

Total Recoil



It's a wrap: The fine art of coiling cable.

In fifteen years of playing, I've seen some great bands have some terrible fights. Many of the ones that escalated from tense words into a mic-stand-tossing battle royal, complete with a variety of loudly-shouted anatomically impossible suggestions, began with a simple disagreement—not over women or bar tabs, but over the correct way to wrap a cord.

I asked a half-dozen soundmen to describe the process. Several told me that it comes down to an extremely simple two-step procedure:

1. Don't touch it.
2. Hand it to me.

The other methods were pretty similar, with the clearest description coming from my old schoolmate Chris Murphy, who offered a brief history and overview of cord wrapping, followed by some basic steps. In his words:

"Cables are the most handled and abused part of any sound

system. They get pulled, thrown, stepped on, soaked by a variety of fluids, tripped over, run over, smashed in doors, laid in mud, rained on, spit on, and generally subjected to the type of abuse that would destroy the gear they're designed to work for. Proper storage and coiling will help lower cable maintenance, setup time, and soundman turnover."

"One of the worst ways to store a cable is the 'palm-elbow' wrapping method. This puts stress on each part of the cable that makes a 180-degree turn, and eventually those sections will crack and break. The proper way to store a cable is to coil it neatly—in a circle, with a diameter that puts no appreciable strain on any part of it. The secret to a well-wrapped cord, as with so many things, is all in the wrist."

Here's all you need to know:

1. If the cable is dirty, wipe it off with some paper towels. (Disinfectant is necessary only after three-set Sigma Nu gigs.)
2. Make sure the cable is free of kinks, duct tape, and square knots, and reasonably straightened out. If you are right-handed, place the end of the cable in your right hand, with your thumb and the plug end pointing away from you. Leave a short amount dangling. (Huh; huh, he said dangle.)
3. Grab the rest of the cable loosely, and slide your left hand away from your right hand, letting the cable slip through your left hand as it moves; in this way your left hand should remove any kinks or twists as the cable runs through it.
4. As you pull your hands apart, slowly bend both wrists up and out; stop when your hands are about two feet apart.
5. Grab the cable firmly with both hands; while bending both wrists in and down, bring the parts of the cable in each hand together.
6. Pass the cable section from your left hand to your right hand, so that your right hand is holding both sections of the cable. It should hang very neatly in a near-perfect circle from your right hand.

7. Repeat steps 2–6 until the cable is fully wrapped.

8. Secure the cable with reusable Velcro strips or, in a pinch, a small piece of duct tape.

9. If you are left-handed, get a right-handed roadie to wrap your cables.

Practice this method and you'll greatly increase the life of your cables. Not only that, but you'll have a much happier soundman and lots more time to argue about important things—such as, whose idea was it to let that stunning go-go dancer onstage? Who gave her the mic? And didn't anyone notice her Adam's apple?—**Reverend Billy C. Wirtz**

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