

Table of Contents

Foreword	5
1 What Is an Electrical Connector?	17
2 Connector Components	19
3 Different Termination Techniques	21
3.1 Soldering Into	21
3.2 Soldering Through	21
3.3 Soldering on Top	21
3.4 Press-Fit Technology	22
3.5 Soldering on Wires	22
3.6 Welding on Wires	22
3.7 Screwing on Wires	23
3.8 Crimping on Wires	23
3.9 IDC Technology	23
4 Insulator Materials	25
4.1 PBT	30
4.2 PA	30
4.3 LCP	31
4.4 PPS	31
4.5 PC	31
4.6 Production of Connector Housings	31
4.7 Reel-to-Reel Processing	31
4.8 Crematorium Effects	32
5 Contact Materials	33
5.1 Copper	34
5.2 Brass	34
5.3 Spring Alloys	34
5.4 Relaxation of Spring Forces	34
5.5 Contacts	36
6 Contact Point	37
7 Various Contact Surfaces	39
7.1 Nickel	39
7.2 Gold	40
7.3 Palladium	40
7.4 Silver	40
7.5 Tin	40
7.6 Multilayer	41
7.7 Nickel Barrier Layer	41

7.8	Contacts Made from Pre-plated Strip Materials	41
7.9	Contact Between Two Different Contact Surfaces	42
8	Contact Resistance	49
8.1	Contact Resistance and Temperature	53
8.2	Contact Resistance and Corrosion	54
8.3	Contact Resistance and Fretting Corrosion	54
8.4	Contact Resistance and Mating Cycles	55
8.5	Films on the Contact Surfaces	56
8.6	Low Contact Resistance Is Important	56
9	Shielding Provisions	59
9.1	Electromagnetic Compatibility	60
9.2	The EMC Shielding Factor	62
9.3	Pseudo-Coaxial Pin Assignment to Optimize Signal Integrity	64
10	Locking Electrical Connectors	69
11	Housing and Mechanics	73
11.1	Position Coding	73
11.2	Pre-Alignment	74
11.3	Intermateability	75
11.4	Inverse Plug-In Systems	76
11.5	Soft and Hard Metric Backplane Systems	76
11.6	Waterproof Versions	77
11.7	Explosion-Proof Connectors	79
12	Why Are New Connectors Being Developed?	81
13	Connectors in Power Electronics	83
13.1	Example of Cooling Via Connected Cables	84
13.2	Example of Cooling Via Copper in the Printed Circuit Board	84
13.3	Thermal Simulation for the Extreme Case	85
13.4	Hot Plugging in Power Electronics	86
13.5	Current Capability at the Borderline	87
14	Connectors for High Data Rates	91
14.1	Why Are These Signals Transmitted as a Differential Pair?	91
14.2	How Do You Transmit Digital Signals?	91
14.3	What Must Be Observed for the Transmission Paths?	94
14.4	Why Are Impedance Discontinuities Critical?	94
14.5	Crosstalk at High Data Rates	96
14.6	Signal-to-Noise Ratio—Why Is Crosstalk So Critical?	97
14.7	Simulation in the Connector Industry	99
14.8	Signal Transmission at High Data Rates	101
14.9	S-parameters	105
14.10	S-parameters in Unbalanced Operation (Single-Ended)	105

14.11 S-parameters in Mixed Mode	106
14.12 Verification of S-parameters After Simulation	109
14.13 What Are Eye Diagrams?	110
14.14 Influence of the Printed Circuit Board	112
15 Processing Connectors in the System Assembly	115
15.1 Soldering Processes for Different PCB Soldering Techniques	115
15.2 Placing Connectors on Printed Circuit Boards Using Press-Fit Technology	116
15.3 Connecting Wires, Strands, and Cables to Electrical Connectors	117
16 Connector Selection	119
16.1 Use Cases	119
16.1.1 Input/Output Electrical Connector	119
16.1.2 Printed Circuit Board Connectors	119
16.1.3 Board-to-Board Connectors	120
16.1.4 Backplane Connectors	120
16.1.5 Mezzanine Connectors	121
16.1.6 Other Electrical Connectors	122
16.2 Checklist	123

