

# JANTZEN AUDIO

## FAQ

Answers to the most frequently asked questions

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## Can we help design crossovers/speakers?

We unfortunately cannot help with designing speakers and/or crossovers.

What we can help with is to give some general advice about choosing components, but it does require that the crossover/speaker design has already been completed and that you send us the crossover schematic.

We often get inquiries from DIY enthusiasts who asks if we can help design crossovers for a set of drivers they already own.

The short answer is that no one can design a speaker/crossover by using driver data alone and by software simulation.

Using the manufacturer's driver data in a software simulation is only the first of many steps required, to properly design speakers/crossovers.

To properly tweak a speaker/crossover design, you will always need to have the drivers mounted on the actual baffle, make measurements of amplitude, phase and impedance, import data to simulation software to generate the crossover, and make test crossovers to measure/hear if things work out correctly.

This means that a speaker design process requires the designer to have the crossovers and the actual baffle in-hand in the workshop.

# Coil types

## **Non-cored single wire, multi-strand (litz) and foil-based induction coils:**

Our Air Core Wire Coils, Litz Wire Wax Coils, Cross Coils and Wax Coils are all either made without a core or with a neutral wooden core.

These coil types can generally be used across the board for all positions on the crossover, with next to no audible distortion (when mounted correctly on the crossover).

The differences between single wire, stranded wire and foil-based inductors relates to both power handling and added dynamic headroom.

## **Iron Core Coils & C-Coils:**

Any induction coil made with a non-neutral core will have a certain level of audible distortion.

When it comes to our Iron Core Coils (with or without discs) these coils are generally recommended for the bass and mid-range section, in the frequency range areas where the core's distortion will not be audible.

Our C-Coils (laminated toroidal steel core) are only recommended for application in separate low-pass filters (bass filter).

## **Wire/Foil Gauges:**

The gauge/thickness of wire or foil will influence both the resistance of the coil (DCR) and the power handling of the coil.

A larger/thicker gauge gives a lower DCR and a larger power handling.

## **General thoughts:**

Which coil will give the best performance is dependent on crossover design, budget preferences (increased performance vs. increased cost).

When choosing the "right" coil using both technical reasoning and personal preferences must be factored in.

## Coil power handling (watt RMS)

The reason that audio grade induction coil manufacturers cannot exactly determine the exact power handling data for a specific coil (gauge/core type and size) has to do with the complexity of doing such measurements, below are listed some of these complications:

- Are we talking 4Ω or 8Ω impedance when measuring?
- At what frequency are we measuring?
- At what amplifier output voltage / amperage are we measuring?

Using a single monotone signal for measuring, will not be the same as measuring coils using a real crossover setup.

The reason is that music consists of a very wide range of signals across the frequency response range.

How a specific coil will perform in a crossover will even depend on the music type played and volume levels over extended play time, etc.

To measure the exact wattage load where a coil would start losing inductance, a core saturates or when audible distortion would occur is there for complicated, as it is not realistic to measure all possible scenarios and system designs where a certain coil could be applied.

There are some simplified or generalized guides to which coils may work within a wider wattage load range, for the most common crossover designs, but such guides should be used as an initial guideline only.

Unless you have prior experience and know which coil types and gauges works for different system designs or filter positions, it is always a good idea to consult knowledge websites or audio forums for help / inspiration.

Doing hands-on measurements and listening tests for different coil types and gauges, on the actual crossover you are designing, is a good idea as well.

# Capacitor types

## **Voltage Rating:**

All audio grade capacitors will have sufficient voltage rating for application in most passive loudspeaker crossovers (for home use).

When using capacitors in amplifiers it is far more important to be mindful of the voltage load of the amplifier and choosing a capacitor with a sufficiently high voltage rating, for valve amplifiers.

## **Bass, mid-range and tweeter section of crossovers:**

For the bass section (lower bass frequency area) we recommend choosing good quality, but lower cost capacitors, e.g. our Cross Caps, Standard Z-Caps, Premium ELKOs or standard type Electrolytic Caps.

From a technical perspective it would generally be complete overkill to use expensive high-end capacitors for the low frequency area (bass), as the improvements in performance / sound of higher-grade capacitors, would not be audible in this frequency range.

For the mid-range section, using higher grade capacitors like our Superior, Silver or Alumen Z-Caps can add better performance/sound, but it will depend on specific crossover design, drivers used, and of course personal preference.

The tweeters are always the most revealing part of any speaker system and therefore the most common position on a crossover to use high-end capacitors, will be the tweeter section.

Depending on preference in sonic profile, we recommend our Superior, Silver, Alumen or Amber Z-Caps as the best choice for tweeter capacitors.

