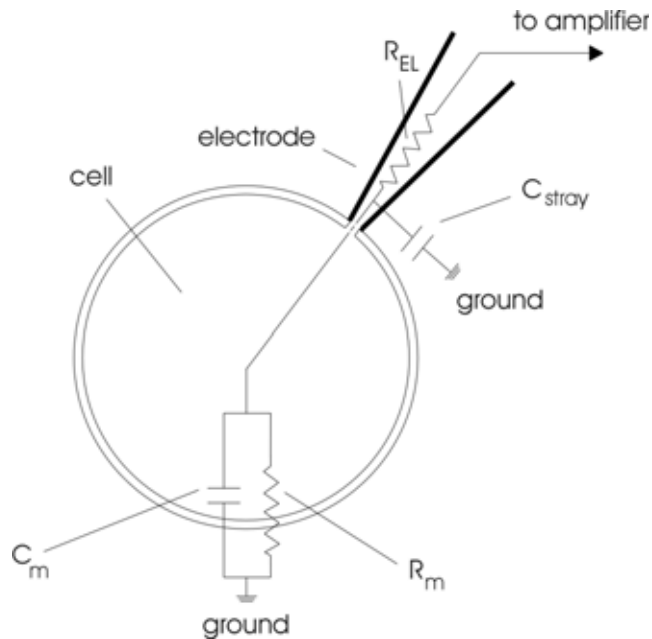


Figure 13: Model circuit for whole cell patch clamp recording using a suction electrode
 C_m : membrane capacitance, C_{stray} : electrode stray capacitance, R_{EL} : electrode resistance, R_m : membrane resistance

- ❑ Prepare the setup and proceed as described in the previous subchapter (8.1) until you have selected a cell. Before immersing the pipette into the bath apply slight positive pressure to the pipette to prevent settling of particles at the tip.
- ❑ Apply test pulses to the pipette (about 10 pA). The resulting voltage signals at the pipette are very small (50 μ V with a 5 M Ω electrode).
- ❑ Approach the cell until the voltage signal changes (**a**, Figure 14). Often you can observe a slight dent in the cell membrane.
- ❑ Release pressure from the pipette. Now forming of the seal is indicated by the voltage deflections getting much larger.
- ❑ If the seal does not form apply gentle suction to the pipette until a gigaseal is established (**b**, Figure 14).
- ❑ Apply stronger suction to the pipette or use the BUZZ unit to brake the cell membrane under the pipette and establish the whole cell configuration. The whole cell configuration is established if you see the voltage signal getting smaller again (**c**, Figure 14) and you read the expected membrane potential.
- ❑ Read the membrane potential and if necessary, readjust the BRIDGE BALANCE as shown in 7.4 and Figure 12.
- ❑ Start the experiment.

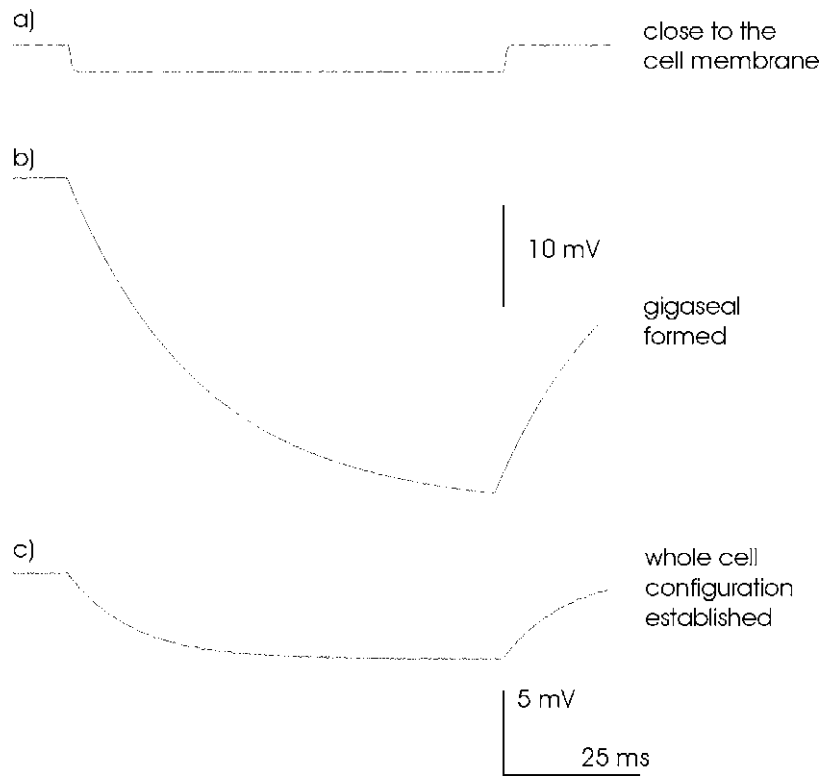


Figure 14: Approaching the cell, forming a gigaseal and establishing the whole cell configuration

9. Trouble Shooting

In the following section some common problems, possible reasons and their solutions are described.

