



Guestroom Light Switching

How to not screw it up

Introduction

Hotel light switching can be so confusing and irritating that it's become a cliché to even point this out.

It's very easy to create simple, obvious requirements that can be easily met and will result in switching that is utterly baffling.

Requirements like:

- Requiring all lights to switch on as guests arrive
- Needing to switch all lights from multiple locations
- Requesting lights to be in multiple different circuits or switched into sub-circuits

Added to this is the lazy assumption that “Housekeeping will set it up” and this will sort everything

The end result is a guest scrabbling around on the floor trying to find the switch for that standard lamp in the corner

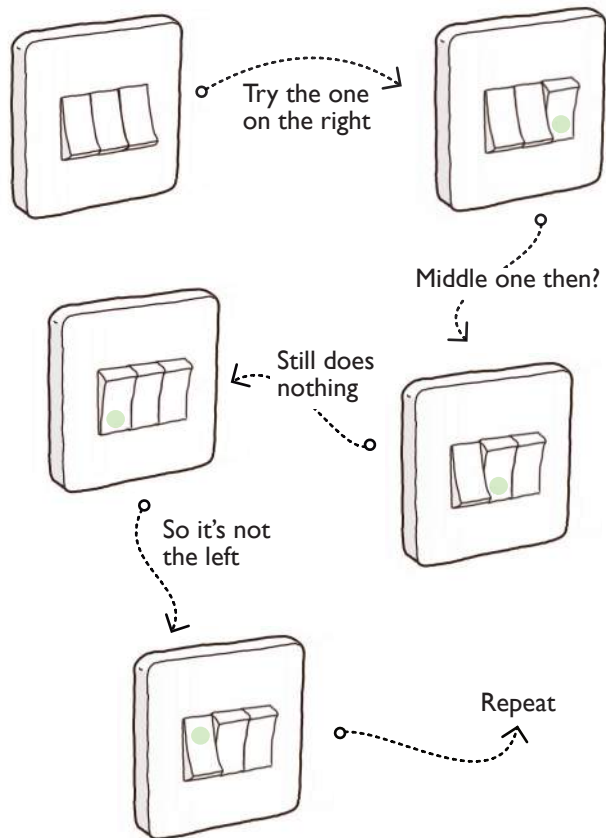


If you don't know which one of these is the master switch, the odds of switching it right first time is 1 in 32

Problem 1

The Mystery Master Switch

The switch on the left is a master switch, none of these attempts will switch on ANY lights



Misused master switches

Adding a master switch at the front door is an easy way for the guest to turn off all the lighting off in a room on their way out. But this is not a magic bullet, missing this single switch means that no other switches in the room will work, If you use a master-switch it **MUST** be really obvious what it does.

Solutions

Avoid them. If all your circuits already have switches near the door, do you really need one?

Use a keycard switch. Guests are now well accustomed to putting their keycard in the slot to turn on the lights. It also has advantages in setting AC to set-backs (which it is not obvious a master-switch would do) and reducing the number of guests losing their keys.

