

devices in
your dorm
room or
apartment,
rules which
may look like
they've been
created with
your maximum
inconvenience
in mind.

Oh, No!

Not
More
Rules!!!

Your college
has probably
given you
rules by the
hundreds...
maybe the
thousands.
Among them
are surely
rules on
electrical



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But take our word for it—these electrical rules do make sense. How do we know? We're the Electrical Safety Foundation International, and it's our job to warn you about getting shocked, starting a fire, or blowing out the electrical service to your entire building.

Here are a few facts that might surprise you:

A halogen lamp may reach temperatures hot enough to ignite curtains or blankets that are too close, or a towel you've inappropriately draped over the lamp. If your floor lamp has a 500W bulb in it, replacing it with a 300W bulb will help reduce hot temperatures. Make sure there is a wire mesh shield over the bulb/lens. Some colleges and schools have outlawed the use of halogen floor lamps. Floor lamps with fluorescent bulbs are approved because they run much cooler and use only a quarter of the energy.

Extension cords can short circuit, overheat and ignite if they are buried under carpet, if they have furniture resting on and pinching them, or if they are bunched up behind hot equipment. By the way, the same can happen if the extension cord is underrated—if there's more demand on it than it can handle.

Toaster ovens get hot enough on the outside to burn you and to ignite notebooks and loose papers they may come in contact with.

Hot plates—well, have you ever seen what happens to a saucepan if you allow the water to boil away? You may as well make sure your fire insurance premium is all paid up now.



Grounding prongs and polarized plugs (one wide blade, one narrow) can help to prevent shocks and electrocutions and prevent damage to your sensitive electronics. Never cut or trim the plug blades or the grounding prong. Doing so can result in severe injury to you and thousands of dollars of damage to your computer (or any equipment), leading to the electronic equivalent of "the dog ate my thesis." In rooms with old-fashioned two-prong outlets, you may need to use adaptors. Read and follow the instructions that come with the adaptor.

Overloading an outlet will cause a fuse to blow or a circuit breaker to open. This safety feature may prevent electrocution or fire. It will certainly annoy that really scary looking senior who just lost a year's worth of research data.

Electrical safety is quite simple. (1) Treat anything that plugs in as if it were an employee with a grudge—willing to work, but awaiting its chance to zap you. (2) Liquid and electricity don't mix: don't introduce them. (3) Appliances which heat (toaster and microwave ovens, hotplates, hair dryers, popcorn poppers, irons, coffee makers) use more electricity and are more likely to cause overloads than things that don't: if your school allows these, exercise special care. (4) Even a small motor in a fan or a mixer is probably stronger than your fingers: stop it and unplug it before you stick your hands in.

Many residence halls were built years ago, before every student arrived with a computer, CD player, microwave, refrigerator, wireless telephone, halogen study lamp, fan, and fax machine. Dorm wiring simply cannot handle the electrical load. And despite the tuition, your college isn't made of money: wasting electricity costs the school a lot and adds to pollution.

Note: Your room doesn't feel lonely when you aren't there—turn off lights, computer and the stereo when you leave.

Electrical safety isn't an exciting topic... until something bad happens. Pictures of burning dorms always make the evening news. Tetanus and measles can be defeated with inoculations, but shock, electrocution, and fire can only be overcome by continuous vigilance. So, before you plug it in or turn it on, ask yourself:



one

Is the circuit overloaded? [Remove something from the circuit.]

two

Is the appliance cord getting hot? [Turn everything off and get a service person to look at the suspect product.]

three

Are the fuses or circuit breakers opening repeatedly? [This is a symptom of a serious problem. Turn everything off and have the appliances examined by a certified service person. Never tamper with the fuse or circuit breaker.]



four

Are there frayed wires, exposed wires, or broken insulation anywhere? Broken plugs? [Throw away extension cords and have appliance cords replaced by someone trained to do it.]

five

Are there sparks when you turn something on? [Turn off, unplug, and get the item serviced.]

six

Does it meet the common sense rule? [If not, don't do it.]

Some Stats:

Amount of electricity used in one hour by:

55W fluorescent floor lamp _____	0.06 kWh
60 W incandescent desk lamp _____	0.06 kWh
300 W quartz halogen lamp _____	0.30 kWh

Temperatures achieved by electrical products:

55W fluorescent floor lamp _____	200° F
60 W incandescent desk lamp _____	260° F
300 W quartz halogen lamp _____	970° F

U.S. dorm, fraternity house, and sorority house fires (average per year, '94-'98) _____ 1,570

Damages estimated from these fires (average per year, '94-'98) _____ \$9.1 million

Injuries and deaths estimated from these fires (average per year, '94-'98) _____ 75

All estimates from National Fire Protection Association, Fire Analysis and Research Division, Special Data Information Package, Dormitories and Fraternity and Sorority Houses, Quincy, MA 2001.

