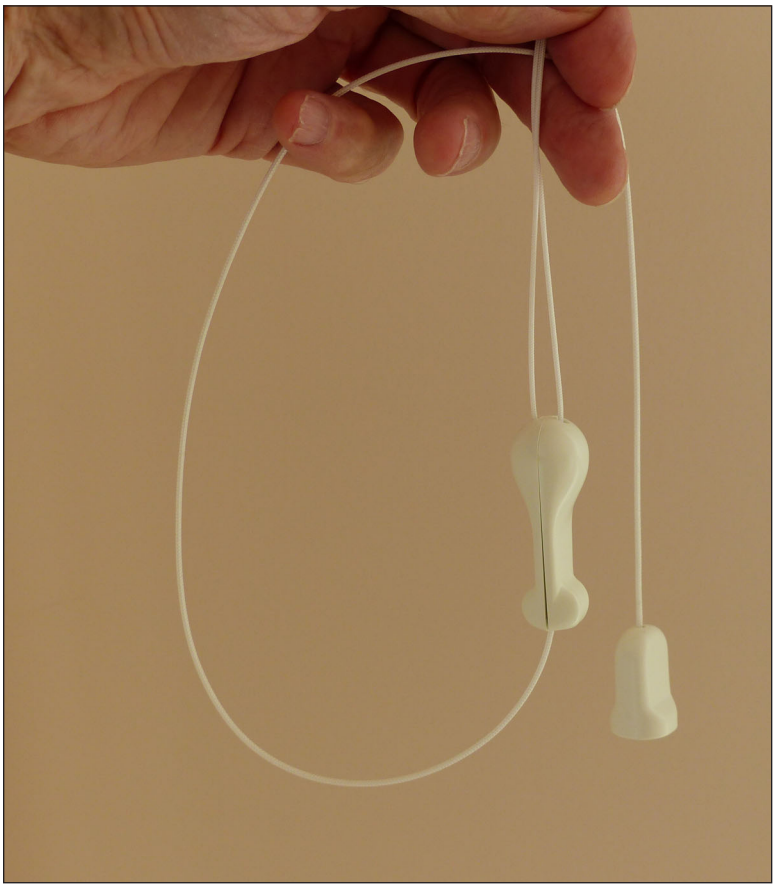
Fixing faulty Select Blinds window shade cord connectors

By Ben Gadd, November 2017

The cord-connectors on nine new honeycomb shades from selectblinds.ca were faulty. Rather than sending the shades back, I devised an easy method for making them work correctly.



Each connector had two cords coming out the upper end and one cord coming out the lower end. The lower cord lead down to a pull-knob. The connector itself also functioned as a pull-grip.

The connector could easily be split in half lengthwise to install or adjust the cords. Each of the two upper cords was inserted through a small hole in one half of the connector. A knot inside held the cord in place. The holes were small, and these knots did not pull out. Good.

However, the lower single cord pulled out rather easily. The knot, plus a small plastic washer, lay between the two halves of the connector. If I pulled even moderately hard on the cord, the two parts expanded and the knot pulled through between them. Not good.

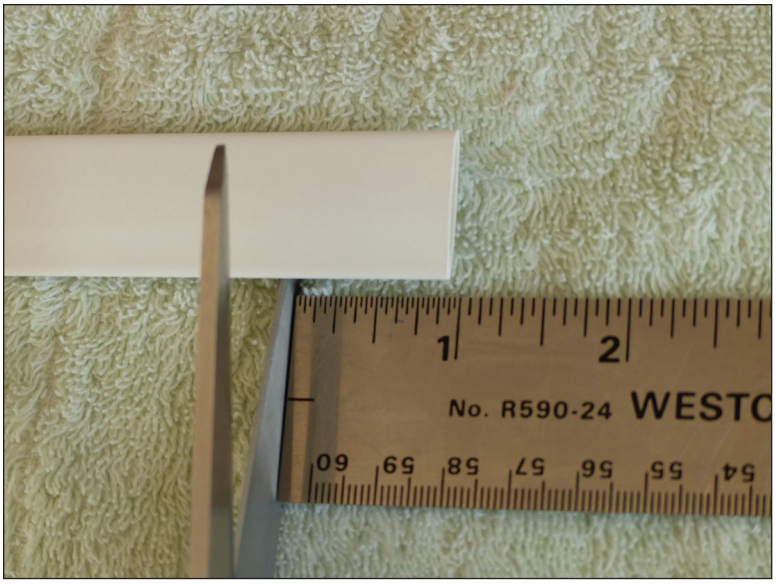
This was caused by two serious flaws in the design of the connector. The two halves didn't snap together very securely, and the two-part hole where the cord emerged was too large.

