



Temporary Means Temporary

Not enough cord for your lamp or radio to reach the nearest outlet? Just plowing through the junk drawer for an extension cord? This may not be a good idea. Extension cords can be very helpful in delivering power right where we need it. However, regardless of the gauge or rating of the cord, an extension cord is a **temporary solution**, not long-term extension of your household's electrical system.

With continuous use, the extension cord can more rapidly deteriorate, creating a potentially dangerous electric shock or fire hazard. Using extension cords properly is crucial to your safety; the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFi) suggests you follow these tips:

- Do not overload extension cords or allow them to run through water or snow on the ground.
- Do not substitute extension cords for permanent wiring.
- Do not run through walls, doorways, ceilings or floors. If cord is covered, heat cannot escape, which may result in a fire hazard.
- Do not use an extension cord for more than one appliance.
- A heavy reliance on extension cords is an indication that you have too few outlets to address your needs. Have additional outlets installed where you need them.
- Multiple plug outlets must be plugged directly into mounted electrical receptacles. They cannot be chained together.
- Make sure the extension cord or temporary power strip you use is rated for the products to be plugged in and is marked for either indoor or outdoor use.
- The appliance or tool that you are using the cord with will have a wattage rating on it. Match this up with your extension cord. Do not use a cord that has a lower rating.
- Replace No. 18 gauge cords with No. 16 gauge cords. Older extension cords using small (No. 18 gauge) wires will overheat at 15 amps or 20 amps.
- Never use a cord that feels hot or is damaged in any way. Touching even a single exposed strand can give you an electric shock or burn.
- Never use three-prong plugs with outlets that only have two slots for the plug. Don't cut off the ground pin to force a fit. This defeats the purpose of a three-prong plug and could lead to an electrical shock. Also, never force a plug into an outlet if it doesn't fit.
- Change the cord to a higher rated one or unplug some appliances, if the rating on the cord is exceeded because of the power requirements of one or more appliances being used on the cord.
- Use cords with polarized and/or three-prong plugs
- Buy only cords approved by an independent testing laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), ETL-SEMKO (ETL) or Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
- A ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) can be plugged or installed into an outlet to protect against electrical shock. GFCIs are products designed to prevent serious injury or death from electrical shock by detecting ground faults at very low levels.

If an extension cord is needed for a longer period of time, temporary power taps (multiple plug outlets) can be used when insufficient electrical receptacles are available. These devices may have 3 to 6 electrical receptacles, a circuit breaker, a 6-ft. to 15-ft. cord and a surge protector and should bear the mark of a certified testing organization.

GFCIs should be used in any area where water may come into contact with electrical products. GFCIs are now required by code in certain areas of the home, including unfinished basements, kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, garages, crawl spaces and around swimming pools.