

USB OUTLET CHARGER

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an electrical power outlet in a building such as a hotel, office or home.

- 5 In a particular form, the invention relates to a power outlet providing an interface for charging Universal Serial Bus (USB) compatible devices.

PRIORITY

The present application claims priority from Australian Provisional Patent Application No.

- 10 2010905218 entitled "USB Outlet Charger" filed on 25 November 2010.

The entire contents of this document are hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- 15 Many electronic devices such as mobile phones, mp3 players and digital cameras are charged through USB ports in either a computer or a USB Alternating Current (AC) adaptor which may be plugged into a wall socket or power outlet. Charging devices through a USB port on a computer requires the computer to be switched on and also prevents other peripheral devices such as mice and memory devices from accessing the port while in use. By using a USB AC adaptor the electronic device may
20 be charged at a wall socket or power outlet. One portion of the adaptor has AC prongs which engage into AC receptacles of the wall socket while another portion of the adaptor has a USB port to interface with a USB connector of an appliance or electronic device to be charged. The disadvantage with this arrangement is that the USB AC adaptor is a separate component that must be purchased and carried around and also that the AC prongs will only be suitable for a particular country or region. This leads
25 to another drawback with using USB AC adaptors in foreign countries, namely that additional AC adaptors are necessary to engage with sockets found in different areas around the world.

- There are also USB wall outlets wherein the USB charger is integral with the power outlet. Having the USB charger integral with the power outlet can lead to increased complexity during installation and
30 costly repair and replacement of parts.

An object of the present invention is to ameliorate one or more of the above described difficulties or at least provide a useful alternative for charging USB compatible devices.

- 35 Other advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein, by way of illustration and example, several aspects and embodiments of the present invention are disclosed.

SUMMARY

In one aspect of the invention, there is proposed a Universal Serial Bus (USB) charging module housing adapted for securement to a surface mountable power outlet, the housing including:

- 5 an engaging portion for connecting the housing to a supporting portion of the power outlet;
 access means to allow a USB charging circuit to be inserted into the housing; and
 an aperture for allowing external access to a USB port.

10 In one form, the USB charging module housing further includes at least one aperture for receiving wires carrying mains power.

In one form, the access means to allow the USB charging circuit to be inserted into the housing is provided by an aperture in an external face of the housing.

15 In one form, the aperture is covered by a removable portion.

In one form, the removable portion includes at least one aperture for receiving wires carrying mains power.

20 In one form, the supporting portion of the power outlet is an integral portion of a grid or face plate.

In another form, the supporting portion of the power outlet is located in a mounting plate that is adapted to be connected to the rear of a grid or face plate.

25 In one form, the housing is connected to the supporting portion of the power outlet from the front of the grid or face plate.

In one form, the housing is connected to the supporting portion of the power outlet from the rear of the grid or face plate.

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In one form, the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing includes a plurality of clips extending outwardly from one or more exterior faces of the housing, said clips for engagement with one or more surfaces of the supporting portion of the power outlet in a snap fit arrangement.

35 In one form, the clips have a tapered front face and a substantially vertical rear face.

In one form, the USB charging module housing has an aperture located on the front face of the housing for allowing external access to a USB port.

In a further aspect of the invention there is proposed a USB charging module adapted for securement to a surface mountable power outlet, the charging module including:

a USB port;

a USB charging circuit that is capable of receiving a mains power input;

a housing, said housing including an engaging portion for connecting the housing to a supporting portion of the power outlet; access means to allow the USB charging circuit to be inserted into the housing and an aperture for allowing external access to the USB port.

In one form, the USB charging module includes a USB charging circuit with a printed circuit board (PCB).

In one form, the USB charging module includes a plurality of wires that are soldered directly to the PCB for connection to mains power either directly or via a switch.

In another form, the USB charging module includes a terminal block mounted on the PCB for connection to wires carrying mains power either directly or via a switch.

In other embodiments, there are provided screwed terminals for wire termination.