Shades from Select Blinds that I had installed previously didn't have this problem. The connectors were very similar, but they snapped together more securely and the two-part hole at the lower end was smaller.

Select Blinds did not respond to my complaints. But I figured out an easy fix. The two parts of the connector could be held firmly together with ordinary heat-shrink tubing of the sort available at electronics-parts shops.

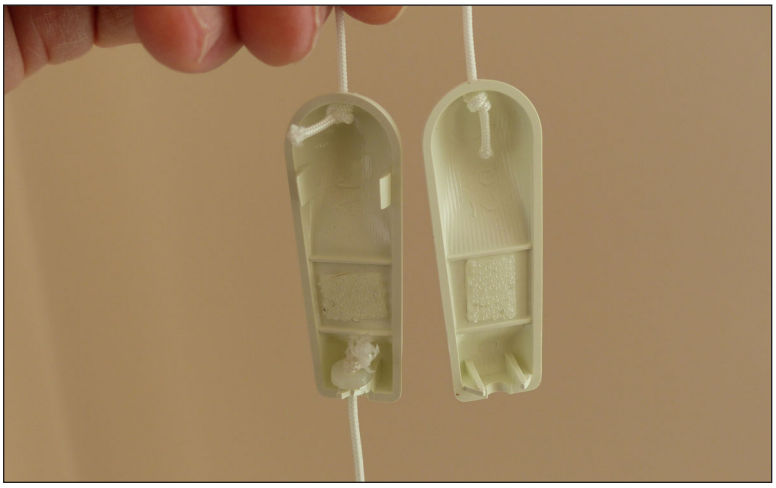
I bought white low-temperature polyolefin "Shrinktek" thin-wall heat-shrink tubing from MRO Electronics of Calgary, only $2.85 per four-foot strip. This material shrank down to half its diameter at a temperature of 80 degrees C. The length of the tubing did not change; just the width.

The tubing came flat. I found that tubing measuring 22 mm (7/8-inch) across was just large enough to slip around a connector. When heated, the tubing shrank enough to encase the connector firmly, especially over the bump at the lower end, the critical part to keep from spreading. Problem solved.

