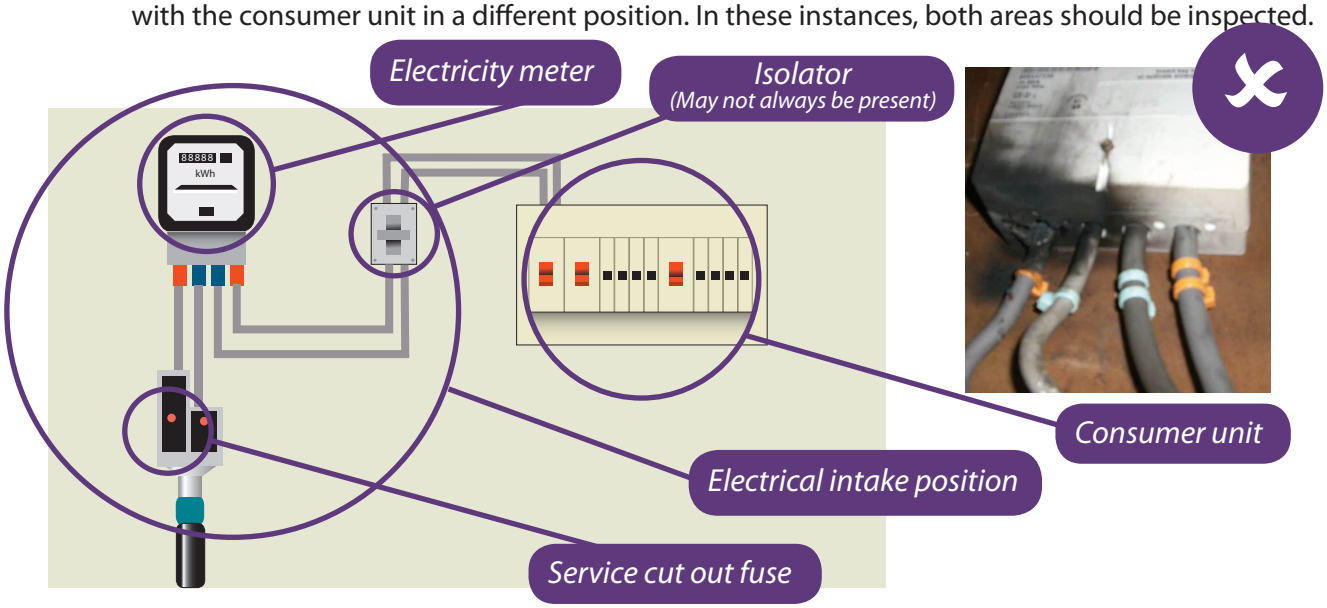
Visual Electrical Guidance

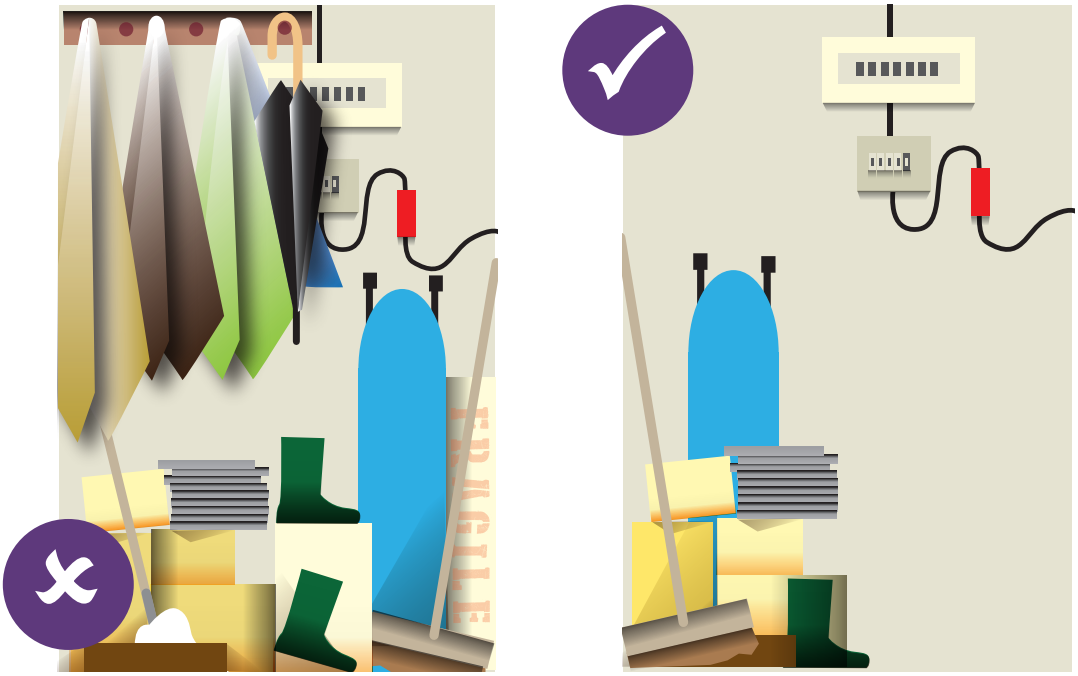
Guidance notes for the Visual Electrical Checklist

