

If you are remodeling, adding a home office, or trying to get rid of that nest of cables in the living room, the question comes up fast: can a regular electrician in California handle coax and Ethernet outlets, or do you need a separate low-voltage or networking contractor?

I have spent years watching that question get answered on job sites, often the hard way. Someone calls an internet provider expecting a neat, concealed cable run and ends up with a coax stapled along their baseboard. Or they call an electrician, who pulls beautiful new Ethernet cabling but cannot help them choose the right network hardware.

The short answer is that many California electricians do install coax and Ethernet outlets, but there are some caveats. The deeper answer touches on code, licensing, cost, and the gray line between electrical wiring and data cabling.

This article walks through how it actually works in California houses and small businesses, and how to choose the right professional for your project.

Electrical vs low-voltage work in California

In California, “electrician” is a broad label that homeowners use for anyone who works with wires. The state is more precise.

Most residential and light commercial wiring work is done by contractors licensed by the California Contractors State License Board (CSLB). For the kind of work we are talking about, you will mostly see two license classifications:

- C-10: Electrical contractor
- C-7: Low Voltage Systems contractor

A C-10 contractor is allowed to install electrical systems of all voltages. That includes standard 120/240-volt branch circuits, subpanels, lighting, EV chargers, and so on. It also covers low-voltage work, such as coax, Ethernet, and security wiring.

A C-7 contractor is focused on systems that operate at 91 volts or less: data, audio, video, alarms, access control, and similar. These are the firms that live and breathe cabling plans, patch panels, and structured wiring.

In practice, many C-10 electricians in California do install coaxial and Ethernet cabling. Some love that work and have invested in the proper testers and tools. Others will only touch low-voltage wiring during new construction, and prefer to leave upgrades and complex networks to C-7 specialists.

When you call a company, the dispatcher might simply say, “Yes, we install data and TV outlets,” but it helps to know what is behind that answer.

Do electricians install cable outlets?

Most homeowners asking this are really wondering two things at once:

1. Will an electrician install the physical coax or Ethernet outlet on the wall and run the cable to it?
2. Will that work be done in a tidy, code-aware way that plays nicely with the rest of the electrical system?

In California, if you hire a reputable C-10 electrical contractor and specifically ask whether they install cable outlets, the answer is usually yes. For coaxial, it is very common. Electricians have been wiring cable TV drops for decades,

long before streaming existed.

Ethernet is a bit more split. Some electricians are extremely comfortable with Cat 5e, Cat 6, and Cat 6A cabling. Others will say they can do it, but they treat it more like speaker wire, and the results show it: kinks, runs tied too closely to high-voltage lines, no test results, maybe even the wrong connectors.

That is why many California builders and remodelers pair a C-10 electrician with a C-7 low-voltage contractor when they rough in a house. The electrician runs the high-voltage, the low-voltage crew handles coax, Ethernet, and often speakers and security.

For a retrofit in an existing home, you have three realistic options:

1. A C-10 electrical contractor who explicitly advertises low-voltage or structured cabling services.
2. A C-7 contractor or AV/network integrator that specializes in coax and Ethernet.
3. Letting your internet or cable company run the drop.

The third option is almost always cheaper on paper, but it usually involves exposed cabling on the outside of the house, visible staples inside, and little concern for aesthetics or long-term flexibility. The work is functional, not elegant.

If you care how it looks and want flexibility for future gear, you are squarely in electrician or low-voltage territory.

Is cabling the same as wiring?

People often ask if cabling is just another word for wiring. In conversation, many tradespeople use the words interchangeably: “We will run the wiring for your office.” Strictly speaking, though, there is a difference in how the two are used.

“Wiring” usually refers to high-voltage electrical circuits that power outlets, lights, and appliances. In California homes that typically means NM-B cable (often called Romex) or THHN conductors in conduit, carrying 120 or 240 volts.

“Cabling” usually refers to low-voltage signal or data lines: coax, Ethernet, speaker wire, security lines, HDMI extenders, and so on. These carry information, not household power.

