

Unsnarl TV wire mess

Oh, what a tangled web we weave.

Just look behind our home-entertainment centers. A horrifying rat's nest of cords and cables sprouts from widescreen TVs, DVD players, VCRs, CD systems and speakers.

What's a consumer to do? Here are some cord-control tips:

- Buy specialized furniture for home-theater components. You'll find holes, tubes, drawers and other devices for safely organizing and hiding cords and cables.

La Difference, for example, carries BDI home-theater furniture that incorporates what the company calls "wire management. It's the routing of the cabling, it's the organization of the cabling, and the desire and effort to make it disappear," said BDI sales representative Steve Feldman.

- Treat cables gently. If cabling is bent, crushed, or — heaven, forbid — stapled beneath carpeting, the signal will be impeded, and the audio/video quality will be dimin-

ished. Never force a cable into a sharp, 90-degree angle. The kink will leave you with garbled pictures and sound.

- Organize your cables by unplugging everything and separating cables. Decide where you want each component to go, and then begin neatly running the cables toward the surge protectors.

- If you're setting up speakers around the room, consider running speaker wiring through the walls. It's more complicated, but it keeps the wires out of the way.

- Consider using what techno geeks call a "surface raceway" system. Surface raceways are boxes resembling wall moldings that are designed to hide, organize and route low-voltage communications wires. They're sold at electronic stores and online sites such as www.cableorganizer.com.

- Electronics stores and online retailers sell inexpensive, low-tech wire-organizing solutions. 3-M makes a cord bundler for \$3.99 that attaches to flat surfaces. Several companies make nylon cable tie kits containing multiple colors and sizes.

Sources: BDI, cableorganizer.com, knowhow-now.com.