## **Series filters:**

For series filters, we generally advise to use the same grade of capacitors for all positions, as all capacitors are in direct line with the tweeters.

# Signal direction for capacitors, coils and resistors

When we look at **non-polarized** audio grade capacitors there is no such thing as a “right” or “wrong” signal direction.

There is also no such thing as “in” and “out” in terms of signal direction.

Non-polarized audio grade capacitors are wound uniformly and there is no “inner” or “outer” foil.

For audio grade induction coils and resistors there is also no such thing as a “right” or “wrong” signal direction or an “in” or “out” for the lead-wires.

Music is a DC signal and it makes no audible difference from which direction it enters a non-polarized capacitor, an induction coil, or a resistor.

It is our professional opinion that such claims will be at best be clever marketing and at worst be misleading information with no technical reasoning behind it.

# Burn-in for audio grade capacitors

In our professional opinion there is no such thing as “burn-in” time for audio grade MKP or pure metal foil capacitors.

There is no technical reasoning behind claiming that such capacitors should somehow change their physical properties over time and thereby sound differently after a “burn in time”. Correctly made audio grade capacitors will not change physically over time in terms of winding tightness or changes to the metalized foil (or pure metal foil).

If we look at the all the Jantzen Audio metalized MKP or pure metal foil capacitors, they are all cast in resin and will never change in sound because of the capacitor windings becoming looser or anything to that effect.

We can only talk about play-in or “burn in” for e.g. bass or mid-woofer speaker units, where the fabric outer suspension and/or fabric spider may become softer over time and reduce point of resonance. Light-weight non-treated paper cones may also become slightly softer over time and change properties. What we can talk about is a sort of “mental burn-in”, where your ears and hence your brain, will need time to adjust and reflect on the change that has happened, as the result of a capacitor swap or upgrade.

When it comes to swapping / upgrading capacitors it will always be a matter of taking some time to get used to something new, by listening to many types of recordings and even from different media. After a longer period, it is completely up to the listener to determine if the change is a preferable thing or not and perhaps discover that less is more.

What our main goal is with our high-end capacitors is to get rid of some of that “coloration” that can occur with lower end capacitors and to let the sonic profile sound a bit less “bright”. We are trying to make recordings sound as close as possible to how it sounded when it was recorded.

Obviously there will be big differences when comparing electronically produced music versus microphone recorded acoustic music.

Some listeners will miss the sort of painted on “coloration” or added “brightness” that they were used too from lower grade capacitors and they will have to decide if the new sonic profile is preferable.

However, all kinds of manipulation of a music signal is a type of distortion, but for some a welcome distortion.

# Choosing the right coil/capacitor type

We often get asked which coil or capacitor type will sound the best or will give the best performance?

This is one of the most difficult questions to answer, as personal preferences often outweigh the technical reasons for choosing crossover components.

## General thoughts on choosing components:

Coils do not have the same instant or direct influence on the sonic profile as capacitors, but they are equally important, but for different reasons.

These reasons are generally more closely related to dynamic headroom and overall system capabilities.

When having considered the technical aspects, one must look at things like:

- Budget for the components and overall cost of the design
- Cost of crossover components in relation to overall cost of the system
- Which sonic profile or “flavor” is preferred
- The ratio related to the increased gain in performance versus the additional cost

It is not an easy task to describe how a component will change or “upgrade” the sound of a specific loudspeaker, as what constitutes “good sound” is of course very subjective.

The best way to find the components you like is to test them yourself, but the second-best thing is to get inspiration and help from the DIY audio community and to read component reviews as well.

# Helpful articles & audio forums

## **Choosing coil types for crossovers:**

Article by Mr. Troels Gravesen.

Read article [here](#)

## **Placement of coils on crossovers:**

Article by Mr. Troels Gravesen.

Read article [here](#)

## **Measuring low resistance (DCR) coils (e.g. C-Coils):**

Article by Mr. Troels Gravesen.

Read article [here](#)

## **Audio Grade Induction Coil Types Explained:**

Article by Audio Judgement

Read article [here](#)

## **Popular DIY audio forums:**

[diyAudio.com](http://diyAudio.com)

[DIYaudioprojects.com](http://DIYaudioprojects.com)

# Capacitor reviews

## **Alumen Z-Caps:**

Review by Mr. Troels Gravesen.

Read review [here](#)

## **Amber Z-Caps:**

Review by Mr. Troels Gravesen.

Read review [here](#)

## **Cross Cap & Z-Cap series reviews:**

Reviews by Humblehomadehifi

Read review [here](#)

## **Z-Cap series capacitor reviews:**

Reviews by audio experts and customers

Read review [here](#)