Subject: Cable Differences
Posted by AudioClueless on Mon, 24 Feb 2014 09:51:31 GMT
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How much should a person expect to pay for cables, both for computing and audio use? Does more expensive always mean better quality, and how can you tell the difference?

Subject: Re: Cable Differences
Posted by Samuel on Mon, 24 Feb 2014 10:38:05 GMT
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I've never believed that buying the most expensive was the way to go. That said, I've never had top of the range gear that would benefit from the more costly cables.

Subject: Re: Cable Differences
Posted by gofar99 on Mon, 24 Feb 2014 21:19:23 GMT
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Hi a can of worms for sure. On one hand is the group that thinks that anything under $1000 a foot is junk and on the the other hand is the group that thinks that anything over $1 a foot is wasted and largely snake oil. I really don't belong to either group. I go by some general guidelines though. I figure if it is good enough for the guys doing the original recordings then it should be fine for me. Generally that means for audio cables about 90% shielding and all copper. The copper should be reasonably pure but 99.999999999 (etc) % is not needed. I have concerns about the terminations though. They should be made of the same metal as your jacks. Gold for gold etc. If not the junction of dissimilar metals can occasionally cause problems. Also the connectors must fit well and stay tight. I use mostly ones for PRO use that have barrels that screw in and out and will really tighten down on the jacks. I also use pro grade instrument cable. You do need to be sensitive to the capacitance per foot of the cable. Too much will affect the response. Too little can be a problem with some things like turntables as well. For speaker wire I use 14 gauge twisted pair copper wire that is rated for in wall use. Pure copper again but not 10 nines. Terminations again should match the jacks or connectors. I like to use silver solder to attach the terminations to the wires but I suspect that any solder would be fine. Digital cables are a second can of worms. I don't get into that much, but from the literature and my own experience as long as they are not too long most will do fine. There are apparently more issues with timing, jitter and other oddities in the devices you hook up than in the wire.

Price is a funny thing. The wire, jacks and cables (like HDMI) that I use are similar or in some cases identical to stuff in retail stores. The difference is that you can get them from places like Amazon, Parts Express, MCM etc for about 1/5 the cost. The HDMI cables I have are a great example. Mine were $14 the identical ones in an un-named local big box store were $79. Same right down to the packaging.

So, in a round about way, my thoughts are save the money from the "expensive" cables and put it good use in buying the things you would like to connect with it. YMMV

Subject: Re: Cable Differences
Posted by AudioClueless on Tue, 25 Feb 2014 09:38:36 GMT
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Thank you! What a wonderful explanation! I was shopping on Saturday and found that the cables that I needed would have cost over $100 in the store. I checked Amazon on my phone in the store and found the same for an incredible $8 in total, but it made me nervous that they were perhaps knock-offs.

Subject: Re: Cable Differences
Posted by Samuel on Tue, 25 Feb 2014 10:39:30 GMT
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What sort of problems can we expect from a mismatch in metals? I use some gold plugs in obviously not gold sockets (as these were all that were easily available at the time) and there is some awful crackling as they are plugged in. Is that indicative of an issue?

Subject: Re: Cable Differences
Posted by gofar99 on Thu, 27 Feb 2014 04:27:56 GMT
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The problem is usually in humid climates where the dis-similar metals have a chemical reaction and corrosion forms at the junctions. There are a number of things you can do though. Several companies sell products that you can use to clean the contact areas and some act like a barrier to further corrosion. A simple fix that usually works is to "exercise" them occasionally. Just plug them in and out a few times. I do this about every 6 months with my stuff....at least the stuff that doesn't get swapped out all the time.

Subject: Re: Cable Differences
Posted by AudioClueless on Thu, 27 Feb 2014 09:21:25 GMT
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Because presumably the action of scraping the metals over one another will help to scrape away any of the corrosion that might have formed? That makes sense.

Subject: Re: Cable Differences

Posted by LoveJB on Sun, 27 Apr 2014 01:01:10 GMT
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Wow, from $100 to $8 is a heck of a difference. Which did you end up buying? I don't know much about cable so I was interested in reading the answers. I now know a lot more about cables. I'm interested to know which one you bought though and how it worked.

Subject: Re: Cable Differences
Posted by gofar99 on Mon, 28 Apr 2014 01:22:58 GMT
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Hi, I made most of my cables with Mogami instrument wire. I used RCA jacks designed for "pro" use like #091-1065 from Parts Express. I like them because they have the outer barrel threaded and when you twist it, it tightens down the connection. You can not accidentally pull them out. You must un-twist it. Well made. I am sure there are other fine connectors as well. BTW the jacks are gold plated and they then match the ones on my equipment (I build all my own stuff). I would use silver connectors, but they are difficult to get and can be costly. If I had to go for ones less costly I would probably use the ones by Rean (PE #s 092-110 and 092-112).