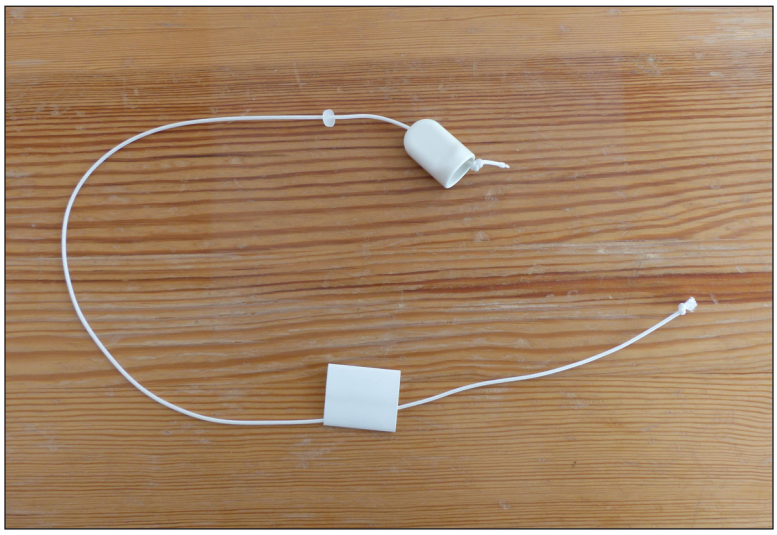


I bought one strip of tubing and cut 18 one-inch segments to slip around the connectors on the nine new shades. (Since these were top-down/ bottom-up shades, there were two connectors per shade). Lots of tubing was left over to re-apply if any connectors needed to be opened, which required that the tubing be cut free.

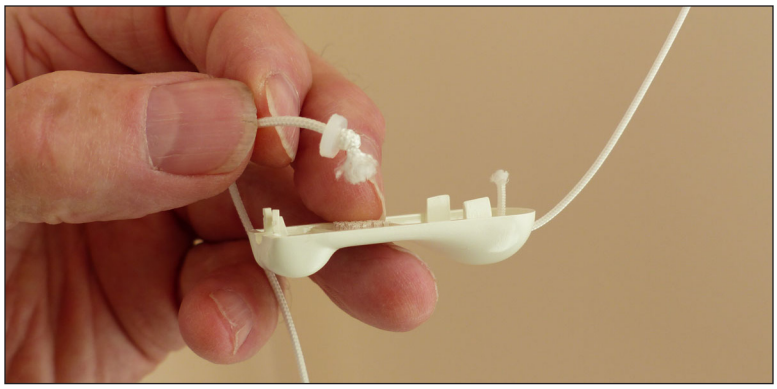
To install the tubing on each connector—



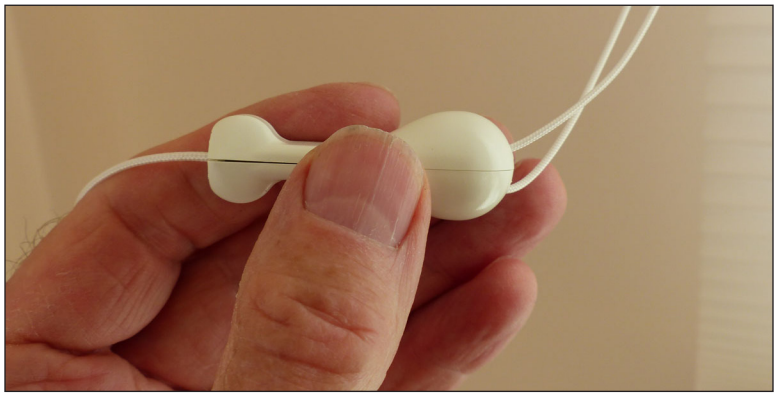
1. Pop the connector apart. Remove the single lower cord coming out between the two parts. There is no need to untie the knot by the plastic washer. Just pull the cord out of its slot.



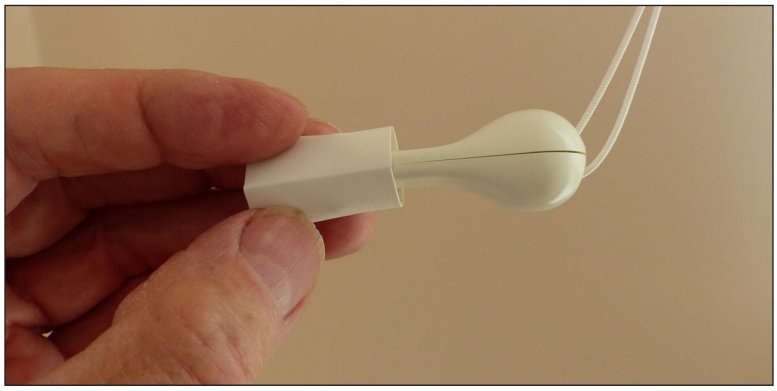
2. Slip a tubing segment over the end of the lower cord. (I had to do it this way, opening the connector and freeing the cord end, because the tubing segment was too narrow to fit over the pull-knob. Larger tubing would have fit over, but it would not have shrunk enough to do the job.)



