

Home theater installation pitfalls are avoidable

Setting up a new home theater system can be exciting, but handling equipment and components and wiring galore comes with its share of pitfalls. Many, though, are avoidable.

As with most home improvement projects, preparation is key, according to Paul Holstein, the COO of CableOrganizer.com, a provider of cable, wire and equipment management solutions. Holstein offers these installation tips:

Account for power requirements

Make sure your home's circuits can handle the power load placed on them by home theater devices. Before you plug in and turn on all of those audio/video components, find out how much power you have running to your home theater room and the total amount that will be drawn by the electronics. If the load is too heavy, reconfigure your equipment so you don't blow the circuit! If you're in doubt as far as power capabilities for a home theater, have a professional assess the situation. Where electricity is concerned, it's always better to be safe than sorry.

Go easy on your cables

It's only natural that you're going to delicately care for expensive, top-of-the-line home theater components such as screens, DVD players and audio equipment, but treat your cables gently too. After all, they are responsible for transferring all the necessary signals between home theater devices. It doesn't matter how great the equipment is — if your cabling is bent or crushed, the signal will be impeded and the audio/video quality won't live up to its full potential.

Cable stress is usually the result of improper installation, but most problems can be easily avoided by observing these two key rules:

■ **No sharp angles!** If you need to work cable into or around a corner, don't force it to form a sharp 90-degree angle. That sort of "kinking" interrupts audio/video signals during their journey from Point A to Point B, and will leave you with garbled pictures and sound. Instead, allow cables to gently curve into relaxed bends that will allow signals to flow freely.

■ **Don't squish your cables.** Stapling them to the wall or floor is a pretty common method for keeping coaxial cables secure and out of the way, but the wrong staples can dig into cabling, damaging its insulation and impeding signal flow. Either use staples specifically designed for use with coaxial cable or go with a surface raceway. A raceway gently routes

cables without squeezing or harshly bending them, keeps them neat and organized and won't leave holes in your wallboard.

Don't forget the surge protectors

No matter how much you've already spent on your audio/video components, don't connect them until you've also invested in surge protection. Home theater electronics can give you a larger-than-life viewing experience but they're extremely delicate. One good power surge can fry the components beyond use. By plugging everything from the high-def screen to the sound system into surge-protected power distribution units (PDUs), you help to ensure that all of those valuable home entertainment components aren't wiped out in one fell swoop. A good choice is ISOBAR's Tripp-Lite surge suppressor.

Give your equipment some room to breathe

Just like people, electronics tend not to function well when they're overheated and kept in close quarters. When you're deciding on how to mount your components, remember correct spacing and thermal management. Consult the manufacturers' specifications to see how much clearance is recommended for each piece of equipment. Rack-mount fans are also a terrific option for home theater thermal management, to keep your equipment cool and going strong.

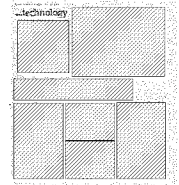
Keep the dust in check

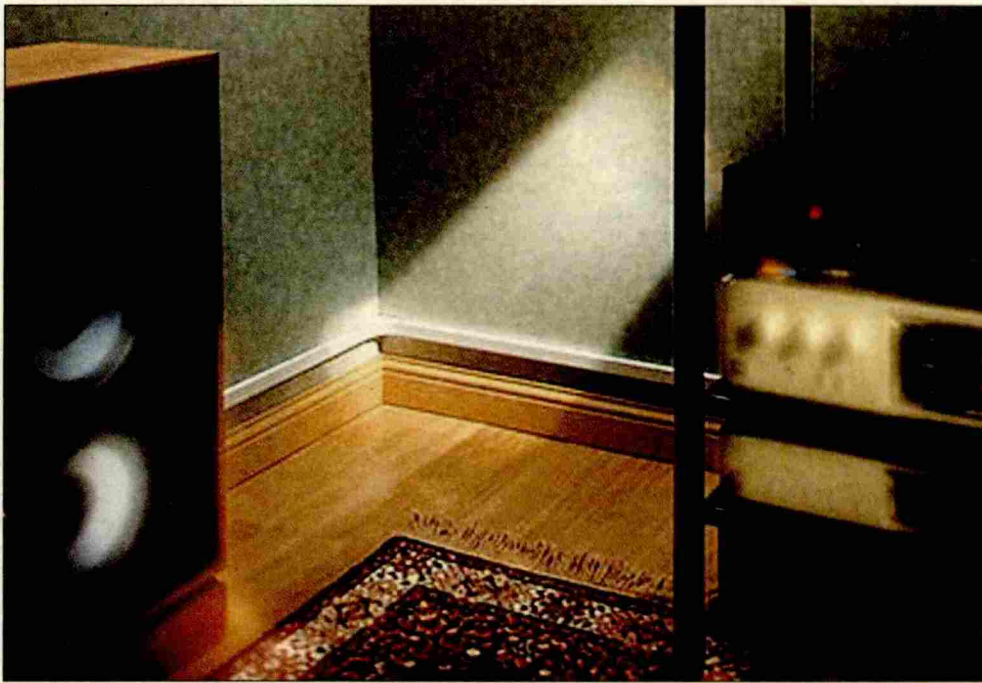
Dust interferes with the functions of home theater components, and left to build up it can shorten the lifespan of your equipment. If your components are housed in an open entertainment console, dust them thoroughly and often. Or install a roll-away rack to keep them covered when not in use.

Hang onto warranty documents

In the excitement of setting up your new home entertainment equipment, you may be tempted to tear into boxes and start throwing around the instruction manuals. Still, be sure to find and hold onto the paperwork for manufacturers' warranties. Register your equipment with the manufacturers as soon as possible, then store all the documents together in a safe place for quick and easy reference. This will save you time and frustration in case one of your components malfunctions.

For information on organizing products and solutions for electronics, visit <http://CableOrganizer.com> or call 1-866-222-0030.





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Surface raceways, such as these from cableorganizer.com, are nonmetallic wiring management systems that gently route electronic cables across walls and around corners, while also producing a neat appearance.

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