In a further aspect of the invention there is proposed a surface mountable power outlet for allowing a user to charge a USB compatible device, the power outlet including:

a supporting portion;

a USB charging module including a USB port; a USB charging circuit that is capable of receiving a mains power input; a housing, said housing including an engaging portion for connecting the housing to the supporting portion of the power outlet; access means to allow the USB charging circuit to be inserted into the housing and an aperture for allowing external access to the USB port;

a grid or face plate adapted to allow a user to access the USB port;

a connection between the USB charging module and mains power; and
mounting means for mounting the power outlet to a mounting surface.

In one form, the mounting surface is a wall or floor.

In one form, the power outlet further includes a cover plate.

In one form, the mains power is between about 100-240V alternating current (AC).

In a further aspect of the invention there is proposed a method of installing a power outlet for allowing a user to charge a USB compatible device as herein described, comprising the steps of:

- 5 connecting the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing to the supporting portion of the power outlet;
 connecting the mains power to the USB charging module; and
 mounting the power outlet to the mounting surface.

- 10 In a further aspect of the invention there is proposed a method of installing a power outlet for allowing a user to charge a USB compatible device as herein described, comprising the steps of:

- connecting the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing to the supporting portion of the power outlet;
 connecting the mounting plate to the rear of a grid or face plate.
15 connecting the mains power to the USB charging module; and
 mounting the power outlet to the mounting surface.

In one form, the power outlet is attached or mounted to the mounting surface by fastening the grid or face plate to the surface by screws.

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It will be understood that the term "comprise" and any of its derivatives (e.g. comprises, comprising) as used in this specification is to be taken to be inclusive of features to which it refers, and is not meant to exclude the presence of any additional features unless otherwise stated or implied.

- 25 The reference to any prior art in this specification is not, and should not be taken as, an acknowledgment or any form of suggestion that such prior art forms part of the common general knowledge of the technical field.

DRAWINGS

- 30 Various aspects of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the following drawings in which:

FIGURE 1 is a front perspective view of a USB charging module housing according to a first aspect of the present invention;

FIGURE 2 is a rear perspective view of the USB charging module housing of Figure 1;

- 35 FIGURE 3 is a detailed view of part of an engaging portion of the USB charging module housing as shown in Figure 1;

FIGURE 4 is a view of a removable cover that fits into the rear opening of a USB charging module housing;

FIGURE 5 shows an embodiment of a supporting portion of a surface mountable power outlet adapted to engage with a USB charging module housing;

5 FIGURE 6 is a detailed view of the mating interface of the supporting portion shown in Figure 5;

FIGURE 7 is a perspective view of a USB charging module according to an embodiment of a second aspect of the present invention;

FIGURE 8 is a perspective view of a USB charging module according to another embodiment of the second aspect of the present invention;

10 FIGURE 9 is a side view of the USB charging module shown in Figure 8;

FIGURE 10 is an end or rear view of the USB charging module shown in Figure 7 (wires not shown);

FIGURE 11 is a view of a USB charging module engaged with a grid or face plate of a surface mountable power outlet according to an embodiment of the present invention;

15 FIGURE 12 is a view of a USB charging module engaged with a grid or face plate of a surface mountable power outlet according to another embodiment of the present invention;

FIGURE 13 is a surface mountable power outlet according to an embodiment of a third aspect of the present invention;

FIGURE 14 shows a surface mountable power outlet according to another embodiment of the third aspect of the present invention;

20 FIGURE 15 is a circuit schematic depicting an embodiment of the AC mains voltage step down and regulation component of the USB charging circuit;

FIGURE 16 is a circuit schematic of a power conditioning circuit with a DC-DC converter to regulate the current and voltage suitable for the USB charging module;

25 FIGURE 17 is a top view of a USB charging circuit adapted to fit inside the USB charging module housing of Figure 1;

FIGURE 18 is a perspective view of the USB charging circuit as shown in Figure 17;

FIGURES 19a-19c depict a sequential series of views of a method of installing a USB charging module to a surface mountable power outlet according to a fourth aspect of the present invention; and

30 FIGURE 20 shows a flow diagram illustrating a general method of installing a USB charging module into a surface mountable power outlet according to a fourth aspect of the present invention.

FIGURE 21 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a USB charging module suitable for front entry engagement with a power outlet.

