

Guide for **consumers** when ordering domestic electrical work

This guide has been produced to help you when you want electrical installation work carried out in your home.

Within the guide you will find general tips and advice as well as a quotation request. The quotation request is for you to complete and pass to an electrician so they will know what electrical work you want them to quote for.

The benefits of using the quotation request are:

- You can provide it to more than one electrician so you can compare quotes.
- The electrician will know exactly what electrical work you want carried out and why.
- The electrician is aware in advance of any special instructions.
- The electrician will be able to give you options if there is more than one way of providing the work you want done.
- Once you have agreed a quote you can ask the electrician to sign the bottom of the quotation request as confirmation of what has been agreed.
- The quotation request could help to avoid a dispute because both you and the electrician are clear on what work has been ordered.

Consumer tips & advice

You may wish to consider the following advice when choosing an electrician.

- Be clear about the work you want done and, unless the work is minor, obtain at least three written quotations.
- Check that the electrician is approved by a reputable body or registered with a government-approved scheme. Details can be found on our website at www.esc.org.uk.
- Ask for references and check they have public liability insurance of at least £2 million.
- All electrical installation work should be carried out by a competent, electrically trained, person and the work should meet BS 7671 (IEE Wiring Regulations). On completion of the work, a detailed certificate, confirming the work meets with this safety standard, should be issued to you.

- Check whether any new electrical work you need doing comes under the requirements of the Building Regulations for your area. If it does, then you should either use an electrician registered with a government-approved scheme who will take care of everything on your behalf or notify your local authority **before** the work is started. (Please note that the Building Regulations in England & Wales are different to those in Scotland. Also there are no Building Regulations for domestic electrical work in Northern Ireland. You can find more information on our website at www.esc.org.uk.)

10 rogue electrician warning signs

The rogue electrician:

1. Avoids giving references.
2. Only supplies a mobile no. and gives no address on their letterhead/business card.
3. Will do the job 'cheaper for cash' on the grounds that the customer avoids paying the VAT.
4. Says they can start tomorrow - a registered electrician is usually booked up well in advance.
5. Will not confirm anything in writing.
6. Tells the customer they are approved by an organisation when they are not.
7. Tells the customer not to worry about the details of the job.
8. Confuses the customer with jargon and complicated explanations.
9. Cannot give a specific cost for materials or labour but asks for money upfront.
10. Provides a quote that is surprisingly low - if something sounds too good to be true, it usually is!



For more advice or guidance, contact Consumer Direct, the government-funded telephone and on-line service. Consumer Direct provides clear and practical advice to help consumers sort out problems and disagreements with suppliers of goods and services; you can contact them on **08454 040506**.

Details of domestic electrical installation work

All electrical installation work must be carried out to BS 7671 (IEE Wiring Regulations) and certificated on completion.

Description of work:

Continued on separate attached page(s)

If needed, please indicate the total numbers of fittings, switches and sockets you want for each location, in the table below. Please note that there may be requirements under the Building Regulations on the minimum number and type of fittings installed.

Location	Number of light fittings		Number of light switches	Number of sockets	
	<i>Ceiling</i>	<i>Wall</i>		<i>Single</i>	<i>Twin</i>
Hall					
Reception 1					
Study					
Dining					
Kitchen					
Utility					
Cloakroom					
Landing					
Bedroom 1					
Bedroom 2					
Bedroom 3					
Bedroom 4					
Bathroom 1*					
Loft					
External					
Garage					
Other					
Other					
Other					

* Sockets are only allowed in the bathroom if they can be fitted at least 3 metres from the bath or shower.

List of items to be provided by customer such as specialist light fittings:

Jargon buster

Accessory – switches, sockets, ceiling roses etc.

BS 7671 – the UK national safety standard for electrical installation work.

Capping – a thin metal or plastic shaped channel sometimes used to contain cables when fixed to a wall before plastering. Capping is used to make it easy to run several cables following the same route with the minimum use of fixings. It does not provide protection against damage from nails or screws.

Chasing – making slots or grooves into walls in order to allow the installation of cables or wiring systems. Chasing causes a lot of disruption, noise and dust and once completed will require making good (see *Making good*). In Scotland, chases are known as raggles.

Consumer unit – a consumer unit or fusebox is used to control and distribute electricity around the home. It usually contains a main switch, fuses or circuit breakers and one or more residual current devices (see *RCD*).

