

In the right light, at the right time, everything is extraordinary." -Aaron Rose

Lighting basics for a beautiful and functional home

Who wants just an ordinary home? Most of us want extraordinary homes, and the truth is we can certainly have them.

Lighting is a Key Component of the Decorating Plan:

Lighting is a very important component of the overall decorating plan. It provides illumination for a variety of tasks, and adds warmth or coolness, definition, depth, and an array of moods to a space. Learning basic lighting principles will help you to build a lighting plan to complete your home interior.

Lighting Basics

There are five important factors to consider when planning for and choosing your interior lighting:

1. Natural light coming in.
2. Color or temperature of light.
3. Type of interior lighting.
4. Fixtures.
5. Placement.

1. Natural Light:

To begin assessing the illumination needs of your space, first consider the light that comes into the room naturally, with a concentration on areas that light is focused towards. How does natural light affect seating and task areas? Is it too strong, and could it potentially harm furnishings? You may need to adjust the placement of seating, other furnishings, art and accessories to protect them.

Notice how the light appears in your space during different times of the day. If you will be painting in the near future, paint a portion of the wall to view how the sunlight affects the color in the morning, afternoon and evening. You will be amazed at how various colors look when bathed in different levels of sunlight.

TIP: *If a room seems visually "closed in", let the sun shine in. Open or pull back the window treatments to allow light to enter. This will add warmth to the space and make it appear larger.*

2. Light Color or Temperature:

Just like walls, floors, furnishings, and accessories within the home, light is an element that also has color. The color— also known as the temperature of light— can be warm, cool, or white.

Warm Lighting: Warm light is usually soft light. It tends to have a yellow, red, or orange glow. Think about the warmth of a fire. This is warm light. Warm light works well in rooms painted in a warm color. One way to achieve warm lighting is by using incandescent bulbs.

Cool Lighting: Cool light tends to have a blue, green, or grey radiance.

Think about a cloudy or overcast sky. Cool light infuses a feeling of distance into a room, and provides for a chic, sophisticated, or sometimes mysterious mood. Modern and contemporary rooms can work well with cool light. Cool lighting is a good choice for visual tasks because of the high contrast it produces. One way to achieve cool lighting is by using good quality fluorescent bulbs.

White Lighting: White light tends to be crisp and bright. White light is best for showing off the TRUE colors in a room. Many interiors including formal, modern, and contemporary rooms do well with true white light. One way to achieve white lighting is by using halogen bulbs.

TIP: *Assess the "visual temperature" of the space-weather it feels cold and dreary or bright and happy, for example. If a room seems visually cold, warm it up with yellow or golden light.*

3. Type of Interior Lighting

There are essentially 4 Types of Lighting you will use in your home:

a. Task Lighting:

Illuminates work or task areas.
For areas that require more light than for general ambiance or illumination.
Provides light for reading, sewing, hobbies, cooking, games, and focused activities.

b. Accent Lighting:

Directs focused light to selected surfaces.
Draws attention to specific objects.
Enhances the aesthetics of an interior space.

TIP: *Illuminate your artwork and prized accessories directly with focused, lighting. Use up-lights behind plants and other furnishings for an interesting effect that can throw shadows for added dimension during certain times of the day or night.*

c. Ambient Lighting:

Helps define the space.
Provides general room illumination.
Helps people feel comfortable in the environment.
Makes a visual statement about the mood.
Can be warm for a cozy, friendly, or sensual mood.
Can be cool for a chic, sophisticated or mysterious mood.

d. Kinetic Lighting:

Moves.
It is never still.
Used for effect.
Adds excitement, fun, mystery, drama.
Hypnotic.
Strobe lights can be dangerous for some people such as those with epilepsy.

Example: a glowing fire in a cozy, warm space can help entertain guests and add to the romance of a dinner party scene.

4. Fixtures

When choosing fixtures, consider specifically:

Operation and controls of the fixture

Energy efficiency

Color: Determine the color of light you want in a room based on the mood you are going for, and choose the appropriate bulbs.

Light distribution: Notice how far the light reaches and in which direction.

Appearance: Is it attractive?

Style: Lamps and fixtures should support the style of furnishings within the space it occupies.

Maintenance requirements: Fixtures should be reasonably easy to clean, polish, and maintain.

Installation expense**5. Placement**

When placing fixtures, consider:

What elements on the space need illumination (art, furnishings, task areas).

The light distribution: the distance between a fixture and the area needing light or illumination.

Doorways, furnishings, and possible obstructions.

Available power outlets.

Height, width, and depth limitations.

Symmetry and balance.

Safety-with cords and heat the fixture emits.

A thoughtful lighting plan that is put into action will definitely add beauty, function, and harmony to a space, and allow you optimal use and enjoyment of your home. Through a systematic approach to good lighting, your home interior will be anything but ordinary. Have fun shopping and selecting just the right lighting fixtures to wonderfully illuminate your home.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

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