FIGURE 22 is a section view through A-A of the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing of Figure 23;

35 FIGURE 23 is a front view of the USB charging module housing as depicted in Figure 21;

FIGURE 24 is a section view B-B of the supporting portion of the grid or face plate depicted in Figure 25;

FIGURE 25 is a front view of a grid or face plate suitable for engagement with the USB charging module of Figure 21;

FIGURE 26 shows the USB charging module of Figure 21 to be connected from the front of the grid or face plate according to an embodiment of the present invention; and

5 FIGURE 27 shows the USB charging module of Figure 21 to be connected from the front of the grid or face plate according to another embodiment of the present invention.

In the following description, like reference characters designate like or corresponding parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

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DESCRIPTION

Referring now to Figures 1-4, there is shown a USB charging module housing 10 according to a first aspect of the present invention. The housing 10 has an aperture 12 through a front face 11 that is large enough to provide access for a USB connector to plug into a USB port or socket 50 enclosed within the housing (see Figure 7). At the rear of the housing 10 (see Figure 2) is an opening or aperture 13 which enables access for inserting a USB charging circuit 60 (see Figure 7) into the housing 10.

15 Although this embodiment shows the rear of the housing as being open to provide an access means for the USB charging circuit 60, it is possible that the opening 13 could be located on a different face and may constitute an entire face or a part thereof. Figure 4 shows a removable cover 20 that engages with the rear of the housing 10 to substantially seal the enclosure from dust and ingress. The removable cover 20 has angled clips 26 and 27 that engage into mating apertures 16 and 15 respectively of the housing 10 in a snap fit arrangement. The lip of the angled clips 27 are inserted directly into apertures 15 and then the cover 20 is closed by applying force proximate the clips 26 until they snap into apertures 16. The clips 26, 27 are flexible and resilient so that they may bend sufficiently to allow fitment into the apertures 15, 16 whereupon they return to their undeformed positions.

20 In one embodiment, a feature of the housing 10 is the clip interface comprising four clips 14 that are positioned around the four side faces of the housing 10. These clips form an engaging portion that connects the housing 10 to a supporting portion 30 (see Figure 5) of a surface mountable power outlet. The supporting portion 30 may be integral with a grid or face plate of the power outlet or located on a mounting plate that is adapted to be connected to the rear of a grid or face plate. Figure 3 shows a detailed view of a clip 14, in particular illustrating a type of clip with a tapered front face 14b and substantially vertical rear face 14a. These clips are designed to engage with the mating interface 34 of the supporting portion 30 which is most clearly illustrated in Figure 6. Figure 6 shows detail of a typical mating interface 34 which will connect to a USB charging module housing 10. As the housing 10 is inserted into the supporting portion 30, the tapered surface 14b of the clip 14 will engage a corresponding tapered surface 35 of the supporting portion 30. As more insertion force is applied, the

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clip 14 will deflect slightly as it passes the vertical surface 37 of the supporting portion 30. The substantially vertical rear face 14a of the clip 14 will eventually pass the lowest point of the vertical surface 37, upon which it reaches the recessed horizontal surface 36 of the supporting portion 30. The compression force acting on the clip 14 is then released and it deflects back to its undeformed position and the substantially vertical rear face 14a engages in surface to surface contact with the horizontal recessed surface 36 of the supporting portion 30 to thereby retain housing 10 to the supporting portion 30. In the embodiment shown in Figure 5, the supporting portion 30 has only two mating interfaces 34 requiring that only two of the four clips 14 be used to connect the housing 10 to the supporting portion 30. In practice, two or more of the clips 14 may be used to secure the housing, and the supporting portion 30 may also have two or more mating interface 34.

Referring now to Figure 7, there is shown a USB charging module 40 according to an embodiment of a second aspect of the present invention. Enclosed inside the housing 10 is a USB port 50 and a USB charging circuit 60. Wires 70, 71 to be connected to mains power are soldered directly onto a printed circuit board (PCB) 62 of the charging circuit 60 (see Figure 16). The wires 70, 71 exit the housing 10 through apertures 22 located through the removable cover 20 (see Figure 10). During installation these wires may be connected to mains power either directly or via a switch. In other embodiments, there may be simply provided screwed terminals for wire termination instead of a terminal block.

