

# 6 Reasons To Replace a Bad Electrical Outlet

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Even though we use electrical outlets every day for so many essential functions, electrical outlet problems in a home are very often overlooked. Most people only notice what's happening with an outlet if it stops working. But, it is crucial to be aware of issues in outlets *before* they worsen to the point that they put people and property at risk of a house fire. Below are some of the most common signs to help you know when to replace electrical outlets in your home.

## When To Replace An Outlet

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Three good ways to determine whether you need to replace an outlet are checking for indicators you can see, smell, or feel, or functional issues, or outdated technology:

### **The outlet has discolored or melted plastic.**

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This kind of discoloration is caused by heat. You should inspect all the outlets in your home routinely. Outlets with discolored or melted plastic are serious warning signs that they may be short-circuiting or malfunctioning in some other way. It could be due to a damaged or burned wire on the inside.

This can result from improper use or installation. Do not try to use an outlet that is discolored or has melted plastic. Shut down the power going to the outlet at the breaker panel and have the outlet examined by a certified electrician.

## **When you plug in an appliance, the outlet smokes, sparks, or smells like it's burning.**

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If one of these problems listed above occurs when you plug in an electrical item, it means you need to have an outlet and wiring inspection urgently. The outlet may have a short circuit or may be getting exposed to water. If the outlet makes a popping or crackling noise, this indicates a very high risk of fire. Shut down electricity going to the outlet at the breaker panel and inspect the outlet by a certified electrician.

## **The covering of the outlet feels hot.**

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An outlet that feels hot around the contact openings or on the cover plate when you touch it is showing a clear sign of a potentially dangerous electrical outlet problem. There may be a damaged, loose, or worn wire. A hot electrical outlet is a fire hazard that can lead to a house fire.

## **When you insert a plug, it falls out of the outlet.**

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When the slots inside the contact openings of electrical outlets are too loose and various appliance plugs keep falling out when you plug them in, that means the outlets are worn. The faulty connections that result inside worn outlets may cause electrical arcing that can result in a house fire. Plugs falling out of electrical outlets present a house fire risk. You should promptly replace those.

## **The outlet has openings for just two-prong plugs.**

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Electrical outlets that do not have three contact openings are not grounded outlets. Outlets with only two contact openings present a shock risk and should be replaced. The usefulness of two-prong outlets is also much more limited because they prevent you from plugging-in appliances that have the ground prong (the third prong). The ungrounded outlets cause your home electronics to be at high risk of irreparable damage.

## **The GFCI outlet does not trip as designed.**

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GFCI outlets should be tested every month or several times per year at a minimum. Test your GFCI outlets by pressing the TEST button on the outlet.

- **TEST:** If the outlets do have electricity coming into them but don't trip the breaker when the TEST button is pushed, that means they are not protecting your family and home. You should replace those outlets promptly.
- **RESET:** If the breaker *does* trip when tested, but pressing the RESET button does not restore electricity to the outlet, the unit is defective and should be replaced.

GFCI outlets have a lifespan of only around ten years and only five years in regions with frequent electrical storms and/or power surges through the supply lines.

## **Other Reasons To Replace Electrical Outlets**

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Even if there are no signs of a bad outlet in your home, there are other reasons it may be time to replace outlets with upgraded models. Today's improved outlet technology delivers some significant benefits compared to older versions:

- *Improved Safety:* Replacing electrical outlets in an old house with new outlet models is an important fire safety upgrade. For example:
  - Recessed Outlets: These protect against plugs hanging from the wall out into the living space.
  - Pop-Up Outlets: These keep electrical cords from causing safety risks to children and pets and prevent them from dangling in high-use countertop workspaces.
- *Improved Efficiency:* Today's Wi-Fi power outlets allow you to monitor and operate your home's electrical outlets remotely. So, if you forget to turn off the oven or the clothes iron, you can shut them off from anywhere!
- *Saved Space:* USB outlets expand your home's capacity to accommodate more chargers, more electronics, more table-top appliances, etc., remotely without resorting to using numerous power strips.

## **For Outlet Replacements In NJ, Contact DK Electrical**

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**For an in-home estimate, call DK Electrical Solutions, Southampton, NJ, at (609) 604-5347, or use our online form to request information or schedule an appointment for service.**

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