Expert Contributions

1 Qualifying and Evaluating Connectors	129
Dipl.-Ing. (FH) TILMAN HEINISCH / Dr.-Ing. UTE HÖRMANN	
1.1 Requirements for Electrical Connectors	129
1.2 Requirements for the Test Laboratory	129
1.3 Norms, Standards, and Test Programs	130
1.4 Assessment Criteria and Test Methods	131
1.4.1 Contact Resistance	131
1.4.2 Insulation Resistance and Dielectric Strength	131
1.4.3 Climatic Tests	132
1.4.4 Mechanical Tests	132
1.4.5 Current Carrying Capacity/Derating	133
1.5 Fault and Damage Analysis on Connector Systems	134
1.5.1 Resistance-Increasing Layers	136
1.5.2 Whisker	139
1.5.3 Production Faults in Crimp Connectors and Connector Systems	140
2 Press-Fit Technology	143
Dipl.-Wirt.-Ing. SANDRA GAST	
2.1 Repairability	144
2.2 PCB Surface Plating	144
2.3 Hole Structure	145
2.4 Surface Coating of the Contacts and the Press-Fit Zone	145
2.5 Printed Circuit Board Design: Minimum Spacing and Track Layout	146
2.6 Press-Fit Process	146
2.7 Presses	147

2.8	Reliability of the Press-Fit Technology	148
2.9	Application Examples	149
2.9.1	From High Speed to High Current	149
2.9.2	Application Examples for Shock and Vibration Resistance	149
3	Whiskers in Press-Fit Technology	151
	Dr. ERIKA CRANDALL	
3.1	Whisker	151
3.2	History of the Tin Whiskers	152
3.3	Whisker Growth Theory and Mechanisms	153
3.4	Whisker Growth in Press-Fit Connections	155
3.5	Whisker Risk Assessment	158
3.6	Standards/Norms	161
4	Surfaces for Press-Fit Pins	167
	Dr. ISABELL BURESCH	
4.1	Tin-Based Coatings	168
4.1.1	Sn With/Without Ni Underlayer	168
4.1.2	Tin-Silver Coatings	171
4.2	Tin-Free Press-Fit Technology	174
4.2.1	Pure Nickel Coating	175
4.2.2	Indium Coating	175
4.2.3	Bismuth Coatings	177
4.3	Summary	179
5	Component Design for Automated Wire Harness Production	181
	Dipl. El-Ing. (FH) CHRISTIAN INFANGER	
5.1	Manual Production Reaches Its Limits	181
5.2	Consider Automation in the Early Project Phases	181
5.3	Current Test Standards Are No Longer Up to Date	181
5.4	Chamfers and Curves in the Insertion Area of Terminals	182
5.5	Full Process Specification as Part of Data Sheets	182
5.6	Provide Areas for Optical Measurement	183
5.7	Chamber Entrance Must Be Freely Accessible	184
5.8	Single-Wire Seals with Collars Increase Process Reliability	186
5.9	Construction of Chamber Inlet and Transitions in the Connector	187
5.10	Pay Special Attention to Connectors with Family Seal	187
5.11	Small Adjustments, Big Impact	189
6	Base Materials for Connector Contacts	191
	Dr. ISABELL BURESCH	
6.1	Why Copper Alloys?	191
6.2	Application-Specific Properties (Focus on Strip Materials)	193
6.2.1	Conductivity	194
6.2.2	Strength	194
6.2.3	Bendability	195
6.2.4	Stress Relaxation	197
6.2.5	Flexural Fatigue Strength	199

