

An automatic function selector for a ceiling fan switch.

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Cathy in Calgary has a wall switch that controls a wall outlet. She wants to know if she can get her electrical source from the switch for the installation of a new ceiling fan. From the switch, probably not -- but from the outlet, yes. When an outlet is controlled by a wall switch, usually only one side of the electrical connection to the outlet is wired over to the switch, meaning that you don't have the two wires necessary to power the fan. But at the outlet, you have the possibility of tapping directly into the lines from the breaker panel to feed the fan, or if you want, connecting to the outlet itself and allowing the wall switch to control the fan. Now the problem is that there are a number of things that need to be controlled on a ceiling fan. There are the lights, the fan and then even fan speed and direction. Which generally means some complicated wiring and fancy switches, but most importantly requires a 3 wire lead from the ceiling to the switch rather than the standard 2 wire lead. The speed and direction of rotation will always be controlled by the pull chains on the fan. But there is a new gadget on the market called Fan-E-Zee that will allow you to control the rest from a standard light switch. This little black box goes up into the ceiling fan electrical box and works like a Morse code interpreter. If you flick the switch on just once, the lights come on. If you flick it quickly on-off-on, it figures out that you want both the lights and the fan. If you flick it on-off-on-off-on, that is Morse code three, and you get the fan by itself. It has been hard to find in the stores so you may have to Google for it. Remember that all electrical work requires a permit. And while some provinces allow homeowners to do their own electrical work, some require that licensed electricians carry out all such work. Click [here](#) for information on the LEGALITY OF DIY ELECTRICAL WORK.

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