

Installation guidelines

The hardest part of installing network cable is the physical task of pulling the cable through ceilings, walls, and floors. This job is just tricky enough that I recommend you don't attempt it yourself, except for small offices. For large jobs, hire a professional cable installer. You may even want to hire a professional for small jobs if the ceiling and wall spaces are difficult to access.

Keep these pointers in mind if you install cable yourself:



WARNING

- » You can purchase twisted-pair cable in prefabricated lengths, such as 10, 15, or 20 feet. Longer lengths, such as 50 feet or 100 feet, are also available.
- » Alternatively, you can purchase cable in bulk rolls, cut them to length, and attach the connectors yourself.
- » Always use a bit more cable than you need, especially if you're running cable through walls. For example, when you run a cable up a wall, leave a few feet of slack in the ceiling above the wall. That way, you have plenty of cable if you need to make a repair.
- » When running cable, avoid sources of interference, such as fluorescent lights, big motors, X-ray machines, nuclear reactors, cyclotrons, flux capacitors, or other gadgets you may have hidden in behind closed doors in your office.

Fluorescent lights are the most common sources of interference for cables behind ceiling panels. Give light fixtures a wide berth. Three feet should do it.

- » The maximum allowable cable length between the hub and the computer is 100 meters (about 328 feet).
- » If you must run cable across the floor where people walk, cover the cable so no one trips over it. Cable protectors are available at most hardware stores.
- » When running cables through walls, label each cable at both ends. Most electrical supply stores carry pads of cable labels that are perfect for the job. These pads contain 50 sheets or so of precut labels with letters and numbers. They look much more professional than wrapping a loop of masking tape around the cable and writing on the tape with a marker.

You can also purchase label makers that can print labels designed to attach to cables. As a last resort, you can always write directly on the label with a permanent marker.



TIP

- » If you're installing cable in new construction, label each end of the cable at least three times, leaving about a foot of space between the labels. The drywallers or painters will probably spray mud or paint all over your cables, making the labels difficult to find.