

10 TIPS FOR PICKING PAINT COLORS

THE FAMILY Handyman

#1 in DIY Home Improvement

How to recaulk a tub

**The best way
to jump-start
a car**

**Switch
anything
from
anywhere!**

**Display wall
for \$300!**

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**Grand
bookcase
with a fold-out bed!**

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Switch ANYTHING from ANYWHERE!



Just because you're stuck at work doesn't mean you can't shut the garage door your teenager left open or unlock the front door for the house cleaners and relock it when they leave. And on your way home, you can warm up your house and preheat the oven with just a few taps on your smartphone.

There's a large, and rapidly growing, selection of devices that can be controlled remotely. The beauty of most of these options is that they can be installed without running new wires. At most, you'll have to replace a switch or a receptacle. Best of all, you don't have to be a computer programmer to get them working. You can spend thousands of dollars on a whole-house automation system or just spend \$15 on one wireless switch to operate your favorite lamp.

by Mark Petersen
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GETTY

GETTY

HOME MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

If you like the idea of being able to control every switch, outlet, electronic device and appliance in your house, you'll want to buy a home management system like the Iris shown here. Most home management systems consist of a central hub that connects to your home wireless network and allows you to control security systems and any number of devices from anywhere in the world using a smartphone, tablet or computer.

How it works: The central hub communicates with compatible devices in the home via an RF (radio frequency) wireless protocol. The devices and the hub need to share the same protocol in order to communicate with each other. Z-Wave, ZigBee and INSTEON are some of the more common RF protocols on the market. Some home management systems operate on more than one protocol, which means they can manage a wider variety of devices.

There are several advantages to a home management system. Because the hub communicates by way of RF rather than Wi-Fi, it won't bog down your home Wi-Fi system. You only have to download (and learn) one interface instead of a bunch. And it's easier and cheaper to add devices at a later date.

The Iris system by Lowe's, shown at right, starts at \$100, with packages including thermostats, outlets and security for \$180 to \$300. Another popular system is Lutron's Caséta, which controls lights, shades, dimmers and thermostats (starting at \$120).

A central hub operates the devices in your home, and you control the hub with your smartphone, tablet or computer...from anywhere.

IRIS APP ON SMARTPHONE

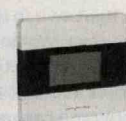


IRIS SMART HUB: Can remotely control hundreds of devices and appliances using your computer or the Iris app. \$100.

IRIS SMART HUB

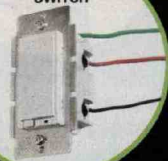


IRIS THERMOSTAT



IRIS THERMOSTAT: Change temperature settings or program weekly schedules. \$99.

HARDWIRED SWITCH



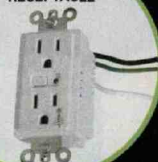
GE SINGLE-POLE LIGHT SWITCH (works with Iris): Hardwired switch controls existing lights. \$35.

ELECTRONIC DOOR LEVER



SCHLAGE ELECTRONIC DOOR LEVER: Operates with key, by push-button code, or remotely. \$200.

HARDWIRED RECEPTACLE



GE 15-AMP ELECTRICAL OUTLET (with Iris): Hardwired receptacle. \$35.

SMART PLUG



IRIS SMART PLUG: Plug-in (no wiring necessary) receptacle remotely monitors power consumption of individual appliances. \$30.

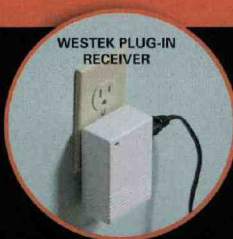
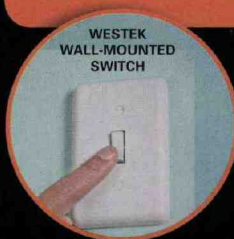


SIMPLE REMOTE CONTROL

Control lights and outlets with remote controls, some disguised as wall switches. There's no reason to spend tons of money if you just want to switch devices when you're at home. There are many simple remote control gadgets that control lights and outlets.

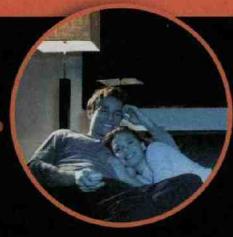
Install an inexpensive plug-in outlet that's controlled by a battery-operated remote that looks like a light switch. Stick the new switch on the wall where you want it and plug the lamp into the remote-controlled outlet—problem solved. A similar setup made for exterior use is perfect for your Christmas lights. This one is controlled by a key chain remote.

WESTEK WALL-MOUNTED SWITCH AND PLUG-IN RECEIVER: Control this plug-in outlet with a battery-operated wall switch. \$15.



Want some cool convenience? Swap out the light switch in the TV room (or anywhere else!) with a remote dimmer switch. That way you can turn off or dim the lights without leaving the comfort of your cushy sofa. There's even a memory button that remembers your favorite light level. Take note, however, that devices like these communicate with an IR (infrared) signal that requires a clear line of sight—meaning, they'll only work together as long as they're in the same room.

LUTRON MAESTRO IR REMOTE DIMMER SWITCH: Dim the lights without leaving the couch. \$40.



Are you notorious for forgetting to turn off the lights in the garage, shop or barn? Tired of trudging down the stairs or across the yard to shut them off? Here's a neat product: Convert any single-pole light switch in your house or on your property into a three-way switch with a product like this [Skylink SK-8](#). Replace the switch you want to control with the Skylink receiver switch. Then attach the battery-operated remote wherever you want. The new switch will work like a three-way that can be operated with the remote or at the source. Each switch has a specific distance limitation; some can only travel 50 ft. This one reaches 500 ft. in open areas.

SKYLINK SK-8 WIRELESS REMOTE 3-WAY: Replace an existing switch and control it locally or with the battery-operated wall switch. \$35.

