

Electrical tips on living together, safely.



If you need to find a registered electrician or for advice on electrical safety please visit our website at www.esc.org.uk or call 0870 040 0561

Do...

- ✓ report any problems with the electrical installation or appliances to your landlord straight away.
- ✓ use appliances according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✓ use an RCD when using electrical equipment outdoors.
- ✓ regularly check the condition of plugs, cables and extension leads.
- ✓ check that any adaptor used complies with British Standards and is adequately rated for the connected load.
- ✓ remove plugs from sockets carefully. Pulling out a plug by the cable puts a strain on the terminations which can be dangerous.

Don't...

- ✗ carry out DIY repairs on electrical installations or appliances.
- ✗ bring mains powered portable appliances into the bathroom.
- ✗ ignore worn flexes on appliances.
- ✗ use any electrical appliance with wet hands.
- ✗ use adaptors plugged into other adaptors.
- ✗ overload adaptors, particularly with high current appliances such as kettles, irons and heaters.



Look out for these danger signs when using appliances

- Frayed, cut or damaged leads.
- Cracked or damaged cases on plugs or appliances.
- Burn marks on plugs, leads or appliances.
- Blowing fuses.
- Loose cord grips in plugs or appliances.

If you notice any of the above danger signs, stop using the appliance and report the problem to your landlord straight away.



Tenant responsibilities

- Do not attempt to extend, repair or replace damaged or worn-out parts of the electrical installation yourself.
- Ensure all electrical appliances are used responsibly and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.
- Report any problems with the electrical installation or appliances to your landlord straight away.
- Allow access to the property should an electrician need to visit to carry out an inspection of the electrical installation/fix any reported problem.

If you have reported a problem to your landlord and they have refused to put the situation right or ignored your request, you should contact your local authority who will be able to assist you. Local authorities will ensure a landlord is meeting their legal obligations and can take enforcement action against them if they are found not to be.

Portable appliance testing (PAT)

- The safety of appliances you bring into your accommodation is your responsibility. If you are in any doubt as to the safety of an appliance get it tested or replaced.

Your landlord or college should have a system for inspecting and testing the portable equipment they provide.

What to look for in new accommodation

- An electrical report confirming that the electrical installation is safe for use (known as a Periodic Inspection Report).
- Certification confirming that any recent electrical work meets the UK national standard BS 7671 (Requirements for Electrical Installations).
- That sockets, switches and light fittings are in good condition with no signs of damage.
- That any appliances are provided with manufacturer's instructions, have up to date PAT test stickers on them (not required if appliance is new and has not been used before) and are in good working order.

Landlord responsibilities

Your landlord is required by law to ensure:

- that the electrical installation in a rented property is safe when a tenancy begins;
- that the electrical installation is maintained in a safe condition throughout the tenancy; and
- that any appliance provided is safe and has at least the CE marking (which is the manufacturer's claim that it meets all the requirements of European law).

In order to meet the above requirements your landlord will need to carry out regular basic safety checks to ensure that the electrical installation and appliances remain in good working order.

The Electrical Safety Council is an independent charity committed to reducing deaths and injuries through electrical accidents at home and at work.

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Don't leave mobile phones on charge for prolonged periods of time as chargers can overheat and could cause a fire.

Never retrieve toast stuck in a toaster whilst it is plugged in, and especially not with a metal knife—there are often live parts inside.

Never leave drinks or other liquids on or near electrical appliances such as a TV. If spilt, the liquid could drip into the appliance which could cause a fire, as well as giving you an electric shock.

Don't leave a laptop turned on and plugged in when not in use as it can overheat and cause a fire. Always turn it off as soon as you have finished using it and allow it to cool down.

Don't take electrical appliances such as a hairdryer or radio into the bathroom. Water carries electricity efficiently and when the two mix, the result can kill.

Don't use a bulb with a higher wattage than specified on the lamp. Using a bulb with a higher wattage than required for a light fitting will increase the risk of fire.

Don't leave TVs, video and DVD players and music systems on standby. By switching off all appliances when not in use you will not only save money on your electricity bill and conserve energy, but will reduce the risk of an electrical fire.

Don't trail flexible cables under carpets, rugs or across walkways. Not only are they a major trip hazard, but also a potential fire risk. Repeated stretching and treading on the cable may damage the cable insulation.

All electrical appliances and equipment which are used outdoors should be plugged into a socket protected by an RCD.
What is an RCD? An RCD is a Residual Current Device that switches off electricity automatically if it detects an earth fault.

Electricity can kill.
Government statistics show that over 15% of all fires in homes in England and Wales and 10% of all fires in Scotland are caused by electrical faults. In 2006, this resulted in 21 deaths and 1201 injuries. There were also 21 deaths and 2788 injuries caused by electric shocks in homes.

Don't overload sockets by plugging in more than one piece of electrical equipment at a time as this could cause overheating. If you do not have enough sockets and need to use an adaptor, use a bar adaptor which does not put pressure on the contacts in the socket.

Always make sure that straighteners are switched off and unplugged when not in use, left in a safe place and that the cable is not wound around the straighteners. This will reduce the risk of electrical fire. Take care when using straighteners as they can get hot very quickly and increase the risk of the user suffering burns.

Never drill holes or fix nails into walls or partitions without knowing what is hidden behind them. Walls and partitions conceal electrical cables and gas and water pipes. A cable and metal detector will help identify the presence of concealed cables and metal pipes.

Make sure you know where your Consumer Unit (fuse box) is located so you can reach it quickly in emergencies.
What is a consumer unit? A consumer unit is used to control and distribute electricity around the home. It usually contains a main switch (to turn electricity on/off), fuses or circuit breakers and one or more residual current devices (see RCD).

Don't try to force a Foreign 2-pin plug into a 3-pin socket as this can cause danger of electric shock or fire. Always use a convertor plug when using an appliance which has a foreign plug. Where possible this should be a short term solution and you should look to change to an appliance which has a British 3-pin plug.

But it's not all doom and gloom. By taking the simple steps highlighted here you can vastly reduce any risk to you and the people you live with.