6.2.6	Spring Bending Limit	200
6.2.7	Costs	201
6.3	Copper Materials for Stamped Connector Contacts	201
6.3.1	Pure Copper Materials	201
6.3.2	Solid-Solution-Hardened Copper Materials	202
6.3.3	Precipitation-Hardened Copper Materials	207
6.4	Copper Materials for Machined Contacts	215
7	Contact Physics	219
	Dr.-Ing. MICHAEL LEIDNER / Dr.-Ing. HELGE SCHMIDT	
7.1	Introduction	219
7.2	The Constriction Resistance According to HOLM	219
7.3	Real versus Apparent Contact Area	223
7.4	Morphology of the Contact Point and Electrical Conduction Processes	225
7.4.1	Areas of Pure Metallic Contact	226
7.4.2	Areas of Pure Quasi-Metallic Contact	227
7.4.3	Insulating Contact Surface	227
7.4.4	Fritting and Dry-Circuit Measurement Conditions	228
7.5	Simulation of the Real Contact Surface	228
7.5.1	The Pure Hertzian Contact	231
7.5.2	Influence of the Layer Sequence	232
7.5.3	Influence of the Surface Topography	233
7.5.4	Measurement and Simulation of the Constriction Resistance	234
7.5.5	Current Density Distribution within the Contact Point	236
7.5.6	Internal Mechanical Stresses/Wear Behavior	237
7.6	Wear and Tear	239
7.6.1	Incipient Wear in the Fixed Contact Point	239
7.6.2	Tribological Wear and Fretting Corrosion	241
8	Surfaces for Connector Contacts	243
	Dr.-Ing. HELGE SCHMIDT / Dr. ISABELL BURESCH	
8.1	Requirements for the Surfaces for Connectors	243
8.2	Contact Materials for Connectors	244
8.2.1	Gold (Au)	244
8.2.2	Platinum (Pt) and Rhodium (Rh)	244
8.2.3	Palladium (Pd)	245
8.2.4	Silver (Ag)	245
8.2.5	Tin (Sn)	245
8.2.6	Nickel (Ni)	245
8.3	Precious Metal Surface Coatings	246
8.3.1	Hard Gold Coatings for Connectors	246
8.3.2	Palladium or Palladium-Nickel with Gold Flash	252
8.3.3	Nickel-Phosphorus-Gold Flash	255
8.3.4	Silver	256
8.4	Surface Coatings Using Non-noble Metals	265
8.4.1	Tin-based Coatings	265
8.4.2	Functional Properties of Surfaces	273
8.4.3	Performance Optimization of Tin Surfaces for Connector Contacts	277

8.4.4	Outlook for Tin-based Coatings	282
8.4.5	Nickel Coatings	284
8.5	Summary and Recommendations	285
8.5.1	Overview	285
8.5.2	Mixing/Cross-Compatibility of Contact Surfaces	285
9	New High-Performance Coatings for Connector Systems—It Doesn't Always Have to Be "Noble"	289
	SASCHA MÖLLER / THOMAS WIELSCH / MARCEL MAINKA	
9.1	Introduction	289
9.2	Experimental	290
9.2.1	Sample Preparation	290
9.2.2	Tribological Investigations	290
9.3	Results and Discussion	291
9.3.1	Layer Structure of the ML System	291
9.3.2	Macro-Friction	292
9.3.3	Micro-Friction (Fretting)	298
9.3.4	Application Tests	302
9.4	Outlook	309
10	Technological Challenges in the Use of Coaxial Connectors at High Data Rates	311
	Dipl.-Ing. BERND ROSENBERGER	
10.1	Introduction	311
10.2	State of the Art Today	312
10.2.1	BNC/TNC Series	312
10.2.2	Series N	312
10.2.3	Series QN	313
10.2.4	Series Snap N	313
10.2.5	Series 7/16	313
10.2.6	Subminiature Coaxial Connector Series for Different Areas of Application	314
10.2.7	Coaxial Printed Circuit Board Connectors	314
10.3	New Coaxial Connectors for Mobile Radio Applications	314
10.4	Coaxial Connectors Board-to-Board "Blind Mate"	315
10.4.1	SMP Series	316
10.4.2	Supplements Mini-SMP/WSMP/Z-SMP Series	316
10.4.3	Tolerance Compensation with Board-to-Board Connectors	317
10.5	Integrated Solutions for Coaxial Connectors in the Automobile FAKRA	319
10.5.1	FAKRA Connector System	319
10.5.2	HFM®—High-Speed FAKRA Connectors and FAKRA Mini	320
10.6	Coax Connection for Transition from Fiber Optic to Electrical Cable	320
10.7	Summary: The Limits of Coaxial Technology	321
11	USB-C—A Plug Connection, Not Just for USB Applications!	323
	TIMO DREYER	
11.1	Typical Applications	323
11.2	Image versus Facts	325

