

Get switched on

Small changes can make a big impact in your room scheme, so make a start with a stylish new light switch

For where to buy items on these pages, see page 167

For a truly great finish, it's all about the detail – and the perfect light switch will give your look that extra little polish.

Start by asking yourself these questions:

Should you relocate the switch?
Or could you replace a one-way switch with a two-way system, so you can control the light from either end of the room?

Do you want a new switch plate or to change the type of switch?

Replacing the switch plate can be done by a confident DIYer (see idealmagazine.co.uk/lightswitchdiy), while changing the type of switch should be left to the professionals. Expect to pay around £55 per hour for an electrician (who'll easily be able to change more than one light switch in that time).

Would you prefer a standard dimmer, or a remote-controlled lighting system? Consider the new hi-tech options that offer extra features (see below).

What about style? To save changing switches every time you redecorate, go for classic chrome or neutral white ones.

What will it cost?

➤ **ROCKER/TOGGLE SWITCHES** The most common type, these simply turn the light on and off. Ideal for an area such as a hallway, where you don't need to adjust the levels of light for different tasks.

Expect to pay from £2 or £3 up to £30

➤ **DIMMERS** These allow you to alter the intensity of light to suit the mood. Perfect for dining rooms, where you might want less light for dinner parties and bright light for when the kids do their homework at the table. New designs have touch-screen controls.

Expect to pay from £10 to £50

➤ **REMOTE CONTROL** These let you dim or raise the level of light without having to leave the sofa. Check if the remote control you choose is compatible with your dimmer switch if you aren't getting them from the same supplier.

Expect to pay Remote control handsets cost as little as £7

➤ **LIGHTING CONTROL PANEL** For a state-of-the-art system, install a programmable panel that can control every light in your home so you can preset various 'mood settings' for each room, which can be activated at the touch of a button.

Expect to pay £100 upwards, plus professional installation costs



Co-ordinating light switches, door handles and light fittings are the extra touch that gives your room a coherent, polished look

Marie Nichols, Deputy Style Editor



FEMININE FLORALS
Patterned one-gang switch plate, Laura Ashley

3 of the best rockers and toggles



Oxford one-gang two-way rocker in brushed brass, John Lewis



One-gang brass dolly switch with clear plate, Jim Lawrence

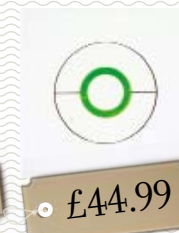


Leather single toggle switch, Turnstyle Design

3 of the best dimmer switches



Glass remote-controlled dimmer, B&Q



Movement sensor switch and dimmer, Wickes



Rania satin nickel digital dimmer, Lutron

Jargon buster

Don't get baffled by boxes...

➤ **BACK BOX** A plastic or metal box that is fixed into the wall. It holds all the wiring for the switch. The **switch plate** is attached to the front of the back box.

➤ **ONE-WAY and TWO-WAY SWITCHES** A one-way switch is the **only switch** to control a light. Two-way switches have **two switches for one light** – typically, two-way switches are found at the top and bottom of stairs to control a landing light.

➤ **ONE, TWO, THREE, or FOUR-GANG SWITCH PLATE** The number of switches on a switch plate. Each one controls a different light.

CONTEMPORARY CHROME Polished chrome two-gang switch plate, Homebase