Referring now to Figures 8 and 9, there is shown a USB charging module 80 according to another embodiment of the second aspect of the present invention. Enclosed inside the housing 10 is USB port 50 and USB charging circuit 60 with a terminal block 65 to be connected to mains power. During installation, wires carrying mains power either directly or via a switch are connected to the terminal block 65 to power the USB charging circuit 60. The wires enter the housing 10 through apertures 18 located on one side of the housing 10.

In the USB charging module embodiments described above, the power input to the module is mains power (also known as household, supply or grid power) supplied between about 100-240V alternating current (AC). The USB charging circuit 60 regulates the voltage and steps it down to a usable 4.75-5.25V direct current (DC) which is typically required to charge many electronic devices.

Referring now to Figures 11-14, there are shown various embodiments of the USB charging module 40 or 80 connected to a grid or face plate of a surface mountable power outlet. Figure 11 shows USB charging module 40 engaged with a supporting portion 30 which is integral with a grid or face plate 100. In one example, the supporting portion 30 is integrally machined into the grid or face plate 100 during manufacture. In other embodiments, the supporting portion 30 is provided as a separate piece and is attached to the grid or faceplate during or before installation. The grid or face plate 100 can be

constructed from plastic, metal or any other suitable materials. Figure 11 shows a grid or face plate 100 with two apertures 102 (only one visible in this view) capable of receiving switches or other electrical connectors in addition to USB ports. Further, as the USB charging module is modular in design, it can always be easily interchanged for a switch or other desired user interface. The grid or face plate 100 shown in Figure 11 may be adapted in many ways such as providing for AC receptacles as commonly found in most household power outlets. The grid or face plate 100 is fastened to a wall by screws or other suitable fasteners through mounting lugs 101. These may be arranged in any suitable position on the grid or face plate 100 and may vary in quantity.

Figure 12 shows a USB charging module 80 engaged with a supporting portion 30 located in a mounting plate 200 that is adapted to be inserted into the rear of a grid or face plate 110. In this arrangement the supporting portion 30 is integrally machined into mounting plate 200. Such a mounting plate 200 (also known as a base or base plate) in standard power outlets, commonly includes electrical contacts for AC receptacles, switch mounting and terminals to connect mains power wiring. The mounting plate 200 is designed to be received by the rear of a grid or face plate 110. As shown in Figure 12, the mounting plate 200 is fastened to the grid or face plate 110 by screws at mounting positions 201. The grid or face plate 110 is mounted onto a wall by screws at mounting locations 111, 112.

Figure 13 more specifically shows a surface mountable power outlet 500 according to a third aspect of the present invention allowing a user to charge USB compatible devices. In this arrangement the USB charging module 40 or 80 is connected to a supporting portion 30 that may either be integral with the grid or face plate or located on a mounting plate adapted to be connected to the rear of the grid or face plate. In this embodiment the power outlet 500 has a pair of switches and AC receptacles in addition to the USB charging module 40 or 80. A power outlet 500 such as this allows a user to plug in normal AC type connectors with power switched on or off and advantageously also provides a user with access to a USB port 50 for charging electronic devices. If the USB charging module 40 or 80 is wired directly to mains without a switch then the charging module 40 or 80 is constantly connected to mains power so that when a user connects their device into the USB port, charging will begin automatically. If the USB charging module 40 or 80 is wired to mains via a switch, then power will not be drawn until the user engages the switch to an "ON" position. As shown in Figure 14 in another embodiment of a wall mounted power outlet 510, there is a USB charging module 40 or 80 provided additionally with LED status lights 55 that indicate whether the device connected to the port is charging or not. In both Figures 13 and 14 there is also shown a cover plate 90, 91 that is adapted to fit around the periphery of the power outlet. The cover plate 90, 91 usually snap fits around the grid or face plate and is provided primarily for aesthetics when the power outlet is mounted to a surface such as a wall or floor.