The skills overlap. Both require careful routing, protection from physical damage, knowledge of fire-stopping, and familiarity with building codes. But data cabling introduces additional concerns:

- Crosstalk and interference from nearby electrical circuits.
- Min bend radius and pull tension limits to avoid damaging pairs.
- Performance standards such as Cat 6 vs Cat 6A, and whether you need them.

So while cabling and wiring are cousins, they are not quite the same craft. The best electricians in California respect that difference and keep up with data cabling best practices, or bring in partners who do.

What does cabling actually do in a home or office?

Cabling is the physical nervous system of your communication and entertainment. Without it, everything falls back to wireless, and that works only up to a point.

In a typical California home, you might find cabling handling at least these roles:

A coaxial run brings internet service from the demarcation point at the side of the house to a modem location inside. Additional coax lines may feed TV locations or a distribution amplifier.

Ethernet cabling connects your router or switch to key devices: workstations, gaming consoles, smart TVs, wireless access points, and sometimes cameras or network video recorders. A hard-wired access point powered by Ethernet can transform the Wi-Fi performance in a larger house.

Low-voltage cabling may also tie together doorbells, thermostats, whole-house audio, intercoms, and security systems. Even if a device uses Wi-Fi, installers often prefer to back it with a wired connection for reliability.

Think of it this way: Wi-Fi is a convenient last hop. The heavy lifting happens over physical cabling. When that cabling is designed and installed well, the entire system feels faster, more stable, and easier to expand.

The main types of cabling you will see

There are many ways to slice the question: What are the three types of cabling? What are the 5 types of cable? What is the most common type of cabling used in networks?

Different trades answer that differently, but in California residential and light commercial projects, three big families cover almost everything:

First, twisted-pair network cabling, mainly Cat 5e, Cat 6, and Cat 6A. This is what you plug your computer or access point into. For most homes, Cat 6 is the sweet spot for new runs. It comfortably handles gigabit speeds, supports 2.5 Gbps in many real-world scenarios, and does not cost wildly more than Cat 5e. In networks today, Cat 5e and Cat 6 are by far the most common.

Second, coaxial cable, typically RG-6 for TV and internet. Coax is rugged, shields well against interference, and is still how most cable internet and many satellite TV signals arrive. It may also be used in some camera or specialty systems.

Third, power cabling such as NM-B, MC, or THHN in conduit. While not “data” cabling, it is deeply involved in how low-voltage lines can be run. In California, the electrical code and fire codes dictate how close these can be, whether they can share stud bays, and how they pass through fire-rated assemblies.

When people ask about the 5 types of cable, they are often looking at a more academic or broad industry answer, which might include twisted pair, coaxial, fiber optic, power, and specialty/multi-conductor signal cable. In a single-family house, the first three dominate.

The three primary components of cabling

Whether it is coax or Ethernet, any cabling system has three primary components.

The first is the cable itself. For Ethernet that means Cat 5e, 6, or 6A bulk cable, unbroken between endpoints. For coax it usually means RG-6. Cable quality is not just marketing; cheap copper-clad aluminum coax or poorly twisted Cat 6 can fail well before its supposed rating.

The second is the termination. At the wall, this might be a keystone jack or a coax F-connector. In a closet or service room, it might be a patch panel, distribution amplifier, or splitter. A good electrician or low-voltage tech uses proper tools and matching components rather than generic hardware store odds and ends.

The third is the pathway. This includes conduit, raceways, holes through studs, cable trays, and any other route the cable follows. Pathway planning is where code requirements, fire-stopping, and physical protection come into play.

In California, where many homes are either stucco over framing or multi-story wood construction, the pathway can be the hardest part of the job.

If anyone skimps on any of those three elements, you will notice. Maybe not the first week, but certainly when you upgrade your internet speed, move equipment, or open a wall years later.

How much does cabling cost?

Homeowners understandably want a simple answer to how much does cabling cost. The reality in California is that cabling cost lives at the intersection of three big factors: the physical difficulty of the [Cabling Services Provider California](#) run, the number of drops, and the professional you hire.

For a basic retrofit in an accessible single-story house with an open attic, a ballpark range many contractors use is:

- Around \$150 to \$300 per new coax or Ethernet drop, including labor and materials, when done as part of a small bundle of outlets.