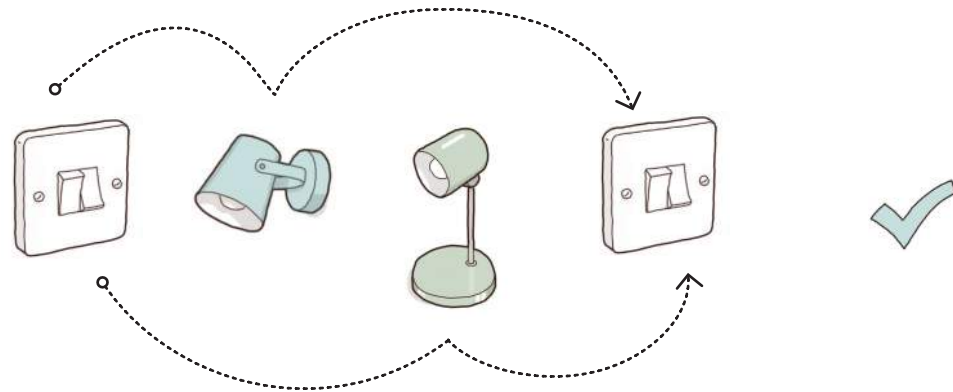
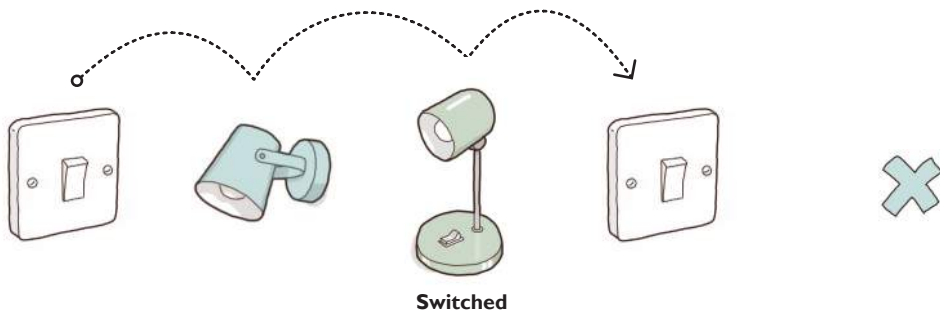
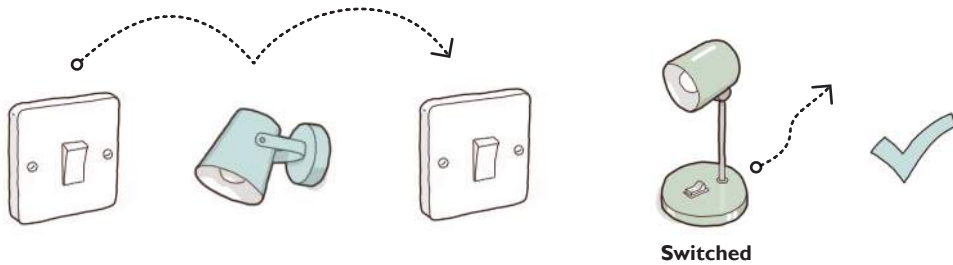
Make them obvious. Engraved / coloured switches are the minimum if you have to have a master-switch. But they are used in the dark, illuminated is preferred.

Cardinal sins

Never have a master switch beside the bed, it's way more likely to be switched off disabling all other lights than to be of any use.

Problem 2

Switches Within Circuits



Double switching

Adding a local switch *seems* sensible, it allows you to turn off that reading light on your side of the bed, or the task light at your desk. But the reality is that this just sets a trap for the guest, If they use this local switch, the next time they try to switch that fitting on, they will have to know that the wall switch AND the local switch BOTH need to be on.

And how would they know which circuit light needs to be on? Without flipping all the main switches, then trying the lamp fitting, then switching them all again they might never find it.

The usual reasons of doing this additional switching is for rare situations like “my husband wants to read while I sleep” but sacrifices the functionality for all guests in the remaining 99% of use cases. This is a marginal improvement in functionality for a large drop in usability and should be avoided.

Solutions

Don't do it. if they really must be switchable locally then give them their own circuit. (Bottom example).

Remove from the circuit. Use a small local light that is solely switched at the fitting and not part of any circuit. (Top example) For bedside lights this works with a small bullet-sized reading light.

Check! Ask if there is a ever possible situation where you could flip a switch and nothing happens, if this is the case, something is wrong.

Problem 3

Don't Leave The Lights On For Me



Spot the switch, the only way to switch off this fitting is the tiny, unmarked button on top of the base

Set-up

It's a common and applaudable aim to have all the lights illuminated when a guest arrives. However if this means the guest has to chase around the room to figure out how to switch lights off then it's not worth it.

If the lamp needs to be on when the guest arrives, then the lamp should be on a circuit, (and switched from bedside).

If the lamp has a fitting switch (floor switch, pull out fitting etc) then this should be switched off when the guest arrives,.

