

Which way is UP for electrical outlets?

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Mrya from Mt. Pearl Newfoundland writes: Which way is the right way for our electrical outlet? This is the reason for asking. I now have an apartment in my sons house which was finished in the last twelve months. The house itself is not a new one. Anyway, I bought one of those plug in lights with a sensor on it. This was for my entrance as I have two steps down and it would be ideal for coming in in the evenings, but when I plugged it in it was upside down and it didn't work to shine on my two steps. I checked my sons outlets and they are the other way up. So I contacted the builder and asked them why they had put all my electrical plugs upside down. They told me this was the correct way with the code here in Newfoundland. I also bought a couple of those plug in air cleaners and of course they don't work either, as after a few days the plastic inserts drop out onto the floor. The writing on the outlet in my bathroom is also upside down. So what I want to know is why are these small electrical things made with the thicker prong on one side not fitting my outlets the right way up. Is it a Canadian code change or just a Newfoundland one? Even find it awkward to plug in appliances, as you have to hold the plug with the earth at the top and it always wants to go the other way. It doesn't make sense to me.----- Response: Oh, I agree with you that this is so frustrating. All the plugs in my house are up-side-down as well, except for a few that I have turned over. I have heard a few contractors in both Ontario and Quebec insist that you have to have the ground wire up -- while all the manufacturers of flat appliance cords and plug in the wall gadgets accept the standard that the ground wire should go down. This whole question was probably less important before we started having a lot of gadgets designed to plug directly into the outlets, not to mention the flat microwave cords which now are physically strained sticking straight up in the air because they are designed to follow the general standard of the ground wire down -- giving the electrical outlet a smiley face. So what does the code say? The Canadian Electrical code says nothing, although three codes ago there was a requirement for putting the outlets in horizontally in mobile homes. The argument was to keep the cords from hanging over each other. But that has since been removed from the code. So I called the chief electrical inspector for Newfoundland, and he said that not only is there no requirement to put the ground wire up but that they discourage it because it creates a strain on flat cords, all designed for the ground wire to go down. So I called the chief electrical inspector for St. John's and he agreed with the other guy. So when your contractor says that it is code to install it that way, I can find no support for that position and two chief electrical inspectors in your region who do not agree, in fact they say that occasionally they oblige contractors to turn them around right-side-up in kitchen appliance outlets. I believe that you have grounds to ask the contractor to turn them around correctly, and if he doesn't want to do it, contact the electrical inspectors and ask them for help. In any case, your contractor will be hard pressed to show you the section of the code that requires electrical outlets to be installed with the ground wire on the top. For more information and the latest update check out what I had to say about this "OUTLETS" question in TV season 4. [Click here](#) for information on the LEGALITY OF DIY ELECTRICAL WORK.

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