Electrical Cord Safety

Electrical cords need to be used properly and protected from damage, so they don't become fire hazards. Here are some tips from the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Electrical Safety Foundation International (which offers more advice at www.esfi.org).

1. Keep unprotected cords out of the path of foot traffic and furniture to prevent fraying, overheating, and tripping.
2. Protect flexible cords and cables from physical damage. Check cords for cut, broken, or cracked insulation.
3. Never run a cord under a rug. It prevents the cord from releasing its heat and could lead to a fire.
4. Don't leave cords dangling anywhere where they can be pulled down or cause a tripping hazard.
5. Make sure there is no crimping or pressure on cords, and don't force them into small spaces or behind furniture. Over time this could lead to a breakdown of the cord's insulation. When using cord-bundling devices, such as Cable Turtles or plastic spiral wire wrap, avoid cramming too many cords together. Keep it loose.
6. Never use staples or nails to attach cords or cord bundlers to a surface, such as a baseboard or a wall. They could puncture the insulation and create a shock or fire hazard.
7. Don't overload outlets or extension cords with too many appliances, or appliances with too much wattage (space heaters, microwave ovens). Check the maximum capacity of an extension cord, and make absolutely sure you don't exceed it.
8. Don't use an adapter to get an extension cord with a three-prong plug into a two-prong outlet.
9. Don't plug extension cords together. Instead, use one long enough for your purpose.
10. Don't use an extension cord to plug in a power strip. Instead, buy a strip with a longer cord.
11. If a cord is hot to the touch, don't use it.