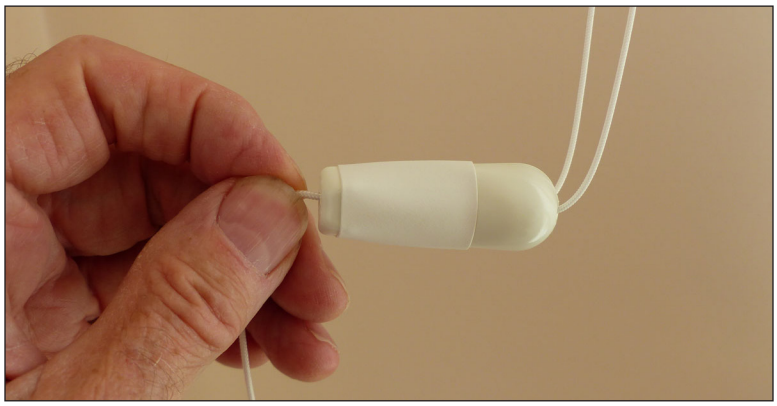
3. Place the single cord back into the connector, washer on the inside, and reassemble the two halves. Take care that the cut ends of the cords are not caught between the halves, or the connector won't close properly.



4. Snap the connector closed.



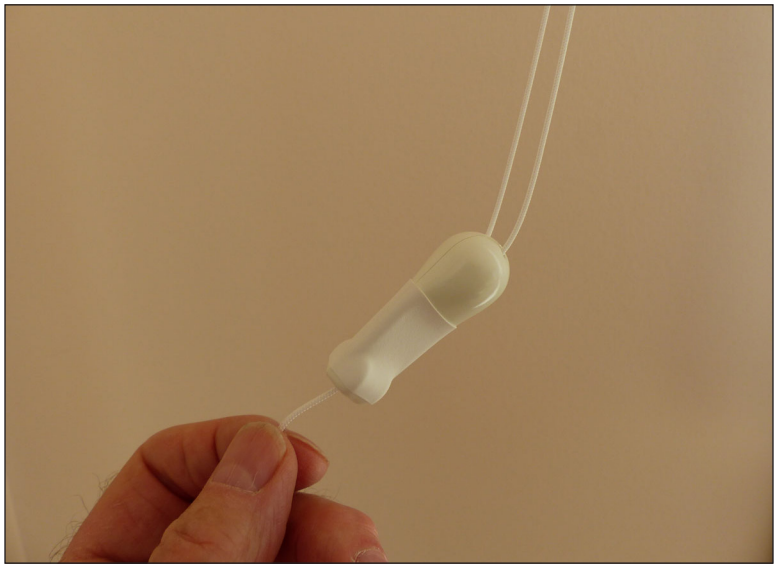
5. Slide the tubing segment over the closed connector.



6. The fit should be fairly tight, even before heat is applied to shrink the tubing.

7. I have used a match or lighter to heat up tubing of this type when applied to wiring, but for this job I needed gentler heating to avoid damaging the connector or the cords. So I used an inexpensive Black & Decker 1375-watt heat gun to shrink the tubing around the connector.

It was important not to apply too much heat, which could discolor the plastic of the connector or even melt it or the cords. I used the low setting on the heat gun and held the nozzle 10-15 cm away while turning the connector this way and that to spread the heat evenly. The tube began to shrink immediately. I removed the heat when no further shrinkage was seen, which took under 30 seconds.



8. Finished. The connector is tightly encased in the tubing and will not split open, even when the pull-knob is jerked hard. If a connector needs to be opened later, the shrunk tubing comes off cleanly when slit.