This might cover one wall plate, a single story, moderate drilling, and a run back to an existing low-voltage panel or network location. Harder jobs climb quickly. A two-story house with no attic access and finished walls, or a condo with strict fire-stopping rules, can easily double that number. In dense parts of California where labor is expensive, such as the Bay Area or west Los Angeles, you will often see higher ranges.

If you are pulling an entire structured cabling system in a new build or major remodel, the math changes. Contractors may price a per-square-foot rate, or they may quote per room, especially if they are pulling multiple runs (for example, two Cat 6 and one RG-6 to every TV location).

Material costs, by comparison, are modest. A 1,000-foot box of decent Cat 6 is typically a small fraction of the labor cost. The same is true for quality RG-6 coax. You pay mostly for time, expertise, and the mess and risk involved in opening walls and ceilings.

You will occasionally find handymen quoting much lower. Some are competent, but many skip testing, use sub-par materials, or ignore code rules about fire-blocking and cable support. That can become a headache when you eventually sell the house or try to troubleshoot a finicky link.

Is cabling difficult?

For an experienced electrician or low-voltage technician, residential cabling is not difficult in the sense of being mysterious. The challenges are mostly physical: crawling through tight attics, fishing down finished walls, and working around insulation, ducts, and existing wiring.

For a homeowner, cabling is difficult mostly because you get only one chance to do it cleanly without opening a lot of drywall. The technical part of crimping an RJ-45 connector or punching down onto a keystone jack is learnable from a short video. The tricky part is choosing good pathways, avoiding interference, and meeting basic fire-stopping expectations.

Professionals also carry the right tools. That includes toners and tracers to identify cables, cable certifiers or at least continuity testers, flexible drill bits and glow rods for fishing walls, and, importantly in California, an understanding of where utilities might be hiding before they start poking holes.

If you plan to run your own low-voltage cabling and have an electrician terminate and test it, talk to the electrician first. Some are comfortable with that division of labor; others are not willing to warranty another person's cable runs that they cannot inspect fully.

The role of code and permitting in California

Coax and Ethernet themselves are low voltage, but that does not mean you can ignore code. California's electrical code is based on the National Electrical Code (NEC) with state amendments, and local jurisdictions sometimes add their own twists.

Three code-related points often surprise homeowners:

First, separation from power. Data cabling usually needs to maintain some separation from 120/240-volt wiring to reduce interference and avoid certain safety issues. The exact distances and conditions depend on whether the cables share a raceway or just a stud bay, and which standard your installer follows.

Second, fire-stopping and plenum ratings. When cabling penetrates fire-rated walls or floors, those penetrations must be sealed with appropriate materials. Some buildings require plenum-rated cabling in air-handling spaces. California inspectors tend to focus more on life safety than on whether a cable is perfectly straight, but missed details here can cause delays and extra costs.

Third, permit triggers. In many California cities, low-voltage cabling work alone does not require a separate permit in a single-family home, especially at small scale. However, once you are doing a larger remodel or adding new electrical circuits, the data cabling becomes part of the permitted scope. A good electrician will know when to loop in the building department and when it is not necessary.



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All of this is a long way of saying that hiring a licensed professional buys more than neat holes in the wall. It buys knowledge of what an inspector or fire marshal will care about.

What is the best wire for home use?

If by “wire” you mean data cabling, most California homes today are well served by Cat 6 Ethernet and RG-6 coax as a baseline.

For Ethernet, Cat 5e technically supports gigabit speeds and is still widely used. However, the cost difference between Cat 5e and Cat 6 bulk cable is small compared to the labor. Cat 6 provides better headroom, especially if you later upgrade to internet plans above 1 Gbps or use multi-gig local networking between devices.

For coax, RG-6 with a solid copper conductor (or quality copper-clad steel if appropriate for the installation) performs better over distance and with certain types of signals. Avoid no-name bargain spools that do not clearly specify their construction.

