

Jargon buster

For all those who don't speak fluent "sparky", NICEIC's explanation of common electrical terms will prevent misunderstandings with your electrician.

Whether your whole house needs rewiring, or you just want to have a new socket fitted, or new spotlights installed, it helps to know the difference between an RCD and a ring main, or if you want your wiring in trunking or chased.

If the technical terms that flow from your electrician's mouth go straight over your head, read on. Our quick translation will help you avoid any misunderstandings.

British Standard BS 7671: The UK national safety standard for electrical installation work. Sometimes known as the IEE (Institution of Electrical Engineers) Wiring Regulations. All NICEIC registered electricians are assessed to check that they understand and comply with the national safety standard.

Capping: A thin metal or plastic channel sometimes used to contain cables when fixed within a wall before plastering. Capping makes it easy to run several cables along the same route with the minimum use of fixings. It also provides protection against trowels used in plastering. It does not provide protection against damage from nails or screws.

Chasing: Drilling a groove or channel into a wall in order to allow the installation of cables or wiring system (e.g. for a plasma screen). The wall should be made good, i.e. replastered, once the electrical work is done. In Scotland chases are known as "raggles".

Circuit: An assembly of electrical sockets, lighting points and light switches. Power is supplied, flows through the light or other item of equipment, and returns to the point of origin (see Ring main), and all elements on the circuit are protected by the same protective device(s) i.e. circuit-breaker or RCD

Circuit-breaker: An automatically-operated electrical switch designed to protect an electrical circuit from damage caused by power overload or short-circuit. Unlike a fuse, which operates once and then has to be replaced, a circuit-breaker can be reset (either manually or automatically) to resume normal operation.

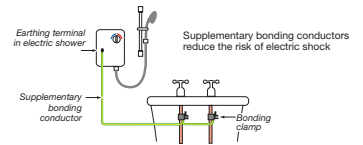
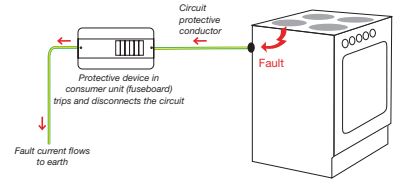


Consumer unit: Also known as a fusebox, consumer control unit or electricity control unit. This is a particular type of power distribution unit used to control and distribute electricity around the home. It will usually contain a main switch, one or more fuses, circuit-breakers, and RCDs.

Earthing and Bonding: The purpose of earthing is to minimise the risk of receiving an electric shock if touching metal when a fault is present. Earthing allows a fault to operate the circuit-breaker or RCD and so clear the danger.

Bonding is used to connect metallic parts to minimize the voltage between them when there is a fault. Main bonding is carried out by connecting incoming metalwork, eg gas and water pipes, to the main earth in your consumer unit.

Supplementary bonding is used in locations of higher risk, eg bathrooms, to connect metal pipes and earths of electrical circuits within that location.



Electrical installation certificate: The certificate that confirms that an electrical installation has been designed, built, inspected and tested to the UK national standard BS7671. This safety certificate will be issued by an NICEIC registered electrician on completion of a new electrical installation.

Flush fitted: The installation of electrical switches or sockets so that their back boxes are contained within a wall, ceiling or floor with only the front plate visible. Flush fitting looks neater than installing these fittings on the surface, but usually involves chasing and making good.

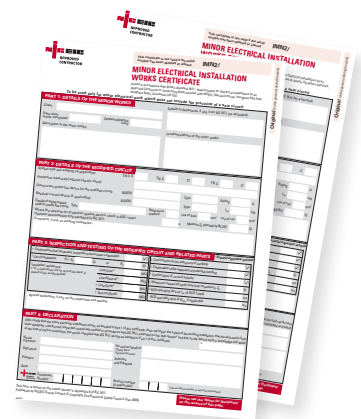
Fuse box: See Consumer unit.

Making good: Restoring the finish of a wall or ceiling that has been damaged, and replacing floorboards which have been lifted during electrical installation work. Usually does not cover full redecoration, but the filling in of chases and holes.

Mini-trunking: Plastic enclosure having one removable side that is used to install cables on the surface of walls and ceilings.

Minor works certificate: Similar to an Electrical installation certificate, but issued only when an addition or alteration is made to an electrical installation and no new circuits have been added.

Overcurrent: An electrical current that exceeds the maximum limit of a circuit (measured in amps). This may damage insulation within the cables and lead to the risk of fire or electric shock.



Part P: The specific section of the Building Regulations for England and Wales that relates to electrical installations in domestic properties. Part P provides safety regulations to protect householders, and requires most domestic electrical work to be carried out by government-registered electricians, or to be inspected by Building Control officers.

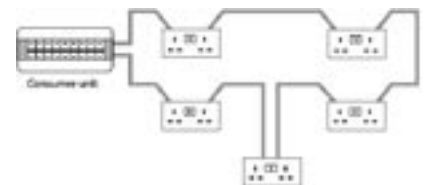
Periodic Inspection Report (PIR): A report on the condition of your property's existing electrical installation, containing an overall assessment of the safety of the installation, observations on its condition, and recommendations, in order of priority, of any work required to upgrade or restore the installation to a satisfactory working condition.

Residual current device (RCD): A sensitive safety device that trips a circuit when an earth fault is detected to stop the power supply, and thus protect against electric shock. RCD protection is particularly important for socket circuits that may be used to supply portable equipment for outdoor use (such as lawnmowers).

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. A partial rewire, where some cabling has been confirmed as suitable for continued use, whilst other cabling is replaced, is also possible – but make sure you agree and understand with your electrician exactly what work is, and is not, being carried out before work starts.

Ring main: This is the usual type of circuit used to supply sockets. A flat twin and earth cable runs from the consumer unit to the first outlet. From there it continues to the next and so on until the last outlet. From here, the cable continues back to the consumer unit once more, where it connects to the same terminals as the cable at the beginning. This may seem odd, but in fact it provides for a reduced loading on the cables.

Spur: An additional connection, often taken from an existing socket, to provide a supply to a new socket.



Where to find a reliable electrician?

NICEIC maintains a list of around 24,000 approved electrical contractors and domestic installers. Find one in your area by calling **0870 013 0382** or visit www.findanelectrician.info

For extra peace of mind, all work carried out by NICEIC Domestic Installers is covered by an automatic warranty, which lasts for a period of six years from the date of completion, and provides added protection for homeowners.