11.3	Low Cost: No Thanks!	325
11.4	Mechanical Performance	326
11.5	Electromagnetic Compatibility	327
11.6	SuperSpeed USB 20 GBit/s	327
11.6.1	Evaluation of Our Sample Measurement	329
11.6.2	Simulation Is Important in Practice—But Does Not Replace Measurement	331
11.7	The Shielding of the Connector	332
11.8	Considerations When Selecting the Plug	333
11.9	The Further Evolution of the USB: “USB4”	334
12	M12 Push-Pull Connector	335
	Dipl.-Ing. (FH) MANUELA GUTMANN	
12.1	Introduction	335
12.2	Metric M12 Circular Connectors	335
12.3	The Path to the M12 Push-Pull	335
12.4	Functionality of the Push-Pull System in Accordance with IEC 61076-2-012 ..	337
12.4.1	Advantages of the System	337
12.4.2	Robustness and Torsion Resistance	337
12.4.3	How Does the Plug Seal?	338
12.4.4	Device Integration	339
12.5	Push-Pull System According to IEC 61076-2-010	340
12.5.1	Outer Push-Pull	340
12.5.2	Inner Push-Pull	341
12.6	Conclusion and Outlook	341
13	Connectors for Single Pair Ethernet	343
	Dipl.-Ing. MATTHIAS FRITSCHÉ	
13.1	The Current IEEE802.3 Standards for SPE	343
13.1.1	IEC 63171—Standardization of Single Pair Ethernet Connection Technology	344
13.1.2	Comparison of the Different Connectors According to IEC 63171-x ...	345
13.1.3	Comparison of MPE and SPE	346
13.1.4	The Connection Technology for SPE	346
13.2	Interpretation of the Electrical Characteristic Values	347
13.2.1	Nominal Voltage	347
13.2.2	Insulation Voltage	347
13.2.3	Rated Current	347
13.2.4	HF Transmission Parameters	347
13.3	Technical Design of the SPE Connection Technology in Accordance with IEC 63171-6	348
13.4	SPE Connection Technology According to IEC 63171-1	350
13.5	SPE Connection Technology According to IEC 63171-4	351
13.6	SPE Connection Technology in Accordance with IEC 63171-2 and -5	351
13.7	SPE Connection Technology According to IEC 63171-7	352
13.8	SPE Connection Technology for Automotive Applications	352

