

Printers, monitors & devices | Easy | 2 min read

# Cables explained: HDMI, USB-C and DisplayPort

Cables look alike, but they do different jobs. Knowing the basics can save you buying the wrong one.

## HDMI

HDMI carries both picture and sound. It is found on televisions, monitors, games consoles and many laptops. If you want to connect a laptop to a TV, HDMI is usually the easiest choice.

## DisplayPort

DisplayPort also carries picture and sound and is common on computer monitors. The plug looks a bit like HDMI but has one corner cut off squarely. You cannot plug a DisplayPort cable into an HDMI socket, but a special adaptor or cable can join them. Check which way the adaptor works before buying.

## USB-C

USB-C is a small, oval plug that works either way up. What it does depends on the device it is plugged into. It can carry charging, data and sometimes video too. Unfortunately, not all USB-C ports or cables do everything. A cable that charges your phone may not carry a picture. Look for a small symbol next to the port, or check the manual.

## Older plugs

The larger rectangular USB-A plug is still very common on mice, keyboards and memory sticks. VGA and DVI are older, chunky plugs with screws. VGA carries picture only and can look soft on modern screens. If you have a choice, use HDMI or DisplayPort instead.

## Tips when buying

1. Check the sockets on both devices first.
2. Decide what you want to do, such as charge, show a picture or move files.
3. Avoid very cheap cables if you have trouble with flickering or dropouts.
4. Keep the cables that come with devices, as they are usually the right ones.

## Looking after cables

Do not bend them sharply or pull on the lead rather than the plug. Do not use a cable with exposed wires or a bent plug.

## When to get more help

If you are not sure which cable or adaptor you need, send us the makes and models of both devices and what you want to do, and we can point you to the right one.

**Still stuck?** Email [admin@visiontech336.com](mailto:admin@visiontech336.com) and tell us what you can see on the screen. Menus and button names can differ slightly between versions and makes. If something does not match, stop and ask rather than guess. Please never send passwords or card details.