

Using extension cords safely

Extension cords are handy for getting power where you need it—but if misused, they can create serious safety risks. Here's how to use them the right way:

Do's

- **Check the cord before you plug it in.** If the cord's insulation is cracked, frayed, or damaged, take it out of service right away.
- **Store cords properly.** Keep them in a dry, indoor place when not in use.
- **Match the ratings.** Make sure the cord's wattage rating meets or exceeds the tool you're using. (Pro tip: The lower the gauge number, the more power the cord can handle.)
- **Unplug the cord safely.** Always pull on the plug—not the cord—to disconnect.
- **Plan for length.** Longer cords carry less current than shorter ones with the same gauge. Use the right length for the job.

Don'ts

- **Use as permanent wiring.** If you're using the same cord for more than 30 days, it's time to look into a permanent solution.
- **Run cords through openings.** Avoid doorways, walls, ceilings, floors, or any holes where cords can get pinched or damaged.
- **Expose cords to traffic.** Never place them where vehicles, forklifts, or equipment might drive over them.
- **Remove the grounding prong.** It's there for your protection—don't mess with it.
- **Chain cords together.** Need more length? Use one cord that's the right size instead of plugging multiple together.

