

Thunderbolt Getting Optical Cables

Written by Marco Attard
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Intel will be introducing optical Thunderbolt cables later this year, an Intel spokesperson says-- allowing longer data transfer distances (with potentially greater bandwidth) for the connection standard.



The news joins the earlier announcement of Intel adding Thunderbolt support to PCI Express 3.0.

What are the differences between copper and optical? Copper handles data transfers for up to 6m (with sufficient bandwidth) while optical technology allows for tens of metres-- making it particularly useful for enterprise applications. However, copper cables offer up to 10W of power to power peripherals (optical cables don't), and are cheaper to produce.

An Apple-Intel co-development, Thunderbolt started off as an optical cable interconnect called "Lightpeak"-- but got a change of name (and material) once it hit the market in early 2011. Even in copper, it offers a bidirectional data rate of 10Gbps.

Intel is already working on a silicon photonics-based successor to Thunderbolt, which is to hit the market sometime in 2015.

Go [Intel: Optical Cables for Thunderbolt Coming This Year \(IDG News Service\)](#)

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