Sizing Electrical Raceway

Proper Sizing of Conduit and Raceways

When selecting the conduit size, it's important to consider the following variables:

1. Number of conductors
2. Size of the conductors
3. Type of conduit

NFPA 731 Section 4.6.3.12(2) requires raceways to be sized properly in accordance with the NEC.

2017 Edition National Electric Code (NFPA 70)

Article 300

Chapter 3 Wiring Methods and Materials

ARTICLE 300
General Requirements for Wiring Methods and Materials

Part I. General Requirements

300.1 Scope.

(A) All Wiring Installations. This article covers general requirements for wiring methods and materials for all wiring installations unless modified by other articles in Chapter 3.

(B) Integral Parts of Equipment. The provisions of this article are not intended to apply to the conductors that form an integral part of equipment, such as motors, controllers, motor control centers, or factory-assembled control equipment or listed utilization equipment.

(C) Metric Designators and Trade Sizes. Metric designators and trade sizes for conduit, tubing, and associated fittings and accessories shall be as designated in Table 300.1(C).

300.2 Limitations.

Exception: Individual conductors shall be permitted where installed as separate overhead conductors in accordance with 225.6.

(B) Conductors of the Same Circuit. All conductors of the same circuit and, where used, the grounded conductor and all equipment grounding conductors and bonding conductors shall be contained within the same raceway, auxiliary gutter, cable tray, cablebus assembly, trench, cable, or cord, unless otherwise permitted in accordance with 300.3(B)(1)through (B)(4).

(1) Paralleled Installations. Conductors shall be permitted to be run in parallel in accordance with the provisions of 310.10(H). The requirement to run all circuit conductors within the same raceway, auxiliary gutter, cable tray, trench, cable, or cord shall apply separately to each portion of the paralleled installation, and the equipment grounding conductors shall comply with the provisions of 250.122. Parallel runs in cable tray shall comply with the provisions of 392.20(C).

Exception: Conductors installed in nonmetallic raceways run underground shall be permitted to be arranged as isolated phase, neutral, and grounded conductor installations. The raceways shall be installed in close proximity, and the isolated phase, neutral, and grounded conductors shall comply with the provisions of 300.20(B).

Article 300.17

300.17 Number and Size of Conductors in Raceway. The number and size of conductors in any raceway shall not be more than will permit dissipation of the heat and ready installation or withdrawal of the conductors without damage to the conductors or to their insulation.

Informational Note: See the following sections of this *Code*: intermediate metal conduit, 342.22; rigid metal conduit, 344.22; flexible metal conduit, 348.22; liquidtight flexible metal conduit, 350.22; PVC conduit, 352.22; HDPE conduit, 353.22; RTRC, 355.22; liquidtight nonmetallic flexible conduit, 356.22; electrical metallic tubing, 358.22; flexible metallic tubing, 360.22; electrical nonmetallic tubing, 362.22; cellular concrete floor raceways, 372.22; cellular metal floor raceways, 374.22; metal wireways, 376.22; nonmetallic wireways, 378.22; surface metal raceways, 386.22; surface nonmetallic raceways, 388.22; underfloor raceways, 390.6; fixture wire, 402.7; theaters, 520.6; signs, 600.31(C); elevators, 620.33; audio signal processing, amplification, and reproduction equipment, 640.23(A) and 640.24; Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 circuits, Article 725; fire alarm circuits, Article 760; and optical fiber cables and raceways, Article 770.

In the NEC, there are two main locations used when determining the maximum number of conductors in a conduit or tubing:

NEC Annex C is used for determining the maximum number of conductors permitted in conduit or tubing, when all conductors in the conduit are of the same size and insulation type.