It will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the surface mountable power outlet embodiments illustrated in this text are by no means limiting to how the invention may be performed. The geometric arrangement of switches, AC receptacles, USB ports or other network connection ports may be customised to suit a particular application. The supporting portion 30 also need not necessarily be limited to being an integral portion of a grid or face plate or located on a mounting plate adapted to be inserted into the rear of a grid or face plate. The supporting portion 30 could be mounted or machined into almost any structure, including a box or other structural housing. Further, the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing and supporting portion of the power outlet may be designed with alternative interfaces to the clip arrangement shown which achieves the principle aim of the invention in providing a modular USB housing which is adapted to be installed in a surface mountable power outlet thereby allowing a user to charge USB compatible devices.

Referring now to Figures 15-19, there is shown the USB charging circuit 60 that receives a 240V AC mains power input and provides a 5V DC output to the USB port 50, suitable for charging USB compatible electronic devices. The USB charging circuit 60 comprises the following stages. In the first stage, shown in Figure 15, the 240V AC mains input is first stepped down using a transformer 61 to reduce the high AC voltage to a low AC voltage (e.g. 15V, 1.2A). This stepped down AC voltage is then passed through a rectifier circuit 63 (e.g. bridge rectifier) that outputs a full wave varying rectified voltage shown as the output across load R_L . As shown in Figure 16, this varying voltage is then smoothed with a capacitor to produce a relatively smooth DC voltage with a small ripple. A voltage regulator (e.g. 7812 Integrated Circuit (IC)) is then used to output a regulated 12V DC output as will be understood by the person skilled in the art.

In the second stage, an embodiment of which is shown in Figure 16, a DC-DC converter (e.g. Texas Instruments TPS40210 current mode boost controller) is then used to regulate the output suitable for the USB charger. The TPS40210 implements a DC-DC single-ended primary inductance converter (SEPIC) with input and output current regulation, as well as output voltage regulation implemented by closed loop feedback control. The TPS40210 ensures that the output voltage of the USB charger is between about 4.75 and 5.25 V (nominally 5V DC) with an operating current of about 1A and also prevents overcharging. The voltage input in Figure 16 is the regulated 12V from the first stage, which is converted to a regulated 5V DC voltage output by the circuit shown. It should be understood that this is just one example of how a USB charging circuit may be implemented and any other suitable circuit arrangement may be used.

Referring specifically to Figures 17 and 18 there is shown an embodiment of the physical circuit layout of the USB charging circuit 60. A double layered PCB 62 is used which provides a compact

and efficient way to house all of the components inside the housing 10. On one layer of the PCB 62 there is mounted the USB port 50, an optional terminal block 65 and the circuit components for the AC mains voltage step down and first stage regulation (including transformer, capacitors, 7812 IC voltage regulator and rectifier circuit). On the second layer of the PCB 62 there is provided the power conditioning circuitry for the USB charger output (including the TPS40210 and various other capacitors, inductors, resistors and diodes).

In other embodiments, there is provided 2 or 3 or more PCBs over which the circuit components are arranged, rather than (or as well as) a double layered arrangement.

Referring now to Figures 19a-19c there is shown a sequential series of views of a method of installing the USB charging module 80 to a surface mountable power outlet according to a fourth aspect of the present invention. In this embodiment, the mounting surface is a wall 90. In Figure 19a there is shown the step of connecting the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing 10 to a supporting portion 30 of the power outlet. Figure 19a shows the USB charging module 80 already having been engaged with the supporting portion 30. Figure 19b illustrates the next step of connecting the mains power to the USB charging circuit 60. The USB charging module 80 and grid or face plate assembly is held in close proximity to a wall opening where the power outlet is to be located. The wiring from the mains (typically active and neutral wires, with earth optional) is physically connected to the USB charging circuit 60. The particular embodiment illustrated in Figures 19a-19c shows a USB charging module 80 with a terminal block 65 for terminating the mains wires. The final step in the installation is to attach or mount the power outlet to the wall 90 as illustrated in Figure 19c. The grid or face plate is held flat against the wall 90 and screws or other suitable fastening means are inserted through mounting apertures in the grid or face plate and fastened securely to the wall 90. In another example, the USB charging module 40 may be connected using wires 70, 71 as previously described.

