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Learn the Basics of the Electromagnets by Angie Turner

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An electromagnet is a type of magnet whose magnetic field is created by the use of electric current. Electromagnets are used in electric generators, electrically operated switches like relays, healthcare equipments like MRI machines, computer hard disks and even in loudspeakers. It is used largely for industrial purposes particularly in wrecking yards where it facilitates the sorting of scrap metal. It differs from ordinary magnets by virtue of its temporary nature. In other words, once the electric circuit is interrupted the magnetic field is automatically switched off and no longer retains its magnetic properties. However, ordinary magnets are more permanent in nature.

A coil of copper wire wrapped around a metal rod that would act as the core, can function as an electromagnetic device. Atoms in the metallic core are in a random state. Electric current causes these atoms to get aligned and the magnetic field to grow. As more current is passed, the magnetic field grows stronger till it reaches a point of saturation. As soon as the circuit is interrupted (in other words, electric current ceases to flow), the atoms revert to their random state once again and the magnetic properties are lost. The strength of the magnet can be increased or decreased depending on how tightly the wire is wound round the core.

We frequently use Electromagnets to power our daily lives. Some of the common household utility items include television, radio, telephones, dishwasher, door bells, and music amplifiers for guitars, hair dryers, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, microwave ovens and so on. They are also widely used in healthcare equipments and also to extract objects embedded in human bodies. Electromagnetic devices are very sensitive to magnetic fields. Care should be taken to keep all devices with a screen or a memory storage capacity away from the vicinity of magnetic fields in order to ensure their longevity.

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