Important: Please note that the suggestions for solving the problems are only hints and may not work. In a complex setup it is impossible to analyze problems without knowing details. In case of trouble always contact an experienced electrophysiologist in your laboratory if possible and connect a cell model to see whether the problem occurring with electrodes and “real” cells persists.

Problem 1:

After immersing the electrode into the bath there is an unusual high potential offset.

Possible reasons:

1. The Ag-AgCl coating of the silver wire in the electrode holder is damaged
2. The Ag-AgCl pellet or Ag-AgCl coating of the silver wire in the agar-bridge are damaged
3. There is an unwanted GND-bridge e.g. caused by a leaky bath
4. The headstage or the amplifier has an error

Solutions:

1. Chloride the silver wire again
2. Exchange the pellet or chloride the silver wire in the agar-bridge
3. Try to find the GND-bridge and disconnect it e.g. by sealing the bath
4. Contact npj

Problem 2:

Even if no stimulus is given a current flows through the electrode

Possible reason:

1. The BIAS current is not adjusted

Solution:

1. Adjust the BIAS current according the procedure described in chapter 7.1

Problem 3:

The system oscillates

Possible reason:

1. The capacitance of the electrode is overcompensated

Solution:

1. Turn the CAPACITY COMPENSATION potentiometer (#30, Figure 1) to the most left position and compensate the input capacitance again

Problem 4:

With the cell model connected the R_{EL} display does not show the correct value (within a tolerance of 2%).

Possible reasons:

1. The capacitance of the electrode is not compensated (using the 100 M Ω electrode)
2. The headstage has an error

Solution:

1. Turn the CAPACITY COMPENSATION potentiometer (#30, Figure 1) to the most left position and compensate the input capacitance again
2. Contact npj

10. Literature

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11. Technical Data

Headstage:

Input voltage range:	± 1000 mV
Operating voltage:	± 15 V
Enclosure:	Size: 23 x 70 x 26 mm, grounded
Holding bar:	Size: length 150 mm, \varnothing 9 mm
Electrode connector:	BNC with driven shield
Ground connector:	2,4 mm connector
Input resistance:	$>10^{13}$ Ω (internally adjustable)
Current range:	± 12 nA into 100 M Ω

Electrode parameter controls:

BIAS:	range ± 150 pA, current adjustable with trim potentiometer
OFFSET:	range ± 200 mV, ten-turn control
CAPACITY COMPENSATION:	range 0 – 30 pF, ten-turn control

Cell penetration:

overcompensation of capacitance compensation (BUZZ), duration ~ 50 – ~ 500 ms (dependent on the setting of capacitance compensation), timer controlled with linear control, accessible with remote switch

Electrode clear circuit:

Application of max. DC currents ($-I_{\max}$ or $+I_{\max}$)

Bridge balance:

Adjustable with ten-turn control and RANGE switch, 0-100 M Ω or 0-1000 M Ω

Electrode resistance test:

10 mV / M Ω obtained by application of square current pulses ± 1 nA, display XXXX M Ω

Bandwidth and speed response:

Full power bandwidth ($R_{EL} = 0$):	>30 kHz, rise time (10% - 90%)
	<10 μ s ($R_{EL} = 100$ M Ω)
	<5 μ s ($R_{EL} = 5$ M Ω)

Outputs:

Resistance:	250 Ω
Current:	BNC connector, sensitivity 1 nA / V, display XX.XX nA, resolution 10 pA
Potential:	BNC connector, sensitivity selectable by toggle switch (x10, x20, x50) display XXXX mV

Inputs:

Current stimulus input via BNC connectors, sensitivity 1 nA / V or 0.1 nA / V

Step gate input via BNC connector, gated stimulus with digital control of current step size, resolution: 10 pA, polarity selectable with toggle switch, holding current range: ± 10 nA, adjustable with ten-turn control

Dimensions:

19" rackmount cabinet

19" (483 mm), 10" (250 mm), 3.5" (88 mm)

Power requirements:

115/230 V AC, 60/50 Hz, fuse 0.4/0.2 A, slow, 25 W

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