

Hot Tips

Good info for the new ham, and old stuff to refresh your memory



Use Anderson Powerpole connectors

If you're ever in a hurry, and grab a radio plus the necessary gear, then start setting up, only to discover that your DC power cables have different connector types from each other, or do not mate because of gender mis-match, you're not alone. One way to make your DC power connections just a little simpler is to agree on a single, reliable standard that connects and releases quickly, and installs easily. One standard recommended by both local [ARES](#) groups and [the ARRL](#) is the **Anderson Powerpole** (or *Powerpole* for short), which is very convenient.

What it is

A Powerpole connector is a two-conductor, snap-together pair of shaped metal tabs located in a plastic housing, often color-coded to indicate electrical polarity. They're gender-neutral, meaning that there is no separate plug and socket; each connector is both a plug and a socket that can mate with any other connector. Also, Powerpole connectors are inherently safe because they present no exposed electrical parts that can be contacted by a person or anything near the connector.

For those of use who are hobbyists or experimenters, the Powerpole connector is convenient if you need to repeatedly connect and disconnect your DC power, such as your battery or other power supply, to your radio, or other devices. For the many who are involved with portable radio work, such as emergency communication, field work, or even instructional demonstrations, this convenience can be a real time-saver, knowing that you can count on any of your equipment being able to connect its power requirement to any source, without worrying about connector types.

Installation

You can purchase Powerpole connectors for generally three wire gauges, named for the current-carrying capabilities of the intended wires, the 15-amp, 30-amp, and 45-amp sizes. In spite of their different wire and tab sizes, their housing exteriors are all the same size, and connect with each other. You can also purchase a 75-amp size, but their large housing cannot be connected to the housings of the other three. While you can connect any appropriate wire to a Powerpole connector, it's convenient to use *zip cord*, which is a two-conductor pair of stranded wires for your needed gauge, easily identifiable by their characteristic red-and-black insulation.

When you install an Anderson Powerpole connector pair onto a pair of wires, it's recommended that you *crimp the tab onto the wire, and not solder it*. Once you crimp the tab onto the wire, you can install the housing vertically, with the positive over the negative, or horizontally, with the positive on one side or the other. The current convention is to install them horizontally, with the positive on the left if you look into the connector end, and with the tab cups facing downward. The housings typically come in different colors, and it's recommended that you use red for positive and black for negative.

Where you can get them

You can purchase Anderson Powerpole connectors from Amazon, eBay, or at the source, from [Powerwerx.com](#). Just make sure the conductor size matches the gauge of wire you intend to install them on. And if you don't already have a pair, be sure to purchase the Powerpole connector crimp tool, but beware of ill-fitting imitations by also purchasing them from Powerwerx.