1 Meter equipment

A The intake position refers to the electrical equipment and wiring at the point where electricity enters your property. It consists of the supply cut out fuse, meter and consumer unit. Look for the thick cabling and boxes that link your electricity meter to the external power grid, as displayed in the image below. This will usually be located inside the house, near the electricity meter and consumer unit. However, sometimes the electricity meter and service cut out fuse are located in a box outside, with the consumer unit in a different position. In these instances, both areas should be inspected.



B Overheating in this area can pose a significant fire risk. To avoid this, it is important that it is not boxed-in or obstructed, and that it is checked annually for signs of burning. The risk of fire is increased if materials are stored within close proximity. This is because the clutter may damage electrical equipment if knocked over, prevent heat from dissipating or, if combustible, contribute to the development and spread of a fire.



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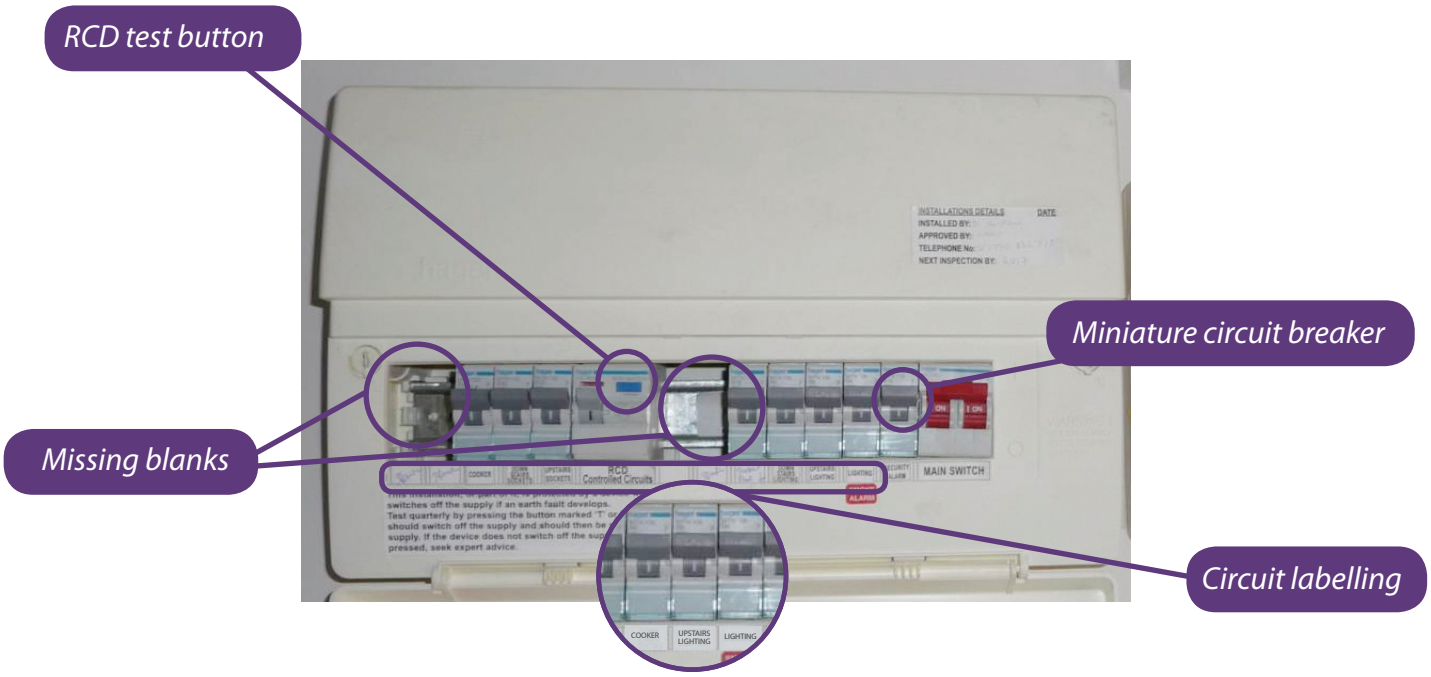
2 Consumer unit (fuse box)