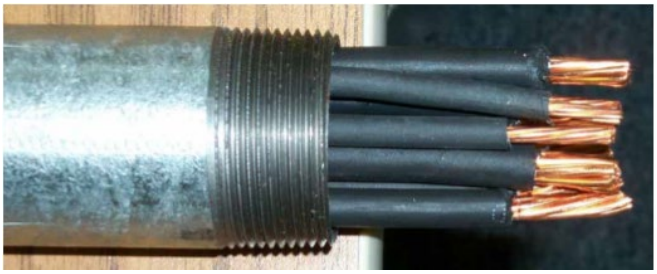
Informative Annex C Conduit and Tubing Fill Tables for Conductors and Fixture Wires of the Same Size

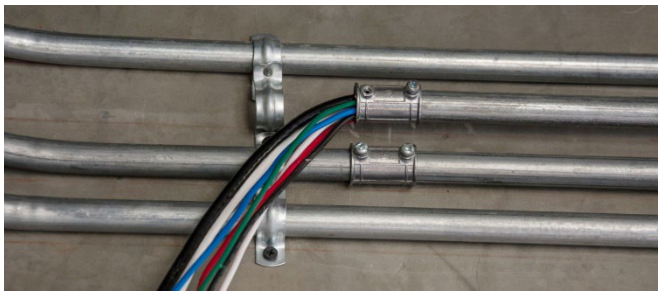
This informative annex is not a part of the requirements of this NFPA document but is included for informational purposes only.

*Where this table is used in conjunction with Tables C.1 through C.13, the conductors installed must be of the compact type.

Table C.1 *Continued*

Type	Conductor Size (AWG/kcmil)	Trade Size (Metric Designator)												
		3/8 (12)	1/2 (16)	3/4 (21)	1 (27)	1 1/4 (35)	1 1/2 (41)	2 (53)	2 1/2 (63)	3 (78)	3 1/2 (91)	4 (103)	5 (129)	6 (155)
	800	—	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	3	5	—	—
	900	—	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	4	—	—
	1000	—	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	3	4	—	—
	1250	—	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	—	—
	1500	—	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	—	—
	1750	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	—	—
	2000	—	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	—	—
THHN, THWN, THWN-2	14	—	12	22	35	61	84	138	241	364	476	608	—	—
	12	—	9	16	26	45	61	101	176	266	347	443	—	—
	10	—	5	10	16	28	38	63	111	167	219	279	—	—
	8	—	3	6	9	16	22	36	64	96	126	161	—	—
	6	—	2	4	7	12	16	26	46	69	91	116	—	—
	4	—	1	2	4	7	10	16	28	43	56	71	—	—
	3	—	1	1	3	6	8	13	24	36	47	60	—	—
	2	—	1	1	3	5	7	11	20	30	40	51	—	—
	1	—	1	1	1	4	5	8	15	22	29	37	—	—
	1/0	—	1	1	1	3	4	7	12	19	25	32	—	—
	2/0	—	0	1	1	2	3	6	10	16	20	26	—	—
	3/0	—	0	1	1	1	3	5	8	13	17	22	—	—
	4/0	—	0	1	1	1	2	4	7	11	14	18	—	—
	250	—	0	0	1	1	1	3	6	9	11	15	—	—
	300	—	0	0	1	1	1	3	5	7	10	13	—	—
	350	—	0	0	1	1	1	2	4	6	9	11	—	—
	400	—	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	6	8	10	—	—
	500	—	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	5	6	8	—	—
	600	—	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	4	5	7	—	—
	700	—	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	4	6	—	—
	750	—	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	4	5	—	—
	800	—	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	4	5	—	—
	900	—	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	3	3	4	—	—
	1000	—	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	4	—	—





NEC Chapter 9 is used for combinations of conductors of different sizes or insulation types installed in the same conduit or tubing.

