

Cable Appearance - what to look for

The issue of what a cable looks like can be very important when it is used externally and has to look like an integral part of an expensive system. A cable, no matter how well it meets the requirements, can make an otherwise good looking piece of equipment look poorly made.

The first question that needs to be addressed before choosing a jacket material is will it meet the physical and electrical requirements. However there may be several materials that can be used for any given application.

Careful choice of the jacket material and finish can make all the difference in the aesthetic appeal of a cable. The six main factors affecting the look of a cable are outlined below:

Shiny Cables that are shiny tend to show less convolutions, but also tend to pickup contamination more easily than matte cables.

Matte Very much in fashion with the computer industry. A round extruded matte cable can look like a well engineered product.

Solid Solid colors do not show what is underneath the jacket. Light cannot penetrate.

Clear Some materials can be clear or opaque, what is under the jacket shows through. Be careful of what you put under a clear jacket, for example tinned copper shields can look bad after a while.

Extruded A full pressure extrusion give a nice round cable free of convolutions. However the jacket can embed in the shield.

Tubed The jacket follows the form of the core. A twisted pair would appear to be convoluted and a perfectly round cable would still appear round.

The table below outlines what finishes can be achieved with various materials

	PVC	Silicone	FEP/PFA	Hytrek	TPR	Polyurethane
Shiny	Yes	Yes ¹	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Matte	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Solid	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clear	Yes	Yes ³	Yes	Yes ²	No	No
Extruded	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Tubed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note 1. Silicone cables tend to stick together over time unless a powder bond breaker is applied.

Note 2. This material is opaque, not truly clear.

Note 3. This material can appear somewhat milky when clear.