A Blanks are plastic covers that occupy spaces in a consumer unit which would otherwise be filled by small switches (miniature circuit breakers or equivalent). The absence of blanks means live conductive parts may be exposed in the unblocked space. This is particularly dangerous if children are able to gain access to the unit.

B It should be made clear which parts of the house the miniature circuit breakers (MCBs) in your consumer unit protect. If they are not correctly labelled, a tenant doing DIY could mistakenly believe that they have safely turned off the power to a certain circuit, when they are in fact working live. Labels can be as simple as a written note under the MCB but should not be easily removed or obscured. You can check that they are correct by turning them to the off position one by one, checking that the power has been switched off to the circuit indicated on each label.

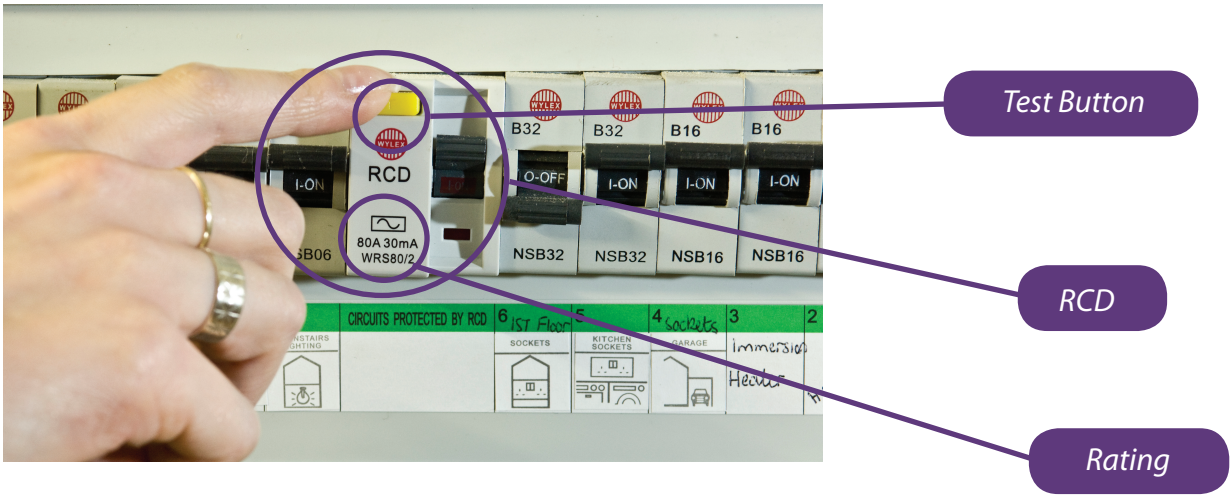


C Electrical burning smells and visual signs of damage will alert you to potentially immediate fire hazards. Electrical burning can sometimes be identified by what some describe as a fishy odour. Burning can be caused by loose wire terminations, inappropriate wiring and components or overloading sockets. Visually, burn marks on accessories such as plug sockets are also warning signs *(see Fixtures and Fittings for a visual example)*.

