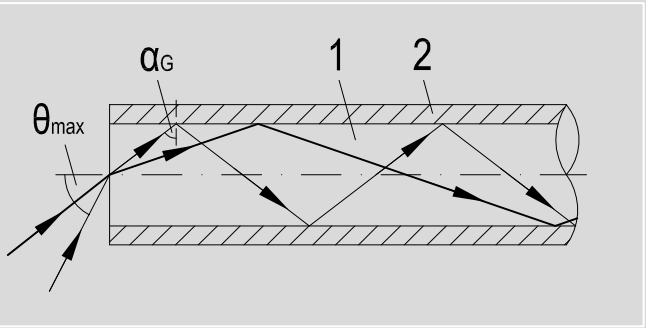
Fibre-optic cable sensors

System description

How fibre-optic cables function

Light guidance is based on the physical effect of total reflection, whereby light coupled into a glass fibre is repeatedly reflected back into the glass fibre from the boundary surface. The major advantage of this technology is that the light can be transported over long distances with almost no loss.

Fibre-optic sensors use this principle to bring the transmitted light to an inaccessible location and take up the reflected light again to return it to the sensor, mounted where more space is available. This technology, which can also be used for the detection of very small objects, is characterised by precision and reliability.



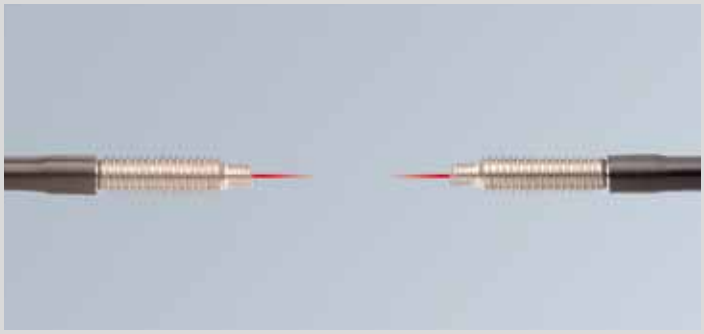
Light guidance in fibre-optic cable
The light is transported in the fibre-optic cable in an axial direction as a result of total reflection at the boundary surface between the sheath (2) and the core (1). The size of the limit angle of the total reflection (α_G) defines the acceptance angle of the fibre-optic cable (θ_{max}). Light hitting the face of the fibre at this or a smaller angle is transported in the fibre-optic cable.

Fibre-optic cable materials

Fibre-optic cables differ in the transmission material used – glass or plastic. SensoPart offers the so-called fibre material in both variants. Glass fibres are highly resistant to chemicals and high temperatures. Suitable metal or silicone sheath materials allow the use of glass fibres in harsh environmental and process conditions. Larger glass-fibre cross-sections offer high functional reserves and reliability, even in dusty and dirty environments.

Fibre-optic cables as through-beam photoelectric sensors

The transmission and receiver fibre-optic cables of through-beam photoelectric sensors run in two separate fibre-optic cables. Both fibre-optic cables are optically connected to the sensor via a coupling. Whereby one fibre-optic cable transports the transmission light from the sensor to the detection location while the other, opposite, fibre-optic cable transports the light back to the receiver. The sensor switches if the light path between the two facing fibre-optic cable heads is interrupted by an object. Relatively long ranges are achieved with through-beam photoelectric sensors.



The photoelectric sensor type
Transmitter cables and receiver cables are laid in two separate sheaths and are connected to the appropriate optical component of the sensor via a coupling.

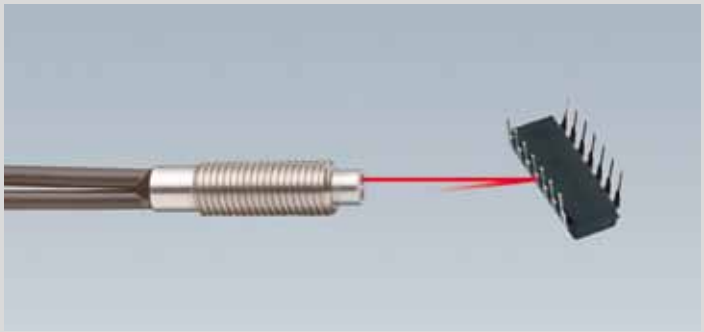
The fibre-optic cable as photoelectric proximity sensor

In the photoelectric proximity sensor variant, the transmitter and receiver cables are combined in one light exit sheath. While one of the fibre-optic cable strands is connected with the transmitter, the other strand transports the light reflected from the target object back to the sensor's receiver. The sensor switches.

The advantages of this cable arrangement lie in the very low space requirement and reduced mounting effort. The fibre-optic cable heads must be brought close to the target object because of the detection principle used. Expanded ranges can be achieved by using larger glass-fibre cross-sections.

Parallel vs. coaxial fibres

In the case of scanner fibre-optic cables, one also differentiates between two different fibre arrangements. In the standard design, the transmitter and receiver fibres run parallel, in coaxial fibre-optic cables the receiver fibres are arranged concentrically around the transmission fibres. When using supplementary optics for focusing (c.f. P. 498) the coaxial design offers application advantages, namely a smaller light spot, in particular, and thus improved small-part detection.



The photoelectric proximity sensor type
In photoelectric proximity sensor versions the transmission and receiver fibres are combined in a single cable and disgorge in a light exit sleeve.

The fibre-optic cable head – numerous different tips

Compact designs of machines and plant with extremely restricted spaces – access to the target objects is often difficult. But the heads of the fibre-optic cables are as varied as the tasks. Particularly fine or bendable fibre-optic cable heads and highly flexible fibre-optic cables provide access in these situations. Fibre-optic cable heads with a lateral light exit that deflect the light by 90° in the smallest of spaces provide assistance in restricted or blocked spaces, in particular. The use of fibre-optic cables together with appropriate cable heads provides flexibility with moving machine parts, low weight, and high impact and vibration resistance – ensuring trouble-free and reliable function.