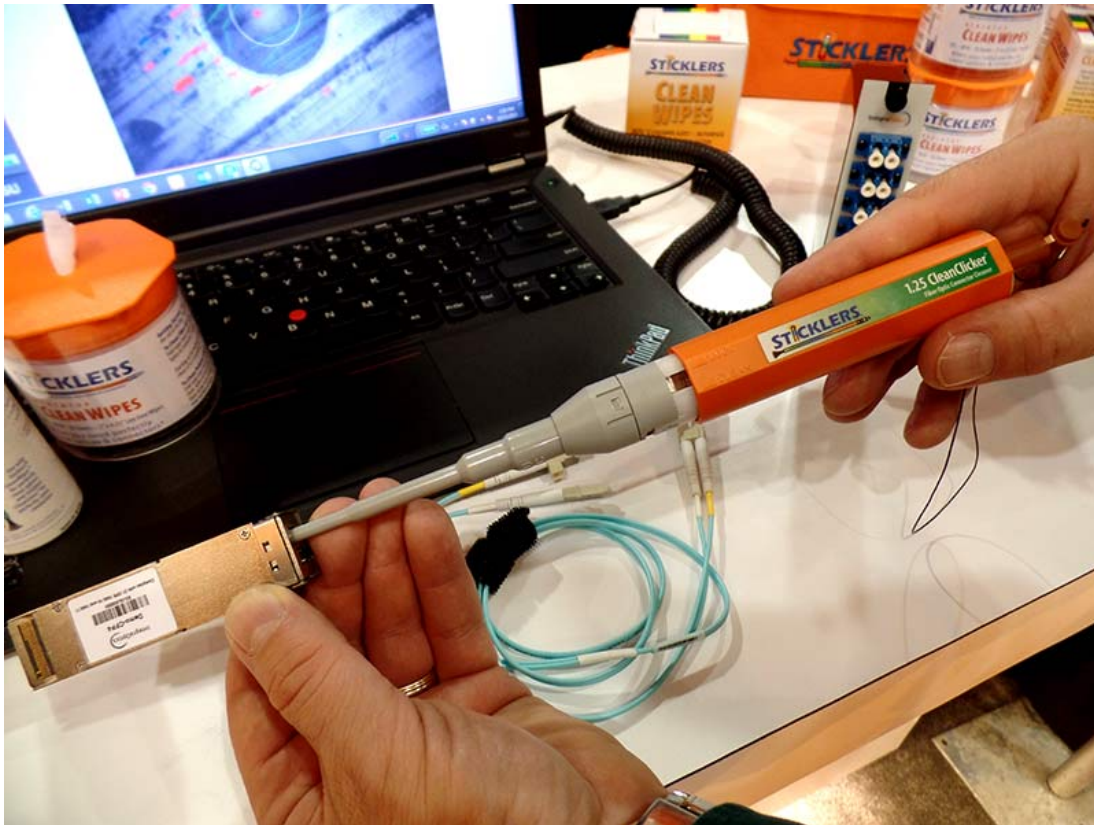


Swabs or Clickers – Which Is Better, and When?

One of the most common questions we get is asking for guidance upon when to use a mechanical clicker and when should a tech should use a stick to clean. That's a great question.

Here's the short answer: clickers get you *fast* cleaning, but sticks get you *better* cleaning.

Which is the right choice? It depends.



CleanClicker push-to-clean tools are an excellent choice for cleaning fiber modules. Notice the inspection scope image of the end-face on the computer screen.

The thing about [click-to-clean tools](#) is they're great for high-volume applications. If you're dealing with fiber counts of 288 fibers and above, or you're going to have to clean lots of mated pairs, a Clicker is a really good option because it's going to let you clean a lot of connectors very quickly and very consistently.

Clickers also are really good for applications with light levels of contamination, for example, maybe cleaning the equipment inside a rack at a data center or central office or head end.



The S16 CleanStix is often used to clean military and aerospace fiber connectors, plus commercial connectors engineered for harsh environments such as SMTPE connectors

Where click-to-clean tools are going to struggle is when you get medium to heavy levels of contamination. Heavy contamination means you're going to have to run the clicker multiple times. That can get expensive. If you need 3-4 clicks you might be better off going with a cleaning stick.

A [cleaning stick](#) or fiber swab also makes it easier to deploy wet-dry cleaning, which iNEMI and IPC agree is a better process for heavily contaminated end-faces. Use a nonflammable, fast-drying liquid to enhance the cleaning; not IPA alcohol.

The other time, too, when a stick may make sense is when you're dealing with smaller fiber counts. So for example if I were putting in a panel with 24 or 48 fibers, I might be better off from an economic standpoint using the sticks. A box of sticks will be a lot less expensive than a clicker.

So if you're working with small fiber counts or dealing with heavy contamination, wet-dry cleaning with a stick and a cleaning fluid is the best option.

Only Sticklers® family of fiber cleaning tools has all these options.