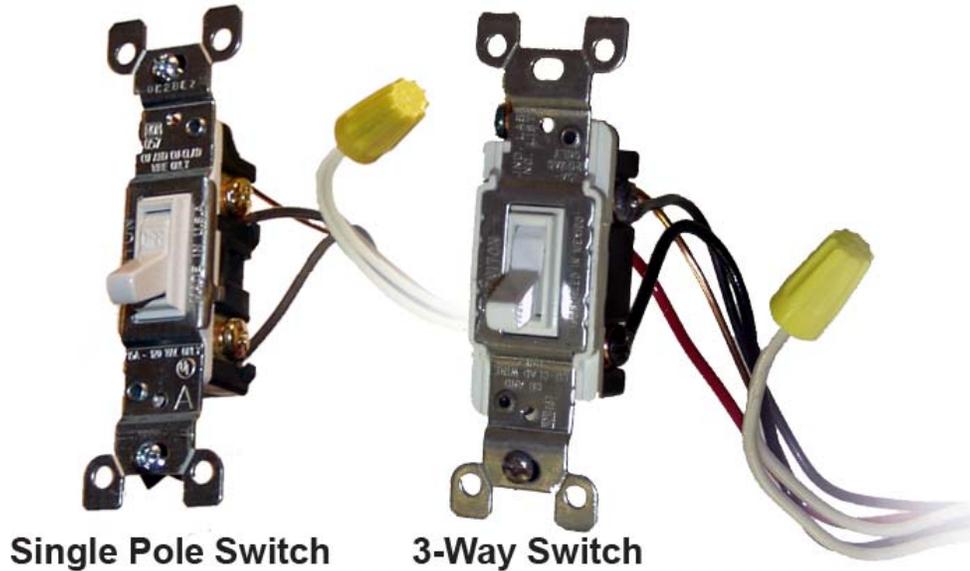# Changing a Light Switch
Level of Difficulty – 3

Whether you're replacing a faulty light switch, or installing a new, contemporary light switch, this is a very easy job to do, even if this is your first time working on an electrical project.

For this project we will address two types of light switches, a single pole (standard) switch and a less common 3-way switch. Rooms with more than one entry, such as a dining room, kitchen, hall, etc. often use 3-way (or even 4-way) switches which make it possible to have two or more light switches control a single light.

Single Pole Switch   **3-Way Switch**

The following instructions apply to most single-pole and 3-way light switches.

Note: If your new switch looks different from the switches shown above, visit K2W's article "Electrical Basics: A Beginner's Reference" for additional connection types.

1. Turn off the power to the switch. Remove the cover plate and use a circuit tester to verify that the wiring is not supplying power to the switch.

2. Identify the type of switch you are replacing.

    a. Typically, a single pole switch has two black wires attached to gold terminal screws and a ground wire (bare copper) attached to the grounding screw.

    b. A 3-way switch has three screws with (typically) two black and one red wire attached to terminal screws and a ground wire (bare copper) attached to the grounding screw on the switch.

3. Diagram the wiring connections and disconnect the wiring from the switch by cutting or loosening the mounting screws.

4. Strip the ends of the wire to about ½" and attach to the new switch terminals, just as the old switch was wired. Do not over-tighten the screws, but wiring should be firmly in place on the new switch.

5. If wiring in the electrical box is joined together with wire nuts (shown yellow above) verify that all wires are firmly secured together. Tighten by twisting the wire nuts clockwise, being careful not to over-tighten.

6. Carefully push all wiring back into the back of the electrical box, taking care not to damage the wiring insulation. Mount the switch to the wall box and inspect your work for any exposed wiring.

7. Install the face plate and turn on the power.