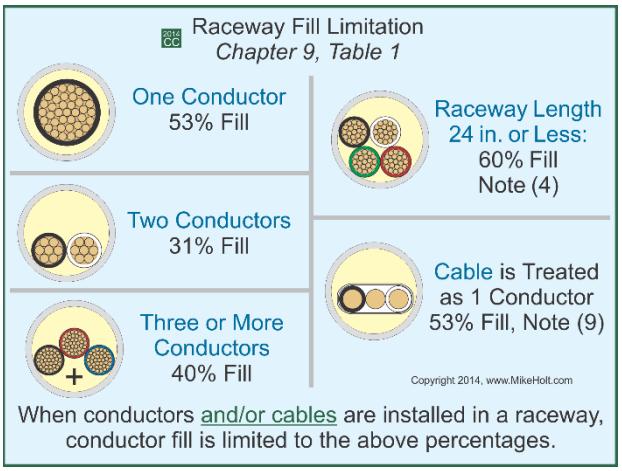
Chapter 9

Table 1 Percent of Cross Section of Conduit and Tubing for Conductors and Cables

Number of Conductors and/or Cables	Cross-Sectional Area (%)
1	53
2	31
Over 2	40

Informational Note No. 1: Table 1 is based on common conditions of proper cabling and alignment of conductors where the length of the pull and the number of bends are within reasonable limits. It should be recognized that, for certain conditions, a larger size conduit or a lesser conduit fill should be considered.

Informational Note No. 2: When pulling three conductors or cables into a raceway, if the ratio of the raceway (inside diameter) to the conductor or cable (outside diameter) is between 2.8 and 3.2, jamming can occur. While jamming can occur when pulling four or more conductors or cables into a raceway, the probability is very low.



Notes to Tables

(1) See Informative Annex C for the maximum number of conductors and fixture wires, all of the same size (total cross-sectional area including insulation) permitted in trade sizes of the applicable conduit or tubing.

(2) Table 1 applies only to complete conduit or tubing systems and is not intended to apply to sections of conduit or tubing used to protect exposed wiring from physical damage.

(3) Equipment grounding or bonding conductors, where installed, shall be included when calculating conduit or tubing fill. The actual dimensions of the equipment grounding or bonding conductor (insulated or bare) shall be used in the calculation.

(4) Where conduit or tubing nipples having a maximum length not to exceed 600 mm (24 in.) are installed between boxes, cabinets, and similar enclosures, the nipples shall be permitted to be filled to 60 percent of their total cross-sectional area, and 310.15(B)(3)(a) adjustment factors need not apply to this condition.

(5) For conductors not included in Chapter 9, such as multiconductor cables and optical fiber cables, the actual dimensions shall be used.

(6) For combinations of conductors of different sizes, use actual dimensions or Table 5 and Table 5A for dimensions of conductors and Table 4 for the applicable conduit or tubing dimensions.

(7) When calculating the maximum number of conductors or cables permitted in a conduit or tubing, all of the same size (total cross-sectional area including insulation), the next higher whole number shall be used to determine the maximum number of conductors permitted when the calculation results in a decimal greater than or equal to 0.8. When calculating the size for conduit or tubing permitted for a single conductor, one conductor shall be permitted when the calculation results in a decimal greater than or equal to 0.8.

(8) Where bare conductors are permitted by other sections of this *Code*, the dimensions for bare conductors in Table 8 shall be permitted.

(9) A multiconductor cable, optical fiber cable, or flexible cord of two or more conductors shall be treated as a single conductor for calculating percentage conduit or tubing fill area. For cables that have elliptical cross sections, the cross-sectional area calculation shall be based on using the major diameter of the ellipse as a circle diameter. Assemblies of single insulated conductors without an overall covering shall not be considered a cable when determining conduit or tubing fill area. The conduit or tubing fill for the assemblies shall be calculated based upon the individual conductors.

(10) The values for approximate conductor diameter and area shown in Table 5 are based on worst-case scenario and indicate round concentric-lay-stranded conductors. Solid and round concentric-lay-stranded conductor values are grouped together for the purpose of Table 5. Round compact-stranded conductor values are shown in Table 5A. If the actual values of the conductor diameter and area are known, they shall be permitted to be used.

Table 4 Dimensions and Percent Area of Conduit and Tubing (Areas of Conduit or Tubing for the Combinations of Wires Permitted in Table 1, Chapter 9)

