Devin Doyle
Major Player

Join Date: Jun 2003
Location: Athens, Ohio
Posts: 186

July 6th, 2003, 10:21 PM

coiling XLR cords PROPERLY

Several times while on a production I've been scolded for not properly coiling cords (XLR cords among others). Even after the scolding I was still never properly instructed on the technique! I've looked around forums and the web for an answer but have come up empty handed. I'm sure someone around here outta know how to properly coil cables so they don't get twisted and warped from improper handling! Your input is appreciated.

PS - I think thats the most times I've ever used the word coil in my life...lol.

reel> http://devin.par-t-com.net
company website> http://www.par-t-com.net

Charles Papert
Wrangler

Join Date: Jan 2002
Location: Los Angeles, CA
Posts: 3,898

July 7th, 2003, 03:06 AM

I'm not sure I can describe the fabled "over-under" technique, but it involves twisting the wrist on every alternate loop to keep the cables from getting bound on itself. A properly coiled cable should allow one to throw it away from you and have it uncoil by itself. The same thing can be applied to all sorts of flexible cable, including extension cords.

The big no-no is wrapping the cord over your hand and bent elbow. That one you get scolded for, without doubt!

There must be some great illustrations out there such as those for knot-tying but I haven't seen them.

Charles Papert, SOC
The "over and under" technique, eh? Well with your help and another email I received I fooled around with an old piece of rope 'till I got it down pat. It's always been one of those things I've been meaning to learn but never got around to. I'll copy and paste the portion of the email I received so others can benefit:

"Hold the cable end in your left hand, connector pointing away from you. With your right hand, bring a small amount of the cable to your left hand, making a loop. Now the tricky part. The next pass, you are going to twist your right hand at the wrist, so the cable coils "under" itself for this one pass. Then go back and do another "over" pass as you did the first. (you are never going to be able to figure this out, but hell, give it a try) Then another "under" pass, and so forth.

The great thing is this allows you to coil the cable without imparting a twist in the cable. And it will uncoil quite nicely."

The over and under part was kinda tricky to me, but the key is to remember that you're not literally wrapping the cable under the first piece - as you coil outward you make a portion lower than the first one, then the next higher and so on all the way coiling out from the first wrap. This way when you lay it down and pull on one end the cord unwraps nicely. (reminiscent of cliffhanger or vertical limit when they throw the rope and it uncoils perfectly). Good luck learning, it wasn't too bad - and thanks to Charles and Wayne for their input!

__________________
reel> http://devin.par-t-com.net
company website> http://www.par-t-com.net

Two small comments. Yes, over and under is the standard method, but a good IATSE stagehand will also tell you to coil it clockwise.

The issue with over and under is that if one of the ends slips through the center of the coil when you are uncoiling it (wrong way), you will have a knot for each "over and under" in the coil. If you coil it "straight" and the end goes through the center by mistake, you can uncoil it without knots.

Good cable coiled straight still lays flat when uncoiled, so I actually prefer
Jacques Mersereau
Emmy Winning Producer 2006
U. of Mich. Video Studio Manager

That method, though I am probably in the minority.

Not sure I quite understand your method Jacques, is it just laying the cable on the ground and wrapping it clockwise around and around so it lays flat? Doesn't seem like an effective way to store the cable unless you're going to lay it flat on the ground? Enlighten me!

Brian

Towards the end of the year our tech crew got tired of coiling cords, so we found a coat rack and started hanging the cords on that. But our usual method is coiling it clock-wise in your hand (meaning that the top of the loup is in hand and the rest of the loup is hanging below. Coiling the cord until it starts to twist out of the loup, in that case u flip the wrist of the hand ur using to coil (not the one the loup is in) so it lays flat on the loup again. Wow that sounds really hard and u might not understand it. I was shown this method at a theater workshop and it seems to work good.

Not sure I quite understand your method Jacques, is it just laying the cable on the ground and wrapping it clockwise around and around so it lays flat?