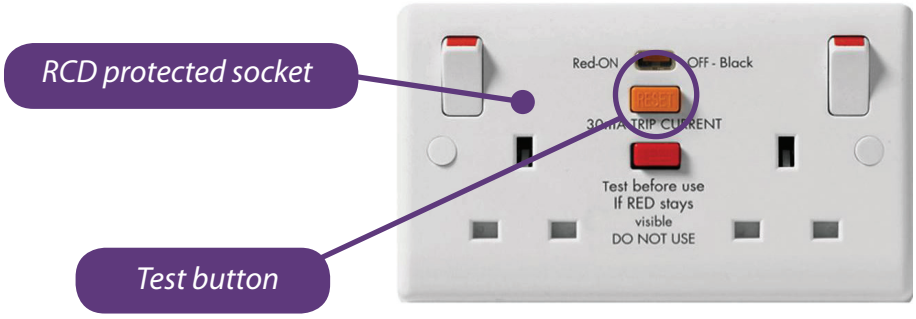
3 Residual Current Device (RCD, RCBO, RCCB)

A 30mA rated RCDs (or equivalent) are designed to prevent fatal electric shocks by switching off the power to circuits affected by abnormal current fluctuations. They also provide protection against electrical fires. Please note that 30mA may be written as 0.03. Normally identifiable by the presence of a pushbutton marked 'T' or 'Test', they are often located in your consumer unit. All residual current protection in domestic properties must be 30mA rated, in line with the British Wiring Regulations, in order to protect against electrocution. The 30mA rating should be clearly displayed on the front of the RCD (or equivalent). If you don't have an RCD, or you can't identify the correct rating, it is strongly advised that you have a 30mA device installed by a competent, registered electrician*.

B If you already have one or more RCDs, you should operate the test button of each device quarterly to indicate whether they are working properly. If the button does not switch off the equipment as identified (for example causing the lights to go out temporarily) the device may not be functioning correctly and you should contact a competent, registered electrician* as soon as possible.



C RCD protection on all circuits is recommended and you should consider contacting a competent, registered electrician* if you have reason to believe that all circuits are not currently covered.



D If you are made aware that an RCD is tripping frequently, it may also be because of inappropriate or faulty appliance and/or fixtures and fittings are being used or faulty wiring is present. It may also be because the RCD itself is faulty. You can carry out basic fault finding by checking whether the RCD trips when a particular appliance is used. If it does, it is likely that the appliance is faulty and you should replace it as soon as possible. If you are unable to identify an appliance as the cause, you should contact a competent, registered electrician* as soon as possible.

** Competent, registered electricians can be found at www.electricalcompetentperson.co.uk*

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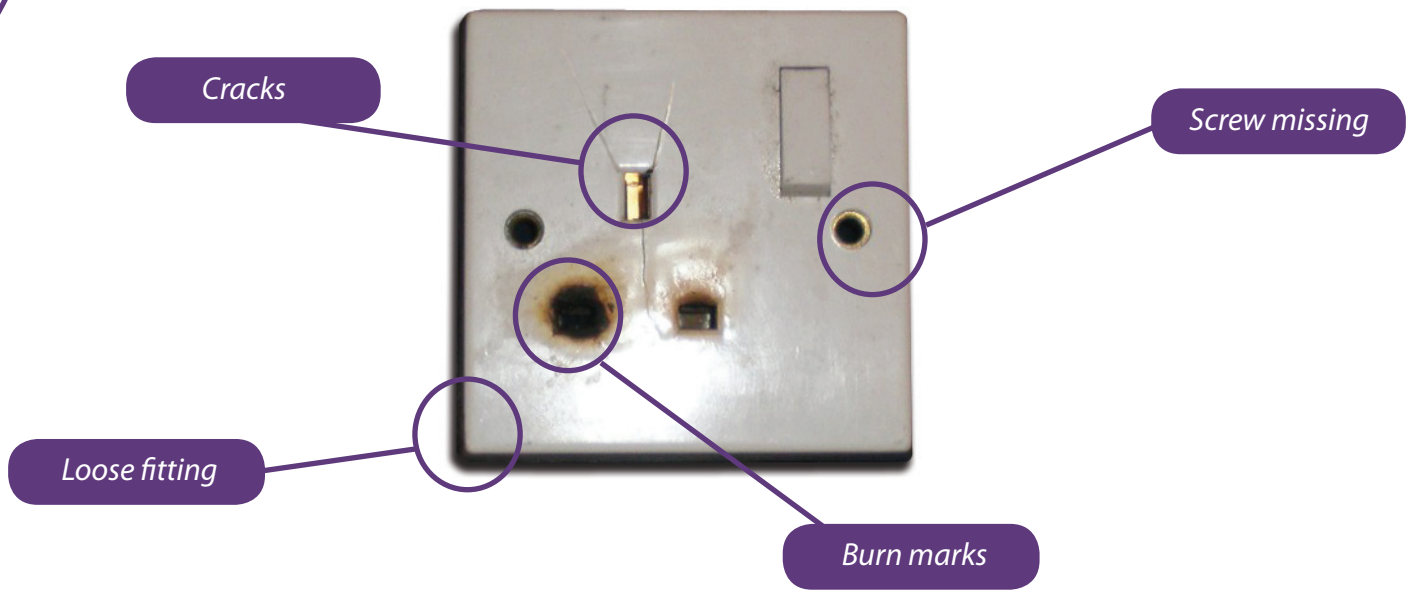
4 Fixtures and Fittings

