

Control, organize your cable clutter

Do you have cable clutter in your office, kitchen or garage?

Maybe the children, pets or family members get caught in the draping cables, and all of the sudden, there is a crash and that new laptop, cell phone or PDA is now on the floor in more than the one piece it came in?

Cable clutter can be a real problem when cables are lying across a walking zone or hanging over the desk or on the kitchen counter. Jumbled masses of cables create visual clutter, and those cables can be a safety problem. Another good reason to corral those cables is that when, and we all know that time is coming, that we have to actually figure out what every one of those twisted cables goes to. If a component fails or you need to isolate a problem, it can be quite frustrating and time consuming to try and trace a cable back to its device.

Yes, there is a way to keep the cables under control and know at a glance what every one is used for and connected to.

Some of my favorite tools to control cable clutter are cable organizers, cable turtles (my favorite) that come in different sizes and colors and work perfectly. Other options include cable zippers, cable ties, cable tubing and Velcro cable wraps. Wire twisters from bread or other packages also work.

Remember how the cables were tied when you took the item out of the box? That's the best way to tie cables together if you are not using turtles or tubes.

The Container Store (www.containerstore.com) carries lots of cable organizing options or shop at the local electronics stores to see what they offer. Radio Shack sells cable clips that work well. Another online resource is www.cableorganizer.com.

When faced with starting to organize a tangled mess of cables, it's best to start by powering down all devices. Start with one device at a time. This may require two people — one at each end to help trace the cable if the tangle is thick. Untangle each cable and tie, wrap or twist depending on the tool

of choice. Then plug the device back in.

So now that the cables are wrapped, tied or covered, how do you know what they are? Step two is to label the cables or be consistent with the color of the ties and cable turtles so all the green cable ties belong to the PC and the blue are the printer and red are the ISP connections. If you have a label maker, print and attach the label at the plug end of the cable. This makes it easier to know what you are unplugging when there is a problem.

If you must lay cables across a walking area, cover them up with a cord cover. These are available at the local home improvement or hardware store and come in a variety of sizes, colors and lengths.

Until we are truly a wireless society, it's time to control your cable clutter.

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