



Glossary of Electrical Terms

Ampere	Unit of measurement of the amount of electrical current in a circuit.
Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter (AFCI)	A device designed to reduce the risk of fire by shutting off the circuit during an arc-fault (short).
Circuit	A branch of the main electrical system that brings power to areas of the home, for appliances, lights and outlets.
Circuit Breaker	A switch that senses overload on a circuit and automatically shuts it off to prevent overheating or over-current.
Conductor	Any material, such as wire, that will carry current.
Distribution Panel	Where branch circuits distribute electricity and circuit breakers or fuses allow individual circuits to be turned off as well as serve as overload protection.
Electricity	The result of electrons flowing through a conductor.
Fuse	A non-mechanical device designed to sense and accidental overload in a circuit and interrupt the flow of electrical current. There are screw-in and cartridge fuses.
Grounding	A system to protect people and equipment from the harmful effects of voltage surges (e.g. lightning) or electricity out of its intended path (e.g. damaged equipment). It consists of extra conductors within the system, as well as a connection between these conductors and the earth.
Ground-Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI)	A device designed to reduce the risk of shock or electrocution by shutting off the circuit when it senses electricity leaking outside its intended circuit.
Insulator	Any material that inhibits the flow of electrons.
Overload	A condition caused when the circuits or conductors carry ore current than designed to carry, leading to over-heating and possible fires.
Polarity	The correct flow of electricity, which is achieved when the hot and neutral wires of the power supply circuit are connected to the corresponding hot and neutral wires of an appliance or outlet.
Reversed Polarity	A potential hazardous condition in which the hot and neutral wires are reversed or incorrectly connected, thereby allowing voltage to be present even when equipment is switched off.
Service Entrance	Conductors and equipment connecting the utility company's service to the home's main service disconnect.
Short Circuit	The condition that exists when a hot wire comes in contact with a neutral or grounded wired or grounded conductor within a circuit. It should cause the fuse to blow or circuit breaker to switch off.
Volt	The unit of electrical force used to measure the "pressure" with which electricity is pushed through a conductor.
Watt	The unit by which electrical power consumption is measured. It is calculated by multiplying the voltage of a circuit by the number of amperes being used by the appliance or fixture. Utility companies use watts for billing.

[Click here to order a electrical or full home inspection](#)