Solutions

Put 'loose' lamps like standard lamps in the lighting circuits hard wired or via a round-pin plug, and remove the fitting switch.

Make sure locally switched fittings are not required for the main room light levels.

Problem 4

Hide and Seek



Find the nightlight (daytime view)



Find the nightlight (night-time view)

Functionality without usability

Adding nightlights around the room always sounds useful and functional, but the reality is that if it's not obvious which switch is the nightlight then a guest will either never use it, or will find it only after switching on all the lights in the room, which defeats the purpose.

Similarly, PIR controlled nightlights are a tick-box on the innovation bingo but if the guest doesn't realise that is how they work, then they will try to find the switch to turn them off before getting into bed (and will wonder who switched it on when the pillow falls off the bed).

It's also usually unhelpful to have bathroom area lights controlled from the bedside, yes you might have to get up if you've forgotten it, but reducing the number of switches is usually more beneficial. Unless you find it hilarious to switch off the bathroom lights off while your other half is showering.

Solutions

If you are going to have a nightlight, make it obvious. If you figure out how to do this in the dark, let me know.

Place switches outside the bathroom It's not as clever-sounding as the bedside, but works, as you can try both switches before opening the bathroom door.

Move PIR detectors. Keep them away from the bed and keep the delay really short (4 or 5 seconds) .