14 Will Single Pair Ethernet Replace the RJ45?	353
SILKE LÖDIGE / KLAUS LEUCHS / RALF TILLMANN / SIMON SEEREINER	
14.1 Ethernet Networks in Buildings	353
14.2 Ethernet Moves into Industrial Applications	353
14.3 Ethernet Reaches the Field Level	355
14.4 The Automotive Industry as a Driver for SPE	355
14.5 Different Fields of Application for SPE	356
14.6 Advantages of SPE in the Industry	357
14.7 Connectors for SPE	357
14.8 Basic Electrical Properties of SPE Connectors	360
14.8.1 Impedance	360
14.8.2 Dielectric Strength	361
14.8.3 Transmission Properties	362
14.9 Comparison of RJ45 and SPE Connectors	363
14.10 The Future of Communication Interfaces	365
15 Connectors for New Vehicle Architectures and Vehicle Electrical Systems	367
Dipl.-Ing. (FH) UWE HAUCK	
15.1 New Vehicle Architectures and Changes in the Vehicle Electrical System	367
15.2 Requirements for HV Connection Systems	369
15.3 Operational Safety	370
15.3.1 Electrical Safety	370
15.3.2 Mechanical Safety	373
15.3.3 Functional Safety	374
15.4 Applications	375
15.4.1 HV On-Board Electrical System	376
15.4.2 Battery	378
15.4.3 Charging Technology	383
15.5 Outlook	386
16 Quality Assurance of the Tightness of Connectors in the Production Process	389
Dr. JOACHIM LAPSIE	
16.1 Electrical Connector	389
16.1.1 Diverse Areas of Application and Extreme Demands on Connectors	389
16.1.2 Leakages in Electrical Connectors	389
16.2 Leak Test in the Laboratory	390
16.2.1 Laboratory Tests—Type Testing and IP Protection Classes	390
16.2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Type Testing in the Laboratory	391
16.3 Leak Testing in the Production Process	392
16.3.1 Routine Tests	392
16.3.2 Relationship Between Tightness, Leakage Rate, and Hole Size	392
16.3.3 Selection of the Test Medium	393
16.3.4 Leak Test with Compressed Air as Test Medium	393
16.3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages of Routine Tests During Production	395
16.4 Leak Test of Connectors	396
16.4.1 Adaptation of Electrical Connectors	396
16.4.2 Condition of the Connector and Suitable Test Methods	397

16.5	Optimizations	400
16.6	Type Testing versus Routine Testing	401
17	Developments for Special Applications	403
	M.Eng. Dipl.-Ing. (FH) BERND SPORER	
17.1	Housing for the USBEXICNC	406
17.2	"ic" WV3XIC Module	407
17.3	Sealing of the USBEXICNC to Fulfill "nC" Requirements	408
18	Thermal Characteristics of an Electrical Connector	411
	Dipl.-Ing. (FH) TOBIAS BEST	
19	CAE Simulation as a Supporting Tool in the Development Process for Connectors	415
	M.Sc (TU) ALEXANDER SHALABY	
19.1	Use of CAE Simulation in the Development Process	415
19.2	CAE Simulation Methods for Connector Development	415
	19.2.1 Field Simulation	416
	19.2.2 Coupling of Physical Domains – "Multi-Physical Simulation"	417
	19.2.3 Simulation of Transmission Paths and Signal Shapes	418
19.3	Performing a CAE Simulation Using the Example of Electromagnetic Field Simulation of Connectors	420
	19.3.1 Model Preparation (Pre-processing)	420
	19.3.2 Analysis (Solution)	422
	19.3.3 Evaluation of Results (Post-processing)	423
19.4	Potential of Parametric Simulation in Product Development	425
20	Modular Connectors: Compact and Flexible Interfaces for Production Systems	427
	HEIKO MEIER	
20.1	Development of Modular Connectors	428
20.2	Structure of Modular Connector Programs	428
20.3	Modular Connections for Modular Machines	428
20.4	Multiple Options for One Interface	429
20.5	Saving Space with Fiber-Optic Transmission	429
20.6	Simple Connection Technology for Quick Installations	429
20.7	Modular and Smart Connectors for Network Communication	430
20.8	Protect Sensitive Electronics, Improve System Availability	430
20.9	Further Miniaturization Through Individual Modules	431
21	Fiber-Optic Connection Assemblies for Communication Networks	435
	M.Sc ETH Masch.-Ing. ALEKSANDAR OPACIC	
21.1	Definition	435
21.2	Structure and Function of Fiber-Optic Connectors: Parameters	435
21.3	Structure and Function of an Adapter	439
21.4	Structure and Function of Fiber-Optic Connections: Insertion Loss Parameters	440
21.5	Maximum Values and Qualities of Fiber-Optic Connections	444
21.6	Connectors and Cables	445