Figure 20 illustrates a flow diagram of a method of installing the USB charging module 40 or 80 to a surface mountable power outlet. In step 600, the installer begins with the USB charging module. In step 601, the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing 10 is connected to the supporting portion 30 of the power outlet. In step 602, a determination is made as to whether the supporting portion is located in a mounting plate that is not integral with the grid or faceplate. If the supporting portion 30 is integral with the grid or face plate, the mains power is connected to the USB charging circuit 60 and the power outlet is attached or mounted to the mounting surface (which may be a wall or floor or other appropriate surface) in step 604. If the supporting portion 30 is located in a mounting plate that is not integral with the grid or face plate, then there is an additional step 603 of connecting the mounting plate to the grid or face plate.

In step 605, the installer then connects the AC mains power to the USB and then in step the power outlet assembly is mounted or attached to the mounting surface such as the wall 90 or a floor. In step 606, the resulting product of the method is a surface mounted USB power or charging outlet.

- 5 Once installation is complete, the power outlet provides an interface to charge USB compatible devices. The USB charging module 40,80 receives a mains input power between about 100-240V AC and converts this to a regulated 5V DC output suitable for charging USB compatible electronic devices. The modular housing 10 enables the power outlet to have interchangeable interfaces to suit operational requirements. The USB charging module 40,80 may be removed from the power outlet
10 and replaced with a switch or any other interface without having to replace the entire power outlet.

- Referring now to Figures 21-27, there is shown a further embodiment whereby the USB charging module 40,80 is connected to the supporting portion 130 of a grid or face plate 120 of a surface mountable power outlet from the front thereby providing a 'front entry' insertion option. Whereas
15 previously described the USB charging module 40,80 is connected into a supporting portion 30 in the rear of the grid or face plate, it is also desirable to be able to insert the module from the front of the grid or face plate. It will be appreciated that this connection may be facilitated in many ways, an example of which is shown in Figures 21-27. Figure 21 generally shows a USB charging module 40,80 which can be connected to mains power as previously described. In one form, the module may
20 have a clip interface comprising clips 18 as shown in more detail in Figures 22-23. Figure 23 is a front view of a USB charging module housing 10 showing the location of two clips 18 suitable for front entry connection of the module. Figure 22 is a sectional view through A-A of Figure 23 providing detail of a possible clip arrangement. This clip arrangement allows the housing 10 to engage with a supporting portion 130 of a grid or face plate 120 as shown in Figure 25. Figure 24 shows as a
25 sectional view through B-B of Figure 25 which generally shows the supporting portion 130 in more detail. The housing 10 of the USB charging module 40,80 is inserted through aperture 132 of the supporting portion 130. The clip arrangement facilitates a snap-fit connection between the clips 18 and the supporting portion 130. As the module is inserted into the grid or face plate, the resilient clips 18 bend slightly as force is applied such that the outer most surface 18b of the clips 18 can pass the inner
30 most surface 133 of the supporting portion 130. Once engaged, surface 19 of the housing 10 mates with recessed surface 131 of the supporting portion 130 and surface 18a of the clips 18 is in contact with surface 134 of the supporting portion 130.

- Figures 26-27 show exploded views of the USB charging module 40,80 and grid or face plate front entry installation. Figure 26 shows a grid or face plate 120 with two apertures 132 which enables more
35 than one USB charging module 40,80 to be inserted. Figure 27 shows a grid or face plate 140 with a single aperture 132 for receiving a USB charging module 40,80 from the front. In addition, Figure 27

shows a cover plate 145 that is attached or mounted to the grid or face plate after the USB charging module 40,80 has been connected and screws 146 for attaching or mounting the grid or face plate to a surface such as a wall or floor.

- 5 Although various illustrative embodiments of the present invention have been described in the foregoing detailed description, it will be understood that the invention is not limited to the embodiments disclosed, but is capable of numerous rearrangements, modifications and substitutions without departing from the scope of the invention as set forth and defined by the following claims.

