

ASK THE BUILDER

I have a lamp I want to put in my living room but I don't want to run an electrical wire over to where I want the switch on the wall. Are there any simple options?

New technology and some that has been around for years can handle your wish to not run electrical wiring for a new switch. It reminds me of the commercial where you clap your hands and a light would turn on. Those types of switches are still available. However technology has come a long way.

There are a few basics of how we can achieve the possibility of installing a switch without electricity. In a normal light switch, electricity runs through the switch and provides power to turn on the light. Flip the switch to the other position and it cuts off the power and the light goes out. If you want to have a switch with no electricity on your wall, you still need to have something to turn the power on and off at the light.

There are modules that can be plugged into an active outlet and then into your lamp. They act as the switch to turn the power on and off. If the lamp has a switch in it, you leave it on at all times. Then the lamp can be switched by the module or a specially designed switch device that can transmit a signal to the module to turn on the lamp.

The module for the "clap your hands" device is activated by a microphone built into the module that listens for the sound of the hand clapping. However if you have a loud bang or someone claps their hands on a television, it can turn the switch on or off inadvertently. So the concept works but it has its weaknesses.

Newer modules can receive radio frequencies (RF) or they can receive signals over the power lines. If you want to install a switch with no electricity, this can be achieved by obtaining a switch that transmits an RF signal to the module. The switch looks and acts like a real switch. It just transmits an on or off request to the module. The switch still needs power which it receives from a small battery located in the switch itself. These types of switches require no holes in the wall and can be purchased to match your existing light switches. This type of technology will give you the basic ability to install a light switch without electricity.

The capabilities of remote controlled switches for lights, appliances, stereos, skylights are endless. Today there are even ways to program these modules to conserve power. Modules can be controlled to turn on lights when you enter a room and shut them off when you leave. Full home automation with the newer technology can also be a real energy saver. It is common that many household appliances can be programmed to be more efficient. In fact, you can now run your home from your I-Pod or cell phone. As you can tell this is one of my favorite subjects. I could go on but we'll save that for later.