21.7 Simplex, Duplex, and Multi-fiber Connectors: Areas of Application	446
21.8 Patch Cables and Pigtails	447
21.9 Standards	448
22 Connector Selection in the Digital World	449
Dipl.-Wirtsch.-Ing. Kai Notté	
22.1 Product Information in Text Form	449
22.1.1 The Classic Product Description	449
22.1.2 Electronic Catalogs	450
22.2 Visualized Product Information	450
22.2.1 Drawings and 3D Models	450
22.2.2 Graphical Data	451
22.2.3 Product Photographs	451
22.3 Searching and Finding Product Information	451
22.3.1 Manufacturer	452
22.3.2 Distributors	452
22.3.3 Other Platforms	453
22.4 The Future	453
23 Wireless Power Transfer – A Different Type of Connection	455
Dipl.-Ing. Mathias Wechlin	
23.1 The Electric Toothbrush—The First Wireless Charging System with Mass Distribution	455
23.1.1 Spot Charging and Continuous Power Transfer Solutions	455
23.1.2 The Basic Technical Approach Is Always Based on Physics, Which Has Been Known for a Long Time	457
23.2 What Characterizes Inductive Wireless Power Transfer Systems?	460
23.3 Practical Example of Electromobility	460
23.3.1 Increased User Acceptance, Increased Reach	463
23.4 Meeting Megatrends with Wireless Power Transfer Solutions	463
Closing words	465
Abbreviations	467
CVs of the Authors	471
Bibliography	479
Additional Sources	492
Glossary	493

1 What Is an Electrical Connector?

ROBERT S. MROCZKOWSKI, a globally recognized connector guru, describes the function of an electrical connector in his *Electronic Connector Handbook* [1] as follows:

“An electrical connector is an electromechanical system which provides a separable connection between two subsystems of an electronic device without causing an unacceptable impact on the performance of the device.”

What is he trying to tell us?

First of all, we must realize that a connector is rarely an optimal solution to a problem. When using connectors, a compromise must always be made—be it in the mechanical design or for the electrical signal routing.

With this in mind, an attempt is made to design an electrical connection with regard to impedance, frequency characteristics, contact resistances, and service life expectations in such a way that the requirements of the overall system are met from an economic point of view.

As the separation points must also meet physical (mating cycles, shock, and vibration) and chemical (corrosion) requirements, copper-based contact materials (conductivity) such as brass, phosphor bronze, or nickel silver must be provided with surfaces that achieve the lowest possible contact transfer resistance with simultaneous corrosion resistance and abrasion resistance over the service life of the overall system.

These compromises will continue to accompany us in the future. Many users think that a manufacturer will design a connector specifically for their application. Even if the user pays tooling cost, this is only feasible in the rarest cases. The manufacturer will investigate the market to see whether such applications occur globally. And even if they do, they will be reluctant to agree, because the development of a new connector nowadays runs into the millions and, on the other hand, the user will sooner or later demand a second source, whether for reasons of price control or really for reasons of security of supply.

Why are new developments of connectors so expensive? Because the customer demands an optimum product with reproducible quality that can no longer be manufactured by hand but must be produced using camera-monitored punching tools, integrated injection or overmolding tools, and fully automated assembly tools.

It therefore makes sense for the user to focus on existing products. Sometimes it is small things, such as temperature ranges, that prevent the use of existing products. In such cases, the user should definitely talk to the manufacturer, because products are developed for a specified market and this market may have lower requirements than the current application.

In such cases, the manufacturer may give its approval, even if this is not reflected in a revised product specification. A new product specification would also mean a new product qualification, which in turn is very cost-intensive.

TIP

If you are interested in the process of connector qualification and fault patterns, read expert contribution 1 titled “Qualifying and Evaluating Connectors” in this book.



In Brief

An optimal selection of a product for a specific application is important in order to find a cost-effective solution for the existing connector problem. This book is intended to help you with your selection and decision.

