

USB-C Cable Cheat Sheet

Decode any USB-C cable: speed, wattage, video and the logos that tell them apart.

Every USB-C cable has the same plug, but inside they differ in two ways: how much **data** they carry, and how much **power**. Video needs a high-speed cable.

Data speed

Label you'll see	Speed	Carries video?	Good for
USB 2.0 / "charging cable"	480 Mbps	No	Charging, phones, keyboards
USB 5Gbps (USB 3.2 Gen 1)	5 Gbps	Yes (DP Alt Mode)	Hubs, drives, monitors
USB 10Gbps (USB 3.2 Gen 2)	10 Gbps	Yes	Fast SSDs, hubs
USB 20Gbps (Gen 2×2)	20 Gbps	Yes	2×2 SSD enclosures
USB4 40Gbps / Thunderbolt 4	40 Gbps	Yes	Docks, NVMe, displays
USB4 80Gbps / Thunderbolt 5	80 Gbps (120 one-way)	Yes	TB5 docks, 8K displays

Power

Rating	What's inside	Enough for
60W (3A)	Standard cable, no e-marker needed	Phones, tablets, MacBook Air, small laptops
100W (5A)	E-marker chip required	Most laptops, 96W MacBook Pro chargers
240W (EPR, 48V)	EPR e-marker, USB PD 3.1	140W MacBook Pro fast charge, gaming laptops

Five rules that save money

1. A charging cable that came with a phone is usually **USB 2.0**: no video, slow data.

2. For a monitor or dock, you need a **5Gbps-or-faster** cable (or the one that came with it).
3. Over 60W needs an **e-marked** cable; 140W+ needs **240W (EPR)**.
4. Full-speed 40/80Gbps passive cables are usually short (about 1m or less); longer ones are often active.
5. Look for the USB-IF logos that print the speed and wattage right on the plug, e.g. "40Gbps · 240W".