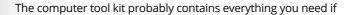>> When several cables come together, tie them with plastic cable ties or, better yet, strips of Velcro. Avoid duct tape (or worse, masking tape). The tape doesn't last, but the sticky glue stuff does. It's a mess a year later. Cable ties are available at electrical supply stores.

>> Cable ties have all sorts of useful purposes. Once, on a backpacking trip, I used a pair of cable ties to attach an unsuspecting buddy's hat to a high tree limb. He wasn't impressed with my innovative use of the cable ties, but my other hiking companions were.

>> When you run cable above suspended ceiling panels, use cable ties, hooks, or clamps to secure the cable to the ceiling or to the metal frame that supports the ceiling tiles. Don't just lay the cable on top of the panels.

The tools you need

Of course, to do a job right, you must have the right tools:

>> Start with a basic set of computer tools, which you can get for about $15 from any computer store and most office-supply stores. These kits include socket wrenches and screwdrivers to open your computers and insert adapter cards.

The computer tool kit probably contains everything you need if

- All your computers are in the same room.

- You're running the cables behind desks or along the floor.

- You're using prefabricated cables.

If you don't have a computer tool kit, make sure that you have several flat-head and Phillips screwdrivers of various sizes.

>> If you're using bulk cable and plan on attaching your own connectors, you also need the following tools in addition to the basic computer tool kit:

- *Wire cutters:* You need big ones for coax; smaller ones work for twisted-pair cable. For yellow cable, you need the Jaws of Life.

- *A crimp tool:* You need the crimp tool to attach the connectors to the cable. Don't use a cheap $25 crimp tool. A good crimp tool costs $100 and will save you many headaches in the long run.

  When you crimp, you mustn't scrimp.

- *Wire stripper:* You need this tool only if the crimp tool doesn't include a wire stripper.

- *A cable tester,* which lets you determine whether the cable will work.