2 Connector Components

If we look at an electrical connector in detail (Figure 2.1), the following individual parts must be taken into account:

- Termination technology pin contact
- Insulator pin contact
- Base material pin contact
- Surface pin contact
- Surface socket contact
- Base material socket contact
- Insulator socket contact
- Termination technology socket contact
- Shielding of the electrical connector (- - - -)
- Housing and locking mechanism

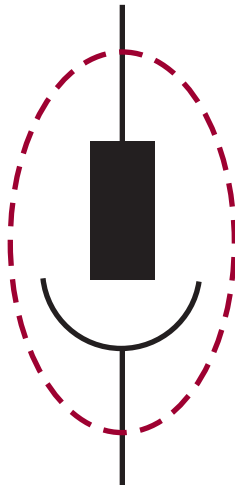


Figure 2.1 Elements of an electrical connector

First, let's look at the termination technology; we typically distinguish between

- Soldering,
- Welding,
- Screws,
- Press fit,
- Crimping, and
- Insulation displacement connectors.

3 Different Termination Techniques

When soldering, we distinguish between soldering into, soldering through, soldering on top, and soldering on wire.

3.1 Soldering Into

Soldering, especially wave soldering, is used to solder a wired component into a single-layer printed circuit board (PCB), for example. This technology is rarely used today. Exceptions are PCBs that are installed in simple household appliances, hobby tools, or similar.

3.2 Soldering Through

Through-hole soldering is a technique in which the solder paste is applied over a plated-through hole (PTH), into which a wired component is then inserted, and subsequently soldered during the reflow process. This technique is also known as **pin-in-paste** (PiP) or **through-hole reflow** (THR) and requires that the circuit boards have PTHs and the components are reflow-capable, i.e. they can withstand temperatures of +260 °C.

It must also be taken into account that the solder paste applied over the PCB is large enough (often limited by the contact pitch minus 0.2 mm separator in the stencil) to fill the space between the PTH and the component's pin. The calculation must take into account the shrinkage of the solder paste (~50% of the volume) during the reflow process.

Further boundary conditions are a distance of 0.25 mm between the connector housing and the circuit board in the area of the solder paste application (plastic feet as spacer) and a maximum penetration of the connection pins underneath the circuit board of 1 mm. This prevents solder paste from accumulating at the end of the pin, which would then be missing in the soldering area.

Finally, it is appropriate to deliver these components in tape and reel so that they can be assembled fully automatically using pick and place machines.

3.3 Soldering on Top

Soldering, usually referred to as surface-mount technology (SMT), is the state of the art today. SMT has the advantage that conductive tracks can run under the component in multilayer PCBs and that the B-side of the PCB can also be fitted with components.

The PCBs are printed with paste using stencils, and then the components are placed and finally soldered using the reflow process.

The component manufacturer specifies the layout for the solder pads. The size of the paste print is usually defined by in-house guidelines, which also take solder resist, etc., into account.

SMT is limited to component lengths of a maximum of 50 mm because PCBs can deflect during the reflow process, resulting in open solder joints on larger components. If larger than 50 mm components need to be processed, press-fit technology or the PiP/THR process is suitable.

In addition to soldering, connection pins can also contact PCBs using press-fit technology.

3.4 Press-Fit Technology

Press-fit technology has its origins in the 1970s, when assembly systems for telecommunications and military applications were still wired to the backplane using wire-wrap technology. At that time, solid posts were pressed into PCBs with plated through holes (PTHs). It quickly became clear that this technique would put a lot of stress on the PCBs—especially because repair options for any damaged connector pin also had to be taken into account.

Flexible press-fit zones were therefore developed. In the 1990s, more than 20 different designs competed for the PTH with a diameter of 1.05 mm, and each connector manufacturer claimed that their design was the true one.

At that time, the connector pitches were 2.54 mm or 2.50 mm. Due to the ever-increasing packing density, the hole diameters had to be reduced, and today, press-fit technology is mainly offered as a punched *eye of a needle* (EoN) for hole diameters from 0.31 mm to 1.05 mm. The hole diameters are referred to as *finished hole diameters* (PTH). In the lead-free age, the originally large hole tolerances are no longer required; chemically tin-plated or *Electroless Nickel Gold* (ENIG) PCB surfaces are used, and PCB manufacturers know that the finished dimensions of the PTHs must be in the upper range of the tolerance band, because chemically tinned surfaces are rougher than the previous lead-containing *hot air leveling* (HAL) surfaces and therefore the press-fit process can be critical in the lower diameter tolerance band.



