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Travel To Germany With a Laptop

My wife will be going to Germany w/a new laptop we just purchased. I would appreciate any thoughts/suggestions from those frequent travelers out there as to what I should watch out for in buying a power converter.

Clarence Behrend, West Bend, Wisconsin

I just used the AC power unit that came standard with the laptop. I was told it adjusts to the electricity automatically. I've used it all over the world and never had a problem. You just need to buy the correct adaptor plug to fit over the US plug.

You might want to pick up a spare cord that attaches the unit to outlet as the little prongs that attach to the unit itself get worn out over time and start smoking, I've noticed. I've gone through 2 in the past 2 years.

Hope this helps..

Vonda K Vandaveer

I used to commute between New York and Hamburg, Germany once or twice a month (so much so that I owned a home in each) with my laptop. I admit that I was in Hamburg so much that I used a German laptop and so only had to use a converter when in the US, but I had no problems at all. So far as I know, all laptops can deal with the different power levels in both locations, so that all I needed to do was have an adaptor for the plug connection. If this is different for laptops made for the US, perhaps more needs to be done. I doubt it, however.

Alan P. Bernstein

I would also suggest a small surge protector as well. Walter D. James III, Grapevine, Texas

But is it as necessary with DC current? If so, not one from the US.

Alan P. Bernstein

I have used my laptop in the UK and Italy. Look at the converter box that is part of the power cable . In your case it may be incorporated in the



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laptop itself. It should say: Input 100-240 VAC If so you do not need a converter since the built- in converter does it for you. What you need is an adapter to fit the different shape of wall plugs. Since they differ from country to country the best solution for me was to go to Radio Shack and buy a travel package which contains four or five adapters. For example the UK wall plugs are different than those used in continental Europe. Should you actually need a converter, a place like Radio Shack will sell you one that converts 220/240VAC to 110/120 VAC. The need for a converter seems mainly to arise with some electric shavers and PDAs built for use only in North America and other which specifically indicate input only for 110/120 VAC Hope it helps. Antonio Fiorentino Di Stefano, San Francisco, California

Why are you buying a power converter? Her laptop should automatically convert from 110 to 220. All you should need is an adapter for the charger.

I have to say, I've had more problems with electrical power in the US than I have had in Europe.

Actually, the plugs in France and Italy are difference as well. They look the same but are a different size. England's plugs are totally different.

Marion J. Browning-Baker, Stuttgart, Germany

I've received several responses to this. Thank you all. However, I am now more confused b/c most all said the laptop should have a switch to run on 220. But it doesn't, nor do I recall seeing one on numerous laptops. Maybe b/c these are cheaper models?

The laptop we have, an Acer 3000+, has a power cord (of course) w/an inline transformer which converts the household current to usable computer levels. Neither the transformer block nor the bottom of the computer has any switch indicating the ability to switch power.

So, either I don't know what to look for, or this unit doesn't' have a switch. I wish it to be the former.

Clarence Behrend, West Bend, Wisconsin

I went through this when I went to Ireland this summer.

It's not a switch. Among all the small print on the power cord "block" should be text that says something like "110/220" meaning that the block can handle either current.

If that's the case, then you just need adapters so you can plug your US plug into European wall outlets. I bought a kit at Radio Shack that has about 5 different adaptors for different types of European outlets. Just use the

adaptor that fits, and you're good to go.

Patrick W. Begos, Westport, Connecticut

Check the documentation for the unit...or perhaps the electric connection for the unit. It should tell you what range of power it can handle.

Alan P. Bernstein

Read the inline transformer. Some automatically detect voltage and accommodate. Others require the physical throwing of a switch. Still others make no accommodation for alternate voltage and you would need an external transformer to drop the voltage (Most electronics will handle the 50Hz vs. 60 Hz difference (my stereo handled it fine for six years in Spain) but some may not and there is some risk). My guess is that your computer automatically switches.

Jim Mills

The problem may be with the language used. There is no physical switching as such, at least in the laptops I have seen. All power coming off the wall has to be transformed from alternate 110 - 240 Volts to about 12 to 20 Volts direct current. The inline converter does that. The inline converter is now usually a box incorporated in the power cord. Read that box - if it says Input 100 to 240 Volts - you are covered. That means the inline converter will automatically take any voltage from 100 to 240 Volts and bring it down to the 12 to 20 Volts required by the laptop. So there is actually no physical switching. The only mechanical problem you have is the shape of the plug that goes into the wall socket. You solve that by getting a Foreign Travel Outlet Adapters kit from a computer store or a Radio shack. You may come across another problem which has to do with the three pronged power cords now in most use in the US. The power adapters you buy may not accommodate the third prong (the cylindrical one). Solve the problem by carrying a couple of converters from three to two prongs that you can find in most stores. In Italy I found converters that do accommodate the third prong.

Antonio Fiorentino Di Stefano, San Francisco, California

Again, thanks to all who responded on this. I am by no means as good as many of the tech people on this list, but am usually able to stumble my way through things. This one had me stumped.

The converter does state 100-240V and 50-60Hz, so it looks like we need only purchase a plug conversion.

Thanks so much.

Clarence Behrend, West Bend, Wisconsin

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