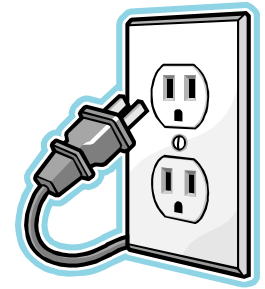


Connect the Circuit Safely!



Did you know that an extension cord is not “just an extension cord”? Did you know that if you use the wrong extension cord it could overheat and cause a fire? Do you know how to choose the correct cord for the job? Read on for information that could help to prevent a fire and keep your family safe!

Size or “Gauge” of a Cord Important

Not all extension cords are the same gauge. It is important to use the proper gauge for the appliance to prevent overheating and possible fire. Gauge is determined by the size (or weight) of the wire and how much wattage it can handle. It is measured by the American Wire Gauge (AWG) System, in which the larger the wire, the smaller the AWG number. For instance, a 12 gauge wire would be larger and can power larger wattage appliances than a 16 gauge cord. A 16 gauge cord, a typical household extension cord, is used for items like lamps, clock radios, etc. The size cord you should use is determined by the wattage used by the appliance. This information is almost always listed on the appliance or in the instruction manual that accompanies it.

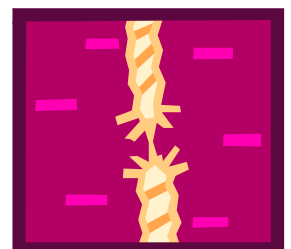


Some appliances indicate power usage in amps. If your appliance indicates that it uses 5 amps at 125 volts, then its wattage rating is 625W (5 x 125). If you are going to use more than one appliance on an extension cord, you must total the wattage for all the appliances to determine which gauge (size) cord you need.

Safety Tips for Extension Cord Usage

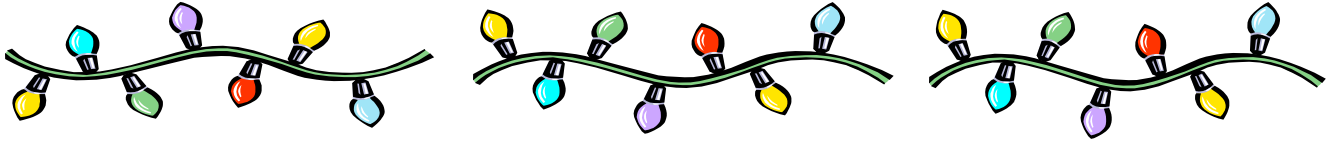
Keep these safety tips in mind when using extension cords.

- Purchase cords that have the UL mark on them—this means that samples of the cord have been tested for possible safety hazards.
- Determine if the cord will be used indoors or outdoors, and purchase one marked accordingly.
- Store all cords indoors when not in use.
- Never keep an extension cord plugged in when not in use—it will continue to conduct electricity until it is unplugged from the outlet.
- Never run an extension cord through puddles of water.
- Most newer, indoor cords with more than one outlet, have covers for the unused openings to keep children and pets safe.
- Do not use extension cords that are cut or damaged. Touching even a single exposed strand of wire can give you a shock or burn.
- Never file or cut the plug blades or grounding pin of an extension cord or appliance to plug it into an old outlet.
- Extension cords and most appliances have a polarized plug (one blade wider than the other) as a safety feature. If a plug does not fit in your receptacle, have an electrician install a new outlet.



Holiday Lights—Care and Handling

Maintain your holiday lights by inspecting them each year for frayed wires, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets and excessive kinking or wear before putting them up. Use only lighting listed by an approved testing laboratory like UL. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet. Do not link more than three light strands, unless the directions indicate it is safe. Make sure to periodically inspect the wires when they are in use—they should not be warm to the touch.



Home Electrical Fires

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, December is the most dangerous month for electrical fires. Fire deaths are highest in winter months which call for more indoor activities and an increase in lighting, heating, and appliance use. During a typical year, home electrical problems account for 67,800 fires, 485 deaths, 2,305 injuries and \$868 million in property losses.

Some of these fires are caused by electrical system failures and appliance defects, but many more are caused by the misuse and poor maintenance of electrical appliances, incorrectly installed wiring, overloaded circuits and extension cords, and running the cords under rugs or in high traffic areas. Most electrical fires are avoidable by following simple safety precautions.



Safety Precautions

- Check your electrical appliances and wiring regularly.
- Replace all worn, old or damaged appliance or extension cords immediately.
- Keep electrical appliances and cords away from wet floors and counters, especially in the bathroom and kitchen.
- When buying electrical appliances, as with extension cords, look for the UL label.
- Don't allow children to play with or around electrical appliances like space heaters, irons and hair dryers.
- Keep clothes, curtains and other combustible items at least three feet from all heaters.
- If an appliance has a three-prong plug, use it only in a three-slot outlet. Never force it to fit into a two-slot outlet or extension cord.
- Replace any tool, even if it causes only small electrical shocks, overheats, or shorts out or gives off smoke or sparks.



Safety Standards

Voluntary industry safety standards, including those of UL, now require that general use extension cords have safety closures, warning labels, rating information about the electrical current, and other added features for the protection of children and other consumers. Also, UL labeled extension cords now must be constructed with #16 gauge or larger wire, or be equipped with integral fuses. The #16 gauge wire is rated to carry up to 1560 watts. Previously, #18 gauge cords were used that were rated for up to 1200 watts.

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