



Buyer's Guide: PAT Testing (UK)

1. Overview

Portable Appliance Testing (PAT Testing) is the process of examining electrical appliances and equipment to ensure they are safe to use. It involves visual inspections and electrical tests to detect wear, damage, or electrical faults that could cause electric shock or fire.

PAT testing is a legal requirement by implication — it helps businesses comply with UK health and safety regulations that demand electrical safety for employees, tenants, and the public.

2. Key Questions to Ask a Supplier

Technical & Service-Related

1. Are your PAT testers City & Guilds 2377 certified or equivalent?
2. What types of equipment do you test? (Office equipment, power tools, IT, kitchen appliances, etc.)
3. What test equipment do you use? (Ensure its calibrated and traceable to UKAS standards.)
4. How do you handle IT-sensitive or high-value equipment?
5. What is your testing methodology — visual inspection, insulation resistance, earth continuity, and functional tests?
6. Do you provide asset tagging and unique identification numbers for each item?
7. How are test results recorded and reported — digital certificates, spreadsheets, or online portal?
8. What happens if an appliance fails the test? (Is it repaired, retested, or removed?)
9. How frequently do you recommend retesting each appliance type?
10. Are there any hidden costs (call-out fees, re-test charges, or minimum appliance numbers)?



Compliance & Documentation

1. Do you issue a PAT Test Certificate with appliance details, pass/fail results, and next test date?
2. Are you insured (public liability and professional indemnity)?
3. Can you provide risk assessment and method statements (RAMS) before starting work?
4. Are test records kept for at least 3 years and available for audit?
5. Do you provide evidence of equipment calibration and engineer competence?

Logistics & Customer Service

1. What's your lead time for scheduling testing?
2. Do you work outside business hours to minimize disruption?
3. Do you provide on-site labelling with pass/fail stickers and retest dates?
4. Can you accommodate multiple locations or national contracts?
5. What support do you offer if the HSE or insurer requests proof of testing?

3. Best Practices for Buyers

Before Testing

- Create an inventory of all portable and fixed electrical appliances.
- Identify high-risk environments (construction, workshops, catering).
- Agree on access times and test locations in advance.
- Back up data before testing IT or office equipment.

During Testing

- Ensure only competent, trained personnel carry out testing.



- Use calibrated PAT testing equipment with valid certification.
- Tag each appliance with a unique ID and date-tested label.
- Separate failed items immediately and document corrective action.

After Testing

- Store test reports securely (digital or paper).
- Review results for patterns of failure.
- Schedule retesting intervals based on risk (see below).
- Keep your PAT register up to date.

4. Benefits of PAT Testing

Benefit	Description
Legal compliance	Helps meet Health & Safety and Electricity at Work Regulations requirements.
Reduced fire and shock risk	Detects faulty or damaged appliances early.
Insurance compliance	Many insurers require evidence of regular PAT testing.
Employee safety	Ensures a safe workplace environment.
Audit trail	Provides documented proof of safety management.
Equipment longevity	Identifies issues before they cause permanent damage.

5. Negatives / Common Challenges

Issue	Description
Cost	Regular testing can be expensive for large sites.
Downtime	Testing may cause brief disruption to operations.
Over-testing	Some companies test too frequently, wasting resources.
Inconsistent quality	Low-cost testers may skip steps or use uncalibrated equipment.
False sense of security	PAT is only one part of an overall electrical safety program.



6. Helpful Tips

Frequency of Testing (Based on Risk):

- Offices, hotels: Every 1–2 years for portable appliances.
- Workshops, construction sites: Every 3–6 months.
- Catering and healthcare: Annually.
- IT & low-risk equipment: Every 2–5 years (visual checks in between).

Avoid the “tick-box” approach — focus on risk-based testing frequency.

Keep a master asset register — it simplifies planning and budgeting.

Label appliances clearly: *green for pass, red for fail, blue for IT-tested.*

Retain test records for insurance and HSE inspections.

Review common failures — damaged cables, loose plugs, exposed wiring, overheating.

7. UK Compliance & Legal Standards

Primary Regulations

1. Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
 - Employers must ensure electrical safety of all equipment in the workplace.
2. Electricity at Work Regulations 1989
 - Regulation 4(2): Requires systems and equipment to be maintained safely.
3. Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) 1998
 - Employers must ensure work equipment is suitable and maintained.
4. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
 - Mandates risk assessment for all workplace hazards, including electrical.



Supporting Standards & Guidance

- IET Code of Practice for In-Service Inspection and Testing of Electrical Equipment (5th Edition, 2020) – The main industry standard for PAT testing.
- BS EN 50699: Recurrent Tests of Electrical Equipment.
- BS EN 50678: General inspection after repair.
- HSE Guidance Note INDG236: “Maintaining portable electric equipment in low-risk environments.”
- LPC / Insurance Guidance: Many insurers follow IET and HSE guidelines.

8. Summary Checklist

Item	Status
Supplier holds City & Guilds 2377 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/>
Test equipment calibrated & UKAS traceable	<input type="checkbox"/>
PAT test certificate issued	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retest intervals defined (risk-based)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Failed equipment isolation procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insurance & HSE compliance achieved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Record retention (minimum 3 years)	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Typical Documentation You Should Receive

- PAT Testing Certificate (with unique certificate number)
- Detailed asset register / inventory
- Test results for each appliance (pass/fail + readings)
- Calibration certificates for test equipment
- Engineer’s competence certification
- Risk assessment and method statement (RAMS)



10. Conclusion

PAT testing is a critical element of workplace safety and legal compliance in the UK.

When selecting a supplier, focus on competence, transparency, documentation, and compliance — not just price.

A reputable provider will:

- Use certified engineers and calibrated testers
- Provide clear, digital reports
- Offer flexible scheduling
- Advise on retest frequencies based on actual risk