

1 Techlink Wires 1st (1m)

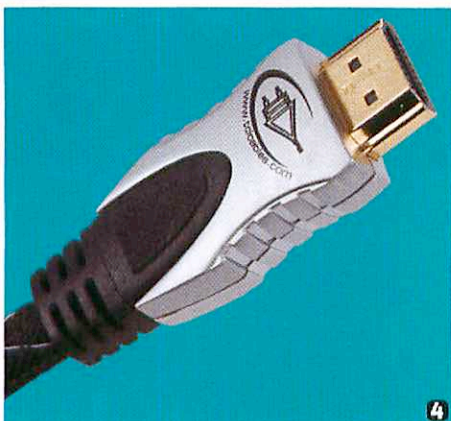
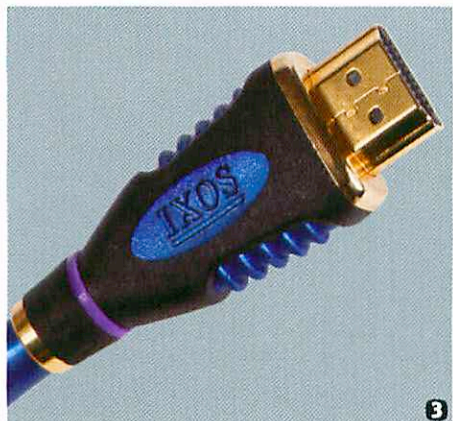
£15 ★★★★★

Not every system needs heaps spending on an HDMI cable, so Techlink has provided a worthy upgrade that won't break the bank. Pictures are composed and detailed, if sometimes slightly soft, with clean edges and low noise – there could be more black detail, though. Sounds realistic, too. Overall, an ideal budget buy.

2 Lindy Premium 37400 (0.5m)

£44 ★★★★★

Short cables make good sense, but this Lindy's hardly worth rearranging your kit for. It delivers good low-light detail, nice natural colours and tracks motion well, but white tones are more prone to noise than any other cable here. Audio is compromised, too, with detail going astray.



3 Ixos Studio XHT288 (1m)

£45 ★★★★★

If you crave fine detail in your picture, the Ixos could be for you. Stable and composed, even through the most testing motion, the XHT288 delivers minutiae in all but the darkest scenes. There's a slight lack of vitality to colours, though. Sound is distinct and expansive, and offers pace and dynamics, even if it's periodically shrill.

4 True Colours Industries Copperhead Lite (1m)

£45 ★★★★★

Solid and unspectacular are the TCI's watchwords. There are no glaring shortcomings in images, but other cables do better in terms of black detail and high contrasts. Sound, being both deft and atmospheric, is more of a success – the Copperhead Lite attacks manfully. Even so, a touch more scale wouldn't go amiss.

Honest HDMI

The best way to connect your favourite source to your flatscreen

JARGON BUSTER

HDMI A single cable that can handle uncompressed digital audio and video data. It's perfect for sending high-quality images and sound from a high-def (Sky HD, Blu-ray or HD DVD player) or standard def (DVD player) source to your flat TV. The latest, highest-spec version is HDMI 1.3.

5 Supra HF100 (1m)

£50 ★★★★★

On the downside, this Supra's not the last word in black detail. All other news is good, though: colours are neutral and natural, contrasts and depth of field handled confidently. The HF100 enables a brawny and punchy sound, too, with a big soundstage and an accomplished treble.

6 Vivanco SHQ HD12 (1.2m)

£60 ★★★★★

This is odd territory for Vivanco, more often found putting the cheerful into cheap. The HD12 holds up against these rivals, though – giving detailed, lustrous images and fine stability with minimal picture noise. Sound impresses with its wide-open stage and efficient effects steering, even if more dynamism would be nice.

7 Audioquest HDMI-X (1m)

£63 ★★★★★

Hugely impressive for a cable that looks like it should be attached to a flat-iron, the Audioquest offers splendidly balanced images. Bright and vivid, but subtle and nuanced too, the HDMI-X is unshakably stable and delivers particularly fine gradations of black tones. Big, authoritative sound is on the menu, offering immersive ambience and colossal drive all at once.

8 Chord Company Silver Plus 1.3 (1m)

£83 ★★★★★

Our Award-winner is the priciest here, but if your system justifies the outlay, you'll be in raptures. Expect a broad colour palette, inky blacks and tremendous motion-handling, plus sound of the meaty variety. Deeply impressive across the board. (See our subscription offer on p26.)

