

## Tools

Make sure that you have at least a basic computer toolkit, the kind you can pick up for \$15 from just about any office supply store. At the minimum, you'll need a good set of screwdrivers, plus wire cutters, wire strippers, and cable crimpers for assembling RJ-45 connectors.

## Patch Cables

Keep a good supply of patch cables on hand. You'll use them often: when you move users around from one office to another, when you add computers to your network, or when you need to rearrange things at the patch panels (assuming you wired your network using patch panels).

When you buy patch cables, buy them in a variety of lengths and colors. One good way to quickly make a mess of your patch panels is to use 15-foot cables when 3-foot cables will do the job. And having a variety of colors can help you sort out a mass of cables.



TIP

The last place you should buy patch cables is from one of those big-box office supply or consumer electronics stores. Instead, get them online. Cables that sell for \$15 or \$20 each at chain stores can be purchased online for \$3 or \$4 each.

## Cable Ties and Velcro

*Cable ties* — those little plastic zip things that you wrap around a group of cables and pull to tighten — can go a long way toward helping keep your network cables neat and organized. You can buy them in bags of 1,000 at big-box home-improvement stores.

Even better than cable ties are rolls of Velcro, which you can cut to the appropriate length to neatly bundle up your cables. I much prefer Velcro over cable ties because Velcro is reusable. To remove a cable tie, you have to cut it.