

Lil described a gadget she was embarrassed about not being able to identify. I produced the following information sheet for her to reduce and clip into the alligator clip note holder given out by her Student Help Desk.

### The INCREDIBLY VERSATILE ALLIGATOR CLIP



An Alligator clip is a temporary electrical connector, named for its resemblance to an alligator's jaws. Functioning much like a clothespin, a spring forces the clip's two tapered, serrated jaws together to make them grip an object. One of the jaws can have a wire permanently attached for connection to an electrical circuit. The clip may be partly covered by plastic to prevent accidental short-circuits.

Large versions of these clips, made of bare copper, are on the ends of jumper cables to transfer energy from a fully charged battery to a dead one.

#### Other uses

- Attach an Alligator clip to a ground strap, secured around the wrist, and clip it onto a metal object to protect delicate electronics from static discharge while working on them.
- Dental offices use Alligator clips to attach a protective bib over the patient's clothing.
- Alligator clips quickly and cheaply assemble circuits in school physics laboratories.
- Alligator clips can be miniature clamps to hold parts together for gluing and wires together for soldering.
- Attach an Alligator clip to any interesting object, as a base, to make a clever photo holder, recipe or note cardholder.
- Attach an Alligator clip to a dowel rod, or pencil, to hold screws and nuts in places where your fingers just will not fit, or pull wires through walls or tight spaces and cases.
- Attach an Alligator clip to the end of a pencil to hold one end of a bracelet while clasping it.
- Attach an Alligator clip to a magnet to hang a variety of notes and/or decorations on the refrigerator.
- Attach decorations to an Alligator clip and clip them to hair or clothing.

An Alligator clip is an example of a gadget, invented for a particular purpose, which is easily usable for an amazing amount of other purposes. Then next time you want to attach two objects together, remember the incredibly versatile Alligator clip.

Patricia Kenworthy August 2006