If you are building a long-term “forever house” or a high-end custom home, you might discuss fiber with your low-voltage designer. Fiber is still less common in typical single-family projects, but it is increasingly attractive for backbone runs between floors or to detached offices and ADUs.

For plain electrical circuits, the best wire for home use is simply whatever type, size, and brand your electrician trusts and that meets California code and local amendments. Arguments over brands matter less than careful terminations, proper protection, and good layout.

When should you call an electrician versus a low-voltage specialist?

Both trades share some territory, especially in retrofit work. The right choice depends more on the scope of your project than the exact type of cable.

Here is a useful way to decide.

1. If you are already hiring an electrician for a remodel, panel upgrade, or new circuits, and you just need a few strategically located coax or Ethernet outlets, asking that same contractor to handle the low-voltage often makes sense.
2. If your primary goal is a well-designed home network with multiple access points, a central rack, patch panels, and perhaps cameras or whole-house audio, bringing in a C-7 low-voltage firm or AV integrator is usually better.
3. If you are dealing with tricky pathways, multi-unit buildings, or strict HOA or fire code environments, either a seasoned electrician with low-voltage experience or a dedicated cabling contractor is fine. Check that they understand local inspection practices.
4. If cost is your only priority and appearance does not matter much, your internet or cable provider can usually run the necessary coax and maybe a single Ethernet run. Just be aware of the trade-offs in neatness and flexibility.

The trade professionals you speak with will also have preferences. An honest electrician will tell you if your job is a better fit for their low-voltage partner.

Who is the cheapest cable provider, and does it matter for cabling?

A common side question during these projects is: who is the cheapest cable provider? In California, the answer depends heavily on your specific address. The major players include Comcast Xfinity, Spectrum, Cox, and a long list of regional or municipal providers in certain areas, not to mention fiber competitors and fixed wireless options.

From a cabling perspective, the exact provider matters less than the type of service and the location of their demarcation point. An electrician or cabling contractor will care about:

- Where the service enters the building.
- Whether it arrives over coax, fiber, or copper.
- Where you plan to locate the primary router or modem.

If you think you might switch providers within a few years, that is an argument for more flexible, provider-agnostic cabling: coax and Ethernet homerun to a central location, plus pathways (such as conduit) that can accept new lines without opening finished surfaces.

Chasing the cheapest monthly bill is a different problem from getting the physical infrastructure right. Spend once on good cabling, then shop providers freely.

Cabling Services Provider California

Typical workflow when a California electrician installs coax and Ethernet

To give you a sense of what to expect, here is how a professional job usually unfolds in a retrofit situation.

1. The electrician walks the space with you, marking outlet locations, discussing furniture placement, TV mounts, desks, and where equipment like routers or switches will sit.
2. They trace possible pathways in attics, crawlspaces, or wall cavities, checking for access and obstacles. This is where they identify any code or fire-stopping challenges.
3. They pull cabling from a central point (sometimes near the electrical panel, sometimes a closet or structured wiring box) to each outlet location, protecting the cable and avoiding sharp bends or high-voltage interference.
4. They terminate the cables at both ends, install wall plates, and label everything. Better contractors will also test each run for continuity and performance.
5. Finally, they help you connect devices, at least at a basic level, and may coordinate with your ISP or IT person if the network setup is more complex.

On a small job, this might be a few hours. On a larger house with finished walls and multiple stories, it can stretch into multiple days, especially if patching and painting are involved.

Final thoughts: matching your project to the right pro

Electricians in California do install coax and Ethernet outlets. Whether they are the right choice for your specific project depends on how far beyond “just get it working” you want to go.

If you simply need a single cable outlet relocated as part of a kitchen remodel, your existing electrician is almost certainly the right call. If you are wiring a dedicated home office for reliable video calls, or building a network that will carry you through the next decade of streaming and remote work, look for someone who treats cabling as a core part of their craft, not an afterthought.

Ask direct questions: Do you run Ethernet and coax regularly? What type of cable do you use for home networks? How do you test your runs? Are you a C-10 or C-7 contractor, and who handles permitting if needed?

The answers will tell you more than any marketing brochure. In a state with California’s labor costs, you only want to pay for cabling once.