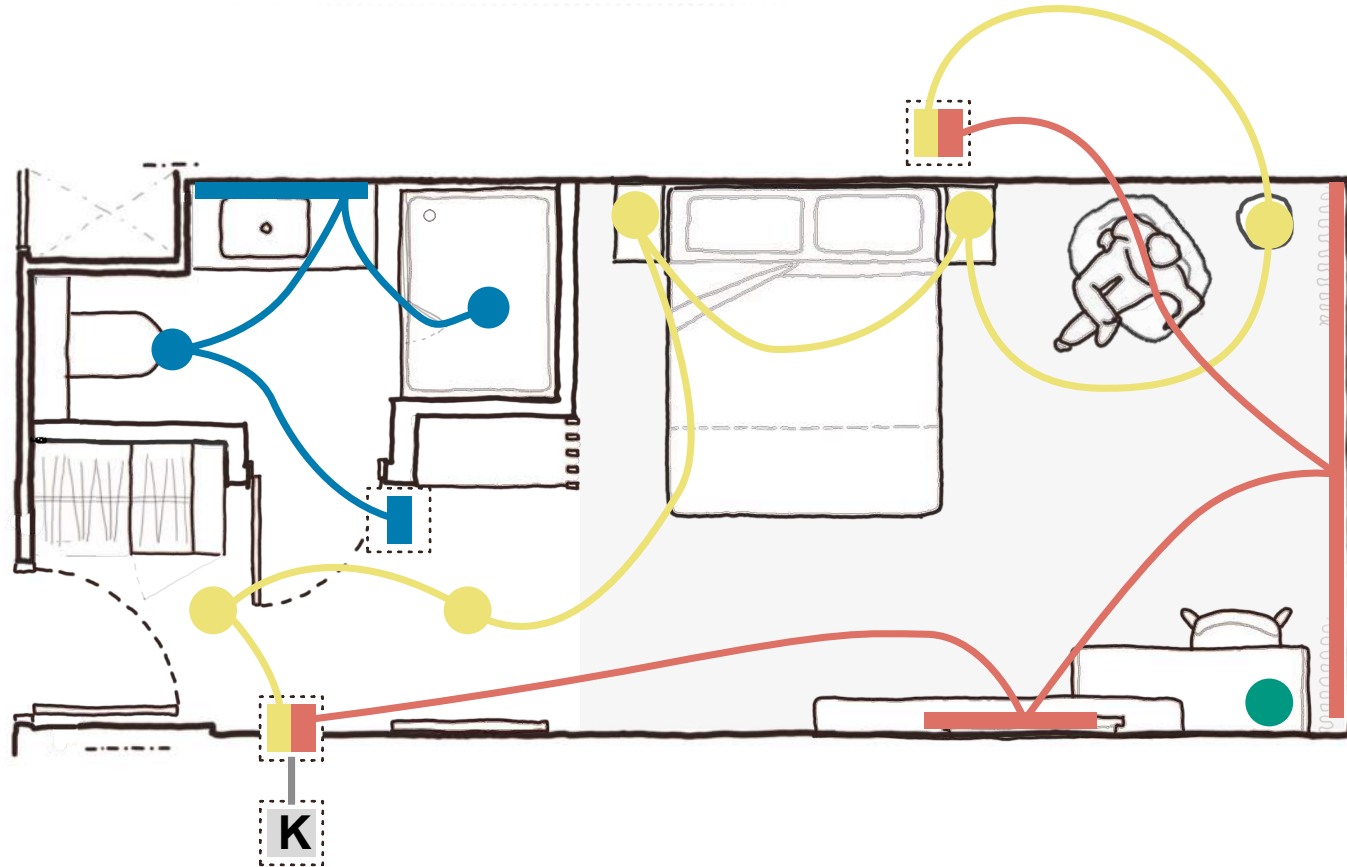
Other issues

This category also applies to other technology in the guestroom, automatic curtains, DND switches, anything controlled with an app. 99% of the time the guest is happier without it, But if it is to be installed it needs to be intuitive.

Appendix & Examples

WORKED EXAMPLE

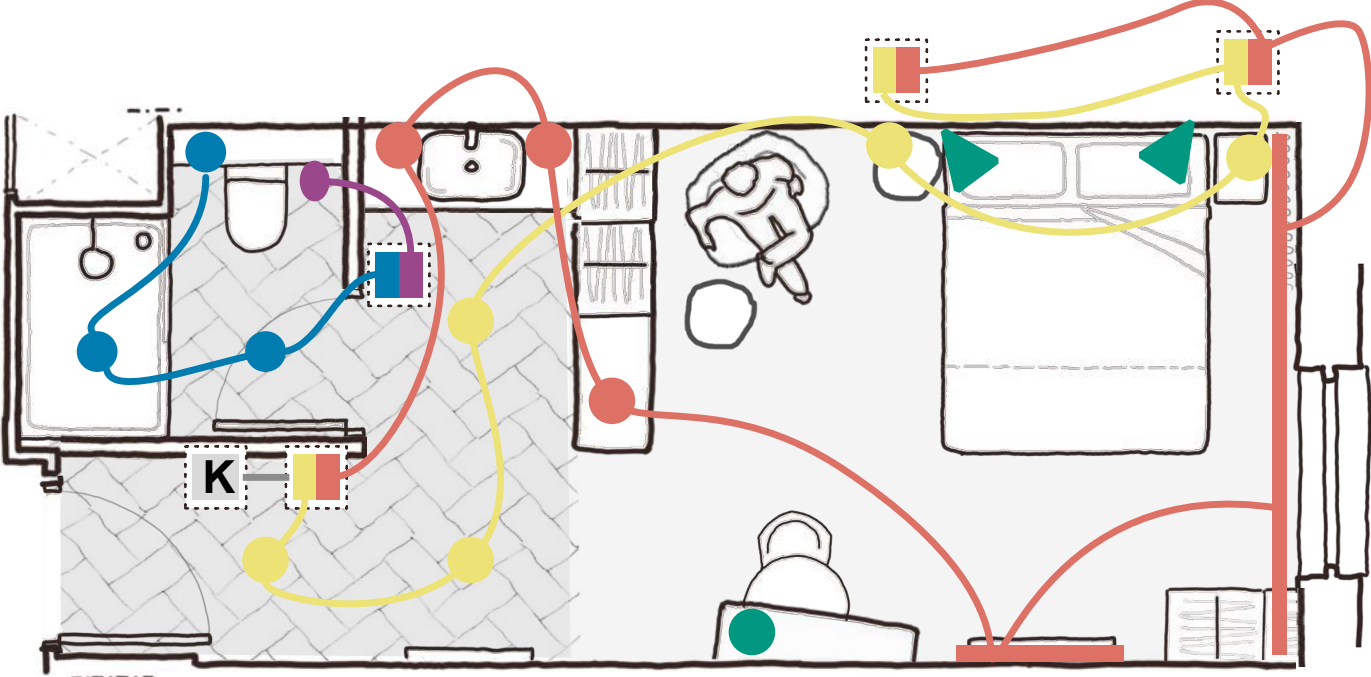
- Main Circuit
- Mood Circuit
- Individual WC
- Fitting Switched