That is one way to do it, but is usually reserved for big cables like feeder, snakes and lighting mults. Cables too heavy to keep hefted in your hand while coiling, BUT . . . in any instance when you start to make your coil, your first loop of your coil, the cable should go in a clockwise circle. From there you can then go over and under or coil it straight. NOTE: depending on how the cable was last coiled,
you may have to spin the coil itself to get it to coil correctly.

So, as you make your first loop, you may notice when you go to make the 2nd loop that the cable will want to coil in a certain way. If that way is not the way you want, you can try and help it to coil your way by twisting *the incoming cable* with the fingers of your right hand.

You may (probably) find that the slight twist you put into the cable with your fingers will cause the cable to eventually twist incorrectly. THEN you have to spin *the coil* in your left hand. (By spinning, I do NOT mean to uncoil it!). The coil may need to be spun clockwise or counterclockwise depending on the incorrect twist that you need to take out of it. That spin should either put the right twist into the cable or take the wrong twists out. Remember, for the end result, you want a nice even and perfect circle of cable.

By now I am sure you must be really confused ;)

__________________
Jacques Mersereau
Emmy Winning Producer 2006
U. of Mich. Video Studio Manager

---

**time for the artists**

time for somebody with some time to draw some pictures and post them someplace so we can understand this stuff....I sure can't envision these explanations...

on the Internet, when you get where you're going you still don't know where you are

---

Drawings? This is a video forum :)

You are correct that it is almost impossible to explain this stuff in writing, especially when a couple of minutes of video would do the trick.

__________________
Jacques Mersereau
Emmy Winning Producer 2006
what a shame

yeah...video....now THERE's an idea! (grin)

just wish there were somebody around that knew how to do take that video and get it on the net...maybe if there were somebody that was a producer...or somebody from a University.... :) 

on the Internet, when you get where you're going you still don't know where you are

Get someone from a university to put video up on the net?

Well, . . . we'd have to get a hold of our IT department, find the right person, make a proposal, get a meeting together (or several), get approval, THEN get someone to actually put it up. Do you have ANY idea how many man hours are involved?! :)

It could take MONTHS!!! (A joke, but with a huge dose of reality!)

OTOH, we are trying out those new apple A/V firewire video-phone cams, so if you had one of those, maybe we could find time to pipe out a live demo.

I'm sure that would be much appreciated by the DV Info Net community.

http://devin.par-t-com.net
company website> http://www.par-t-com.net
ha! got it!

Yep! I have iChat AV all ready to go! Actually, I don't have a little iSight sitting here all the time so I have to take a moment to connect my little ZR10, which I use as my iChat camera, but I've had some great chats with people all over the world. Still haven't had the pleasure of any chats with beautiful women just in from the beach, but there is always hope.

If you want to have some fun and a reason to set up an AV chat to show me how to coil a line, it would crack me up. :) (and it would be appreciated). I'm not sure, but there might be a law against using AV chats for anything useful.... :)

my iChat name is budkuenzli@mac.com but I'm not normally available unless I set it ahead of time..

__________________
on the Internet, when you get where you're going you still don't know where you are

Matt Gettemeier
Inner Circle

I must be nuts... I always thought it was basically pretty easy to wrap up xlr's... of course I don't use any over 50' so...

You can feel and see the cable "twisting" if you aren't keeping it oriented properly as you coil... just take your time. If you coil up a cable three times in a row while paying attention to what's happening you should be a pro.

I also feel very strongly about Rip-Ties... I have 'em on ALL my cables... even power cables.

Bud Kuenzli
Major Player

I get the basic coiling

I get the idea of twisting the cable as it is coiled so it coils smoothly, I just can't picture this under and over thing. Not that it's real high on my agend of worries in life, but I am curious about it...

__________________
on the Internet, when you get where you're going you still don't know where you are
Posting Rules

You may not post new threads
You may not post replies
You may not post attachments
You may not edit your posts

vB code is On
Smilies are Off
[IMG] code is Off
HTML code is Off

Forum Jump

Now Hear This

All times are GMT -6. The time now is 10:49 PM.

Contact Us - The Digital Video Information Network - Archive - Top

DV Info Net -- Real Names, Real People, Real Info!
1998-2007 The Digital Video Information Network