Article 358 — Electrical Metallic Tubing (EMT)													
Metric Designator	Trade Size	Over 2 Wires 40%		60%		1 Wire 53%		2 Wires 31%		Nominal Internal Diameter		Total Area 100%	
		mm²	in.²	mm²	in.²	mm²	in.²	mm²	in.²	mm	in.	mm²	in.²
16	½	78	0.122	118	0.182	104	0.161	61	0.094	15.8	0.622	196	0.304
21	¾	137	0.213	206	0.320	182	0.283	106	0.165	20.9	0.824	343	0.533
27	1	222	0.346	333	0.519	295	0.458	172	0.268	26.6	1.049	556	0.864
35	1¼	387	0.598	581	0.897	513	0.793	300	0.464	35.1	1.380	968	1.496
41	1½	526	0.814	788	1.221	696	1.079	407	0.631	40.9	1.610	1314	2.036
53	2	866	1.342	1299	2.013	1147	1.778	671	1.040	52.5	2.067	2165	3.356
63	2½	1513	2.343	2270	3.515	2005	3.105	1173	1.816	69.4	2.731	3783	5.858
78	3	2280	3.538	3421	5.307	3022	4.688	1767	2.742	85.2	3.356	5701	8.846
91	3½	2980	4.618	4471	6.927	3949	6.119	2310	3.579	97.4	3.834	7451	11.545
103	4	3808	5.901	5712	8.852	5046	7.819	2951	4.573	110.1	4.334	9521	14.753

Table 5 Dimensions of Insulated Conductors and Fixture Wires

Type	Size (AWG or kcmil)	Approximate Area		Approximate Diameter	
		mm²	in.²	mm	in.
Type: FFH-2, RFH-1, RFH-2, RFHH-2, RHH*, RHW* , RHW-2*, RHH, RHW, RHW-2, SF-1, SF-2, SFF-1, SFF-2, TF, TFF, THHW, THW, THW-2, TW, XF, XFF					
RFH-2, FFH-2, RFHH-2	18	9.355	0.0145	3.454	0.136
	16	11.10	0.0172	3.759	0.148
RHH, RHW, RHW-2	14	18.90	0.0293	4.902	0.193
	12	22.77	0.0353	5.385	0.212
	10	28.19	0.0437	5.994	0.236
	8	53.87	0.0835	8.280	0.326
THHN, THWN, THWN-2	14	6.258	0.0097	2.819	0.111
	12	8.581	0.0133	3.302	0.130
	10	13.61	0.0211	4.166	0.164
	8	23.61	0.0366	5.486	0.216
	6	32.71	0.0507	6.452	0.254
	4	53.16	0.0824	8.230	0.324
	3	62.77	0.0973	8.941	0.352
	2	74.71	0.1158	9.754	0.384
	1	100.8	0.1562	11.33	0.446
	1/0	119.7	0.1855	12.34	0.486
	2/0	143.4	0.2223	13.51	0.532
	3/0	172.8	0.2679	14.83	0.584
	4/0	208.8	0.3237	16.31	0.642
	250	256.1	0.3970	18.06	0.711
	300	297.3	0.4608	19.46	0.766

Table 8 Conductor Properties

Size (AWG or kcmil)	Area		Conductors							Direct-Current Resistance at 75°C (167°F)					
			Stranding			Overall				Copper					
				Diameter		Diameter		Area		Uncoated		Coated		Aluminum	
	mm²	Circular mils	Quantity	mm	in.	mm	in.	mm²	in.²	ohm/km	ohm/kFT	ohm/km	ohm/kFT	ohm/km	ohm/kFT
18	0.823	1620	1	—	—	1.02	0.040	0.823	0.001	25.5	7.77	26.5	8.08	42.0	12.8
18	0.823	1620	7	0.39	0.015	1.16	0.046	1.06	0.002	26.1	7.95	27.7	8.45	42.8	13.1
16	1.31	2580	1	—	—	1.29	0.051	1.31	0.002	16.0	4.89	16.7	5.08	26.4	8.05
16	1.31	2580	7	0.49	0.019	1.46	0.058	1.68	0.003	16.4	4.99	17.3	5.29	26.9	8.21
14	2.08	4110	1	—	—	1.63	0.064	2.08	0.003	10.1	3.07	10.4	3.19	16.6	5.06
14	2.08	4110	7	0.62	0.024	1.85	0.073	2.68	0.004	10.3	3.14	10.7	3.26	16.9	5.17
12	3.31	6530	1	—	—	2.05	0.081	3.31	0.005	6.34	1.93	6.57	2.01	10.45	3.18
12	3.31	6530	7	0.78	0.030	2.32	0.092	4.25	0.006	6.50	1.98	6.73	2.05	10.69	3.25
10	5.261	10380	1	—	—	2.588	0.102	5.26	0.008	3.984	1.21	4.148	1.26	6.561	2.00
10	5.261	10380	7	0.98	0.038	2.95	0.116	6.76	0.011	4.070	1.24	4.226	1.29	6.679	2.04
8	8.367	16510	1	—	—	3.264	0.128	8.37	0.013	2.506	0.764	2.579	0.786	4.125	1.26
8	8.367	16510	7	1.23	0.049	3.71	0.146	10.76	0.017	2.551	0.778	2.653	0.809	4.204	1.28