TRADITIONAL MID-SCALE ROOM

WORKED EXAMPLE

- Main Circuit
- Mood Circuit
- Individual WC
- Fitting Switched
- Individual Nightlight



BOUTIQUE ROOM

GLOSSARY AND TERMS

KEYCARD SWITCH / MASTER-SWITCH

The term master-switch is often used to describe any switch which turns off a circuit, but it should really only refer to the one switch which turns off all lighting in a room and perhaps sends AC to a fall-back setting. Think of this as pulling the plug or deactivating the whole room.

This should never control guest sockets so they can charge their devices.

CIRCUIT LIGHTING

Lights controlled by multiple switches that are linked together. Often these might have descriptive names like “mood circuit” “main circuit” “vanity circuit”

- **Circuit lighting is all or nothing**, never add a local switch to fitting on a circuit, otherwise it'll get switched off and the guest will need to test every possible switching combination to get it to turn on again.
- Remember every circuit you add means another switch in the row of switches needed to control the room. (This is what engineers call the number of Gangs)
- Try to limit the number of places a circuit is switched from to 2 or 3 (this is what engineers call 3-way switching), but it is easier to add a switching location than to add another circuit.

INDIVIDUAL SWITCHING

A single wall switch that controls lights but isn't controlled from elsewhere in the room.. Though they will be deactivated when the keycard is removed/master-switch turned off.

Perfect for: Bathrooms, especially separate WCs
Balcony lighting
Task lighting

FITTING SWITCHING

Switches that are attached directly to the fitting and should be the only way to control them. The fitting will switch off when the keycard switch is turned off, but shouldn't be part of any circuit lighting.

OTHER POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Demister pads should be linked to bathroom lights
- Do you need an illuminated shaving mirror, many brands still ask for them
- Colour temperatures should be 2700-3000k
- Wardrobe lights are great, make sure they switch off reliably when the doors close, and don't have a delay timer.

LIGHTING CONTROL SYSTEMS

Increasingly lighting control systems are being seen as a solution to many of the issues raised in this guide but they should be approached very carefully. Often they are unintuitive, and can cause maintenance headaches. The plight of the maintenance manager at a London hotel who swapped a light switch from one room to replace a broken one in another room.. Only to find it was still controlling the lights in the first room.

Systems need to be supported for decades and preferably open to multiple manufacturers. In 99% of hotel guestrooms they are best avoided.

WISH LIST

There are a few products that could be developed that would greatly assist some of these issues, if you sell these please get in touch.

- A lamp/dimmer that can be dimmed but **not** switched off, so from 100% down to 10% say., This allows local control but without confusion as it will still react to circuit switches.
- A lamp that can be switched off locally, but when the circuit is turned off, the switch reverts to on. This could fix 90% of the problems above.
- An emergency fitting that has a really really dim indicator bulb, in the last few years they have become bright enough to land aircraft.

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About The Author

Alistair Twiname has been working in hotel design since 1997. As an architect in practice he worked on the development of several boutique properties across the UK.

Alistair was Director of Design & Innovation for IHG Europe. He spent 6 years with the group, being responsible for 36 hotel openings and many more signings, feasibility studies and refurbishments. He spent 3 years developing new generation guestrooms and public areas for Holiday Inn, Holiday Inn Express and Staybridge Suites. This work is currently being rolled out to over 400 existing hotels and all new openings across Europe.

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