My new year’s resolution: no more MicroUSB

If you’ve used or owned any piece of personal technology over the past decade, chances are good that you’ve come across a MicroUSB cable in that time. It was the standard choice for charging and connecting Android devices for many years, and it remains the most common way to charge wireless headphones to this day. Apple’s recently updated Beats Studio 3 and Solo 3 models both use it; Sony’s upgraded 1000XM2s also rely on it; and even flagship smartphones like the brand new Oppo R11s lean on the old connector.

Our collective reliance and continued need for MicroUSB cables is not a good thing.




Chord Hugo 2
Photo: Chord Electronics

The main thing prompting me to say that now is my recent encounter with the Chord Hugo 2, a high-end, very expensive ($2,379 in the US) headphone amplifier and digital-to-analog converter that’s still tied to the past with a pair of MicroUSB ports. One of them accepts digital data from my computer and the other juices up the built-in battery and keeps the device powered on. My problem? The data cable’s MicroUSB connector has already gotten bent out of shape without me ever twisting or torquing it in any improper way. Because, well, MicroUSB ports and connectors aren’t anywhere near as sturdy as the newer — and in all material ways better — USB-C standard.

The Hugo 2 is a spectacular feat of engineering, performing better than many desktop audio systems that require a

permanent tether to a power outlet. But I can't forgive its use of MicroUSB. Every smartphone I've reviewed over the past couple of years, and every laptop worth talking about, is now powered by a USB-C charger of some description. They're not all cross-compatible, I'll grant you that, but at least I can use the same cable across all of my devices. Except, on my present trip away from home, I'm stuck with the Hugo 2 wanting MicroUSB charging and data, which means having to use that busted cable and plugging it in *ever so carefully*. For people like me, embracing the imperfect future of USB-C, MicroUSB devices are just a massive anchor holding us back.

I understand the rationale of a lot of companies, especially mainstream headphone makers like Sony and Beats, who feel like MicroUSB is the most ubiquitous cable and charger that people are likely to already have. But I've spent a long time writing about the progress of technology, and sticking with a superseded standard has never been the long-term solution for improving the user experience of *anything*.



Bowers & Wilkins PX USB-C charging port
Photo by Chris Welch / The Verge

The forward-thinking companies that have put USB-C ports on their headphones this year — such as Master & Dynamic and, most recently, Bowers & Wilkins with the PX — have given me a glimpse into a better world. My most essential tech items are my phone, laptop, and headphones, and being able to power all three of them up with the same cable is simply blissful. People are rightly wary about having to recharge yet another thing with wireless headphones, but if they can do it with their phone or laptop charger, they're likely to feel a lot better about that extra consideration. That's certainly been my experience.

USB-C connectors are sturdier than MicroUSB, they're now more common among the very latest tech, and they're only going to increase in prevalence and importance as time goes on. My way of simplifying my life in 2018 will be to just embrace and demand USB-C. I'm ready to let the old MicroUSB standard go, and I suggest you do the same.