Example 1

What is the minimum size Schedule 40 PVC raceway required for three 500 kcmil THHN conductors, one 250 kcmil THHN conductor, and one 3 THHN conductor?

[Chapter 9, Table 5]

Step 1. 500 THHN [0.7073 in.^{2} x 3 wires = 2.1219 in.^{2}]
250 THHN [0.3970 in.^{2} x 1 wire = 0.3970 in.^{2}]
3 THHN [0.0973 in.^{2} x 1 wire = 0.0973 in.^{2}]

Step 2. Total cross-sectional area of all conductors = 2.6162 in.^{2}

Step 3. [Chapter 9, Table 4]
Size conduit at 40% fill (PVC schedule 40)
Trade Size 3 = allowable cross-sectional area of 2.907 in.^{2}

Example 2

What size RMC nipple is required for three 3/0 THHN conductors, one 1 THHN conductor and one 6 THHN conductor?

Step 1. 3/0 THHN [0.2679 in.^{2} x 3 wires = 0.8037 in.^{2}]
1 THHN [0.1562 in.^{2} x 1 wire = 0.1562 in.^{2}]
6 THHN [0.0507 in.^{2} x 1 wire = 0.0507 in.^{2}]

Step 2. Total cross-sectional area of all conductors = 1.0106 in.^{2}

Step 3. [Chapter 9, Table 1, Note 4] - Size conduit at 60% fill
Trade Size 1 ¼ nipple = 0.916 in.^{2} (too small)
Trade Size 1 ½ nipple = 1.243 in.^{2} (just right)
Trade Size 2 nipple = 2.045 in.^{2} (larger than required)

Example 3

How many 8 THHN conductors can be installed in a trade size 3/4 EMT?

Annex C. Table C.1, pg. 70-714

Total of (6) 8 AWG THHN conductors in a ¾" EMT conduit

Example 4

How many 18 TFFN conductors can be installed in trade size ¾ LFMC?

Annex C. Table C.8, pg. 70-757

Total of (39) 18 AWG TFFN conductors in a ¾" LFMC conduit

Example 5

What's the smallest trade size PVC Schedule 40 raceway that can be used for the installation of four 1/0 THHN conductors?

Annex C. Table C.11(A), pg. 70-777

1 ½" PVC Schedule 40 conduit

Example 6

A 200A feeder installed in Schedule 80 PVC has three 3/0 THHN conductors, one 2 THHN conductor, and one 6 THHN conductor. What size raceway is required? Chapter 9 Tables

QTY	GAUGE	TYPE	Cross-Section Area		
3	3/0	THHN	3 x 0.2679 in^2 = 0.8037 in^2		
1	2	THHN	1 x 0.1158 in^2 = 0.1158 in^2		
1	6	THHN	1 x 0.0507 in^2 = 0.0507 in^2		PVC Sched. 80
			Total Cross-Section Area	0.9702 in^2	2"

Example 7

What size EMT raceway is required for 4 wires, with insulation type THHN, and gauge of 8 AWG and 2 wires, with insulation type THW, and gauge of 4 AWG.?

QTY	GAUGE	TYPE	Cross-Section Area		
4	8	THHN	4 x 0.0366 in^2 = 0.1464 in^2		
2	4	THW	2 x 0.0973 in^2 = 0.1946 in^2		EMT
			Total Cross-Section Area	0.341 in^2	1"