Earthing – the purpose of earthing is to minimise the risk of receiving an electric shock if touching metal parts when a fault is present. This is achieved by providing a path for fault current to flow safely to earth, which would also cause the protective device (MCB, fuses) to disconnect the circuit removing the danger. The electrician will check that the earthing and bonding is satisfactory before starting any work.

Electrical installation certificate – a safety certificate issued by the electrician on completion of a new electrical installation, or changes to an existing electrical installation. The certificate confirms that the installation has been designed, built, inspected and tested to the UK national standard BS 7671.

Flush fitted – electrical accessories such as switches or sockets installed so that their back boxes are contained in a wall, floor or ceiling and only the front plates are visible. Flush fitting is more aesthetically pleasing but usually involves chasing (see *Chasing*).

Fusebox – see consumer unit

Fused connection unit – enables electricity to be supplied to an item of equipment or appliance providing its own method of circuit protection (by fuse), and sometimes includes a switch. Fused connection units are sometimes referred to in the electrical trade as fused spurs (see *Spur*).

Main bonding – connecting metal pipes (gas, water or oil) entering premises to the main earthing terminal of the electrical installation via low resistance conductors.

Making good – restoring the finish of a wall or ceiling that has been damaged and replacing floorboards which have been lifted during the electrical installation work. Usually does not cover full redecoration, but will be the filling in of chases (see *Chasing*) and holes. You may agree with the electrician to leave the making good of walls and ceilings to another person such as a plasterer.

MCB – Miniature circuit-breaker (commonly known as a circuit-breaker). An automatic protective device fitted in the consumer unit which will disconnect a circuit if there is a fault or overload.

Mini trunking – a plastic enclosure having one removable side that is used to install cables on the surface of walls and ceilings.

Minor works certificate – a safety certificate (see *Electrical installation certificate*) used when only an addition or alteration is made to an electrical installation and no new circuits have been added.

Partial rewire – a common situation where it has not been possible or necessary to fully rewire (see *Rewire*) the electrical installation. For example when cabling has been confirmed as being suitable for continued use to minimise the degree of damage and disruption to the decoration. Or where only a part of an installation has suffered damage from a burst water pipe or similar. If you are considering a partial rewire or it is offered to you as an option by an electrician it is very important that you agree and understand exactly what work is and is not being done before the work starts.

Part P – the specific section of the Building Regulations for England and Wales which relates to electrical installations in domestic properties.

Periodic inspection report (PIR) – a report on the condition of an existing electrical installation. Containing an overall assessment of the safety of the installation, observations on its condition, and a number of recommendations (in order of priority) for actions, if any required, to restore the installation to a satisfactory condition for continued service.

RCD – Residual current device. This is a sensitive switching device that trips a circuit when an earth fault is detected. RCD protection is particularly important for socket circuits that may be used to supply portable equipment for use outdoors. .

Rewire – the process of installing new cables, circuits and accessories and carrying out the inspection and testing before putting the installation into service. A full rewire should mean that all parts of the electrical installation are new. However you may wish for items such as switches and light fittings to be re-used and the electrician may wish to re-use a part of the installation which is electrically sound, due to it being difficult to remove and replace. It is very important that you agree and understand with the electrician exactly what work is, and is not, being done before the work starts (see *Partial rewire*).

Scottish Building Standards – responsible for the implementation of the Building Regulations in Scotland

Spur – an additional connection often taken from an existing accessory such as a socket. It may provide a supply to a new socket or a fused connection unit (see *Fused connection unit*).

Supplementary bonding – the connecting together of the metal parts of electrical equipment (such as a heated towel rail) and the metal parts of a non-electrical item (such as pipes) to prevent a dangerous voltage between them, if a fault occurs. May be required in bath and shower rooms.

Surface mounted – this is where wiring or electrical accessories such as switches or sockets are installed so that they are on top of the surface or front of a wall, floor or ceiling. This causes less disruption to the decoration but is not as aesthetically pleasing as flush fitting (see *Flush fitted*).



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

We are supported by all sectors of the electrical industry as well as local and central government and work to promote safety and good practice.



The Institution of Engineering and Technology

plays a key role in the electrical installation industry in terms of standards and safety, and is known for its

independent and trusted voice in this sector. It publishes the standard BS 7671 – commonly known as the IEE Wiring Regulations.

