Grilling Safety Guide

A friendly, practical guide to grilling safely at home, from where to place the grill and checking propane to charcoal care, balcony rules, kids and pets, and cleanup.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

We wrote this guide for everyone who loves a good cookout, tenants, owners, roommates and neighbors alike, because grilling brings people together, and a few simple habits keep it fun and safe. The right spot, a careful check and a clean grill make all the difference. If anything here is unclear, we would genuinely love to help.

This guide shares general information to help you, and is not legal or fire-safety advice. Please follow the grill maker's instructions and local fire codes. Bunklow does not inspect grills or decks.

Over the years, we have seen a great many backyard cookouts, and a few close calls: a grill tucked right under the eaves, a propane hose that hissed, hot coals dumped into a plastic trash can, a balcony grill in a building that didn't allow them. Most grill trouble comes from placement and cleanup.

The good news is that safe grilling is easy. This guide walks through where grills belong, checking propane tanks and hoses, charcoal and lighter fluid, balcony and lease rules, keeping kids and pets safe, food safety, and cleaning up. We hope it helps every cookout end with full plates and happy guests.

FOUR SIMPLE RULES

1 Place it well away

Keep grills outdoors and well away from the home, deck railings, eaves and branches.

2 Check before you light

Look for leaks, cracks and grease buildup before every cookout.

3 Never leave it alone

Stay with a lit grill, and keep kids and pets well back.

4 Know the rules

Many leases and local codes limit grills on balconies and decks.

GRILLING SAFELY AT HOME

HABITS FOR A SAFE COOKOUT

- Read the lease and ask the owner where grills are allowed.
- Set up the grill on a level surface, well away from the home, railings and overhanging branches.
- Clean grease and fat from the grates and trays regularly.
- Check propane hoses for leaks with soapy water before the first cookout of the season.
- Keep a fire extinguisher, a spray bottle and a lid nearby.
- Let charcoal cool completely, then dispose of it in a metal container.
- Turn off the propane tank valve when you are done.

PROPANE TANK CARE

Keep propane tanks upright and outdoors, out of direct sun. Have damaged or rusty tanks replaced.

PLEASE BE CAREFUL WITH THESE

- Please don't grill indoors, in a garage, under a covered porch or in any enclosed space.
- Please don't use a grill on a balcony or deck unless the lease and local rules allow it.
- Please don't add lighter fluid to coals that are already lit.
- Please don't store propane tanks indoors or in a garage.

BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP

Brush soapy water on propane hoses and connections, then open the tank valve. Bubbles mean a leak, so close the valve and don't light the grill until it is fixed.

IF THERE IS A FIRE OR GAS LEAK

1. Stay calm. For a small flare-up, close the lid and turn off the burners or tank if it is safe.
2. Never use water on a grease fire.
3. If the fire spreads or you can't control it, get everyone away and call 911.
4. If you smell gas and the grill is off, turn off the tank valve and get the grill checked before using it again.
5. If you smell gas while the grill is on, move away and call 911 if the smell continues.
6. Let the owner know in writing about any fire or damage. You did exactly the right thing.

BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP

Keep the lid close. Closing it starves a flare-up of air, and that is often all it takes.

FOR OWNERS

SETTING CLEAR GRILL RULES

- Learn the fire codes where your homes are, including rules for balconies and multi-unit buildings.
- Put grill rules in the lease or a written addendum, including where grills may be used.
- If you provide a grill, keep it clean, check it each season and place it safely.
- Keep landscaping trimmed back from grilling areas.
- Provide a metal container for cooled ashes if residents use charcoal.

FOOD SAFETY

Use a food thermometer, and keep raw meat away from cooked food with separate plates and utensils.

WHEN A GRILL CONCERN IS SHARED

- Thank the resident or neighbor, and treat fire or gas concerns as urgent.
- Remind residents of grill rules kindly and in writing.
- Repair any damage to decks, siding or railings from heat or fire.
- Replace or remove unsafe provided grills right away.
- Write down what was reported, what was done and when, and follow up kindly to make sure all is well.

BEFORE EVERY COOKOUT

Grill placed safely outdoors, grates and grease tray clean, hoses and connections checked, tank valve working.

Fire extinguisher nearby, kids and pets well back, and a plan for cooled ashes or turning off the tank afterward.

BUNKLY'S FIELD TIP

A simple grill rule sheet in the move-in packet, with a picture of where grills are allowed, prevents most grill problems before summer starts.

COMMON MYTHS, GENTLY CORRECTED

"A covered porch is outdoors enough."

Covered porches can trap heat and fumes. Grill in the open, away from the home.

"Water puts out any grill fire."

Water can spread a grease fire. Close the lid and cut the gas instead.

"Charcoal is cool once it stops glowing."

Coals can stay hot for many hours. Let them cool fully in a metal container.

"Small grills are fine on any balcony."

Many fire codes limit grills on balconies. Check the rules first.

ELECTRIC GRILLS

Where open flames aren't allowed, an electric grill may be permitted. Check the lease and rules first.

Grill outdoors, away from the home and railings.

SAFETY, HEALTH AND THE LAW

Grills produce carbon monoxide, so never use them indoors or in enclosed spaces. Keep raw and cooked foods separate, and cook meat to safe temperatures. If anyone is burned, cool the burn with cool running water, and seek care for serious burns or call 911.

Fire codes, local rules and leases often limit where and what kinds of grills may be used, especially on balconies and in multi-unit buildings. We would gently encourage a quick look at the lease and the rules where your home is, and if you are ever unsure, your local fire department or an attorney in your area will be glad to help.

ASK ABOUT GRILLING AT MOVE-IN

Your move-in walk is a great time to ask where grills are allowed and to note the condition of decks, patios and railings. Please give every single item a comment, in any condition, with photos. Bunklow Walk and our free move-in condition report were made for exactly this.

A FEW MORE HELPFUL HABITS

LIGHTER FLUID

Use only charcoal lighter fluid, and never on lit coals. A chimney starter avoids lighter fluid altogether.

WIND

Strong wind can blow embers and flames. Consider skipping the grill on very windy, dry days.

Never grill in a garage or under a covered porch.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- National Fire Protection Association: Grilling Safety
- FoodSafety.gov: Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures

We hope this guide helps every cookout stay safe, delicious and full of good company. Thank you so much for taking the time to read it. If there is anything we can do to help, we would truly love to hear from you.

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