A All electrical fixtures and fittings should be fixed and secure at all available points (i.e. screws) and free from damage (including burn marks). If you find any indication of damage or burning, you should contact a competent, registered electrician as soon as possible.*



B Socket-outlets can be checked using a socket-outlet test device. Although not able to indicate all electrical faults, socket-outlet test devices can be used to indicate socket functionality and provide a useful indication of safety in-between full Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR). An EICR is recommended to be carried out every 5 years, or within the time frame determined by a registered electrical installer.

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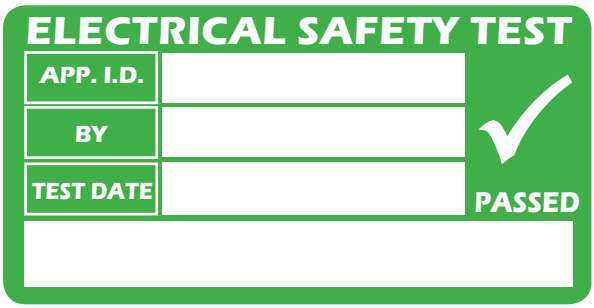
Fall Prevention Checklist

5 Appliances

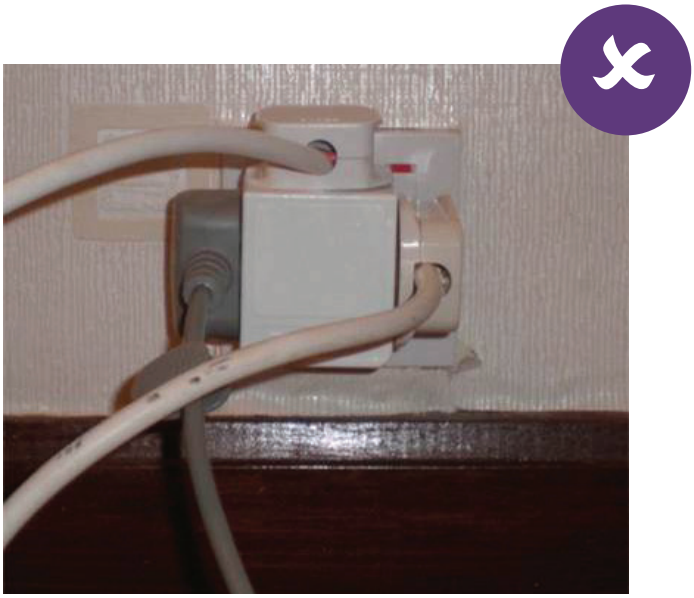
A Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) involves a competent tester making visual and physical checks to ensure the safety of electrical appliances and equipment. The tester who carries them out will help you to confirm the ongoing electrical safety of the appliances in the property you let and should label the appliance with a sticker like the one shown below.

This should contain information such as contact details for the tester responsible, an identification code and when the appliance was tested.

Portable appliance testers should be competent and provide you with a schedule of appliances with recommended test periods in line with a risk assessment which they have carried out. It is advised you keep a copy of this schedule for your records.



B Overloading sockets with appliances that draw a lot of current, such as toasters and kettles, can cause adapters to heat up and catch fire, even if you only use a single adaptor. It is advisable to contact a competent, registered electrician to install additional socket points if adapters are in use.*



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