

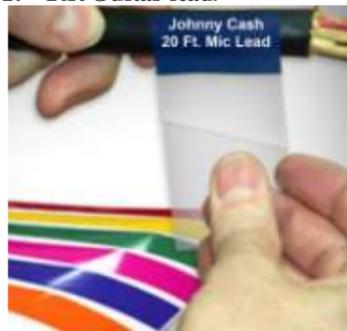
Care And Feeding Of Your Cables

Do you often have to fight with confused cables, have cables that seem to die for no reason, or just would like to know the best way to take care of your cables so that they last for many years and are easy to unpack and use – then read on. . .



Cable Pointers

- Signal leads (like microphone, instrument, and multi-core leads) are actually several mini cables each made up of many fine wires as thin as your hair. They are not a tow rope or garden hose, so don't treat them like one.
- Do not put any knots of any kind in your cables.
- Avoid twisting them or bending them too tightly.
- Always disconnect your leads by pulling the plug and not the lead.
- If your lead crackles badly or picks up the local radio station when you plug it in – replace it.
- Buy leads with decent quality cable. I often see players with high end guitars played into a top shelf amplifier – but connected using a cheap nasty moulded cable. Use leads made from good quality cable (like Lava, George L, Canare, and Mogami). They are designed to provide a much better signal due to shielding, insulation, capacitance/resistance, crosstalk and other factors.
- Plugs and connectors can look very similar on the outside but that's where they end (no pun intended). Use leads with quality connectors like Switchcraft, Neutrik, and Cannon. The Switchcraft 280 is legendary and will usually outlast the cable. I have leads around 30 years old with Switchcraft connectors that have been run over by handtrucks, cars, and even had speaker boxes dropped on them and they still work fine.
- Don't get caught up on expensive 'gimmick' leads (like Monster). Stick with the proven leaders and you can get much better for a lot less.
- Avoid coiled leads. Your guitar is not a telephone, and you will not stand 2 feet away from your amp for the whole performance.
- Use the correct cable/lead for each purpose. Standard instrument leads and speaker leads can look identical on the outside – but a speaker lead is unshielded and will make you guitar hum like crazy when used as an instrument cable, and an instrument cable is not designed to take the high current of a speaker signal and may overheat, short out and damage your equipment if it is used to connect a speaker.
- Label your leads with your name, length, and purpose for easy identification. i.e. **Leo F. - 10ft Guitar lead.** The self-laminating labels are excellent. You can also get colour coded label kits that have matching stick on dots so that you know where they should be connected.



How to secure your leads

Velcro ties are your best choice for securing your leads; followed by reusable zip ties, or basic twist ties. You can even use doubled over Gaffa tape in a pinch. If you don't have a tie, you can LOOSELY wind the free end around the coil a few times when you are done.



How to store your leads

I prefer to lay cables flat in a storage container with a lid, or a stackable crate. I have separate containers for instrument, speaker, microphone/XLR, MIDI etc. Some folks like heavy duty canvas bags with zippers. In your home/studio you can hang them on a hook on the wall.



How NOT to roll up your leads

DO NOT grab one end of the cable in your hand, bend your arm at 90 degrees and wrap the cable around your arm. This will damage the cable, and put twists in the coils.

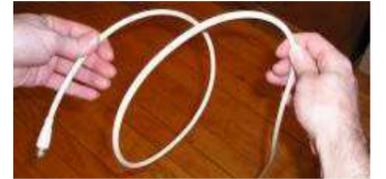


How to roll up your leads

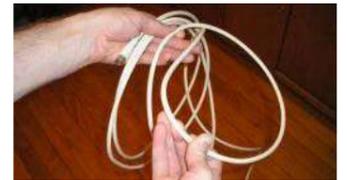
The loose loop method: *The preferred method for most instrument leads, as well as power and speaker leads.*

1. Take one end of the cable in one hand (the 'holding' hand) and use your other hand (the 'working' hand) to run down the cable to straighten any twists from the cable.
2. Once the cable is untwisted and 'relaxed', grab the cable using your 'working' hand at a spot about 30 inches (roughly the length of your arm) down the cable from where you are holding it. Bring the cable up with your 'working' hand to make a relaxed loop about the size of a dinner plate. Once the loop has been made, your right and left hands should meet with thumbs together and the loose end of the cable should be in front of the loop. This is a REGULAR LOOP where the loop lays OVER the end of the previous loop - effectively winding in the direction of a spring.

NOTE: You may need to give the lead a gentle twist as you go to get a relaxed loop and avoid 'figure 8' twists or other tension in the lead. If there just seems to be too much tension or twisting on the cable, you may need to use an UNDER loop (see below) instead of a regular loop.



3. Lay the top of the newly formed loop from the 'working' hand into the 'holding' hand next to the cable already there, freeing up the 'working' hand to make the next loop.
4. Repeat the process of making REGULAR loops until the cable stops making relaxed loops and feels like it wants to turn in your hands. When that happens, you need to make an 'UNDER' loop to release the tension in the cable.
5. **UNDER LOOP:** Grab the cable using your 'working' hand at a spot about 30 inches (roughly the length of your arm) down the cable from where you are holding it. Bring the cable up with your 'working' hand WHILE TWISTING YOUR WRIST 180 degrees to make a relaxed loop about the size of a dinner plate. This time the loose end of the cable should be UNDER the loop and the palms of your hands should be facing the same direction.
6. Lay the top of the newly formed loop from the 'working' hand into the 'holding' hand next to the cable already there, freeing up the 'working' hand to make the next loop.
7. Repeat this process of over/under loops until you run out of cable. It is very important to let the cable decide which loop it wants to lie in. Each following loop should match in size and fit close together. The goal here is to coil the cable nicely so there are no twists or tension. In a perfect world, you may actually end up with all regular loops. Some text book guides suggest a strict under, over, under, over approach – but that can cause knots to happen as you unravel the lead.
8. When you have finished folding up the cable, keep it in place with a Velcro cable tie or something else suitable (NO KNOTS !!!).



The Fold In Half Method: *This can be used as an alternative for heavy duty leads like speaker leads and power cables, or other cables that just won't coil nicely using the loose loop method.*

1. Take one end of the cable in one hand (the 'holding' hand) and use your other hand (the 'working' hand) to run down the cable to straighten any twists from the cable.
2. Once the cable is untwisted and 'relaxed', place the two ends of the cable together in the 'holding' hand – basically folding the cable in half.
3. This time follow the doubled over cable until you reach the end where it loops back.
4. Grab the loose end of the cable and place it next to the other end already in your 'holding' hand – folding it in half again.
5. Repeat this process until the folded length reaches a manageable length that suits your carrying bag or case. Remember to always keep the cable relaxed and free of twists.
6. When you have finished folding up the cable, keep it in place with a Velcro cable tie or something else suitable (NO KNOTS !!!).



HOT TIP (Literally): If you find that you really need to fight with a lead to get it to lay in relaxed loops, then you may need to give it the 'Brown Snake' treatment - lay it out straight in the hot sun and let it relax and unravel for a while.

If you look after your leads, they will look after you with many years of reliable service.