



## Wall Mounted Controls

### ADA-Minimal Legal Requirements vs. ADA-Preferred Requirements

Wall mounted controls are routinely installed for individuals of typical stature. Many of these control heights are unsuitable for an array of individuals and those in unique situations. ADA requirements are the minimum legal obligations that all builders must abide. These standards from ADAAG are usually given as a range in feet or inches. Often professionals such as builders and electricians install controls at the highest possible end of these ranges because they are unsure of a better option.

There are many wall mounted controls whose heights should be taken into consideration including light switches, thermostat controls, elevator controls, doorbells, automatic door openers, etc.

The ADA requires that light switches be placed anywhere from 15 to 48 inches. A light switch mounted at 48" is not accessible for individuals with quadriplegia who use powered wheelchairs, little people, or for people carrying heavy boxes. A light switch mounted at 40" is much more accessible and provides optimal usability for all populations.

The type of light switch installed also plays an important role in overall user accessibility. There are two major categories of light switches that are typically installed in buildings. The typical toggle light switch requires substantial finger force, which may be difficult for individuals with a weak grip or tremors. The toggle also requires more force to operate than a plate rocker switch. A plate rocker switch is a more accessible option for everyone because the switch does not require finger power and requires only minimal force to operate.

For more information please refer to the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG) at <http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm>

For more information see annotated web links at  
[www.r2d2.uwm.edu/access-ed](http://www.r2d2.uwm.edu/access-ed)



Standard light switch  
mounted at 48"



Toggle switch- more finger  
force required



Universally designed accessible light  
switch mounted at 40"



Plate rocker switch- less force  
and no grip required

