

Introduction

For an individual with physical disabilities being able to use a switch to control mains powered appliances may give them access to more meaningful activities whilst encouraging participation.

- The success in using mains powered appliances depends on them being used within context i.e. being able to turn the light on when entering a room
- The use of mains powered appliances range from developing and consolidating cause and effect understanding, to the user having control over everyday activities

The Control Unit

- To control an electrically powered appliance with a switch, it must be linked to a control unit. The unit ensures safety by isolating the switch from the mains voltage
- A range of suitable control units is described in our resource list. The units vary in total watt capacity
- The electrical appliance you use should not exceed this wattage otherwise a fuse will be blown in the control unit
- Although the switch is entirely safe, it is important to remember that the lead to the appliance from the unit should be kept out of reach of the user as this contains mains voltage

Modes of Control

All the control units have a selection of modes that they can be set to. These include:-

Momentary or Direct	The appliance will operate for as long as the input switch is pressed
Timed	The appliance is switched on when the user presses the input switch, and switches off after a pre-set timed period, regardless of what the user is doing with the input switch
Latched	The appliance is switched on and off with alternate switch presses

Activity Ideas

- Participating in cookery sessions by operating a food mixer
- Operating a hairdryer to dry hair after swimming
- Making drinks for peers using a Juicer
- Operate a foot-spa for a soothing foot massage
- A fan and light both plugged in via a double plug adapter to create a 'mini' sensory room experience. Having shiny streamers, which shine in the light and blow in the air from the fan, can heighten the experience

Electrical appliances that could be used with these units include

Tape-recorder	Christmas lights	Disco lights	Portable lamp	
Hair dryer	Electric fan	Foot-spa	Kettle	Toaster
Food mixer	Juicer	Microwave oven	Ice-cream machine	Pop-corn maker

NB Check wattage of the mains control unit to ensure it can take the desired appliance.

Further Reading

Jackie Levin and Lynn Scherfenberg *Selection and Use of Simple Technology in Home, School, Work and Community Settings*

Jackie Levin And Kathy En Selein *Fun For Everyone - A Guide to Adapted Leisure Activities for Children with Disabilities*

Jackie Levin and Lynn Scherfenberg *Breaking Barriers - How Children and Adults with Severe Disabilities Can Access the World through Simple Technology*

All available from: Ablenet Division, Liberator Ltd, Whitegates, Swinstead, Lincs, NG33 4PA
Tel: 01476 550391

Resource List

ITEM	COMMENTS	SUPPLIERS
Powerlink 2	Allows the user to operate electrical appliances up to 2,400-watt capacity by the use of a single input switch. Provides the user with three modes of control direct; times and latched.	Liberator Inclusive Technology

NB The switch connection on individual units can have stereo or mono switch connection. Be sure the connection is compatible to the switches you are using.