



Hybrid charging station at home

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Unlike most owners of conventional gas cars, EV owners can "refill" at home--just pull into your garage and plug it in. Owners can use a standard outlet, which takes a while, or install a wall charger for a much quicker charge. All electric vehicles come with a 110-volt-compatible, or Level 1, home connector kit. It's essentially a fancy extension cord that allows your car to be plugged into a standard outlet on one end and into the car on the other end.

Consumer Reports recommends that most electric vehicle buyers, especially those purchasing a plug-in hybrid (PHEV) with a small battery, start with just the included cord, rather than invest in a 240-volt, or Level 2, wall-mounted charger.

"Most PHEV owners will not need a Level 2 charger," advises Gil Tal, director of the Plug-in Hybrid & Electric Vehicle Research Center at the University of California, Davis. "The Level 1 charger that is provided with the car can charge the battery back to 100 percent overnight."

Tal adds that Level 1 may be sufficient for many EV owners if they don't drive more than 40 to 50 miles a day. That's farther than the average daily commute for American drivers.

It's worth investing in a wall-mounted charger if you need juice quicker than 110 volts can provide and you don't have convenient access to a public or workplace charger.

Wall units are available online through Amazon, Home Depot, and Lowe's, among others. The cost is typically \$500 to \$700. Some automakers, such as BMW, offer advice on chargers and coordinate installation. Others leave it for the consumer to figure out.

You'll need an electrician to install a special 240-volt receptacle, like the ones used for most clothes dryers, in your garage. HomeAdvisor shows that parts and labor, beyond the charger itself, can cost up to \$2,000.

Electric cars are bringing some of the biggest changes the auto industry has seen in years. On the "Consumer 101" TV show, Consumer Reports expert Jake Fisher explains to host Jack Rico why these vehicles might not be as newfangled as you think.



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