TIP

Expert contribution 2 titled “Press-Fit Technology” in this book provides detailed information on this technology.

The following sections describe the connection of wires, strands, and cables to electrical connectors.

3.5 Soldering on Wires

This is the traditional soldering process using a soldering iron and solder wire. The pre-tinned stranded wire is inserted into the solder pot or inserted through the soldering eye and soldered by adding solder wire. Soldered connections of stranded conductors must also be fitted with a bend protection sleeve (heat shrink tubing), as otherwise individual strands may break off behind the solder joint when the stranded conductor is bent. Shield connections should be made with copper foil and filler wire.

In addition to soldering, wires can also be welded, screwed, or crimped on.

3.6 Welding on Wires

Welding wires—whether by resistance welding or ultrasonic welding—is a complex process, but one that can be automated. Welding is always used when the contact resistance of a crimp connection is either too unstable (e.g. in the case of an ABS -- antilock brake system - sensor that is exposed to high vibration) or too high (e.g. in the case of stranded conductors that are above 25 mm² in high-current applications).

3.7 Screwing on Wires

Screwing on wires is not only used in installation technology. More and more terminal strips for electronic circuit boards are being used—both as one-piece terminal strips and in two-piece versions, each with soldered pins. With regard to the screw, it is important to ensure that the clamping point does not damage the stranded conductor (i.e. no screws are directly placed on the stranded conductor) or that ferrules are used.

A simpler way to terminate wires is to use cage clamps. Depending on the design and cross-section, there are cage clamps for direct contacting (simply insert the wire) or, for larger cross-sections, with locking and unlocking levers.

3.8 Crimping on Wires

Crimping contacts to wires is certainly the most widely used connection technique. The wire is inserted into a stripper crimper and a contact (preferably with a wire crimp and insulation crimp) is applied directly to the end of the wire. The bundle of crimped contacts is then snapped into the correct positions of the connector housing manually or with the help of color recognition of the wire insulation with an automated machine. If the contact does not have an insulation crimp, a bent protection sleeve (heat-shrink tubing) must also be applied here!

Wire cross-section (mm² or AWG), crimp contact, and tool setting must be matched to each other.

As crimping is a type of cold welding of the individual wires of a stranded conductor, the crimp machine must be monitored regularly by checking the height and width of the crimp and by measuring the pull-off forces.

Crimping involves cold welding of the stranded wires, which is why tin bronze is preferable as contact material. Brass creates microcracks during crimping, which can lead to corrosion in the long term.

Solid wires cannot be processed in crimp contacts as there is no cold welding!

TIP

Expert contribution 5 titled “Component Design for Automated Wire Harness Production” in this book provides detailed information on this technology.



3.9 IDC Technology

With an insulation displacement connection, several wires—preferably from a flat ribbon cable—are connected to a connector at the same time. The wire cross-section and contact fork must be precisely matched. The impact strength of the wire insulation also has a significant effect on the quality of the insulation displacement technology.

Shielded ribbon cables are expensive and difficult to process, which is why round cables are offered that have twisted wire pairs inside. A simpler solution is to use additional ground wires in the ribbon cable, which allows acceptable shielding to be achieved over short distances (Figure 3.1):

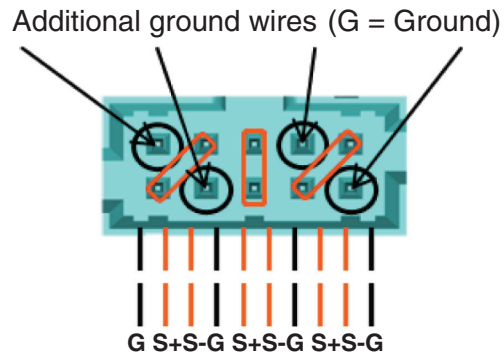


Figure 3.1 In this arrangement, the differential pairs of a ribbon cable with 1 mm pitch have 105 Ω impedance!