CLAIMS:

1. A Universal Serial Bus (USB) charging module housing adapted for securement to a surface mountable power outlet, the housing including:
 - 5 an engaging portion for connecting the housing to a supporting portion of the power outlet;
 - access means to allow a USB charging circuit to be inserted into the housing; and
 - an aperture for allowing external access to a USB port.
- 10 2. The housing according to claim 1 further including at least one aperture for receiving wires carrying mains power.
3. The housing according to claim 1 wherein the access means is provided by an aperture in an external face of the housing.
- 15 4. The housing according to claim 3 wherein the aperture is covered by a removable portion.
5. The housing according to claim 4 wherein the removable portion includes at least one aperture for receiving wires carrying mains power.
- 20 6. The housing according to claim 1 wherein the supporting portion of the power outlet is an integral portion of a grid or face plate.
7. The housing according to claim 1 wherein the supporting portion of the power outlet is located in a mounting plate that is adapted to be connected to the rear of a grid or face plate.
- 25 8. The housing according to claim 1 wherein said housing is connected to the supporting portion of the power outlet from the front of the grid or face plate.
9. The housing according to claim 1 wherein said housing is connected to the supporting portion of the power outlet from the rear of the grid or face plate.
- 30 10. The housing according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the engaging portion includes:
 - 35 a plurality of clips extending outwardly from one or more exterior faces of the housing, said clips for engagement with one or more surfaces of the supporting portion of the power outlet in a snap fit arrangement.

11. The housing according to claim 10 wherein the clips have a tapered front face and a substantially vertical rear face.
- 5 12. The housing according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the aperture for allowing external access to a USB port is located on a front face of the housing.
13. A Universal Serial Bus (USB) charging module adapted for securement to a surface mountable power outlet, the charging module including:
- 10 a USB port;
a USB charging circuit that is capable of receiving a mains power input;
a housing, said housing including an engaging portion for connecting the housing to a supporting portion of the power outlet; access means to allow the USB charging circuit to be inserted into the housing and an aperture for allowing external access to the USB port.
- 15 14. The USB charging module according to claim 13 wherein the USB charging circuit includes a printed circuit board (PCB).
15. The USB charging module according to claim 14 wherein a plurality of wires are soldered
20 directly to the PCB for connection to mains power either directly or via a switch.
16. The USB charging module according to claim 14 wherein a terminal block is mounted on the PCB for connection to wires carrying mains power either directly or via a switch.
- 25 17. The USB charging module according to claim 14 wherein there are provided screwed terminals for wire termination.
18. A surface mountable power outlet for allowing a user to charge a USB compatible device, the power outlet including:
- 30 a supporting portion;
a USB charging module including a USB port; a USB charging circuit that is capable of receiving a mains power input; a housing, said housing including an engaging portion for connecting the housing to the supporting portion of the power outlet; access means to allow the USB charging circuit to be inserted into the housing and an aperture for allowing external
35 access to the USB port;
a grid or face plate adapted to allow a user to access the USB port;
a connection between the USB charging module and mains power; and

mounting means for mounting the power outlet to a mounting surface.

19. The power outlet according to claim 18 wherein the supporting portion is an integral portion of the grid or face plate.

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20. The power outlet according to claim 18 wherein the supporting portion is located in a mounting plate that is adapted to be connected to the rear of the grid or face plate.

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21. The power outlet according to claim 18 wherein the USB charging module housing is connected to the supporting portion from the front of the grid or face plate.

22. The power outlet according to claim 18 wherein the USB charging module housing is connected to the supporting portion from the rear of the grid or face plate.

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23. The power outlet according to claim 18 wherein the mounting surface is a wall or floor.

24. The power outlet according to claim 18 further including a cover plate.

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25. The power outlet according to claim 18 wherein the mains power is between about 100-240V alternating current (AC).

26. A method of installing a power outlet for allowing a user to charge a USB compatible device, the power outlet according to claim 18, comprising the steps of:

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connecting the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing to the supporting portion of the power outlet;
connecting the mains power to the USB charging module; and
mounting the power outlet to the mounting surface.

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27. A method of installing a power outlet allowing a user to charge USB compatible devices, the power outlet according to claim 20, comprising the steps of:

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connecting the engaging portion of the USB charging module housing to the supporting portion of the power outlet;
connecting the mounting plate to the rear of a grid or face plate;
connecting the mains power to the USB charging module; and
mounting the power outlet to the mounting surface.

28. The method of installing a power outlet according to any one of claims 26 or 27 wherein the power outlet is mounted to the mounting surface by fastening the grid or face plate to the surface by screws.