

# Lighting your home

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Good lighting can make a huge difference to the way your home looks, and to the way you feel when in your home: light adds warmth and cosiness, sparkle and drama, and gives your spirits a genuine lift.

There are three main types of lighting to consider:

- ❖ **Ambient**
- ❖ **Task**
- ❖ **Decorative**

There are also so many kinds of artificial light sources available, including down-lighters (recessed spot-lights and ceiling pendants), up-lighters, recessed directional spot-lights (which can be focused on walls to illuminate your paintings, or even your curtains), picture lights, table-lamps, floor-lamps (sometimes called standard lamps), candles, and firelight.

**Ambient lighting** is also sometimes called 'general' light. It's what gives a room an evenly-lit appearance, softening the lines between light and shadow. Ambient light is provided by daylight, of course, and at night by ceiling lights and wall lights.

Fluorescent or halogen strip lights, or 'rope' lights installed on top of kitchen wall cabinets, bookcases, or display cabinets will throw light onto the ceiling to reflect back into the room.

Canister up-lighters placed in the corners of a room give a lovely effect and also satisfy any Feng Shui -inspired anxieties about corners by neutralising their hard effect.

Night-time sources of ambient light should ideally be dimmable, especially in rooms used for watching television.

**Task lighting** is light that focuses on areas of activity: spots or strip lights beneath kitchen cabinets for food preparation; pendant down-lighters over a kitchen island; desk lamps for working; a table or floor lamp next to your favourite chair for reading, or knitting.

**Decorative lighting** can be a grand statement piece, such as an antique, or ultra-modern, crystal chandelier; it can also be as simple as a cluster of flickering candles on a dining-table or mantel, or inside an unused fireplace.

In most of our homes the usual place for a chandelier is over the dining-table, which allows for a larger fixture with a longer drop than in other rooms. A chandelier looks best when hung fairly low over the table, say 70cm or even 60cm from the table to the bottom of the fixture. This is a good height for dining, but does mean that when standing the light will be at eye-level, hence the importance of the dimmer-switch. However, the height you hang a chandelier will change depending on your ceiling-height.

If you yearn for a modern chandelier with a huge drop, but don't have the necessary ceiling-height, you might consider moving your central light to a corner of your room and using it there, like a piece of sculpture. Some fixtures lend themselves very well to this kind of treatment, although the whole idea is best avoided if you have young children, or cats.

However, different types of light source can serve more than one purpose. For example, a chandelier is decorative, but also provides ambient light. A table lamp casts task light downwards for reading and ambient light upwards, and is also a decorative feature. Wall-lights give ambient light, but can also be highly attractive.

Functional canister up-lights are available with a spike for pushing into the earth at the base of tall container plants: the effect of these at night in a conservatory is magical. Garden lighting plays an important part in a lighting design scheme, too, transforming your windows at night: from blank, black rectangles into something beautiful.

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