



As of 2014 new regulations are in force relating to window blind 'cords'. Examples of blinds which may have cords would be Vertical, Venetian, Roller, Roman and Austrian blinds. The regulations require all blind operating cords that can form a loop be made child safe. The new regulations stem from data from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents which indicate that 29 children have been strangled by blind cords in recent years.

New blinds will be either safe by design, have in built safety systems or be supplied with separate safety systems. Limitations are now placed on cord lengths, and safety devices will prevent cords/chains from forming a hazardous loop. However, we would always recommend checking a newly purchased blind to ensure it meets the safety standards (as summarised below).

Existing blinds (i.e. those already fitted in a rented property) must also comply. It is therefore important to check that ALL blinds in your rental property (irrelevant of the type or length of pull cord) meet the safety requirements, even if no children are to be present in the property.

Blinds that already comply

The design of your blinds may make them compliant. Blinds which are cordless or have concealed or tensioned cords will generally be compliant; these types of blinds are generally 'pulled' or 'pushed' into position and will not have a flexible loop cord. Examples are Vertical blinds which have a single operating rod which is used to slide open and close the blind, and is also rotated to twist the slats. Another example would be a spring operated roller blind which has a small pulley at the bottom which makes the blind retract upwards when a small amount of pressure is applied downwards on the pulley. Blinds that have a plastic or metal 'bead' loop pull cord may also comply if they have a chain break connector fitted which will 'break' the cord when a certain amount of pressure is applied.

Blinds that do not comply

If any of your blinds do not appear to comply, and therefore may present a strangulation hazard for children, they should either be replaced or a separate safety system should be fitted. These safety systems are generally low cost, easy to fit, and fall into 3 categories:

1. If the blind has a 'bead' loop pull cord, cut the cord and fit a **chain break connector**. *It is however vital that the correct size connector is used to ensure the cord breaks correctly.*
2. Fit a **pull cord tensioner/tidy** which keeps the pull cord taut and fixed at all times. This is only suitable for loop pull cords.
3. Fit a **pull cord cleat (hook)**. This must be secured to a surface adjacent to the blind which is out of the reach of children and at least 1.5 Metres from the floor. The cord must be secured around the cleat after each and every operation of the blind so Tenants should be given instructions relating to this. *This is the most common safety measure.*

For more information please visit www.makeitsafe.org.uk