

Review: SnapPower teaches old plugs and switches some new tricks

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Electric outlets, light switches, safety covers and USB charger are impressive in their simplicity

Every once in a while I'll find a product I like so much I just mutter, "I wish I'd thought of that one."

Then there are products that are real improvements over existing versions.

SnapPower is making such products, which are covers for ordinary outlets or [light switches](#) like everyone has in their home.

The SnapPower family of products gives those outlet and plug covers added functionality, like adding LED lighting or a USB charging port.

Installation

Before I get into the products, I want to describe the installation, which might be the easiest ever.

All you need is a screwdriver, and you do not have to turn off the power to the outlet or switch.

There are prongs built onto the back of the plate that pull power from the side posts of the outlet where the power wires connect. It's genius. Simply remove the one or two screws holding on the old cover and

replace it with the SnapPower cover. It takes less than 30 seconds.

Guidelight

The Guidelight covers replace the cover plates on your existing outlets - either duplex (two separate plugs) or decor (the more modern, square plugs).

The Guidelight looks exactly like your existing cover plates but has a strip of LED lights along the bottom edge.

The light isn't controlled by a switch - it's turned on or off with a light sensor. When the light in a room goes out, the Guidelight automatically turns on.

There are certainly limits to where you would want to place the Guidelight.

I have one on an outlet over my kitchen counter to give a little light to the kitchen at night.

The Guidelight would also be perfect for dark hallways, bathrooms or a kid's room, depending on the outlet placement.

The light of the Guidelight for outlets is not adjustable. It lights up gradually, as the light in the room gets dimmer.

Guidelights are available in white, light almond, ivory and black and cost \$15 each. There are discounts if you buy multiples. A 10-pack is \$120.

SwitchLight

The second member of the SnapPower product family is the newest - the

SwitchLight, which is a replacement for the wall switch cover plates.

SwitchLight also has a strip of LED lights on one end that automatically turn on when the light in the room is off.

The SwitchLight is a second-generation product that has an advantage over the Guidelight - the SwitchLight's LED brightness is adjustable with a small slider switch. You can choose from full brightness, partial brightness or off.

SwitchLight is available for two styles of switch: toggle (the familiar flip up-down switch) or decor (a flat rocker switch).

One thing to note: Both the Guidelight and the SwitchLight are only available for single plug outlets and single switches.

If you have two or three switches in one box, the SnapPower products won't fit.

SwitchLights are \$17 each, with discounts for multiples.

SafeLight

There's also a version called the SafeLight that adds both LED nightlight and a sliding cover for the outlets to keep children from getting electrocuted.

SafeLights are available only in white, and they cost \$17 each, with discounts for multiples.

The LED lights in the Guidelight, SwitchLight and SafeLight are designed to last up to 25 years, and SnapPower says they cost about 10 cents per year in electricity.

Charger

Finally, there's an outlet cover with a built-in USB port, called the SnapPower Charger, for charging your phone or tablet.

The Charger is handy, but it provides only 1 amp of power to the port, so your phone or tablet won't charge as fast as with their original chargers.

SnapPower says the Charger will take an iPhone 6S from zero to 100 percent charged in three hours, while an iPad Air 2 will take 7.5 hours.

Handy but not speedy.

The Charger is available in white, [light](#) almond or ivory, and it costs \$20 each, with discounts for multiples.

You will want to check the age of your outlets or switches. The prongs of the SnapPower products need to come into contact with the screws on the sides of the switches or outlets, and older hardware might not be compatible.

Conclusions

The SnapPower products really are genius in their simplicity, and they do their job exceedingly well. I gave away a few of these last Christmas.

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Pros: Simplest install ever. Great added functionality.

Cons: I wish the USB port provided fast charging.

Bottom line: Every house could use a few of these.

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