

Electrical Safety Tips Anyone Can Follow

Being safe when using electrical appliances, extension cords, light bulbs and other equipment is easy, and safety tips should be included in household rules, homeschool fire safety and daily behavior expectations for all members of the family. It only takes one mistake to spark an electrical fire, but simple prevention measures can be effective solutions.

Appliances

Appliances are an integral part of every household, from a simple electric clock to the microwave oven to decorative holiday lights. These safety tips can help keep all appliances operating safely:

- Unplug unused appliances and stow cords safely out of reach of pets, young children or hazardous situations.
- Appliances that generate heat, such as clocks, televisions and computer monitors, should be given several inches of clearance all around for good air circulation and cooling. Do not drape clothes, toys or other items over warm appliances.
- Always follow appliance instructions carefully, and do not attempt amateur repairs or upgrades.
- Keep all electrical appliances away from water such as sinks, bathtubs, pools or overhead vents that may drip.
- Do not operate any electrical appliance with wet hands or while standing in water.
- Keep clothes, curtains, toys and other potentially combustible materials at least three feet away from radiators, space heaters, heating vents and other heat sources.

Cords

Every electrical appliance has a cord, and many homes use extension cords to increase the range of electrical outlets. These safety tips can help keep cords in good condition for safe operation.

- Check cords regularly for frays, cracks or kinks, including power tool cords, holiday lights and extension cords.
- Cords are not be jump ropes, clothes lines or leashes, and should never be used for anything other than their intended purpose.

- Cords should be firmly plugged into outlets - if the cord is loose and can pull out easily, choose a different, more snug outlet.
- Do not staple or nail cords in position at any time; if the cord does not remain where desired, use tape or twist ties to secure it.
- Cords should not be placed beneath rugs where they can become a trip hazard or where frays will not be noticeable. Furthermore, covering a cord will prevent it from keeping as cool as possible.
- Do not make modifications to a cord's plug at any time - do not clip off the third prong or attempt to file down a wider prong to fit in a different outlet.
- Extension cords are a temporary solution only and their use should be minimized whenever possible.
- Use the proper weight and length of extension cord for the appropriate task, and be sure the cord is rated for indoor or outdoor use, whichever is required.
- When unplugging a cord, pull on the cord at the outlet rather than tug on the cord itself.

Outlets

Every cord has to plug into an appropriate electrical outlet, but these tempting niches are inviting to unwelcome objects that can cause shorts and fires. Use these electrical safety tips at home to keep outlets safe.

- Block unused outlets by changing to a solid cover plate or using childproof caps.
- Do not overload outlets with multiple adaptors or power strips; relocate cords instead.
- Never put any object other than the appropriate size plug into an outlet.
- Install ground fault circuit interrupter outlets in potentially hazardous areas such as near pools, crawlspaces, kitchens, bathrooms and unfinished basements.
- Keep all outlets properly covered with secure plates that cover all wiring.

Light Bulbs

Light bulbs are the single most common electrical fixture in homes, and proper light bulb safety can keep them from becoming a common electrical hazard.

- Use bulbs that have the correct wattage requirements for each fixture -- using a higher wattage bulb can cause the fixture to overheat.

- Consider switching to more efficient compact fluorescent bulbs that provide the same level of light at a lower wattage level.
- Always screw bulbs in tightly; a loose bulb can cause sparks or shorts.
- Be sure to unplug or turn off a fixture completely before changing light bulbs.

Outdoors

It is important to also practice electrical safety when outside, since many electrical hazards can be found near homes and not just inside their walls.

- Keep trees pruned and away from power lines overhead as well as where the power lines approach the house.
- Do not fly kites, model aircraft or balloons near power lines.
- When using a ladder, carefully inspect the surrounding area to be sure it is free from power lines.
- Do not swim or play in water during an electrical storm, even if it is not raining.
- Do not approach a downed power line to see if it is live - it may give no signs that can be easily observed, but it is just as deadly. Contact the authorities immediately about downed lines.

Electrical Fire Safety Tips

When an electrical short or spark does happen, it is vital to understand what to do to prevent or put out an electrical fire to keep the damage and devastation from spreading.

- Call 911 or other appropriate emergency services immediately in case of electrical injury or fire.
- Never touch anyone who is being shocked; the shock can spread through body contact.
- Know where fuse boxes and circuit breakers are located as well as how to properly operate them.
- Never attempt electrical repairs or rewiring without proper certification and experience.
- Do not put water on an electrical fire; use a dry fire extinguisher or baking soda instead.

(Source: [http://safety.lovetoknow.com/Electrical Safety Tips at Home](http://safety.lovetoknow.com/Electrical_Safety_Tips_at_Home))