

Safeguard Your Investment with Surge Protectors

So you've done all the research on today's television technologies, you've spent the time to comparison shop for the best TV to meet your home entertainment needs, and you've purchased a high-quality television stand to display and support your brand-new screen—but what are you doing to protect your cutting-edge media investment?

If the answer is “nothing,” you may want to consider looking into a surge protector. The most obvious purpose of a surge protector is to provide an all-purpose power source for multiple electronic components. This allows you to plug your TV, DVD player, stereo receiver, PC, and any other modules into one universal outlet, eliminating the messy tangles of extension cords from snaking around the room. But the more important function of surge protectors is to safeguard your electronic components from sudden surges in power.

What's a Power Surge?

To ensure safety and prevent the threat of fire, all electronic components are supposed to adhere to a standard power voltage of 120 volts or less. When the voltage rises higher than 120, it causes an imbalance of electrical pressure within the wiring of the component, which heats up and effectively burns the inside of the wire. In the event of a one-time, extremely high power surge, you may see an immediate breakdown of your television equipment. For lower, sustained surges, the impact may be more subtle, gradually wearing down the circuitry of your components until they eventually stop performing.

How Do Surge Protectors Work?

In the event of a sudden spike in voltage, surge protectors receive a signal that lets them know it's time to do their job. They effectively soak up the extra power before it can travel down the wire and infiltrate the electronic components. They're not all-powerful, though—like most electronic equipment, there are different levels of surge protectors with differing capacities. When it's reached its threshold for voltage absorption, a protector will need to be replaced with a new one.

What to Look For in a Surge Protector

With so many surge protectors on the market, it can be difficult to determine which is right for you. For optimum protection of your television and media equipment, follow the below guidelines. (And don't be fooled by the misconception that standard power strips provide surge protection—that's simply not the case.)

Price: As with most electrical equipment, you get what you pay for with surge protectors. You most likely won't get reliable protection for anything under \$10 or \$20.

UL Rating: Effective surge protectors will have a UL rating from Underwriters Laboratories, a non-profit agency that specializes in safety testing of electronic equipment. Although a UL rating isn't an absolute guarantee of quality, it does prove that the unit met a minimum standard of safety. Verify that the UL rating lists the surge protector as a transient voltage surge suppressor, which is a UL-1449 rating.

On-Off Switch: You should have the ability to shut off power to all electronic components at once.

Notification: When a power surge has been detected, an effective surge protector should indicate the occurrence with a blinking light, alarm, or some other manifest signal.

Quick Response: To ensure protection of your electronic devices, a surge protector should respond within 10 nanoseconds of detection of the surge.

Other Specifications: Look for a clamping voltage of 330 or lower (indicates at what level the protector begins blocking the surge) and a joule rating of 400 or higher (indicates the device's absorption ability).